



Core Content Evidence Guide v2.1

English Language Arts

Grades K-2

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Introduction

The Evidence Guides are designed to be used alongside the Review Criteria and show how indicators are scored, their purpose and rationale, relevant research and standards connections related to them, and guidance for review teams on what to look for in materials.

While each indicator's scoring criteria explains how materials can meet expectations, materials can partially meet or not meet expectations for the following reasons:

- There are insufficient opportunities for student practice
- The teacher guidance provided for instruction is vague or general (not specific to the lesson, text, task, etc.)
- Materials meet some, but not all, scoring criteria for the indicator
- Materials meet the criteria sometimes, but not consistently throughout the program
- Materials do not meet the overall intent of the indicator

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

Criterion 1.1

Alphabet Knowledge (Grade K only)

Materials and instruction provide systematic and explicit instruction and practice for letter recognition.

What is the purpose of this Criterion?

This criterion addresses alphabet knowledge in Kindergarten. Alphabet knowledge is the understanding of letter forms, names, and corresponding sounds. Early learners need systematic, explicit instruction and opportunities to practice alphabet knowledge.

Research Connection

Research consistently shows a strong connection between letter-name and letter-sound knowledge in early readers. [Evans et al. \(2006\)](#) highlight that these skills are highly correlated, often in the range of .70 to .80, suggesting that familiarity with letter names facilitates easier access to letter sounds. This relationship is particularly important because many letter names contain the phoneme they represent, either in the initial (e.g., *p*, *t*) or final (e.g., *f*, *s*) position. As a result, letter-name knowledge not only improves letter recognition but also draws children’s attention to the sound structure of language, reinforcing phoneme-grapheme connections and supporting phonological awareness development.

Other researchers, including [Dougherty-Stahl \(2014\)](#), confirm that letter-name knowledge is one of the strongest predictors of a child’s ability to acquire letter-sound relationships. In addition, Stahl emphasizes the importance of using systematic and explicit instruction, rather than relying solely on incidental learning through shared storybook reading. While contextualized practice and transfer are important for application, young learners benefit most from direct, intentional instruction that supports mastery of discrete foundational skills.

Together, these findings underscore the importance of clear and explicit instruction in letter recognition and sound-symbol relationships, supported by structured practice opportunities that help students internalize the connections between visual symbols and spoken language.

Kindergarten Scoring:

Meets Expectations

- 9-10 points

Partially Meets Expectations

- 5-8 points

Does Not Meet Expectations

- < 5 points

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Criterion 1.1 | Materials and instruction provide systematic and explicit instruction and practice for letter recognition. |
| Indicator 1a | <p>Alphabet Knowledge</p> <p>1a.i. Materials provide systematic and explicit instruction in letter names and their corresponding sounds. (K)</p> <p>1a.ii. Materials provide opportunities for student practice in letter names and their corresponding sounds. (K)</p> <p>1a.iii. Materials provide explicit instruction and teacher modeling in printing and forming the 26 letters (uppercase and lowercase).</p> <p>1a.iv. Materials provide opportunities for student practice in printing and forming the 26 letters (uppercase and lowercase). (K)</p> |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Scoring: 1a.i. Materials provide systematic and explicit instruction in letter names and their corresponding sounds. (K) | | |
| 2 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 1 point Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a defined sequence for letter recognition instruction to be completed in a reasonable time frame over the school year. • Materials contain isolated, systematic, and explicit instruction for students to recognize all 26 lowercase and uppercase letters. | | |
| Scoring: 1a.ii. Materials provide opportunities for student practice in letter names and their corresponding sounds. (K) | | |
| 2 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 1 point Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials include sufficient practice opportunities for students to recognize all 26 lowercase and uppercase letters accurately and automatically. • Materials incorporate a variety of activities and resources for students to develop, practice, and reinforce | | |

(through cumulative review) alphabet knowledge.

Scoring:

1a.iii. Materials provide explicit instruction and teacher modeling in printing and forming the 26 letters (uppercase and lowercase).

2 points

Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.

1 point

Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.

0 points

Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.

- There is a defined sequence for letter formation, aligned to the scope and sequence of letter recognition, to be completed in a reasonable time frame over the school year.
- Materials include clear directions for the teacher concerning how to explain and model how to correctly form each of the 26 letters (uppercase and lowercase).
- Materials include teacher guidance for corrective feedback when needed for students.

Scoring:

1a.iv. Materials provide opportunities for student practice in printing and forming the 26 letters (uppercase and lowercase). (K)

2 points

Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.

1 point

Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.

0 points

Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.

- Materials include frequent opportunities for students to practice forming all of the 26 uppercase and lowercase letters.
- Materials include cumulative review of previously learned letter formation.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator focuses on instruction in alphabet knowledge. Fluent letter identification within print concepts is required for students to begin to read and spell. The identification of letters allows students to begin to understand the relationship between printed symbols and oral language. Students in Kindergarten need to recognize and name letters. Furthermore, they need to learn to visually identify and locate upper- and lowercase letters. Alphabetic knowledge in Kindergarten is connected to later literacy achievement. Letter-name knowledge is a strong predictor of students' knowing letter sounds.

In order to write stories, ideas, and thoughts, a student has to be able to print the letters that form words and sentences. Without explicit instruction in letter formation, students are limited in what they are able to write. Learning to correctly form the 52 letters is no easy feat for early literacy learners. While some letters are similar in uppercase and lowercase, many letters look very different in those forms.

Research or Standards connection:

Alphabet knowledge is widely recognized as one of the most reliable predictors of children's future reading achievement. Research consistently shows that students who enter kindergarten with limited knowledge of

letter names and sounds are more likely to experience reading difficulties. [Piasta and Wagner \(2010\)](#) highlight that early deficits in letter-name and letter-sound knowledge are linked to a higher likelihood of later reading challenges and classification as having reading disabilities. [Turnbull et al. \(2010\)](#) further affirm that children who can rapidly associate phonemes with graphemes—an ability rooted in solid alphabet knowledge—are better equipped to decode unfamiliar words and connect print to speech through the alphabetic principle.

Instructional design plays an essential role in how children acquire this knowledge. [Vander Hart et al. \(2009\)](#) emphasize the importance of introducing letters in a carefully planned order, avoiding confusable letter pairs (such as *b* and *d*) or similar vowel sounds when students are first learning. Their findings also support explicit teacher modeling of letter formation, including demonstration of pencil grip and paper positioning, as a foundational instructional technique.

Writing and motor development research also supports the integration of handwriting instruction into early literacy. [Brady \(2021\)](#) explains that handwriting not only reinforces letter identification and letter-sound correspondence but also builds neural connections that support language processing. She notes that poor handwriting can slow down and constrain student writing output, while skilled, automatic handwriting allows for better content and fluency. For early learners, systematic handwriting practice should be embedded alongside phoneme awareness and letter knowledge instruction to support automaticity and full literacy development.

Resources:

- [Basics: Alphabet Knowledge](#)
- [Want to Improve Children’s Writing? Don’t Neglect Their Handwriting](#)

Indicator 1a Guiding Question:

How do the materials provide explicit instruction and student practice of letter identification and printing letters?

Evidence Collection

In the Instructional Materials being reviewed:

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards at each grade level. Review:
 - Table of Contents (including prefatory materials to see the rationale for how letter identification and letter formation instruction is approached).
 - Scope and sequence within teacher resources for letter identification and letter formation.
 - Daily and weekly routines for learning and practicing new letter identification.
- Teacher Edition provides guidance and prompting for corrective feedback within each daily lesson.

Definition of terms:

- Letter identification: the ability to say the names of both upper- and lowercase letters of the alphabet quickly, without having to think very long about each letter.
- Letter recognition: the ability to identify letters by name, shape, and sound
- Letter naming: the ability to recognize letter shapes and associate them with a letter name

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?

- Does the teacher provide explicit instruction for the distinguishing features of every letter?
- Is there a scope and sequence for the instruction of every letter, both uppercase and lowercase?
- Does the teacher visually present similar letters at different times in the sequence?
- Does the teacher draw attention to letters-sound correspondences in student names and familiar environmental print (e.g., “M” in *McDonald’s*)?
- Does the teacher provide explicit, systematic instruction for each letter in the beginning through mid-year?
- Is the teacher providing daily opportunities for students to practice oral fluency in letter naming and visual recognition?
- Do materials allocate additional time and practice for letters that are more difficult to learn (e.g., *h, w, y, c, g, vowels, q, x*)?
- How is corrective feedback provided to students? Is it a separate resource or is corrective feedback provided in each daily lesson with specific teacher guidance aligned to the newly taught skill?
- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Are students frequently practicing identification and written formation of letters?
 - How do students identify letters?
 - Are students applying letter knowledge during meaningful print-rich experiences such as alphabet books, sharing reading, poetry posters, interactive writing, or daily message activities?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of letter recognition and the printing of letters in core materials.
- Discuss the amount of time spent on letter recognition and the printing of letters over the course of the school year. Is adequate instructional time devoted to letter recognition and printing across the year, and are students demonstrating development of these skills?
- Discuss how materials include lessons, activities, and routines for sufficient practice.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final ratings.

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

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| Criterion 1.1 | Materials and instruction provide systematic and explicit instruction and practice for letter recognition. |
| Indicator 1b | Materials regularly and systematically offer assessment opportunities that measure student progress through mastery of letter recognition and printing letters (as indicated by the program scope and sequence). (K) |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Scoring: | | |
| 2 points | 1 point | 0 points |
| Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials regularly and systematically provide a variety of assessment opportunities over the course of the year to demonstrate students' progress toward mastery and independence of letter recognition, and letter formation. Assessment materials provide teachers and students with information concerning students' current skills/level of understanding of letter recognition, and letter formation. Materials support teachers with instructional suggestions for assessment-based steps to help students to progress toward mastery in letter recognition, and letter formation. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines the quality of instructional materials intended for assessment of letter recognition.

Ongoing assessment of foundational skills allows the teacher to use various instruments, tools, observations, and student work samples to determine student progress. Foundational skill assessments should help a teacher determine a student's overall reading ability as well as subcomponents of each student's growth in foundational skills. Assessments (diagnostic, formative, summative, informal, formal, pre-assessments, post-assessments, screening assessments, running records, portfolios, checklists, observations, etc.) support the teacher in evaluating students' skills in order to plan effective instruction and activities for all students to make academic growth. These assessments inform the teacher of next steps for the whole group, small group, and individual instruction of foundational skills.

Quality materials will provide assessments for the teacher and students that assess student progress of foundational skills regularly and systematically during the day, week, month, and year.

Assessments of foundational skills are not intended to be a battery of tests administered to students. Materials should contain assessment opportunities that help the teacher monitor students' progress and then provide the

teacher with support to reteach when students are not successful in learning the foundational skill.

Research or Standards connection:

Monitoring and supporting students' development in print concepts, letter knowledge, and emergent writing is essential to ensuring early reading success. Cabell et al. (2007) emphasize the need for early educators to systematically assess young children's understanding of print in order to guide effective literacy instruction and intervention. Their research highlights that skills such as alphabet knowledge, letter-sound correspondence, and print awareness are among the most reliable predictors of future reading achievement. When assessment is regular, developmentally appropriate, and closely tied to instruction, it can support responsive teaching and targeted support in foundational literacy areas.

This research underscores the importance of integrating meaningful and observable assessment opportunities throughout the year to monitor students' progress in recognizing, naming, and forming letters. Instructionally aligned assessments help educators identify when students require teaching, additional practice, or adaptations to ensure students are developing the foundational print knowledge needed for fluent reading and writing.

Resources:

- [Assessment of Handwriting Skills](#)

Indicator 1b Guiding Question:

How do the materials provide assessment of letter identification and letter formation?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards at each grade level. Review:
 - Table of Contents (including prefatory materials to see the rationale for how assessment is approached)
 - Assessment sections (diagnostic assessments, checklists, rubrics, running records, observation forms)
 - Protocols for how to support students performing below grade level
- Look for evidence of systematic instruction AND assessment to support development of foundational skills.
- Teacher Edition identifies metrics and systems for progress monitoring the foundational skills to support the teacher in identifying students' growth toward reading grade level and for progress monitoring throughout the year.
- Look at questions and tasks in assessments (screeners, inventories, diagnostics).

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What assessment measures are included for foundational skills?
- Are diagnostic assessments offered at regular intervals?
- Are there pre-assessments and post-assessments?
- Do the materials provide teacher guidance on how to interpret assessment results and using the data to modify, scaffold, or intensify instruction?
- How are teachers supported in using assessment results (formal and informal) to guide instructional next steps?

- How is letter recognition assessed in K-1? Are oral naming, visual identification, and/or observational tools used?
- How frequently is student progress assessed?
- What in-the-moment assessment opportunities are included to give teachers immediate feedback on student learning?
- What tools or methods are provided for tracking student progress in letter recognition and formation over time?
- How do students participate in assessment?
- What kinds of feedback do students receive? Is the feedback based on lesson objectives?
- What instructional adjustments and protocols are recommended after the assessment? Are there opportunities for more practice, re-teaching, and/or alternative instructional practices suggested?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Do the materials provide regular and systematic assessment opportunities?
- Do the assessments include success criteria and help the teacher identify student progress toward mastery of letter recognition and formation?
- Do the assessment materials provide progress information for students to be supported and move toward independence in foundational skills?
- What guidance and/or protocols exist for the teacher to help students performing below grade level?
- Are the assessment materials aligned to the instruction?
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final ratings.

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

Criterion 1.2

Phonemic Awareness (Grades K-1 only)

Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based phonemic awareness.

What is the purpose of this Criterion?

This criterion addresses phonemic awareness in Kindergarten and Grade 1. Because phonemic awareness is a top predictor of later reading achievement, instruction in this area must be explicit, systematic, and aligned to a clear scope and sequence. Students benefit from carefully designed instructional progressions that introduce phonemic awareness skills in a logical order, from simpler tasks like isolation and blending to more complex tasks like manipulation.

Systematic instruction includes both the content and the sequence in which it is delivered, ensuring that students are gradually introduced to a wide range of phoneme-level skills while minimizing potential confusion (Mesmer & Griffith, 2005; Buckingham et al., 2019).

Explicit instruction is equally essential for student success. Instructional approaches that provide direct explanations, modeling, guided practice, and corrective feedback are more effective than incidental or discovery-based approaches. Scaffolding student learning through small, manageable steps and routinely checking for understanding allows all learners to engage with the material and build toward independence. This method ensures that students receive sufficient support while they are acquiring and applying new phonemic awareness skills (Archer & Hughes, 2011).

Together, these findings affirm that phonemic awareness instruction must be intentionally designed to build foundational reading skills that support successful phonological decoding and fluent word reading in the early years of school.

Research Connection

Phonemic awareness plays a central role in early reading acquisition and has been shown to significantly impact both word reading and reading comprehension. A synthesis of over 50 studies by the National Reading Panel found that explicit instruction in phonemic awareness improved children's ability to isolate and manipulate sounds in words. These gains translated into better performance in early reading and spelling, with long-term benefits evident across foundational literacy domains (Shanahan, 2005).

Recent work in reading science further emphasizes the cognitive processes behind these gains. Ehri (2020)

explains that as students learn to read and spell, they build on an internal alphabetic system that links graphemes to phonemes in the brain. This system not only supports decoding but also enhances memory for spoken words, deepening phonological processing and reinforcing the reciprocal relationship between speech and print.

Research also underscores the importance of sequencing instruction in a developmentally appropriate way. Students benefit most when they first develop strong phoneme-level awareness—such as blending and segmenting—before connecting those sounds to letters. Introducing phoneme awareness prior to or in tandem with letter instruction supports the acquisition of the alphabetic principle and avoids potential confusion between phonemes and letter names or shapes ([Brady, 2020](#)).

Finally, findings from the [International Dyslexia Association \(2022\)](#) affirm that instruction should prioritize phoneme awareness over broader phonological sensitivity tasks like rhyming or syllables. While these larger linguistic units may have instructional value, they are not required precursors for phonemic awareness development. Programs that focus directly on phonemes and then link those phonemes to graphemes are more effective for both beginning readers and students at risk of reading difficulty.

Together, these findings support phonemic awareness instruction that is explicitly taught, developmentally sequenced, and tightly integrated with phonics instruction.

Scoring:

Meets Expectations

- 14-16 points

Partially Meets Expectations

- 8-13 points

Does Not Meet Expectations

- < 8 points

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

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|---------------|--|
| Criterion 1.2 | Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based phonemic awareness. |
| Indicator 1c | Scope and sequence clearly delineate the sequence in which phonemic awareness skills are to be taught, with a clear, evidence-based explanation for the expected hierarchy of phonemic awareness competence. |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Scoring: | | |
| 4 points | 2 points | 0 points |
| Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials contain a clear, evidence-based explanation for the expected sequence for teaching phonemic awareness skills. Materials have a cohesive sequence of phonemic awareness instruction based on the expected hierarchy to build toward students' immediate application of the skills. Materials prioritize phonemic awareness instruction (isolation, blending, segmenting, manipulation) and introduce phonological sensitivity tasks (e.g., rhyming, syllables, onset-rime) only briefly and early in Kindergarten. Materials contain a phonemic awareness sequence of instruction and practice aligned to the phonics scope and sequence. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator focuses on the scope and sequence of phonemic awareness instruction. The learning of phonemic awareness includes a range of skills from simple to complex. Therefore, there is a hierarchy of phonemic awareness. Because each phonemic awareness skill builds upon previous skills, it is important that materials include resources for teaching each component of phonemic awareness and delineate the sequence in which phonemic awareness skills are to be taught, with a clear, evidence-based explanation for the expected hierarchy. Materials should include the evidence-based explanation with the intended scope and sequence. The sequence should progress from simpler tasks such as identifying the initial, final, and medial (vowel) sounds in words to more complex skills such as isolating and identifying the inner consonant clusters in words (eg: the /t/ in stop, the /n/ in bank). The sequence of phonemic awareness instruction should also align to the phonics scope and sequence. Materials may include a documented scope and sequence that provides instruction in phonemic awareness skills to include blending and segmenting phonemes and isolating and identifying phonemes that have been taught in previous lessons. In addition, the lesson should also include a phonemic awareness warm-up activity that aligns to the phonics portion of the lesson. Materials should connect the

phoneme to the grapheme as soon as possible. Majority of instruction should focus on phonemic awareness skills such as isolation, blending, and segmenting. Phonological awareness instruction, such as rhyming, onset/rime, and syllables, should be limited to the beginning of Kindergarten. Phonemic awareness instruction should include phonemes/groups of phonemes previously taught or the current instructional focus. According to Louisa Moats, “Tasks associated with early phonological awareness, while serving as ‘red flags’ or indicators of potential reading problems, are only moderately associated with early reading and spelling. Learning to be better at them is not necessarily going to lead to proficiency in what really counts. It is phoneme awareness—specifically, the ability to say the individual phonemes in words, to pull them apart, and to put them together—that enables kids to read and spell in an alphabetic writing system like English. That is what instruction should focus on, especially from mid-kindergarten onward ([Moats, Louisa. \(n.d.\).](#))”

Research or Standards connection:

Effective phonemic awareness instruction is grounded in a clear developmental sequence that reflects how students typically acquire the ability to hear and manipulate individual phonemes. According to [Brady \(2020\)](#), this progression often begins with identifying external phonemes—first the initial, then final sounds in CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words—and gradually moves to awareness of medial vowels and internal consonants in more complex structures. These early phoneme identity skills, especially with initial and final positions, are foundational in Kindergarten and support students in blending and segmenting words made up of two or three phonemes (e.g., CV, VC, CVC).

