

The attached comparison tables provide a high-level overview of the most significant updates between the 2020 Early Literacy Standards and the new K-3 Foundational Literacy Standards. While the core commitment to strong early literacy instruction remains unchanged, the revised standards offer greater clarity, stronger vertical alignment, a more intentional focus on phonemic awareness, spelling, and morphology, and expanded implementation supports. The tables below highlight key additions, areas that have been streamlined or reduced, and the overall shifts designed to better support students, teachers, and school leaders in developing skilled and joyful readers.

<u>Key Additions in the 2026 Standards</u>	
Addition	Benefit
Orthography & Spelling Strand	Recognizes encoding and spelling as essential literacy skills.
Morphology & Word Analysis Strand	Builds vocabulary, comprehension, and word-solving skills.
Fluency Benchmarks	Provides clear end-of-year expectations.
Skills Progression Heat Map	Supports vertical alignment and curriculum planning.
Assessment Guidance	Clarifies screening, benchmarking, and progress monitoring.
Intervention & ENL Supports	Supports all learners more intentionally.
Global Expectations K-3	Establishes shared assumptions about skill mastery and progression.

<u>Key Removals or Reductions</u>	
Previous Feature	Update
Rhyming and alliteration standards	Greater focus on advanced phonemic awareness skills
Detailed print concepts strand	Embedded within instruction rather than standards
Sight-word quantity requirements	Focus on automatic recognition and orthographic mapping
Extensive skill lists inside standards	Skills moved to appendices and progression documents
Curriculum guidance embedded in standards	Standards separated from instructional resources

Early Literacy and Phonics Standards Updates Overview			
Area	2020 Standards	2026 Standards	What Changed?
Purpose	Combined standards, instructional guidance, examples, skill progressions, and expectations.	Separate standards, skill progressions, assessment guidance, and instructional tools.	Clear distinction between standards and implementation resources.
Organization	Phonological Awareness, Phonics & Word Recognition, Print Concepts, Fluency.	Phonemic Awareness, Phonics & Decoding, Orthography & Spelling, Morphology & Word Analysis, Fluency.	Better aligned to Science of Reading research.
Phonological/Phonemic Awareness	Included rhyming, alliteration, onset-rime, syllables, word counting, blending, and segmenting.	Focuses on isolating, blending, segmenting, adding, deleting, and substituting phonemes.	Greater emphasis on skills most predictive of reading success.
Phonics	Detailed phonics patterns embedded directly in standards.	Broader decoding standards supported by scope-and-sequence documents.	Standards are cleaner and easier to maintain.
Orthography & Spelling	Embedded within phonics and grammar.	Dedicated K-3 strand.	Spelling and encoding are elevated as core literacy skills.
Morphology	Primarily introduced in Grades 2-3.	Dedicated strand beginning in Kindergarten.	Stronger vocabulary and word-meaning focus.
Print Concepts	Separate strand including book handling, print awareness, alphabet knowledge, and text features.	No separate Print Concepts strand.	Foundational print skills are assumed and taught through instruction.
High-Frequency Words	Specific numerical goals (100, 200, 300 words).	Focuses on automatic recognition of high-frequency and irregular words.	Emphasis shifts from counting words to word recognition and orthographic mapping.
Syllable Study	Embedded across grades.	Explicitly connected to orthography, morphology, and word analysis progressions.	Stronger vertical coherence.
Fluency	Fluency expectations without benchmarks.	Includes recommended K-3 WPM benchmarks.	Clearer expectations for reading proficiency.
Assessment	Limited assessment guidance.	Dedicated assessment framework and recommendations.	Greater consistency across schools.
Intervention	Not explicitly included.	Dedicated intervention, differentiation, and ENL supports.	Stronger support for diverse learners.
Vertical Alignment	Skills often repeated from grade to grade.	Prior grade mastery assumed; skills intentionally progress.	More coherent K-3 learning progression.
Scope & Sequence	Embedded within standards language.	Separate scope-and-sequence and progression documents.	Greater flexibility for curriculum planning.
Catholic Identity	Primarily found in guiding principles.	Embedded throughout standards and strand descriptions.	Stronger integration of faith and literacy formation.

