



Curriculum Navigation Report

RedThread, Grades K-5



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

Introduction

CURRICULUM EVALUATION GUIDELINES DESCRIPTION

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

Hennessy, 2020, pg. 8.

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

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

Curriculum Description

The evaluation on the following pages features the review of Lavinia Group's RedThread, which is created for students in Grades K-5.

For this report, reviewers closely examined the Teacher Guides for RedThread's Foundations and Knowledge Strands as well as the Student Portfolios for both the Foundations and Knowledge Units. This review also included an analysis of the program's decodable texts for Grades K-2 aligned to the following units:

Kindergarten, Unit 4	Grade 3, Unit 3
Grade 1, Unit 3	Grade 4, Unit 4
Grade 2, Unit 5	Grade 5, Unit 5

Furthermore, the team had access to and examined the full online curriculum, including the assessment suite, available on the program's Canvas page. Finally, reviewers analyzed RedThread's scope and sequence documents.

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 based on the Red Flag rubric that follows and to report their findings. For a more comprehensive review process description, visit [The Reading League Compass's Curriculum Decision Makers page](#).

 1 Red Flag statement is False.	 2 Red Flag statement is minimally True. Evidence is minimal or briefly mentioned.
 3 Red Flag statement is mostly True. If applicable, evidence is in multiple places throughout the curriculum.	 4 Red Flag statement is always true, pervasive, and/or integral to the curriculum.
 A black box indicates that this component is not addressed in this curriculum and must be addressed with other materials.	

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

Overall Design and Delivery

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

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

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Reviewers found that RedThread includes evidence of deliberate practice throughout its program. For example, reviewers noted that phonics instruction is grounded in explicit phoneme work that emphasizes systematic instruction in letter-sound correspondences. The team also noted instances of retrieval practice in K-2 foundational reading skills, but RedThread's program design does not reliably include consistent practice through explicit routines, particularly in the older grades. RedThread provides teachers with the means to explain a concept well, but provides less support and guidance regarding instructional practice. A foundational skills routine is outlined on page 26 of the Grade 1, Unit 6 manual, in which teachers build unit words with Letter Cards, prompt students to segment and blend the word, clarify meaning through sentence use, and have students name each letter. However, these directions are presented once, with the expectation that they will be internalized by the teacher rather than consistently embedded or reiterated across subsequent lessons. The publisher clarified that this was intentional for instructional design; however, it should be noted that additional retrieval practice may be required for students to fully automatize concepts.

Considering spaced or distributed practice, the foundational skills scope and sequence documents for K-2 and 3-5 show that concepts are repeated across multiple years. For example, the vowel team "ea" is introduced in Grade 3 and revisited in Grades 4 and 5. This vertical spacing provides an opportunity to strengthen and refine learning over time. In Grades K and 1, core phonemic awareness skills, including isolating, blending, and segmenting sounds, start in Week 1 of kindergarten and continue into Grade 1. This reflects distributed practice over time, rather than massed instruction in a single unit. The team did note, however, that rhyme is also taught and practiced throughout all of kindergarten. Current research suggests that rhyme is not as instructionally impactful as blending and segmenting; therefore, not all instances of spaced repetition are equally valuable.

In Grade 1, phonics skills build logically, with new concepts introduced in a way that integrates previously taught skills. Students begin with CVC words, including digraphs, and later build on this foundation through the introduction of the "FLSZ" rule and plural "-s" before blends are introduced. Instruction also incorporates rime families to support the unitization of word patterns. The progression of syllable types and the continued use of initial and final consonants remain consistent throughout the Grade 1 scope and sequence, demonstrating cumulative review and opportunities for interleaved practice.

The program demonstrates thematic cohesion across grade levels through recurring ideas and themes. In Grade 1, instruction is organized around the overarching themes of problem solving, innovation, and the environment, supported by a wide range of high-interest read-alouds. In Grade 3, units consistently engage with concepts related to democracy and social justice, with themes that progress and interleave across the year. While the program is not designed as a social studies curriculum, the sustained focus in Grade 3 could meaningfully support aspects of social studies content alongside literacy instruction. While the emphasis on democracy and social justice supports civic learning, reviewers questioned the breadth of reading topics available to students. They noted greater variety exists within student independent reading options; however, those texts may or may not be included by teachers.

From a usability standpoint, the program presents some challenges. While foundational word work routines are clearly described in the opening pages of the Teacher Guide for kindergarten, these routines are not embedded within individual lessons. As a result, teachers must repeatedly navigate between sections or rely on memorization, increasing the likelihood of inconsistent implementation. The “Sounds Segmentation” section of the Phonemic Awareness Warm-Up provides students with practice segmenting words at multiple levels, including syllables, onset and rime, phonemes, and sentences. However, within individual lessons, the specific level of segmentation is not always clearly identified. For example, in the Grade 1, Foundations Unit 6 Teacher Guide, teachers are prompted to ask, “What sounds do you hear?” for the words “blur,” “item,” and “scowl” (p. 221). While “blur” and “scowl” are segmented by phoneme, “item” is segmented by syllable. Without explicit direction, students (or teachers) may incorrectly interpret the word “item” as having two sounds rather than two syllables, increasing the likelihood of instructional confusion or misapplication. The online platform was difficult to navigate. Clear directions guiding teachers to specific materials were not provided. The team also noted that based on the materials they received, it appears that some resources were only available online, which also contributed to navigation challenges and confusion. Each grade is organized into six units, with separate teacher manuals for each unit and instructional focus (Foundational Skills or Knowledge). Students engage with a variety of materials, including decodable readers in Grades K-2, which support differentiated and developmentally appropriate practice.

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).	2

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Three-cueing is not taught as the primary strategy for decoding within the program. Decoding instruction is explicit and systematic without evidence of instructing students to use pictures or context when learning to read. It is important to note, however, that the Sight Word Instruction Routine in Grade 1, Unit 6, lacks precision in terminology. The term *orthographic mapping* is used in a way that may be misleading, as it is not an instructional action but a cognitive process that develops when students successfully link phonemes, graphemes, and word meaning through multiple exposures and practice. With adequate explicit instruction and practice, this process leads to automatic reading of all words, not just high-frequency words. Additionally, the term sight word may unintentionally confuse teachers, as it is frequently conflated with whole-word memorization rather than decoding-based instruction. Because of this ambiguity, teacher knowledge will be essential for directing students to use phonics and morphology as their primary decoding strategy. Reviewers also noted that the routine does not explicitly reference the use of immediate corrective feedback, which is a critical component of effective instruction.

In contrast, the Phonics Encoding Routine, “Write It,” (outlined on pp. 31–32) provides more specific guidance on instructional routines. For example, under the “Words” section (p. 32; see also p. 226), teachers are prompted to have students segment words one sound at a time while naming each letter as they write. Students then chorally segment and blend the word to read it, and teachers prompt spelling revision as needed. This level of specificity more clearly supports accurate implementation and instructional consistency.

Students are explicitly taught that context clues are “hints in a story or a sentence that help you figure out a word, or the meaning of a word you don’t know” (Grade 2 Foundations Unit 5: Teacher Guide, p. 113). Within the Foundations Units, however, students are first prompted to segment and blend words to resolve errors when a word does not sound or look right. In contrast, the Knowledge Units explicitly teach students to use context, including both text and illustrations, to determine word meaning, with guiding questions such as, “What’s happening in the story?” and “How does that help you understand the meaning of the word ___?” Reviewers suggest including language that encourages students to utilize their decoding skills in both the Foundations and Knowledge Units.

In the Kindergarten Foundations Unit 4 Teacher Guide, the curriculum uses the term *sight word*, defining it as a word we can’t tap out “because the letters do not always match their regular sounds,”—in contrast to words that can be segmented and tapped for spelling (p. 61). In this lesson, “she” is labeled as a sight word that cannot be tapped out; however, “she” is a decodable word that follows the open syllable pattern. This classification may reflect the fact that open syllables have not yet been introduced in the phonics scope and sequence, but the use of the term sight word in this context may contribute to conceptual confusion.

In Grade 1, Foundational Skills Unit 6, “sight word” instruction is designed to be brief (i.e., approximately five minutes) and includes steps that direct students to attend to letter-sound relationships and word meaning through sentence use (p. 58). During this week, three words, “circle,” “color,” and “picture,” are explicitly taught and revisited across multiple lessons (Days 2, 4, and 5) using consistent routines. In the Teacher Guide, phonics decoding and sight word routines (pp. 23–28) are emphasized in the front of every instruction manual. There is also a phonics encoding routine. As such, students are not asked to memorize isolated word lists; however, a significant part of instruction relies on teachers identifying “challenge spots,” which require them to identify error patterns. The challenge spots are a part of almost every routine in K–2 Foundations. Novice teachers might struggle with this step as it relies on teacher knowledge and experience for successful implementation. The publisher clarified that additional guidance on challenge spots is located within their assessment guidance, which is further explained in their publisher’s response.

A scope and sequence is provided for both the K–2 and 3–5 Foundations Units. Each Teacher Guide also includes a unit overview at the beginning (e.g., Grade 4 Foundations Unit 4, pp. 2–3), supporting instructional planning. In Grade 1, explicit routines for phonological awareness, decoding, and encoding are clearly taught (see Teacher Guide pp. 14–41). Overall, elements of the scope and sequence reflect a systematic progression. For example, Kindergarten instruction begins with consonants and short vowels to support CVC word reading, then advances to more complex patterns such as consonant blends, consonant digraphs, FLSZ words, and vowel-consonant-e words. However, multisyllabic words are not introduced until Grade 1, Unit 4 (Week 19), after which instruction expands to more complex vowel sounds, consonant types, and spelling patterns.

The team observed some review within grade levels in the Foundations scope and sequence. For example, in Grade K, Unit 3, Week 13, students review closed-syllable CVC words after explicit instruction in Weeks 6, 7, and 9. Nearly all lessons in Grade 1, Units 2 and 3 review Kindergarten concepts, and most lessons in Grade 2, Unit 2 revisit skills introduced in Grade 1. This spiraling continues in Grades 3–5; for instance, the vowel team “ea” and split vowel team “ea” are introduced in Grade 3, Unit 4, Week 17, and reappear in Grade 4, Unit 3, Week 9, and Grade 5, Unit 4, Week 17.

