



Curriculum Navigation Report

Open Up Resources Bookworms Curriculum (2022) for Grades K-5



bookworms

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 have undergone an inter-rater reliability study with positive results.

While the CEGs have been useful for schools and districts for informing curricular and instructional decision-making, TRL recognized the challenge of school-based teams that might not have the capacity for an in-depth review process. In the spirit of its mission to advance the awareness, understanding, and use of evidence-aligned reading instruction, expert review teams engaged in a large-scale review of the most widely-used curricula currently used in the United States in order to develop informative reports of each.

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 LEAs to support their journey of selecting, using, and refining instruction and instructional materials to ensure they align with the science of reading.

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

Curriculum Description

The following pages feature a review of Open Up Resources Bookworms Curriculum (2022) for Grades K-5. Bookworms is authored by a university-based literacy professor, features easy-to-apply evidenced-based routines, and includes high-quality, whole texts to build student vocabulary and background knowledge. Bookworms is designed to meet the needs of diverse learners and includes differentiated instruction for English language learners and students with disabilities with its differentiation tool kit. Additionally, this curriculum is openly resourced, and educators can access both online and (some) print resources at no cost.

For this report, reviewers closely examined the Bookworms schedule, which consists of three 45-minute blocks totaling 135 instructional minutes daily. This includes English language arts, shared reading, and differentiated reading instruction blocks. Bookworms reinforces that this schedule must be followed with fidelity for optimal student achievement. For specifics connected to word recognition and foundational skills, the team examined the shared reading and differentiated reading instruction materials. For language comprehension, the team appraised the general lesson directions included within the English language arts materials as well as some supplemental materials from the shared reading block. Reviewers were selected based on their deep knowledge of the science of reading and associated terminology as well as high-quality instructional materials. Once selected, they were assigned to teams of at least three reviewers. The team met regularly to establish reliability in their individual scores and report their findings.

For a more comprehensive description of the review process, visit [The Reading League Compass' Curriculum Decision Makers page](#).



1 Red Flag statement is False.



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



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



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

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).	1
1.2: Guidance to memorize any whole words, including high frequency words, by sight without attending to the sound/symbol correspondences.	2
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

Bookworms’ **word recognition** non-negotiables are “**mostly met.**” The curriculum includes word study scope and sequence documents for Grades K-1 and 2-5. While all students who take part in Bookworms participate in daily word study instruction, there was some confusion about which learners participate within this foundational skills block. For example, the team made note that within the K-1 Teacher’s Guide, “Understanding the Differentiated Instruction (DI) Block,” the program specifically states, “The beauty of DI is that only students whoneed scripted decoding lessons get them; students who have mastered that content don’t waste time with it” (Walpole, 2022, para 1). This raised reviewer questions as it was unclear if foundational skills instruction is provided to ALL learners or only those who “need basic foundational skills,” including explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, and spelling. The publisher clarified that the DI block provides additional instruction for those students who require more intensive practice than provided within the whole group word study block. However, the team noted several problematic elements, including the introduction of all targeted patterns within a DI lesson; use of word sorts to provide direct, explicit instruction; and activities that ask learners to sort by analogy instead of offering students explicit explanations (Walpole & McKenna, 2017, pp. 181-193). The DI lesson does include the use of decodable text and features 175 brief decodable passages that target blends and digraphs, r-controlled vowels, vowel-consonant-e, and vowel teams. The team did note, however, that students would benefit from more practice opportunities with additional texts. Furthermore, it remained ambiguous if all students had access to these texts since the DI block is designed for those who need more intensive instruction.

he curriculum also references the memorization of whole words and does not always emphasize student attention to sound/symbol correspondences. For example, in the Kindergarten Shared Reading Module 1, Unit 1, Lesson 2 (GK, M1, U1, L2), teachers are directed to engage students in echo reading and choral reading so learners can repeat the poem “Sand House,” which is projected or displayed for learners. Because these poems and rhymes are memorized as oral language and not read by students, displaying the poem may cause confusion for students and educators alike. The publishers responded that the poems are projected so educators can reinforce concepts of print; however, this may still present challenges, and teacher materials would benefit from additional clarity. Furthermore, the curriculum relies heavily on echo and choral reading as a means of memorization. For instance, in Grade 1 Shared Reading Module 1, Unit 1, Lesson 1 (G1, M1, U1, L1), easy readers are introduced to students through teacher read alouds. After teacher modeling is complete, students are tasked to echo read the targeted sentences until they have them memorized. The K-1 Teacher’s Guide (2022) describes easy readers as those who “use familiar language structures, simple dialogue, and characters doing familiar tasks” (Walpole, para. 12). These texts “do not use a large number of decodable words and they are not designed for any particular skills’ practice” (Walpole, para. 12). Again, this approach emphasizes memorization and students are not tasked to apply their decoding skills. Finally, in Grade 2 Shared Reading Module 1, Unit 1, Lesson 7 (G2, M1, U1, L7), students are reminded that if their reading does not make sense, they should reread or ask a partner for help as opposed to applying word attack skills.

While high frequency words are reviewed in each lesson framework and students engage in activities that have them stretch and sound out words, the team could find no attempt to connect high frequency words to the skill focus and/or spelling patterns featured in the lesson and instead found an emphasis on rote memorization. There is also no guidance for educators on what to do when irregular words or word parts appear in lessons.

