



Curriculum Navigation Report

McGraw Hill's Wonders Curriculum 2023

Wonders

2024 Publication
Reviewed with Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines (2nd Edition, 2023)

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 (LEAs), and state education agencies (SEAs) as a primary tool to find evidence of red flags or practices that may interfere with the development of skilled reading. This report was generated after a review of the curriculum using the March 2023 Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines, which have been refined based on feedback, a lengthy pilot review, and an inter-rater reliability study.

While the CEGs have been useful for schools and districts for informing curricular and instructional decision-making, The Reading League recognized the challenge of schoolbased teams that might not have the capacity for an in-depth review process. Expert review teams engaged in a large-scale review of the most widely-used curricula in the United States in order to develop these Curriculum Navigation Reports.

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 [curriculum decision makers](#) to support their efforts in selecting, using, and refining instructional materials to ensure they align with findings from 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 following pages feature the review of McGraw Hill's Wonders Curriculum 2023. This curriculum is designed to deliver comprehensive and engaging literacy instruction for students in kindergarten through 5th grade.

For this report, reviewers closely examined the ELA curriculum materials for Grades K-5. For specifics connected to word recognition, reviewers utilized the foundational skills materials, including phonics, word work, and fluency resources, for gathering evidence. For language comprehension, the team appraised the general lesson directions included within their literary and informational text materials. Additionally, the team had access to the curriculum's teacher guides and online materials, which offered a variety of multimedia and digital tools. 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 their review, each group member used The Reading League's *Curriculum Reviewer Workbook* to capture scores and evidence for their decisions. Once they determined which section and grade level of the Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines to review, they individually conducted a review of that section for red flags. Individuals then looked for evidence of red flags within the curriculum materials, including scope and sequences, modules/units, and lessons, as well as any ancillary Tier 1 curriculum materials (e.g., assessment documents). As each component was reviewed, individual reviewers also noted the extent to which a red flag statement was "true" and selected the appropriate rating in the Reviewer Workbook as outlined below:



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.

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.

Findings:

COMPONENTS SUPPORTING WORD RECOGNITION

1A: Word Recognition Non-Negotiables

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

WORD RECOGNITION NON-NEGOTIABLES	SCORE	
1.1: Three cueing-systems are taught as strategies 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).	2	
1.2: Guidance to memorize any whole words, including high frequency words, by sight without attending to the sound/symbol 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).	2	

The word recognition non-negotiables of McGraw-Hill's Wonders are **“mostly met.”** Reviewers found that overall, Wonders includes explicit instruction in sound/symbol relationships and how to blend the sounds of the letters to decode words. It does not emphasize the use of pictures, syntax, or semantics as the basis of word reading. Wonders includes pre-decodable text that includes rebus images. There is research to support using rebus images for words that are highly irregular for students at the time of instruction. The rebus images in Wonders' pre-decodable text include a word under the image that, per the publisher, is intended to be used by the instructor and not the student; however, students are then asked to read the text independently. Because of the written word that accompanies the picture along with the fact that some of the rebus images represent words that are not highly irregular to the student at the time of instruction, the review team assigned a minor red flag. For example, the Kindergarten Pre-Decodable text *Tom on Top* includes the sentence, “Can you see a firehouse?” Directly above the word “firehouse” is a picture of a brick building with a fire truck parked inside to help students identify the word. This rebus is supported by research as the word firehouse would not be decodable by an early Kindergarten reader. However, later in the story, students read the sentence “I can see a hat,” which features a picture of a hat over the decodable word “hat.” This is an instance of using a picture cue to read a word that a student should instead be encouraged to use phonic decoding strategies to read. The use of picture cues is included within some Kindergarten Decodables, as well, and the leveled books used for shared reading also encourage students to look at pictures to identify words. For example, the Kindergarten leveled text, *The Rain*, by Frankie Hartley, includes the sentence, “The chick was fast,” and a picture of a baby chick appears over the word.

Reviewers were able to locate a scope and sequence that builds from simple to complex, starting with consonants & short vowels and moving on to more advanced patterns. However, they did note some discrepancies. For example, the team observed that the titles of certain decodable texts were not, in fact, decodable. This includes kindergarten titles like: *How Things Change*, *Going Places*, and *Weather for All Seasons*. These texts also contained some words that were not decodable based on the letter-sound correspondences taught. For example, in Grade 1, Unit 3, Week 1, students are tasked to read decodable texts that include words like “match” and “race” without ever learning the trigraph -tch or the soft sound of c (/s/). Furthermore, it was noted that student workbook pages are not fully decodable, and students are consistently asked to read text that features patterns they have not been explicitly taught. For example, the Grade 1, Unit 3, Week 1 workbook pages include words like “outside,” “pretty,” “butterfly,” “follows,” “down,” “playground,” and “hollers.”

In addition to decodable text, students in kindergarten and first grades are also asked to read leveled text. Leveled texts have audio support, during which the words are highlighted as they are read aloud. This opportunity for practice does not foster student application of decoding skills. Additionally, some included materials do not align with the outlined scope and sequence. For example, in Grade 1, Unit 3, Week 1 students review the spelling of the long vowel sound /ā/ in the vowel-consonant-e (e.g. a-e) pattern. During this unit, students work on practice pages that include soft c and g sounds (e.g., _ace and _age); however, soft c and g are not introduced until two weeks later in Week 3, Unit 3.

Reviewers also observed that Wonders expects students to read, spell, and write high-frequency words before receiving direct instruction in letter formation. Additionally, in kindergarten through second grade, teachers are instructed to use the High-Frequency Word Routine, which has the teacher read the word, spell the word orally, and write the word while students repeat. Below the read, spell, write routine, it is noted in a bullet to “point out the sound-spellings children have already learned as well as any irregular sound-spellings such as the / e / sound spelled ai in again”. The reviewers found this guidance a bit vague and noted the need to build teacher knowledge in the regular and irregular parts of high-frequency words and how to effectively implement this strategy, particularly if it is new for them. The reviewers also noted that high-frequency words are not taught in an order that corresponds with phonograms presented in the scope and sequence and, instead, are taught so students can “read” a decodable text.

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) without moving to the phoneme level (e.g., blends such as /t/ /r/ are kept intact rather than having students notice their individual sounds).	1
1.8: Instruction is focused on letters only without explicit instruction and practice with the phonemes that letters represent.	1
1.9: Phoneme awareness is not taught as a foundational reading skill.	1
1.10: Phonological and phoneme awareness is not assessed or monitored.	2

The phonological and phoneme awareness non-negotiables of McGraw-Hill's Wonders are **“mostly met.”** To begin, Phoneme awareness is taught and emphasized as a foundational reading skill. Reviewers found that Wonder's curriculum progresses from the larger units of phonological awareness to the phoneme level in an appropriate manner. For example, in kindergarten, the first three weeks of instruction are focused on the larger units of phonological awareness, including sentence segmentation, syllables, and rhyming. Kindergarten students then progress to phoneme level work in Week 1, Unit 1. Additionally, instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness is taught directly, explicitly, and systematically, occurring for all students in kindergarten through first grade and in grade two and beyond for students who require support.

The curriculum also provides learners with explicit instruction and practice with phonemegrapheme correspondences. For example, in Kindergarten, Unit 1, Week 1, the first letter taught is m using the Sound-Spelling Card, which provides teachers with explicit scripting: “This is the map card. The sound is /m/. The /m/ sound is spelled with the letter m. Say it with me: /mmm/. This is the sound at the beginning of the word map. Listen: /mmap/, map.” Additionally, the letter-sound cards include conversations about the way sounds are made in the mouth as well as articulation.

Finally, reviewers observed that phonological and phonemic awareness aren't consistently evaluated in all end-of-unit assessments from kindergarten to first grade. However, these skills are monitored throughout the week and in daily assignments, even if not present in every assessment for K-1.

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
1.15: Letter-sound correspondences are taught opportunistically or implicitly during text reading.	1	
1.16: Instruction is typically “one and done”; phonics skills are introduced but with very little or short-term review.	1	
1.17: Key words for letter/sound correspondences are not aligned with the pure phoneme being taught (e.g., earth for /ĕ/, ant for /ă/, orange for /ŏ/).	2	
1.18: Phonics instruction takes place in short (or optional) “mini-lessons” or “word work” sessions.	1	
1.19: 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	
1.20: Blending is not explicitly taught nor practiced.	1	
1.21: 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.	2	
1.22: Words with known sound-symbol correspondences, including high-frequency words, are taught as whole-word units, often as stand-alone “sight words” to be memorized.	2	
1.23: Few opportunities for word-level decoding practice are provided.	1	
1.24: 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	
1.25: Advanced word study (Grades 2–5): Instruction in phonics ends once single syllable phonics patterns (e.g., CVC, CVCe) are taught.	1	
1.26: Advanced word study (Grades 2–5): No instruction in multisyllabic word decoding strategies and/or using morphology to support word recognition is evident.	1	

The phonics and phonic decoding non-negotiables of McGraw-Hill's Wonders are **"mostly met."** Reviewers found that letter-sound correspondences are explicitly taught to automaticity, with phonics instruction incorporating cumulative review in both reading and writing. This systematic and sequential approach starts with basic letter/sound associations, such as consonants and short vowels, and progresses to more complex phonic patterns. Segmenting and blending are also taught explicitly and practiced regularly in both decoding and encoding lessons.

Reviewers did note that some key words for letter/sound correspondences were not aligned with the pure phoneme being taught. For example, the key word for the short / / sound is "insect." This poses a problem as the short sound / / is distorted by the nasal (/n/) following it. Additionally, the key word "egg" is questionable as some dialects pronounce the short /e/ as /ā/. This can also be said of the vowel sound /ā/ represented by the key word "train." In this instance, the sound /ā/ is distorted by the tr-blend, which can be altered and make the sound /ch/. Reviewers also noted the key word koala for the sound /k/ is not ideal. In this instance, coarticulation makes it difficult for students to isolate the sound /k/.

Many of the curriculum's reg flag practices involved high-frequency words. Reviewers observed that students in kindergarten memorize 108 high-frequency words, including the phonetic ones which could be aligned with the curriculum's scope & sequence. In one example, when students encounter the word "do," the letter d is represented by the sound /d/, and then it is stated that the letter o has a different sound than the /o/ sound in the word "dot," however, this marks the extent of instruction.

Kindergarten pre-decodable texts also include pictures above words which encourages students to memorize whole words. Additionally, the kindergarten practice book includes decodable texts used for Take Home Stories. Students read these texts by memorizing targeted high-frequency words, and, again, these texts contain words with picture cues above them until Unit 5, Week 1 of the curriculum. Examples of non-decodable words include "tie," "garden," "throw," and "school," which all have images above them. Additionally, student practice pages include picture clues and feature non-decodable words like "build," "play," and "dance" that students are tasked to read with partners. If students are unable to read these words, the teacher is prompted to give them the word. Students also utilize leveled readers in kindergarten. As mentioned previously, these texts are read aloud with audio support, and students are instructed to, "use background knowledge and pictures to help them understand the text."

