



Curriculum Navigation Report

Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) Curriculum, 2nd Edition (2023) for Grades K–5

Amplify CKLA

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 school-based 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 Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) Curriculum, 2nd Edition (2023) for Grades K-5. This curriculum strives to build student knowledge and foundational skills grounded in the science of reading.

For this report, reviewers closely examined the CKLA core curriculum materials for Grades K-5. For specifics connected to word recognition, reviewers utilized the Teacher Guides, Student Activity Books, decodables (K-2), and Student Readers (3-5) for gathering evidence. For language comprehension, the team appraised the general lesson directions included within the Teacher Guides as well as the Big Books (K-2) used for read-alouds, various trade books (K-5), and their corresponding novel guides for educators, the program's research units (K-5), and the Poet's and Writer's Journals (4-5). 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 *Curriculum 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).	1
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).	1

Amplify CKLA's word recognition non-negotiables are **“met.”** Reviewers observed no evidence of the three cueing-systems. They even located a disclaimer included within the curriculum's introduction, which states “CKLA uses a synthetic phonics approach which teaches students to read by blending through the word. It does not teach multiple cueing strategies, use of pictures as a primary resource in decoding, or part-word guessing.” Nothing was observed in the review to contradict this statement. Each grade level has a skills scope and sequence located in the appendix that includes detailed information about which student skills are taught in each unit/lesson. All skills are taught explicitly, progressing from simple to complex, and the curriculum provides many opportunities for student practice, both in isolation as well as within text. Moreover, skills are continually reviewed both within multiple days and in the following weeks as well.

Finally, high-frequency words are labeled Tricky Words, and the irregular word parts are highlighted, drawing students' attention to how these irregular sounds are spelled. For example, in Grade 1, Skills Unit 3, students learn the Tricky Word because. First, the teacher calls attention to the regular word parts, 'b' and 'c,' and explains that “...they are pronounced just as one would expect, as /b/ and /k/.” After this, the teacher focuses on the irregular word parts of 'e,' 'au,' and 'se.' Here students are taught that in the word because the 'e' represents the sound /ĕ/, 'au' represents the sound /u/, and 'se' represents the sound /z/. However, the lesson doesn't end here, and the curriculum provides a note that depending on variations in pronunciation, because can be pronounced three different ways due in part to syllable stress. This information is extremely beneficial for educators as it provides insight into the complexities of pronunciation.

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).	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	

Amplify CKLA’s phonological and phonemic awareness practices are “mostly met.” The review team found that explicit instruction attends to both the larger units of phonological awareness and the phoneme level. While phoneme awareness is embedded within the lessons, it is not always explicitly named and occurs within the lesson’s warm-up. Additionally, phonemic awareness is embedded into phonics and spelling lessons. However, reviewers pointed out that the absence of specific naming might escape the attention of teachers who are not actively seeking, leading them to overlook the foundational importance of these embedded phonemic awareness components for students’ reading and writing development.

The lessons include identifying the targeted phonics skill/sound within the word orally and the same lesson sequence occurs for every new sound introduced. This includes:

- The teacher introduces the sound (e.g., “Today’s sound is /ě/ as in feet.”).
- Students repeat the target sound several times.
- Students repeat words with the target sound in the initial position (i.e., eat, east, each, eagle).
- Students repeat words with the target sound in the medial position (i.e., peace, greet, meat, heat).
- Students repeat words with the target sound in the final position (i.e., be, me, key, tree).
- Students identify that the target sound is a vowel or consonant sound.
- Students close their eyes and listen as the teacher says a list of words, some with the target sound and some without. When they hear a word with the target sound present, they raise their hand.