As students move into first grade, instruction should build on this foundation by expanding their awareness to the full range of phonemes in English, including more complex consonant blends, digraphs, diphthongs, and vowel teams. Brady recommends that blending and segmentation tasks evolve accordingly to include words with more advanced syllable structures. Additionally, deletion tasks and activities that integrate writing help students solidify their understanding of how phonemes function within increasingly complex word forms.

This sequence—from simple to complex—ensures that phonemic awareness instruction is not only developmentally appropriate but also strategically aligned with phonics instruction. It supports students in acquiring the manipulation skills that are essential for decoding unfamiliar words, spelling accurately, and building a foundation for fluent, automatic reading.

Resources:

- [Building Phoneme Awareness: Know What Matters](#)
- [A 2020 Perspective on Research Findings on Alphabetics \(Phoneme Awareness and Phonics\): Implications for Instruction](#)
- [They Say You Can Do Phonemic Awareness Instruction “In the Dark”, But Should You? A Critical Evaluation of the Trend Toward Advanced Phonemic Awareness Training](#)

Indicator 1c Guiding Questions:

What is the scope and sequence for phonemic awareness skills?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards at each grade level. Review:
 - The overview and scope and sequence of phonemic awareness.
 - Unit overviews for phonemic awareness objectives.

- The daily lesson plans for the phonemic awareness instruction per day.
- Examine when phonemic awareness instruction begins in the scope and sequence.
- Examine how long materials spend on other phonological sensitivity tasks such as: alliteration, creating and recognizing rhyme, syllables, onset/rime.
- Examine supplemental documents for information about the sequence of phonemic awareness.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - What is the documented sequence of phonemic awareness instruction across Kindergarten and Grade 1?
 - Does the sequence of instruction follow a research-based progression from simple to complex to phonemic awareness skills? Does it include isolating phonemes (initial, final, medial), then blending and segmenting, and introduce manipulation skills later in Kindergarten or in Grade 1?
 - Follows this general progression:
 - 1. isolating (initial, final, medial)
 - 2. segmenting and blending
 - 3. manipulating (initial, final, medial) (end of year)
 - For application and development of skills:
 - Kindergarten scope and sequence includes segmenting and blending with two- and three-phoneme words
 - Grade 1 scope and sequence includes segmenting and blending with three- and four-phoneme words (can progress towards multisyllabic words)
 - What is the recommended daily or weekly time for phonemic awareness instruction? Is instruction focused primarily on phoneme-level tasks, and is broader phonological awareness work limited to early Kindergarten?
 - How is regular and varied practice with phonemic awareness skills embedded in the materials?
 - What research is cited in the materials about the phonemic awareness sequence?
 - At what point in the school year does phonemic awareness instruction begin?
- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - What phonemic activities do students practice?
 - Do students practice all phonemic awareness skills in the sequence?
 - Are students supported with manipulatives (e.g., Elkonin boxes, chips) during phonemic practice, and is there a gradual release to promote independent skill use?
 - Do students have opportunities to connect phonemes to graphemes, or are phonemic awareness activities limited to oral tasks only?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss the evidence of a coherent scope and sequence for phonemic awareness instruction in the materials.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

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| Criterion 1.2 | Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based phonemic awareness. |
| Indicator 1d | Materials include systematic and explicit instruction in phonemic awareness with repeated teacher modeling. |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Scoring: | | |
| 4 points | 2 points | 0 points |
| Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials include systematic, explicit instruction in sounds (phonemes). Materials provide the teacher with examples for instruction in sounds (phonemes). Materials include teacher guidance for corrective feedback when needed for students. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator focuses specifically on phonemic awareness instruction, which involves helping students attend to and manipulate the smallest units of sound in spoken language. Phonemic awareness is distinct from phonics or print-based tasks; students working on these skills should be able to complete them orally, without visual support. As defined in *Put Reading First (Armbruster et al., 2001)*, phonemic awareness includes the ability to isolate, segment, blend, and manipulate individual sounds in words, and is essential for developing decoding and spelling skills.

To support mastery, effective instruction should be explicit and include clear modeling from the teacher. Students benefit when materials guide the teacher to explain and demonstrate how each phoneme is produced, using consistent language and scaffolded examples. Explicit modeling helps students build accurate sound representations and prepares them to connect these oral skills to print in later instruction.

Corrective feedback is also critical to phonemic awareness instruction. Materials should prompt the teacher to notice student errors and guide students to identify and correct their mistakes. Research supports the use of immediate, scaffolded feedback to help students clarify misunderstandings and reinforce accurate production of sounds. This includes both general frameworks for identifying and responding to errors, as well as specific, contextualized prompts within lessons to address predictable mistakes (e.g., distinguishing between minimal pairs like “sweat” and “sweet”).

By combining explicit modeling with intentional corrective feedback, materials help ensure students receive the

support needed to internalize and master individual phoneme awareness skills, which are foundational to accurate decoding and fluent reading.

Research or Standards connection:

Phonemic awareness plays a critical role in helping students understand how spoken language connects to print. According to [Brady \(2020\)](#), phoneme awareness supports the development of precise phonological and orthographic representations in the brain, which are essential for fluent reading and spelling. While phonemic awareness instruction focuses on the oral manipulation of sounds, it also prepares students to understand what letters represent and how they correspond to spoken phonemes.

As students develop phoneme-level awareness, their growing knowledge of graphemes further reinforces their understanding of the alphabetic principle. Research emphasizes that instruction in these two domains should be sequenced and coordinated to build a strong foundation for decoding and encoding. While the direct instruction of graphemes occurs in the phonics component of instruction, phonemic awareness instruction should still be intentionally aligned with this broader progression so that students can successfully transfer oral sound skills to print-based applications over time.

Resources:

- [Explicit Instruction Explanation](#)
- [What is Explicit Instruction?](#)
- [Exploring the Foundations of Explicit Instruction](#)
- [Review Kindergarten Phonological Awareness](#)
 - RF.K.2d-e
- [Review Grade 1 Phonological Awareness](#)
 - RF.1.2a-d

Indicator 1d Guiding Question:

How do the materials provide explicit, systematic instruction of grade-level phonemic awareness skills?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards for phonemic awareness at each grade level. Review:
 - Introduction section that describes the materials and phonemic awareness routines for units.
 - Scope and sequence of the units.
 - Instruction, questions, and tasks found in relevant foundational sections of daily lessons about phonemic awareness.
- Teacher Edition identifies lessons and oral activities for teacher modeling phonemic awareness and comparing sounds, contrasting sounds, blending sounds, substituting sounds, segmenting sounds, and manipulating sounds.
- Teacher Edition provides guidance and prompting for corrective feedback within daily lessons.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - How do the materials support regular, systematic teacher modeling of newly taught phonemes during phonemic awareness instruction?

- Do materials include explicit instruction supported by tools such as Elkonin boxes, finger tapping, or manipulatives to model and reinforce phoneme-level tasks?
- What are the directions to the teacher for demonstrating how to pronounce different phonemes?
- Do materials include articulatory guidance for voicing, airflow, and tongue/lip placement when appropriate?
- Do materials provide key words that reflect the pure phoneme being taught, to support accurate teacher modeling of letter-sound correspondences?
- Do materials include visual representations of articulation?
- What is the sequence of grade-level phonemic awareness concepts being introduced?
- How are new concepts being built and previously taught concepts being reviewed/maintained?
- Does the program provide explicit instruction in all grade-level phonemes, introduced in a logical progression from simple to complex?
- Does the program include clear guidance on corrective feedback? Do materials support teachers in recognizing common errors and provide questioning strategies or prompts—either within daily lessons or as a standalone resource—to help students identify and correct mistakes related to newly taught phonemes?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of grade-level phonemic awareness instruction in core materials.
- Discuss the amount of time spent on grade-level phonemic awareness instruction over the course of the school year. Is adequate time spent? Are the skills being developed for students?
- Discuss the structure and consistency of instructional routines for phonemic awareness. Are these routines modeled explicitly and maintained across the year?
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final ratings.

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Criterion 1.2 | Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based phonemic awareness. |
| Indicator 1e | Materials include daily, brief lessons in phonemic awareness. |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Scoring: | | |
| 4 points | 2 points | 0 points |
| Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily phonemic awareness instruction aligns to the scope and sequence, progressing from isolation, blending, and segmenting to more advanced phoneme manipulations, with phoneme-grapheme correspondences introduced to connect sounds to letters. Materials include opportunities for students to practice connecting sounds to letters. Materials include directions to the teacher for demonstrating how to pronounce each phoneme (articulation/mouth formation). | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator addresses the importance of student practice in phonemic awareness and the immediate application of those skills through connection to graphemes. Early and frequent opportunities for students to link individual phonemes to their corresponding letters reinforce the alphabetic principle—the understanding that sounds in spoken language are systematically represented by written symbols. This concept foundational for learning to read and spell.

Research highlights the reciprocal relationship between phonological and orthographic processing. Ehri (2014) notes that as students develop the ability to connect phonemes to graphemes, both their phonological representations and their orthographic knowledge become more robust. This mutual reinforcement accelerates students’ ability to decode unfamiliar words and supports the long-term development of fluent reading and accurate spelling.

Consistent and well-structured practice in phoneme-grapheme mapping ensures students internalize these connections. By integrating phonemic awareness instruction with targeted phonics application in the same lesson, students are more likely to apply their understanding in authentic reading and writing contexts. This practice strengthens memory for both spoken sounds and written word forms, building a bridge between oral language and print-based literacy skills.

Research or Standards connection:

Providing students with daily, structured opportunities to practice phonemic awareness and apply those skills in connection with newly taught graphemes is essential for building foundational reading proficiency. This type of instruction is most effective when it is both explicit and systematic—ensuring that students have repeated and intentional practice aligned to clearly defined learning goals.

According to [Otaiba et al. \(2019\)](#), when teachers are equipped to implement explicit and systematic instructional approaches, they are better able to support students within RTI and MTSS frameworks and reduce the number of students reading below grade level. These same approaches are not only effective for intervention and remediation but also serve as strong core instructional practices for all learners, including those with dyslexia and other specific reading disabilities.

By embedding daily phonemic awareness practice and phoneme-grapheme connections into the instructional routine, materials can help ensure all students receive the support they need to build strong word-reading and spelling skills from the earliest stages of reading development.

Resources:

- [Building Phoneme Awareness: Know What Matters](#)
- [Current Knowledge about Instruction in Letter Knowledge, Phoneme Awareness and Handwriting: What to Teach, When to Start, and Why to Integrate](#)

Indicator 1e Guiding Question:

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards for phonemic awareness at each grade level. Review:
 - Introduction section that describes the materials and phonemic awareness routines for units.
 - Scope and sequence of the units.
 - Instruction, questions, and tasks found in relevant foundational sections of daily lessons about phonemic awareness.
 - Review the phonics portion of the lessons to ensure the correlation between the newly taught phoneme to the grapheme (sound-spelling correspondence).
- Teacher Edition identifies lessons and oral activities for students to practice daily phonemic awareness activities correlated to the explicit instruction provided by the teacher.
- Lessons embed cumulative review of previously taught phonemes.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What evidence is there of daily phonemic awareness activities in instruction, and how do these activities support students in connecting phonemes to graphemes?
- How much time is allocated to grade-level phonemic awareness instruction throughout the school year? Is this amount of time adequate to develop the necessary skills in students?

- In what ways do the instructional materials provide structured and repeated opportunities for students to practice phonemic awareness and phoneme-grapheme mapping?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss what evidence shows that students have daily opportunities to practice phoneme awareness and connect phonemes to graphemes.
- Based on the materials, is sufficient time allocated for phonemic awareness practice throughout the year? Are the skills being developed progressively?
- Discuss whether the lessons and routines offer structured, scaffolded practice for both phonemic awareness and letter-sound connections.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final ratings.

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Criterion 1.2 | Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based phonemic awareness. |
| Indicator 1f | Materials regularly and systematically offer assessment opportunities that measure student progress of phonemic awareness (as indicated by the program scope and sequence). |

| Scoring: | | |
|---|--|--|
| 4 points | 2 points | 0 points |
| Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials provide a variety of assessment opportunities throughout the year (e.g., at least three times per year or aligned to key instructional benchmarks) to monitor student progress in phonemic awareness. Assessment types may include oral tasks, encoding assessments, decoding activities requiring phoneme manipulation, and teacher observations. Assessment materials provide teachers-and, when appropriate, caregivers-with clear information about students' current skill levels in phonemic awareness. Materials support teachers with instructional suggestions or next steps based on assessment results to support student progress toward mastery. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines the quality of instructional materials intended for assessment of foundational skills, specifically phonemic awareness.

Ongoing assessment of phonemic awareness allows teachers to use a variety of instruments, tools, observations, and student work samples to monitor student progress over time. These assessments help determine a student's growth in specific subskills (e.g., isolation, blending, segmentation, manipulation) and their readiness to transfer those skills to phonics and decoding. Assessments may take any form—diagnostic, formative, summative, formal, informal—and can include screening tools, checklists, running records, and performance-based tasks. Effective assessment systems provide information that supports instructional decision-making for whole group, small group, and individual instruction.

Quality materials include assessment opportunities that are regular, systematic, and embedded across the day, week, month, and year (e.g., screening and/or progress monitoring three times per year or at major instructional

benchmarks). These assessments are not intended to be a battery of disconnected tests, but rather a mechanism for progress monitoring that directly informs instruction and intervention. Materials should provide teachers—and, when appropriate, caregivers—with clear information about student performance and concrete suggestions for next steps when students are not yet demonstrating mastery.

In alignment with current research and field guidance, phonemic awareness assessments may also include applied tasks. These can involve encoding activities, decoding tasks that require phoneme manipulation, and structured teacher observations. Expanding assessment formats in this way allows for a more complete and authentic understanding of students' abilities to isolate, manipulate, and apply sounds within the context of reading and writing instruction.

Research or Standards connection:

Phonemic awareness is a critical precursor to proficient reading and must be assessed regularly to ensure students receive timely, targeted instruction. Burns et al. (2018) found that specific components of phonemic awareness—such as segmentation and blending—significantly contribute to students' acquisition of letter-sound knowledge, particularly in high-need kindergarten settings. Their findings underscore the importance of assessing PA subskills early and using that data to guide instruction before more significant reading challenges emerge.

Foundational literacy experts recommend a variety of assessment methods beyond traditional oral-only tasks. Brady (2020) notes that encoding and decoding activities—such as spelling words based on sounds or segmenting phonemes while reading—can be effective indicators of phonemic awareness development when paired with oral tasks. These applied assessments offer insight into how well students are transferring their phonemic skills to real reading and writing contexts, which is a more instructionally relevant measure than oral manipulation tasks alone.

Moats (2020) emphasizes that effective assessment of phonemic awareness should be embedded within instruction and should capture how students are using sound-based skills in print-focused tasks. She underscores the importance of assessing students' ability to connect phonemes to graphemes through teacher observation, structured tasks, and authentic student work.

The National Center for Improving Literacy (2022) also encourages the use of observational tools and classroom-embedded checks for understanding, rather than relying solely on isolated or scripted tests. Their guidance supports real-time assessments that help teachers differentiate instruction and monitor progress for students at risk of reading difficulties.

Together, these sources affirm that effective phonemic awareness assessment includes oral, applied, and observational tools, is aligned to a coherent scope and sequence, and provides teachers with the data needed to adjust instruction in real time.

Resources:

- Brady, S. (2020). *A 2020 Perspective on Research Findings on Alphabetsics (Phonics and Phonemic Awareness)*. Reading Science: Implications for Instruction and Assessment. American Federation of Teachers.
<https://www.thereadingleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Brady-Expanded-Version-of-Alphabetsics-TRLJ.pdf>
- Burns, M. K., Maki, K. E., Helman, L., McComas, J. J., & Young, H. (2018). Contributions of the components of phonemic awareness to letter-sound knowledge with kindergarten students in high-poverty urban elementary schools. *Reading & Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*, 34(5), 409–418.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10573569.2018.1468835>

- Moats, L. C. (2020). *Speech to Print: Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading* (3rd ed.). Paul H. Brookes Publishing.
- National Center on Improving Literacy. (2022). *Screening and Assessment Practices in Early Literacy*. Retrieved from <https://improvingliteracy.org>
- [Phonemic Awareness Assessment](#)

Indicator 1f Guiding Question:

How do the materials provide assessment for phonemic awareness?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards at each grade level. Review:
 - Table of Contents (including prefatory materials to see the rationale for how assessment is approached)
 - Assessment sections (diagnostic assessments, checklists, rubrics, running records, observation forms)
 - Guidance and/or Protocols for how to support students performing below grade level
- Look for evidence of systematic instruction AND assessment to support development of foundational skills.
- Teacher Edition identifies metrics and systems for progress monitoring the foundational skills to support the teacher in identifying students' growth toward reading grade level and for progress monitoring throughout the year.
- Look at questions and tasks in assessments (screeners, inventories, diagnostics).
- Some materials may have grade-level fluency passages with questions attached for comprehension checks.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What assessment measures are included for foundational skills?
- Are diagnostic assessments offered at regular intervals?
- Are there pre-assessments and post-assessments aligned to the phonemic awareness scope and sequence?
- What does the teacher do with the results of formal and informal assessments? Are next steps such as re-teaching, additional practice, or instructional adjustments suggested?
- How is phonemic and phonemic awareness assessed in K-1? Do the materials include oral tasks, encoding or decoding activities, or structured observational checklists?
- How frequently is student progress assessed?
- What assessments are embedded in instruction to provide the teacher with immediate feedback on student learning (e.g., oral checks, dictation, decoding tasks)?
- What data tracking methods are employed (e.g., observation forms, checklists, portfolios, digital trackers)?
- How do students participate in assessment? Are tasks interactive or embedded in lesson routines?
- What feedback do students receive, and is it aligned to the lesson's phonemic awareness objectives?
- What instructional adjustments and protocols are recommended after the assessment? Are there opportunities for more practice, re-teaching, and/or alternative instructional practices suggested?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.

- Do the materials provide regular, systematic, and instructionally embedded assessment opportunities aligned to the phonemic awareness scope and sequence?
- Do the assessments help the teacher find evidence of a student’s progress toward mastery of key phonemic awareness subskills (e.g., isolation, blending, segmentation, manipulation)?
- Do the assessment materials provide progress information for students to be supported and move toward independence in foundational skills?
- What protocols exist for the teacher to help students performing below grade level?
- Are the assessment materials aligned to the instruction and scope and sequence for phonemic awareness?
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final ratings.

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

Criterion 1.3

Phonics (Foundational Decoding and Encoding)

Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of phonics, including instruction in letter-sound relationships, blending sounds to read words, and segmenting sounds to spell words.

What is the purpose of this Criterion?

This criterion addresses phonics in Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 2. Phonics is the relationship between letters/graphemes (e.g., written letters such as -ck) and associated sounds/phonemes (e.g., smallest unit of sound such as /k/). Critical to learning phonics is explicit (i.e., precise instruction of letters and sounds) and systematic (i.e., organized, logical sequence) instruction. Students need multiple and varied practice opportunities with decoding and encoding each phonics skill.

According to the Simple View of Reading, reading is a multifaceted skill that involves two primary components: decoding (the ability to convert written symbols into sounds and words) and linguistic comprehension (the ability to understand language)" ([Hoover & Gough, 1990](#)). Dr. Scarborough highlights the significance of decoding skills acquired through phonics instruction. She suggests that proficient decoding abilities are essential for unlocking the alphabetic code and building the foundation for reading comprehension ([Scarborough, 1998](#)). Furthermore, Scarborough's Reading Rope model underscores the essential role of phonics instruction in reading development. She emphasizes that systematic and explicit teaching of letter-sound correspondences is crucial for helping children acquire decoding skills, which are fundamental to proficient reading ([Scarborough, 2001](#)).