Finally, reviewers did observe that McGraw-Hill's Wonders does provide learners with instruction in the division of multisyllabic words, which can be found on page 58 of the Instructional Routines Manual. This routine teaches students to first look for prefixes and suffixes at the beginning and end of words. Students then identify basewords and examine them for familiar spelling patterns and/or syllable types. Finally, they are prompted to sound out and blend word parts. Furthermore, in Grade 4, Unit 4, Week 1, students explore Latin roots, and later in Grade 4, Unit 5, Week 3, instruction focuses on decoding of vowel teams.

1D: Fluency

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

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

The fluency non-negotiables of McGraw-Hill's Wonders are **“met.”** Reviewers found that letter names and associated sounds are given sufficient practice opportunities to ensure accuracy and automatically, a foundational skill for both reading and writing. Additionally, word-level fluency practice is provided, and students practice reading words accurately and automatically continuously, starting in K with high-frequency words. This is true of choral, partner, and repeated readings of the text, which again focus on accuracy and automaticity. Learners are provided with practice with connected text to assist them in reading with prosody. The latter practice took place mainly through the use of the curriculum's decodable readers. Instruction includes both teacher-led modeling and instances of oral reading by students, and learners are provided with immediate corrective feedback throughout. If students make reading errors, teachers pause their learners and guide them in blending sounds to read the word accurately, and afterward, students are then prompted to reread. Finally, reviewers also observed that for Multilingual Learners (MLLs), additional support is included whenever possible to ensure students understand the meaning of words being read. This occurs in both whole and small group work time, and Wonders provides many opportunities for learners to stop and discuss meaning, especially with MLLs.

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 were 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.	2	
2-4.2: (LC, RC, W) Students are not exposed to rich vocabulary and complex syntax in reading and writing materials.	1	
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.	1	
2-4.4: (RC, W) Writing is not taught or is taught separately from reading at all times.	2	
2-4.5: (LC, RC) Questioning during read-alouds focuses mainly on lower-level thinking skills.	1	

The non-negotiables for language comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing of McGraw-Hill's Wonders were **"mostly met."** Reviewers acknowledged the curriculum's strength in presenting a clear and consistent instructional framework, including a comprehensive scope and sequence that explicitly teaches elements of language comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing. However, despite these strengths, some issues were also identified. For example, elements of a workshop approach were found.

Specifically, kindergarten students have opportunities to "free write" and are instructed to write to build fluency in writing. This begins immediately in Unit 1, before they have mastered letter formation, and carries on throughout the year. Additionally, students are told to read leveled texts independently with the prompt to "blend words," even though there are many words they cannot decode. Students are provided with three ranks of leveled texts: approaching, on level, and beyond level. Words with pictures above them are supplied to help learners "with reading comprehension."

Reviewers also observed that some of the text utilized is rather simplistic and features Tier 1 vocabulary as well as simple sentence structures. For example, In Grade 1, Unit 2, Week 1, students take part in the shared reading of *Good Job, Ben*, which includes vocabulary words like “smells,” “good,” “helped,” and “ten.”

Later in Grade 1, Unit 2, Week 2 students participate in a shared reading of *Cubs in a Hut*. Reviewers noted that the words highlighted, including “plan,” “stack,” “fun,” and “mud,” would be familiar to most 1st graders. However, if those implementing Wonders ensure the Literature Big Book and Interactive Read Alouds are included as an essential component of instruction, students will have greater exposure to higher tier language. These resources are full of rich vocabulary and complex syntax as they are written at a text complexity level that is approximately two grades above grade level. Moreover, Access Complex Text features can be used to further support this area.

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).	1
2.2: Opportunities to bridge existing knowledge to new knowledge is not apparent in instruction.	1
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.	1

The background knowledge non-negotiables of McGraw-Hill’s Wonders are “**met.**” Reviewers found that students have access to many authentic texts, including both narrative and knowledge-building expository texts. Students are also provided with opportunities to bridge existing knowledge to new knowledge. At the beginning of Grade 1, Unit 1, Week 1, Wonders capitalizes on the reading-writing connection to build background knowledge on the topic of community workers. Finally, for students who are automatic with the code, texts cover a variety of diverse, complex, knowledge-building topics across a broad range of Lexile levels. This aims to develop students’ background knowledge in a variety of subject areas.

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.	1
2.8: Instruction includes memorization of isolated words and definitions out of context.	1
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.	1
2.10: Students are not exposed to and taught Tier 3 words.	1
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.	1

The vocabulary non-negotiables of McGraw-Hill's Wonders are **“met.”** Reviewers found that explicit instruction in vocabulary for both Tier 2 and 3 words is evident. In kindergarten and first grade, students are provided with direct instruction in oral, Tier 2 vocabulary. Visual Vocabulary Cards are used to introduce words. Educators are provided with a student-friendly definition, an example, and a question to help students think critically about the word's use. For example, when teaching the word “leaped,” teachers ask students, “What is the difference between leaped and hopped?” This question is designed to help students think about the subtle differences in the given words. Then, in grades two through five, there are direct instructional vocabulary minilessons that include exploring connected words (e.g. keeper, kept, keeps, keeping), sentence writing to express the word's meaning, knowledge building through a Frayer model-inspired activity called “word squares,” and shades of meaning activities designed to help students determine nuance in word use. Additionally, while not the strongest of exemplars, the team was able to locate a scope and sequence of morphology instruction that progressed from simple to complex. Learners are also provided with explicit instruction in morphology, including Latin roots and affixes. For example, in Grade 3, Unit 4, Week 1, students are taught the meanings of the prefixes un- and im-, two negative prefixes. In Grade 4, Unit 4, Week 1, students are taught Latin roots as a vocabulary strategy. For example, when learning about the word “amendments,” students discuss the root word, amend, which means to correct or improve. This helps learners understand that “amendments” are formal changes, or improvements, made to laws or official documents.

2D: Language Structures

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

RED FLAG 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.	1
2.19: Instruction does not include teacher modeling nor sufficient opportunities for discussion.	1
2.20: Students are asked to memorize parts of speech as a list without learning in context and through application.	1

The language structures non-negotiables of McGraw-Hill's Wonders are **“met.”** Reviewers found that there is a clear scope and sequence for teaching conventions of grammar, mechanics, and syntax across all grade levels. Additionally, instruction includes sufficient time for discussion, including teacher modeling of both full ideas and complete sentences. Finally, the team noted that for speakers of English language variations, activities that fostered an asset-based approach could be found in the supplemental materials. Here teachers are offered ways to engage in a contrastive analysis between home and school languages covering aspects like sentence structures, suffixes, and subject-verb agreement.

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).	2
2.27: Students do not practice inference as a discrete skill.	2

The verbal reasoning non-negotiables of McGraw-Hill's Wonders are **“mostly met.”** Reviewers struggled to identify explicit instruction regarding inference. Students were required to respond to the text with evidence, utilizing both text and picture cues, to establish text-to-self connections, identify story elements, and infer problem and solution relationships. Additionally, students were often asked to discuss what they deduced with a friend instead of being provided with instances of direct instruction. Finally, while teachers do use think-alouds as a way to model comprehension monitoring, the team observed that this strategy was mostly used for vocabulary and not inferencing. They noted that teacher think-aloud would be a highly effective means to help learners make inferences as it makes this process transparent, providing a clear model for students to follow and understand.

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.	1
2.34: Genre-specific text structures and corresponding signal words are not explicitly taught and practiced.	2

The literacy knowledge non-negotiables of McGraw-Hill’s Wonders are “**mostly met.**” The team observed that a variety of genre types and their corresponding features are explicitly taught. Additionally, in the Blackline Masters, there are differentiated genre passages, including texts on approaching level, on level, beyond level, and ELL level. However, the reviewers could not find explicit teaching or guided practice on how to use corresponding signal words. Instead, students were asked to independently apply this skill by searching for signal words to complete graphic organizers associated with specific text structures. For example, in the Grade 2, Unit 4 Reading/Writing Companion, students are asked to look for words that signal compare and contrast, including both, same, in common, and different, while reading the text, *Happy New Year!* (pg. 20). Then, in the Grade 5, Unit 6 Reading/Writing Companion, students were tasked to look for the cause and effect signal words “because,” “of,” “as a result,” “if/then,” and “when” during their reading of *Amazing Adaptations* (pg. 152). Although there are several opportunities for practice with some text structure types, particularly sequence and compare and contrast, the reviewers found that additional practice opportunities for understanding text structures and corresponding signal words would be beneficial for students.

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: Students are asked to independently read texts they are unable to decode with accuracy in order to practice reading comprehension strategies (e.g., making inferences, predicting, summarizing, visualizing).	3	
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.	1	
3.3: Emphasis is on independent reading and book choice without engaging with complex texts.	1	
3.4: Materials for comprehension instruction are predominantly predictable and/or leveled texts.	1	
3.5: Students are not taught methods to monitor their comprehension while reading.	1	

The reading comprehension non-negotiables of McGraw-Hill's Wonders are **"mostly met."** The primary concern highlighted is that students are asked to independently read texts that include patterns they haven't yet been introduced to in the scope and sequence. Thus, learners are required to practice reading comprehension strategies with texts they are unable to decode accurately. This happens often with leveled texts in kindergarten through second grade. As previously noted, many of the leveled readers have an audio component, so students are able to listen to the readers. However, students are also asked to whisperread on their own, with a partner, or to reread on their own. This makes step 3 of the Leveled Reader Routine especially challenging (Instructional Routines Handbook, pg. 106). Here students are asked to read closely and independently, with a purpose, and learners may struggle to do so without sufficient understanding of all of the patterns included in a text. Reviewers did observe that comprehension strategies are practiced within read-alouds as well as the building knowledge section of the curriculum. Additionally, while the team found that the independent texts provided were not complex, the read alouds text selection was rich and varied.

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: No direct instruction in handwriting.	1
4.2: Handwriting instruction predominantly features unlined paper or picture paper.	1
4.3: Handwriting instruction is an isolated add-on.	1

The handwriting non-negotiables of McGraw-Hill’s Wonders are “**met.**” Reviewers observed that students are provided with explicit instruction in handwriting, which is outlined for teachers within the Handwriting Guide. Handwriting occurs daily, and students practice letter formation on a white response board first, followed by practice on paper. This paper is lined to assist students with developing consistent letter size, shape, and alignment. Letters are paired with their corresponding phoneme for explicit instruction, and center ideas are provided for cumulative practice. Reviewers did note that the majority of center-related tasks do not involve students forming targeted letters on paper. For example, when learning letter formation for upper and lower case i, the curriculum prompts teachers to “Have children use pencils or wooden sticks to make the uppercase letter I. Emphasize the line used to form the letter. Have children practice saying ‘ / /, that’s an icky insect’ as they form I and i in the sand.” (p.T16, K, Unit 3, week 1).