The lessons also include an activity called “teacher chaining,” where students practice manipulating phonemes. For example, a word is written on the board (nut), and then various phonemes are changed (i.e., nut>shut>shout>out>ouch>pouch> pooch>mooch>smooch). Support for oral blending and segmenting is paired with hand movements. Specifically, for blending, students tap and blend sounds with their thumb and forefinger, and for segmenting, students hold up and wiggle their fingers one at a time. Additionally, consonant blends (such as /fl/ in “flip”) are broken into individual phonemes, and these skills are practiced throughout grades K-2.

Reviewers did find observational assessments included within the lessons. These short, formative measures are recorded on the student’s observation record form.

However, outside of these formative assessments, phonological and phonemic awareness is not assessed and monitored systematically.

1C: Phonics and Phonic Decoding

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

RED FLAGS PRACTICES FOR PHONOLOGICAL AND PHONEME AWARENESS	SCORE	
1.15: 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 /ē/, ant for /ā/, 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.	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.	1	
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.	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	

Amplify CKLA's phonics and phonic decoding practices are **“met.”** Reviewers observed that letter/sound correspondences are taught in a systematic, explicit, and sequential way which is reflected in the curriculum's scope and sequence. Students are provided with opportunities to practice targeted patterns first in decodable text and then in student readers. Students are not asked to read from the reader until they know all of the sound/spelling correspondences that appear within the text. CKLA strongly recommends that educators do not use trade books or picture books for early reading instruction in kindergarten as this can lead to frustration or guessing on the part of the student. Skills are revisited and built upon throughout the lessons, and application and practice opportunities are provided within the activity book and through the use of connected text.

CKLA's keywords for letter/sound are appropriate, and the curriculum's sound cards include the pure phoneme being taught as well as their corresponding graphemes, which is indicated in red on the cards. For example, the 'm' spelling for the /m/ sound shows a sample keyword, mat, and the spelling of the word, with 'm' printed in red. Additionally, the sound card also includes a color photograph of a mat. However, reviewers did note that keywords are not an integral part of the curriculum's lessons, as highlighted in the Kindergarten Appendix A document, which states, “Keywords are not taught, and gestures for consonant sounds are not included in the program.”

Phonics instruction is an integral part of the curriculum and takes place within the Skills Domain. In grades K-2, this instruction requires an hour of designated instruction time per day, if the program is used with fidelity. The length of time spent on each individual skill varies based on the lesson's sequence within the unit. For

example, with lessons placed earlier in the unit, more time is spent on the phonics skill, but as students progress through the unit, the target skill is embedded within connected text, and instructional time focuses on student application through reading or language activities. Additionally, as stated in the Kindergarten Appendix A document, in the initial lessons, CKLA “...has tried to strip the lessons down, so only the most basic and essential elements are taught at first, and the less essential material is introduced later. [For example] In the Basic Code Lesson on /g/, the sound /g/ and the lowercase letter 'g' are taught—and that is all.” The program focuses on this “basic” information as these are the two features required for students to begin reading words. As such, the introduction of letter names and uppercase letters is postponed until later.

Students are taught to blend and segment individual sounds within words and are then asked to directly apply their new sound knowledge to reading and writing tasks. For example, in Grade 1, Unit 3, students learn the sound /oo/ as in moon. Students are first asked to distinguish the difference between the /oo/ sound in moon versus the /oo/ sound in 'ue'. Then, the spelling of /oo/ is introduced. Students practice reading words with 'oo' and spelling words with 'oo.' Finally, learners read a text emphasizing words spelled with 'oo' in their student readers. This lesson progression is observed for each phonics skill introduced. Another distinctive feature of the curriculum is its heavy reliance on chaining exercises where students work with sound-spelling correspondences by paying attention to individual sound-spelling changes as words are read or spelled (i.e., nut> shut> shout> out> ouch>pouch>pooch> mooch>smooch).

CKLA does not emphasize memorization and students apply taught sound-spelling correspondences by reading and spelling words. The targeted phonics skill is also used in the following week’s spelling list and assessment. As mentioned previously, irregular sight words, labeled by the curriculum as “tricky words,” are taught by decoding all regular parts of the word. Finally, instruction in CKLA continues past one-syllable words, and multisyllabic word patterns and morphology are both taught in Grades 2-5.