Systematic: "The term systematic contains two important connotations: scope and sequence. Scope includes the content of the phonics instruction, the range of letter–sound correspondences (e.g., /t/, /ar/, /a/) covered. Sequence defines an order for teaching letter–sound correspondences. First one sound or group of sounds will be taught and then another, and so on" ([Mesmer and Griffith, 2005](#)).

Explicit: "Explicit instruction is characterized by a series of supports or scaffolds, whereby students are guided through the learning process with clear statements about the purpose and rationale for learning the new skill, clear explanations and demonstrations of the instructional target, and supported practice with feedback until independent mastery has been achieved. Rosenshine (1987) described this form of instruction as "a systematic method of teaching with emphasis on proceeding in small steps, checking for student understanding, and achieving active and successful participation by all students" ([Archer and Hughes, 2011, p. 34](#)).

Research Connection

Phonics instruction is most effective when it is explicit and systematic, enabling students to master the alphabetic principle and apply that understanding to both reading and writing. According to the [National Reading Panel \(2000\)](#), high-quality phonics programs provide a clearly sequenced set of phonics elements, delivered with an appropriate degree of explicitness. The goal of such instruction is not isolated skills acquisition, but the ability to apply phonics knowledge meaningfully within authentic literacy contexts.

While research does not prescribe one “correct” order for introducing phonics skills, what matters most is that the sequence is consistent, coherent, and intentionally followed. Students are more likely to succeed when instruction adheres to a systematic program, regardless of the specific order of skill introduction ([Shanahan, 2014](#)). This principle is reinforced by the [National Research Council \(2015\)](#), which highlights that explicit instruction helps children attend to the key relationships that support learning—such as grapheme-phoneme correspondences.

Decades of research from multiple disciplines confirm the effectiveness of systematic phonics instruction for teaching children how written language represents spoken language. Instruction should follow a logical sequence, ensuring that students are exposed to all necessary letter-sound correspondences and patterns, including blending and digraphs. This approach supports the development of both accuracy and fluency in word reading ([Buckingham et al., 2019](#)).

Phonics instruction also plays a central role in vocabulary and memory development. As students progress through developmental phases of word reading, they rely on foundational knowledge of grapheme-phoneme relationships and phonemic segmentation. Over time, this knowledge expands to include more advanced syllabic and morphemic units. Research by [Ehri \(2020\)](#) shows that when spelling, pronunciation, and meaning are securely linked in memory, vocabulary retention and reading comprehension improve—underscoring the importance of early, structured phonics instruction.

Together, these findings affirm that high-quality phonics instruction should be systematic, explicit, and developmentally sequenced to ensure that all students develop the decoding skills necessary for accurate and fluent reading.

Scoring:

Meets Expectations

- 30-32 points

Partially Meets Expectations

- 16-29 points

Does Not Meet Expectations

- < 16 points

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Criterion 1.3 | Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based phonics. |
| Indicator 1g | Scope and sequence clearly delineate an intentional sequence in which phonics skills are to be taught, with a clear explanation for the order of the sequence. |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Scoring: | | |
| 4 points | 2 points | 0 points |
| Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials contain a clear, evidence-based explanation for the expected sequence for teaching phonics skills. Materials provide a cohesive, intentional phonics sequence that progresses from simple to more complex skills and includes ample opportunities to apply skills through decoding in connected text. Phonics instruction is based on high utility patterns and/or specific phonics generalizations. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator focuses on the scope and sequence of phonics instruction. While there is no research to support a perfect sequence for teaching phonics, there is research supporting an intentional, timely sequence of phonics instruction. For example, learning one letter and a corresponding sound is intentional; however, students are left with only a few weeks in a school year to learn other sounds, such as long vowels or digraphs. To learn five letters and corresponding sounds in one week can be just as challenging for students since that scenario involves a plethora of new information for a student’s working memory. In any systematic program, the phonics sequence in instructional materials must be organized in a way that early readers build graphophonic relationships in a timely manner to help students make progress towards and success in the grade level standards. The scope and sequence for the instructional materials will clearly delineate an intentional sequence in which phonics skills are to be taught, with a clear explanation for the order of the sequence.

Regardless of the phonics approach utilized in the materials, (i.e., synthetic/letter-sound based or analytic), certain patterns and phonics generalizations have higher utility. When instructional materials explicitly target phonics patterns and common phonics generalizations, students build a deeper understanding of the more reliable patterns to decode words. Generalization patterns are not meant to be memorized. With repeated and engaging instruction, patterns become understood and can be applied.

[Theodore Clymer \(1963\) conducted research](#) on the phonics “rules” that are taught in classrooms. Clymer suggested teaching phonics generalizations that are valid 75% of the time. Examples of known generalizations with low validity are:

- a. When two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking. This has a 45% utility.
- b. When y is a vowel in words, it sometimes has the sound of long i. This has a 15% utility.

Examples of known generalizations with high validity are:

- a. The k in kn is silent. This has a 100% utility.
- b. If a word ends in ck, it has a /k/ sound. This has a 100% utility.

Research or Standards connection:

Systematic phonics instruction is foundational for helping students develop as proficient decoders. This instruction provides the structured sequence of grapheme-phoneme correspondences students need to understand the alphabetic principle and move through the developmental phases of word reading. Scope and sequence charts serve as critical tools, outlining the major phonics patterns students must master and the order in which they are introduced to build toward fluency and independence ([Ehri, 2020](#)).

Decoding is a critical skill for word recognition and reading comprehension. Proficient readers are able to accurately and independently decode unfamiliar words, and this ability is directly tied to their phonemic awareness. Teaching decoding explicitly and consistently ensures that students develop the skills required to recognize words automatically and access meaning efficiently ([Lyon, 2023](#)).

Synthetic phonics is one effective model of systematic instruction, and it is characterized by clearly defined, cumulative steps for introducing grapheme-phoneme correspondences. Instruction typically begins with single-letter sounds and progresses to common digraphs and more complex grapheme units. Students are taught to blend phonemes for reading and segment them for spelling, with instruction aligned to a sequence that introduces the most common sound-symbol patterns first. As they gain proficiency, students are gradually introduced to alternative spellings and high-frequency words with irregular correspondences. Effective programs also provide students with opportunities to apply their growing phonics knowledge by reading decodable texts that closely follow the taught phonics sequence ([Buckingham et al., 2019](#)).

Together, this body of research emphasizes that phonics instruction should not only be structured and sequential, but also cumulative and immediately applicable. When taught that way, phonics becomes the on-ramp to word recognition and a critical driver for reading success.

Resources:

- [Clymer’s utility of phonic generalizations](#)

Indicator 1g Guiding Questions:

What is the scope and sequence for phonics skills?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards at each grade level. Review:
 - The overview and scope and sequence of phonics.
 - Unit overviews for phonics objectives.

- The daily lesson plans for the phonics instruction per day.
- The research-based and/or evidence-based rationale provided for rules to be taught.
- Examine supplemental documents for information about the sequence of phonics instruction.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - What is the sequence of phonics instruction across the K-2 grade levels, and how is it built over time?
 - What is the amount of recommended time allocated for each component of lessons and activities?
 - What research is cited in the materials about the phonics sequence?
 - What phonics generalizations are taught to students, and how are they introduced and reinforced?
 - Are the phonics patterns of high utility?
 - Are resources provided to promote students' learning of phonics patterns and common generalizations?
- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Do students practice all phonics skills in the sequence?
 - Are phonics skills organized to help early readers build graphophonic relationships in a timely manner and make progress toward grade-level standards?
 - How do students practice phonics skills?
 - Do students practice patterns that are common?
 - Do the provided resources support student learning of phonics patterns and generalizations through structured practice?
 - Are there catchy phrases for remembering common phonics patterns?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of materials providing a scope and sequence for phonics skills in core materials.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Criterion 1.3 | Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based phonics. |
| Indicator 1h | Materials are absent of the three-cueing system. |

| | |
|---|--|
| Scoring: | |
| 4 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials meet NONE of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials do not contain elements of instruction that are based on the three-cueing system for teaching decoding. | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator focuses on the presence and use of the three-cueing systems in foundational skills materials as a means to teach phonics instruction. The "three cueing systems" refer to a theory of reading developed by educator Ken Goodman in the 1960s, which suggests that readers use three cues—semantic (meaning), syntactic (grammar), and graphophonic (letter-sound relationships)—to decode words while reading; however, relying too heavily on semantic and syntactic cues can lead to guessing or "predictive reading," where children guess words based on context rather than sounding them out. This can hinder their ability to develop strong decoding skills and may lead to difficulties in reading comprehension later on. Materials should be absent of the three-cueing system to teach phonics and follow research-based practices for decoding and encoding.

Research consistently shows that explicit, systematic phonics instruction is highly effective in teaching children to read. Phonics instruction helps children understand the alphabetic principle—the idea that letters represent sounds—and provides them with the skills to decode words accurately and efficiently.

Research or Standards connection:

To become fluent and independent readers, students must be taught to decode unfamiliar words using phonics as their primary strategy. Research cautions against teaching children to rely on alternative, context-based cues—such as looking at pictures, rereading surrounding text, or guessing based on what might make sense—as these strategies can lead to overreliance on guessing and hinder the development of accurate word recognition skills.

While such strategies may occasionally lead to correct guesses, they are not dependable and do not promote the acquisition of phonics knowledge. Continued reliance on these approaches can interfere with students' ability to apply decoding skills systematically and may delay the development of automatic word recognition. As texts increase in complexity and become less predictable, students who have not learned to decode effectively often struggle with comprehension and fluency.

For this reason, effective instructional materials emphasize phonics as the primary and most reliable method for decoding unfamiliar words. Programs aligned to the research avoid incorporating instructional cues or strategies that encourage guessing from pictures or context, and instead provide direct instruction and practice in grapheme-phoneme correspondences (Primary National Strategy, 2006).

Resources:

- [The Three-Cueing System](#)
- [The three-cueing model: Down for the count?](#)
- [The Three-Cueing System: Help or Hindrance?](#)

Indicator 1h Guiding Question:

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials.
Review:
 - The Table of Contents, any pacing guides, and phonics scope and sequence provided by the publisher.
 - Review daily lesson plans for teaching decoding skills.
 - Review any additional resources, including optional tasks.
 - Review decodable texts and any other texts provided.
 - Review teacher-facing protocols and directions for implementation and use of decodable texts, and any other texts provided.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- How do materials teach decoding within the daily lesson plans?
- Do materials include additional resources or optional tasks that include prompting students to identify words using the three-cueing system?
- What protocols do materials use for students to read decodable texts?
- Do materials include predictable texts?
- How do materials prompt students to read unfamiliar words?
- What word-solving strategies are included for students when they get stuck?
- Be prepared to explain and justify your conclusion.

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of materials providing a scope and sequence for phonics skills in core materials.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.

- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Criterion 1.3 | Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based phonics. |
| Indicator 1i | Materials, questions, and tasks provide reasonable pacing where phonics (decoding and encoding) skills are taught one at a time and allot time where phonics skills are practiced to automaticity, with cumulative review. |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Scoring: | | |
| 4 points | 2 points | 0 points |
| Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials include reasonable pacing of newly taught phonics skills. The lesson plan design allots time to include sufficient student practice to work towards automaticity. Materials contain distributed, cumulative, and interleaved opportunities for students to practice and review all previously learned grade-level phonics. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator focuses on the pacing and timing within individual phonics lessons as well as across the year. While indicator 3c examines overall pacing across all foundational skills, Indicator 1i specifically looks at the pacing of phonics instruction—ensuring that newly taught skills are given adequate time for student practice and mastery.

Research emphasizes that young learners require extended time and structured practice to master new phonics concepts. According to [Blevins \(2019\)](#) and the International Literacy Association, newly introduced phonics skills should be systematically reviewed for a sustained period—typically 4 to 6 weeks—after initial instruction to support mastery, not just exposure.

Without purposeful review and reinforcement, students may struggle to transfer skills to independent reading and writing tasks. Fast-moving pacing within many curricula often underestimates the time it takes to build phonics mastery. To address this, materials should incorporate cycles of review and repeated practice opportunities, including activities such as blending, dictation, and rereading decodable texts. These instructional routines strengthen retention and support students in applying skills across reading situations.

Instructional materials that include intentional pacing and structured cumulative review help ensure students

have sufficient time and support to progress toward mastery of phonics skills throughout the year.

Research or Standards connection:

Fluency in reading is closely tied to students' ability to decode words efficiently. When students struggle with word-level skills, it often impacts their overall reading comprehension and confidence. Targeted decoding practice—both in word lists and in connected text—helps students improve accuracy and then transitions toward automaticity allowing for greater exposure to text and deeper development of decoding fluency, ultimately supporting reading comprehension ([Hudson et al., 2011](#)).

Effective phonics instruction is grounded in a systematic approach. According to the [National Reading Panel](#), systematic phonics programs follow a clearly defined sequence of instruction, introducing phonics elements in a deliberate and cumulative order. This contrasts with incidental instruction, which relies on unplanned opportunities to highlight phonics patterns as they arise in text. Systematic instruction ensures all students receive consistent, explicit teaching and sufficient opportunities to revisit and apply previously taught skills.

Cumulative review is essential to reinforcing and retaining phonics learning. Research on practice design suggests that interleaving skills—mixing multiple phonics patterns within a single practice session—strengthens students' ability to discriminate between patterns, supports long-term retention, and improves accuracy. This contrasts with blocked practice, where students complete one skill before moving on to the next. Interleaved practice maximizes learning by helping students apply skills, flexibly and under varied conditions ([Hughes & Joo-Young, 2020](#)).

Together, this body of research affirms that phonics instruction should be paced to allow for mastery, include frequent cumulative review, and be structured in a way that supports efficient decoding and fluent reading development.

Resources:

- [Phonics Instruction by National Reading Panel](#)
- [Effective Approaches for Scheduling and Formatting Practice Distributed, Cumulative, and Interleaved Practice](#)

Indicator 1i Guiding Question:

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials.
Review:
 - The Table of Contents, any pacing guides, and phonics scope and sequence provided by the publisher.
 - Look at the overview and phonics scope and sequence for the number of lessons and/or number of days of instruction.
 - Unit overviews for number of days/weeks spent on each new phonics skill.
 - Unit overviews for amount of opportunities for cumulative review.
 - The time needed per lesson per day to teach phonics skills, as well as time spent on cumulative review.
 - Lesson overviews, pacing guides, daily lessons, scope and sequences
 - Lessons for each phonics skill for design and pacing.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- This metric requires qualitative judgment; there is no exact number of days that is specified by the standards.
- Consider if there is too much or too little material for the amount of time allotted for the phonics portion of the lesson.
- Consider if students are provided sufficient opportunities to master each newly taught phonics skill.
- Consider if the pacing is appropriate based on the complexity of the newly taught phonics skill.
- Consider the amount of time spent on cumulative review.
- Be prepared to explain and justify your conclusion.

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of materials providing a scope and sequence for phonics skills in core materials.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Criterion 1.3 | Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based phonics. |
| Indicator 1j | Materials include systematic and explicit phonics instruction with repeated teacher modeling. |

| Scoring: | | |
|---|--|--|
| 4 points | 2 points | 0 points |
| Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials contain explicit instructions for systematic and repeated teacher modeling of newly taught phonics patterns. Lessons include blending and segmenting practice using structured, consistent blending routines with teacher modeling. Lessons include dictation of words and sentences using the newly taught phonics pattern(s). Materials include teacher guidance for corrective feedback when needed for students. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator focuses on explicit phonics instruction through systematic and repeated modeling. The key to this indicator is that the materials contain lessons for the teacher to explicitly model and explain each phonics skill, as well as provide teacher guidance for corrective feedback. Furthermore, the materials provide lessons that contain structured blending and segmenting routines that are consistent across the academic year. Blending routines provide opportunities for students to practice decoding words, while segmenting routines provide opportunities for students to practice spelling words. In order to become skilled phonic decoders, students will need to have strong phoneme-grapheme knowledge as well as skills in phonological blending. This means a student must sound out the individual graphemes in a word and then blend those phonemes together to pronounce the word. There are several different blending techniques that can be modeled for students and practiced, such as continuous, additive, or whole word blending. “This is the main strategy for teaching students how to sound out words and must be frequently modeled and applied. It is simply the stringing together of letter-sounds to read a word. It is the focus of early phonics instruction but still plays a role when transitioning students from reading monosyllabic to multisyllabic words” ([Blevins, 2019](#); International Literacy Association).

The use of consistent dictation routines where the teacher provides words for students to encode is pivotal in materials for students to practice transferring the knowledge of the newly taught phonics skills to spelling. “To

best transfer students’ growing phonics skills to writing, dictation (i.e., guided spelling with teacher think-alouds) is critical and begins in kindergarten. Although not a spelling test, this activity can accelerate students’ spelling abilities and understanding of common English spelling patterns and assist students in using these phonics skills in writing. Used in combination with word building and structured and unstructured writing experiences in phonics instruction, students have increased opportunities to ‘try out’ their developing skills to express ideas in written form” ([Blevins, 2019](#); International Literacy Association).

Research or Standards connection:

Effective early literacy instruction is grounded in systematic and explicit phonics instruction. Research supports that strong programs include daily lessons that follow a clear progression of skills, ensuring students build foundational decoding and encoding abilities over time. According to [Buckingham et al. \(2019\)](#), high-quality phonics instruction is marked by direct explanation, teacher modeling, clearly stated objectives, and consistent use of unambiguous language. Instruction should follow a logical sequence of phonics elements, reinforced through multiple opportunities for practice and cumulative review.

Key phonemic awareness skills, such as blending and segmenting at the phoneme level, play a critical role in supporting decoding and spelling. Blending enables students to synthesize individual phonemes into whole words, while segmenting helps them isolate sounds for encoding. [Brady \(2020\)](#) notes that these skills are strongly predictive of future reading achievement. For example, blending skills measured at the end of kindergarten are associated with reading performance in first grade, while segmentation and reading skills influence each other reciprocally through early elementary years.

Instructional routines are further strengthened by the inclusion of corrective feedback. [Fyfe et al. \(2023\)](#) found that young children are highly responsive to basic, task-specific feedback. Students who receive feedback are more likely to improve performance on a given task compared to peers who complete the same task without feedback. This underscores the importance of instructional materials that guide teachers in how and when to offer feedback during phonics practice and word-reading tasks.

Taken together, these findings emphasize that strong phonics instruction includes clear modeling, practice in key phonemic awareness skills, and opportunities for corrective feedback—all within a systematic and explicit instructional structure.

Resources:

- [Explicit Instruction Explanation](#)
- [What is Explicit Instruction?](#)
- [Exploring the Foundations of Explicit Instruction](#)
- [When Young Readers Get Stuck](#)
- [Review Kindergarten Phonics and Word Recognition](#)
 - RF.K.3a-b; d
- [Review Grade 1 Phonics and Word Recognition](#)
 - RF.1.3a-f
- [Review Grade 2 Phonics and Word Recognition](#)
 - RF.2.3a-c

Indicator 1j Guiding Question:

How do the materials provide explicit, systematic instruction of grade-level phonics skills?

