THE READING LEAGUE

Curriculum Navigation Report

Foundations A to Z, Grades K–5

Foundations A-Z™

2026 Publication
Reviewed with Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines (3rd Edition, 2026)

Introduction

CURRICULUM EVALUATION GUIDELINES DESCRIPTION

"Decisions regarding curriculum, instructional approaches, programs, and resources are critical and must be informed by more than experience, observations, or even belief systems. If we are to succeed in implementing effective practices, then we will need to embrace learning as a part of our work as much as teaching itself."

Hennessy, 2020, pg. 8.

Due to the popularity of the science of reading movement, the term "science of reading" has been used as a marketing tool, often promising a quick fix for decision makers seeking a program aligned with the scientific evidence base. However, as articulated in The Reading League's *Science of Reading: Defining Guide (2022)*,

> *The science of reading is a vast, interdisciplinary body of scientifically-based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing. Over the last five decades, this research has provided a preponderance of evidence to inform how proficient reading and writing develop; why some students have difficulty; and how educators can most effectively assess and teach, and, therefore, improve student outcomes through the prevention of and intervention for reading difficulties. (p.6)*

The Reading League's *Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines (CEGs)* are a resource developed to assist consumers in making informed decisions when selecting curricula and instructional materials that best support evidence-aligned instruction grounded in the science of reading.

The CEGs are anchored by frameworks validated by the science of reading. Findings from the science of reading provide additional understandings that substantiate both aligned and non-aligned practices (AKA "red flags") within the CEGs. These serve as a foundation for what to expect from published curricula that claim to be aligned with the scientific evidence of how students learn to read. The CEGs highlight best practices that align with the science of reading. Red flags specify any non-aligned practices in the following areas:



- **Word Recognition**
- **Language Comprehension**
- **Reading Comprehension**
- **Writing**
- **Assessment**



The CEGs have been used by educators, building and district leaders, local education agencies, and state education agencies as a primary tool to find evidence of red flags, or practices that may interfere with the development of skilled reading. While the CEGs have been useful for schools and districts for informing curricular and instructional decision-making, The Reading League recognized the challenge of school-based teams that might not have the capacity for an in-depth review process. In the spirit of its mission to advance the awareness, understanding, and use of evidence-aligned reading instruction, expert review teams engaged in a large-scale review of the most widely used curricula currently used in the United States in order to develop informative reports of each.

This report was generated after a review of the curriculum using the revised *Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines, 3rd Edition*, published in 2026. The *Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines* have been refined based on feedback and a lengthy pilot review, and have undergone an inter-rater reliability study with positive results. As you read through the findings of this report, remember that red flags will be present for all curricula as there is no perfect curriculum. The intent of this report is not to provide a recommendation, but rather to provide information to local education agencies to support their journey of selecting, using, and refining instruction and instructional materials to ensure they align with the science of reading.

Disclaimer: The Reading League's curriculum review is deemed an informational educational resource and should not be construed as sales pitches or product promotion. The purpose of the review is to further our mission to advance the understanding, awareness, and use of evidence-aligned reading instruction.

Curriculum Description

The evaluation on the following pages features the review of Foundations A to Z, a foundational skills program created for students in kindergarten-5.

For this report, reviewers received a spiral-bound book that included directions to access Foundations A to Z's online materials. The online platform provides a range of digital and printable resources, including teacher-facing tools such as the teacher dashboard, guided lesson plans, and embedded professional development support. Students also have access to videos, games, and decodable books that could be used for independent practice. In addition, the curriculum features assessments and classroom reports that automatically generate recommended resources, helping teachers decide when to use small-group instruction or independent practice to reteach, reinforce, or enrich key concepts and skills.

Reviewers were selected based on their deep knowledge of the science of reading and associated terminology, as well as high-quality instructional materials. Once selected, they were assigned to teams of at least three reviewers. The team met regularly to establish reliability in their individual scores and report their findings. For a more comprehensive description of the review process, visit The Reading League Compass's Curriculum Decision Makers page.



1 Red Flag statement is False.



2 Red Flag statement is minimally True. Evidence is minimal or briefly mentioned.



3 Red Flag statement is mostly True. If applicable, evidence is in multiple places throughout the curriculum.



4 Red Flag statement is always true, pervasive, and/or integral to the curriculum.



A black box indicates that this component is not addressed in this curriculum and must be addressed with other materials.

Reviewers used the notes section of each component to capture helpful evidence and notes, such as keywords that described a practice listed within the CEGs, specific examples, and precise locations of evidence. Notes were included in the review of any optional aligned components as well.

Overall Design and Delivery

IDENTIFICATION OF THE FOLLOWING RED FLAG PRACTICES WAS PRIORITIZED IN THE REVIEW OF THIS SECTION.

OVERALL DESIGN AND DELIVERY	SCORE	
No evidence of deliberate and purposeful practice: "These two terms refer to practice that goes beyond rote repetition and involves practicing for a purpose (e.g., accuracy, fluent retrieval, generalization) with the deliberate goal of long-term improvement of skill performance" (Hughes & Riccomini, 2019, p. 406).	1	
No evidence of retrieval practice: Retrieval practice "consists of tasks requiring retrieval of targeted skills and knowledge from memory without prompts or cues" (Hughes & Riccomini, 2019, p. 407). "Retrieval practice is a strategy in which calling information to mind subsequently enhances and boosts learning" (Agarwal, Roediger, McDaniel, & McDermott, 2020, p. 2).	1	
No evidence of spaced or distributed practice: Spaced or distributed practice "involves taking a given amount of time devoted to learning and arranging that time into multiple sessions that are spread over time" (Carpenter & Agarwal, 2019, p. 3).	1	
No evidence of cumulative practice: Cumulative practice is "the systematic addition of a just-learned skill to previously learned and related skills, allowing them to be practiced together" (Hughes & Lee, 2019, p. 414; Archer & Hughes, 2011). "It requires that new (and usually related) skills are added to a practice activity as they are acquired, thus providing distributed practice for multiple skills within one session" (Hughes & Riccomini, 2019, p. 407).	1	
No evidence of interleaved practice: Interleaved practice "is similar to cumulative practice but involves mixing the order of skills and problems to be practiced by distributing them in a random fashion, causing the learner to have to discriminate" (Kirschner, P. & Hendrick, C., 2020).	1	
Student Interest: The materials are generally not intrinsically interesting and engaging for most students in that grade.	1	
Cohesion: The program components are disjointed and not seamlessly related to one another. Instruction based on the science of reading must be integrated, acknowledging the impact of various component skills upon each other.	1	
Usability: The materials are confusing and/or difficult to manage and use in a classroom setting.	3	