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.	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.	3	
1.43: Fluency is practiced only in narrative text or with repeated readings of patterned text.	2	
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	

Amplify CKLA’s fluency practices are “**somewhat met.**” Reviewers found that students are asked to read aloud or partner read and that silent reading is not encouraged as a part of this curriculum. Accuracy is prioritized over rate during end-of-unit assessments. The team also found that explicit practice is incidental within the core curricular materials and noted that educators need to look at the supplemental materials available on the Amplify website for additional instruction and practice. This component was created to accompany Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) materials for Grade 3 and consists of selections from a variety of genres, including poetry, folklore, and fables. However, since these additional selections are not part of the core curricular materials, curriculum decision makers would need to access them independently to bolster their fluency work.

The team also determined that while there is some phrase practice provided within the Two Voices and Silly Voices activities, both of which focus on partner reading, this is not a routine embedded within the weekly lesson plan. Finally, fluency is assessed, and the focus is on students' reading accuracy. However, it is not provided to every student, and only those who score below on the Silent Reading Comprehension assessment receive this fluency measure. This assessment takes place in the last unit of 1st grade, twice in grade 2, and during instructional “pause points” in grade 3. For students in 4th and 5th grades, a fluency assessment is given to every student at the beginning of the year. This assessment features literary text only.

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, 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

Amplify CKLA's non-negotiables for language comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing are "met." Reviewers found that student knowledge is explicitly built through a variety of means, including read-alouds, comprehension questions, speaking and listening activities, and vocabulary instruction, all centered upon a specific topic or theme. Both reading and writing materials are age and grade-appropriate and center on a given unit's knowledge theme. For example, in Grade 1, students participate in a unit about The Human Body, and all of the texts read revolve around this topic.

Reviewers also observed that writing and reading are taught together and capitalize on the reading-writing connection. For example, in Grade 4 Unit 1, (pg. 44) students read a narrative text called A Good Lie and study character traits. This is followed by an activity where students write a paragraph describing what makes a good friend. Furthermore, outside of student writing, very few products are truly produced. Instead, Amplify CKLA's curriculum focuses on supporting students in developing the critical processes required to comprehend text. Finally, curricular materials are purposefully designed to develop learners' higher-level questioning skills. Consequently, literal, inferential, and evaluative questions are asked for each passage provided. For example, in Grade 4, Unit 1, (pg. 54), students engage in these varying question types as highlighted in the following examples:

Literal: *Review and define character traits.*

Inferential: *What are some character traits you'd use to describe the mother and father in Condoleezza Rice's personal narrative?*

Evaluative: *What do you think cause and effect means?*

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

Amplify CKLA’s practices for background knowledge are “**met.**” Reviewers observed that the program features a wide variety of text types, and some units contain mostly narrative text while others focus on expository/informational. For example, Grade 1 includes a unit on the human body and features science-based informational texts. However, in Grade 4, the curriculum includes a unit on poetry, and students explore this genre with its unique purpose, structures, and features. There was no evidence of leveled texts found, and texts are designed to build knowledge and offer diverse perspectives.

CKLA’s components also offer students the opportunity to bridge existing knowledge to new knowledge. For example, reviewers found evidence of K-W-L charts in Grade 1, Unit 2 (pg. 7) to assist learners in connecting existing knowledge to new knowledge. Teachers are instructed to add to the chart as students participate in multiple read-alouds highlighting that this activity is not performed once and forgotten but is continuously added to over time. In Grade 4, Unit 5 (pg. 7), reviewers highlighted another example where learners activate and assess their prior knowledge of the Earth and geology before engaging in a new unit. Moreover, the curricular materials offer educators insight into the prior knowledge built in the units of preceding grade levels. Thus, learners who have engaged with the curriculum across the grades will have already developed pertinent background knowledge aligned to specific units.