Evidence Collection

In the Instructional Materials being reviewed:

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Phonics Standards at each grade level. Review:
 - Table of Contents (including prefatory materials to see the rationale for how phonics instruction is approached).
 - Instructions, questions, and tasks in relevant foundational sections, including prefatory material to evaluate the systematic and repeated phonics instruction.
 - Teacher Edition identifies lessons and activities for phonics instruction.
 - Teacher Edition identifies blending and segmenting routines, dictation routines, and corrective feedback.
 - Teacher Edition for teacher guidance and prompting for corrective feedback in daily lessons.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - How do the materials provide systematic and repeated modeling of how to hear, say, write, and read each newly taught sound and spelling pattern?
 - How does the design of the materials inform the teaching and learning of phonics?
 - What materials are included for the teacher to explicitly teach grade-level phonics?
 - Are the phonics skills aligned to the correct grade level?
 - Is the teacher explicitly instructing and modeling new sound and spelling patterns?
- What does the student do after the teacher explicitly teaches the new phonics skill? For example:
 - Do the students hear the sound?
 - Do the students say the sound?
 - Do the students write the letter(s) corresponding to the sound?
 - Do the students read the letter(s) corresponding to the sound?
- What structured routines are provided for students to blend and segment words?
- Are dictation routines consistently provided for students across the year?
- How is corrective feedback structured in the materials? Do lessons include specific prompts, examples of teacher language, or decision-making guidance to address common student errors? Is feedback embedded within each lesson or provided as a separate resource?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of grade-level phonics instruction in core materials.
- Discuss the amount of time spent on grade-level phonics instruction over the course of the school year. Is adequate time spent? Are the skills being developed for students?
- Discuss how materials include lessons, activities, and routines for sufficient practice.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final ratings.

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 1.3 | Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based phonics. |
| Indicator 1k | Materials include frequent practice opportunities for students to decode and encode words that consist of common and newly-taught sound and spelling patterns. |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Scoring: | | |
| 4 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 2 points Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons provide students with regular opportunities to decode words with taught phonics patterns. • Lessons provide students with regular opportunities to encode words with taught phonics patterns. • Student-guided practice and independent practice of blending sounds using the sound-spelling pattern(s) is varied and frequent, supporting skill retention and automaticity. • Materials provide opportunities for students to engage in word-level decoding practice focused on accuracy and automaticity. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator focuses on student practice of decoding and encoding explicitly taught phonics skills.

The purpose of this indicator is to ensure materials offer opportunities for students to apply their newly acquired phonics skills and previously learned grade level phonics to the isolated application of decoding words. In decoding, students say the individual phoneme sounds and then read the entire word. The opportunity to decode words based in grade-level phonics provides students with the excitement of reading words.

Furthermore, the purpose of this indicator is to ensure instructional materials provide students with repeated practice of grade-level phonics across the year. Phonics skills are not taught and learned in a day. Phonics, especially the learning of vowel sounds, must be reviewed and practiced repeatedly. With short, fast-paced review lessons to address previously taught components of phonics, students can routinely and repeatedly practice grade-level phonics skills.

Research or Standards connection:

To become proficient readers, students must move beyond decoding with accuracy and develop automaticity in their foundational reading skills. Research shows that while accurate decoding is essential, it is not enough on its own. Automaticity—the ability to apply phonics skills quickly and effortlessly—is necessary for students to free up cognitive resources for comprehension and other higher-order literacy tasks. When decoding becomes automatic, students can attend more fully to meaning, and fluency improves as a result ([Hudson et al., 2011](#)).

Given the complexity of the English writing system, developing this level of efficiency requires repeated, structured exposure to the grapheme-phoneme patterns of the language. With approximately 44 phonemes represented in over 250 spellings, decoding and spelling must be taught through ongoing, integrated practice. Research supports the idea that when decoding and encoding are taught together, rather than in isolation, students gain multiple opportunities to apply the same letter-sound patterns in both reading and writing. This combined approach enhances skill development across phonemic awareness, word reading, spelling, fluency, and comprehension ([Reed, 2012](#)).

Spelling instruction, in particular, strengthens students’ understanding of how letters and sounds are connected. [Graham \(2020\)](#) notes that instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency contributes to spelling development, and that spelling instruction, in turn, reinforces word recognition. When students develop schemas for common letter patterns through encoding, they are better equipped to read new words that follow those same patterns.

Together, these findings emphasize that decoding and encoding should be taught as mutually reinforcing processes. Instructional materials should integrate both, with sufficient time and structure to help students build toward automatic application across reading and writing tasks.

Resources:

- [‘Encoding’ Explained: What It Is and Why It’s Essential to Literacy](#)
- [What Is Decoding?: Part 2 of Encoding vs. Decoding](#)
- [Phonics and Decoding](#)
- [Review Kindergarten Phonics and Word Recognition](#)
 - RF.K.3a-b
- [Review Grade 1 Phonics and Word Recognition](#)
 - RF.1.3a-e
- [Review Grade 2 Phonics and Word Recognition](#)
 - RF.2.3a-c

Indicator 1k Guiding Question:

How do the materials provide students with practice opportunities of grade-level phonics skills?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards at each grade level. Review:
 - Table of Contents (including prefatory materials to see the rationale for how phonics instruction and student practice is approached).
 - Instructions, questions, and tasks in relevant foundational sections, including prefatory material to evaluate the quality of phonics practice.

- The scope and sequence.
- The unit and/or weekly overviews.
- The daily lessons in the Teacher Edition.
- Teacher Edition identifies lessons and activities for phonics student practice.
- Teacher Edition identifies lessons and activities about previously taught spelling patterns.
- Teacher Edition has evidence of daily activities designed to reinforce previously taught phonics skills.
- Do materials rely on the three-cueing system? Is the use of the cueing system distracting students from decoding words?

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - How does the teacher engage students in decoding words based on sounds?
 - How does the teacher engage students in decoding words based on looking at syllables?
 - Do materials explicitly provide strategies students can use to identify words, such as sounding out the word, breaking the word apart, or trying a different sound?
 - Do students read words through decoding grade-level phonics, including common and newly-taught sound and spelling patterns?
 - Do students have a physical strategy (arm tapping, finger tapping, pounding, clapping, desk tapping) to help them decode each sound in the word?
 - Do students decode words according to grade level standards, e.g., with digraphs, blends, diphthongs?
 - Do students show their knowledge of sound and spelling patterns by decoding words?
 - What does the student do after the teacher explicitly teaches the new phonics skill?
 - Are the phonics skills aligned to the correct grade level?
 - How do the materials provide regular practice of phonics?
 - How are concepts being built and previously taught concepts being reviewed/maintained?
 - What routines are in place for practicing previously taught phonics skills?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of students' practice of phonics in core materials.
- Discuss the amount of time spent on students' practice of phonics over the course of the school year. Is adequate time spent? Are the skills being developed for students?
- Discuss how materials include lessons, activities, and routines for sufficient practice.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final ratings.

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Criterion 1.3 | Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based phonics. |
| Indicator 1l | Spelling rules and generalizations are taught one at a time at a reasonable pace. Spelling words and generalizations are practiced to automaticity. |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Scoring: | | |
| 4 points | 2 points | 0 points |
| Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spelling rules and generalizations are aligned to the phonics scope and sequence. • Materials include explanations for spelling of specific words or spelling rules. • Students have sufficient opportunities to practice spelling rules and generalizations. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator focuses on teaching spelling rules and generalizations to students. Teaching spelling rules and generalizations is essential for building a strong foundation in language skills, enhancing communication abilities, and fostering confidence in students' writing capabilities. Teaching spelling rules and generalizations is crucial for several reasons: Spelling rules provide consistency in the language. When students understand these rules, they can apply them to a wide range of words, even those they have never seen before, increasing their accuracy in spelling. Learning spelling rules helps students understand the structure of words, including prefixes, suffixes, and root words. This understanding can also improve their vocabulary and reading comprehension skills. Understanding spelling rules is closely related to decoding skills in reading. When students understand the patterns in words, they can more easily decode unfamiliar words while reading. Spelling rules often follow patterns that are transferable across different words. Teaching these patterns equips students with skills that they can apply to spell various words, not just those covered in the classroom. Proficiency in spelling lays the groundwork for more advanced language skills, including grammar, syntax, and composition. Mastering spelling rules early on can pave the way for future language learning and academic success.

Research or Standards connection:

Instruction in grade-level spelling patterns is a critical component of foundational literacy development, and research consistently supports the need for intentional, explicit instruction in this area. Effective spelling instruction includes attention to both high-utility spelling patterns—such as vowel teams that consistently represent one sound—and more variable or complex patterns—such as *r*-controlled vowels or vowel patterns with

multiple pronunciations. Students benefit from instructional activities that support flexible thinking about these patterns, such as word sorts, which can be used to examine phonograms, rimes, or alternate spellings of the same sound across a developmental progression ([Johnston, 2001](#)).

A comprehensive meta-analysis by [Graham and Santagelo \(2014\)](#) reinforces the importance of formally teaching spelling, rather than relying on informal or incidental methods. Analyzing 53 experimental and quasi-experimental studies involving more than 6,000 students in grades K-12, the researchers found that formal spelling instruction significantly improved student outcomes. Compared to no instruction or unrelated instruction, spelling performance improved with an effect size of 0.54, while improvements over informal approaches produced an effect size of 0.43. Increasing the amount of explicit instruction led to even greater gains (ES = 0.70), and results were sustained over time (ES = 0.53) and transferred to writing (ES = 0.94). Positive effects were also found for phonological awareness (ES = 0.51) and reading skills (ES = 0.44). These outcomes were consistent regardless of students' grade level or baseline literacy skills, highlighting the widespread value of structured spelling instruction within early literacy programs.

Additional research supports instructional strategies that go beyond traditional weekly spelling tests. [Dymock and Nicholson \(2017\)](#) found that students who were taught using rule-based approaches—such as syllable breaking strategies, vowel sound rules, and morphological rules—demonstrated greater ability to generalize their learning to novel word spelling. These rule-based strategies were especially helpful for both proficient and less proficient spellers, highlighting the importance of teaching spelling as a transferable, applied skill rather than an isolated memorization task.

Together, this research supports spelling instruction that is explicit, rule-based, and developmentally sequenced. Materials should include opportunities to examine patterns at varying levels of complexity and provide instructional routines that help students apply those patterns across reading and writing.

Resources:

- [Clymer's utility of phonic generalizations](#)
- [How Words Cast Their Spell: Spelling Is an Integral Part of Learning the Language, Not a Matter of Memorization](#)

Indicator 1I Guiding Question:

Evidence Collection

- Review the Teacher and student materials for the following:
 - Scope and sequence of phonics rules and generalizations.
 - Detailed explanation for the use of phonics rules and generalizations in the materials.
 - The delivery of instruction for teaching new phonics rules and generalizations.
 - How often students practice new phonics rules and generalizations.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Consider the sequence of instruction for phonics rules and generalizations.
- Consider how students practice phonics rules and generalizations.
- Consider how often students practice new phonics rules and generalizations.

- Are students provided ample opportunities to progress towards student mastery?
- Is instruction aligned to high-utility phonics rules and generalizations?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of students' practice of spelling rules and phonics generalizations in core materials.
- Discuss the amount of time spent on students' practice of phonics over the course of the school year. Is adequate time spent? Are the skills being developed for students?
- Discuss how materials include lessons, activities, and routines for sufficient practice.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final ratings.

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Criterion 1.3 | Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based phonics. |
| Indicator 1m | Materials include decodable texts with phonics aligned to the program’s scope and sequence and opportunities for students to use decodables for multiple readings. |

| Scoring: | | |
|--|--|--|
| 4 points | 2 points | 0 points |
| Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decodable texts reflect grade-level phonics patterns aligned to the program’s scope and sequence. Lessons include detailed plans for repeated readings of decodable texts to reinforce accuracy, automaticity, and confidence. Reading practice occurs in decodable texts aligned to the taught phonics patterns and reflects an absence of predictable texts. Use of decodable texts decreases over time as students demonstrate decoding proficiency and transition into increasingly complex texts. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator focuses on the instruction and practice of phonics in the context of connected text. Decodable texts are small readers or passages for students to read immediately after learning a phonics skill or learning new high-frequency/irregularly-spelled words. Decodable texts provide students practice for acquiring an understanding of the alphabetic principle in a logical progression. They also provide the necessary practice for building the automatic cognitive systems in the word-form area of the brain that lead to fluent reading. Students need support and consistent corrective feedback to develop efficient decoding strategies. They should not be encouraged to use compensation strategies such as guessing at words based on context or picture cues.

Furthermore, decodable texts contain few semantic cues, so students must use their phonics learning and understanding to decode words. Decodable texts contain repetition of phonics patterns for students to practice decoding words in sentences. While decodable texts do often contain contrived storylines, the decodable texts have phonetically controlled elements which are what early readers need to independently gain meaning from text.

With multiple readings, students can read the decodable text for different purposes, such as reading for accuracy of the phonetically controlled elements and reading for consistent practice of phonics elements.

Research or Standards connection:

Early reading development is best supported through repeated practice with decodable texts that align closely with students' phonics instruction. Research has shown that reading the same decodable text multiple times improves decoding accuracy and supports comprehension, particularly for beginning readers. Decodable texts promote the use of letter-sound knowledge and spelling pattern recognition as the primary reading strategy, allowing students to successfully apply the phonics skills they are learning in context ([Wolf, 2018](#)).

Deliberate decoding of connected text is considered a critical component of early reading development. Decodable texts are designed so that students can readily apply their phonics knowledge, which encourages them to process all letters in each word, rather than relying on guessing or context-based cues. This thorough processing supports the development of accurate orthographic representations—stored knowledge of how words are spelled and recognized. As a result, students become more efficient at word recognition, freeing up cognitive resources for comprehension ([Cheatham & Allor, 2012](#)).

Overall, using decodable texts that are tightly aligned to the phonics scope and sequence helps ensure that students practice newly taught skills in meaningful reading situations. This type of structured practice enhances decoding automaticity and supports students as they move toward fluency and independent reading.

Resources:

- [What Are Decodable Books and Why Are They Important?](#)

Indicator 1m Guiding Question:

How do the materials provide instruction and practice of phonics and high-frequency words through the use of decodables?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards at each grade level. Review:
 - The Table of Contents for lesson plans about how to use decodable texts.
 - The scope and sequence for phonics and for high-frequency words/irregularly spelled words.
 - The end of the teacher manual or resources for the instructional routines for decodables.
 - Small-group opportunities that use decodable texts.
- Review in the materials for separate decodable texts.
- Look at decodables or decodable texts. A decodable text is a passage that contains the current and previous grapheme-phoneme correspondences that students have been taught. The purpose is to provide students an opportunity to practice reading words in context with automaticity. Decodable texts should be 80% decodable.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Do the materials contain decodable texts (small readers)?
 - Does the teacher have opportunities to explicitly teach students how to apply the new phonics skills in decodable texts?
 - Does the teacher have opportunities to explicitly teach students how to apply the new high-frequency

- words/irregularly spelled words in decodable texts?
- Do the materials provide lesson plans or instructional routines for the teacher to engage students in reading decodable texts?
- Are multiple lessons or instructional routines available per decodable text to support repeated reading and skill reinforcement?
- Are there regular opportunities for the teacher to guide students in the reading of decodable texts?
- How are decodable texts used?
- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Do the materials provide frequent, year-long opportunities for students to read decodable texts aligned to the phonics scope and sequence?
 - Do students practice decoding new phonics skills by reading the phonetically controlled words in the context of a decodable text?
 - How many times does a student engage with each decodable text?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of materials providing opportunities for students to read decodable texts in core materials.
- Discuss the amount of time spent on students' reading decodable texts over the course of the school year. Is adequate time spent? Are the skills being developed for students?
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Criterion 1.3 | Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based phonics. |
| Indicator 1n | Materials regularly and systematically offer assessment opportunities that measure student progress of phonics in- and out-of-context (as indicated by the program scope and sequence). |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Scoring: | | |
| 4 points | 2 points | 0 points |
| Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials regularly and systematically provide a variety of assessment opportunities over the course of the year to demonstrate students' progress toward mastery and independence in phonics. Assessment materials provide teachers and students with information concerning students' current skills/level of understanding of phonics. Materials support teachers with instructional suggestions for assessment-based steps to help students to progress toward mastery in phonics. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines the quality of instructional materials intended for assessment of phonics skills.

Ongoing assessment of phonics skills allows the teacher to use various instruments, tools, observations, and student work samples to determine student progress. Phonics skills assessments should help a teacher determine a student's overall reading ability as well as subcomponents of each student's growth in phonics skills. Assessments (diagnostic, formative, summative, informal, formal, pre-assessments, post-assessments, screening assessments, portfolios, checklists, observations, etc.) support the teacher in evaluating students' skills in order to plan effective instruction and activities for all students to make academic growth. These assessments inform the teacher of next steps for the whole group, small group, and individual instruction of foundational skills.

There are several types of phonics assessments designed to evaluate different aspects of a student's phonics knowledge and skills. A combination of assessments often provides a comprehensive understanding of a student's phonics proficiency. Quality materials will provide assessments for the teacher and students that assess student progress of foundational skills regularly and systematically during the day, week, month, and year.

Assessments of phonics skills are not intended to be a battery of tests administered to students. Materials should contain assessment opportunities that help the teacher monitor students' progress and then provide the teacher with support to reteach when students are not successful in learning the phonics skill.

Research or Standards connection:

Effective phonics assessment should evaluate multiple aspects of a student's word recognition abilities to provide a clear picture of early reading development. According to [Otaiba et al. \(2012\)](#), a comprehensive diagnostic approach includes assessments of word-reading accuracy (both in and out of context), phonemic decoding skills, and reading fluency. Out-of-context word reading is especially important when evaluating students with reading difficulties, as it isolates their ability to decode without relying on contextual clues. This type of assessment is particularly revealing for identifying students who may be over-relying on memorization or guessing strategies rather than applying phonics knowledge.

In addition to formal assessments, observing students' oral reading of texts at different difficulty levels offers valuable insights into how they apply decoding, fluency, and word recognition strategies during authentic reading. These observations can help teachers understand how students integrate their knowledge of phonics patterns with broader reading behaviors, supporting more targeted and responsive instruction.

Resources:

- [The critical role of phonics assessment in the Science of Reading](#)
- [Assessment: In Depth](#)

Indicator 1n Guiding Question:

How do the materials provide assessment of phonics skills?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Phonics Standards at each grade level. Review:
 - Table of Contents (including prefatory materials to see the rationale for how assessment is approached)
 - Assessment sections (diagnostic assessments, checklists, rubrics, running records, observation forms)
 - Protocols for how to support students performing below grade level
- Look for evidence of systematic instruction AND assessment to support development of foundational skills.
- Teacher Edition identifies metrics and systems for progress monitoring the foundational skills to support the teacher in identifying students' growth toward reading grade level and for progress monitoring throughout the year.
- Look at questions and tasks in phonics assessments (screeners, inventories, diagnostics).

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What assessment measures are included for foundational skills?
- Are diagnostic assessments offered at regular intervals?
- Are there pre-assessments and post-assessments?

- What does the teacher do with the results of formal and informal assessments?
- How are phonics assessed across K-2?
- How frequently is student progress assessed?
- What assessments are suggested for the teacher to use during lessons for immediate teacher feedback on student learning?
- What data tracking methods are employed?
- How do students participate in assessment?
- What kinds of feedback do students receive? Is the feedback based on lesson objectives?
- What instructional adjustments and protocols are recommended after the assessment? Are there opportunities for more practice, re-teaching, and/or alternative instructional practices suggested?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Do the materials provide regular and systematic assessment opportunities?
- Do the assessments provide the teacher with success criteria? Do the assessments help the teacher find evidence of a student's progress toward mastery of each skill?
- Do the assessment materials provide progress information for students to be supported and move toward independence in foundational skills?
- What guidance and/or protocols exist for the teacher to help students performing below grade level?
- Are the assessment materials aligned to the instruction?
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final ratings.