However, less within-unit review is evident in the upper-grade Foundations Units. In these grades, students are typically introduced to a new foundational concept during the first lesson of the week through guided practice of a limited number of words in isolation and in a decodable text, as well as encoding one or two words in isolation. The concept is not systematically revisited later in the week unless addressed through individual teacher coaching during an independent text (e.g., Grade 4, Unit 4 Foundations, Lessons 16–20).

The program includes systematic routines that follow a consistent instructional flow across units and grades. These routines include:

- Concept launch (Lessons 1 and 3)
- Sound drill (daily)
- Segment, blend, and read (daily)
- Build It (Days 1 and 3)
- Write It (Days 1 and 3)
- Sight word instruction (Days 2, 4, and 5)
- Dictation check (Day 5)

Each week begins with a clear weekly overview, helping teachers anticipate instruction. RedThread also includes a narrative introduction at the start of each unit that explains the instructional flow and connections to the Knowledge Unit.

Additionally, the unit syllabi provide strong insight into skill development across the unit, texts utilized, and big ideas targeted. Reviewers also found the “Unit at a Glance” pages to offer a high-level view of upcoming lessons without overwhelming detail. For example, Grade 3, Unit 3 Foundations includes:

- Narrative overview and knowledge connections (pp. 2–3)
- Instructional display and anchor chart reminders (p. 4)
- Syllable division rules with examples (pp. 5–6)
- Common suffixes (p. 7)
- Jobs of silent “e” (p. 8)
- Types of evidence with clear visuals (p. 9)
- Contractions (p. 10)
- Text features addressed (p. 11)
- Text list with genre and Lexile levels (p. 12)

Thus, from a unit prep perspective, the curriculum is strong.

While each unit is clearly explained, teachers must seek out a separate scope and sequence document to understand which skills were taught in prior units and how current instruction fits into the broader grade-level progression. Furthermore, RedThread assumes teachers have strong background knowledge to recall previously taught phonics concepts and can coach students in connecting foundational skills to new learning. The team also noted that in Grades 3–5, there is limited explicit review of phonics concepts within Foundations lessons. In fact, review primarily occurs during read-alouds, syllable division activities, or independent reading conferences. As a result, upper-grade students may have fewer structured opportunities to revisit and reinforce foundational skills.

Overall, the program does a good job of showing what is taught within each unit. However, the unit overview is less explicit about how skills build across the entire grade and how foundational skills connect vertically across grades.

Finally, some teachers may find the “Unit at a Glance” sufficient, while others may need more explicit cross-unit or cross-grade guidance.

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

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

The Phonemic Awareness Warm-Up includes a wide range of activities, including rhyme production; sound blending at the word, syllable, onset-rime, and phoneme levels; sound isolation; sound segmentation at multiple levels; and sound manipulation through adding, deleting, and substituting sounds (Teacher Guide, K Foundations, Unit 4, pp. 15-22). In addition, the review of Keyword Image Cards and Letter Cards provides repeated opportunities to practice individual phonemes as students learn the letter name, the keyword, and the sound. In the case of vowels, students say the letter name, keyword, and sound(s), if the vowel has more than one.

Blends are taught as two separate sounds. For example, in Grade 1, Foundations Unit 6, teachers explain that the word storm begins with two sounds: /s/ and /t/, “which are made by the consonant blend ‘st’, so we used the letters ‘s’ and ‘t’ to represent the consonant blend” (p. 66). The Kindergarten Foundations materials introduce the concept of glued sounds in Unit 4, Lesson 26a (pp. 256-259), including focused instruction on the nasal sound /an/, which is not typically taught as one sound.

The Sound Drill Routine, Keyword Image Cards, and Letter Cards all require students to explicitly name both graphemes and the phonemes they represent (Kindergarten Foundations, Unit 4: Teacher Guide, p. 24). In addition, new phonemes are introduced simultaneously with their corresponding graphemes, as demonstrated in instruction on the wh digraph, where students learn that when the letters “w” and “h” come together, they make one sound: “wh” - whistle - /wh/ (Kindergarten Foundations, Unit 4: Teacher Guide, p. 127).

Phonemic awareness is emphasized as a foundational reading skill within the K-1 Foundations Units. Blending phonemes, sound isolation, sound segmentation, and sound manipulation are all explicitly taught as part of the Phonological and Phonemic Awareness routines (Kindergarten Foundations, Unit 4: Teacher Guide, pp. 17-22). In addition, phonemic awareness is embedded within phonics instruction. For example, after learning the sounds and letters for a consonant digraph, students are prompted to identify the number of sounds in a word, then chorally segment and blend the sounds by tapping them on their fingers or arms before blending the sounds together (Kindergarten Foundations, Unit 4: Teacher Guide, p. 86). Segmenting and blending are also integrated into routines for reading, spelling, and writing new words, reinforcing phonemic awareness across instructional contexts.

While assessment of phonemic awareness is addressed daily through warm-up routines and embedded within phonics instruction, monitoring primarily occurs at the whole-class level through choral responses. Teachers are encouraged to observe student performance and adjust instruction accordingly; however, phonemic awareness is not explicitly assessed through dedicated measures, such as the weekly Dictation Check. As a result, evidence of student mastery is inferred through performance during decoding and encoding routines rather than systematically assessed at the individual level through isolated oral tasks. Thus, when students segment, blend, and read words, or identify initial, medial, and final sounds, teachers are expected to gauge phonemic awareness based on students’ performance within these tasks.

1C: Phonics and Phonic Decoding

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

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

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Instruction in phoneme-grapheme correspondences is explicit and systematic rather than opportunistic. In Grade 1 Foundations, phonemes and graphemes are introduced together during concept launches and practiced through multiple practice activities, including work with letter boards, sound drills, and writing tasks. Similarly, in Grades 3–5, phonics and morphology concepts are explicitly taught in isolation prior to application during text reading.

Phonics concepts are reviewed throughout the kindergarten and Grades 1 and 2 Foundations Units. During the Sound Drill, students practice with both Focus Cards and Review Cards. Review words and sounds are also included during the Segment, Blend, and Read; Build It; and Write It activities to practice previously learned sounds and words with previous phonics concepts. Additionally, Dictation Checks are included in the K–2 Foundations Units to review sounds, new focus words, review words of previous phonics concepts, sight words, and sentences. In contrast, Grades 3–5 Foundations Units include limited short-term review. Phonics concepts are typically introduced in the first lesson of the week and are not explicitly revisited in subsequent lessons within the unit, resulting in minimal practice beyond initial instruction. While some phonics concepts are revisited across grade levels (e.g., the rule for silent “e” in words ending in “i,” “u,” “v,” and “z,” introduced in Grade 3, Unit 3, Week 8 and revisited in Grade 4, Unit 2, Week 4), within-unit opportunities for review are less evident in the upper grades overall.

Regarding RedThread’s keywords, the first letters of each keyword align with the phoneme being taught. For example, the keywords for the short vowel sounds include “apple” (/ă/), “edge” (/ĕ/), “otter” (/ŏ/), “itch” (/ĭ/), and “up” (/ŭ/). Additionally, the use of the program’s Articulation Cards, which are part of the Online Resources, supports this as well. Phonics instruction is a required component of all Foundations Units in Grades K–5. In Grades K–2, each lesson includes approximately 25–35 minutes of foundational skills instruction. In Grades 3–5, each week begins with a 30-minute Phonics and Morphology lesson. The program encourages responsive teaching by allowing teachers to revisit concepts that proved challenging in previous lessons. For example, in Grade 1, Unit 6, teachers are prompted to identify “challenge spots” during Segment, Blend, and Read activities and to select additional words for Build It activities as needed (Grade 1 Foundations, Unit 6: Teacher Guide, p. 150). Rather than embedding all review words directly into the lesson materials, the program relies on teacher judgment to determine which additional words should be used for targeted review.

RedThread's K-2 scope and sequence reflects a measured and systematic instructional progression rather than the rapid introduction of consonants and vowels. Sounds are introduced in small sets, with only one short vowel taught per week and a limited number of consonants introduced at a time. For example, in Kindergarten Foundations, Unit 2, Week 2, students are introduced to two consonants ("t" and "m") and one short vowel sound (/ă/). Long vowel patterns are delayed until later in kindergarten, and multiple sounds for individual letters (e.g., "c" and "g") are intentionally separated across grade levels. This sequencing avoids introducing too many consonants before vowels, teaching short vowels in rapid succession, or presenting all sounds for a letter simultaneously.

Blending is a recurring component of the K-2 Foundations Units. It is taught directly through daily Phonological Awareness Warm-Ups, reinforced through the Segment, Blend, and Read Routine, supported with kinesthetic cues (e.g., students are directed to tap out sounds on their fingers or arms before blending them), and applied consistently across reading, spelling, and sight word routines. This instructional design provides frequent, explicit, and systematic practice with blending. Teachers model how to use phonics to decode unfamiliar words when reading. For example, in Grade 3 Foundations, Unit 4, the teacher is prompted to model syllable division and decoding through an explicit think-aloud that connects syllable rules, syllable types, and vowel pronunciation by stating:

I can use what I know about syllables to read the next word ... We will split the word between the first 'e' and the 'c' because normally the one consonant between vowels goes to the right. That makes the first syllable an open syllable, which, if stressed, we read as /dē/. (p. 104)

Students are not expected to memorize words in isolation. While word cards are included to support fluency practice, instruction emphasizes decoding through the Segment, Blend, and Read Routine and the Sight Word Routine, both of which require students to attend to letter-sound relationships and sound out words rather than rely on memorization. It is important to note the essential role of teacher knowledge in understanding this explicit and systematic routine, as there may be confusion with the term "sight word." This term is most often associated with an instructional routine that relies on memorization of whole words, but this runs counter to the science of reading. When adopting this program, the review team recommends clarifying with teachers that students should not be memorizing these words by sight.