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.	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.	3
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

Amplify CKLA's practices for vocabulary are "somewhat met." The curriculum includes exposure and instruction of Tier 2 and 3 words and the memorization of isolated words is not featured, as words and definitions are always presented as part of the text the students are reading. While reviewers found that academic vocabulary is embedded within texts and there are weekly vocabulary lessons provided, there were not enough practice opportunities to assist learners in developing a deep understanding of targeted words. For example, in kindergarten, there are opportunities for students to engage in conversation using the vocabulary taught, but reviewers found limited practice opportunities other than exposure to these words within stories and texts read in class. A similar issue was observed in Grade 3 as learners previewed new words and added them to a vocabulary chart; however, there were not enough practice opportunities offered to develop a deep understanding. This was the case with Tier 2 words overall, which are included throughout the curriculum, but, again, there is not enough practice provided for learners to obtain mastery. Reviewers found that Tier 2 words are explicitly taught on one day of instruction but are not consistently revisited unless they arise within the context of the text. This presents a concern as without frequent practice opportunities, learners will fail to achieve a depth of word knowledge and may find it challenging to use the targeted words in their speaking and writing.

Morphology is taught explicitly and included in the curriculum's scope and sequence document. In the upper grades (3-5), it is referred to as "morphology," while in the lower grades (K-2), it is referred to as "grammar." For example, in Grade 1, Unit 7, students learn to add the inflectional suffixes -ed and -ing to various root words and explore how these words change tense. In Grade 3, Unit 3, students study the suffixes -er, -or, -ist, -ian, -y, and -al. They also review how suffixes change the meaning of root words and how they may change the part of speech of that word. Finally, in Grade 4, Unit 2, students are tasked to use the Greek root graph accurately in sentences. Students look at a group of words that contain the targeted root (e.g., *autograph*, *paragraph*, *biography*) and are asked to think about how these words relate to each other.

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

Amplify CKLA's practices for language structures are **“met.”** Throughout all grades, student skills are developed from simple to complex through the “knowledge” strand under “language and vocabulary.” Students are explicitly taught the function of the parts of speech as well as the sentence types. For example, in Grade 4, Knowledge Domain 1, students learn that strong action verbs show drama and excitement and they work to help the reader visualize what’s happening in a passage or scene. There are also instances of explicit teacher instruction as well as opportunities for student practice with a partner. In Grade 1, Knowledge Domain 5, students are explicitly taught that object pronouns are used to replace words that stand for people when something happens to them or is given to them. The teacher first models examples that include the use of an object pronoun (i.e. The principal gave the sticker to me.) before allowing learners to work in partnerships to create their own sentences about something they have been given using the word “me” to replace their name. Later, in Grade 4, Knowledge Domain 1, students are given opportunities to practice replacing everyday verbs with more “vital verbs.” Thus, instead of writing, I walked from school to grandmother’s house, students are tasked to brainstorm more colorful action verbs like trudged, skipped, or pranced.

2E: Verbal Reasoning

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

RED FLAGS 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).	1
2.27: Students do not practice inference as a discrete skill.	1

Amplify CKLA's practices for verbal reasoning are **“met.”** Inferential questions are based on the text as well as what the author is trying to communicate. Reviewers found no evidence that students are taught to use picture clues to try and make inferences. Additionally, students are asked to answer literal and inferential questions after reading each text. For instance, in Grade 1, Knowledge Domain 5, students begin by answering literal questions and then progress to answering inferential ones, as shown in the following examples:

Literal: *How long did Kanak and his family travel to the Mayan city of Baakal?*

Literal: *How long did it take them to reach Baakal?*

Inferential: *Where did they stay as they were traveling? How did they find food along the way? Inferential: Was extended family an important part of the Mayan culture? How do you know?*

Another example is found in Grade 4, where students read a text about the Middle Ages and are then asked to answer the following question:

Inferential: *Based on what you just read, who do you think had more power and freedom in the Middle Ages – serfs or lords? Why?*

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

Amplify CKLA’s practices for literacy knowledge are **“met.”** Genre and text structure is explicitly taught, observed in content-specific text, and practiced. For example, in Grade 1, Unit 1, students explore the structure and features of narrative text through the genre of personal narrative. In this unit, students read five personal narratives and identify their features, including a logical sequence, dialogue, descriptive language, sensory details, and characters with defining traits. After reading and learning about this genre, students compose a personal narrative of their own, incorporating the features they learned about. Later on in Grade 1, students explore informational text and work to identify facts and information before, during, and after informational read alouds. Furthermore, the teaching of genre-specific signal words is embedded into the instruction of the text type. These words are explicitly taught when students are required to incorporate them into their writing. Reviewers noted a lesson in Grade 4, Unit 1, where students learned chronological order words to show the connection between moments or events in a personal narrative. Here the teacher harkens back to the story Small Steps, which includes phrases like “two days earlier” and “three days later” to help the story move smoothly from event to event.

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).	1
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 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

Amplify CKLA's practices for reading comprehension are **“met.”** Reviewers found that students are not asked to independently read texts until they are taught to decode with accuracy. Within the upper grades, learners are asked to independently read texts, but the program ensures they have been explicitly taught the necessary skills to decode those texts before they are expected to read them. The knowledge strands are very purposeful and rich and students are never asked to read disconnected readings. Every text featured is connected to the domain topic. In this curriculum, students do not have the autonomy to select their own texts. Instead, they are exposed to above-grade-level texts through read-alouds and on-grade-level texts through independent reading activities. Reviewers also observed that text selections are neither predictable nor leveled. Rather texts are chosen based on their relevance to the knowledge/domain topics. Finally, Amplify CKLA incorporates questions at critical junctures within the texts to monitor students' comprehension or provide instances of teacher-modeled think-alouds. This creates transparency for learners as they can clearly see the articulation of teacher thinking as they vocalize the internal dialogue they employ when reading a text.

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

Amplify CKLA’s practices for handwriting are “**met.**” There is direct handwriting instruction for both print and cursive. Print instruction is embedded within the first unit for grades K-2, while cursive is integrated into the first unit for grades 3-5. Reviewers observed that Amplify CKLA’s handwriting paper features three lines which assists learners in demonstrating handwriting control as well as even sizing and spacing of letters. Handwriting is also explicitly embedded within the program’s lesson plans and is included within the curriculum’s scope and sequence under the skills strand.

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.	1
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.	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 grapheme/phonemes.	1

Amplify CKLA's practices for spelling are **“met.”** Reviewers found that the curriculum includes explicit spelling instruction, which is directly linked to the phonics skill taught the previous week. Student spelling instruction is supported through phoneme-grapheme mapping, and students practice their spelling words using sound/symbol correspondences. Spelling lists are not based on content and are derived from the previous week's phonics skills. Additionally, reviewers found no evidence of spelling by memorization.

Finally, spelling patterns are taught one at a time, prioritizing the frequency of grapheme use to determine the order of instruction. The program uses “power bars” to denote how often that spelling pattern is used for that sound on the Spelling Cards. Each Spelling Card is printed front and back. One side of the card shows the sound. The other side of the card shows three things: The top of this side of the card shows the spelling. The bottom shows a sample word containing the spelling. In the middle is a power bar. The power bar indicates how common this spelling is for the sound it represents. A long power bar that stretches almost across the card means that this is the main spelling for the sound, and there are very few words that have this sound spelled any other way. A very short power bar means the spelling is less common and occurs in fewer English words. Thus, the power bar for the word “pat” is much longer than the power bar for “weight.”