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

Criterion 1.4

Word Recognition and Word Analysis

Materials and instruction support students in learning and practicing regularly and irregularly spelled words.

What is the purpose of this Criterion?

This criterion addresses high-frequency words in Kindergarten, Grade 1, and Grade 2. High-frequency words are the most commonly used words in English text. Some English words are phonetically regular and others are temporarily irregularly spelled or permanently irregularly spelled. There is a need for students to recognize high-frequency words and irregularly spelled words automatically in text, therefore instruction and practice of high-frequency words is necessary in instructional materials.

Research Connection

A core goal of early reading instruction is helping students develop the ability to recognize words automatically. This process, known as orthographic mapping, occurs when students connect the spellings of words with their pronunciations and meanings. As students decode printed words and pronounce them, the orthographic information is stored in memory, allowing them to retrieve those words later by sight ([Miles, Rubin, & Gonzalez-Frey, 2017](#)).

Decoding plays a central role in this process. Teaching students to decode unfamiliar words provides the foundation for storing familiar words in memory. When students learn to connect letters in spellings to the sounds in pronunciations—both during decoding and while reading connected text—they strengthen their ability to retain and recall those words automatically. This process supports the development of a growing bank of words students can read by sight, increasing fluency and comprehension ([Ehri, 2020](#)).

Systematic instruction helps ensure this process is effective. Programs that follow a planned sequence often begin with regular consonants and single-letter vowel patterns, selected for their frequency and predictability. High-frequency words may be introduced alongside phonics content to support application in connected reading and writing. Over time, additional spelling and decoding patterns are introduced to build accuracy, automaticity, and confidence. This sequencing can follow either a grapheme-based model or a word family approach, as long as instruction builds cumulatively on prior knowledge ([Brady, 2020](#)).

Together, this research emphasizes the importance of decoding, systematic phonics instruction, and memory-building practices to support the development of automatic word recognition in early readers.

Scoring:

Meets Expectations

- 10-12 points

Partially Meets Expectations

- 6-9 points

Does Not Meet Expectations

- < 6 points

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Criterion 1.4 | Materials and instruction support students in learning and practicing regularly and irregularly spelled words. |
| Indicator 1o | Materials include explicit instruction in identifying the regularly spelled part and the temporarily irregularly spelled part of words. High-frequency word instruction includes spiraling review. |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Scoring: | | |
| 2 points | 1 point | 0 points |
| Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials include systematic and explicit instruction of high-frequency words with an explicit and consistent instructional routine. Materials include teacher modeling of the spelling and reading of high-frequency words that includes connecting the phonemes to the graphemes. Materials include a sufficient quantity of high-frequency words for students to make reading progress. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator focuses on systematic and explicit instruction of high-frequency words. Materials should include an instructional routine for students to identify the regularly spelled and temporarily irregularly spelled part of words. Explicit instruction in identifying the regularly spelled part and the temporarily irregularly spelled part of words is crucial for several reasons: Teaching students to identify regular and irregular spelling patterns helps them understand the structure of words. Recognizing common patterns allows students to decode unfamiliar words and read with greater fluency. By understanding the regular patterns in words, students can apply these patterns to their spelling, enabling them to spell words correctly even if they haven't encountered them before. This boosts their overall spelling skills. When students can accurately decode words, their reading comprehension improves. They can focus on understanding the meaning of the text rather than struggling with individual word recognition. Identifying regularly spelled parts of words allows students to read more efficiently. They can quickly recognize and process familiar word parts, speeding up their reading and making it a more enjoyable experience.

Spiraling review in high-frequency word instruction ensures that students retain these words in their long-term memory. Repetition and review help reinforce memory, making it more likely that these words will be recognized

and read fluently. High-frequency words are words that appear frequently in texts. Teaching these words and incorporating spiraling review helps students achieve automaticity, meaning they can recognize and read these words quickly and effortlessly. Automatic recognition of common words is essential for fluent reading. When students can quickly recognize high-frequency words, their reading fluency improves. Fluent readers can focus on understanding the meaning of the text rather than struggling with basic word recognition.

In this indicator, we define high-frequency words as regularly and irregularly spelled high-frequency words. High-frequency words are both decodable words and irregularly spelled words. Additionally, parts of high-frequency words may be temporarily irregular until students learn the sound-spelling pattern. Regularly spelled parts of words refer to the segments of words that follow common phonetic or spelling rules. Temporarily irregularly spelled parts of words are parts of words that do not conform to common phonetic rules but may become regular with further instruction or understanding of advanced spelling patterns. “Surprisingly, approximately only four percent of all English words in print defy explanation and are truly irregular. More commonly, speech sounds in English words are spelled with one of several possible spellings, which are determined by various kinds of patterns” ([English Gets a Bad Wrap! Moats & Tolman \(2009\)](#)).

Research or Standards connection:

Learning to read in English requires students to navigate a writing system that includes both regular and irregular grapheme-phoneme correspondences. While systematic phonics instruction is essential, students must also learn to read words that do not follow regular spelling patterns. Research highlights that successful instruction for irregular words must involve active processing of the word’s orthography—encouraging students to pay close attention to how letters and sounds interact even when patterns are less predictable.

[Colenbrander et al. \(2022\)](#) found that engaging students in analyzing and processing the spellings of irregular words during instruction significantly supports their ability to recognize and read these words. Rather than relying solely on memorization, students benefit from instruction that draws attention to the specific orthographic features of irregular words, helping them anchor the word’s pronunciation, meaning, and spelling in memory. This process enables students to integrate irregular words into their developing reading system more effectively and supports broader word recognition growth.

Resources:

- [Basics: Sight Words and Orthographic Mapping](#)
- [A New Model for Teaching High-Frequency Words](#)

Indicator 1a Guiding Question:

How do the materials provide explicit, systematic instruction of grade-level phonics skills?

Evidence Collection

In the Instructional Materials being reviewed:

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards at each grade level. Review:
 - Table of Contents (including prefatory materials to see the rationale for how high-frequency word instruction is approached).
 - Instructions, questions, and tasks in relevant foundational sections including prefatory material to evaluate the systematic, explicit high-frequency word instruction.
 - Teacher Edition identifies lessons and activities for high-frequency word instruction.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - How do the materials provide systematic and repeated modeling of high-frequency word instruction?
 - How does the design of the materials inform the teaching and learning of high-frequency words?
 - What materials are included for the teacher to explicitly teach grade-level high-frequency words?
 - Does the teacher explicitly teach high-frequency words by identifying previously learned sound/spelling patterns and memorizing the temporarily irregular parts of words? For example, in the word "want," the "w" and "nt" follow typical phonetic patterns. Using the same example, the "a" in "want" does not follow the expected short vowel sound pattern.
 - How do the materials provide systematic and repeated instruction so students have opportunities to learn high-frequency words to mastery as opposed to memorization or flash cards?
 - How many words are taught each year? Are any repeated each year across K-2?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of grade-level high-frequency word instruction in core materials.
- Discuss the amount of time spent on high-frequency word instruction over the course of the school year. Is adequate time spent? Are the skills being developed for students?
- Discuss how materials include lessons, activities, and routines for sufficient practice.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final ratings.

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Criterion 1.4 | Materials and instruction support students in learning and practicing regularly and irregularly spelled words. |
| Indicator 1p | Instructional opportunities are frequently built into the materials for students to practice and gain decoding automaticity of high-frequency words. |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Scoring: | | |
| 2 points | 1 point | 0 points |
| Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students practice decoding high-frequency words in isolation. • Lessons provide students with frequent opportunities to decode high-frequency words in context. • Lessons provide students with frequent opportunities to encode high-frequency words in tasks, such as sentences, in order to promote automaticity of high-frequency words. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

The purpose of this indicator is to verify materials do not simply require students to learn to read and write high-frequency words in isolation through skill and drill practice with word lists or cards, relying on memorization. High-frequency words are used frequently in text, hence the name high-frequency words. To understand high-frequency words, students need opportunities to develop automaticity in decoding, reading, and writing the high-frequency words in the context of phrases and sentences. Furthermore, abstract high-frequency words, (e.g., *a*, *the*, and *of*) require the context of a phrase or sentence to carry meaning. In this indicator we define high-frequency words as regularly and irregularly spelled high-frequency words.

Research or Standards connection:

Fluency in reading depends heavily on a student’s ability to recognize words automatically. Proficient readers draw on a large bank of sight words, freeing up mental energy to focus on comprehension rather than decoding each word. Research shows that the development of sight word knowledge occurs through a process of linking the visual form of a word to its pronunciation. As students encounter words repeatedly and apply phonics skills to decode them, these visual-phonological connections become stronger, allowing words to be stored in long-term memory for effortless retrieval.

The goal of early reading instruction is to help students develop an analytic approach to decoding unfamiliar words (Miles, 2018). Through consistent decoding practice and repeated exposure, students gradually transition from sounding out words to recognizing most words automatically. Over time, even words that initially seem irregular in their spelling patterns become familiar and function like regularly spelled words for fluent readers. Supporting students in the process is essential for building the automaticity and comprehension skills necessary for independent reading success.

Resources:

- [Basics: Sight Words and Orthographic Mapping](#)
- [Should I teach students to memorize sight words and monitor their progress?](#)

Indicator 1p Guiding Question:

How do the materials provide students with opportunities to read and write high-frequency words in context?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards at each grade level. Review:
 - The Table of Contents for high-frequency words.
 - The index for high-frequency word instruction.
 - The end of the Teacher Edition or resources for the instructional routines for high-frequency words. Sentences in the decodables for high-frequency.
 - Lessons in high-frequency/irregularly spelled words for activities that require students to read or write high-frequency in the context of sentences.
 - Student workbooks for practice in high-frequency words.
- Look for separate ancillary materials with instructional routines for high-frequency words or irregularly spelled words.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Are opportunities to implement practice of high-frequency words in context evident in the core instructional sequence?
 - Is there regular practice of high-frequency words for students across the units?
 - Does the teacher model activities and tasks that promote the reading and writing of high-frequency words?
 - Are the activities grade-appropriate, with an emphasis on newly learned high-frequency words with scaffolded teacher support?
- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Do the materials provide opportunities for students to acquire automatic recognition of high-frequency words in the context of a phrase or sentence?
 - Do the materials provide frequent and regular opportunities throughout the year for students to read and write high-frequency words through diverse tasks?
 - Is there regular practice across diverse activities for students throughout the units?
 - Do tasks provide students multiple opportunities to read regularly and irregularly spelled high-frequency words?

- Do tasks provide students multiple opportunities to spell regularly and irregularly spelled high-frequency words?
- Do students engage with reading and writing tasks utilizing high-frequency words (e.g., writing high-frequency words in contextual sentences, reading/writing high-frequency words in projects, etc.)?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of materials providing opportunities for students to read and write high-frequency words in core materials.
- Discuss the amount of time spent on students' practice of reading and writing/encoding practice with high-frequency words over the course of the school year. Is adequate time spent? Are the skills being developed for students?
- Discuss how materials include lessons, activities, and routines for sufficient practice.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final ratings.

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Criterion 1.4 | Materials and instruction support students in learning and practicing regularly and irregularly spelled words. |
| Indicator 1q | Materials include explicit instruction in syllabication and morpheme analysis and provide students with practice opportunities to apply learning. |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Scoring: | | |
| 4 points | 2 points | 0 points |
| Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials contain explicit instruction of syllable types and syllable division that promote decoding and encoding of words. Materials contain explicit instruction in morpheme analysis to decode unfamiliar words. Multiple and varied opportunities are provided over the course of the year for students to learn, practice, and apply word analysis strategies. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator focuses on syllabication and morpheme analysis. When students come across unfamiliar words to decode, students need the skills to decode the word. If a student is explicitly taught syllabication and word analysis skills, a student is better equipped to decode unfamiliar words.

Teaching syllabication (breaking words into syllables) and morpheme analysis (breaking words into meaningful units) are important skills in developing students' literacy abilities. Teachers need to teach students about phoneme and grapheme relationships, such as when a vowel makes a short sound or a long sound. Teachers need to teach students how to use word analysis when reading complex words such as words with common and uncommon vowel digraphs, multisyllabic words, or words with prefixes, suffixes, or roots..

Understanding syllables helps students read and decode unfamiliar words. By breaking words into syllables, they can tackle longer, multisyllabic words more easily, improving their reading fluency. Knowledge of syllables aids spelling. When students know how to divide words into syllables, they can spell more accurately. It also helps them recognize common spelling patterns within syllables. Proficiency in syllabication supports reading fluency. Fluent readers can identify syllables quickly, enabling smoother and more natural reading. While the teacher needs to have knowledge of the six different syllable types and syllabication rules (e.g., every syllable has a vowel), students do not necessarily need to know the specific terminology for syllable types, rather how

the syllable type or rule helps a student determine the vowel sound in the word. For example, materials may include instruction containing short vowel syllable and long vowel syllable types without teaching the terminology of closed syllable type and open syllable type. Further, as words gain syllables, students must apply vowel flexibility (i.e., apply long and short vowel sound and schwa) to syllables as they are decoding (e.g., students flex vowel sounds in ci-vi-li-za-tion using vowel names, sounds, and schwa).

Morphemes are the smallest units of meaning in words. Analyzing morphemes helps students understand the meanings of words. For example, "unhappiness" consists of the prefix, "un-," the root, "happy," and the suffix "-ness," (i.e., a noun), each contributing to the overall meaning. Understanding morphemes aids in recognizing and decoding words. For example, recognizing the root word "act" in "activity," "actor," and "react" helps students read and understand various words related to the same root. Morpheme analysis improves spelling skills. When students recognize common prefixes, suffixes, and roots, they can spell words correctly by applying their knowledge of morphemes.

Research or Standards connection:

As students advance in their reading development, they encounter increasingly complex, multisyllabic words, making instruction in word analysis strategies essential. Teaching students to decode longer words by breaking them into parts, identifying vowel patterns, and blending the parts back together supports their ability to read more complex texts with accuracy and fluency (Foorman et al., 2016). Across programs, a consistent emphasis is placed on helping students recognize and use vowel information as a critical cue for dividing and decoding unfamiliar words (Kearns et al., 2022).

The need for explicit instruction in multisyllabic word reading grows significantly starting in the elementary grades. Research indicates that the vast majority of English words are multisyllabic, and their prevalence in academic texts increases dramatically as early as grade 3. These longer words pose challenges not only because of their length but also due to factors like syllable boundaries, word stress patterns, ambiguous vowel pronunciations, and morphological complexity. Explicit teaching of syllabification strategies and morphological awareness has been shown to significantly improve multisyllabic word reading accuracy for struggling readers (Heggie & Wade-Woolley, 2017).

Instruction that focuses on building automaticity with multisyllabic words is most effective when students have repeated opportunities to manipulate and read words and word parts. A part-to-whole instructional model—beginning with morphemes in isolation, then applying them within whole words, and ultimately using them in connected text—helps students strengthen their word recognition skills and promotes greater reading fluency (Toste et al., 2017).

Resources:

- [On Eating Elephants and Teaching Syllabication](#)
- [Six Syllable Types](#)
- [Helping Students With Dyslexia Read Long Words Using Syllables and Morphemes](#)
- [33. Syllables or Morphemes? When to Teach Which and Why | 2022 Literacy Symposium](#)

Indicator 1q Guiding Question:

How do the materials provide explicit, systematic word analysis instruction and student practice of word analysis?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards at each grade level. Review:
 - Table of Contents (including prefatory materials to see the rationale for how word analysis is approached).
 - Instructions, questions, and tasks in relevant foundational sections including prefatory material to evaluate word analysis strategies.
- Review the teacher materials for syllabication and morphemic analysis.
- Look at the end of the Teacher Edition or resources for the instructional routines or protocols for word analysis.
 - Students in Kindergarten can be taught suffixes such as -s, -ed, and -ing. Inflectional endings are taught in Grade 1, and a variety of prefixes and suffixes are taught in Grade 2.
 - Students in Grade 1 can be taught to differentiate the number of morphemes in a word.
- Look for ancillary materials with explanations about word analysis and syllabication.
 - Review for:
 - In Kindergarten, students can learn what a CVC syllable is. Students in kindergarten can differentiate between long and short vowel sounds. Open and closed syllables can be taught.
 - In Grade 1, students learn final -e and common vowel teams. They also learn that every syllable must have a vowel sound. By the end of Grade 1, students are breaking two-syllable words into parts.
- Look in phonics lessons for word analysis and syllabication opportunities.
 - Ex: Sorting words by morphological rules
- Look in the materials for the teaching of prefixes and suffixes.
 - Ex: Word building activities where students build words with a prefix, root, and suffix.
- Look in the materials for syllabication taught across K-2 (*note: all six syllable types will not be addressed in one year).

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Do the materials have the teacher explicitly teach word analysis skills?
 - Do the materials provide teacher guidance on a progression for teaching word analysis skills?
 - Do the materials provide teacher guidance on how multisyllabic words can be decoded?
- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Do the materials provide grade-appropriate opportunities for the students to analyze phoneme-grapheme relationships within single-syllable and multisyllabic words?
 - Do single-syllable and multisyllabic activities provide students grade-appropriate opportunities to practice and learn phoneme/grapheme recognition?
 - Do multisyllabic activities provide students grade-appropriate opportunities to practice and learn morpheme analysis?
 - Do single-syllable and multisyllabic activities provide students grade-appropriate opportunities to practice and learn that every syllable has a vowel sound?
 - Do multisyllabic activities provide students grade-appropriate opportunities to practice and learn common affixes?
 - Do multisyllabic activities provide students grade-appropriate opportunities to practice and learn division of syllables?
 - Do the materials provide frequent and regular opportunities throughout the year for students to practice and apply word analysis strategies in reading and writing?

- Do materials provide students with opportunities to independently use word analysis strategies in reading and writing tasks?
- Are there materials students can utilize as “tools” to help them remember word analysis strategies taught?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of materials providing explicit instruction in word analysis strategies and student practice of word analysis strategies in core materials.
- Discuss the amount of time spent on students’ practice of word analysis over the course of the school year. Is adequate time spent? Are the skills being developed for students?
- Discuss how materials include lessons, activities, and routines for sufficient practice.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final ratings.

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Criterion 1.4 | Materials and instruction support students in learning and practicing regularly and irregularly spelled words. |
| Indicator 1r | Materials regularly and systematically offer assessment opportunities that measure student progress of word recognition and analysis (as indicated by the program scope and sequence). |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Scoring: | | |
| 4 points | 2 points | 0 points |
| Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials regularly and systematically provide a variety of assessment opportunities over the course of the year to demonstrate students' progress toward mastery and independence of word recognition and analysis. Assessment materials provide the teacher and students with information concerning students' current skills/level of understanding of word recognition and word analysis. Materials support the teacher with instructional suggestions for assessment-based steps to help students progress toward mastery in word recognition and word analysis. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines the quality of instructional materials intended for assessment of word recognition skills.

Ongoing assessment of word recognition skills allows the teacher to use various instruments, tools, observations, and student work samples to determine student progress. Foundational skill assessments should help a teacher determine a student's overall reading ability as well as subcomponents of each student's growth in foundational skills. Assessments (diagnostic, formative, summative, informal, formal, pre-assessments, post-assessments, screening assessments, running records, portfolios, checklists, observations, etc.) support the teachers in evaluating students' skills in order to plan effective instruction and activities for all students to make academic growth. These assessments inform the teacher of next steps for the whole group, small group, and individual instruction of foundational skills.