Within Grade 1 Foundations, the Segment, Blend, and Read Routine appears in multiple lessons (e.g., Lesson 12, pp. 157 & 159). However, the lesson-level directions often assume familiarity with the routine and do not restate each instructional step. As a result, teachers may inadvertently skip critical components, such as explicit sounding out. The full routine is outlined earlier in the Grade 1, Unit 6 Foundations manual, where teachers are directed to build the unit word with the Letter Cards, prompt students to segment and blend the word, clarify meaning by using the word in a sentence, and have students name each letter as cards are returned to the letter board. However, as stated previously, RedThread presents these directions once rather than consistently embedding them within each lesson, and teachers are expected to internalize them as they move through the program.

In Grade 2, the sight word routine includes a greater proportion of Tier 2 vocabulary, and the instructional routine is clearly defined. Instruction supports orthographic mapping by explicitly attending to phoneme-grapheme relationships and anchoring word meaning through sentences. Across the program, sight word instruction progresses in a developmentally appropriate manner:

- Kindergarten words are primarily common and highly familiar.
- Grade 1 instruction includes more irregular, high-frequency words.
- Grade 2 instruction increasingly includes connected words as well as phonological representations.

Weekly word lists are used throughout the lesson in activities such as Segment, Blend and Read, Write It, and sight word practice, reinforcing repeated application rather than memorization. In Grades 3–5, this progression continues through explicit syllable division practice, supported by Teacher Guides that begin units by discussing syllable practices.

The team observed that in Grades K–2, there is some inconsistency between phonically decodable words and those labeled as sight words. Reviewers recommended clarifying this distinction by more frequently framing certain words as temporarily non-decodable or explaining to students that, in the future, they will be able to decode the word, but right now it is a “need to know” word. As students progress into Grades 3–5, instruction increasingly emphasizes decoding, phonics, and morphology, indicating that whole-word treatment is not an instructional approach across the program.

In Grades K-2, after engaging in guided practice to learn a new phonics concept, students have multiple opportunities to practice it through reading, spelling, and writing words that follow the pattern. Later, students read a decodable text featuring the target concept, providing students with additional practice in context. Subsequent weekly lessons build upon this concept and provide additional practice, as well. In Grades 3-5, phonics instruction is explicit, with a strong emphasis on applying skills during the Syllable Routine. However, opportunities for systematic, repeated practice of newly taught and previously taught phonics concepts within a unit are limited, and review often depends on teacher initiative through student coaching or incidental encounters during reading and spelling activities.

Decodable texts are an essential part of all of RedThread's Foundations Units. In K-2, students review focus words that exemplify the concept being taught, as well as review words from previously taught lessons, before they partner-read the text. The decodable text is used across multiple lessons to support fluency development. In the second lesson, students engage in additional partner reading of the decodable text to build accuracy and fluency. In the third lesson, students reread the decodable independently and respond to a prompt, allowing them to apply their fluency skills while demonstrating comprehension. The majority of these texts are highly decodable; however, reviewers observed that some of the decodables also contain words with phonic elements that haven't been taught. For example, in the Kindergarten, Unit 4 decodable, *A Classroom Vote*, the word "cheer" is included even though students have not learned about vowel teams or the long vowel "e." The book is 91% decodable; however, since the text is only read in pairs or independently, there is no opportunity to ensure students do not simply guess the word unless every group is coached by the teacher during partner reading. Words like "cheer" are important to the syntax and contribute to the story even if they're not decodable. Furthermore, the team observed occasional instances where words contained sounds that do not match the targeted sounds. For instance, students were asked to segment to blend, read, and write "moss" and "boss," which do not feature the same short /ɒ/ vowel sound targeted in the unit.

The program does not end phonics instruction after single-syllable patterns. Instead, phonics instruction progresses systematically from single-syllable words in kindergarten to increasingly complex multisyllabic word study beginning in Grade 1 (e.g., multisyllabic words with two closed syllables, r-controlled vowels, and vowel teams). In Grade 2, students continue to study more complex patterns such as multisyllabic words with schwa, vowel teams, and consonant -le syllables. Explicit syllable division and morphology routines in Grades 3-5, along with instruction in schwa, vowel teams, split vowels, and other advanced patterns, demonstrate sustained and intentional advanced phonics instruction.

Finally, in Grades 3-5, a Morphology Routine is included in every Phonics and Morphology lesson. During the Analyze to Read routine, students identify prefixes and suffixes, underline the base word, and use morpheme meanings to determine the meaning of the whole word. In the Analyze to Write routine, students use their knowledge of morphemes to spell a dictated word before determining its meaning. A Syllable Routine is also embedded in every Phonics and Morphology lesson in Grades 3-5. In the Segment to Read portion, students independently identify vowel types, scoop syllables, apply syllable division rules, and read the word. In the Segment to Write portion, students spell the word and then analyze it by scooping vowel types and dividing syllables.

Reviewers also noted that in Grade 3, advanced word study is reinforced within the Knowledge materials as well. Language lessons, such as Lesson 22b, include scripted instruction focused on common irregular spelling patterns and the addition of suffixes to base words. These morphology examples address both spelling conventions and language conventions. The accompanying portfolio materials for Lesson 22b further support this instruction by providing practice opportunities, including combining inflectional suffixes.

1D: Fluency

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

RED FLAGS PRACTICES FOR FLUENCY	SCORE	
1.42: Fluency instruction focuses primarily on student silent reading.	2	
1.43: Rate is emphasized over accuracy; priority is given to the student's ability to read words quickly.	1	
1.44: Word-level fluency practice to automaticity is not provided, or fluency is viewed only as text-reading fluency.	1	
1.45: Fluency is practiced only in narrative text or with repeated readings of patterned text.	1	
1.46: Fluency assessment allows acceptance of incorrectly decoded words if they are close in meaning to the target word (e.g., accepting the word "house" instead of the printed word "home").	1	

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Fluency instruction does not primarily rely on silent reading. Instead, it is structured around both partner reading and independent silent reading, with limited teacher modeling at the beginning of lessons. In the early grades, decodable reading consists of three reads: a first read focused on partner reading by alternating pages; a second read focused on partner reading, then independent reading if time allows; and a third read focused on independent reading. Reviewers noted that students would benefit from increased teacher modeling, both to hear fluent, expert read-alouds and to observe how a skilled reader self-monitors and self-corrects during reading. Reviewers also noted that teachers would greatly benefit from explicit guidance on how to apply their knowledge to enhance modeling and read-alouds. Without this support, teachers may not achieve the fluency outcomes they are aiming for.

During the fluency lessons in Grades 3–5, some choral reading occurs when practicing a fluency concept. Lesson 1 typically includes teacher modeling (e.g., decoding with a phonics focus); Lesson 2 includes modeling of a fluency skill, sometimes with brief choral practice. Then, after modeling, students read mostly with partners or independently. While fluency skills are explicitly taught and practiced, opportunities for extended choral reading, echo reading, and teacher-led feedback are limited, resulting in an instructional sequence that emphasizes “You Do” practice with relatively less supported “We Do” practice.

RedThread emphasizes reading with accuracy over speed. For example, in Kindergarten Foundations, Unit 4, instruction highlights that good readers pause to segment and blend unfamiliar words rather than read quickly. In the older grades, fluency lessons emphasize prosody over speed. For example, in Grade 5 Foundations, Lesson 22, the teaching point is “Poetry readers notice punctuation and line breaks to read groups of words smoothly and fluently in meaningful phrases, like poets” (p. 200). Similarly, in Grade 4 Foundations, Lesson 12, the teaching point stresses that skilled readers self-monitor by recognizing and correcting errors and rereading text in appropriately phrased groups, using storyteller or presenter voice as needed.

Word-level fluency practice is included across the program, though its emphasis varies by grade band. In Grades K-2, the Fluency Quick Read activity is embedded within the Segment, Blend, and Read decoding routine and Sight Word routine to build automaticity. During these routines, students read unit word cards chorally, including focus words, review words, and three to five teacher-identified words with challenge spots. In contrast, in Grades 3-5, students decode words both in isolation and within connected text, but word-level fluency practice is less consistently developed to the level of automaticity.

Fluency is practiced with all genres of text. In Grade 5 Foundations, Unit 5, students practice their fluency with two narrative texts: *Emerging from the Darkness* and *Hatchet*, two nonfiction texts: *Robots to the Rescue* and *Search and Rescue Kids*, and one poem: “I Took My Power in My Hand.” The decodables in Kindergarten Foundations, Unit 4 include both fiction and nonfiction texts, including *Mari Meets the President* and *Kamala Harris*. Regarding assessment, according to the program’s K-5 Fluency Criteria Checklist, students are expected to read with at least 95% accuracy and to self-correct errors as needed. Fluency is formally assessed during unit assessments and at the beginning, middle, and end of instructional periods. In addition, there is an option to assess students’ fluency each week using passages found in the assessment suite online, as well as their comprehension and retell. Teachers are also directed to complete fluency checks with the program’s decodables while students practice.

Findings:

COMPONENTS SUPPORTING LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION, READING COMPREHENSION, AND WRITING

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

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

NON-NEGOTIABLES FOR LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION, READING COMPREHENSION, AND WRITING	SCORE
2-4.1: (LC, RC, W) In early grades, the instructional framework is primarily a workshop approach, emphasizing student choice and implicit, incidental, or embedded learning.	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 instruction and learning in the early grades are intentional, not incidental. For example, there is a separate language lesson that focuses on helping students understand that a sentence tells who or what it is about and what they are doing. After explicit teacher modeling, students first practice as a group and then on their own with isolated sentences. Think-alouds are also prominent and well-scripted, and instruction is not confined to a short mini-lesson— instead, it’s distributed throughout the lesson.

For example, in Kindergarten Foundations Unit 4, Lesson 21, the full 32-minute Foundational Skills block consists of repeated cycles of modeling and guided practice, including:

- Phonemic Awareness Warm-Up (5 min)
- Sound Drill (5 min)
- Concept Launch (5 min)
- Segment, Blend, and Read (5 min)
- Build It (5 min)
- Write It (5 min)

This reflects a structured approach, not a workshop model. Knowledge Units follow the same explicit design and prioritize teacher modeling, guided discussion, and structured partner discourse. A typical lesson includes:

- Engage (3 min)
- Launch (5 min)
- Read Aloud (15 min)
- Partner Discourse (8 min)
- Closing (2 min)

Additionally, writing and language lessons are similarly structured.

