List of Topics Covered in Ed.S. – Elementary Education Comprehensive Exam

The exam consists of multiple-choice questions.

Comprehensive Exam Key Concepts

Ed.S. – Elementary Education

Inclusive Education, Equity, and Diversity

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Whole-Child Context & Educational Equity	Examine students' academic learning within economic, family, community, health, and educational contexts; understand how outside conditions can shape opportunity without defining student ability.
Poverty, Basic Needs & Opportunity	How poverty, food insecurity, and access to resources can affect learning and educational opportunity; connect students with supports while maintaining rigorous expectations.
Hope, Resilience & High Expectations	Meaningful goals, supportive relationships, opportunities for success, and high expectations as supports for students facing economic challenges.
Structural Inequality & School Segregation	How residential/economic segregation, housing, wealth, school boundaries, and resource distribution can create or sustain unequal educational opportunities even after formal desegregation.
Asset-Based Multilingual Education	Identify and build on multilingual learners' existing knowledge, languages, cultures, and experiences; provide linguistic supports and multiple pathways to rigorous academic content.
Curricular Representation & Critical Literacy	Use texts that function as windows and mirrors; include diverse characters with meaningful roles and agency; select materials that allow students to examine multiple perspectives, injustice, and social challenges.
Difference, Identity & Equity	Understand why color-blind or difference-blind approaches can overlook the ways identity and unequal social experiences affect students' opportunities and school experiences.
Belonging & Relational Learning	Create classroom environments that reflect students' identities, experiences, languages, and communities; use discussion and relationships to strengthen belonging and supportive learning communities.
Culturally Responsive Teaching	Connect learning to students' cultures, histories, experiences, and communities while maintaining high academic expectations and avoiding deficit-based assumptions.
Immigrant Students, Families & Community Assets	Recognize the knowledge, strengths, agency, and community resources immigrant students and families bring; approach families as partners rather than simply recipients of services.
Student Voice, Agency & Justice	Provide meaningful opportunities for students to make choices, ask questions, contribute to learning decisions, and recognize how individuals and groups can exercise agency when confronting injustice.
Universal Design for Learning (UDL)	Anticipate learner variability and reduce barriers from the beginning; provide multiple means of representation and multiple ways for students to act and express what they know.

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
UDL, Accommodations & Access	Understand that universally designed instruction can reduce many barriers but does not eliminate the need for individualized accommodations or supports for some students.
Inclusive Education for Students with Disabilities	Use flexible, individualized approaches that consider communication, access, strengths, goals, and needs rather than relying only on disability labels; promote participation and independence.
Independence, Self-Advocacy & Scaffolding	Use appropriate scaffolds while teaching students to set goals, make choices, reflect on learning, and develop greater independence and self-advocacy.
Disability as Diversity & Ableism	Understand disability as part of human variation and broader conversations about identity, access, and equity; examine policies, environments, and attitudes that create barriers.
Representation, Accessibility & Inclusion	Recognize that physical access alone is not full inclusion; representation, belonging, participation, and positive portrayals of disability also matter.
Humanizing & Responsive Pedagogy	Build authentic relationships and connect learning to students' identities, knowledge, and experiences; balance rigorous standards and accountability with responsiveness to students as whole people.
Equity-Centered Educational Practice	Synthesize course concepts by designing inclusive environments that recognize student assets and identities, reduce barriers, promote agency and belonging, and address unequal opportunities.

Content-Area Literacy, Reading Comprehension, Assessment, and Vocabulary Instruction

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Reading Process & Active Reading	Active readers monitor comprehension; bottom-up views of reading; schema; independence in reading; characteristics of fluent reading.
Fluency	Reading with speed, accuracy, and appropriate expression across a range of texts; relationship of fluency to comprehension.
Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction	Avoiding stereotypes and cultural assumptions; recognizing language differences; connecting school learning to students' lives; understanding diverse perspectives.
Diversity, Equity & Gifted Education	Underrepresentation of minority and economically disadvantaged students in gifted programs; equitable literacy and instructional practices.
Technology & Learning Communities	Technology as motivational, self-paced, and interactive; communication tools that support classroom and learning communities.
Essential Questions & Instructional Planning	Open-ended essential questions that guide learning; planning content objectives, literacy skills, materials, student needs, and assessment procedures.
Cognitive Apprenticeship & Authentic Learning	Engaging students in authentic activities resembling the work of practitioners in real-world contexts.
Reciprocal Teaching	Predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing as comprehension strategies.