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Foundations A to Z's activities, both within and across lessons, are intentionally designed to address the stages of skill development: building decoding skills first, then fluency, and finally generalization—ultimately leading to successful application of skills in text to support comprehension. Retrieval practice was noted in the curriculum's approach to fluency review. Students are provided fluency practice sheets in kindergarten as well as at the beginning of Grade 1. Each sheet includes three grids in which students practice letter-naming, letter-sounds, and high-frequency words that have been introduced to date, offering students multiple opportunities to retrieve and reinforce this knowledge. Foundations A to Z also provides collections of flash cards for students to practice letter names, sounds, and high-frequency words. Often, the games that can be presented (or projected) by the teacher or assigned to students' accounts for independent practice incorporate retrieval practice as well.

Foundations A to Z also includes spaced (i.e., distributed) practice. For instance, the final module in each unit provides a review of the skills introduced throughout the unit. In addition, teachers have access to a wide range of supplemental resources, including games and practice sheets, which can be used across grade levels to reinforce and revisit previously taught skills. Practice of skills across lessons is cumulative and intentionally integrates practice of previously taught skills. Skills or words are not sorted or organized by a single target pattern, which allows for authentic mixed practice. For example, in Grade 1, Unit 2, Module 1, Lesson 2 on final "s" blends, students read words and phrases that have final "s" blends and previously taught initial "s" blends. The words featured also include practice of short-vowel, closed-syllable words, with a variety of vowel patterns in mixed order. This provides students with meaningful opportunities to apply multiple phonics skills simultaneously. Student interest is supported through a wide range of text types, topics, and discussion prompts that are grade-appropriate and likely to engage a broad range of learners.

Finally, reviewers found that the organization and presentation of information for educators is clear and easy to understand. Directions for teachers are thorough and include detailed examples of instructional dialogue to support lesson delivery. However, because the program is fully digital and does not offer printed teacher manuals, student workbooks, or readers, it presents some challenges. For example, educators are provided with the option to print individual lessons, but reviewers noted that lessons are typically ten pages or more, which may be difficult for teachers with limited printing access. Also, any texts, worksheets, or assessments would need to be printed if educators want their students to have books and materials in hand. Another possible challenge of a fully digital program is that teachers who use their devices to present lesson content and materials may have difficulty accessing teacher instructions and guidance. Finally, navigation within grade-level lessons is fairly intuitive, but the curriculum's overall platform navigation is less user-friendly. The search function is limited, requiring the exact resource name, and there is no option to bookmark or "favorite" frequently used lessons or materials.

Findings:

COMPONENTS SUPPORTING WORD RECOGNITION

1A: Word Recognition Non-Negotiables

Identification of the following red flag practices was prioritized in the review of this section.

WORD RECOGNITION NON-NEGOTIABLES	SCORE
1.1: The three-cueing system is taught as a strategy for decoding in early grades (i.e., directing students to use picture cues, context cues, or attend to the first letter of a word as a cue).	1
1.2: Guidance is given to memorize any whole words, including high-frequency words, by sight without attending to the letter-sound correspondences.	1
1.3: Supporting materials do not provide a systematic scope and sequence nor opportunities for practice and review of elements taught (e.g., phonics, decoding, encoding).	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Foundations A to Z shows no evidence of the three-cueing system. Reviewers highlighted the Accuracy and Self-Correction Fluency Mini-Lesson/Routine, used across Grades K–5 for reading decodable and grade-level texts, as a notable example that guides teachers to remind students what it means to read accurately and why it matters. They then have students whisper-read a short section of text. If they make a mistake, the teacher prompts them to stop, sound out the word using what they know about letter-sound patterns and word parts, and then reread the sentence to be sure it makes sense. Although the directions include language that encourages students to notice when words "don't make sense," which could invite guessing based on context, the subsequent correction procedure emphasizes a phonics-based approach: "Focus on the word and involve students as you decode it using learned phonics and morphology skills. Point out where in the word you made an error."

When students practice reading words, phrases, and sentences, the teacher is directed to model how to decode and read fluently from left to right. For example, in Grade 2, Unit 2, Module 2, Lesson 2, teachers are directed to begin by modeling how to decode the word "brought," highlighting the vowel sound and its spelling pattern. They then remind students that this word appeared earlier during instruction on irregular past-tense verbs. The following sample dialogue is provided for teachers:

> *This word has an unusual sound-spelling in it. Here's a hint: The letters o-u-g-h are a team that stands for the vowel sound /ô/. Here's another hint: we saw this word earlier, as the past-tense form of the verb bring. Get ready to segment and blend the word. Ready, segment: /b/ /r/ /ô/ /t/. Now, slide your finger under the letters and blend to read the word: brought. (Foundations A to Z; 2025)*

Thus, nothing is implied or assumed—the teacher clearly explains the concept, drawing student attention to how sounds connect to spelling patterns.

Students are also encouraged to sound out and spell words using knowledge of known/predictable sound-spelling patterns. Instruction of high-frequency words, even those with irregular patterns, is introduced and practiced with attention to letter-sound correspondences. Lessons instruct teachers to use sound boxes to guide students to identify the sounds in words and then use grapheme cards to spell the words, marking any irregular patterns with heart cards. For example, in Grade K, Unit 2, Module 3, Lesson 3, students are introduced to the high-frequency word "of" using the Spelling by Heart routine. First, the teacher models saying each sound as they touch each sound box: /ŭ/ /v/. Then they blend the two sounds together and say the word "of." The teacher places heart cards above both the "o" and the "f" to show that neither letter makes its expected sound. Finally, students are prompted to read the word themselves.