Vocabulary instruction is explicit, and words are regularly reviewed and used by students. Learners are exposed to a variety of complex texts with rich vocabulary and complex syntax beginning in kindergarten. For example, in Kindergarten Knowledge Unit 4, Lesson 18, students read the text, *The Power of Her Pen*, by Lesa Cline-Ransom. In it, students are exposed to a variety of high-level vocabulary words and terms such as “journalist,” “segregation,” “discrimination,” “racism,” “Great Depression,” “promoted,” and “editor.” Reviewers noted that students encounter complex syntax in both the Knowledge and Foundations Units. For example, in the Grade 5 Foundations, Unit 5, Lesson 7, as part of a fluency lesson, students read the sentence, “It was a heartbreaking tragedy, not only for the family and friends of the 19 men, but for the scores of others who worked tirelessly to try and save them.” Students practice reading the sentence and are taught how to analyze the embedded phrases and clauses to determine how to read it aloud with both emotion and meaning (pp. 82–83). Furthermore, RedThread explicitly identifies opportunities for discussion and is supported with detailed planning.

Writing is an essential component of both the Knowledge and Foundations strands. For example, Kindergarten Knowledge, Unit 4, and 5th Grade Knowledge, Unit 5, both include thirteen distinct writing lessons. Throughout these lessons, students complete a variety of writing projects. For example, in the 5th-grade unit, students write “A Columnist’s Reflection” opinion piece and a “School Chronicles Article.” Both projects are connected to the unit’s reading, which includes articles and opinion pieces about the soccer team trapped in a cave in Thailand. Literature responses are integrated throughout the units, as well, to support connections between reading and writing. For example, in the Kindergarten Foundations Unit 4, after rereading a decodable text independently, students respond to a literature response prompt. They also receive explicit instruction on how to strengthen their writing about reading. For example, in Grade 5 Knowledge, Unit 5, Lesson 13, students are taught how to select the most relevant evidence from a text to support their claims in a literature response.

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.	2
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

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

RedThread includes diverse, knowledge-building texts across both the Foundations and Knowledge strands. Within each unit, texts are organized around a common theme, providing multiple opportunities for students to build content knowledge through a combination of accessible independent and decodable texts alongside more complex whole-class read-alouds. Unit themes address topics such as democracy in Kindergarten Knowledge, Unit 4, and contemporary events, including the rescue of the soccer team in Thailand in Grade 5 Knowledge, Unit 5. Program read-alouds feature complex texts that cover a variety of genres. For example, in Grade 5, Unit 5, the core text is the narrative nonfiction book *All Thirteen: The Incredible Cave Rescue of the Thai Boys' Soccer Team*, which anchors students' reading and discussion throughout the unit. In kindergarten, students also engage with complex fiction and nonfiction texts. These selections include texts such as *Equity Calls*, which address voting rights and introduce sophisticated concepts like women's suffrage, along with challenging vocabulary such as "abolition" and "amendment."

RedThread emphasizes building students' background knowledge prior to reading. For example, each decodable text includes a *Building Knowledge* section, and in the upper grades, specific lessons are dedicated to developing background knowledge before a read-aloud is introduced. In these lessons, background information is primarily provided by the teacher rather than elicited from students' prior knowledge about the topic. The program also draws attention to connections across units and grade levels to reinforce prior learning; however, these connections are most often tied to previously taught vocabulary. For instance, in kindergarten, the teacher reminds students that they previously learned that "courage is being brave and doing something even if it's a little scary" (Kindergarten Knowledge Unit 5: Teacher Guide, p. 155). In this example, the connection to prior learning is explicitly supplied by the teacher rather than generated by students, a pattern that appears consistently across units.

Finally, reviewers noted that the read-aloud texts are authentic, complex, and diverse. For example, in Grade 5 Knowledge, Unit 5, students read the core narrative nonfiction text *All Thirteen: The Incredible Cave Rescue of the Thai Boys' Soccer Team*, and extend their learning through authentic news articles from *ABC News*, *CNN*, and *The Guardian*. In the Foundations Unit, students further explore the topic through more accessible nonfiction texts as well as additional genres, including fiction and poetry. As a result, students not only deepen their understanding of the current event but also build knowledge related to technology, geography, Thai culture, and survival skills.

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.	2	
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	

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Vocabulary instruction primarily relies on teacher-provided definitions and examples, with limited attention to additional word relationships such as synonyms, antonyms, parts of speech, or morphological connections. Students receive lists of vocabulary words and definitions in their Unit Portfolios; however, there is little explicit practice required to support deeper word learning. Although vocabulary is incorporated throughout each unit, including teaching points, writing and discussion prompts, and read-alouds, this integration results in a large number of vocabulary words being introduced within a single unit. As a result, opportunities for students to develop depth of understanding for individual words are limited. For example, in Kindergarten Knowledge Unit 4, Lesson 2A, students are introduced to ten new vocabulary words in a single lesson. Similarly, in the Grade 2 Knowledge Units, vocabulary lists are provided and revisited during read-alouds, but there are few opportunities for students to engage with the words through multiple modalities or repeated, meaningful practice. In Grade 4, word-level practice appears primarily within Knowledge Units and during vocabulary review activities at lesson closure. Independent reading also provides opportunities to revisit challenging words (e.g., “chagrin,” “gorge,” “coil”). Consequently, vocabulary instruction emphasizes breadth over depth, which may limit students’ long-term word knowledge.

No memorization of vocabulary words is required, and all words are introduced within the context of the lesson or text. For example, the following words are presented in Grade 5 Knowledge, Unit 5, Lesson 7:

- *Credibility* - Introduced by the teacher in the introduction of the lesson to provide an explanation for the teaching point, “Nonfiction readers examine how authors support their ideas” (pp. 144-153)
- *Reluctant, urge, and conserve* - Vocabulary terms from the text
- *Daunting* - Specific language used in the prompt for the whole-class discourse and summary of the key ideas in the text
- *Transcript* - The activity the students are to complete in the writing portion of the lesson

Tier 2 vocabulary is explicitly taught in context and revisited through multiple exposures. For example, in Grade 5 Knowledge Unit 5, Lesson 8A, students are introduced to the word “impact.” After the teacher explains the definition, the word is reinforced through varied contexts, including a teacher think-aloud (e.g., “Those involved in the mission significantly impacted the course of events”) and discussion questions such as, “How did the professional birds’ nest collectors impact the rescue mission?” (pp. 162-169). Students also encounter the word across additional components of the unit, including their Unit Portfolios, Independent Reading Charts, lesson vocabulary lists, and writing prompts, providing repeated opportunities to engage with the word in meaningful contexts. Students are also expected to incorporate unit vocabulary into their writing; however, explicit practice and frequent review of these words are limited. As a result, reviewers suggested increasing opportunities for student practice to support true word ownership. While RedThread introduces a wide breadth of vocabulary, opportunities for developing depth of understanding through sustained practice are less evident. Students are exposed to Tier 3 literary terms such as *character motivation*, *allusion*, and *internal/external conflict* to develop literacy knowledge in different genres. Tier 3 words are also frequently taught to develop students’ content knowledge. For example, in the Kindergarten Knowledge Portfolio for Unit 4, students learn about democracy and are taught terms like *Bill of Rights*, *Congress*, and *executive branch*.

Finally, explicit morphology instruction is included in both the Foundations and Knowledge strands. For example, in Grade 5, students engage in weekly morphology work during the Morphology Routine in the Foundations lessons, where they review and learn morphemes and use this knowledge to analyze word parts and determine meaning. In addition, Knowledge lessons reinforce this instruction by prompting students to attend to affixes and roots when encountering new words, such as in Lesson 2B of the Knowledge Unit. Morphology instruction is intentionally sequenced from simple to increasingly complex concepts, beginning with basic suffixes such as “-s” and “-es” in kindergarten and advancing to common roots, prefixes, and suffixes as students progress in the grades. Reviewers noted that some opportunities to apply morphology in context are missed. For example, during a Grade 5 read-aloud, the teacher provides the definition of “indescribable,” even though students have previously been taught to analyze such words using morphological strategies to determine meaning. In addition, the review team recommended making more explicit connections for teachers between Foundations and Knowledge lessons to support consistent application of morphology across contexts. For example, in Grade 4, word-level practice appears primarily within Knowledge Units and during vocabulary review activities at lesson closure. Independent reading also provides opportunities to revisit challenging words (e.g., “chagrin,” “gorge,” “coil”), with instruction focused on synthesis and application rather than repeated practice for automaticity.

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.	2	
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	

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

RedThread includes dedicated language lessons and teaching points that address grammar and syntax. Across grade levels, instruction generally progresses from simple to complex. For example, kindergarten students focus on basic sentence elements such as nouns and verbs, while Grade 5 instruction addresses complex sentences and subordinating conjunctions. According to the K-8 Knowledge & Language Scope and Sequence, Grade 5 includes **only** eleven lessons focused specifically on language structures and an additional seven lessons on punctuation and formatting, a frequency that may not provide sufficient opportunities for students to develop and apply these skills.

Within grade levels, topics are often organized in a scaffolded sequence. In Grade 5, instruction begins with commas in lists and later advances to more complex punctuation, such as semicolons. However, some inconsistencies in sequencing are evident. For instance, students learn common uses of commas in Unit 5, but commas used to set off “yes” and “no” are not introduced until Unit 6. Additionally, some gaps in scaffolding appear between related skills. In Kindergarten Foundations Unit 4, students are expected to write sentences using correct capitalization during the Dictation Check, yet handwriting instruction during this unit focuses only on forming capital letters, suggesting a mismatch between instruction and expectations.

Language lessons follow a guided practice structure (e.g., *I do, we do, you do*). Teacher modeling is used to introduce key components of language structure. For example, in Kindergarten Knowledge Unit 4, the teacher models how to identify who or what a sentence is about. The class then examines two examples together and reviews an anchor chart with eight additional examples, before students independently practice the concept in their Unit Portfolios.