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Reading & Writing Workshops	Time, choice, and strategy instruction for struggling readers; workshop structures that support literacy development.
Quality Assessment Practices	Use of multiple sources of information; culturally responsive assessment; alignment of assessment with intended learning.
Validity & Linguistic Bias	Validity as an assessment's ability to provide the intended information; recognizing vocabulary and language-related bias in test questions.
Authentic & Portfolio Assessment	Teacher-designed assessments closely related to curriculum; student reflection and self-awareness as important features of portfolio assessment.
Prior Knowledge & Graphic Organizers	Activating prior knowledge; graphic organizers; branching relationships among important vocabulary and concepts.
Anticipation Guides	Previewing content; establishing a purpose for reading; activating prior knowledge; clarifying misconceptions; discussion before and after reading.
Content-Centered Comprehension Instruction	Essential curricular concepts; content-area texts; reading guides and graphic organizers; explicit comprehension strategy use.
Questioning & QAR	Pre-reading questions; literal/textually explicit questions; questions requiring prior knowledge; Question-Answer Relationships; self-questioning.
Study Guides & Comprehension Support	Using study guides before reading to help students locate important information and ideas; knowledgeable teacher decision-making.
Vocabulary Development	Context clues; morphemic analysis of roots and affixes; semantic feature analysis; dictionary use with other strategies; vocabulary self-collection; wide reading.

Language Arts, Literacy Development, and Reading Instruction

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Children's Literature & Literary Genres	Characteristics of high-quality children's literature; literary merit and reader appeal; age-appropriate protagonists, themes, and language; biography and informational texts.
Word Study & Word Sorts	Grouping words by pronunciation, structure, and meaning; word sorts and related vocabulary/word-study techniques.
Oral Language, Listening & Communication	Activities that develop communication; discussion; listening comprehension; Directed Listening-Thinking Activity (DLTA); Think-Pair-Share.
English Learners & Oral Proficiency	Strategies supporting oral proficiency; academic language; scaffolding and adapted instruction; SIOP and other supports for multilingual learners.
Writing Development & Conventions	Sentence and paragraph structure; spelling; mechanics; punctuation; development of control over written-language conventions.
Metacognition & Learning Awareness	Monitoring one's own learning and engagement; evaluating learning; metacognitive awareness and self-regulation.
Guided Reading	Support for decoding, reading strategies, and comprehension strategies through guided reading groups.

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Multiple Intelligences & Multimodal Learning	Gardner's multiple intelligences; using visual and verbal forms to support retention and learning.
Informational Text & Text Features	Glossaries, headings, captions, and other text features; informational reading materials such as magazines and trade books.
Emergent Literacy	Early emergent literacy characteristics; beginning phonemic awareness; concepts of print; tracking spoken words in written text.
Language Arts Assessment	Assessment as an ongoing process; attention to cultural, developmental, and learner factors; using results to guide instructional decisions.
Struggling Readers & Explicit Support	Explicit instruction; frequent review; one-on-one attention; modeling; choice; appropriate instructional support rather than simply easier work.
Phonics & Phonological Awareness	Phonics for decoding and word recognition; recognizing and producing language sounds; phonological awareness.
Vocabulary Instruction	Word walls and thematic vocabulary; brainstorming words; connecting vocabulary to unit concepts and content.
Language Systems	Syntax, morphology, semantics, and other components of language; understanding how meaning and ideas are communicated.
Reading Across Genres	Activating prior knowledge; making connections; constructing meaning; evaluating author point of view; monitoring comprehension; reflecting on theme.
Second-Language Acquisition	SIOP; stages of English acquisition including preproduction and early production; comprehensible input and instructional scaffolding.
Writing Assessment	Analytic assessment of individual elements of writing; distinction from holistic assessment and reading measures.
Thematic Instruction	Developing meaningful thematic statements and interdisciplinary connections rather than using topics alone as themes.

Behavior, Assessment, Positive Behavior Supports, and Intervention

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Behavior Observation & Data Collection	Direct and indirect observation; variable interval recording; frequency, duration, and intensity; selecting measurement strategies for target behaviors.
A-B-C Analysis & Functional Behavior Assessment	Antecedent-behavior-consequence analysis; direct observation; identifying functional relationships between behavior and environmental variables across settings.
Functions of Behavior	Attention, peer approval, escape/avoidance, rule testing, stimulation, and other possible functions of disruptive behavior.
Reinforcement Principles	Positive and negative reinforcement; automatic reinforcement; extinction; maintaining cooperative behavior through acknowledgement and reinforcement.

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Reinforcement Schedules	Fixed and intermittent/variable patterns of reinforcement; recognizing schedules based on changing response requirements.
Positive Behavior Support / PBIS	Teaching functional replacement behaviors; environmental redesign; adjusting adult behavior; improving learning environments; schoolwide expectations.
Schoolwide Expectations & Classroom Rules	Few, reasonable, positively stated, behavioral, enforceable rules; broad schoolwide expectations; consistency across situations.
Praise & Positive Teacher Interactions	Appropriate praise-to-reprimand ratios; acknowledging rule-following; teacher movement and positive greetings/interactions.
Environmental Variables & Modifications	Rules, schedules, routines, seating, physical characteristics, and other environmental factors that may influence behavior.
Prompts & Cues	Verbal, tangible, visual/sign, and modeling prompts; using cues to support desired behavior and performance.
Curriculum-Based Measurement	Assessing performance in the curriculum being taught; frequent monitoring of academic progress; using data to make instructional adjustments.
Formative Evaluation	Evaluation throughout instruction or intervention; sensitivity to ongoing student progress; distinction from pretest-posttest-only approaches.
Single-Subject Research	Use of single-subject designs to evaluate intervention effects and individual behavior change.
Behavior Intervention Planning	Examining goals and procedures when a behavior intervention plan is unsuccessful; matching interventions to behavior function and context.
Prevention & Levels of Support	Primary prevention aimed at preventing new occurrences of problem behavior; understanding treatment and intervention settings.
Self-Injurious Behavior	Recognizing forms of self-injurious behavior and the need for appropriate behavioral assessment and support.
Response Maintenance & Generalization	Durability of behavior after intervention is withdrawn; distinction between maintenance and transfer/generalization across settings.
Social-Emotional & Mental Health Concepts	Anhedonia as loss of interest or pleasure; recognizing behavioral and emotional indicators relevant to student support.
Anger-Management Training	Identifying antecedents to anger, recognizing personal reactions, and selecting appropriate behavioral choices.
IDEA Transition Planning	Postsecondary transition needs addressed no later than the first IEP in effect when a student is 16.