In another example in Grade 2, Unit 1, Module 1, Lesson 3, students are introduced to the high-frequency words "spell," "story," "very," and "year" using high-frequency word flashcards and the whiteboard spelling routine. The teacher says each word, has students repeat it, and then chorally spells it with them before briefly explaining its meaning. Additionally, if the word contains a phonics element that students are currently studying, the teacher is instructed to point it out. For "spell," "story," and "year," students write the words on their whiteboards, check them against the models, and correct any errors. The word "very" is taught with an added focus on its irregular spelling. The teacher segments the sounds (/v/ /ĕ / /r/ /ē/) and explains that "very" has one part that does not follow the usual sound-spelling pattern: the letters "er" do not make the expected /ûr/ sound (as in "her"). Instead, the vowel sound is /ĕ/. The teacher marks the unexpected spelling with a heart card to show that this part must be learned "by heart."

Finally, Foundations A to Z provides a clearly organized and systematic scope and sequence as part of its supporting materials. The K–5 Instructional Progression document outlines how phonological awareness, phonics, handwriting, high-frequency words, print concepts, and fluency develop across grade levels and modules. In addition, each grade level includes its own more detailed scope and sequence for teacher use. For example, the kindergarten document lists the specific skills taught in each module, including phonological awareness, phonics, print handwriting, high-frequency words/phonograms, print concepts, fluency, and language connections. By contrast, the Grade 4 scope and sequence reflects the instructional shift as students progress through the grade levels, focusing on phonics, content-area high-frequency words, fluency, word study/language connection, and cursive handwriting.

1B: Phonological and Phoneme Awareness

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR PHONOLOGICAL AND PHONEME AWARENESS	SCORE
1.7: Instruction only attends to larger units of phonological awareness (syllables, rhyme, onset-rime) as a focus of instruction without moving to the phoneme level.	1
1.8: Blends such as /b/ /l/ are kept intact rather than having students notice their individual sounds.	1
1.9: Students do not practice the phonemes as soon as they learn the graphemes.	1
1.10: Instruction is focused on letters only without explicit instruction and practice with the phonemes that letters represent.	1
1.11: Phoneme awareness is not taught as a foundational reading skill.	1
1.12: Phoneme awareness is not assessed and monitored (e.g., a student's ability to identify the initial, final, and medial phonemes in a word).	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Foundations A to Z has a daily focus on phoneme awareness in kindergarten and Grade 1. In Grade 2, the Teacher Guide recommends continued phonemic awareness practice as needed and provides additional support for teachers to use when appropriate. The first units in kindergarten and Grade 1 include phonological awareness tasks at the syllable and onset-rime level; however, the following modules all focus on skill work at the phoneme level. Additionally, all lessons, beginning in Grade K, Unit 4, include decoding and/or encoding work that embeds phonological/phonemic awareness skill practice through word blending and building, phoneme-grapheme mapping, and dictation. Blends are treated as separate, segmentable sounds, not as units. For example, in Grade 1, Unit 2, Module 1, Lesson 1, teachers are directed to point out that words are made up of different sounds and that each sound is separate. Students then practice breaking apart initial consonant blends to help them hear all the sounds in words. In a later example, Grade 1, Unit 3, Module 1, Lesson 2, blending is taught sound by sound, with each phoneme being tapped individually and then blended (e.g., /f/ /ă/ /s/ /t/).

Beginning in kindergarten, phonemes are introduced and practiced before students learn the corresponding letter. Instruction includes explicit modeling of how to articulate each sound, followed by phonological awareness activities in which students blend, segment, and isolate the target phoneme (or words containing it). Phoneme awareness is assessed through the daily lesson observation checklist and program unit assessments. These assessments require students to identify phonemes in the initial, medial, and final positions of words, as well as demonstrate the ability to segment, blend, and delete sounds.

1C: Phonics and Phonic Decoding

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR PHONICS AND PHONIC DECODING	SCORE
1.17: Letter-sound correspondences are taught opportunistically or implicitly during text reading.	1
1.18: Instruction is typically "one and done"; phonics skills are introduced but with very little or short-term review.	2
1.19: The first letters of key words for letter/sound correspondences are not aligned with the pure phoneme being taught (e.g., earth /ĕ/, ant for /ă/, orange for /ŏ/).	1
1.20: Phonics instruction takes place in short (or optional) "mini-lessons" or "word work" sessions.	1
1.21: The initial instructional sequence introduces many (or all) consonants before a vowel is introduced, short vowels are all taught in rapid succession, and/or all sounds for one letter are taught all at once.	1
1.22: Blending is not explicitly taught nor practiced.	1
1.23: Instruction encourages students to memorize whole words, read using the first letter only as a clue, guess at words in context using a "What would make sense?" strategy, or use picture clues rather than phonic decoding.	1
1.24: Words with known letter-sound correspondences, including high-frequency words, are taught as whole-word units, often as standalone "sight words" to be memorized.	1
1.25: There are few opportunities provided for word-level decoding practice of new phonics patterns and interleaving practice for prior phonics patterns.	1
1.26: Early texts are predominantly predictable and/or leveled texts which include phonic elements that have not been taught; decodable texts are not used or emphasized.	1
1.27: Advanced word study (Grades 2–5): Instruction in phonics ends once single syllable phonics patterns (e.g., CVC, CVCe) are taught.	1
1.28: Advanced word study (Grades 2–5): There is no evident instruction in multisyllabic word decoding strategies and/or using morphology to support word recognition.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Foundations A to Z's detailed grade-level scope and sequence documents clearly outline the progression of letter-sound correspondences taught across the school year. The lessons offer explicit instructional language and routines aligned with best practices for teaching letter–sound correspondences, including articulated sound modeling and integrated letter formation instruction. All keyword sounds featured match recommendations for pure phonemes. The team noted that some supplemental resources designed to reinforce alphabet knowledge, such as the "Alphabet Chants" used primarily in kindergarten, do not consistently align with the program's key words. In addition, guidance on how to use these tools was unclear. Reviewers were unsure whether the "Alphabet Chants" were intended for extra practice, as no teacher directions for implementation were provided.