1B: Phonological and Phoneme Awareness

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

RED FLAGS 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).	3	
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.	2	
1.10: Phonological and phoneme awareness is not assessed or monitored.	2	

Bookworms' phonological and phoneme awareness practices are "somewhat met." Students in kindergarten and first grade receive daily instruction in phonological awareness, and Bookworms' approach is taught via whole class poems and rhymes, which the curriculum describes as "group language play." In kindergarten, teachers are instructed to display the poems and emphasize memorization of these targeted rhymes through engaged student repetition (e.g., choral and echo reading) on days 1 and 2 of the instructional sequence. Day 3 then emphasizes rhyming through the production of real and nonsense words and initial phoneme substitution. For example, in Grade K Shared Reading Module 4, Unit 1, Lesson 3 (GK, M4, U1, L3), the teacher is prompted to engage learners in rhyming based on the poem "Spring" as shown in the following excerpt:

Shared Reading Grade K, Module 4, Unit 1, Lesson 3

I see [the word] rabbit. What if we change the /r/ to /h/?

What word would we have? Yes, habit. Rabbit, habit.

Do they rhyme? Yes, because they sound the same at the end.

What if we change the /h/ to /v/? Yes, vabbit. Rabbit, habit, vabbit.

Do they rhyme? Yes, because they (sound the same at the end). They end with /abbit/.

On day 4, students focus on counting words and syllables, and it is not until day 5 that students focus on segmenting individual phonemes in words. Segmenting phonemes only focuses on initial phonemes until the “milestone” lesson in Unit 3, Lesson 11. This is where students transition to reading word families after they have learned all letter/sound correspondences and have isolated the phonemes in the initial position. When students progress to first grade, the curriculum provides 20 days of review of kindergarten content which they say allows “students to regain knowledge that may have been lost over the summer and [also] allows teachers to build skills for students new to the school or the curriculum” (First Grade Word Study section, 2022, para. 3). However, learners in Grade 1 follow a similar framework for instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness and additional activities are not added.

Finally, while individual phonemes are taught, there is also a major focus on word families throughout the curriculum. Emergent literacy skills, like phoneme awareness, are also assessed via an individual skills rubric and through phonics instruction. Specifically, Bookworms’ spelling assessment includes teacher guidance about noting a student’s ability to encode initial and final sounds; however, teachers would need to look to external assessment tools for comprehensive screening and/or formal assessment measures.

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.	3	
1.17: The first letters of key words for letter/sound correspondences are not aligned with the pure phoneme being taught (e.g., earth /ĕ/ant for /ă/, orange for /ō/)	1	
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.	2	
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.	1	
1.23: Few opportunities for word-level decoding practice are provided.	2	
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.	2	
1.25: Advanced word study (Grades 2-5) Instruction in phonics ends once single syllable phonics patterns (e.g., CVC, CVCe) are taught.	2	
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.	3	

Bookworms' **phonics and phonic decoding** practices are “**somewhat met.**” To begin, Bookworms includes the progression of phonics skills within the word study scope and sequence documents, and phonics instruction is included daily as a part of the word study block. However, the curriculum primarily features an analytic phonics approach which teaches students to decode using larger sound units (e.g., word families like at, an, it, og) or reading by analogy (e.g., if I know “dog,” then I can read “log”). Phonics and phonic decoding are initially addressed through the use of alphabet activities (e.g., singing and echoing the alphabet song) and the introduction of the header and picture cards. Students then move on to sorting activities, which rely heavily on reading word families and identification by analogy rather than providing students with direct instruction on letter-sound relationships. This transition to reading word families starts after Module 3, Lesson 11 in kindergarten, which Bookworms classifies as a “milestone” lesson as students have learned all letters in the initial position and move on to the study of word families. Additionally, activities in *How to Plan Differentiated Reading Instruction* also feature word sorting activities which direct students to sort words by “figur[ing] out differences” followed by reading a paragraph that features words with these targeted patterns. The team observed that these word sorting activities constituted the main method for teaching phonics within the curriculum, and without professional learning in how to integrate content from *How to Plan Differentiated Reading Instruction* into the planning of lessons, teachers may not understand the importance of leveraging these activities that are not named specifically in the online teacher’s manual.

Reviewers also noted missed opportunities for learners to apply their letter-sound knowledge. For instance, part of the kindergarten word study lesson instructs students to follow along with the teacher by pointing to the first letter of each word; however, attendance to the letter-sound match isn’t required. This is highlighted in Grade K Shared Reading Module 2, Unit 1, Lesson 3 (GK, M2, U1, L3), which focuses on the text “A Bee’s Life.” Here the teacher models pointing to the word “there” and touching the first letter as they read. However, there is no attention given to the sound /th/. Missed opportunities such as this hinder students from practicing and applying their letter-sound knowledge.

The curriculum guides teachers to use the Say it, Move it strategy when considering blending as a targeted skill. During this activity, the teacher, working with a set of words, says the word, stretches the word, and then represents phonemes by moving markers into an Elkonin box. Students then stretch, move, and blend the word. The team noted that this is the primary means of blending practice, and students in kindergarten have limited opportunities to practice their decoding skills as they primarily participate in dialogic reading and expressive language development during the shared reading block. In fact, Bookworms specifically avoids “rhyming books, predictable books, and decodable books” during shared reading to prevent memorization of text. Thus, students in kindergarten are not given the opportunity to apply their blending skills within the context of decodable text, outside of passages that can be incorporated into DI lessons. When students progress to Grade 1, phonics skills are practiced in the context of easy reader texts, which, as previously discussed, avoid using a large number of decodable words and are not specifically crafted for skills practice (McKenna & Walpole, 2022). Again, this limited exposure to and practice with text raises concerns about the frequency with which Bookworms’ learners practice and apply their decoding skills.