One issue noted is that students are tasked to write letters they’ve never learned starting in kindergarten. For example, Kindergarten, Unit 3, Lesson 1, states to “Guide children on how to print letters that they have not been taught yet.” (pg. 17). Additionally, students are required to write sentences when they have not learned to form more than a couple letters. This can be found in Kindergarten, Unit 1, Week 1, where students are asked to write the sentence, “The man sees,” but have only learned to form uppercase and lowercase m. This is troubling as this practice can lead to incorrect letter formation, and due to slow pacing and the introduction of letters (one letter per week), students will have written letters incorrectly for months before they’re taught how to form them correctly. This leads to extensive reteaching and the need to break entrenched, ineffective habits.

4B: Writing – Spelling

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

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR SPELLING	SCORE	
4.7: 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.	3	
4.8: No evidence of phoneme segmentation and/or phoneme-grapheme mapping to support spelling instruction.	2	
4.9: 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	
4.10: Students practice spelling by memorization only (e.g., rainbow writing, repeated writing, pyramid writing).	1	
4.11: 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 graphemes/phonemes.	4	

The spelling non-negotiables of McGraw-Hill’s Wonders were **“somewhat met.”** Although spelling patterns are aligned to the phonics scope and sequence, there is little to no evidence of explicit instruction. For example, in Grade 1, Unit 4, Week 1, students are shown spelling options for the long /ā/ sound in a, ai, and ay. However, no explicit instruction is provided on when to use the various graphemes in relation to position or frequency. Additionally, reviewers could not locate specific spelling generalizations. For example, the -tch/ch spelling generalization (i.e., the spelling -tch is used when the sound /ch/ occurs at the end of a single word and is immediately preceded by a short vowel) and the floss rule (i.e., the doubling of f, l, and s after a short vowel in a one-syllable word) could not be located. Additionally, the spelling of soft c and g (i.e., when followed by an e, i, or y, c says /s/ and g says /j/) was not explicitly taught.

Teachers are provided with the Instructional Routines Handbook, which includes the Spelling Routine. While students are directed to orally segment words in step 2 of the Spelling Routine, they are only “allowed” to use sound boxes if needed (pg. 68). The Spelling Routine includes activities like dictation, syllable sorts, and the Look-Say-Cover-Write-Check method. This latter strategy is especially problematic as it encourages students to memorize words instead of applying taught decoding skills. Furthermore, Wonders relies upon the memorization of high-frequency words rather than teaching the predictable parts of these words based on alignment to the scope and sequence. Finally, there are instances when students are taught all of the phonograms for a sound at once. This is the case with Grade 1, Unit 4, Week 1, mentioned above, where students are exposed to the three spellings for the long /ā/ sound, including a, ai, and ay.

4C: Writing – Composition

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

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR COMPOSITION	SCORE	
4.17: Writing prompts are provided with little time for modeling, planning, and brainstorming ideas.	1	
4.18: Writing is primarily unstructured with few models or graphic organizers.	1	
4.19: Conventions, grammar, and sentence structure are not explicitly taught and practiced systematically (i.e., from simple to complex) with opportunities for practice to automaticity; instead they are taught implicitly or opportunistically.	1	
4.20: Writing instruction is primarily narrative or unstructured choice.	2	
4.21: Students are not taught the writing process (e.g., planning, revising, editing).	2	
4.22: Writing is taught as a standalone and is not used to further reading comprehension.	1	

The composition non-negotiables of McGraw-Hill’s Wonders were **“mostly met.”** Wonders explicitly teaches students conventions, grammar, and sentence structure, and these skills are practiced systematically, progressing from simple to complex. Reviewers also noted that students learn to produce many different types of writing, and the curriculum features a variety of writing extension activities. Emphasis is placed on the connection between reading and writing, leveraging it as a tool to enrich reading comprehension. For example, in Kindergarten, after reading the *Gingerbread Man*, students are given the prompt: Imagine the *Gingerbread Man* had chosen to go around the lake. Then write a new ending to the story. The teacher then models for students finding evidence in the story to help them craft a new ending by asking questions (e.g. *What is the Gingerbread Man’s problem?*, *How does the fox help solve his problem?*, *What happens at the end of the story?*). The teacher then prompts students to consider what might have happened if the *Gingerbread Man* went around the lake and never encountered the fox, and guides them in crafting a response. Additionally, the curriculum uses many models (both exemplars and non-exemplars) as well as graphic organizers.

However, there are activities that students in the primary grades cannot read. For example, in Grade 1, students were tasked to analyze a writing exemplar; however, the sample included many words that first-grade learners would be unable to decode. The team also found that although students are taught the writing process (i.e., planning, revising, editing), this isn't explicitly instructed until second grade. This is problematic because early exposure and guidance in the writing process significantly contribute to students' development of strong writing skills. Furthermore, students are offered self-selected choice as is the case in Grade 1, Unit 3. Here students are allowed to choose from either journal writing, squiggle writing, or creation of a comic strip in response to the essential question: *How do plants change as they grow?* (Teacher's Guide, pg. 140). This again presents an issue as it overlooks the opportunity to provide students with direct instruction, potentially impacting their understanding and skill development of writing.

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 that have the same meaning are marked as correct.	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., read 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.	1
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).	1
5.13: Multilingual learners are not assessed in their home language.	4

The assessment non-negotiables of McGraw-Hill's Wonders were **“mostly met.”** The curriculum provides diagnostic, screening, and progress monitoring assessments across multiple areas, including phonics, phoneme awareness, nonsense word fluency, decoding, encoding, fluency, vocabulary, and listening comprehension. The following table includes a comprehensive list of assessment options McGraw-Hill Wonders offers.

ASSESSMENT NAME	READING COMPONENT MEASURED	APPLICABLE GRADES	TEST TYPE
Oral Reading Fluency	Fluency	K-5	Screening & Progress Monitoring
Inventories of Developmental Spelling	Spelling	K-5+	Screening & Progress Monitoring
Critchlow Verbal Language Scale	Vocabulary	K-5	Screening
Comprehension Tests	• GK-1 - Listening Comprehension • G-5 Reading Comprehension	K-5	Screening
Meta-Comprehension Strategy Index	Reading Comprehension	2-5	Screening
McLeod Assessment of Reading	Reading Comprehension	2-5	Screening
DIBELS Next (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills)	Foundational Reading Skills (FSF PSF, NWF, ORF+ Retelling)	K-5	Screening & Progress Monitoring
TPRI (Texas Primary Reading Instrument)	Foundational Reading Skills	K-3	Screening, Diagnostic & Progress Monitoring
ARC (Dynamic Assessment of Reading Comprehension)	Reading Comprehension	3-5	Diagnostic

Additionally, there are unit assessments that include literary and informational texts with test items that cover reading comprehension skills, literary elements, text features, vocabulary strategies, grammar, mechanics, and usage.

Finally, the review team found that the majority of assessments included in McGraw-Hill's Wonders Curriculum are written and delivered in English, and the curriculum-based measures do not provide opportunities to assess Multilingual Learners in their home language. Thus, educators would need to look to outside assessment tools to ensure that Multilingual Learners are assessed in this manner. However, the team also noted that this would likely be the case with most core curricula programs. Additionally, McGraw Hill does offer Maravillas, a fully equitable Spanish Language Arts program designed to support the development of literacy through a bilingual/bicultural curriculum. This curriculum mirrors the plans, themes, skills, and strategies included within the core Wonders program. This curriculum also includes placement and diagnostic assessments as well as guidance for educators to monitor student progress.

Final Report Summary

Overall, the reviewed components for McGraw-Hill Wonder’s Language Arts Curriculum were found to **“meet”** or **“mostly meet”** most criteria for Grades K-5. This means there was minimal evidence of red flag practices. 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

McGraw-Hill’s Wonders provides educators with robust assessment options for phonics, phoneme awareness, nonsense word fluency, decoding, encoding, fluency, vocabulary, listening comprehension. These assessment options enable teachers to evaluate learners through various methods, gathering data to tailor instruction to meet individual student needs. This multifaceted approach aids in constructing a more comprehensive picture of each student’s strengths, areas for improvement, and overall learning profile.

McGraw-Hill’s Wonders instruction includes conversations about the way sounds are made in the mouth through use of the program’s letter-sound cards. These instructional tools include a description of the sound and how to make the sound overall (i.e., how the articulatory gestures of airflow, tongue and lip placement, vocal cord voicing are happening). Reviewers thought this was an excellent enhancement as it offers both educators and students a deeper understanding of sound production.

McGraw-Hill’s Wonders fluency instruction prioritizes reading accuracy and automaticity as hallmarks of fluent reading. Students engage in varied practice opportunities at the letter-sound, word, and connected text levels and are provided with instances of teacher-led modeling as well as immediate corrective feedback.

McGraw-Hill’s Wonders instructional materials offer scaffolding and support for Multilingual Learners which is indicative of a thoughtful approach to meeting the diverse linguistic needs of students.

McGraw-Hill’s Wonders online portal provides educators with access to a variety of resources. The team did note, however, that due to the abundance of materials, it can be cumbersome to navigate efficiently.

McGraw-Hill's Wonders curriculum does not capitalize on explicit instruction, with multiple practice opportunities for sound-symbol correspondences to allow students to make sense of these words based on taught patterns. Without adequate attention to phonics, phonic decoding, immediate error correction, and practice, particularly as it relates to words with irregular spelling patterns, students may need to rely on rote memorization.

McGraw-Hill's Wonders includes rebus images that represent words that could be decoded by students.

McGraw-Hill's Wonders lacks deep explicit instruction and practice in inferencing. This is problematic because, without explicit guidance in this area, students may struggle to draw meaningful conclusions from the text, hindering their overall comprehension and analytical abilities.

McGraw-Hill's Wonders does not provide deep instruction and practice in the function of genrespecific signal words. Instead, students are asked to independently apply this skill by searching for signal words in a given text to complete graphic organizers associated with the genre-specific text structure. This practice is questionable because, without adequate direct instruction on the purpose and usage of these signal words, learners may struggle to understand their significance within different genres, limiting their ability to effectively comprehend and navigate diverse types of texts as well as apply these signal words when writing.

While McGraw-Hill's Wonders spelling scope and sequence aligns with its phonics scope and sequence, reviewers found that instruction lacks evidence of direct, explicit spelling instruction. The team could not locate specific spelling generalizations, including the -tch/ch spelling generalization and the floss rule, and the spelling of soft c and g was not explicitly taught. Additionally, Wonder's spelling instruction may encourage students to memorize some words, especially with high-frequency words, and includes strategies like the Look-Say-Cover-Write- Check method. Finally, there are instances when students are taught all of the phonograms for a sound at once. This presents a problem as students are unable to systematically distinguish between and master the application of the different phonograms for the given sound.