The initial instructional sequence introduces short vowels one at a time. During the first five weeks of kindergarten, each short vowel sound is taught alongside two consonants, with only the short vowel sound and its single-letter spelling introduced initially. Teachers are instructed to support blending by having students say each sound as they point to the letters, then slide a finger under the word to blend the sounds into a whole word. The script that follows comes from Grade K, Unit 4, Module 1, Lesson 1:

> *We can blend the sounds to read this word. As I point under each letter, say its sound with me. I'll start with the first letter. The first letter in a word is on the left. Let's say the sounds: /m/ /ă/ /p/. Let's do it again. This time, I'll slide my finger under the letters at a faster pace: /mmmăăăp/, map. Now, watch as I blend the word using my fingers. (Hold up your hand and make a fist with your palm facing out.) I will raise my thumb for /m/, my index finger for /ă/ and my middle finger for /p/. You repeat. Now, blend the word with me as I underline the word. What word did we just read? (map) (Foundations A to Z, 2025)*

As soon as students have been taught the letter–sound relationships for two consonants and one vowel, the program immediately labels high-frequency words that contain those sounds as decodable, because they can be read using the phonics skills students have already learned.

The High-Frequency Word Routine instructs teachers and students to analyze the sound-spellings in the target word. For example, in Grade 3, Module 1, Unit 2, teachers are directed to utilize the following scripting:

> *Look at the word 'order.' It has two syllables, or and der, and each one is an r-controlled syllable. The stress, or emphasis, is on the first syllable. I'm going to say the sounds in the word order and write the matching letter or letters for each one. (Model saying each sound, /ôr/ /d/ /ûr/, and writing the corresponding grapheme on the board to spell order.) (Foundations A to Z, 2025)*

Decoding instruction is reinforced in almost every lesson. Students practice newly taught phonics patterns through word reading and sorting tasks, as well as by encountering target patterns in sentences, decodable texts, and fluency passages.

Decodable texts are used in kindergarten through Grade 2. These controlled texts feature mostly decodable words and previously taught high-frequency words, supporting students' practice in accuracy, fluency, and early comprehension. Foundations A to Z also utilizes shared texts in kindergarten and Grade 1. These texts are beyond students' independent decoding abilities, so the teacher reads a big book version aloud to model fluency and demonstrate how text features like punctuation cue reading with expression. The shared reading instruction also introduces concepts of print, providing students with an opportunity to learn about the characteristics and basic organization of various texts. Reviewers noted that the projectable format would work well with whole-group instruction as it allows students to follow along while the teacher reads aloud. As students gain decoding proficiency, they gradually shift from active listening to actively recognizing and reading words featured in the shared readers. By the middle of Grade 1, some students will have enough explicit instruction in phonics and word study to begin engaging with shared readers independently.

In Grade 2, each module features grade-level text sets that are first read with instructional support, then reread in small groups or with partners, and finally read independently. These texts are available in both projectable and printable formats, making them suitable for whole-group or small-group instruction. Additionally, in Grades 2–5, advanced word study expands to include strategies for decoding multisyllabic words and morphology to strengthen students' word recognition.

Finally, each module, which consists of five lessons, includes targeted, repeated review of new skills. Module 4 in each unit serves as a cumulative review of the new skills from Modules 1–3, so Foundations A to Z builds in an intentional checkpoint. Additionally, across the grade levels, students continue to see previously taught decoding and fluency skills. However, there is no prescribed routine or cyclical review that ensures skills from earlier units continue to be practiced later on. Reviewers noted that establishing such a routine would strengthen student retention and mastery of foundational skills.

1D: Fluency

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR FLUENCY	SCORE	
1.42: Fluency instruction focuses primarily on student silent reading.	1	
1.43: Rate is emphasized over accuracy; priority is given to the student's ability to read words quickly.	1	
1.44: Word-level fluency practice to automaticity is not provided, or fluency is viewed only as text-reading fluency.	1	
1.45: Fluency is practiced only in narrative text or with repeated readings of patterned text.	1	
1.46: Fluency assessment allows acceptance of incorrectly decoded words if they are close in meaning to the target word (e.g., accepting the word "house" instead of the printed word "home").	1	

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Foundations A to Z's fluency instruction routinely includes choral and/or partner routines in which students read aloud to one another. Rate is not emphasized over accuracy. There are four Fluency Mini-Lessons provided for teacher use across grade levels that emphasize the following skills: Accuracy & Self-Correction, Reading Rate, Expression through Phrasing, and Expression through Intonation & Stress. The Accuracy & Self-Correction lesson highlights the importance of accuracy and emphasizes that students should not guess or keep reading when something doesn't look or sound right. Teachers are prompted to explicitly teach the habit of stopping when an error is noticed, whether it's a misread, mispronunciation, or nonsensical word. Teachers are directed to show students how to use their phonics and morphology knowledge to decode the unknown word. This includes looking at each part of the word, applying known grapheme-phoneme correspondences, and blending or reblending to check accuracy. Students are then prompted to reread and check for meaning. The routine also encourages flexibility and persistence as it suggests that students try alternate sounds for the same spelling (e.g., different vowel sounds). Finally, students are directed to ask for help if needed.

The program also includes resources to support fluency at the word-level, including practice sheets and sentence frames, games with word cards, and opportunities for students to practice repeated readings of randomized word lists during whole-group instruction. Additionally, fluency is practiced with a variety of text types, providing students with exposure to varied text structures and genres. Finally, teacher directions for administration of fluency assessments across grade levels direct teachers to mark errors while students read, including misread words, substitutions, hesitations, and skipped words.