High frequency words are not introduced to students until Grade 1 Shared Reading Module 1, Unit 2, Lessons 21-25. High frequency words are fully analyzed for their sounds and for the match of graphemes to phonemes, as shown in the following excerpt:

Shared Reading Grade 1, Module 1, Unit 2, Lesson 26

Today we will learn two new words.

The first word is good. What word?

You use this word when you say, I think chocolate ice cream is very good.

I'm going to show you how the word works. Watch me say the sounds.

Hold up a finger for each phoneme.

/g/ /oo/ /d/, there are three sounds.

Watch me write the letters.

Use a whiteboard to write the letters as you say them.

good, there are four letters.

Use Elkonin boxes to make the directions below concrete.

This same instructional routine is used in DI lessons for consistency. However, the team noted that Bookworms lacks discussion on irregular word parts, which was perceived as a missed opportunity. The review team also observed that once students learned the alphabet and were introduced to initial letter sounds, they can be presented with select high frequency words. Consequently, the introduction of high frequency words could commence in kindergarten instead of Grade 1.

Another reported weakness is the program's reliance on strategies that emphasize memorization. For instance, in *How to Plan Differentiated Reading Instruction* (2017), the generic Basic Alphabet Knowledge Lesson Plan features a section where learners work to track memorized text. Here the teacher is instructed to say, "This sentence says _____. You say that"

(Walpole & McKenna, 2017, p. 60). This encourages students to memorize whole words instead of applying taught decoding skills. A similar approach to working with high frequency words is seen in this same lesson, and students are encouraged to memorize these whole word units (Walpole & McKenna, 2017; p. 60).

By Grade 2, any students who require more practice applying basic decoding skills receive additional instruction within the DI block. Whole group work focuses on sorting words by vowel sounds and then patterns. Students then build upon their single-syllable pattern knowledge in Grade 3 to decode and spell multisyllabic words. This starts after lesson 16 of Grade 3 when learners are introduced to the syllable types. In Grades 4-5, students continue to study syllable types in the context of chosen vocabulary words. The goal of this instruction in Grades 3-5 is “to build flexible strategies for decoding unknown words” (Word Study Grades 3-5, 2022, para. 39). As such, teachers are provided with target vocabulary words divided into syllables with the syllable type names listed. For example, in Grade 4 Shared Reading Module 1, Unit 1, Lesson 1 (G4, M1, U1, L1), teachers introduce the word “universe” as follows: u · niv · erse (*open, closed, r-controlled*).

There is a supplementary multisyllabic decoding curriculum included in the text *How to Plan Differentiated Reading Instruction* that would strengthen this aspect of instruction; however, much like the student decoding practice, it is not evident within the Open Up Resources curricular materials online as to where and how to integrate this resource, so additional professional learning in how to do so is recommended. Furthermore, while there is some discussion of base elements and corresponding affixes embedded within the shared reading lessons, morphology instruction is limited and could be enhanced by incorporating discussion around the layers of language and word origin, especially in the upper level grades. Finally, there was limited evidence of student practice of these strategies, and the majority of instruction is teacher led.

1D: Fluency

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

RED FLAGS PRACTICES FOR FLUENCY	SCORE	
1.40: Fluency instruction focuses primarily on student silent reading.	2	
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.	3	
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	

Bookworms' fluency practices are "somewhat met." The program emphasizes both reading accuracy and automaticity and features the use of narrative and expository text. Fluency work consists of a variety of practices, including echo, shared, choral, partner, and whisper reading, with echo reading dropped at the end of Grade 1. The reviewers did find mention of silent reading within the DI block, specifically during the DI vocabulary and comprehension lessons where students in Grades 2-5 are directed to engage in silent reading after the teacher provides direct instruction in vocabulary words taken from preselected trade books (Walpole & McKenna, 2017, p. 244). However, the publisher clarified that students only engage in silent reading after they have achieved grade level fluency benchmarks, and those same students still engage in oral repeated reading practice daily. Thus, silent reading is not emphasized as the primary means of fluency instruction in Bookworms, but is included as an extension for students who are already fluent.

The reviewers also reiterated that there is limited emphasis on word-level fluency practice unless this has been identified as a need and students participate in the DI routines. That being said, it's not clear if access to word-level fluency practice would be readily available to all students in Bookworms. Texts for fluency within core instruction stay focused on repeated reading strategies, and this option remains the primary means of fluency work within the DI block as well. Finally, for fluency assessment, the curriculum directs users to quality tools outside of the Bookworms program, including DIBELS and aimswebPlus. This ensures that assessment measures for fluency will be delivered both reliably and validly.

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 (2001) reading rope. Therefore, the 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.	1
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.	1
2-4.5: (LC, RC) Questioning during read-alouds focuses mainly on lower-level questioning skills.	1

Reviewers found that Bookworms’ non-negotiables for **language comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing** are “**met.**” The instructional framework provided emphasizes direct, explicit instruction of language comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing. The curriculum includes routines for vocabulary instruction, and the use of rich text is evident throughout.

The table below highlights several high-quality trade book read-alouds, as well as their corresponding units and grade levels, used to build rich language.