Quality materials will provide assessments for the teacher and students that assess student progress of foundational skills regularly and systematically during the day, week, month, and year.

Assessments of foundational skills are not intended to be a battery of tests administered to students. Materials should contain assessment opportunities that help the teacher monitor students' progress and then provide the teacher with support to reteach when students are not successful in learning the foundational skill.

Research or Standards connection:

Effective assessment of early reading skills must include multiple dimensions of word recognition to fully capture students' strengths and areas of need. Research highlights that a comprehensive diagnostic approach should measure word-reading accuracy both in and out of context, phonemic decoding skill, and reading fluency ([Al Otaiba et al., 2012](#)). Assessments that involve reading words in isolation are particularly important for identifying challenges faced by students with reading disabilities, as they remove the contextual cues that can sometimes mask decoding weaknesses.

Understanding the difference between a student's performance on in-context and out-of-context word reading tasks can provide valuable diagnostic insight into how well the student can independently recognize words and how much they rely on contextual guessing strategies ([Al Otaiba et al., 2012](#)). In addition to formal measures, observations of students' oral reading behaviors across texts of varying difficulty offer useful information about how students integrate decoding, context, and other reading strategies. Together, these practices help educators form a more complete picture of a student's reading development and inform targeted instructional support.

Resources:

- [The Effects of Syllable-Awareness Skills on the Word-Reading Performances of Students Reading in a Transparent Orthography](#)

Indicator 1r Guiding Question:

How do the materials provide assessment of all high-frequency words, word analysis, and syllabication skills?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards at each grade level. Review:
 - Table of Contents (including prefatory materials to see the rationale for how assessment is approached)
 - Assessment sections (diagnostic assessments, checklists, rubrics, running records, observation forms)
 - Protocols for how to support students performing below grade level
- Look for evidence of systematic instruction AND assessment to support development of foundational skills.
- Teacher Edition identifies metrics and systems for progress monitoring the foundational skills to support the teacher in identifying students' growth toward reading grade level and for progress monitoring throughout the year.
- Look at questions and tasks in assessments (screeners, inventories, diagnostics).
- Some materials may have grade-level fluency passages with questions attached for comprehension checks.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What assessment measures are included for foundational skills?
- Are diagnostic assessments offered at regular intervals?
- Are there pre-assessments and post-assessments?
- What does the teacher do with the results of formal and informal assessments?
- What tools are used to measure student learning of word recognition in K-2?
- How frequently is student progress assessed?
- What assessments are suggested for the teacher to use during lessons for immediate teacher feedback on student learning?
- What data tracking methods are employed?
- How do students participate in assessment?
- What kinds of feedback do students receive? Is the feedback based on lesson objectives?
- What instructional adjustments and protocols are recommended after the assessment? Are there opportunities for more practice, re-teaching, and/or alternative instructional practices suggested?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Do the materials provide regular and systematic assessment opportunities?
- Do the assessments provide the teacher with success criteria? Do the assessments help the teacher find evidence of a student's progress toward mastery of each skill?
- Do the assessment materials provide progress information for students to be supported and move toward independence in foundational skills?
- What protocols exist for the teacher to help students performing below grade level?
- Are the assessment materials aligned to the instruction?
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final ratings.

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

Criterion 1.5

Reading Fluency Development (Grades 1-2 Only)

Materials provide systematic and explicit instruction and practice in oral reading fluency by mid-to-late 1st and 2nd grade. Materials for Grade 2 oral reading fluency practice should vary (decodables and grade-level texts). Instruction and practice support students' development of accuracy, rate, and prosody to build fluent, meaningful reading.

What is the purpose of this Criterion?

This criterion addresses oral reading fluency, which is the ability to read text accurately, automatically, and with appropriate expression. Fluent readers can decode words effortlessly, allowing them to focus on understanding the meaning of the text. Developing fluent readers requires explicit, systematic, and structured literacy instruction that includes teacher modeling, repeated practice, and feedback over time.

Fluency rate refers to the speed at which a person reads. It is the ability to read text quickly and efficiently without sacrificing comprehension (National Reading Panel. (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).

Accuracy in reading refers to the ability to read words correctly. It involves recognizing and decoding words without making mistakes ([Chard et al., 2002](#)).

Prosody refers to the ability to read with appropriate expression, phrasing, and intonation, conveying the meaning of the text ([Rasinski, 2004](#)).

Effective instructional materials support students in developing all three components through varied and intentional opportunities for oral reading practice in connected texts, particularly beginning in mid-Grade 1 and continuing through Grade 2.

Research Connection

Fluency development is a critical bridge between decoding skills and reading comprehension. According to [Rasinski \(2014, 2017\)](#), automatic word recognition builds directly upon phonics instruction by enabling students to recognize words quickly and accurately, using minimal cognitive effort. When readers automatically recognize words, they can devote more of their mental resources to higher-level processes such as understanding and interpreting text.

A key component of fluency is prosody—the expressions, intonation, and rhythm used during oral reading. Prosody serves as the connection between fluent word reading and comprehension. To read with appropriate expression that reflects the author’s intent and meaning, students must have at least a basic understanding of the text they are reading. In contrast, struggling readers often lack automaticity, forcing them to focus most of their cognitive resources on decoding individual words. This limits their ability to engage in the more complex task of making meaning from the text. Strengthening automaticity and prosody through fluency-focused instruction is essential for supporting both reading fluency and overall comprehension.

Scoring:

Meets Expectations

- 10-12 points

Partially Meets Expectations

- 6-9 points

Does Not Meet Expectations

- < 6 points

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

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|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 1.5 | Materials provide systematic and explicit instruction and practice in oral reading fluency by mid-to-late 1st and 2nd grade. Materials for Grade 2 oral reading fluency practice should vary (decodables and grade-level texts). |
| Indicator 1s | Instructional opportunities are built into the materials for systematic, evidence-based, explicit instruction in oral reading fluency. |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Scoring: | | |
| 4 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 2 points Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials include regular and varied opportunities for explicit, systematic instruction in rate, accuracy, and prosody using grade-level decodable connected text. Materials provide opportunities for students to hear fluent reading of grade-level text by a model reader. Materials include a variety of resources for explicit instruction in oral reading fluency, supporting skill development across the year. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

The National Reading Panel included fluency as one of the five necessary components for reading instruction. When reading fluency is taught in Grades 1-2, students should be provided with explicit instruction in how to read fluently. Fluency instruction includes explicit instruction of how to read fluently as well as modeling of rate, accuracy, and prosody. Students should hear and see the teacher model how to be a fluent reader. Following teacher modeling, instructional materials for students in Grades 1 and 2 will provide opportunities for students to engage in a variety of tasks and activities designed to build fluency.

Research or Standards connection:

Reading fluency is a foundational competency that plays a critical role in overall reading success. Research shows that fluency can be measured reliably and efficiently and that effective instructional strategies have been developed to improve students' fluency over time ([Rasinski, 2014 & 2017](#)). Struggling readers, including those who perform poorly on high-stakes silent reading comprehension assessments, often demonstrate significant weaknesses in fluency. Poor fluency limits their ability to decode words quickly and effortlessly, which in turn hinders their comprehension of connected text.

Although fluency is recognized as an essential component of early reading development and is included in national standards such as the Common Core State Standards, many students in upper elementary, middle, and secondary grades continue to struggle with achieving adequate levels of fluency. This persistent fluency gap contributes to broader difficulties with reading comprehension, emphasizing the need for consistent, explicit fluency instruction throughout students' educational careers. Strengthening fluency supports both word reading efficiency and higher-level comprehension processes.

Resources:

- [Components of Fluency](#)

Indicator 1s Guiding Question:

How do the materials address explicit, systematic oral reading fluency instruction?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to fluency standards at each grade level. Review:
 - The Table of Contents in the Teacher Edition for listing of fluency lessons.
 - Materials for grade-level reading passages that focus on fluency.
 - Guidance for systematic and explicit instruction in fluency.
 - Guidance for teacher modeling of phrasing, use of punctuation, and expression.
 - Lessons that focus on use of phrasing, punctuation, and expression.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Are instructional opportunities built into the materials for explicit fluency instruction in Grades 1-2?
 - Do the materials provide support and opportunities for evidence-based fluency instruction in Grades 1-2?
 - Do materials provide a variety of resources, not just narrative texts, to practice oral reading fluency?
 - Do the instructional opportunities in the materials support systematic fluency instruction in Grades 1-2?
 - Do materials sufficiently attend to rate and accuracy?
 - How do materials attend to prosody? (This should begin in mid-Grade 1)
 - Do the instructional opportunities included in the materials require students to understand the use and impact of the following elements on fluency:
 - Phrasing?
 - Expression?
 - Intonation?
 - Punctuation?
 - Rate?
 - Accuracy?
- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Do students hear the teacher model fluency?
 - Do students hear the same passage read repeatedly with fluency?
 - Do students see the teacher or proficient reader use a finger to track the reading of the words as the

reader reads aloud?

- Do students hear modeled phrasing, expression, intonation, rate, and accuracy?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of materials providing instruction in fluency in core materials.
- Discuss the amount of time spent on fluency instruction over the course of the school year. Is adequate time spent?
- Discuss how materials include lessons, activities, and routines for sufficient practice.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final ratings.

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 1.5 | Materials provide systematic and explicit instruction and practice in oral reading fluency by mid-to-late 1st and 2nd grade. Materials for Grade 2 oral reading fluency practice should vary (decodables and grade-level texts). |
| Indicator 1t | Varied and frequent opportunities are built into the materials for students to engage in supported practice to gain automaticity and prosody beginning in mid-Grade 1 and through Grade 2 (once accuracy is secure). |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Scoring: | | |
| 4 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 2 points Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varied, frequent opportunities are provided over the course of the year for students to gain automaticity and prosody in connected text, aligned to program expectations and developmental readiness. • Materials provide practice opportunities for word reading fluency in a variety of settings (e.g. repeated readings, dyad or partner reading, continuous reading), with sufficient frequency to support progress towards mastery. • Materials include teacher-facing guidance on modeling fluent reading and delivering corrective feedback that supports students’ growth in rate, expression, and phrasing. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

The National Reading Panel included fluency as part of the five necessary components for reading instruction. Fluency includes oral reading rate (appropriate speed), oral reading word recognition (accuracy), and oral reading prosody (expression and phrasing).

Automaticity in reading means recognizing words quickly and accurately without conscious effort. Frequent practice with a variety of texts—beginning in mid-Grade 1 once accuracy is established—helps students develop automatic word recognition skills. When words are recognized automatically, students can focus on understanding the meaning of the text rather than struggling with word recognition. Fluent reading involves not only accurate word recognition but also appropriate speed and expression (prosody). Frequent practice with different texts and genres—including routines such as repeated reading, partner reading, echo reading, and poetry—helps students read smoothly and with expression, improving their overall reading fluency.

By becoming fluent readers, students can allocate more cognitive resources to comprehension. When students read with automaticity and prosody, they can grasp the meaning of sentences and passages more effectively.

Fluent reading supports comprehension by allowing students to read phrases and sentences as meaningful chunks, aiding in understanding. To support this growth, materials should embed fluency opportunities at regular intervals across the year—ideally weekly or aligned to the program’s design to ensure consistent development.

Research or Standards connection:

Reading fluency is a critical competency that must be explicitly addressed within literacy instruction. Research consistently shows that fluency is not only foundational to reading development but also relatively straightforward to measure and monitor (Rasinski, 2014 & 2017). Reliable assessment tools and evidence-based instructional methods have been developed to support the improvement of students’ fluency skills. Strengthening fluency is essential for enabling students to read accurately, automatically, and with appropriate expression—key components that contribute to overall reading comprehension and academic success.

Resources:

- [Fluency: In Practice](#)
- [Evidence-based Fluency Instruction](#)

Indicator 1t Guiding Question:

How do the materials address oral reading fluency practice?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards at each grade level. Review:
 - Guidance for systematic instruction and practice in oral reading fluency.
 - Lessons that focus on use of phrasing, punctuation, and expression.
 - Lessons for different types of oral reading fluency opportunities (i.e., reader’s theater, dialogues, song lyrics, narratives, speeches, whisper reading, repeated readings, choral reading, oral recitation, echo reading)
 - Texts, books, and passages (decodable and grade-level) that support students at different levels for small groups, whole group, and independent reading.
 - Opportunities for students to read texts considered on-grade level, especially in Grade 2.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Do the instructional materials adequately support the development of fluency?
 - Are supports included that teach and support fluent reading?
 - Are multiple and varied reading opportunities offered over the course of the year?
 - Does the teacher support students with varied fluency opportunities (e.g., reader’s theater, dialogues, song lyrics, narratives, speeches, whisper reading, repeated readings, choral reading, oral recitation, echo reading) across the year in whole group, small group, individual, and intervention settings to increase fluency?
- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Do students read texts with a focus on rate, accuracy, and expression?
 - Do students practice reading fluency through varied fluency opportunities?
 - Do students receive fluency instruction in whole group and in small groups?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of materials providing fluency practice in core materials.
- Discuss the amount of time spent on students' fluency practice over the course of the school year. Is adequate time spent? Are the skills being developed for students?
- Discuss how materials include lessons, activities, and routines for sufficient practice.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final ratings.

Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 1.5 | Materials provide systematic and explicit instruction and practice in oral reading fluency by mid-to-late 1st and 2nd grade. Materials for Grade 2 oral reading fluency practice should vary (decodables and grade-level texts). |
| Indicator 1u | Materials regularly and systematically offer assessment opportunities that measure student progress in oral reading fluency (as indicated by the program scope and sequence). |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Scoring: | | |
| 4 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 2 points Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple assessment opportunities are provided regularly and systematically over the course of the year for students to demonstrate progress toward mastery and independence of oral reading fluency. • Assessment materials provide the teacher—and, when appropriate, caregivers—with information about students' current skills/levels in rate, accuracy, and prosody. • Materials support the teacher with instructional adjustments to help students make progress toward mastery and include guidance aligned to developmentally appropriate fluency benchmarks (e.g., WCPM, prosody rubrics, or progress-monitoring targets). | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines the quality of instructional materials intended for assessment of oral reading fluency, including rate, accuracy, and prosody.

Ongoing assessment of foundational skills allows the teacher to use various instruments, tools, observations, and student work samples to determine student progress. Foundational skill assessments should help a teacher determine a student's overall reading ability as well as subcomponents of each student's growth in foundational skills. Assessments (diagnostic, formative, summative, informal, formal, pre-assessments, post-assessments, screening assessments, running records, portfolios, checklists, observations, etc.) support the teachers in evaluating students' skills in order to plan effective instruction and activities for all students to make academic growth. These assessments inform the teacher of next steps for the whole group, small group, and individual instruction of foundational skills.

Quality materials will provide assessments for the teacher and students that assess student progress of

foundational skills regularly and systematically during the day, week, month, and year and offer developmentally appropriate benchmarks (e.g., WCPM, prosody rubrics, or growth indicators) to support interpretation and instructional planning.

Assessments of foundational skills are not intended to be a battery of tests administered to students. Materials should contain assessment opportunities that help the teacher monitor students' progress and then provide the teacher with support to reteach when students are not successful in learning the foundational skill.

Research or Standards connection:

Oral reading fluency (ORF) is a critical indicator of overall reading competence and plays a central role in identifying students who may need additional support. Research shows that ORF skills—including speed, accuracy, and expression—are essential not only for reading comprehension but also for academic success across subject areas ([White et al., 2021](#)). Because of its strong predictive value, ORF is often used as a primary measurement tool for determining which students are on track to meet reading standards and which may require targeted intervention. Regular classroom assessments of oral reading fluency, such as curriculum-based measurements and progress monitoring, are widely implemented within response-to-intervention (RTI) models to inform instructional decisions and tier placement.

Intervention practices that combine repeated reading with additional strategies have been shown to produce greater gains in oral reading fluency. Effective combinations include techniques such as word preview (pre-teaching isolated words), listening passage preview (modeling fluent reading), error correction during oral reading, performance feedback (goal setting and self-monitoring), peer-mediated reading activities, and the gradual introduction of more challenging texts ([Lee & Yoon, 2017](#)). These approaches enhance the benefits of repeated reading by building accuracy, automaticity, and prosody, and help ensure that students develop the fluency skills necessary for successful reading comprehension.

Resources:

- [Understanding and Assessing Fluency](#)
- [Oral Reading Fluency Norms: A Valuable Assessment Tool for Reading Teachers](#)

Indicator 1u Guiding Question:

How do the materials provide assessment of fluency?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Fluency standards in Grades 1-2. Review:
 - Table of Contents (including prefatory materials to see the rationale for how assessment is approached)
 - Assessment sections (diagnostic assessments, checklists, rubrics, running records, observation forms)
 - Protocols for how to support students performing below grade level
- Look for evidence of systematic instruction AND assessment to support development of foundational skills.
- Teacher Edition identifies metrics and systems for progress monitoring the foundational skills to support the teacher in identifying students' growth toward reading grade level and for progress monitoring throughout the year.
- Look at questions and tasks in assessments (screeners, inventories, diagnostics).
- Some materials may have grade-level fluency passages with questions attached for comprehension

checks.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What assessment measures are included for foundational skills?
- Are diagnostic assessments offered at regular intervals?
- Are there pre-assessments and post-assessments?
- What does the teacher do with the results of formal and informal assessments?
- How is fluency assessed?
- How frequently is student progress assessed?
- What assessments are suggested for the teacher to use during lessons for immediate teacher feedback on student learning?
- What data tracking methods are employed?
- How do students participate in assessment?
- What kinds of feedback do students receive? Is the feedback based on lesson objectives?
- What instructional adjustments and protocols are recommended after the assessment? Are there opportunities for more practice, re-teaching, and/or alternative instructional practices suggested?
- Do the materials include clear fluency benchmarks or expectations (e.g., WCPM targets, prosody rubrics, or other grade-level indicators to guide interpretation of student performance?)

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Do the materials provide regular and systematic assessment opportunities?
- Do the assessments provide the teacher with success criteria? Do the assessments help the teacher find evidence of a student's progress toward mastery of each skill?
- Do the assessment materials provide progress information for students to be supported and move toward independence in foundational skills?
- What protocols exist for the teacher to help students performing below grade level?
- Are the assessment materials aligned to the instruction?
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final ratings.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

Criterion 2.1

Text Quality and Complexity

Materials include content-rich, engaging texts that meet the text complexity criteria for the grade level. Texts and text sets cohesively work together to build knowledge of specific topics and/or content themes.

What is the purpose of this Criterion?

This criterion addresses a program’s text selection and how those texts work together to build student knowledge of a topic or theme. Determining text complexity involves quantitative and qualitative analysis as well as considering their relationship to the associated student task. Students need access to content-rich, varied, and engaging texts that meet the text complexity criteria at their grade level to advance their literacy skills and develop knowledge of a topic/topics. This criterion also looks at the scaffolds provided in the materials to ensure that all students can access the texts and make meaning.