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.	1
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

Amplify CKLA's practices for composition are **“met.”** Reviewers observed that teacher modeling is an explicit part of each writing lesson and reading comprehension and writing are directly tied. Before learners engage in any independent writing, the writing task, which is directly related to the read-aloud, is preceded by explicit instruction in both the type of writing targeted as well as the content. For example, in Grade 4, Unit 2, learners engage in informational writing describing the life of a lord during the Middle Ages. To build knowledge of content, learners read and take notes from informational chapters in the text *Knights, Castles, and Chivalry*. Additionally, earlier in the curriculum, learners participated in writing a descriptive personal narrative as a part of the Personal Narrative lessons. As such, students are tasked to apply the basic elements of a descriptive paragraph using the notes they collected from the informational text. In the lower grades (K-2), lessons begin with explicit handwriting instruction and pictorial representations of the content/writing process. As the curriculum progresses, students write sentences to respond to text and eventually into longer pieces of writing.

Writing instruction is highly planned and structured, and students use graphic organizers to assemble and arrange their thoughts. For example, in Grade 1, Knowledge Domain 4, students complete a whole-class Venn Diagram comparing and contrasting pyramids and ziggurats. Then in Grade 4, Unit 2, students use a two-column chart to compare and contrast the homes, work, clothing, food, and power of serfs and lords during the Middle Ages. Students are offered opportunities to write across multiple genres, including narrative, opinion, and informational writing. This was evident in Grade 4, Unit 1, as students wrote a personal narrative, an opinion paragraph, a cause/effect paragraph, and a descriptive paragraph all within one unit. Reviewers noted that this level of genre-specific instruction paired with opportunities for practice and application is evident in every grade, and learners engage in all genres of writing depending on the knowledge topic. The writing process is also explicitly taught and emphasized. As a result, students learn to master this recursive process, which allows them to refine and improve upon their work. Finally, grammar instruction is delivered and reinforced systematically, ensuring that student skills are consistently revisited to help learners achieve mastery.

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

Amplify CKLA's non negotiables and practices for assessment are **“mostly met.”** Reviewers found that the program assesses for both domain knowledge and word recognition knowledge. Specifically, the Word Recognition assessments measure students' ability to recognize and read words with previously taught patterns, and the Reading Comprehension assessments examine students' ability to read a text independently and answer connected comprehension questions. Additionally, the curriculum features a miscue analysis that counts words as correct when read correctly, while omissions or substitutions are marked as incorrect. For example, the miscue analysis procedures across grade levels are prescribed as such:

Words Read Correctly	No mark is required.
Omissions	Draw a long dash above the word omitted.
Insertions	Write a caret (^) at the point where the insertion was made. If you have time, write down the word that was inserted.
Words Read Incorrectly	Write an “X” above the word.
Substitutions	Write the substitution above the word.
Self-Corrected Errors	Replace the original words with an “SC.”
Teacher-Supplied Words	Write a “T” above the word (counts as an error).

Reviewers also observed that Amplify CKLA's Foundational skills assessments include measures of word reading, comprehension of decodable text, and grammar. There is no evidence of leveled text and/or its corresponding assessments. In considering assessments for word recognition, reviewers found that phonemic awareness is not assessed beyond kindergarten. While PA is practiced throughout the program through its relation to letters, educators must have substantial knowledge in order to determine whether their students are struggling with phonemic awareness or orthography. The team also noted that while there are a few opportunities for formative assessment of PA provided, it is not explicitly stated as such and could be missed by educators.

Student phonics skills are assessed through word reading and spelling tasks, and the assessments use both real and pseudowords. The pseudoword measures are administered individually as a pre-assessment measure, while the end-of-unit assessments focus on the decoding of real words. Additionally, fluency is assessed during the end-of-unit assessments, and charts are provided to assist educators in determining where students fall based on national percentiles. When considering assessment of language comprehension, vocabulary, syntax, and listening comprehension are all regularly assessed within the unit assessments. These assessments are housed within the student activity book and students have access to their activity books throughout the unit.