Findings:

COMPONENTS SUPPORTING LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION, READING COMPREHENSION, AND WRITING

SECTIONS 2–4: Non-Negotiables for Language Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, and Writing

This section begins with a review of non-negotiable elements for language comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing before moving on to the language comprehension strands highlighted in Scarborough's reading rope. Therefore, identification of the following red flag practices was prioritized in the review of this section.

NON-NEGOTIABLES FOR LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION, READING COMPREHENSION, AND WRITING	SCORE
2-4.1: (LC, RC, W) In early grades, the instructional framework is primarily a workshop approach, emphasizing student choice and implicit, incidental, or embedded learning.	n/a
2-4.2: (LC, RC, W) Students are not exposed to rich vocabulary and complex syntax in reading and writing materials.	n/a
2-4.3: (RC) Comprehension activities focus mainly on assessing whether students understand content (the product of comprehension) instead of supporting the process of comprehending texts.	n/a
2-4.4: (RC, W) Writing is not taught or is taught separately from reading at all times.	n/a
2-4.5: (LC, RC) Questioning during read-alouds focuses mainly on lower-level thinking skills.	n/a

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Foundations A to Z's practices for Non-Negotiables for Language Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, and Writing are not applicable. As a foundational reading program, Foundations A to Z focuses on the word recognition components of skilled reading, including phonological awareness, decoding, sight recognition, and fluency. However, it does not address the non-negotiables for language comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing components of skilled reading. For that reason, adopters must ensure that additional high-quality materials are in place to provide systematic instruction in vocabulary, background knowledge, syntax, inference, literacy knowledge, and writing. Without a complementary program, students will not receive the full range of instruction necessary to develop into skilled, proficient readers.

2B: Background Knowledge

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE	SCORE
2.1: Read-aloud opportunities emphasize simple stories or narrative texts. Read-aloud text is not sufficiently complex and/or does not include knowledge-building expository texts (i.e., topics related to science, social studies, current events).	n/a
2.2: Opportunities to bridge existing knowledge to new knowledge is not apparent in instruction.	n/a
2.3: Advanced (Grades 2–5): For students who are automatic with the code, texts for reading are primarily leveled texts that do not feature a variety of diverse, complex, knowledge-building text sets to develop background knowledge in a variety of subject areas.	n/a

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Foundations A to Z's practices for background knowledge are not applicable. As a foundational reading program, Foundations A to Z focuses on the word recognition components of skilled reading, including phonological awareness, decoding, sight recognition, and fluency. However, it does not address the development of student background knowledge. For this reason, adopters must ensure that supplemental, high-quality materials are in place to provide systematic instruction in knowledge building. Without a complementary program, students will not receive the full range of instruction necessary to become skilled, proficient readers.

2C: Vocabulary

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR VOCABULARY	SCORE
2.7: Vocabulary worksheets and activities are used with little opportunity for deep understanding of vocabulary words.	n/a
2.8: Instruction includes memorization of isolated words and definitions out of context.	n/a
2.9: Tier 2 words are not taught explicitly and practiced; students are not given opportunities to use them in their speech, see them in print, and use them in writing.	n/a
2.10: Students are not exposed to and taught Tier 3 words.	n/a
2.11: Explicit instruction in morphology is not present and/or not taught according to a scope and sequence (i.e., simple to complex) consistently throughout K–5 instruction.	n/a

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Foundation A to Z's practices for vocabulary are not applicable. As a foundational reading program, Foundations A to Z focuses on the word recognition components of skilled reading, including phonological awareness, decoding, sight recognition, and fluency. However, it does not address the development of students' depth of word knowledge. For this reason, adopters must ensure that supplemental, high-quality materials are in place to provide systematic instruction in vocabulary. Without a complementary program, students will not receive the full range of instruction necessary to become skilled, proficient readers.

2D: Language Structures

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAGS PRACTICES FOR LANGUAGE STRUCTURES	SCORE
2.18: Conventions of print, grammar, and syntax are taught implicitly or opportunistically with no evidence of consistent, explicit, simple to complex instruction across all grade levels.	n/a
2.19: Instruction does not include teacher modeling nor sufficient opportunities for discussion.	n/a
2.20: Students are asked to memorize parts of speech as a list without learning in context and through application.	n/a

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Foundations A to Z's practices for language structures are not applicable. As a foundational reading program, Foundations A to Z focuses on the word recognition components of skilled reading, including phonological awareness, decoding, sight recognition, and fluency. However, it does not address the development of students' knowledge of conventions, grammar, and syntax. For this reason, adopters must ensure that supplemental, high-quality materials are in place to provide systematic instruction in sentence comprehension and syntax. Without a complementary program, students will not receive the full range of instruction necessary to become skilled, proficient readers.

2E: Verbal Reasoning

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR VERBAL REASONING	SCORE
2.26: Inferencing strategies are not taught explicitly and may be based only on picture clues and not text (i.e., picture walking).	n/a
2.27: Students do not practice inference as a discrete skill.	n/a

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Foundations A to Z's practices for verbal reasoning are not applicable. As a foundational reading program, Foundations A to Z focuses on the word recognition components of skilled reading, including phonological awareness, decoding, sight recognition, and fluency. However, it does not address the explicit development of students' verbal reasoning skills. For this reason, adopters must ensure that supplemental, high-quality materials are in place to provide systematic instruction in inferencing. Without a complementary program, students will not receive the full range of instruction necessary to become skilled, proficient readers.

2F: Literacy Knowledge

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR LITERACY KNOWLEDGE	SCORE
2.33: Genre types and features are not explicitly taught.	n/a
2.34: Genre types and text structures (e.g., cause and effect, problem and solution, sequence, compare and contrast) are not used to understand the purpose of what is being read.	n/a
2.35: Specific text structures and corresponding signal words are not explicitly taught and practiced.	n/a

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Foundations A to Z's practices for literacy knowledge are not applicable. As a foundational reading program, Foundations A to Z focuses on the word recognition components of skilled reading, including phonological awareness, decoding, sight recognition, and fluency. However, it does not address the development of students' literacy knowledge. For this reason, adopters must ensure that supplemental, high-quality materials are in place to provide systematic instruction in genre types, text structures, and their corresponding signal words. Without a complementary program, students will not receive the full range of instruction necessary to become skilled, proficient readers.