Finally, language instruction focuses on the function of words rather than memorizing parts of speech as a list. For example, in the Kindergarten Knowledge Unit 4 Lesson 2b, students are encouraged to ask, “Who or what is the sentence about?” and “What are they doing?” instead of being directed to find the noun and verb (p. 66). Students are directed to revise their writing based on instruction from language lessons, as is the case in Grade 5 Knowledge Unit 5, Lesson 8B. However, in this unit, the application of language instruction is largely limited to punctuation. In addition, examples used within language lessons are typically isolated and are not drawn from the core texts students read in the unit. In Grade 3, there is clearer evidence of academic language instruction focused on word function and explicit guidance for editing. Several lessons connect language instruction to the writing process and to extended writing projects. However, making explicit connections between language lessons and students’ writing often relies on teacher facilitation rather than being systematically embedded within the materials.

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

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

While inference instruction is included, explicit explanation of how background knowledge contributes to inference-making is often absent from teacher think-alouds. For example, in Kindergarten Knowledge Unit 4, Lesson 24a, the teacher cites the evidence, “When I look at their faces, I see their eyebrows are raised and they are smiling.” But when the teacher draws the inference, “Their facial expressions tell me they feel hopeful and excited,” students may not understand it without the background knowledge that associates smiling and raised eyebrows with particular emotions (p. 362). In addition, RedThread defines inference as “a conclusion based on evidence,” a definition that omits the role of background knowledge in constructing meaning (Grade 5 Knowledge Unit 5, Teacher Guide, p. 227). Furthermore, inference instruction demonstrates a clear progression across grade levels, beginning with inferences based on illustrations in kindergarten, advancing to the integration of text and illustrations, and later emphasizing evidence-based inferences in Grade 5. However, across these lessons, the role of background knowledge in interpreting evidence is often implied rather than explicitly modeled or explained. As a result, students are taught what evidence to use, but not consistently how their background knowledge supports its interpretation.

Students practice inference as a discrete skill, and RedThread includes specific lessons designed to teach and review inferencing. Inference is also frequently embedded within instruction for other comprehension skills. For example, during a lesson focused on identifying and connecting new information to prior learning, the teacher highlights new information and then draws conclusions, stating, “This information tells me...” (Kindergarten Knowledge Unit 4: Teacher Guide, p. 338). However, inferencing language is not always used consistently. In some instances, teachers model statements such as “I assume” rather than explicitly naming the process as “I infer” (Kindergarten Knowledge Unit 4: Teacher Guide, p. 337).

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 types and text structures (e.g., cause and effect, problem and solution, sequence, compare and contrast) are not used to understand the purpose of what is being read.	1
2.35: Specific text structures and corresponding signal words are not explicitly taught and practiced.	2

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

RedThread explicitly teaches genre types and their associated features. Reviewers noted that the Genre Frames anchor chart is an essential resource across Grades K-5, as it provides guiding questions to support students' thinking about different genres. For example, when working with fiction texts, Grade 5 students are prompted to consider questions such as, "What is the conflict, resolution, and theme?" (Grade 5 Foundations Unit 5, Teacher Guide, p. 4). Beyond broad genre categories (e.g., fiction, nonfiction, poetry), students also study more specific genres, including narrative nonfiction and journalism in Grade 5. Instruction is supported through guided practice: after a genre and its corresponding frame are introduced, teachers model the thinking process and pose scaffolded questions to support student understanding. Students then engage in partner and whole-class discussions to apply the Genre Frames, such as during the exploration of poetry in Kindergarten Knowledge Unit 4.

In the Nonfiction Text Structures anchor chart, students receive a description about each text structure, a visual, and common language for each. The description also emphasizes the purpose of understanding the targeted structure. In Kindergarten Knowledge Unit 4, students use cause and effect to understand how ideas are connected by learning that skilled readers connect events in a text by figuring out how one event leads to or causes another. Teachers are instructed to use think-alouds to model this thinking. In Grade 5 Knowledge Unit 5, Lesson 6, students compare the structures of two texts and analyze why the authors chose to organize the information as they did and how this choice impacts the reader. However, in this same unit, only one lesson specifically mentioned text structures as a way to understand the purpose of what was being read, even though students read multiple nonfiction texts throughout. Additionally, much of the teaching around genre types and text structures is addressed during teacher think-aloud and discourse, rather than during guided practice.

Explicit instruction in the specific text structures and their corresponding signal words is inconsistent. For example, in Grade 2, nonfiction text structures are explicitly taught. In Grade 3, however, instruction shifts toward teacher think-alouds to highlight genre features and text structures. Again, across grades, the Genre Frames anchor charts and guiding questions are provided to support students' analysis; however, explicit instruction in naming and defining text structures becomes more limited.

Lessons include resources such as Nonfiction Text Structures, which include common language used for each structure. Additionally, some attention is given to the organization of information to determine a text structure. For instance, during a Grade 5 think-aloud, the teacher points out that dates used as subheadings indicate a sequence structure for organizing the events in the text. Instruction, however, focuses largely on the headings and details, rather than explicitly addressing sequence signal words. Reviewers also noted that RedThread misses some opportunities to teach signal words within the context of what students are reading. For example, in a Grade 5, Unit 5 lesson about noticing a shift in subtopics, the teacher models how to notice a shift without mentioning the specific signal words that could indicate it (p. 79).

In Grade 5, students are also asked to discuss how an author structures a text, often through comparison across texts. While this encourages higher-level thinking, a clear, direct statement identifying the specific text structure (e.g., cause and effect, sequence, problem-solution) is not always evident. For example, teaching points that emphasize an author's key ideas and structural choices prompt analysis but do not consistently guide students to explicitly name or apply text-structure terminology.

SECTION 3: Reading Comprehension

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

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR READING COMPREHENSION	SCORE	
3.1: Comprehension strategies such as identifying the main idea, summarizing, noting text structure, inferencing, and fix-ups are not taught and practiced throughout the year using a gradual release of responsibility (i.e., I do, we do, you do) using appropriate instructional text that students can accurately decode.	2	
3.2: Students are asked to independently apply reading comprehension strategies primarily in short, disconnected readings at the expense of engaging in knowledge-building text sets.	1	
3.3: Emphasis is on independent reading and book choice without engaging with complex texts.	1	
3.4: Materials for comprehension instruction are predominantly predictable and/or leveled texts.	1	
3.5: Students are not taught methods to monitor their comprehension while reading.	1	

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Finding the main idea is an essential element of the Foundations Units in Grades 3-5, with one lesson per week dedicated to modeling this skill in both fiction and nonfiction decodable texts. Lessons in comprehension are organized using a gradual release of responsibility. For example, in Grade 5 Knowledge Unit 5, Lesson 5, the teacher models how to identify the main idea at the beginning of the read-aloud. For the next section of the read-aloud, the teacher provides guiding questions to help students practice this skill before they finish reading the text by themselves, while applying the strategy and jotting their ideas into their Unit Portfolios. They end the lesson by sharing their thinking in Discourse Clubs and then as a class to reinforce the practice. However, some comprehension strategies, such as questioning, are not taught explicitly or with the same frequency as other strategies, like finding the main idea. Fix-up strategies are also only taught in regard to fluency, and are not adapted to address comprehension.

While elements of gradual release are present, the instructional framework does not explicitly name or call out instruction aligned to a clear “I do, we do, you do” progression. Instead, this sequence appears to be inferred rather than explicitly articulated for teachers, creating an assumption that instructors with a strong instructional knowledge base will independently enact the progression—an expectation that is challenging to implement consistently in practice. In particular, the “we do” phase (guided practice) is frequently less explicit than the others. Questioning is evident throughout lessons, and metacognitive practices and self-monitoring are supported through tools such as Genre Frames, rereading with a purpose, and strategy-focused discussion. Teachers also model thinking through practices such as “model jotting.”

However, the instructional guidance does not consistently address what teachers should do when students demonstrate confusion or lack understanding. In other words, how to respond when students do not yet grasp the concept is not clearly articulated. “Back pocket” questions are provided for teachers to scaffold their questioning, but the review team found that these connections, which are meant to be explicit, are sometimes indirect. Additionally, teacher guidance sometimes lacks clarity. For example, in Grade 2, a literature response task presents an opportunity to address text structure, but the teaching points guiding that instruction are not clearly defined, leaving greater responsibility on the teacher to make the instructional moves explicit.

All texts students read in the Foundation and Knowledge Units are meant to build background on the unit’s overarching topic. For example, the topic in Kindergarten, Unit 4 is democracy, so students read decodables like *A Classroom Vote* in the Foundations Unit and listen to read-alouds such as *The President of the Jungle*, and *Vote for Our Future*, in the Knowledge Unit. Students practice comprehension strategies, like identifying story problems as well as how characters attempt to solve them, when using these knowledge-building texts. Students do engage in independent application of comprehension strategies after guided practice in a lesson, especially in the older grades. For example, in the Grade 5 Foundations Unit, after a lesson on main idea and another on craft and structure, students apply these skills and strategies at the end of the week as they independently read a decodable passage. Students also engage in independent practice of comprehension strategies in the Knowledge Units. After teacher modeling and guided practice, students read an excerpt of the read-aloud on their own, practicing the comprehension strategy, and adding their thinking to a chart in their Student Portfolio.

Independent reading without exposure to complex texts is not emphasized; students only engage in independent reading of knowledge-building texts related to the unit's topic. For example, after reading the article, "Search and Rescue Kids," in the Grade 5 Foundations Unit 5, students read "Bare-Bones Survival." Both texts are about survival skills, and build background knowledge about the rescue of the soccer team in Thailand. RedThread does require 30 minutes of independent reading outside of class, called Thematic Independent Reading. For this, students must choose a text related to the unit's topic for their independent reading book in order to continue developing their knowledge about the unit. Furthermore, each grade level includes grade-level Anchor Discussion and Launch materials to support comprehension.