Finally, the review team determined that educators would need to look to outside assessment tools provided to ensure that Multilingual Learners are assessed in their home language. However, the team also noted that this would most likely be the case with most core curricula programs. CKLA does provide all of its lessons in Spanish; however, this would not include learners' whose primary language is neither English nor Spanish.

Final Report Summary

Overall, the reviewed components for Amplify's Core Knowledge Language Arts curriculum were found to **"mostly meet"** or **"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

Amplify CKLA's curriculum addresses all strands of the reading rope, ensuring that learners are offered a comprehensive approach to literacy development. This multifaceted approach equips learners with the skills and tools they need to become proficient readers and writers.

Amplify CKLA's curriculum provides learners with rich knowledge specifically designed to pique learner interest and curiosity. Students have access to rich, complex text that features diverse content knowledge and offers learners exposure to multiple genres.

Amplify CKLA's curriculum provides learners with evidence-based foundational skill lessons. Learners develop a solid foundation through systematic, explicit instruction, building these fundamental skills from simple to more complex.

Amplify CKLA's curriculum utilizes explicit instruction and weaves assessment throughout its components.

Amplify CKLA's curriculum explicitly teaches writing, including the writing process, conventions, grammar, and sentence structure. Students learn to write across varied genres and reading comprehension and writing are directly tied. As such, Amplify CKLA capitalizes on the reading-writing connection.

Although reviewers identified brief, formative measures of phonological and phonemic awareness included within Amplify CKLA's curriculum, the team was unable to locate systematic assessments for ongoing monitoring of these skills. Thus, educators would need to look to outside assessment tools to ensure phonological and phonemic awareness is assessed comprehensively.

Amplify CKLA's materials for fluency instruction predominately focus on narrative text. To enhance the curriculum, it would be beneficial to integrate more frequent opportunities for students to practice and apply their fluency skills with expository/informational text.

Amplify CKLA's fluency instruction is predominately incidental within the core curricular materials and the only fluency practice students engage in within the core lesson plans is through the rereading of text within their reader. Thus, educators need to look at the supplemental materials available on the Amplify website for additional instruction and practice opportunities.

Amplify CKLA's curriculum offers students limited opportunities for fluency practice at the word, phrase, or sentence level.

Amplify CKLA's vocabulary instruction lacks adequate time for practice. While students are provided with initial instances of explicit instruction, there are limited opportunities for students to practice and apply taught words. Consequently, students may fail to develop the depth of word knowledge required to use these words successfully in their speaking and writing.

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PUBLISHER'S RESPONSE

Amplify CKLA

**Amplify Core Knowledge
Language Arts
(CKLA) Curriculum,
2nd Edition (2023)
for Grades K-5**



Amplify CKLA introduction

Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) is built on the Science of Reading and used by over three million students nationwide. The program combines knowledge-building and explicit, systematic foundational skills instruction to guide educators in developing strong readers, writers, and thinkers.

Amplify CKLA meets the criteria for Tier I-Strong Evidence as an education intervention under ESSA. [Click here](#) for a closer look at Amplify CKLA's research base, efficacy, and impact.

Amplify appreciates the opportunity to have Amplify CKLA reviewed by The Reading League (TRL) to ensure our alignment and continued commitment to the Science of Reading.

Amplify CKLA publisher response

1B: Phonological and Phoneme Awareness

1.10: Phonological and phoneme awareness is not assessed or monitored.	2
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Amplify response:

Within core instruction, Amplify CKLA uses formative assessments and observational records to monitor phonological and phonemic awareness development. This allows teachers to adjust instruction within the context of the unit and use activities from the digital *Assessment and Remediation Guides* or the digital Intervention Toolkit to provide additional practice.

For systematic screening and progress monitoring, Amplify recommends universal screening through [mCLASS DIBELS 8th Edition](#), a key component of Amplify's comprehensive literacy suite for core instruction, assessment, personalized learning, and intervention that aligns with a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) model. mCLASS DIBELS 8th Edition is also validated to identify students at risk for dyslexia. More information on Amplify's comprehensive literacy suite can be found [here](#).