UNIT	READ ALOUD	GRADE LEVEL
Listening to Stories	<i>Frederick</i> by Leo Leonli	Kindergarten
Stories from Our Past	<i>Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears: A West African Tale</i> by Verna Aardema	Grade 1
Animals in the Wild	<i>Where in the Wild?: Camouflaged Creatures Concealed...and Revealed</i> by David M. Schwartz	Grade 2
Becoming a Writer	<i>The BFG</i> by Roald Dahl	Grade 3
Mysterious Exploration	<i>Roanoke: The Lost Colony - An Unsolved Mystery from History</i> by Jane Yolen and Heidi Elisabet Yolen Stemple	Grade 4
History of Civil Rights	<i>The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963</i> by Christopher Paul Curtis	Grade 5

Additionally, in the text *How to Plan Differentiated Reading Instruction*, the authors provide a rationale on how text is selected to support fluency and comprehension. This includes guiding questions that teachers can ask themselves when selecting text to ensure it meets the appropriate criteria (Walpole & McKenna, 2017). For example, when selecting a text to support rich language and complex syntax, teachers are prompted to reflect on the question, “Does the book contain authentic, natural prose, rather than decodable or patterned language?” (Walpole & McKenna, 2017; p. 204). Students are also taught to use text structure to help them understand how text is organized to convey meaning. Furthermore, when unpacking texts within the English language arts materials, the team noted that student questions are fairly high level and go beyond superficial queries. Finally, the integration of reading and writing instruction occurs within the ELA block, and students across all grade levels are asked to craft reading responses to texts read in class. Students are also provided with daily time to write starting in Grade 1.

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.	3
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

Reviewers found that Bookworms’ practices for **background knowledge** are “**somewhat met.**” As mentioned previously, Bookworms’ curriculum includes a variety of complex texts, including both narrative stories and knowledge building expository texts. Additionally, the reviewers did not find evidence of leveled texts, and students who are automatic with the code are asked to engage with authentic, knowledge-building texts that feature varied genres and subject areas. One area of concern noted by reviewers is opportunities to bridge existing knowledge to new knowledge. Although Bookworms’ units are centered around a theme, the team was unable to identify evidence linking new units to previously discussed concepts and texts. The inability to establish connections among the various topics incorporated within the curriculum creates a missed opportunity for students to see the bigger picture and form meaningful connections between distinct ideas.

2C: Vocabulary

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

RED FLAGS PRACTICES FOR VOCABULARY	SCORE	
2.7: Vocabulary worksheets and activities are used with little opportunity for deep understanding of vocabulary words.	2	
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.	2	
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.	3	

Reviewers found that Bookworms' practices for **vocabulary** were **"somewhat met."** Overall, the curriculum emphasizes the direct instruction of Tier 2, high-utility words within the context of texts students are reading without being heavy in worksheet use. However, reviewers noted that opportunities for students to foster a deeper understanding of vocabulary words are not readily evident. In most shared reading lessons, one or two words are presented each day. Sometimes, students engage in creating a Concept of Definition (COD) Map where semantic connections are made while previewing select terms. For example, in Grade 5 Shared Reading Module 1, Unit 2, Lesson 31 (G5, M1, U2, L31), the teacher maps out the connections between the topic, Units of Life, and the word "cell," which is described as the "smallest unit of life." However, vocabulary instruction in the shared reading block typically focuses on the word, its corresponding syllables and definition, and brief conversation related to morphology.

During ELA lessons, students use the curriculum's vocabulary routine to learn and understand Tier 2 words. This includes presenting the word, furnishing a student-friendly definition, and providing examples, including those from the book and some connected to everyday life. The following excerpt highlights the introduction of the word "navigate" during a Grade 5 ELA lesson.

ELA Grade 5, Module 1, Unit 1, Lesson 11

One word from our book today is navigate.

What word?

The word navigate means to plan and direct the route of a ship, aircraft or any form of transportation. Today many people use a GPS system on their phone or in their car to help them navigate from one place to another. It is called a navigation system. In our book, the author says that “soon Matt could navigate by the stars.” Navigate is to plan and direct a route of direction.

You can use that word:

I help my mother navigate when... I like to navigate my way around ...

What word?

However, reviewers also observed that while Bookworms incorporates robust Tier 2 terminology and an explicit instructional routine for introducing vocabulary words, additional opportunities for practice with these words to promote students’ depth of word knowledge are not apparent.

Upon review, the team found that Bookworms does include exposure to and teaching of Tier 3 words. This predominantly takes place within the ELA block and is paired with informational text. Tier 3 vocabulary is introduced before students listen to or encounter the words in content area text. Additionally, these terms are introduced in clusters, or semantic networks, whenever possible. The introduction of these terms involves the use of diagrams which are previewed with learners prior to reading the informational text. The simplest activity used is a labeled diagram, followed by tree diagrams to show relationships among content words and semantic mapping activities. Scripted vocabulary instruction is a part of the word study block beginning in Grade 3 and this also features the inclusion of Tier 3 words taught in relation to informational text. Reviewers did note that discussion of morphology, specifically instruction of Greek roots connected to science and math terminology, could be utilized here, and this seemed like a missed opportunity. Morphology, in general, could be enhanced within Bookworms, especially in the upper elementary grades. Affixes are included on the word study scope and sequence documents starting in Grade 2; however, discussion of morphology in connection to the layers of the English language and word origin, as well as specific strategies for morphemic analysis, is not present. Additionally, learners in Grades K-1 can begin to learn morphemes by adding common prefixes and suffixes to CVC words, but there is limited discussion of morphology in the early grades. Finally, the use of prefixes and suffixes is mentioned in the *How to Plan Differentiated Reading Instruction* text, but again, the reviewers were unclear if ALL students would be exposed to this level of instruction. There was also minimal reference to morphology beyond the terms “prefix” and “suffix.” The term “root” was used inconsistently: sometimes, it was identified and defined, but the team was unable to locate explicit instruction on roots within the curriculum.