The curriculum features a variety of authentic, complex texts for comprehension rather than predictable and/or leveled texts. For example, in kindergarten, students read the text "Not Done Yet," by Tameka Fryer, which is a biography of Shirley Chisholm. Within this text, students learn about complex concepts such as prejudice and the New York State Assembly, and learn challenging vocabulary such as "hallowed" and "neglected."

Finally, RedThread includes lessons designed to support students' overall understanding of text. Students are taught to monitor their oral reading by recognizing and correcting errors as they read and to use strategies to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words. In addition, students are taught comprehension strategies such as identifying the main idea, summarizing, and retelling to help them construct an overall understanding of texts. For example, in Kindergarten Unit 4, students learn to retell stories by identifying the problem and solution. This instruction is supported by Genre Frames, teacher modeling, and guided discussions.

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 is an isolated add-on.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Letter formation is explicitly taught in the Kindergarten Foundations Unit. During this procedure, the teacher models letter formation, then students practice with “air writing” before writing the letter on a whiteboard or a piece of grid paper. However, explicit review of letter formation is not included within the unit beyond application (i.e., writing words during dictation checks or learning to begin sentences with capital letters). Furthermore, explicit handwriting instruction is available only in kindergarten and the first three units of Grade 1.

Once letter formation is taught, students are generally expected to use correct letter formation in their writing. While students are given ample opportunities to write in every lesson, and teachers have opportunities to provide feedback on writing content, explicit review of letter formation is limited. In Grade 2 Foundations, in particular, there are no clearly defined opportunities to revisit or practice letter formation or to review phonics sounds in connection with handwriting. Thus, the role of teacher knowledge will be critical to integrate error correction and additional practice for students working toward accurate letter formation.

Letter formation practice is included twice per week in the Kindergarten Foundations Units, with two to three letters introduced at a time based on shared visual features (e.g., uppercase “P” and “R”). Students are asked to write frequently during Foundations lessons through the Write It routine; however, letter formation is not explicitly taught or systematically reviewed during this practice beyond the general expectation that “students use the correct letter formation to write the letter that makes the sound” (Kindergarten Foundations Unit 4: Teacher Guide, p. 34).

4B: Writing – Spelling

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

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

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

In RedThread's K-3 lessons, Segment to Spell and Build is an integral procedure. During this routine, the teacher dictates the word, the students chorally repeat the word, and the teacher clarifies the word and gives its definition. Then, the students segment the sound to build the word on their magnetic boards. One student shares their spelling, the class checks the spelling by chorally segmenting and blending, and students finish by saying the letter name. Similar protocols are used during the Segment to Spell and Write procedure. Reviewers noted that teacher modeling of encoding is not always present in this procedure, but there are certain lessons that model how to segment words to spell (e.g., Kindergarten Foundations, Unit 4, Lesson 1A, p. 44). Furthermore, the words that students segment to spell, build, and write match the lesson's concept. For example, in Kindergarten Foundations Unit 4, Lesson 21A, students are taught the FLSZ rule using words that end in a doubled consonant. During spelling practice, all focus words (e.g., *doll*, *pass*, *tiff*, *fill*) directly reinforce this concept, while additional review words revisit previously taught phonics patterns. Teachers also incorporate one or two teacher-identified words from the Weekly Unit Word List that include known challenge spots.

In Grades 3–5, spelling is incorporated during the Morphology and Syllable Routines. During the Morphology Routine, students apply newly learned morphemes by spelling a word, identifying and marking its parts, and using those parts to determine the word’s meaning. The Syllable Routine: Segment to Write activity follows a similar structure; however, after spelling the word, students are additionally required to scoop vowel types and divide the word into syllables. While the target word is drawn from the whole group read-aloud text, it does not necessarily align with or reinforce the phonics concept being taught. Reviewers also observed that Grades 3–5 lack a clear spelling scope and sequence. In many lessons, spelling practice is limited to a single word, which diminishes practice opportunities. Reviewers also suggested that RedThread consider adding morpheme-based spelling lists to support more systematic and transferable learning. While some lessons include strong connections between phonics, morphology, and sentence-level application, particularly in Grade 3, where students apply suffix spelling rules to read, spell, and determine meaning, this approach is not consistently implemented across the program.

Phoneme-grapheme mapping is a core component of spelling instruction in Grades K–2. During spelling routines, teachers dictate a sound, students repeat it, identify the corresponding letter, and write the letter that represents the sound. Students then name the letter aloud, reinforcing the sound-symbol connection. Phoneme segmentation is also embedded in the spelling protocol. Teachers prompt students to chorally segment words using kinesthetic cues, then segment each word sound by sound while naming the corresponding letters as they write. In Grades 3–5, instruction shifts to analyzing words at the syllable and morpheme level. Students are prompted to identify vowel patterns, determine syllable types, and segment words accordingly when spelling. Focus questions emphasize analysis and application. Examples include “How do we spell the word?” “How do we scoop the vowels to divide the syllables?” and “What syllable types and vowel sounds do we hear?” (Grade 5 Foundations Unit 5: Teacher Guide, pp. 155, 158).

In Grades K-2, decoding patterns are featured in encoding lessons. For example, in Kindergarten Foundations Unit 4, Lesson 8A, students learn about the consonant digraphs “sh-” and “ch-” in the concept launch lesson and then practice spelling and writing words with these digraphs (e.g., “hush,” “Chad,” “gash,” “shop,” “chap”). In Grades 3-5, students are often asked to spell words drawn directly from the text rather than those explicitly aligned with the lesson’s phonics focus. For example, in Grade 5 Foundations Unit 5, Lesson 5, students learn about silent “h” spelling patterns and “ti” sound-spelling correspondences; however, the word selected for spelling practice is “steadied,” which comes from the core text *Emerging From the Darkness*, but does not reinforce the targeted phonics patterns. Reviewers observed a stronger alignment within the Grades 3-5 Morphology Routine. In the same lesson, students review the root “aqua,” read multiple words containing this root, and then spell the word “aquatic” before analyzing its meaning. Although “aquatic” is also drawn from *Emerging From the Darkness*, it directly reflects the instructional focus of the morphology lesson, demonstrating more intentional alignment between instruction and practice.

In Grades K-2, students practice spelling patterns by segmenting and blending during the Build It and Write It Routines. When learning “sight words” during the Sight Words Routine, the teacher guides students in orthographically mapping the word before students repeat the word using the say-spell-say pattern. Afterward, they practice air writing the word before writing it in their Unit Portfolios or on their whiteboards. In Grades 3-5, spelling instruction typically requires students to spell the word first, before analyzing it through vowel scooping, syllable division, or marking morphemes. After completing this process, students share their spellings with the class. Additionally, in the upper grades, spelling is incorporated during morphology and syllable instruction; however, the words are not practiced beyond the initial analysis. Reviewers noted this is a missed opportunity that could be expanded on.

Finally, RedThread teaches spelling patterns in a systematic progression. For example, students learn vowel spellings by focusing on syllable types rather than all the spelling patterns for one phoneme at once. In kindergarten during week 28, students learn vowel-consonant-e words with “a,” “i,” and “o,” yet don’t learn the “ea” vowel pattern until week 31. Then, in Grades 3-5, students revisit previously taught spelling patterns and build upon their initial understandings. For example, after learning about the phoneme /h/ in the younger grades, students learn about four of the “silent h” spelling patterns in Grade 4. Later, in Grade 5, students review this pattern and learn two additional “silent h” rules.

4C: Writing – Composition

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

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR COMPOSITION	SCORE	
4.15: Writing tasks and prompts are provided with minimal instruction for the skills needed to complete them and little time for planning prior to writing.	2	
4.16: Writing assignments are primarily unstructured with few models or graphic organizers.	1	
4.17: Conventions, grammar, and sentence structure are not explicitly taught, and opportunities for practice to develop automaticity are not provided; instead, they are addressed opportunistically.	2	
4.18: Writing instruction and assignments are focused primarily on narrative writing or unstructured student choice.	1	
4.19: Students are not taught the writing process (i.e., planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing).	1	
4.20: Writing is taught as a standalone skill and is not used to further reading comprehension.	1	

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Specific lessons are included to plan writing and target the writing process. For example, in Kindergarten Knowledge Unit 4, students study a mentor text, determine a topic, plan important ideas, add a title, and discuss their ideas before beginning to write. Additionally, throughout the Knowledge Units, students compose multiple pieces, providing frequent opportunities to engage in the writing process. However, because of this structure, not every unit places a heavy focus on each stage of the writing process. For instance, in Grade 5 Knowledge Unit 5, students spend only three lessons writing and revising their School Chronicles Articles and two lessons writing, revising, and editing their opinion piece.

Reviewers also noted that additional instruction may be required to support students' understanding of specific skills. Again, in Grade 5 Knowledge Unit 5, students are expected to paraphrase some of the information from their interviews for their School Chronicle Articles. Students study a mentor text and recognize that the journalist conveys ideas using different words; however, beyond this recognition, there is no explicit instruction on how students might paraphrase quotes in their own writing beyond simply changing the wording. Furthermore, more information may be needed to explain different parts of the writing process. For example, in Kindergarten Knowledge Unit 4, Lesson 23B, students are encouraged to restate their opinion and include a reason or convincing information when writing the conclusion of their persuasive speech. However, students were previously taught to include reasons to support their opinion in the body of the speech. The lesson does not explicitly explain how reasons in the conclusion should differ from those presented earlier, resulting in missing guidance on the purpose and function of a concluding reason.

Graphic organizers are frequently used to plan writing. For example, when planning for their School Chronicles Article, 5th-grade students are provided with a mentor outline and a blank graphic organizer with beginning, middle, end, and text features sections. Mentor texts are frequently used to scaffold students' understanding. For example, in the Kindergarten Knowledge Unit 4, students study mentor texts for each of their writing pieces, including their literature response, campaign poster, and persuasive speech.