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PUBLISHER'S RESPONSE



Curriculum Navigation Report
McGraw Hill's Wonders
Curriculum 2023



The Reading League Curriculum Evaluation: McGraw Hill Publisher's Response for *Wonders* 2023

McGraw Hill appreciates the opportunity to respond to The Reading League's Curriculum Evaluation of *Wonders* ©2023, Grades K-5. We are dedicated to applying pedagogical research toward developing products designed to improve student and educator outcomes. We have drawn upon decades of rigorous literacy research and collaborative work with preeminent reading researchers and experts to inform the design, development, and ongoing efficacy testing of our literacy solutions.

McGraw Hill recognizes that equitable literacy education provides learners with the instruction they need, when they need it, while also providing a robust learning experience that addresses each of the skills and competencies identified as critical for successful literacy development.

McGraw Hill Response to Strengths Identified in the Report:

The intensive review conducted by The Reading League highlighted many strengths of *Wonders* and the alignment of our program to the extensive body of scientific research regarding how students learn to read. McGraw Hill partners with leading researchers and practitioners in the United States to develop and maintain *Wonders* as an effective and powerful reading program. *Wonders* resources provide strong support and scaffolding for all learners, including multilingual learners.

Teachers understand how to leverage the *Wonders* library of resources based on the robust assessment options highlighted by the review, including phonics, phoneme awareness, nonsense word fluency, decoding, encoding, fluency, vocabulary, listening, and comprehension. The various methods through which teachers can collect, gather, and analyze data in the program allow for classroom instruction to meet individual student needs. This allows teachers to create a comprehensive understanding of a student's strengths, areas for improvement, and overall performance.

The Reading League review also noted the strength of specific *Wonders* assets including the sound-spelling cards and fluency instruction. *Wonders* sound-spelling cards are an important instructional tool used to teach students sound-symbol correspondences. This resource includes articulation support by noting the articulatory gestures of airflow, tongue and lip placement, and vocal cord voicing. The fluency instruction in the program prioritizes accuracy and automaticity with varied, ample practice, teacher led modeling, and corrective feedback.

McGraw Hill is proud of the legacy of the program. We strive to continually improve and appreciate the opportunity to partner, learn, and grow as the body of scientific research continues to evolve our understanding of the most effective methods of reading instruction.

McGraw Hill Response to Challenges Identified in the Report:

The Reading League cited five challenges in *Wonders*. The following outlines each challenge and provides clarification on McGraw Hill's approach to each topic:

1. McGraw-Hill's *Wonders* curriculum does not capitalize on explicit instruction, with multiple practice opportunities for sound-symbol correspondences to allow students to make sense of these words based on taught patterns. Without adequate attention to phonics, phonic decoding, immediate error correction, and practice, particularly as it relates to words with irregular spelling patterns, students may need to rely on rote memorization.

McGraw Hill Response: In *Wonders* Grades K-2, new weekly sound-spelling(s) is/are introduced in an explicit lesson on Day 1 with teacher modeling, guided practice, and practice, and reinforced in the spelling lessons all week. Lessons include corrective feedback. On Days 2-5, lessons focus on review of the targeted sound-spellings, expanding instruction and practice to blend, build, and encode (spell) words. Review and repetition are critical for students to achieve mastery. Small group lessons are also available to further support students with phonics.

2. McGraw-Hill's *Wonders* includes rebus images that represent words that could be decoded by students.

McGraw Hill Response: Rebuses are used in early Grade K units so that complete sentences in connected texts can be presented to students early in the scope and sequence. Students are not expected to read these words. If a rebus is used in a text, the word it represents is not yet decodable at that point in the grade level scope and sequence. See additional details noted in the response to [criterion 1.1](#).

3. McGraw-Hill's *Wonders* lacks deep explicit instruction and practice in inferencing. This is problematic because, without explicit guidance in this area, students may struggle to draw meaningful conclusions from the text, hindering their overall comprehension and analytical abilities.

McGraw Hill Response: Explicit instruction for inferencing, which includes teacher think alouds, is included throughout each grade, accompanied by opportunities for students to practice making inferences. See additional details noted in the [response to criterion 2.26, 2.27](#).

4. McGraw-Hill's *Wonders* does not provide deep instruction and practice in the function of genre-specific signal words. Instead, students are asked to independently apply this skill by searching for signal words in a given text to complete graphic organizers associated with the genre-specific text structure. This practice is questionable because, without adequate direct instruction on the purpose and usage of these signal words, learners may struggle to understand their significance within different genres, limiting their ability to effectively comprehend and navigate diverse types of texts as well as apply these signal words when writing.

McGraw Hill Response: Throughout *Wonders*, students are explicitly taught text structures and corresponding signal words prior to asking students to apply the skill. See additional details noted in the [response to criterion 2.34](#).

5. While McGraw-Hill's *Wonders* spelling scope and sequence aligns with its phonics scope and sequence, reviewers found that instruction lacks evidence of direct, explicit spelling instruction. The team could not locate specific spelling generalizations, including the -tch/ch spelling generalization and the floss rule, and the spelling of soft c and g was not explicitly taught. Additionally, *Wonder*'s spelling instruction may encourage students to memorize some words, especially with high-frequency words, and includes strategies like the Look-Say-Cover-Write-Check method. Finally, there are instances when students are taught all of the phonograms for a sound at once. This presents a problem as students are unable to systematically distinguish between and master the application of the different phonograms for the given sound.

McGraw Hill Response: Weekly spelling lessons in the Teacher's Edition incorporate explicit instruction, including a dictation routine that helps children transfer their knowledge of sound-spellings to writing. In addition, lessons include word sorts and spiral review. Spelling generalizations for tch/ch, soft c and g and others are taught in the program. The Look-Say-Cover-Write-Check routine is included in the Instructional Routines Handbook but is not used in the lessons. If teachers choose to use this, it would be used as an assessment tool, not in lieu of instruction.

While in some weeks of instruction, multiple spellings for the same phoneme are taught together, many of the weeks contain only one or two spellings for the same phoneme. In addition, there is recursive review in the scope and sequence across grades.

See additional details noted in the response for [criteria 4.7](#), [4.8](#), and [4.11](#) below.

McGraw Hill Response to the Red Flags

McGraw Hill also appreciates the opportunity to respond directly to The Reading League’s criteria. We acknowledge the reviewers summary that "Overall, the reviewed components for McGraw-Hill Wonder’s Language Arts Curriculum were found to “meet” or “mostly meet” most criteria for Grades K-5. This means there was minimal evidence of red flag practices." Please see our rationale and examples of application within *Wonders* for the specific criteria below.

WORD RECOGNITION RED FLAGS

1.1 Three cueing-systems are taught as strategies 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). (SCORE: 2)

Reviewer Comments: Reviewers found that overall, *Wonders* includes explicit instruction in sound/symbol relationships and how to blend the sounds of the letters to decode words. It does not emphasize the use of pictures, syntax, or semantics as the basis of word reading. *Wonders* includes pre-decodable text that includes rebus images.

There is research to support using rebus images for words that are highly irregular for students at the time of instruction. The rebus images in *Wonders*’ pre-decodable text include a word under the image that, per the publisher, is intended to be used by the instructor and not the student; however, students are then asked to read the text independently. Because of the written word that accompanies the picture along with the fact that some of the rebus images represent words that are not highly irregular to the student at the time of instruction, the review team assigned a minor red flag.

For example, the Kindergarten Pre-Decodable text *Tom on Top* includes the sentence, “Can you see a firehouse?” Directly above the word “firehouse” is a picture of a brick building with a fire truck parked inside to help students identify the word. This rebus is supported by research as the word firehouse would not be decodable by an early Kindergarten reader. However, later in the story, students read the sentence “I can see a hat,” which features a picture of a hat over the decodable word “hat.” This is an instance of using a picture cue to read a word that a student should instead be encouraged to use phonic decoding strategies to read. The use of picture cues is included within some Kindergarten Decodables, as well, and the leveled books used for shared reading also encourage students to look at pictures to identify words. For example, the Kindergarten leveled text, *The Rain*, by Frankie Hartley, includes the sentence, “The chick was fast,” and a picture of a baby chick appears over the word.

McGraw Hill Response: As noted in the Reviewer Comments, *Wonders* explicitly teaches the sound/symbol relationships of letters and how to blend the sounds of the letters to decode words. The program does not emphasize the use of pictures, syntax, or semantics as the basis of word reading.

The use of rebuses in early Kindergarten in the Pre-Decodable texts and in some of the Shared Read texts is not to teach three-cueing systems as strategies for decoding. Rather, rebuses are used so that complete sentences in connected texts can be presented to students early in the scope and sequence. For words that students are not expected to read, *Wonders* includes rebuses of the words. These rebuses are not provided to cue students about how to read these words. In the instructional routines and lessons, teachers are directed to point out the rebus and explain what the picture represents before chorally reading the text with students in the first read of the text. Labels under the rebuses are included in a smaller font size for the teacher to accurately identify for students what the picture represents.

In the Pre-Decodable Readers, rebuses are only used through Start Smart and Units 1-3 of Kindergarten. Decodable Readers in Units 4-10 do not include rebuses. In the Shared Read texts in the Reading/Writing Companion—longer texts than the decodables—rebuses are used through Unit 5. If a rebus is used in a text, the word it represents is not yet decodable at that point in the grade level scope and sequence. For example, the Shared Read example cited, *Tom on Top*, is in Grade K Unit 4 Week 1. While /a/a and /t/t have been taught, /h/h is not taught until Unit 5 Week 1.

The studies listed below, provided by Dr. Tim Shanahan, found some benefits in using rebus to introduce words and facilitate early reading development with various populations. However, our claim is not that the brief use of rebus in our program teaches anything related to word reading, nor is it meant to. Rebuses are used in early Kindergarten to facilitate students' work with other words in connected text. The legitimate concern researchers have raised about not teaching students to use picture cues to read words is not about the use of rebus.

Rebus pictures are not a cue to words as much as replacements of words — in this case to allow students to apply their decoding skills in complete sentences. Given what students in Kindergarten *Wonders* are asked to do, students are not misled about the nature of decoding. Per Dr. Shanahan, there is no evidence showing this to be confusing, misleading, or that it undermines students' understanding of decoding ([return to top](#)).

Research Supports:

- Clark, C. R. (1977). *A Comparative Study Of Young Children's Ease Of Learning Words Represented In The Graphic Systems Of Rebus, Bliss, Carrier-peak, And Traditional Orthography* (Order No. 7726084). Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota.
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- Jones, K. R. (1979). A rebus system of non-fade visual language. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 5(1), 1-7. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2214.1979.tb00104.x>

- Loucks, G. M. (1983). *Redundancy Through Relational And Abstract Rebuses: A Strategy For Function Word Recognition In Beginning Reading* (Order No. 8328517). Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of San Francisco.

See the following examples in *Wonders* that instruct teachers to identify what each rebus represents prior to reading the texts.