Classroom Assessment, Testing, Grading, and Score Interpretation

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Reliability	Stability, alternate-forms reliability, and internal consistency; selecting the appropriate type of reliability evidence for an assessment situation.

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Validity	Content-related, criterion-related, and construct-related validity evidence; alignment between assessment items and instructional objectives.
Short-Answer & Essay Item Construction	Clear directions; direct questions; appropriate use and placement of blanks; explicit student tasks; item-writing guidelines.
Essay Scoring	Analytic and holistic scoring; scoring keys; anonymous scoring; consistency and fairness when evaluating constructed responses.
Portfolio Assessment	Portfolio contents and conferences; student self-evaluation; clear evaluative criteria; communication with students and families.
Assessment Item Quality & Revision	Revising outdated, inaccurate, ambiguous, or poorly constructed items; peer review; alignment with standards and current content.
Item Analysis	Using performance evidence to evaluate test items; criterion-referenced interpretations; pretest-posttest analysis; instructed versus uninstructed comparisons.
Formative Assessment	Assessment for learning; using assessment-elicited evidence to make adjustments in teaching and learning; formative assessment as a process rather than a test type.
Summative Assessment	Assessment of learning; semester/year grades; accountability uses; teacher or program evaluation; distinguishing summative from formative uses.
Standardized Test Score Interpretation	Percentiles, NCEs, grade equivalents, stanines, and scale scores; relative/norm-referenced interpretation; common score misconceptions.
High-Stakes Testing & Test Preparation	Appropriate generalized test-taking preparation; teaching the knowledge and skills represented by a test rather than teaching actual or cloned items.
Educational Accountability	Connections among high-stakes testing, accountability, instructional quality, and appropriate classroom assessment practices.
Goal-Attainment Grading	Grades based on mastery of curricular aims; communicating goals and evaluative criteria; identifying and weighting evidence of goal attainment.

School Reform Models in Elementary Schools

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Fluid & Crystallized Intelligence	Crystallized intelligence as learned/background information; fluid intelligence as cognitive and innate processing.
Marzano's Effective Schools Framework	School-level, teacher-level, and student-level factors associated with effective schools and student achievement.
Challenging Goals & Effective Feedback	Establishing challenging goals for all students; specific, formative feedback; schoolwide and student achievement goals.
School-Level Factors	Guaranteed and viable curriculum; challenging goals and effective feedback; parent/community involvement; safe and orderly environment; collegiality/professionalism.

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Teacher-Level Factors	Research-based instructional strategies; classroom management; classroom curriculum design; teacher effectiveness.
Student-Level Factors	Home environment; learned intelligence/background knowledge; motivation; influences on student achievement.
Leadership for Change	Collaborative leadership teams; principal as a cohesive force; strong guidance with respect; interpersonal relationships; effective leader behaviors.
Research-Based Instructional Strategies	Cooperative learning; mastery learning; games and simulations; individualization; instructional frameworks using research-based strategies.
Curriculum Design	Identifying specific knowledge; multiple exposures and complex interactions with knowledge; structured tasks that promote transfer and reasoning.
Safe & Orderly Schools	Clear schoolwide rules and procedures; environmental/routine considerations; appropriate consequences; teaching self-discipline and responsibility.
Teacher Leadership	Gabriel's teacher-leader traits and roles; work ethic, confidence, leadership potential, organization, altruism, accessibility; mentors, peer coaches, grade-level and department leaders.
Cultivating Professional Community	Connection, staff development, reflection, team building, collaboration, and development of a strong school community.
Leadership Communication	Effective written leadership communication through professional emails, memos, and letters.
Remediation & Student Support	Differentiation; reteaching and retesting; considering ability levels; limitations of retention as a remediation strategy.
Parent & Community Involvement	Communication, participation, and governance; family expectations; home and family influences on achievement.
Dintersmith & School Reform	PEAK framework; century-old standardized model versus innovative education; purpose-driven learning; developing rather than ranking human potential.
Professional Development & Implementation	Providing professional development and instructional frameworks to support successful implementation of research-based strategies.
Teacher Effectiveness	Classroom management and organization; teacher-student interaction; instruction; equity in effective teaching.
Mentoring Students	Consistent presence; maintaining the relationship; involving youth in decisions; respecting student viewpoints; effective mentor practices.