RedThread includes dedicated language lessons that explicitly teach conventions and grammar concepts. For example, in Grade 5 Knowledge Unit 5, students receive instruction on using commas in lists, after introductory elements, and in direct address, as well as using semicolons and formatting titles of works. These language lessons also include structured opportunities for guided practice. For instance, when Grade 5 students learn to use commas in lists, they are first introduced to the rule, along with examples and non-examples. After analyzing the differences and identifying the purpose of the rule, the class collaboratively discusses two examples before students independently practice ten items in their Unit Portfolios. Students then share their responses in the Writer's Circle and revise their work as needed. Reviewers noted that eight to ten items are a typical amount of practice for grammar and conventions concepts in Unit Portfolios; however, the team cautioned that some students may require additional opportunities to develop automaticity. Although students are reminded to apply previously taught skills during drafting and encounter these concepts again through editing checklists, reminders alone do not provide the same level of reinforcement as explicit, guided practice.

Writing lessons provide instruction across a range of writing types and purposes. For example, in Grade 5 Knowledge Unit 5, students compose both a School Chronicles Article and an opinion piece. Students also receive instruction in responding to literature, including how to deconstruct prompts and support ideas with evidence. Short, embedded writing tasks, such as quick writes and quick draws, are used throughout the Foundations and Knowledge Units to support text comprehension. For instance, in Kindergarten Knowledge Unit 4, Lesson 11, after reading *I Am George Washington*, students respond to the prompt, “How would you describe George Washington?” This task deepens comprehension by requiring students to identify character traits while practicing how to support a claim with evidence (pp. 192-196).

The team observed that some information presented in the reading and writing lessons includes contradictions. For example, in Kindergarten Knowledge Unit 4, Lesson 17a, students are taught that “reasons are evidence that may include information, facts, and details” (pp. 267-343). However, in Lesson 22b, students are taught that “a persuasive reason is a statement that explains why you want someone to agree with you or do something you want” (pp. 267-343). While both lessons address the use of reasons, they frame those reasons differently: one emphasizes evidence to support an opinion, and the other emphasizes influence on an audience. Greater instructional consistency and explicit comparison between opinion-based reasons and persuasive reasons would help students understand the nuanced shift in purpose and build connections between the two forms of writing.

Findings:

COMPONENTS SUPPORTING ASSESSMENT

SECTION 5: Assessment

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

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

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR ASSESSMENT	SCORE
5.6: Assessments result in benchmarks according to a leveled text gradient.	1
5.7: Foundational skills assessments are primarily running records or similar assessments that are based on whole language or cueing strategies (e.g., 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.	3
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).	2
5.13: Multilingual Learners are not assessed in their home language.	4

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

On the Benchmark assessments for kindergarten, students are assessed on the following: letter knowledge; letter sounds; rhyme recognition; sound isolation; syllable and sound blending, segmentation, and deletion; decoding; letter encoding; and letter formation. During the Dictation Checks in Grades K-2, students are assessed on letter sounds, focus words, review words, sight words, and writing sentences. Timed reads are also provided for Day 5 lessons for the K-2 decodable text and the 3-5 independent close reading text. RedThread's Marking Template provides teachers with explicit guidance on how to record student errors, directing them to mark omissions, insertions, and repetitions, and to note in the right margin any miscues that affect meaning or reflect phonics patterns.

Reviewers found no evidence that assessments are benchmarked according to a leveled-text gradient. For example, the Fluency Criteria list measures students' rate, accuracy, and prosody on a four-point scale ranging from "not meeting criteria" to "exceeding criteria," rather than anchoring performance to leveled text. The Benchmark Foundations assessments are not based on whole-language or cuing strategies; during the Text Decoding assessment, students are evaluated on accuracy, rate, and prosody.

Regarding assessment of phonics skills, students are assessed during weekly Dictation Checks in the Kindergarten Foundations Units. Here, students write the letter corresponding to a given sound and encode a dictated decodable word, sight word, and sentence. In addition, the Kindergarten End-of-Year Benchmark assessment requires students to produce letter sounds when shown letters and to demonstrate sound encoding by writing the letter(s) that represent the sounds they hear in words. Students are also assessed on their ability to decode words with familiar phonics patterns and sight words. In the Foundations Units, after each week, students read a new independent text that assesses their skills from that week, including phonics. For instance, in Grade 5 Foundations Unit 5, students learn about silent letters "h," (e.g., honest), "ps," (e.g., psalm), and "ti" (e.g., partial), along with related spelling patterns. On that week's assessment, students are asked to determine whether an underlined word containing one of these patterns has the same sound as a similarly spelled word. However, no Foundations Benchmark assessment is required for students in Grades 3-5. Reviewers also observed that RedThread primarily uses real words to assess decoding skills. This approach is evident in both the program's Benchmark Assessments and the weekly Dictation Checks within the K-2 Foundations units.

Phonemic awareness is assessed as part of the Kindergarten End-of-Year Benchmark assessment, in which students demonstrate sound blending, segmentation, and isolation. Phonemic awareness is not explicitly assessed during the weekly Dictation Checks in the K-2 Foundations Units. However, teachers are encouraged to formatively assess students during daily phonemic awareness warm-ups, identify two or three sounds that present challenges, and use this information to plan additional words for targeted practice within the routines.

Oral Reading Fluency is assessed through the Benchmark Foundations assessments administered at the beginning, middle, and end of the year in Grades K-2. Teachers are also encouraged to formatively assess a small number of students each week during the Read portion of Decodable Text lessons (Grades K-2) or Fluency lessons (Grades 3-5) using the Fluency Criteria Lists. Assessments are also provided each fifth day of text reading, although the team noted that these were initially challenging to locate.

The Benchmark Assessments in the K-2 Foundations Units primarily focus on word recognition skills and do not assess aspects of language comprehension, such as vocabulary or syntax. RedThread does embed Language Quizzes throughout the Knowledge Units to assess a range of language skills, including identifying the meanings of multiple-meaning words and writing complete sentences. In addition, end-of-unit Knowledge assessments include comprehension items (e.g., identifying the main idea), vocabulary tasks (e.g., determining word meaning in context), grammar and conventions, morphemes, and comparing and contrasting texts. Despite these measures, more explicit and comprehensive assessments may be needed to fully evaluate students' language comprehension, particularly in vocabulary depth, syntactic understanding, and broader language comprehension skills.

Finally, RedThread does not include resources to assess multilingual learners in their home language. As such, educators would also need to look to outside assessment tools to ensure that multilingual learners are assessed in their home language. However, the team noted that this would most likely be the case with most core curricula programs.

Final Report Summary

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

STRENGTHS

RedThread exhibits significant strengths in its commitment to the code-based aspects of reading, closely aligning with the science of reading principles. A major strength is its explicit and sustained focus on decoding instruction, including the allocation of substantial instructional time to phonics supported by modern, aligned decodable texts. This work is reinforced by explicitly teaching phonics, morphology, and syllabication, equipping students with the tools needed to analyze and break down words, ensuring they develop mastery over the alphabetic code.

RedThread's strong attention to phonological and phonemic awareness establishes the critical auditory foundation required for decoding success. As students progress through the grades, the curriculum continues to build depth through advanced word study, incorporating robust morphology and syllable instruction to support the reading and understanding of multisyllabic and academically complex vocabulary.

RedThread's instructional routines are clearly established early on. This clarity supports teachers in consistent instructional delivery and helps students internalize procedures. Additionally, the repetition of these routines benefits both teachers and students, reinforcing predictability and instructional efficiency.

RedThread's knowledge-building approach is a notable strength. Reviewers found the topic alignment between the Foundations and Knowledge curricula especially effective, as students read decodable texts while also engaging with academic texts and writing about the same topic, supporting both decoding and knowledge development. At the same time, reviewers noted that instructional alignment across strands could be strengthened. For example, while Foundations lessons explicitly teach skills such as character and story structure, these concepts are not consistently revisited or reinforced within the corresponding Knowledge Units, limiting opportunities for transfer and coherence.

RedThread makes a clear effort to move beyond traditional classic texts by including more contemporary and inclusive selections, as well as original texts developed by the program. For instance, in Kindergarten Foundations, Unit 4, RedThread authors created the decodable text, "Kamala Harris," which allows students to engage with relevant content while applying newly taught phonics skills.

While RedThread features a variety of strong vocabulary words aligned to its themes and topics, the program prioritizes breadth over depth of word knowledge. Reviewers recommend increasing opportunities for deeper word learning, including repeated exposure and application across varied contexts. Additionally, the program's word work and morphemic analysis lessons could be more intentionally integrated with its vocabulary instruction to better support semantic knowledge and transfer.

RedThread's grammar instruction reflects a similar pattern to its vocabulary instruction, with an emphasis on breadth rather than depth. Reviewers noted limited opportunities for repeated practice and revisiting previously taught concepts, both of which are necessary to support mastery.

RedThread's instructional sequence provides limited opportunities for review within the program's instructional units; once concepts are introduced, they are not consistently revisited, especially in the upper grades. Reviewers recommend increasing interleaved practice and being more intentional about where key concepts reappear across lessons and units.

Reviewers noted that aspects of RedThread's teacher-facing materials could be more streamlined and user-friendly. Managing multiple resources, navigating online components, and using interactive features can be challenging, which may impact teachers' ability to plan and deliver instruction efficiently. Furthermore, concerns regarding the overall usability and organization of materials suggest a potential barrier to consistent implementation. RedThread's lack of strategy-specific differentiation limits the curriculum's effectiveness, especially for students requiring targeted, explicit instruction and intervention.