SECTION 3: Reading Comprehension

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR READING COMPREHENSION	SCORE
3.1: Comprehension strategies such as identifying the main idea, summarizing, noting text structure, inferencing, and fix ups are not taught and practiced throughout the year using a gradual release of responsibility (i.e., I do, we do, you do) using appropriate instructional text that students can accurately decode.	n/a
3.2: Students are asked to independently apply reading comprehension strategies primarily in short, disconnected readings at the expense of engaging in knowledge-building text sets.	n/a
3.3: Emphasis is on independent reading and book choice without engaging with complex texts.	n/a
3.4: Materials for comprehension instruction are predominantly predictable and/or leveled texts.	n/a
3.5: Students are not taught methods to monitor their comprehension while reading.	n/a

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Foundations A to Z's practices for reading comprehension are not applicable. As a foundational reading program, Foundations A to Z focuses on the word recognition components of skilled reading, including phonological awareness, decoding, sight recognition, and fluency. However, it does not emphasize the development of deep reading comprehension and its related strategies. For this reason, adopters must ensure that supplemental, high-quality materials are in place to provide systematic instruction in reading comprehension. Without a complementary program, students will not receive the full range of instruction necessary to become skilled, proficient readers.

4A: Writing — Handwriting

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR HANDWRITING	SCORE
4.1: There is no direct instruction in handwriting.	1
4.2: Handwriting instruction is an isolated add-on.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Foundations A to Z provides explicit instruction in manuscript letter formation as soon as letters are introduced in kindergarten. Teacher scripting includes clear examples of modeling with precise verbal directions for each stroke. Additionally, students practice letter formation while verbalizing the modeled steps and target letter sounds. Thus, the routine connects phonology, orthography, and motor memory. Manuscript instruction is embedded in kindergarten lessons whenever letter sounds are first introduced or reviewed. Recommendations for supporting students who have not yet developed handwriting fluency continue through Grade 1, as both consonants and vowels are revisited. While cursive handwriting is referenced in the scope and sequence, and the team observed practice sheets with directional arrows indicating cursive formation, reviewers were unable to locate explicit instruction on cursive letter formation within the lesson materials they reviewed. The publisher clarified that explicit instruction in cursive handwriting begins in Grade 2, Unit 5, and is incorporated in Lessons 2 and 4 of each module. This includes scripted teacher language to guide teacher instruction.

4B: Writing — Spelling

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR SPELLING	SCORE	
4.5 There is no evidence of explicit spelling instruction, no spelling scope and sequence, or the spelling scope and sequence is not aligned with the phonics/decoding scope and sequence.	1	
4.6: There is no evidence of phoneme segmentation or phoneme-grapheme mapping to support spelling instruction.	1	
4.7: Patterns in decoding are not featured in encoding/spelling; spelling lists are based on content or frequency of word use and not connected to decoding/phonics lessons.	1	
4.8: Students practice spelling by memorization only (e.g., rainbow writing, repeated writing, pyramid writing).	1	
4.9: Spelling patterns for each phoneme are taught all at once (e.g., all spellings of long /ā/) instead of a systematic progression to develop automaticity with individual grapheme/phonemes.	2	

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Within kindergarten–Grade 1 modules, Foundation A to Z's instruction in spelling focuses mostly on principles of sound-spelling correspondence and positional spelling patterns. Students develop spelling skills by building target word patterns through structured activities, including word building with phoneme boxes and grapheme tiles (phoneme–grapheme mapping) and word and sentence dictation. Students also practice spelling previously introduced high-frequency words. In Grades 2–5, spelling instruction elaborates on earlier phonics skills by developing students' knowledge of morphemes, syllable types, suffix rules, and additional elements of advanced word study. Additionally, activities shift to provide students with more practice applying these advanced rules and principles to known words.

Some spelling patterns are introduced gradually. For example, /s/ spelled "s" is introduced in kindergarten, while /s/ spelled "ce" is introduced in Grade 1. In another instance, /ă/ in a closed syllable (e.g., cat) is introduced in kindergarten, while /ă/ spelled with the vowel digraph "ea" is introduced in Grade 1. However, the team observed instances where many spelling patterns were introduced simultaneously, especially with long vowel spellings. For example, while the VCe pattern of long "a" is introduced in kindergarten (e.g., tape), and open syllable patterns are introduced in early first grade, Grade 1, Unit 4, Module 3 introduces all of the following spellings for /ā/ at once: "ai" (e.g., rain), "aigh" (e.g., straight), "ay" (e.g., play), "ea" (e.g., great), "ei" (e.g., vein), "eigh" (e.g., eight), and "ey" (e.g., they). A similar approach is used when teaching long "o" patterns, with students learning all of the /ō/ digraphs, including "oa" (e.g., boat), "oe" (e.g., toe), and "ow" (e.g., snow), as well as other long "o" spellings like open syllable "o" (e.g., open), "old" (e.g., cold), "oll" (e.g., toll), "olt" (e.g., colt), and "ost" (e.g., most), within the same module. A more gradual introduction of these spelling patterns would better support students' development of accuracy and automaticity with individual grapheme–phoneme correspondences.

4C: Writing — Composition

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR COMPOSITION	SCORE
4.15: Writing tasks and prompts are provided with minimal instruction for the skills needed to complete them and little time for planning prior to writing.	n/a
4.16: Writing assignments are primarily unstructured with few models or graphic organizers.	n/a
4.17: Conventions, grammar, and sentence structure are not explicitly taught, and opportunities for practice to develop automaticity are not provided; instead, they are addressed opportunistically.	n/a
4.18: Writing instruction and assignments are focused primarily on narrative writing or unstructured student choice.	n/a
4.19: Students are not taught the writing process (i.e., planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing).	n/a
4.20: Writing is taught as a standalone and is not used to further reading comprehension.	n/a

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Foundations A to Z's practices for composition are not applicable. As a foundational reading program, Foundations A to Z focuses on the word recognition components of skilled reading, including phonological awareness, decoding, sight recognition, and fluency. However, it does not emphasize the development of writing composition. Writing activities are included in the curriculum and often connect to the shared and decodable texts and fluency passages; however, minimal writing instruction is provided to support these activities. For this reason, adopters must ensure that supplemental, high-quality materials are in place to provide systematic instruction in writing. Without a complementary program, students will not receive the full range of instruction necessary to become skilled, proficient readers.