Research Connection

Research emphasizes the critical role of diverse and complex texts in literacy development and student engagement. The Common Core State Standards advocate for a balanced inclusion of informational and literary texts throughout K-12 education, promoting the systematic development of students’ knowledge about the world. Engaging with challenging texts is likened to weightlifting for the brain, as it builds reading proficiency by developing skills such as vocabulary acquisition, syntactical understanding, and critical thinking. Diverse literature serves as both mirrors and windows, allowing students to see their own identities reflected while learning about different cultures, fostering empathy and combating ethnocentrism. Studies support integrating scaffolded reading practices to provide structured guidance and improve fluency and comprehension. Overall, the research underscores the need for inclusive, varied, and complex reading materials, combined with thoughtful instructional support, to prepare students effectively for academic achievement and participation in a diverse society.

Scoring:

Meets Expectations
 ● 12–14 points

Partially Meets Expectations
 ● 7–11 points

Does Not Meet Expectations
 ● < 7 points

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Criterion 2.1 | Materials include content-rich, engaging texts that meet the text complexity criteria for the grade level. Texts and text sets cohesively work together to build knowledge of specific topics and/or content themes. |
| Indicator 2a | Materials provide opportunities for students to engage in a range and volume of reading through content-rich and engaging texts. |

Narrative Only Criteria (this information will be included in the narrative report but will not affect scoring):

- Materials reflect the balance of informational and literary texts required by the grade-level standards (50/50 in K-5), including various subgenres.
- Materials include a range of full texts and excerpts (including long-form and short-form texts), depending on the materials' stated purpose.
- Materials include sufficient teacher guidance (including monitoring and feedback) and (starting in Grade 1) student accountability structures for independent reading (e.g., independent reading procedures, proposed schedule, tracking system for independent reading).

Scoring:

4 points

Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.

2 points

Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.

0 points

Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.

- Materials include core/anchor texts that are well-crafted, content-rich, and engaging for students at their grade level.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator considers the types of texts students read throughout a program, including the balance of literary and informational texts and their various subgenres. This indicator also considers the volume of reading throughout the program, including the accountability structures for independent reading. The purpose of this indicator is to ensure that materials offer students a diverse and substantial amount of reading experiences using texts that are both content-rich and engaging.

Quality texts are rich in language, engaging, grade-level appropriate, and relevant. They encompass timeless, universal themes and may integrate other content areas. Quality texts can be examined multiple times for multiple purposes. They are used to expand big ideas, build academic vocabulary, and facilitate access to future texts. Ideally, texts are engaging while providing students with opportunities to gain and broaden their knowledge base. Quality texts also impact student perspectives on a variety of topics at various levels of

depth/meaning that lead to the development of a well-rounded individual and facilitate access to future texts (e.g., well-crafted, content-rich, stretches thinking or grows knowledge, engages students of the intended age, avoids stereotypes as well as one-dimensional characters).

Beyond wide reading on a topic, reading volume is critical to students' knowledge base and vocabulary. Students need to practice building their perseverance to be able to navigate complex texts and those of varying lengths. Instructional materials must include opportunities for students to read across a range and volume of text to achieve grade-level reading independence. This indicator identifies the opportunities that exist for students at each grade level to read a variety of genres and topics. Those opportunities provide a large quantity of texts for students to read. To help students engage in a volume of reading, instructional materials should provide a format (e.g., reading log, journal) for teachers, students, and parents/guardians to keep track of the reading activities students do.

Research or Standards connection:

According to "[Common Core's Key Shifts in English Language Arts](#)," "In K-5, fulfilling the standards requires a 50-50 balance between informational and literary reading. Informational reading includes content-rich nonfiction in history/social studies, sciences, technical studies, and the arts. The K-5 standards strongly recommend that texts—both within and across grades—be selected to support students in systematically developing knowledge about the world. In grades 6-12, there is much greater attention on the specific category of literary nonfiction, which is a shift from traditional standards. To be clear, the standards pay substantial attention to literature throughout K-12, as it constitutes half of the reading in K-5 and is the core of the work of 6-12 ELA teachers. Also in grades 6-12, the standards for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects ensure that students can independently build knowledge in these disciplines through reading and writing."

In the article "[The Challenge of Challenging Text](#)," Fisher, Frey, and Shanahan (2012) discuss the importance of engaging with complex texts to develop robust reading skills, comparing the process to weightlifting. Just as lifting weights builds muscle, reading challenging texts builds reading proficiency. The article argues that, like physical exercise, engaging with increasingly difficult texts is essential for developing strong reading skills. Unlike past approaches, which often aimed to simplify texts for students, current educational standards advocate for gradually increasing text complexity to build students' reading stamina and capability. Factors that affect text complexity are vocabulary, sentence structure, coherence, organization, and background knowledge. Materials can "select texts worthy of instruction and align their instructional efforts to ensure that all students read complex, interesting, and important texts."

In the "[Engaging the Adolescent Learner](#)," April 2012 issue, Fisher and Frey (2012) begin by asking, "What Makes Texts Worthy?" The issue states that "for classroom use, worthy texts are those that allow readers to reflect on themselves and their actions; invite them in the worlds of others; understand the biological, social, or physical world; or solve problems that are timely and important. Texts worthy of instruction also allow students to develop their literary prowess and become informed citizens. Although there is not a clear-cut definition and wide-spread agreement about worthy texts, there are texts worth studying."

In the article, "[Reading Volume and Reading Achievement: A Review of Recent Research](#)," Allington and McGill-Franzen (2021) examine the significant positive correlation between reading volume and reading achievement, especially after students achieve basic reading proficiency. Studies since 2000, including experimental designs, demonstrate that increased reading, particularly self-selected reading, improves reading skills, especially mitigating the summer reading loss disproportionately affecting low-income students.

In the book, *Reader Come Home: The Reading Brain in a Digital World*, Wolf (2018) examines how digital technology is transforming our reading habits from deep, reflective engagement to quick, superficial skimming. This shift has profound implications for cognitive processes, such as critical thinking, memory, and empathy. Wolf

advocates for nurturing a bi-literate reading brain capable of deep reading and digital navigation, emphasizing the importance of maintaining these skills in education to support children's cognitive development. The book intertwines scientific research with personal insights, highlighting the role of reading in fostering empathy and understanding. It offers strategies for balancing digital and print reading to preserve the benefits of traditional reading in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

The book, [*Teaching Stamina and Silent Reading in the Digital-Global Age*](#), argues that in the 21st century, high literacy levels are essential for success in higher education, communities, and workplaces. However, a significant portion of U.S. students fail to achieve proficiency, as noted by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2013). Although most students can recognize words, they often lack the stamina for independent reading. The book explores how silent reading practices can evolve to improve students' literacy over the next decade. It emphasizes the need to balance both oral and silent reading, highlighting their complementary roles rather than viewing them as mutually exclusive. The book critiques the overemphasis on oral reading and the simplistic implementation of independent silent reading practices from previous decades. It argues for a more nuanced approach that incorporates effective instructional techniques, ongoing teacher support, and adaptation to digital contexts. To enhance literacy skills, educators must strategically integrate both reading methods and adapt to the demands of the digital age, ensuring that students are prepared for future literacy challenges.

In the article, "[Scaffolded Silent Reading: A Complement to Guided Repeated Oral Reading That Works!](#)" Reutzel, Jones, Fawson, and Smith (2008) discuss Structured Silent Reading's (ScSR) benefits compared to Sustained Silent Reading (SSR). ScSR proves to be a viable complement to traditional SSR and Guided Repeated Oral Reading (GROR) by offering structured guidance, monitoring, and feedback, addressing past criticisms of SSR. It combines student choice with systematic support, making it an effective alternative for enhancing reading fluency and comprehension. ScSR balances engagement with accountability, providing a practical solution for schools aiming to improve reading practices and cater to diverse learner needs. ScSR offers a balanced approach to reading practice by incorporating elements of student choice and engagement with structured monitoring and accountability.

In the article, "[Building a Stronger Case for Independent Reading at School](#)," Bus, Shang, and Roskos (2024) investigate the impact of in-school independent reading on K-10 students' attitudes toward reading, word recognition, and comprehension. Analyzing 47 studies, the researchers found a statistically significant overall positive effect, though this effect is primarily observed in word recognition and attitudes toward reading. The effect on comprehension was negligible. The study also explores debates surrounding independent reading, including the level of control over students' reading choices and the role of independent reading in a comprehensive reading program. The meta-analysis concludes that independent reading is a valuable addition to reading instruction, particularly for fostering positive attitudes toward reading and improving word recognition skills. However, the impact on comprehension may be less pronounced and may depend on the nature of activities in the control group.

Resources:

- [CCSS Appendix A](#)
- [CCSS Appendix B](#)
- [Placing Texts at the Center of the Standards-Aligned ELA Classroom](#)

Range of Text Types for K-5

Students in K-5 apply the Reading standards to the following range of text types, with texts selected from a broad range of cultures and periods.

| Literature | | | Informational Text |
|---|--|--|--|
| Stories | Dramas | Poetry | Literary Nonfiction and Historical, Scientific, and Technical Texts |
| Includes children's adventure stories, folktales, legends, fables, fantasy, realistic fiction, and myth | Includes staged dialogue and brief familiar scenes | Includes nursery rhymes and the subgenres of the narrative poem, limerick, and free verse poem | Includes biographies and autobiographies; books about history, social studies, science, and the arts; technical texts, including directions, forms, and information displayed in graphs, charts, or maps; and digital sources on a range of topics |

Indicator 2a Guiding Question:

Are students reading a range and volume of content-rich and engaging texts, both through interaction with the teacher and/or classmates and independently?

Evidence Collection

Note:

- The first three criteria for this indicator consider the anchor or core texts in a program. “Anchor texts” are defined as those texts used as core to instruction.
- Texts identified as “supplemental” or “optional” are not considered core texts.
- Short-form texts refer to picture books, short stories, articles, poems, essays, blog posts, etc.
- Long-form texts refer to full-length chapter books, full-length novels (including full-length graphic novels), full-length plays, and full-length books.

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Review the Text Analysis information to identify the anchor/core texts.
- Read through anchor texts and accompanying teacher resources outlining them.
- Review the appendices, teacher resources, or another source for information about the anchor texts.
- Review the instructional materials Table of Contents for literary and informational texts.
- Review the literary and informational texts that anchor a year's worth of curriculum.
- Identify the balance of literary and informational texts (50/50 in Grades K-5).
- Identify the subgenres covered by the anchor or core texts in the program.
- Identify the independent reading system included in the materials (including teacher guidance).

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the materials reflect a balance of informational and literary reading selections? What is the percentage of each? Is there roughly a 50/50 split of informational to literary?
- Do the selections reflect a variety of genres, including poetry, short stories, dramas, and novels? Record the variety and balance, noting specific numbers of each type, as applicable.
- Are any genres or text types “missing?”
- Do the materials include a range of full texts and excerpts? Do the materials include a purpose for why excerpts are used? Note the percentage of full texts and excerpts in the program.
- Do the materials include a range of short-form and long-form texts? Note the percentage of short-form texts and long-form texts in the program.
- Are the anchor texts rich in language? Do they provide academic vocabulary?
- Do most literary anchor texts provide rich characterizations (v. one-dimensional characters) and various literary archetypes?

- Are informational texts from trustworthy sources?
- Do texts consider a range of student interests?
- Would this text be interesting to the average X-grader?
- Is there a proposed schedule for when students will engage in independent reading?
- Is there a tracking system (possibly with a student component) to ensure accountability for all readers?
- How are opportunities for student choice provided?
- Is there teacher guidance on how to lead, monitor, and provide feedback during independent reading?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss the balance of informational and literary anchor/core texts. Discuss whether the balance is appropriate for the grade level.
- Discuss the variety of subgenres included in the materials. Note any missing subgenres.
- Discuss if the materials include a range of full texts and excerpts, and whether there is an explanation for why excerpts are used. Discuss the percentage of full texts and excerpts in the program.
- Discuss whether the materials include a range of short-form and long-form texts. Note the percentage of short-form texts and long-form texts in the program.
- Discuss whether anchor texts are well-crafted and content-rich. Consider whether the texts are rich in language and academic vocabulary. Note if any anchor texts lack rich language and academic vocabulary.
- Discuss the characterization and literary archetypes in the texts. Note if texts heavily favor one type of person or story.
- Discuss if informational texts are from trustworthy sources. Note if any texts are not.
- Discuss if the texts would be engaging for an average X grader and consider a range of interests.
- Discuss how the program provides opportunities for independent reading, including accountability structures.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by the curriculum.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 2.1 | Materials include content-rich, engaging texts that meet the text complexity criteria for the grade level. Texts and text sets cohesively work together to build knowledge of specific topics and/or content themes. |
| Indicator 2b | Core/Anchor texts have the appropriate level of complexity for the grade according to documented quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis, and relationship to their associated student task. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Scoring: | | |
| 4 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 2 points Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate text complexity analysis and a rationale for educational purpose and placement in the grade level accompany core/anchor texts. • According to quantitative and qualitative analysis and their relationship to the associated student task, core/anchor texts have the appropriate level of complexity for the grade. • Materials provide opportunities for students to listen to texts read aloud that are more complex than what they can read independently. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines the quantitative and qualitative complexity of core/anchor texts throughout the program. It also assesses how each text’s complexity works with the associated reader and task demands to create an appropriate grade-level experience for students. In order to maintain quality and rigor, texts must meet the appropriate level of text complexity for each grade level according to quantitative and qualitative analysis. This indicator identifies whether the texts are the correct “ingredients” for the grade level.

To identify text complexity, we use a three-step process. First, identify that the quantitative measure of the text falls within the grade band. Second, identify the qualitative features of the text. Third, identify the associated tasks and reader considerations. The composite of these three evaluations makes up the determination of text complexity. Complexity levels of texts do not need to progress in a stair step fashion for each new anchor/core text. While the texts selected should fall within the Lexile grade band, the order in which texts appear should not solely be determined by the Lexile level of the text. In Grades K and 1, the quantitative analysis should be for texts read aloud to students.

In order to meet full expectations of this indicator, the materials must also include a rationale for each text’s placement in the materials. This expectation is to ensure that core/anchor texts have been intentionally selected based on their content and complexity.

Research or Standards connection:

[Appendix A](#) of the Common Core Standards argues that while reading demands in higher education and the workforce have remained high or increased, K–12 texts have become less complex over the past fifty years. This mismatch leaves students unprepared for post-graduation challenges. Research shows that students exposed to less demanding texts struggle more with complex material later, affecting their college and career success. This issue is exacerbated by the heavy reliance on simplified texts and extensive scaffolding in K–12 education, which fails to promote independent reading of challenging materials. Addressing this gap by increasing text complexity in schools is crucial for better preparing students for future demands.

The Standards establish a three-part model for assessing text complexity, crucial for ensuring students engage with appropriately challenging materials as they progress through school. This model integrates:

1. **Qualitative Dimensions:** These are aspects of text complexity that require human judgment, including levels of meaning, text structure, language use, and knowledge demands.
2. **Quantitative Dimensions:** These involve measurable factors like word length, sentence structure, and text cohesion, typically assessed using computer tools.
3. **Reader and Task Considerations:** This factor considers the reader’s background, motivation, and the specific demands of the task or assignment, which may affect how well a student can handle a text.

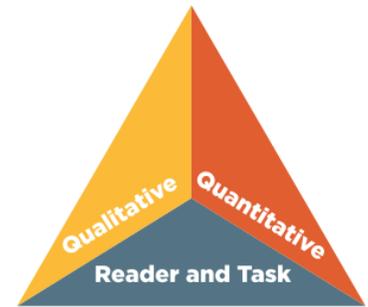


Figure 1: The Standards’ Model of Text Complexity

The model suggests that a combination of these elements should guide text selection and complexity assessment. Qualitative measures involve human analysis of text features, while quantitative measures offer objective data. Together with an understanding of reader needs and task requirements, these elements help ensure that texts are both challenging and suitable for students’ development.

In *Text Complexity: Stretching Readers with Texts and Tasks*, Fisher and Frey argue for the critical role of complex texts in education. The book contends that exposing students to challenging reading materials is essential for developing their analytical and critical thinking skills. Fisher and Frey argue that without engaging with texts that push their cognitive boundaries, students miss out on opportunities to deepen their understanding and enhance their interpretative abilities. The authors emphasize that complex texts are not merely a tool for academic rigor but a necessary component of a robust educational framework. They present a clear argument for integrating texts that demand higher-order thinking, while also providing strategies for supporting students through these challenges. By advocating for thoughtful text selection and task design, Fisher and Frey make a case that complex texts, coupled with effective scaffolding, are fundamental to fostering students’ intellectual growth and preparing them for higher academic and real-world demands.

In the article, “[Toward a Theoretical Model of Text Complexity for the Early Grades: Learning from the Past, Anticipating the Future](#),” Mesmer, Cunningham, and Hiebert (2012) develop a framework for understanding text complexity in early grades, focusing on several key aspects of text complexity: word-level features, syntax-level features, and discourse-level features. They also identifies gaps in current research and poses questions for future studies to further refine the understanding of text complexity at these levels. The authors discuss how collections of texts should be designed for early readers, emphasizing their longitudinal use throughout the early stages of literacy development. They also introduce a theoretical framework that integrates existing

research to form a cohesive model of early grade text complexity and outline a strategy for developing this framework into a comprehensive model that can guide practice and research.

In the article, “[Advancing our Students’ Language and Literacy: The Challenge of Complex Texts](#),” Marilyn Jager Adams (2010-2011) argues that to enhance students' reading comprehension and vocabulary development, educators should employ a combination of direct vocabulary instruction and extensive reading. Direct instruction helps with specific word learning, while extensive reading builds vocabulary through context. Cognitive research highlights the importance of prior domain knowledge and suggests that simplifying texts can hinder advanced comprehension. A well-sequenced curriculum, starting with simpler texts and progressing to more complex materials, helps build background knowledge and vocabulary incrementally. Supporting these efforts with a well-structured core curriculum ensures that students receive rigorous and relevant instruction, preparing them for advanced academic challenges and real-world literacy demands.

Resources:

- [Qualitative Rubric Literary](#)
- [Qualitative Rubric Informational](#)
- [Supplemental Information for Appendix A: New Research for Text Complexity](#)

Figure 1: Updated Text Complexity Grade Bands and Associated Ranges from Multiple Measures⁷

| Common Core Band | ATOS | Degrees of Reading Power® | Flesch-Kincaid ⁸ | The Lexile Framework® | Reading Maturity | SourceRater |
|------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|---------------|
| 2 nd – 3 rd | 2.75 – 5.14 | 42 – 54 | 1.98 – 5.34 | 420 – 820 | 3.53 – 6.13 | 0.05 – 2.48 |
| 4 th – 5 th | 4.97 – 7.03 | 52 – 60 | 4.51 – 7.73 | 740 – 1010 | 5.42 – 7.92 | 0.84 – 5.75 |
| 6 th – 8 th | 7.00 – 9.98 | 57 – 67 | 6.51 – 10.34 | 925 – 1185 | 7.04 – 9.57 | 4.11 – 10.66 |
| 9 th – 10 th | 9.67 – 12.01 | 62 – 72 | 8.32 – 12.12 | 1050 – 1335 | 8.41 – 10.81 | 9.02 – 13.93 |
| 11 th – CCR | 11.20 – 14.10 | 67 – 74 | 10.34 – 14.2 | 1185 – 1385 | 9.57 – 12.00 | 12.30 – 14.50 |

Indicator 2b Guiding Question:

Are the anchor texts at the appropriate level of rigor/text complexity for each grade level and are a text complexity analysis and rationale for the text’s inclusion in the materials provided?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Review the Text Analysis information to identify the quantitative and qualitative information provided for all core/anchor texts in the program.