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PUBLISHER'S RESPONSE



A **Lavinia** Literacy Program

**RedThread,
Grades K-5)**

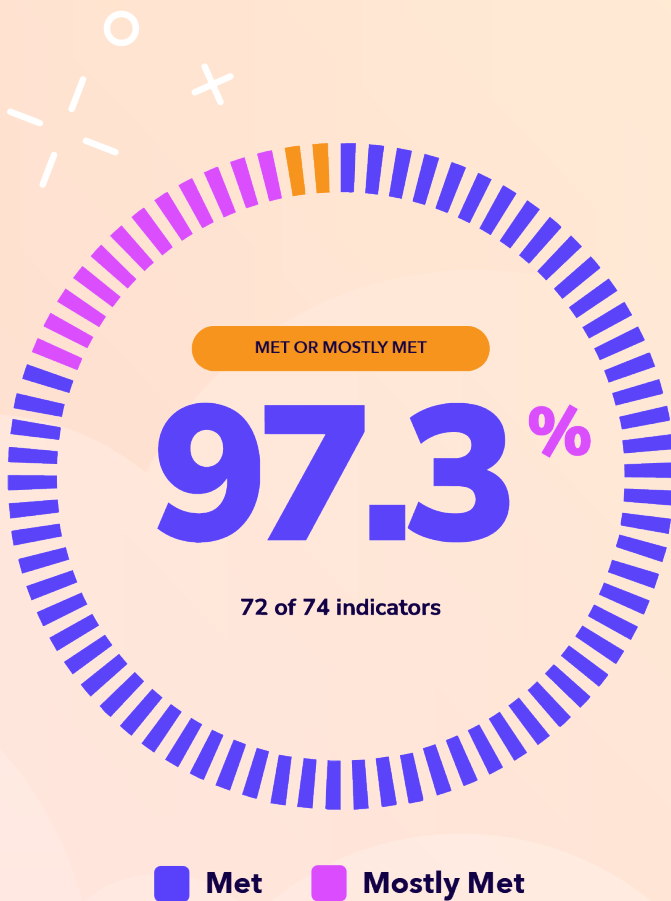


A **Lavinia** Literacy Program

We appreciate The Reading League's rigorous and research-based process for evaluating curriculum aligned to the science of reading and are grateful for the opportunity to engage in this review.

RedThread Literacy is a comprehensive K–8 program that combines Foundations and Knowledge components, integrating engaging knowledge-building topics and themes with reading, writing, and foundational skills through explicit, systematic instruction grounded in evidence-based practices.

This publisher's response outlines key strengths, clarifications, and areas of continuous improvement as we continue to refine the program in alignment with research and classroom implementation.

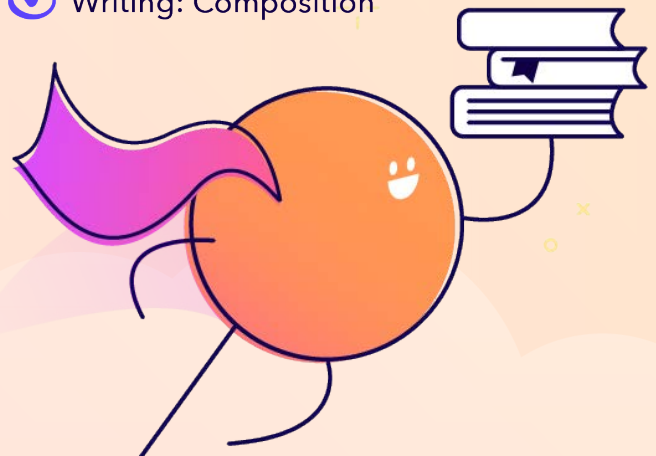


Each tick on the ring represents a single evaluated indicator.

Only **two** of the 74 indicators scored below the "Mostly Met" threshold.

Categories with **no red flags** or minimal evidence of red flags include:

- ✓ Phonological and Phoneme Awareness
- ✓ Phonics and Phonic Decoding
- ✓ Fluency
- ✓ Background Knowledge
- ✓ Vocabulary
- ✓ Language Structures
- ✓ Verbal Reasoning
- ✓ Literacy Knowledge
- ✓ Reading Comprehension
- ✓ Writing: Handwriting
- ✓ Writing: Spelling
- ✓ Writing: Composition



REDTHREAD STRENGTHS

Explicit Instruction Based on the Science of Reading



Reviewers noted that RedThread demonstrates strong alignment to evidence-based practices and the science of reading, with **"significant strengths in its commitment to the code-based aspects of reading"** and an **"explicit and sustained focus on decoding instruction."** Instruction is supported by clearly established routines that **"support teachers in consistent instructional delivery"** and reinforce predictability for students.

A coherent scope and sequence ensures that **"concepts are repeated across multiple years... [providing] an opportunity to strengthen and refine learning over time,"** while **"new concepts [are] introduced in a way that integrates previously taught skills,"** demonstrating cumulative and interleaved practice. Together, these elements promote accurate, automatic reading development grounded in research-based instruction.

Knowledge-Building



Reviewers noted that RedThread builds strong content knowledge and maintains text coherence, with **"thematic cohesion across grade levels through recurring ideas and themes."** The report highlights that **"RedThread's knowledge-building approach is a notable strength,"** with effective alignment between the Foundations and Knowledge strands. **"Within each unit, texts are organized around a common theme,"** allowing students to build content knowledge through a combination of independent, decodable, and complex read-aloud texts. Together, these structures support sustained engagement with content and promote cumulative knowledge development across grades.

Rich and Authentic Texts



Students reading rich and authentic texts is central to RedThread's design because we believe in developing a love of reading in students, in addition to confidence and proficiency. Reviewers noted this attention to rich texts, stating that **"RedThread makes a clear effort to move beyond traditional classic texts by including more contemporary and inclusive selections, as well as original texts developed by the program."**

RedThread intentionally prioritizes students engaging with whole texts, allowing them to build deeper understanding, sustain meaning across a complete work, and develop the stamina and joy that come from fully experiencing books reviewers described as **"authentic, complex, and diverse"** and **"high-interest"** for students.

Integration of Reading and Writing



Reading and writing are purposefully integrated across the program, as **"writing is an essential component of both the Knowledge and Foundations strands."** As noted in the report, **"RedThread demonstrates strong integration of reading and writing through text-based writing tasks, literature responses, and explicit instruction in using textual evidence, ensuring that writing consistently reinforces comprehension."**

Writing tasks are grounded in texts, as **"projects are connected to the unit's reading,"** and **"literature responses are integrated throughout the units... to support connections between reading and writing."** Students also **"receive explicit instruction on how to strengthen their writing about reading,"** supporting both comprehension and composition.

REDTHREAD STRENGTHS *(continued)*



Explicit Vocabulary and Language Development

RedThread demonstrates strong explicit vocabulary and language development, as reviewers note that **"vocabulary instruction is explicit, and words are regularly reviewed and used by students,"** with **"Tier 2 vocabulary... explicitly taught in context and revisited through multiple exposures."** Students are exposed to **"a variety of complex texts with rich vocabulary and complex syntax beginning in kindergarten,"** supporting early and sustained language development.

Vocabulary is deeply integrated across instruction, as **"vocabulary is incorporated throughout each unit including teaching points, writing and discussion prompts, and read-alouds,"** and students **"encounter the word across additional components... providing repeated opportunities to engage with the word in meaningful contexts."** Together, these elements ensure students build both the breadth and depth of word knowledge.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

We value the insights provided in this report and are committed to continuous improvement. The following section addresses key areas identified for improvement and clarification.

Practice Opportunities

Reviewers found that **"RedThread includes evidence of deliberate practice throughout its program,"** and noted that **"phonics skills build logically, with new concepts introduced in a way that integrates previously taught skills."** Reviewers also highlighted that **"the foundational skills scope and sequence documents for K–2 and 3–5 show that concepts are repeated across multiple years,"** reflecting opportunities for spaced and distributed practice. At the same time, reviewers identified an opportunity to strengthen the consistency of review and interleaved practice across lessons and units, particularly in the upper grades, to ensure students have more systematic opportunities to revisit and apply previously taught concepts over time.

In response, we are enhancing lesson materials to ensure review, cumulative practice, and interleaving are more systematically embedded across the year, particularly in Grades 3–5, to support mastery and automatization beyond teacher-identified challenge spots. We have also revised our detailed scope and sequence documents to outline specific weekly review concepts by grade level and are continuing to map interleaved practice vertically across grades to clarify when concepts are introduced, reinforced, and expected to reach proficiency.

Usability

RedThread's intentional design prioritizes clarity, consistency, and usability, enabling teachers to plan efficiently and deliver structured, coherent instruction. Reviewers noted that **"the program includes systematic routines that follow a consistent instructional flow across units and grades,"** and that **"the repetition of these routines benefits both teachers and students, reinforcing predictability and instructional efficiency."** This consistency enhances usability by providing clear, predictable structures that support efficient planning and implementation. However, reviewers noted that **"Managing multiple resources, navigating online components, and using interactive features can be challenging."** We appreciate this feedback and are taking steps to improve usability, including a streamlined digital platform that gives teachers easier access to online resources and interactive features.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT *(continued)*

A Note on Formative Assessment and "Challenge Spots"

RedThread supports responsive, data-informed instruction through embedded formative assessment and routine-based practice. Reviewers noted that **"a significant part of instruction relies on teachers identifying 'challenge spots,' which require them to identify error patterns,"** and that these opportunities are embedded across "almost every routine in K–2 Foundations." This intentional design positions teachers to identify patterns in student performance and adjust instruction using targeted words, prompts, scaffolds, and systematic review opportunities.

To further support implementation, particularly for novice teachers developing expertise with diagnostic instruction, we expanded the instructional recommendations and "Responding to Assessments" resources available on our digital platform. These resources provide additional guidance for analyzing student errors, identifying instructional priorities, and selecting targeted next steps, further reinforcing teachers' ability to consistently apply explicit, systematic, and evidence-aligned practices in daily instruction.

Extended Practice in Vocabulary and Grammar

Reviewers noted that while RedThread **"features a variety of strong vocabulary words aligned to its themes and topics,"** lessons could benefit from increased depth of practice. We are actively reviewing opportunities to deepen word learning through increased repeated exposure and application across varied contexts. We have already begun to address a similar need for greater cumulative practice in grammar.

Specifically, we have developed supplemental grammar lessons that specifically target key previously taught concepts in sentence composition, accompanied by clear guidance for teachers on implementation. We are committed to ensuring these additions strengthen both semantic knowledge and students' ability to apply grammatical understanding over time.

OUR COMMITMENT

Lavinia Group is committed to continuously refining RedThread Literacy to ensure strong alignment with the science of reading and to support educators in delivering high-quality, evidence-based instruction. We are grateful for this review and will continue to evolve the program to better meet the needs of teachers and students.