- Instructional Routines Handbook, p. 64
- Grade K: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 1 Week 1, p. T28 (Read the Shared Read)
- Grade K: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 3 Week 2, p. 110 (Read the Shared Read)
- Grade K: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 4 Week 3, p. T436 (Read the Shared Read)

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). (SCORE: 2)

Reviewer Comments: Reviewers were able to locate a scope and sequence that builds from simple to complex, starting with consonants & short vowels and moving on to more advanced patterns. However, they did note some discrepancies. For example, the team observed that the titles of certain decodable texts were not in fact decodable. This includes kindergarten titles like: *How Things Change*, *Going Places*, and *Weather for All Seasons*. These texts also contained some words that were not decodable based on the letter sounds correspondences taught. For example in Grade 1, Unit 3, Week 1, students are tasked to read decodable texts that include words like “match” and “race” without ever learning the trigraph -tch or the soft sound of c (/s/). Furthermore, it was noted that student workbook pages are not fully decodable, and students are consistently asked to read text that features patterns they have not been explicitly taught. For example, the Grade 1, Unit 3, Week 1 workbook pages include words like “outside,” “pretty,” “butterfly,” “follows,” “down,” “playground,” and “hollers.”

McGraw Hill Response: In *Wonders* Grades K-2 Word Work lessons, students are expected to read at least two decodable readers per week which are written to be highly decodable. These books have been carefully crafted to ensure that students have the skills necessary to read the words using the decoding skills they have developed up to that point in the program. These decodable texts also include explicitly taught high-frequency words. These Decodable Reader texts are delivered via unitized books, and while the titles of each story are also decodable, the unitized cover is designed to be read aloud by the teacher and is therefore not decodable.

Additionally in Grades K-1 Word Work lessons, children read a third text each week, the Shared Read, in the Reading/Writing Companion. The words in these texts are also mainly constructed from decodable words and high-frequency words explicitly taught. As mentioned above in section 1.1, rebuses are used in early Grade K units so that complete sentences in connected texts can be presented to students early in the scope and sequence. Students are not expected to read these words.

The Grade 1 Shared Reads contain some "story words," which are introduced to children before they begin to read the text. This mix of words in instructional text is consistent with the best scientific evidence on the effects of decodability and statistical learning on reading proficiency as well as the cognitive research on massed versus distributed practice and developing an appropriate mental set for diversity when learning decoding skills.

Research Supports:

- Cheatham, J. P., & Allor, J. H. (2012). The influence of decodability in early reading text on reading achievement: A review of the evidence. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 25(9), 2223-2246. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-011-9355-2>
- Gibson, E. J., & Levin, H. (1975). *The psychology of reading*. The MIT Press.
- Jenkins, J. R., Peyton, J. A., Sanders, E. A., & Vadasy, P. F. (2004). Effects of reading decodable texts in supplemental first-grade tutoring. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 8(1), 53–85. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532799xssr0801_4
- Pugh, A., Kearns, D. M., & Hiebert, E. H. (2023). Text types and their relation to efficacy in beginning reading interventions. *RRQ*, 58(4), 710-732.
- Seidenberg, M. (2017). *Language at the Speed of Sight: How We Read, Why So Many Can't, and What Can Be Done about It*. New York: Basic Books.

At Grades K-1, there are other pages in the Reading/Writing Companion (noted in the reviewer comments as workbook pages) for which the instructional expectation is that the teacher is reading the text aloud, such as direction lines, prompts, instruction to students, and student models.

Phonological Awareness and Phoneme Awareness

1.10: Phonological and phoneme awareness is not assessed or monitored. (SCORE: 2)

Reviewer Comments: Finally, reviewers observed that phonological and phonemic awareness are not consistently evaluated in all end-of-unit assessments from kindergarten to first grade. However, these skills are monitored throughout the week and in daily assignments, even if they are not present in every assessment for K-1.

McGraw Hill Response: As noted in the Reviewer Comments, phonological awareness and phonemic awareness are monitored throughout each week and in daily assignments. Students in Grades K and 1 can be assigned Phonological and Phonemic Awareness Subtests from the Placement and Diagnostic Assessment component to assist with placement and act as a progress monitoring tool for these key skills throughout the year.

In Grade K Unit Assessment, Phonological/Phonemic Awareness items are included in every unit. In Grade 1 Unit Assessment, Phonological/Phonemic Awareness items are included in Units 1-3. We do move away from Phonological/Phonemic Awareness in Units 4-6. This allows us to feature assessment items on vocabulary skills and a writing prompt based on the genre taught in the unit,

without increasing item load for students. Students are formally assessed on Phonological/Phonemic Awareness skills in the Progress Monitoring Assessment at a weekly cadence in Units 4-6 and given opportunities in the Practice Book for these units to show skill proficiency.

In addition to the Progress Monitoring and Unit Assessments, *Wonders* Adaptive Learning provides personalized instruction and practice in foundational skills, including phonemic awareness, allowing students to work at their own pace and instructional level. Teachers can access student progress reports to inform instructional decisions.

Phonics and Phonic Decoding

1.17: Key words for letter/sound correspondences are not aligned with the pure phoneme being taught (e.g., earth for /ĕ/, ant for /ă/, orange for /ŏ/). (SCORE: 2)

Reviewer Comments: Reviewers did note that some key words for letter/sound correspondences were not aligned with the pure phoneme being taught. For example, the key word for the short /ĭ/ sound is “insect.” This poses a problem as the short sound /ĭ/ is distorted by the nasal (/n/) following it. Additionally, the key word “egg” is questionable as some dialects pronounce the short /ĕ/ as /ā/. This can also be said of the vowel sound /ā/ represented by the key word “train.” In this instance, the sound /ā/ is distorted by the tr- blend, which can be altered and make the sound /ch/. Reviewers also noted the key word koala for the sound /k/ is not ideal. In this instance, coarticulation makes it difficult for students to isolate the sound /k/.

McGraw Hill Response: The examples that reviewers pointed to are from the *Wonders* Sound-Spelling Cards. There is a photo and a word on the front of the card, and there is additional instruction and support on the back of the cards. The action script on the back of the Sound-Spelling Cards uses additional word(s) and there is a word list for oral practice that includes words with the sound in initial, medial, and/or final position. For example, the word list for short *i* also includes *if, ignore, it, big, did, fit, lip, miss, sip*, among others. The word list for short *e* contains *edge, ever, exit, desk, fed, jet, leg, red, rest*, and *web*, among others. The word list for long *a* includes *aim, ate, date, rain, day*, and *say*, among others. The word list for /k/ includes *keep, kid, kite, back, cook, oak*, and *sick*. The Sound-Spelling Cards also include articulation support.

The Teacher’s Editions lessons also go beyond the single word on the front of the Sound-Spelling Cards. For example, in Grade 1 Unit 1 Week 2, pp. T90-T91, the Word Work lessons start with a Phoneme Blending lesson that include words with short *i*. The model is *pick*: /p/ /i/ /k/. Then in the Phonics blending lesson, the teacher models blending the word *fit*. In the Guided Practice/Practice activity, students read a variety of CVC and CVCC words that include short *i*.

In Grade 1 Unit 2 Week 1, pp. T10-T11, the Word Work lessons start with a Phoneme Blending lesson that includes words with short *e*. The model is *leg*: /l/ /e/ /g/ and the Guided

Practice/Practice includes *fed, bed, jet, pet, pen, sled*, among others. Then in the Phonics blending lesson, the teacher models blending the word *set*. In the Guided Practice/Practice activity, students read a variety of words that include short e.

1.21: 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. (SCORE: 2)

Reviewer Comments: Kindergarten pre-decodable texts also include pictures above words which encourages students to memorize whole words. Additionally, the kindergarten practice book includes decodable texts used for Take Home Stories. Students read these texts by memorizing targeted high frequency words, and, again, these texts contain words with picture cues above them until Unit 5, Week 1 of the curriculum. Examples of non-decodable words include “tie,” “garden,” “throw,” and “school” which all have images above them. Additionally, student practice pages include picture clues and feature non decodable words like “build,” “play,” and “dance” that students are tasked to read with partners. If students are unable to read these words, the teacher is prompted to give them the word. Students also utilize leveled readers in kindergarten. As mentioned previously, these texts are read aloud with audio support, and students are instructed to, “use background knowledge and pictures to help them understand the text.”

McGraw Hill Response: As The Reading League reviewers stated for criterion 1.1, “Reviewers found that overall, *Wonders* includes explicit instruction in sound/symbol relationships and how to blend the sounds of the letters to decode words. It does not emphasize the use of pictures, syntax, or semantics as the basis of word reading. *Wonders* includes pre-decodable text that includes rebus images. There is research to support using rebus images for words that are highly irregular for students at the time of instruction.” As stated in the McGraw Hill Response for criterion 1.1 above, rebuses are used so that complete sentences in connected texts can be presented to students early in the scope and sequence.

For words that students are not expected to read in Grade K, *Wonders* includes rebuses of the words. These rebuses are not provided to cue students about how to read these words. In the instructional routines and lessons, teachers are directed to point out the rebus and explain what the picture represents before chorally reading the text with students in the first read of the text. Labels under the rebuses are included in a smaller font size for the teacher to accurately identify for students what the picture represents. If a rebus is used in a text, the word it represents is not yet decodable at that point in the grade level scope and sequence. High-frequency words in these texts are taught using the Read-Spell-Write routine during which teachers point out known, irregular, and/or not-yet-learned sound-spellings. Note that The Reading League reviewers did not find any red flags for *Wonders* related to criterion 1.2: “Guidance to memorize any whole words, including high frequency words, by sight without attending to the sound/symbol correspondences.”

Leveled Readers are an optional part of the instructional model as part of the knowledge build for each text set and are used with teacher support and/or audio support. Background knowledge helps with comprehension of the text, as do the images. Students are not instructed to use background knowledge or pictures to guess how to read words.

1.22: Words with known sound-symbol correspondences, including high frequency words, are taught as whole-word units, often as stand-alone “sight words” to be memorized. (SCORE: 2)

Reviewer Comments: Many of the curriculum’s reg flag practices involved high frequency words. Reviewers observed that students in kindergarten memorize 108 high frequency words, including the phonetic ones which could be aligned with the curriculum’s scope & sequence. In one example, when students encounter the word “do,” the letter d is represented by the sound /d/, and then it is stated that the letter o has a different sound than the /ō/ sound in the word “dot,” however, this marks the extent of instruction.

McGraw Hill Response: *Wonders* Grade K teaches 40 high-frequency lessons and includes corresponding Practice Book pages. There are additional words that appear on the Day 3 lesson pages in the Build Your Own Word Bank section. These are words that teachers can choose to teach if their students are ready to take on more words. The Build Your Own Word Bank words are also reinforced in the Small Group On and Beyond level lessons. In addition, the Practice Book provides word cards for the additional words that include the word on the front and the word in a sentence on the back. These new words are part of the Fry 100 list.