2D: Language Structures

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

RED FLAGS PRACTICES FOR LANGUAGE STRUCTURES	SCORE
2.18: Conventions of print, grammar, and syntax are taught implicitly or opportunistically with no evidence of consistent, explicit, simple to complex instruction across all grade levels.	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

Reviewers found that Bookworms' practices for **language structures** were “**met.**” Starting in first grade, students move away from daily shared sentence writing to dictation. This provides an opportunity for students to write grammatically correct sentences each day, applying both words and patterns they are learning as well as practicing taught high frequency words. These dictated sentences also serve as daily progress monitoring of students' ability to apply correct grammatical and syntactic patterns. Then, in Grade 3, students are introduced to the Super Sentence graphic organizer as a means to teach sentence construction and reinforce targeted vocabulary. The Grade 2-5 Teacher's Guide (2002) describes Super Sentences as

structured supports for creating a new sentence-level context for a vocabulary word. They provide extensive practice with planning a great sentence by helping students think about anchoring with a subject and verb and then deciding how to expand with details. We use question words to prompt thinking: when, where, how, and why. (para. 37)

Additionally, the Super Sentence organizers have a corresponding rubric which provides a tool to informally assess students' understanding as well as their application of grammar and syntax. Finally, reviewers noted that Bookworms uses anchor sentences to teach designated grammar concepts. These sentences were pulled directly from texts students were reading in class, serving as tangible examples tied to the content they were learning about. This is followed by students composing their own sentences that match the targeted structure. However, reviewers did note that most of these activities focused on sentence imitation.

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	

Reviewers found that Bookworms’ practices for **verbal reasoning** are “**mostly met.**” The team found some evidence of instruction in inferencing; however, this instruction was less evident in the younger grades. Towards the end of Grade 1 and thereafter, students participate in a scripted comprehension modeling step as a part of the shared reading lesson. There is also comprehension strategy modeling in every interactive read aloud. Again, evidence of inferring was less present in Grades K-1 and could be enhanced to offer younger learners more robust instruction in this area.

2F: Literacy Knowledge

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

RED FLAGS 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.	1	

Reviewers found that Bookworms’ practices for **literacy knowledge** are “**met.**” Evidence of explicit instruction in genre types and corresponding features were found in the shared reading lesson plans. This included instruction and practice with both genre-specific text structures and their corresponding signal words.

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.	3	
3.3: Emphasis 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.	3	

Reviewers found that Bookworms’ practices for **reading comprehension** are “**somewhat met.**” The curriculum includes knowledge-building text sets and instances of teacher modeling for monitoring comprehension, so applying strategies across shorter passages is not an issue. However, there is limited instruction in reading comprehension strategies, specifically for independent student practice. In fact, the team noted that most of the curriculum’s instruction appears to be either teacher-directed modeling (“I do”) or guided practice (“we do”), and there is no indication of what students do on their own (“you do”). Thus, learners are never responsible for completing reading comprehension tasks independently. Furthermore, while students are working with complex texts, the reviewers were unable to find information on how independent text is selected or supported. The team was also unable to locate instances of students being taught to use comprehension-monitoring strategies. This omission is problematic, as it hinders students’ development of independent reading skills and can impact their success in comprehending challenging materials on their own. Finally, students are taught to self-monitor through instances of teacher modeling during the shared reading block and read alouds; however, there is limited independent practice or application of comprehension monitoring when students read independently.

4A: Writing – Handwriting

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

RED FLAGS 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	

Bookworms’ practices for **handwriting** are “**met.**” The team found evidence of direct instruction in handwriting within the shared reading lessons for Grades K-1. Additionally, the curriculum features a handwriting book where students practice within the shared reading block. Thus, handwriting instruction is integrated into core reading and writing instruction and follows the sequence of letter learning.

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 for spelling, or the spelling scope and sequence is not aligned with the phonics / decoding scope and sequence.	2	
4.8: No evidence of phoneme segmentation and/or phoneme-grapheme mapping to support spelling instruction.	1	
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.	2	
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 grapheme/phonemes.	3	

Bookworms’ practices for **spelling** are “**somewhat met.**” While the team noted that explicit spelling instruction and dictation are built into the shared reading lesson plans and spelling by memorization is not emphasized, they were unable to locate a stand-alone scope and sequence document for encoding. Thus, beyond going lesson by lesson, the reviewers found it difficult to assess the overall cohesiveness of universally taught spelling concepts. Furthermore, this also poses a challenge in offering support to educators regarding which specific concepts may require reteaching. Reviewers also observed that the curriculum predominately featured word families as its targeted patterns of instruction. When combined with the curriculum’s differentiation methods and the absence of a clear scope and sequence, reviewers did not feel confident that all students would be exposed to the requisite spelling patterns. Finally, reviewers were unsure about the progression with which spelling patterns are introduced. For example, page 190 in *How to Plan Differentiated Reading Instruction* features a small group lesson where students work with all of the vowel teams that represent the sound /ē/. However, since the DI block is based on placement, the reviewers were not clear on how the introduction of phonemes occurred.