1D: Fluency

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.	2

Amplify response:

Students regularly engage in word-level instructional routines to build from phoneme-grapheme fluency to word-level reading and spelling fluency. These routines include Pocket Chart Chaining for Reading (first introduced in Kindergarten Skills Unit 3, Lesson 3), Pocket Chart Chaining for Spelling (first introduced in Kindergarten Skills Unit 3, Lesson 5), Individual Chaining (first introduced in Kindergarten Skills), Word Box activity (first introduced in Grade 1 Skills Unit 1, Lesson 2), and Write the Spellings (words)/Word Box activity (first introduced in Grade 1 Skills Unit 1, Lesson 3).

For additional practice with word-level fluency, the online *Assessment and Remediation Guides* and the online Intervention Toolkit include a variety of printable Fluency and Comprehension activities and games (such as BINGO cards) and decodable passages. These activities allow for word-level fluency to be practiced in different contexts.

In addition, the Fluency Supplements noted in the review are available for grades 2–5 and help students build fluency with a balance of nonfiction and literary passages (e.g. the Grade 2 Fluency Supplements offer nonfiction passages on a variety of topics including the sense of smell, animals, a spelling bee, and the Star-Spangled Banner).

2C: Vocabulary

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.	3
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Amplify response:

In Amplify CKLA, vocabulary words are taught in a depth-oriented manner, aiming to help students understand the multiple layers of meaning associated with the words and to

strengthen students' knowledge of word relationships with semantic networks. The program incorporates various instructional strategies, including graphic organizers and other devices, to support students in developing a deeper understanding of vocabulary words. For example, in Grade 3 Unit 5 (Light and Sound) students write sentences in a triangle to show the relationship between three content vocabulary words about light. Amplify provides specific lesson segments that help students understand the multiple layers of words including Word Work, Vocabulary Instructional activities, and Multiple-Meaning activities.

For additional practice of Tier 2 words in diverse contexts, Amplify CKLA includes a free digital student-facing Vocab App that allows students to practice Tier 2 words through interactive games and activities. The Vocab App is specifically designed for practicing Tier 2 academic words and includes Word Lists from Amplify CKLA domains in grades 3–5. More information on the Vocab App can be found [here](#).

Section 5: Assessment

5.9: Phoneme awareness is not assessed	2
5.13: Multilingual Learners are not assessed in their home language.	3

Amplify response:

Within core instruction, Amplify CKLA uses formative assessments and observational records to monitor phonological and phonemic awareness development. This allows teachers to adjust instruction within the context of the unit and use activities from the digital *Assessment and Remediation Guides* or the digital Intervention Toolkit to provide additional practice.

For systematic screening and progress monitoring of phonological and phonemic awareness, Amplify recommends universal screening through mCLASS DIBELS 8th Edition, a key component of Amplify's comprehensive literacy suite for core instruction, assessment, personalized learning, and intervention that aligns with a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) model. mCLASS DIBELS 8th Edition is also validated to identify students at risk for dyslexia. More information on Amplify's comprehensive literacy suite can be found [here](#).

Amplify is committed to best practices for multilingual students, including research-based assessments in Spanish. For multilingual Spanish-speaking learners, Amplify provides universal and dyslexia screening in Spanish through [mCLASS Lectura](#) as part of our comprehensive biliteracy suite.

mCLASS Lectura provides full parity between English and Spanish assessment, includes cross-linguistic transfer guidance, and features authentic measures of Spanish literacy (i.e., it is not a translation). Additionally, Amplify CKLA offers a Spanish literacy program, Amplify Caminos, which pairs with Amplify CKLA and includes comprehensive instruction to support a variety of dual language instruction models. More information on mCLASS Lectura, Amplify Caminos, and Amplify's biliteracy suite can be found [here](#).