New high-frequency words are introduced in the first lesson of each week using this Read/Spell/Write routine in the Teacher’s Edition, which supports orthographic mapping. As children spell words with the teacher, teachers point out sound-symbol correspondences that children have already learned as well as any irregular sound-symbol correspondences for each word. Students also review previously taught high-frequency words cumulatively each week. See examples:

- Grade K: Teacher’s Edition Unit 9 Week 2, p. T95
- Grade 1: Teacher’s Edition Unit 2 Week 2, p. T93
- Grade 2: Teacher’s Edition Unit 1 Text Set 2. p. T231

We would like to note that there were no red flags raised for *Wonders* for criterion 1.2: Guidance to memorize any whole words, including high frequency words, by sight without attending to the sound/symbol correspondences.

LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION, READING COMPREHENSION, WRITING RED FLAGS

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. (SCORE: 2)

Reviewer Comment: Specifically, kindergarten students have opportunities to “free write” and are instructed to write to build fluency in writing. This begins immediately in Unit 1, before they have mastered letter formation, and carries on throughout the year. Additionally, students are told to read leveled texts independently with the prompt to “blend words,” even though there are many words they cannot decode. Students are provided with three ranks of leveled texts: approaching, on level, and beyond level. Words with pictures above them are supplied to help learners “with reading comprehension.”

McGraw Hill Response: Explicit letter formation instruction is provided in Kindergarten. *Wonders* provides a range of generative writing activities including free writing along with the explicit writing instruction; research shows that providing this range of activities is positively and significantly related to higher writing achievement.

Research Supports:

- Coker, D. L., Jr., Jennings, A. S., Farley-Ripple, E., & MacArthur, C. A. (2018). The type of writing instruction and practice matters: The direct and indirect effects of writing instruction and student practice on reading achievement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 110(4), 502-517. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000232>
- Coker, D. L., Jr., Jennings, A. S., Farley-Ripple, E., & MacArthur, C. A. (2018). When the type of practice matters: The relationship between typical writing instruction, student practice, and writing achievement in first grade. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 54, 235-246. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2018.06.013>

Leveled Readers are an optional part of the instructional model as part of the knowledge build for each text set and are used with teacher support and/or audio support. These resources would not be used for independent reading without first being introduced with teacher support.

2-4.4: (RC, W) Writing is not taught or is taught separately from reading at all times. (SCORE: 2)

Reviewer Comments: n/a

McGraw Hill Response: Reviewer comments that provide rationale for the score of this criterion were not found; however, explicit writing instruction that is connected to reading is a critical part of the *Wonders* instructional model. In Grades K-1, students write about what they read daily. The reciprocal connection between reading and writing is manifested in the Reading/Writing Companion.

Lessons follow a weekly progression which allows children to see and generate models of responses to texts. The progression of lessons is: Lesson 1: Modeled Writing, Lesson 2: Interactive Writing, Lessons 3-4 Independent Writing. Within these lessons, students receive explicit instruction for foundational writing skills, such as sentence capitalization, left-to-right progression,

writing a complete sentence, and varying sentence length. In addition to these skills being taught through the writing scope and sequence (see the “Writing and Grammar” column of the scope and sequence), a writing skills minilesson bank is available for flexible use to meet students where they are in their writing development. Developmental Writing Support can be found in the back of each Teacher’s Edition at Grades K-1.

- Grade 1: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 2, Week 3, p. T176 (Modeled Writing)
- Grade 1: Reading/Writing Companion, Unit 2, Week 3, pp. 92-93 (foundational writing skill)
- Grade 1: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 2, Week 3, p. T186 (Interactive Writing)
- Grade 1: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 2 Week 3, p. T202 (Independent Writing)
- Grade 1: Reading/Writing Companion, Unit 2, Week 3, pp. 92-93 (Independent Writing)
- Grade 1: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 2, Week 2, pp. T422-T423 (Writing Skills lesson bank)

In Grades 2-5, writing instruction includes analytical writing (writing about the text) as well as Genre/Process writing. Analytical writing is tightly integrated with close reading in *Wonders*. The Reading/Writing Companion supports instruction in the key skills of close reading and analytical writing, challenging students to write across texts and domains of knowledge through deep, structured engagement with text. As they read, students write in varied ways in response to the text: they take notes using graphic organizers, they write short responses to Read prompts citing text evidence, and they retell or summarize the text. In purposeful rereadings, questions require students to think more deeply about the meaning of the texts. Students work collaboratively to discuss text evidence that supports their responses, focusing on author’s craft, analyzing how and why authors presented information in the text. Students then write their responses to reread questions and a higher-level Respond to Reading prompt in their Reading/Writing Companion. As they integrate Ideas at the end of a text and text set, students write in response to interpretive and evaluative questions to deepen their understanding of the texts they have read.

In Grades 2-5, *Wonders* also provides two extended genre/process writing opportunities per unit, incorporating a variety of text types for student writing. Expert models, which are often the anchor texts from the reading lessons, are included. In Grade 2 Units 1-4, Grade 3 Units 1-2, and Grades 4 and 5 Units 5-6, students go through the full writing process, with sufficient time for modeling, planning, and brainstorming and direct instruction related to each step. In Grade 2 Units 5-6, Grade 3 Units 3-6, and Grades 4 and 5 Units 1-4, the emphasis shifts to writing to sources, and students begin by analyzing a rubric and an aspirational student model. Explicit minilessons following the gradual release model support the planning, drafting, and revising steps of the writing process in each unit. A flexible bank of Writing Craft minilessons providing further support is also offered.

- Grade 2: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 1, pp. T8-T13, T24-T25, T42-T43, T52-T53, T356-T371, T372-T387, T388-T393
- Grade 3: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 2, pp. T96-T101, T112-T113, T136-T137, T146-T147, T240-T255, T256-T271, T272-T277

- Grade 4: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 4, pp. T168-T171, T182-T183, T192-T193, T198-T199, T228-T245, T246-T263
- Grade 5: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 3, pp. T8-T11, T22-T23, T42-T43, T50-T51, T224-T241, T242-T259

Additionally, for Grades 2-5, access to the online Writer’s Notebook allows students to compose pieces digitally with supports including videos, slide shows, anchor papers, graphic organizers, checklists, and rubrics.

VERBAL REASONING RED FLAGS

2.26: Inferencing strategies are not taught explicitly and may be based only on picture clues and not text (i.e., picture walking). (SCORE: 2)

2.27 Students do not practice inference as a discrete skill. (SCORE: 2)

Reviewer Comments: The verbal reasoning non-negotiables of McGraw-Hill’s *Wonders* are “**mostly met.**” Reviewers struggled to identify explicit instruction regarding inference. Students were required to respond to text with evidence, utilizing both text and picture cues, to establish text-to-self connections, identify story elements, and infer problem and solution relationships. Additionally, students were often asked to discuss what they deduced with a friend instead of being provided with instances of direct instruction. Finally, while teachers do use think-alouds as a way to model comprehension monitoring, the team observed that this strategy was mostly used for vocabulary, and not inferencing. They noted that teacher think-aloud would be a highly effective means to help learners make inferences as it makes this process transparent, providing a clear model for students to follow and understand.

McGraw Hill Response: Explicit instruction for inferencing, which includes the teacher defining what it means to make an inference and also using think alouds to model, is included throughout the units of each grade. This explicit instruction is included in Make Inferences features in the Teacher’s Edition and Reading/Writing Companion, as well as on the Center Activity Cards. Instruction is accompanied by opportunities for students to practice making inferences as they read the unit texts and use the Center Activity Cards during independent time.

For example, in the Grade 4 Unit 1 Teacher’s Edition (p. T95), the Make Inferences feature states, “Explain that authors do not always tell the reader everything that happens in a story. Instead, readers use details or clues in the story and what they already know to make inferences. Making inferences can help you better understand the characters and events in a story.” After the explanation, there is a Think Aloud that reads, “On page 41, the author doesn’t say directly that Tina agrees to do a separate act. However, the author includes the sentence: *The next day, she*

described her act and costume. From this statement, I can infer that Tina is describing her act and costume to Maura because she has agreed to do her own separate act.”

In Grade 5 Reading/Writing Companion, Volume 3, Unit 6 Text Set 1 (p. 130), the Make Inferences feature states to students, “You can often make inferences based on how characters respond to each other. Think about what they say and what their actions suggest. What inference can you make about how John feels about this school? What does John say and do to help you come to this conclusion?”

Please see additional examples below ([return to top](#)).

- Grade K: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 4, Week 2, p. T343
- Grade K: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 5, Week 1, p. T25
- Grade K: Center Activity Card #26
- Grade K: Reading/Writing Companion: Unit 6, Week 3, p. 79
- Grade K: Reading/Writing Companion: Unit 9, Week 1, p. 18
- Grade 1: Teacher’s Edition Unit 1 Week 3, p. T199 (Make Inferences box)
- Grade 1: Teacher’s Edition Unit 3 Week 1, p. T37 (Make Inferences box)
- Grade 1: Teacher’s Edition Unit 6 Week 1, p. T37 (Make Inferences box)
- Grade 1: Center Activity Card #40
- Grade 1: Reading/Writing Companion: Unit 1 Week 3, p. 112
- Grade 1: Reading/Writing Companion: Unit 3, Week 1, p. 33;
- Grade 1: Reading/Writing Companion: Unit 6, Week 1, p. 35
- Grade 2: Teacher’s Edition Unit 1, Text Set 1, p. T23 (Make Inferences box)
- Grade 2: Teacher’s Edition Unit 3, Text Set 3, p. T285 (Make Inferences box)
- Grade 2: Teacher’s Edition Unit 5, Text Set 3, p. T275 (Make Inferences box)
- Grade 2: Center Activity Card #36 (Front/Back)
- Grade 2: Reading/Writing Companion Unit 1, Text Set 1, p. 27 (Cite Text Evidence; Make Inferences box)
- Grade 2: Reading/Writing Companion Unit 5, Text Set 1, p. 24 (Make Inferences box)
- Grade 3: Teacher’s Edition Unit 1, Text Set 1, p. T23 (Make Inferences box)
- Grade 3: Teacher’s Edition Unit 3, Text Set 1, p. T23
- Grade 3: Teacher’s Edition Unit 6, Text Set 1, p. T21
- Grade 3: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 1, Text Set 1, p. 41 (Make Inferences box)
- Grade 3: Teacher Edition, Unit 5, Text Set 2, p. 114 (Make Inferences box)
- Grade 4: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 3, Text Set 1, p. T22 (Analyze the Prompt and Analyze Text Evidence)
- Grade 4: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 4, Text Set 2, p. T89 (Make Inferences section)
- Grade 4: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 6, Text Set 1, p. T31
- Grade 4: Reading/Writing Companion Unit 1, Text Set 2, p. 51 (Make Inferences box and student responses to prompts)

- Grade 4: Reading/Writing, Unit 3, Text Set 2, p. 51 (Cite Text Evidence section and Readers to Writers box);
- Grade 4: Reading/Writing, Unit 5, Text Set 1, p. 26 (Make Inferences box and student responses to prompts)
- Grade 4: Center Activity Card #40 (front/back)
- Grade 5: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 3, Text Set 2, p. T97
- Grade 5: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 5, Text Set 2, p. T101
- Grade 5: Reading/Writing Companion, Volume 1, Unit 1, Text Set 1, p. 26 (Make Inferences box)
- Grade 5: Reading/Writing Companion, Volume 2, Unit 3, Text Set 1, p. 25 (Make Inferences box)

LITERACY KNOWLEDGE RED FLAGS

2.34 Genre-specific text structures and corresponding signal words are not explicitly taught and practiced. (SCORE: 2)

Reviewer Comments: However, the reviewers could not find explicit teaching or guided practice of how to use corresponding signal words. Instead, students were asked to independently apply this skill by searching for signal words to complete graphic organizers associated with specific text structures. For example, in the Grade 2, Unit 4 Reading/Writing Companion, students are asked to look for words that signal compare and contrast including both, same, in common, and different while reading the text, *Happy New Year!* (pg. 20). Then in the Grade 5, Unit 6 Reading/Writing Companion, students were tasked to look for the cause and effect signal words “because,” “of,” “as a result,” “if/then,” and “when” during their reading of *Amazing Adaptations* (pg. 152). With both of these lessons, students were not provided with direct instruction, potentially leading to a lack of understanding with this important skill.