Findings:

COMPONENTS SUPPORTING ASSESSMENT

SECTION 5: Assessment

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

NON-NEGOTIABLES FOR ASSESSMENT	SCORE
5.1: Assessments measure comprehension only without additional assessment measures to determine what is leading to comprehension weaknesses (e.g., phonics, phoneme awareness, nonsense word fluency, decoding, encoding, fluency, vocabulary, listening comprehension).	1
5.2: Assessments include miscue analysis in which misread words are marked correct if the mistake does not substantially alter the meaning of the text.	1

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR ASSESSMENT	SCORE
5.6: Assessments result in benchmarks according to a leveled-text gradient.	1
5.7: Foundational skills assessments are primarily running records or similar assessments that are based on whole language or cueing strategies (e.g., guess the word by looking at the first letter, use picture support for decoding).	1
5.8: Phonics skills are not assessed.	1
5.9: Phoneme awareness is not assessed.	1
5.10: Decoding skills are assessed using real words only.	4
5.11: Oral reading fluency (ORF) assessments are not used.	1
5.12: The suite of assessments does not address aspects of language comprehension (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, listening comprehension).	3
5.13: Multilingual learners are not assessed in their home language.	4

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Foundations A to Z's focus is on instruction of Foundational Skills, and the objectives of unit and interim assessments target fluency, grammar, mechanics, phonics, print concepts, and vocabulary. Sentence-level comprehension is also measured. More complex comprehension (e.g., grade-level standards) is not assessed as this is not the focus of the program's instruction. Furthermore, no evidence of assessments aligned to leveled-text gradients were observed.

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Foundations A to Z's focus is on instruction of Foundational Skills, and the objectives of unit and interim assessments target fluency, grammar, mechanics, phonics, print concepts, and vocabulary. Sentence-level comprehension is also measured. More complex comprehension (e.g., grade-level standards) is not assessed as this is not the focus of the program's instruction. Furthermore, no evidence of assessments aligned to leveled-text gradients were observed.

Reviewers found that phoneme awareness is assessed consistently. Phonics skills are also assessed during every observation checklist, unit assessment, and grade-level interim assessment. However, the team found no evidence of nonsense word (i.e., pseudoword) use in any component of the program's instruction or assessment. One recommendation would be to include nonsense words as a part of the curriculum's assessment measures to provide more detailed information about students' progress with mastering key spelling patterns. Reviewers noted that an oral reading fluency (ORF) assessment is included in every unit. Observation checklists also include indicators for fluency when reading connected text.

Since Foundations A to Z positions itself as a program designed to streamline teachers' planning and delivery of foundational skills instruction while complementing any core literacy curriculum, it should be noted that aspects of language comprehension—such as vocabulary, syntax, and listening comprehension—are not a primary focus of instruction. For example, vocabulary instruction mostly focuses on the use of morphemes to deepen understanding or derive the meaning of words. Students are also instructed in concepts such as homophones. These aspects of vocabulary are assessed, but the depth of word knowledge is not assessed. Assessments also feature activities that ask students to choose the correct word to complete a sentence, but this is primarily linked to word reading skills and not sentence comprehension or word order. Students do not have to construct or identify complete sentences or fix incorrect sentences. Furthermore, listening comprehension is not assessed as a part of Foundations A to Z's assessment suite. As such, adopters of this program must ensure they have measures in place to address aspects of language comprehension (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, listening comprehension). Finally, the program's Professional Learning Library includes research and general guidance on foundational skills instruction for multilingual learners. However, aside from occasional notes embedded in lessons, there are no instructional materials, supplemental resources, or assessments provided in languages other than English. Because of this, educators would also need to look to outside assessment tools to ensure that multilingual learners are assessed in their home language. However, the team noted that this would most likely be the case with most core curricula programs.

Final Report Summary

Overall, the reviewed components for the Foundations A to Z curriculum demonstrate strengths as well as areas that would benefit from further refinement. Continued attention to these elements can help ensure high-quality instruction across kindergarten–Grade 5. While an evidence-aligned core curriculum is a critical part of any literacy program, it is no substitute for building a solid foundation of educator and leader knowledge in the science of reading, as well as a coaching system to support fidelity of implementation.

STRENGTHS

Foundations A to Z provides sample teacher scripts that use clear, explicit language aligned with the science of reading. The scripts are student-friendly, offering strong support for new teachers or those new to science-of-reading-aligned instruction.

Foundations A to Z's instructional routines are a noted strength. Reviewers appreciated how the routines build coherently on previous learning from earlier grades, enabling students to use them with confidence and ease.

Foundations A to Z's curriculum includes a substantial amount of text—both fiction and nonfiction—which exposes students to a wide range of topics. As a result, students have frequent opportunities to practice fluent reading, which reviewers identified as another notable strength.

Foundations A to Z provides flexible and varied student activities that support independent practice, such as watching instructional videos, playing practice games, and reading decodable texts.

Foundations A to Z's Daily Checks for Understanding (CFUs) include "I can..." objectives and have the potential to serve as a supportive tool for collecting anecdotal evidence. However, reviewers recommend adding clearer guidance on how to use this tool, as its purpose and application could be misinterpreted.

CHALLENGES

Reviewers found it challenging to navigate Foundations A to Z's online resources, as it was difficult to know what materials were included. Also, the absence of features such as bookmarks or a favorites option made refinding materials especially cumbersome.