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 is not explicitly taught and practiced systematically (i.e., from simple to complex) with opportunities for practice to automaticity, instead it is taught implicitly or opportunistically.	3	
4.20: Writing instruction is primarily narrative or unstructured choice.	1	
4.21: Students are not taught the writing process (i.e., planning, revising, editing).	1	
4.22: Writing is taught as a standalone and is not used to further reading comprehension.	1	

Bookworms' practices for **writing composition** were “**mostly met.**” The reviewers observed that writing is taught explicitly through a gradual release of responsibility and includes the use of models and graphic organizers to support student composition. Instruction in writing occurs across a variety of genres (e.g., narrative, informational, persuasive), purposes, and audiences. Students also receive explicit instruction in the components of the writing process (e.g., planning, revising, editing) to ensure they develop strong writing skills and can effectively communicate their ideas through written expression. One area to improve upon noted by reviewers is the lack of a scope and sequence for grammar, conventions, and sentence structure. These concepts are primarily taught through teacher modeling and examples pulled from shared reading text, so systematic instruction was not identified. A clear scope and sequence for these skills would allow teachers to have a structured roadmap for effectively teaching grammar, conventions, and sentence structure.

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).	2	
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.	2	
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.	2	
5.9: Phoneme awareness is not assessed.	2	
5.10: Decoding skills are assessed using real words only.	1	
5.11: Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) assessments are not used.	3	
5.12: The suite of assessments does not address aspects of language comprehension (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, listening comprehension).	3	
5.13: Multilingual Learners are not assessed in their home language.	4	

Bookworms' **assessment practices** were **"somewhat met."** When considering assessment measures, the program references the importance of assessment across multiple domains (e.g., phonics, phoneme awareness, nonsense word fluency, decoding, encoding, fluency, vocabulary, and listening comprehension). However, assessments of each individual domain are not of equal quality. For example, phoneme awareness is assessed monthly during the shared reading block through teacher observation during rhyme reading. Although Bookworms offers educators the Emergent Literacy Skills Rubric for assessing this domain, the review team noted that this informal curriculum-based measure yields limited data. To adequately assess both this and oral reading fluency (ORF), which is also not included as a part of the assessment suite, teachers would need to rely on valid and reliable external measures. Bookworms acknowledges this limitation and advises users to utilize external assessment materials to collect ORF data in Grades 1-5.

Assessment of comprehension weaknesses is reliant on teacher knowledge and expertise in identifying and addressing these issues. The program features the text connections responses included in the shared reading segment to assess comprehension. The Grades 2-5 Teacher Manual (2022) describes text connections as student responses that "require coordination of several different skills sets: comprehension of the text being read [and previously-read texts in Grades 2-5], spelling, sentence formation, and aspects of opinion, narrative, and informative writing" (Measuring Student Progress, para. 18). These activities are included every five days and educators use grade-level Written Response Rubrics to assess students' responses. However, like the Emergent Literacy Skills Rubric, these informal assessment tools provide limited insight into student progress, and a lack of teacher guidance on effective implementation raises concerns about potential subjectivity in the assessment process. Furthermore, the read-alouds featured within the ELA block are not used to collect formal data. Educators are instead provided with a Speaking and Listening Rubric to assess language informally during this block.

Reviewers also found that texts are dispersed by Lexile® and content. However, there is no assessment included in the program to provide the students with their corresponding Lexile®. Thus, the pairing of students with text is based on teacher judgment. In *How to Plan Differentiated Reading Instruction* (2017), the authors reference a spiral approach to text selection, which progresses students from easier to harder texts while rotating students through the text types (p. 244). Again, it was unclear to reviewers if this approach is used for ALL learners or just those who need additional instruction.

Reviewers did find some evidence of assessments related to phonics and phonemic awareness in the text *How to Plan Differentiated Reading Instruction*. Here, teachers are provided with a decoding survey, and students participate in informal progress checks through word sorting activities presented after each DI small group session. Finding evidence of phonemic awareness assessment proved to be more challenging; however, reviewers noted that this is minimally assessed through Say it, Move it activities. For reliable and valid measures of phonics and phonemic awareness, Bookworms directs users to high-quality assessments like DIBELS and aimswebPlus. This is also the case with oral reading fluency, as no connected text level assessment is included. Reviewers also noted there is minimal evidence of assessment measures addressing aspects of language comprehension (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, listening comprehension).

Finally, Bookworms does not include materials to assess multilingual learners in their home language, and 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 most likely be the case with most core curricula programs.

Final Report Summary

Overall, the reviewed components for Bookworms' curriculum were found to **"mostly meet"** or **"somewhat meet"** most criteria for Grades K-5. This means there was some evidence of red flag practices found within the program.

STRENGTHS

Bookworms' curriculum points users to high-quality external assessment measures (e.g., DIBELS, aimswebPlus) to ensure thorough and reliable evaluation of students' reading proficiency.

Bookworms' curriculum emphasizes both reading accuracy and automaticity, and fluency practice features the use of narrative and expository text.

Bookworms' curriculum uses authentic texts that expose students to a variety of genres as well as knowledge-building topics.

Bookworms' writing curriculum emphasizes the reading and writing connection and includes sufficient time for modeling, planning, and brainstorming ideas before drafting.

Bookworms' curriculum emphasizes the differentiation of student instruction to support learners from diverse backgrounds with a range of literacy skills.

*While Bookworms' curriculum emphasizes differentiated instruction, not all learners receive the scaffolding and supports within the DI block that are outlined in the text *How to Plan Differentiated Reading Instruction*. Additionally, *How to Plan Differentiated Reading Instruction* is a separate purchase outside of the curriculum materials which could lead some educators to believe that it is unnecessary or optional for programming.*

When considering assessment measures, Bookworms references the importance of assessment across multiple domains (e.g., phonics, phonemic awareness, nonsense word fluency, decoding, encoding, fluency, vocabulary, and listening comprehension). However, assessments of individual domains are not of equal quality, and many of the program's assessment measures rely on informal observation which raises concerns about subjectivity in the assessment process.