McGraw Hill Response: Throughout *Wonders*, students are explicitly taught text structures and corresponding signal words prior to asking students to apply this skill by searching for signal words. For example, in Grade 2 Unit 4 that was cited by the reviewers above, the Plot: Compare and Contrast lesson in the Teacher’s Edition includes a bullet point in the “Explain” section of the lesson that tells teachers to point out that some authors use words such as *same* and *different* to compare and contrast two plot events. Then in the “Model” section of the lesson, the teacher models how the word *different* in the first paragraph of the text is a clue that the author is contrasting the way the New Year is celebrated in the United States and China. Finally, in the “Guided Practice” section of the lesson, teachers remind students to look for words that compare and contrast, such as *same* or *different*.

Similarly, in the Grade 5 Unit 6 example that was cited by the reviewers above, the Text Structure: Cause and Effect lesson in the Teacher’s Edition includes a bullet point in the “Explain” section of the lesson that says “Certain words and phrases can signal cause-and-effect relationships. These

include *because of*, *as a result*, *if/then*, and *when*.” Then in the “Model” section of the lesson, the teacher models how the word *when* in the first paragraph of the text signals a cause-and-effect relationship. It is at this point (the Guided Practice section of the lesson) that students complete the Reading/Writing Companion pages 152-153. There is additional support with these signal words for English Language Learners as well.

See additional examples below ([return to top](#)).

- Grade 1: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 6, Week 5, p. T405
- Grade 2: Center Activity Card #9 (Front/Back)
- Grade 2: Teacher’s Edition Unit 2, Text Set 2, p. T148
- Grade 2: Reading/Writing Companion Unit 2, Text Set 2, pp. 50-51 (Quick Tip box)
- Grade 2: Teacher’s Edition Unit 4, Text Set 1, p. T18
- Grade 2: Reading/Writing Companion Unit 4, Text Set 1, p. 20 (Quick Tip box)
- Grade 3: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 1, Text Set 1, p. T20
- Grade 3: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 4, Text Set 2, p. T104
- Grade 3: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 5, Text Set 1, p. T37
- Grade 3: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 5, Text Set 1, p. T54
- Grade 4: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 1, Text Set 1, p. T18
- Grade 4: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 3, Text Set 2, p. T118 (Text Structure: Sequence; Access Complex Text)
- Grade 4: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 4, Text Set 1, p. T18
- Grade 4: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 5, Text Set 1, p. T18
- Grade 4: Center Activity Card #15 (Front/Back)
- Grade 5: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 1, Text Set 1, p. T18
- Grade 5: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 2, Text Set 1, p. T18
- Grade 5: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 4, Text Set 1, p. T52 (Model, Guided Practice)
- Grade 5: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 6, Text Set 2, pp. T98-T99

Reading Comprehension

3.1: Students are asked to independently read texts they are unable to decode with accuracy in order to practice reading comprehension strategies (e.g., making inferences, predicting, summarizing, visualizing). (SCORE: 3)

Reviewer Comments: The primary concern highlighted is that students are asked to independently read texts that include patterns they haven’t yet been introduced to in the scope and sequence. Thus, learners are required to practice reading comprehension strategies with texts they are unable to decode accurately. This happens often with leveled texts in kindergarten through second grade. As previously noted, many of the leveled readers have an audio component, so students are able to listen to the readers. However, students are also asked to whisper-read on their own, with a

partner, or to reread on their own. This makes step 3 of the Leveled Reader Routine especially challenging (Instructional Routines Handbook, pg. 106). Here students are asked to read closely, and independently, with a purpose and learners may struggle to do so without sufficient understanding of all of the patterns included in a text.

McGraw Hill Response: Leveled Readers are an optional part of the instructional model as part of the knowledge build for each text set and are used with teacher support and/or audio support. This instructional support from these lessons is provided before students are asked to read independently. As the Instructional Routines Handbook serves teachers teaching all grades K-5, teachers who choose to use the Leveled Readers in the lower grades (where they are not core reads for the text set) can scaffold the routine as they read the text with students or use the audio support in the eBook. Note that other texts, such as Decodable Readers, are provided as Independent Reading options at K-2.

SPELLING RED FLAGS

4.7: No evidence of explicit spelling instruction; no spelling scope and sequence for spelling, or the spelling scope and sequence is not aligned with the phonics / decoding scope and sequence. (SCORE: 3)

Reviewer Comments: Although spelling patterns are aligned to the phonics scope and sequence, there is little to no evidence of explicit instruction. For example, in Grade 1, Unit 4, Week 1, students are shown spelling options for long /ā/ sound in a, ai, and ay. However, there is no explicit instruction provided on when to use the various graphemes in relation to position or frequency. Additionally, reviewers could not locate specific spelling generalizations. For example, the -tch/ch spelling generalization (i.e. the spelling -tch is used when the sound /ch/ occurs at the end of a single-word and is it immediately preceded by a short vowel) and the floss rule (i.e. the doubling of f, l, and s after a short vowel in a one-syllable word) could not be located. Additionally, the spelling of soft c and g (i.e. when followed by an e, i, or y, c says /s/ and g says /j/) was not explicitly taught.

McGraw Hill Response: As noted in the Reviewer Comments, the weekly spelling instruction for Grades K-5 is closely aligned with the phonics scope and sequence, emphasizing the important relationship between decoding and encoding.

In Grade K, children are first taught a letter-sound correspondence within the phonics lesson. The subsequent blending lesson uses the target letter as well as previously taught letters. The explicit blending lesson helps reinforce the letter-sound correspondences and teaches children how the letters work together in a specific sequence to form a word. These lessons are followed by multiple spelling/dictation lessons throughout the week. Each spelling/dictation lesson teaches children how to figure out how to spell words—from stretching sounds in a word to using sound boxes. Spelling/dictation lessons occur three times per week, and instruction in sorting words into word families begins in Unit 9, using the term “spelling patterns.”

This introduction to spelling in Grade K prepares children for the more formal spelling lessons

they will encounter in Grade 1. Grade 1 spelling words reflect the phonics element of the week and also include previously taught sound-spellings. Weekly spelling lessons begin with a dictation routine that helps children transfer their growing knowledge of sound-spellings to writing. For more information about the Dictation routine, see criterion 4.8 below. Lessons also include word sorts and corrective feedback.

At Grades 2-5, the spelling scope and sequence is also closely aligned to the phonics scope and sequence, beginning with a review of short and long vowel sounds before moving onto other more complex phonics skills. Lessons, located after the Writing tab at the end of the Teacher's Edition, include explicit instruction in encoding as well as word sorts and spiral review.

- Grade K: Unit 3 Week 2 pages T109, T117, T131, T139; Unit 6 Week 1 pages T267, T275, T289, T295
- Grade 1: Unit 2 Week 1 page T12; Unit 5 Week 3 page T196
- Grade 2: Unit 3 Weeks 1-2 pages T406, T408; Unit 5 Weeks 1-2 pages T398, T400
- Grade 3: Unit 4 Week 5 pages T186, T288-T289; Unit 5 Weeks 3-4 pages T108, T290-T291
- Grade 4: Unit 3 Weeks 1-2 pages T24, T280-T281; Unit 5 Weeks 3-4 pages T108, T286-T287
- Grade 5: Unit 3 Weeks 1-2 pages T24, T276-T277; Unit 5 Weeks 1-2 pages T24, T276-T277

Wonders includes targeted spelling generalizations within Teacher's Edition lessons, such as the following:

- Grade K: Teacher's Edition: Unit 6, Week 3, p. T431 (long *i* spelled *i_e*)
- Grade 1: Teacher's Edition: Start Smart, Week 3, p. S78 (*ck* at end of words)
- Grade 1: Teacher's Edition: Unit 3, Week 3, p. T170 (/s/ spelled *ce* and *ci*; /j/ spelled *g*; *dge*)
- Grade 1: Teacher's Edition: Unit 3, Week 3, p. T181 (drop final *-e* before adding *-ed* or *-ing*)
- Grade 1: Teacher's Edition: Unit 3, Week 5, p. T345 (double final consonant before adding *-ed* or *-ing*)
- Grade 1: Teacher's Edition: Unit 4, Week 4, p. T291 (change *y* to *i* before adding *-es* or *-ed*)
- Grade 1: Teacher's Edition: Unit 5, Week 4, p. T296 (/ow/ spelled *ou* never appears at the end of a word)
- Grade 1: Teacher's Edition: Unit 5, Week 5, p. T388 (/oi/ spelled *oi* never appears at the end of a word)
- Grade 2: Teacher's Edition: Unit 1, Text Set 1, p. T58 (Plural marker *-es* added after nouns ending with *s*, *x*, *ch*, *sh*)

([return to top](#))

4.8: No evidence of phoneme segmentation and/or phoneme-grapheme mapping to support spelling instruction. (SCORE: 2)

Reviewer Comments: Teachers are provided with the Instructional Routines Handbook, which includes the Spelling Routine. While students are directed to orally segment words in step 2 of the Spelling Routine, they are only “allowed” to use sound boxes if needed (pg. 68). The Spelling Routine includes activities like dictation, syllable sorts, and the Look-Say-Cover-Write-Check method. This latter strategy is especially problematic as it encourages students to memorize words instead of applying taught decoding skills.

McGraw Hill Response: The weekly spelling instruction for *Wonders* Grades K-5 is closely aligned with the phonics scope and sequence, emphasizing the important relationship between decoding and encoding. In Grade 1, weekly spelling lessons include Word Families and Word Sorts. Grades 2-5 spelling lessons also have Word Sorts, including Pattern Sorts.