Reviewers found that the timing of Foundations A to Z's lessons did not seem realistic. The time estimates provided felt too limited to be feasible, making it challenging to complete the lessons as written. The publisher noted that the program offers pacing support and alternate options for a variety of classroom scenarios.

Reviewers noted that Foundations A to Z's platform relies heavily on digital materials, requiring teachers to toggle between multiple screens during instruction. This may pose difficulties for educators who are less comfortable with technology. Reviewers suggested offering a low-cost, printed, spiral-bound Teacher's Guide that educators could quickly flip through, use without relying on multiple digital screens, and annotate—especially since the digital platform does not include annotation features.

Foundations A to Z's assessment practices presented challenges. While teachers could assign assessments through the platform, reviewers raised concerns about both the administration and the overall quality of these assessments. In kindergarten–Grade 1, many assessments required 1:1 administration, which can be time-intensive. In upper grades, assessments shifted to mostly multiple-choice questions, which reviewers felt may not be the most effective way to measure targeted skills, like phonemic awareness.

Foundations A to Z states that writing is included; however, reviewers noted that there is no direct instruction in writing. Instead, writing appears only through brief activities and prompts, which are not easily implemented within the program's tight instructional time frame.

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PUBLISHER'S RESPONSE



Foundations A to Z,
Grades K-5

Foundations A-Z™

Publisher's Response

Overview

Learning A-Z is honored to have Foundations A-Z thoughtfully reviewed and recognized by The Reading League. This acknowledgment reflects our commitment to aligning our products with the Science of Reading and evidence-based literacy practices. We extend our sincere gratitude to the reviewers for highlighting the instructional quality Foundations A-Z provides.

Built on the principles of the Science of Reading, Foundations A-Z equips educators with research-driven strategies to deliver effective foundational skills instruction. Our goal is to empower teachers by providing the tools and resources that make those transformative "aha" moments possible—when a student successfully decodes a word for the first time.

At Learning A-Z, our mission is to equip educators with practical, research-based literacy solutions that inspire joy in students. We believe teachers know their students best, and when equipped with research-aligned resources, they can deliver differentiated instruction that benefits every learner. Our comprehensive suite of curriculum solutions helps educators strengthen core instruction, address learning gaps, and personalize learning—without sacrificing creativity or individuality. By supporting teachers with evidence-based practices, we aim to ensure every student receives the impactful instruction they need to thrive.

Strengths

The final report indicates the reviewed components of Foundations A-Z meet most criteria for Grades K-5, reflecting minimal evidence of red flag practices.

Criteria Met

- **word recognition**
- **phonological and phonemic awareness**
- **phonics and decoding**
- **fluency**
- **handwriting**
- **spelling**

The evaluation also highlights several key strengths in the program:

Alignment With Evidence-Based Practices

Reviewers recognized the program's teacher scripts for their use of "clear, explicit language aligned with the science of reading," offering "strong support" for teachers and reinforcing the capacity of Foundations A-Z to build skilled readers through evidence-based practice.

Consistent, Purposeful Instructional Routines

The instructional routines in Foundations A-Z were identified as a significant strength. Reviewers noted that the routines "build coherently on previous learning from earlier grades, enabling students to use them with confidence and ease."

Rich, Wide-Ranging High-Quality Texts

Reviewers commended the substantial text collection in Foundations A-Z, highlighting the breadth of fiction and nonfiction that "exposes students to a wide range of topics." This variety provides "frequent opportunities to practice fluent reading," which reviewers identified as another notable strength of the curriculum.

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Learning A-Z™

Flexible and Engaging Student Activities

Foundations A-Z offers flexible student activities that support independent practice. Reviewers observed that the variety of practice includes "watching instructional videos, playing practice games, and reading decodable texts," which offer engaging opportunities for skill reinforcement.

Frequent Formative Assessments

Reviewers noted that the Foundations A-Z Daily Checks for Understanding include "I can..." objectives and "have the potential to serve as a supportive tool for collecting anecdotal evidence." These checks appear at point of use within each Lesson Plan and allow teachers to give corrective feedback so students do not leave with misconceptions.

Addressing the Feedback

Enhancing Navigation

Learning A-Z actively listens to customers and continuously enhances materials based on their feedback. One of the key advantages of being a digital product is the ability to quickly adapt and revise resources to meet evolving customer needs. To improve ease of access, Learning A-Z is exploring solutions such as bookmarks and a favorites feature to make finding materials faster and more convenient.

Timing

Learning A-Z has acknowledged feedback regarding lesson timing. To support flexible implementation, Learning A-Z provides detailed guides that include pacing charts tailored to different literacy blocks, ensuring educators can adapt lessons to their classroom schedules with ease.

Clarification of Assessment Suite

The Foundations A-Z assessment suite is designed to complement a broader assessment system. This larger system typically includes components such as nonsense word assessments and support for multilingual learners, which are common in most core programs. All of our assessments can be administered digitally or on paper, and they can be assigned individually to students or delivered in whole-group or small-group settings. This flexibility is especially valuable for students in lower grade levels who may be less comfortable with technology. Additionally, we plan to explore further implementation support to help educators understand how these curriculum-based assessments fit within the wider assessment context.

Clarification on Writing

Foundations A-Z isn't a full-scale writing curriculum covering all stages of composition, but it offers explicit, research-based instruction in both handwriting and spelling—two foundational components of writing. Drawing on kinesthetic learning, it guides students through letter formation and phonogram writing using multi-sensory, motor-rich activities. This approach not only supports accurate letter production but also reinforces phonological awareness and decoding skills, which are essential bases for fluent reading and writing.

For educators seeking a comprehensive writing program, Learning A-Z offers Writing A-Z, which was specifically designed for K-5 instruction. It integrates the full writing process—prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing—across genres like opinion, informative, and narrative writing. The program includes explicit lesson plans, embedded grammar instruction, and a patented digital tool called WaLT (Writing and Learning Together) that supports students through every stage of writing. It also offers point-of-use professional development, interactive practice opportunities, and automated grammar assignments aligned to grade-level standards.

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