While Bookworms includes some basic instruction of morphology, the review team felt that this area could be expanded on, especially in the upper elementary grades.

For successful implementation of the Bookworms curriculum, teacher knowledge of the science of reading and expertise in the principles of literacy instruction are crucial. Teachers need to be well-versed in these areas to ensure the effective execution of the program, and reviewers felt that even well-informed educators would struggle to navigate and manage the materials offered.

Ultimately, reviewers primarily identified teacher-led instruction, with minimal evidence of opportunities for independent student practice. Consequently, students across grade levels have limited abilities to apply what they've learned on their own, and the majority of the curriculum's programming focuses on "I do" or "we do" instruction.

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PUBLISHER'S RESPONSE



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**Open Up Resources Bookworms
Curriculum (2022) for Grades K-5**



K–5 Reading & Writing

Bookworms K–5 Reading & Writing is authored by a university-based literacy researcher who has dedicated her life's work to making research-based literacy practices accessible to teachers. This nationally-recognized curriculum is designed to ensure students develop a lifelong love of reading and writing. By helping teachers understand and apply research around the science of reading, *Bookworms* positively impacts student achievement.

Bookworms is structurally different from other curricula on the market. It is composed of three, 45-minute instructional blocks: Shared Reading, English Language Arts, and Differentiated Instruction. Each block is consistent in layout and structure across modules, units, and lessons.

- The Shared Reading Block consists of grade-level reading instruction, spelling instruction, and foundational skills development.
- The English Language Arts Block consists of genre-based writing instruction, interactive read alouds with high-leverage vocabulary instruction, and explicit instruction of grammar and language standards.
- Differentiated Instruction is a multiple-entry skills block in which teachers use oral reading fluency and phonics assessment data to ensure students get additional direct instruction in the skills they need.

Student Achievement

There are rich case studies that show increased achievement on multiple measures when districts adopt *Bookworms*. In a 2017 study (Walpole et al.), students using *Bookworms* (n=594) outperformed students using guided reading (n=507) in DIBELS oral reading fluency and Scholastic Reading Inventory comprehension.

In a longitudinal study published in early 2024 (May et al.), students using *Bookworms* (n=8,806) added an average 4.9 months of growth in upper elementary grades on MAP compared to their growth under the district's instructional-level guided reading curriculum; students receiving special education supports and students with the lowest achievement made the most growth.

SBAC achievement data at the Seaford School District in Delaware was evaluated in a 2019 study (Center for Research in Education and Social Policy). The number of students at the highest proficiency rating increased from 15% to 23% across the upper elementary grades. One of the elementary schools in Seaford was recognized statewide for success with African American students. Before *Bookworms*, 32% of African American students met the proficiency

benchmark; after *Bookworms*, 58% met that benchmark. Seaford serves a student population that is 36% Black and 23% Hispanic; 17% qualify for special education support, and 42% qualify for lunch subsidies.

Curriculum Recognition

Bookworms has been recognized repeatedly by reading researchers and literacy organizations as a best-in-class curriculum, including:

- **2018: Acknowledged by Achieve the Core** Student Achievement Partners recognized *Bookworms* for both its attention to foundational skills and reading volume. “Bookworms also deserves praise for its approach to close reading. Struggling readers traditionally have not been allowed to experience reading grade-level rich complex texts, but Bookworms engages all students in reading grade-appropriate text multiple times daily for different purposes.”
- **2021: Featured on the Education Trust podcast ExtraOrdinary District** This podcast identified Seaford School District, which adopted *Bookworms*, as an outlier nationally for narrowing the achievement gap between White and Black students. The podcast host, Karin Chenoweth, also elevated the story of Seaford’s success in her 2021 book, *Districts That Succeed: Breaking the Correlation Between Race, Poverty, and Achievement*.
- **2022: Recognized as a knowledge-building curriculum by the Knowledge Matters Campaign** “While these curricula share common virtues and are all solidly grounded in what matters most for literacy, each has a unique and compelling identity. They present students with substantive, rich content and lack ‘fluff.’ They support access for all students. They motivate and engage students through their content and design. They help all students achieve at high levels. And teachers get ever better at their craft by using them.”
- **2022: Foundational Skills materials were featured in the documentary *The Right to Read***

Highlights from the Report

Section	Component	Explanation
Non-Negotiables for Language Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, and Writing	2-4.1: (LC, RC, W) 2-4.2: (LC, RC, W) 2-4.3: (LC, RC, W) 2-4.4: (LC, RC, W) 2-4.5: (LC, RC, W)	The instructional framework provided emphasizes direct, explicit instruction of language comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing. The curriculum includes routines for vocabulary instruction, and the use of rich text is evident throughout.
Background Knowledge	2.1 2.3	As mentioned previously, the <i>Bookworms</i> curriculum includes a variety of complex texts, including both narrative stories and knowledge

		building expository texts. Additionally, the reviewers did not find evidence of leveled texts, and students who are automatic with the code are asked to engage with authentic, knowledge-building texts that feature varied genres and subject areas.
Language Structures	2.18 2.19 2.20	Starting in Grade 1, students move away from daily shared sentence writing to dictation. This provides an opportunity for students to write grammatically correct sentences each day, applying both words and patterns they are learning as well as practicing taught high frequency words. These dictated sentences also serve as daily progress monitoring of students' ability to apply correct grammatical and syntactic patterns. Then, in Grade 3, students are introduced to the Super Sentence graphic organizer as a means to teach sentence construction and reinforce targeted vocabulary. Finally, reviewers noted that <i>Bookworms</i> uses anchor sentences to teach designated grammar concepts. These sentences were pulled directly from texts students were reading in class, serving as tangible examples tied to the content they were learning about. This is followed by students composing their own sentences that match the targeted structure.
Literacy Knowledge	2.33 2.34	Evidence of explicit instruction in genre types and corresponding features were found in the shared reading lesson plans. This included instruction and practice with both genre-specific text structures and their corresponding signal words.
Handwriting	4.1 4.2 4.3	The team found evidence of direct instruction in handwriting within the shared reading lessons for Grades K–1. Additionally, the curriculum features a handwriting book where students practice within the shared reading block. Thus, handwriting instruction is integrated into core reading and writing instruction and follows the sequence of letter learning.