The Instructional Routines Handbook includes spelling routines for Dictation, Closed Sort, and Open Sort. The Dictation Routine on page 68 directly supports this criterion, moving through four steps:

- Say the word.
- Orally segment the word. (*Phoneme Segmentation routine on page 40 is also mentioned for teacher support with this step.*)
- Connect each sound to a spelling.
- Check spelling.

The Dictation Routine is for all grades, so teachers can decide when to use Elkonin boxes with the routine. This may vary between primary grades and intermediate grades. The Look-Say-Cover-Write-Check routine is provided in the Instructional Routines Handbook for reference but is not used in the *Wonders* Teacher’s Edition lessons. If teachers choose to use this, it would be used as an assessment tool, not in lieu of instruction ([return to top](#)).

4.11 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 (SCORE: 4)

Reviewer Comments: Finally, there are instances when students are taught all of the phonograms for a sound at once. This is the case with Grade 1, Unit 4, Week 1, mentioned above, where students are exposed to the three spellings for the long /ā/ sound including a, ai, and ay.

McGraw Hill Response: While in some weeks of instruction, multiple spellings for the same phoneme are taught together, many of the weeks contain only one or two spellings for the same phoneme. In addition, there is recursive review in the scope and sequence across grades. In addition, once taught, each sound-spelling appears in the words students read and spell throughout the year, providing ongoing opportunities for students to develop automaticity.

Grade K: One spelling per phoneme per week except for three weeks. /k/ is taught first in Unit 3 Week 3 with the spelling *c*. Then in Unit 6 Week 2, the spellings *k* and *ck* are taught. Two spellings of long *o* are introduced in Unit 9 Week 3 and three spellings of long *e* are taught in Unit 10 Week 2.

Grade 1: Consonants are reviewed in Start Smart, and then from Units 1-6, about half of the weeks include only one spelling for an individual phoneme, and fewer than a third include more than two spellings for an individual phoneme. For long vowel instruction, silent *e* spellings are taught first (reviewed from Grade K), then later in Unit 4, additional spellings for long vowels are introduced. For example, for long *e*, the *e_e* spelling is reviewed in Unit 3 Week 4, then the *e*, *ee*, *ea*, *ie* spellings are included in Unit 4 Week 2 (note that *e* and *ee* are review from Grade K), and the *y*, *ey* spellings are taught in Unit 4 Week 5.

Grade 2: Most sound-spellings in the Grade 2 scope and sequence are a review from Grade 1. There are only a handful of new spellings for phonemes in this grade. For example, in Unit 5 Week 4, the *a*, *aw*, *au*, *ough*, and *al* spellings for variant vowel /ô/ are reviewed from Grade 1, and *ough* is introduced ([return to top](#)).

WRITING RED FLAGS

4.20: Writing instruction is primarily narrative or unstructured choice. (SCORE: 2)

Reviewer Comments: Furthermore, students are offered self-selected choice as is the case in Grade 1, Unit 3. Here students are allowed to choose from either journal writing, squiggle writing, or creation of a comic strip in response to the essential question: How do plants change as they grow? (Teacher’s Guide, pg. 140). This again presents an issue as it overlooks the opportunity to provide students with direct instruction, potentially impacting their understanding and skill development of writing.

McGraw Hill Response: In Grades K-1, there is weekly structured writing instruction and practice that moves from Modeled Writing to Interactive Writing to Independent Writing. Within these lessons, students learn foundational writing skills, writing traits, and grammar skills that they apply to their independent writing. Independent writing prompts include a mix of narrative, informational, and opinion writing as shown in the “Writing and Grammar” column of the grade level scope and sequence. For example, four out of the five weeks of Unit 1 weekly writing focus on informational prompts, while one is narrative. Unit 2 is a mix of narrative, informational, and opinion.

There is choice in the Self-Selected Writing lesson on the last day of each week after students have completed their independent writing prompts. This lesson, which was developed with the support of our authors, provides an alternate way for students to show what they have learned about the topic they are focusing on that week and also promotes student motivation.

In addition to the weekly structured writing instruction and practice, there are structured Extended Writing projects available for teachers to use throughout the year. These projects also include a mix

of narrative, informational/expository, and opinion texts. See the “Writing and Grammar” column of the scope and sequence and criterion 4.21 below for more information.

4.21 Students are not taught the writing process (i.e., planning, revising, editing). (SCORE: 2)

Reviewer Comments: However, there are activities that students in the primary grades cannot read. For example, in Grade 1, students were tasked to analyze a writing exemplar; however, the sample included many words that first-grade learners would be unable to decode. The team also found that although students are taught the writing process (i.e., planning, revising, editing), this isn’t explicitly instructed until second grade. This is problematic because early exposure and guidance in the writing process significantly contribute to students’ development of strong writing skills.

McGraw Hill Response: Note that lessons in the Reading/Writing Companion are designed to be used with teacher support, and therefore there is an expectation that teachers are reading parts of the lesson, including the student model, aloud for students.

Wonders provides comprehensive, explicit writing instruction based on grade-level standards through Extended Writing projects, in which students work through the writing process, as well as lessons that teach students how to respond to text.

Grades K and 1 have daily integrated writing instruction (Modeled Writing, Interactive Writing, and Independent Writing). With each Independent Writing prompt, students draft, revise, edit/proofread, and share. There is also a full set of lessons that supports the Writing Process and writing in a specific genre once every six weeks. These lessons explicitly teach the full writing process, starting in Grade K. Examples from Grade 1 follow; however, the same lesson types appear in Grade K.

- Grade 1: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 2, Week 3, p. T165F (Independent Writing)
- Grade 1: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 2, Week 3, p. T202
- Grade 1: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 2, Week 3, p. T210
- Grade 1: Teacher’s Edition, Unit 3, Week 5, pp. T400-T401 (Extended Writing overview; see pp. T402-T411 for full lessons for each step of the writing process)

For more information, see [criterion 2-4.4](#) above.

Development of Materials

Wonders is an evidence-based K–5 ELA program that empowers students to take an active role in learning and exploration. Students enjoy unparalleled opportunities for student-friendly self-assessments and self-expression through reading, writing, and speaking. Every student deserves high quality instruction at the right moment in their education. We are committed to supporting strong educational outcomes for all learners. By experiencing diverse perspectives and sharing

their own, students will expand their learning. Best-in-class differentiation ensures that all students have opportunities to become strong readers, writers, and critical thinkers. By incorporating decades of literacy research, and the expertise of preeminent reading researchers, including Dr. Doug Fisher and Dr. Tim Shanahan, *Wonders* was built to deliver high-quality literacy instruction, supported by the science of reading. Scientific research led to identifying key pillars that must be addressed in literacy programs.

- **Foundational Skills** *Wonders* presents a sequence of research-aligned learning activities in its grade-level placements, sequences of instruction, and instructional guidance across Phonemic Awareness, Phonics/Decoding, and Text Reading Fluency
- **Vocabulary, Language, and Comprehension** *Wonders* provides explicit, research-based lessons in vocabulary and other language skills, guidance for high-quality discussions, and lessons aimed at building the executive functions that promote reading comprehension, including: Building Knowledge/Using Knowledge, Text Complexity, and Comprehension Strategies.

McGraw Hill also acknowledges that the path to success doesn't look the same for every child. *Wonders* helps educators accommodate learner variability with instructional on-ramps, scaffolded supports and materials, and data-driven differentiation to teach, reteach, or extend, while providing rich content that will broaden students' horizons. Our expert team of authors and advisors features leaders from all areas of literacy education, including:

- **Dr. Diane August**, Managing Researcher at the American Institutes for Research (AIR); previously Senior Research Scientist at the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL); Senior Program Officer at the National Academy of Sciences
- **Dr. Donald Bear**, Professor Emeritus in literacy education at Iowa State University and University of Nevada, Reno, author of *Words Their Way*
- **Kathy R. Bumgardner**, M.Ed., Ed. S., Founder, CEO and National Literacy Consultant with Strategies Unlimited, Inc.; school improvement specialist
- **Dr. Jana Echevarria**, Professor Emerita at California State University, Long Beach; founding researcher and creator of the SIOP Model; expert on English learners for the U.S. Department of Justice
- **Dr. Douglas Fisher**, Professor of Educational Leadership at San Diego State University; teacher leader at Health Sciences High & Middle College; former President of the International Literacy Association (ILA) Board
- **Dr. David J. Francis**, Professor and Distinguished Chair of Quantitative Methods in the Department of Psychology at the University of Houston; Director of the Texas Institute for Measurement, Evaluation, and Statistics; member of the National Research Council's Board on Testing and Assessment
- **Dr. Vicki Gibson**, CEO and Chairman of Gibson Hasbrouck & Associates; Curriculum Director of Longmire Learning Center, Inc.

- **Dr. Jan Hasbrouck**, educational consultant, researcher, and author; Executive Consultant to the Washington State Reading Initiative and advisor to the Texas Reading Initiative; reading specialist, literacy coach, professor at University of Oregon and Texas A&M University
- **Jay McTighe**, Director of the Maryland Assessment Consortium, school improvement projects at the Maryland State Department of Education led Maryland's standards-based reforms, including the development of performance-based, statewide assessments
- **Dr. Timothy Shanahan**, Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of Illinois at Chicago, Founding Director of the UIC Center for Literacy, previously served on the Advisory Board of the National Institute for Literacy, National Reading Panel (NRP), National Literacy Panel for Language Minority Children and Youth, National Early Literacy Panel
- **Dr. Tracy Spinrad**, Professor at Arizona State University in the T. Denny Sanford School of Social and Family Dynamics. Spinrad has published numerous peer-reviewed journal articles and chapters on self-regulation, children's moral behavior, and social adjustment.
- **Dr. Josefina Tinajero**, Dean of the College of Education at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) and Professor of Bilingual Education, member of the Board of Directors of the American Association of College for Teacher Education (AACTE) and the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE)
- **Dr. Doris Walker-Dalhouse**, Educational Consultant, Researcher, and Professor at Marquette University; active board member with the International Reading Association, President for both the Minnesota Reading Association and Red River Reading Association, and is presently an affiliate of the National Reading Conference
- **Dinah Zike**, award-winning author, educator, and inventor known for designing three-dimensional, hands-on manipulatives and interactive graphic organizers known as Foldables® and Notebook Foldables

Efficacy

We are continually learning from educators to evolve and improve the instructional quality and academic integrity of our materials. Since *Wonders* was launched, we've been listening to and collaborating with educators, who best understand what is working for students and how to meet the needs of their classrooms.

Wonders is used and enjoyed by millions of students and hundreds of thousands of teachers across the United States. *Wonders* presents compelling indicators of success including:

- Case studies and testimonials from a range of customers in districts with differing needs, all of whom acknowledge that *Wonders* contributed to student success.
- An independent efficacy study, in which the students using *Wonders* showed significant gains from beginning-of-year to end-of-year exams.

We invite everyone to visit our Research & Success page to examine our most compelling indicators of success of the *Wonders* program.