Composition	4.17 4.18 4.20 4.21 4.22	The reviewers observed that writing is taught explicitly through a gradual release of responsibility and includes the use of models and graphic organizers to support student composition. Instruction in writing occurs across a variety of genres (e.g., narrative, informational, persuasive), purposes, and audiences. Students also receive explicit instruction in the components of the writing process (e.g., planning, revising, editing) to ensure they develop strong writing skills and can effectively communicate their ideas through written expression.
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Response to Other Individual Indicators

Section	Component	OUR's Response to Indicator Feedback
Phonological and Phoneme Awareness	1.7	The curriculum received a higher red flag for this component because of the program's major focus on word families. <i>Bookworms</i> word study is organized to compare and contrast rimes in kindergarten. There is a 5-day sequence. When students sort their words by sound, on days 1 and 2, they work at onset-rime. On days 3 and 4, they use Elkonin boxes to move to the phoneme level. For each week's words, students work at both onset-rime level and full phonemic segmentation level. Blends are always treated as individual sounds.
Phonics and Phonic Decoding	1.16	The curriculum received a higher red flag for this component because phonics review as part of the Differentiated Instruction (DI) block was not considered. The DI block is a core component of <i>Bookworms</i> . All students participate. Teachers use a specific set of screening and diagnostic assessments to assign students to groups. The teacher can meet with three different groups every day. Student practice with decodable texts occurs within the DI block, and review is included in DI lessons if diagnostic data indicates it is needed.

	1.26	All students engage in syllable-type analysis of vocabulary words beginning in Grade 3. They also take a multisyllabic decoding subtest. Students who are not proficient with multisyllabic decoding have direct instruction in both multisyllabic decoding and morphology during Differentiated Instruction (DI). Multisyllabic decoding and fluency lessons, using this curriculum, are provided during the DI block for students identified with the diagnostic assessment included in the curriculum.
Fluency	1.42	Word level fluency practice is provided at the end Using Letter Sounds, Blends and Digraphs, R-Controlled Vowels, VCE, and Vowel Teams lessons in DI just before the decodable text reading.
Reading Comprehension	3.1	The curriculum received a higher red flag for this component because the program's independent reading practices were misunderstood. Students do not read texts independently unless they finish all of their work and read from the classroom library. During instruction, all texts are first read chorally with the teacher and then reread with a partner.
	3.2	The curriculum received a higher red flag for this component due to an error in the review. There are no short passages; texts are organized into knowledge-building sets in both Shared Reading and in ELA.
	3.5	Comprehension monitoring is modeled by the teacher during Shared Reading and during Interactive Read Alouds, but it is not targeted as a separate skill.
Spelling	4.11	The scope and sequence for word study is cumulative. Students review previous patterns and learn new ones; they work within one short vowel and then across vowels. Word families are used to ground the scope and sequence for WS. DI groups do not use word families in Using Letter Sounds, Blends and Digraphs, R-Controlled Vowels, VCE, or Vowel Teams. They use them only in one 3-week segment: Using Letter Patterns.

Composition	4.19	Understanding English grammar is vitally important to reading, and the production of grammatically sound content is vitally important to writing. <i>Bookworms</i> follows the approach from Graham and colleagues. The type of grammar instruction that research supports is that of sentence composing/combining rather than direct grammar instruction. <i>Bookworms</i> includes sentence composing/combining throughout the ELA block. Grammar instruction in <i>Bookworms</i> has three types—expanding, imitating, and combining—which students in Grades K through Grade 5 cycle through with teacher-led instruction.
Assessment	5.11	Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) assessments are required beginning January of Grade 1 to place students in the Differentiated Instruction (DI) block.

Summary

The *Bookworms* curriculum distills research-based best practices into straightforward lesson structures that support reading through careful attention to foundational skills, language comprehension, and composition based on grade-level expectations and the individual needs of each student. The instructional routines build classroom communities through the use of strategies such as teacher modeling, shared reading, evidence-based writing, discussion, and intentional vocabulary instruction.

The curriculum's systematic phonics-based foundational skills block features unique skill-based groupings, supported by frequent progress monitoring, with tailored instruction for each group. Instructional protocols are explicit and simple for teachers to follow.

Over the course of elementary school, students will study 283 full-length texts that expose them to a high volume of full-length, deeply engaging trade books to build knowledge and drive literacy instruction. These complex texts are varied and serve different purposes. Both teachers and students engage in close reads, shared reading with peers, and independent reading.

All students deserve the opportunity to have access to and engage in literacy instruction that fosters their love of reading and supports their learning potential. The simplicity of the *Bookworms* structure makes the program accessible for teachers to internalize literacy research and provide systematic instruction and practice for students that promotes rapid learning about the world while nurturing a deep appreciation of reading and writing.