- Consider the appropriateness of each text’s complexity for the grade level based on the quantitative and qualitative analysis. Use the new College and Career Readiness quantitative ranges to guide your thinking.
- Look for the Reader and Task considerations for each text provided in the materials, and how the text supports students’ ability to access complex texts.
- Consider the rationale provided in the materials for the selection of each text.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Is there an analysis of anchor/core texts, paired selections, and text sets for the year-long grade-level materials?
- Does the analysis use the appropriate metrics (i.e., quantitative, qualitative, and reader/task consideration) for the grade level?
- Does the analysis/rationale provided coherently and comprehensively explain how texts were chosen for the grade level and students?
- Are the anchor texts at the appropriate level of rigor/text complexity for each grade level?
- Are the quantitative measures of anchor texts within the appropriate grade level band?
- Are there any texts (and associated tasks) that are above or below the grade level without appropriate scaffolding or appropriate purpose?
- Do the materials provide opportunities for students to listen to texts read aloud that are more complex than what they can read independently?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss whether most texts are at the appropriate level of complexity for the grade level.
- Discuss how the analysis/rationale provided coherently and comprehensively explains how texts were chosen for the grade level and students.
- Discuss the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the texts in relation to the associated student tasks.
- Discuss whether the materials provide opportunities for students to listen to texts read aloud that are more complex than what they can read independently.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 2.1 | Materials include content-rich, engaging texts that meet the text complexity criteria for the grade level. Texts and text sets cohesively work together to build knowledge of specific topics and/or content themes. |
| Indicator 2c | Materials provide appropriate scaffolds for core/anchor texts that ensure all students can access the text and make meaning. Scaffolds align with the text’s qualitative analysis. |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Scoring: | | |
| 2 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 1 point Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scaffolds align with the qualitative complexity of the program’s texts to support students in making meaning of each text. • Materials include scaffolds for before, during, and after engaging with a complex text. • Materials include teacher guidance on how to enact each scaffold based on student needs. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines the scaffolds materials provide for each core/anchor text. In order to access and make meaning of challenging texts, students need various supports. By offering scaffolds, all students, including those with diverse learning needs, language backgrounds, or varying reading proficiencies, are given the opportunity to successfully interact with grade-level texts. While the previous indicators looked at whether materials include engaging, complex texts that are appropriate for the grade level, this indicator examines the supports provided for students to unpack and make meaning of these complex texts, and that these scaffolds align to each text’s complexity level. Ensuring that scaffolds align with the qualitative features of the text (such as language complexity, themes, and narrative structure) ensures that support is targeted effectively. This means students are not only understanding the basics but also engaging with deeper meanings and higher-order thinking skills associated with the text. This indicator also looks at the specific teacher guidance included in materials so that these scaffolds can be enacted appropriately. Overall, this indicator emphasizes the importance of tailored instructional support to ensure that all students can effectively access and make meaning of the core/anchor texts in the materials.

Research or Standards connection:

According to [Appendix A](#) of the CCSS, students' ability to read complex texts does not develop uniformly or linearly. While Reading Standard 10 outlines expected grade-by-grade progressions in reading complexity, individual student growth may vary. Opportunities to read both challenging and accessible texts are essential for

development, and student interest and experience should influence text selection. Educators should balance using texts of varying difficulty, providing additional support for students reading significantly above or below their grade level. Those above grade level may need advanced challenges, while struggling readers require targeted help to achieve grade-appropriate complexity. Scaffolding is crucial, especially as students transition between grade bands, but the goal is to gradually reduce support to foster independent, proficient reading by the end of each grade band (CCSS Appendix A, p. 5). It has been found that “students’ ability to read complex text does not always develop in a linear fashion....Even many students on course for college and career readiness are likely to need scaffolding as they master higher levels of text complexity” (CCSS Appendix A, p. 8).

In “[The Science of Reading Comprehension Instruction](#),” Duke, Ward, and Pearson (2021) argue that decades of research on reading comprehension reveal several key insights. Effective comprehension instruction should start early and include teaching word-reading and bridging skills such as phonological awareness, semantic flexibility, and fluency. Strong fluency alone does not ensure comprehension, so instruction must also cover text structures and features. Comprehension varies depending on the reading purpose and type, and strategy instruction can enhance it. Vocabulary and knowledge building are crucial, and engagement with texts through volume reading, discussions, and writing supports comprehension. Additionally, fostering reading motivation improves comprehension. A visual model of these principles underscores the layered approach necessary for impactful comprehension instruction.

In “[Beyond Comprehension](#),” Willingham (2023) explains that research highlights that teaching comprehension strategies effectively enhances students’ understanding of texts by helping them connect ideas and recognize text importance. These strategies are beneficial for achieving basic comprehension but do not show additional gains with further practice. To achieve deeper understanding, students need extensive practice in advanced reading skills, such as analyzing arguments, understanding nuanced text elements, and applying discipline-specific skills. Overall, while comprehension strategies are a crucial component of reading instruction, a focus on deeper reading practices is essential for developing more sophisticated comprehension abilities.

In “[Scaffolding the Academic Language of Complex Text: An Intervention for Late Secondary Students](#),” Reynolds (2021) argues that late secondary students preparing for university and careers often struggle with academic texts. A study with 152 U.S. Grade 11 students tested an intervention involving scaffolded instruction for complex texts. Participants were either given support with paraphrasing and academic language or received standard instruction. Results showed that the intervention led to a small but significant improvement in standardized reading comprehension scores ($d = 0.16$). Scaffolding types impacted outcomes differently: rereading scaffolds were associated with lower scores, while syntax and structure scaffolds were linked to higher scores. These findings suggest that targeted scaffolding can enhance comprehension, especially by addressing complex syntax and text structure, offering a model for future interventions.

Resources:

- [CCSS Appendix A](#)

Indicator 2c Guiding Question:

Do materials provide appropriate scaffolds and teacher guidance to enact them for each core/anchor text?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Review the scaffolds provided for each core/anchor text in each unit.
- Consider whether the scaffolds align to the qualitative complexity of the text.

- Consider when each scaffold is enacted (before, during, after reading).
- Look at the teacher guidance provided on how to implement each scaffold. Consider if the guidance is sufficient to successfully support teachers.
- Consider whether the scaffolds are evidence-based.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What scaffolds for making meaning of each core/anchor text are present in the materials?
- Do the scaffolds align with the qualitative complexity of each text?
- Are scaffolds enacted at different parts of the “making meaning” process (before, during, and after reading)?
- Is there teacher guidance on how to implement each scaffold?
- Is the teacher guidance provided sufficient to successfully implement the scaffolds in the materials, or do teachers need to pull from outside of the materials?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss the scaffolds provided in the materials to help students access core/anchor texts.
- Discuss if the scaffolds align to the qualitative complexity of each core/anchor text.
- Discuss if scaffolds are enacted at different parts of the “making meaning” process (before, during, and after reading).
- Discuss the teacher guidance available for implementing each scaffold.
- Discuss whether the teacher guidance provided is sufficient to successfully implement the scaffolds in the materials.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 2.1 | Materials include content-rich, engaging texts that meet the text complexity criteria for the grade level. Texts and text sets cohesively work together to build knowledge of specific topics and/or content themes. |
| Indicator 2d | Text sets (e.g., unit, module) are organized around topic(s) or theme(s) to cohesively build student knowledge. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Scoring: | | |
| 4 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 2 points Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text sets are organized around a grade-appropriate, tightly-connected topic or theme. • Text set organization provides opportunities for students to address facets of the same topic or theme over an extended period (e.g., a unit, module), enabling the development of deeper knowledge. • Text sets cohesively build knowledge across a range of topics in social studies (including history), science, the arts, and literature, exposing students to academic vocabulary, content knowledge, and complex syntax. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator considers the connections between each core/anchor text in each unit/module. Reading a series of texts on a topic(s)/theme(s) allows for students to develop coherent knowledge over time. A focused topic/theme included for each text set increases students’ abilities to build knowledge and subsequently build more vocabulary and reading ability. Building content knowledge across a broad range of topics helps students understand the world better and fosters critical thinking skills. As students progress through the texts in a unit, they should develop deeper knowledge by learning about different facets of a topic/theme. It’s important to note that units/modules should be effectively designed to enhance student learning and comprehension across various subjects. Encouraging connections between different fields, such as social studies, science, the arts, and literature, helps students develop a well-rounded understanding and appreciation for diverse topics. By incorporating academic vocabulary, students become familiar with the specific language used within each discipline, which aids in comprehension and effective communication of complex ideas. Exposure to complex sentence structures prepares students to comprehend and produce sophisticated texts, enhancing their reading and writing abilities. Overall, this indicator is about ensuring that core/anchor texts are connected, comprehensive, and challenging, to help students build essential knowledge and skills for academic success.

Research or Standards connection:

In “[Effect of Prior Knowledge on Good and Poor Readers’ Memory of Text](#),” Recht and Leslie (1988) investigated the effects of prior knowledge on reading comprehension, specifically examining the memory of text in good

and poor readers. They found that prior knowledge significantly impacted both the quantity and quality of recall in all measures, regardless of reading ability. This suggests that having prior knowledge about a subject can enhance comprehension and recall, even for students who struggle with reading comprehension. The study further highlights the importance of prior knowledge in summarization, demonstrating that readers with high prior knowledge can more effectively identify important ideas and create summaries that are closer to expert summaries. Overall, this research emphasizes the crucial role of prior knowledge in reading comprehension and suggests that incorporating prior knowledge into educational approaches could significantly improve student learning.

In [“The Role of Background Knowledge in Reading Comprehension: A Critical Review,”](#) Smith, Snow, Serry, and Hammond (2021) examined the impact of background knowledge on reading comprehension, analyzing 23 studies that focused on primary school-aged children. They concluded that prior knowledge plays a vital role in reading comprehension, enhancing both the quantity and quality of information recalled, particularly for those struggling with reading. However, the review emphasized that while background knowledge can partially compensate for poor reading skills, it cannot fully address the challenges of making inferences and developing a deep understanding of complex texts. Furthermore, the review highlighted the importance of text coherence and cohesion, noting that low-cohesion texts can pose difficulties for readers with limited knowledge, while high-knowledge readers benefit from such texts as they are forced to engage more actively with the material. The review recommends that explicitly teaching background knowledge be a fundamental part of reading instruction, alongside the teaching of comprehension strategies.

In [“Building Insider Knowledge: Teaching Students to Read, Write, and Think within ELA and Across the Disciplines,”](#) Rainey and Moje (2012) argue that disciplinary literacy, the specific ways of reading, writing, thinking, and reasoning used in different academic subjects, is crucial for student learning. The authors demonstrate how a lack of understanding of these disciplinary practices can lead to students struggling to comprehend texts and engage fully in their learning.

In [“Building Background Knowledge Through Reading: Rethinking Text Sets,”](#) Lupo, Strong, and Lewis (2017) propose a “quad text set” framework, designed to improve adolescent literacy by using a combination of four types of texts: a challenging target text, a visual or video text to activate background knowledge, informational texts to build additional knowledge, and an accessible text to ensure connections. The authors argue that this framework not only increases reading volume but also helps to build background knowledge and motivate students to engage with challenging texts. They provide examples of how teachers can implement this framework in ELA, social studies, and science classrooms, emphasizing the importance of incorporating disciplinary literacy practices. The article addresses concerns about the use of challenging texts, suggesting that with careful planning and a focus on building background knowledge, students can successfully engage with such texts and reap the benefits of increased reading volume and exposure to complex ideas.

In [“The Case for Bringing Content into the Language Arts Block and for a Knowledge-Rich Curriculum Core for All Children,”](#) Hirsch (2006) critiques current American educational practices, emphasizing that reading comprehension relies heavily on background knowledge and vocabulary, not just decoding skills. It argues that the prevalent focus on formal skills and strategies neglects the critical role of substantive content knowledge, leading to stagnation in reading achievement and exacerbating educational inequities, particularly for disadvantaged students. Hirsch calls for a curriculum overhaul to integrate broad, content-rich instruction from an early age, enhancing students' comprehension and helping to bridge achievement gaps.

According to CCSS’ [Key Shifts in English Language Arts](#), “students must be immersed in information about the world around them if they are to develop the strong general knowledge and vocabulary they need to become successful readers and be prepared for college, career, and life. Informational texts play an important part in

building students' content knowledge. Further, it is vital for students to have extensive opportunities to build knowledge through texts so they can learn independently.”

Resources:

- [Key Shifts in English Language Arts](#)

Indicator 2d Guiding Question:

Are text sets in each unit/module connected by a grade-appropriate topic or theme to cohesively build student knowledge?

Evidence Collection

Note: It is not enough for text sets to be connected by a broad or vague topic or themes. Text sets should be connected by a cohesive and specific topic or theme.

In the Instructional Materials being reviewed:

- Look at all core/anchor texts and text sets in sequence.
- Ensure that the topics or themes are suitable for the students' age and developmental level.
- Look for a logical organization of texts that facilitates learning. The progression should make sense and support building understanding progressively.
- Ensure that the text sets are cohesive, with clear connections between each resource, allowing students to explore the facets of a topic or theme thoroughly.
- Ensure that the text sets include materials from a range of subjects, such as social studies, science, the arts, and literature.
- Evaluate the integration of academic vocabulary and complex syntax to promote language development and discipline-specific literacy.
- Assess how well the texts build knowledge about the topic or theme, preparing students with background information and context

Note:

With regards to theme, it is important to review and ensure that the theme addressed in the materials works to build knowledge. Note the theme title, the texts within the theme, essential questions, and tasks and evaluate if those items work together to build knowledge of a topic within the theme.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Are the topics or themes suitable for the students' age and developmental level?
- Is there a logical organization of texts that facilitates learning, with a progression that supports building understanding progressively?
- Are the text sets cohesive, with clear connections between each resource, allowing students to thoroughly explore the facets of a topic or theme?
- Do the text sets include materials from a range of subjects, such as social studies, science, the arts, and literature?
- Is there effective integration of academic vocabulary and complex syntax to promote language development and discipline-specific literacy?
- How well do the texts build knowledge about the topic or theme, and do they prepare students with background information and context?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss the organization of the core/anchor texts in each unit/module to determine if they support building knowledge over time.
- Discuss whether the text sets are cohesive, with clear connections between each resource, allowing students to thoroughly explore the facets of a topic or theme.
- Discuss whether the text sets include materials from a range of subjects, such as social studies, science, the arts, and literature.
- Discuss whether the materials effectively integrate academic vocabulary and complex syntax to promote language development and discipline-specific literacy.
- Discuss how well the texts build knowledge about the topic or theme and how they prepare students with background information and context.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 2.1 | Materials include content-rich, engaging texts that meet the text complexity criteria for the grade level. Texts and text sets cohesively work together to build knowledge of specific topics and/or content themes. |
| Indicator 2e | Materials include varied texts and provide teacher support in helping students learn about people who are similar to and different from them. |

Scoring: Narrative Evidence Only

Note: No score is given for this indicator. Only qualitative evidence is provided.

- Materials include varied texts that offer wide-ranging perspectives on the topic/theme of study, including characters and people of interest from various backgrounds and perspectives.
- Text sets include texts written by authors of varied backgrounds.
- Materials provide clear teacher guidance when texts contain grade-appropriate topics that impact students.
- The materials provide teacher support in helping students learn about people or characters similar to and different from them across social, cultural, political, and historical contexts rather than in superficial, oversimplified ways that perpetuate stereotypes.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

The purpose of this indicator is to ensure that instructional materials include varied texts from many different perspectives. By including varied texts, materials can represent different backgrounds, allowing students to see themselves reflected in what they read and learn about people who are different from them. This fosters a sense of belonging and validation for all students. Learning about people who are different helps students develop empathy and a better understanding of diverse perspectives. This exposure encourages respect and appreciation for differences among people, which is crucial in our increasingly interconnected world. Varied texts introduce students to a range of experiences and viewpoints, helping them broaden their understanding of the world and enhance critical thinking skills. This prepares students to engage thoughtfully with diverse ideas and global issues. This indicator also considers the teacher guidance provided in the materials so that teachers can support students in appropriately engaging with varied texts. This includes guidance on how to address grade-appropriate topics and promote inclusive learning environments. Overall, this indicator is about materials equipping students with the knowledge and skills to interact effectively and respectfully with people from similar and different backgrounds.

Research or Standards connection:

In "[Windows and Mirrors: Children's Books and Parallel Cultures](#)," Bishop (1990) discusses how literature serves as both mirrors and windows, reflecting readers' own experiences while offering views into different cultures and perspectives. She emphasizes the importance of diverse representation in books to affirm the identities of minority groups and help all students understand and appreciate cultural differences. This dual role of literature

fosters empathy, combats ethnocentric views, and supports social learning by transmitting societal values and encouraging imagination and innovation. By providing varied and inclusive texts, literature not only helps individuals find personal and cultural validation but also facilitates broader social understanding and transformation.

In [“Using Texts as Mirrors: The Power of Readers Seeing Themselves,”](#) Heineke, Papola-Ellis, and Elliot (2022) advocate for using texts as mirrors to empower students by reflecting their identities and lived experiences. They highlight the importance of selecting diverse and inclusive texts that represent a range of backgrounds and perspectives, which can enhance engagement, foster community, and improve comprehension. The authors suggest a four-part framework for incorporating inclusive texts into classroom instruction: 1) getting to know students' multifaceted identities and experiences, 2) aligning texts with learning goals, 3) selecting relevant and authentic texts, and 4) integrating these texts into instruction using purposeful strategies. They also emphasize the role of textual mirrors in building community, enhancing comprehension, mediating discussions, and encouraging translanguaging.

In [“Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors,”](#) Bishop (2015) argues that children's literature should reflect the diversity of our society, acting as both mirrors (for children to see themselves) and windows (for children to learn about others). Bishop points out that for many years, non-white children have been underrepresented in literature, leading to a lack of mirrors for them and a sense of being devalued in society. She emphasizes the importance of providing children with books that celebrate both our differences and similarities, ultimately helping us to understand and accept each other. Bishop uses examples of diverse voices and authors in children's literature to illustrate the power of stories to reflect authentic cultural experiences and traditions. She argues that when children are exposed to a variety of voices and perspectives, they are better able to understand and appreciate the richness and diversity of our world.

In [“Reflection and Projection: Inclusive and Diverse Texts in the English Language Arts Curriculum,”](#) Stephens, Allee, and Luther (2024) discuss the importance of incorporating inclusive and diverse texts (IDTs) in the language arts curriculum to improve student engagement and create positive reading experiences. They highlight the need for texts with non-stereotypical depictions of girls, women, and people of color to ensure all students see themselves represented. By reflecting multiple identities in literary texts, educators can foster a more equitable and inclusive classroom environment.

The [“NCTE Position Statement on Supporting Teachers and Students in Discussing Complex Topics”](#) (2024), discusses the challenges and importance of teaching complex topics in education. Complex topics encompass multiple perspectives and are often linked to personal identities and lived experiences. Despite legislative barriers against teaching subjects like race, gender, and sexuality, educators argue for the need to teach full histories and engage students in discussions about current social issues to foster critical thinking, civic engagement, and academic achievement. The NCTE supports educators in navigating these challenges and provides resources to facilitate discussions, emphasizing the importance of understanding multiple perspectives and maintaining open dialogue in classrooms. Teachers need to be well-prepared with expertise, and they must assess risks and seek support when discussing such topics. NCTE continues to advocate for diverse voices and critical literacy to enable students to engage with societal issues effectively.

In *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories*, Booker (2019) identifies and explores seven fundamental narrative archetypes that he believes underpin most storytelling across cultures and history. These plots are: Overcoming the Monster, where the hero confronts a great evil; Rags to Riches, depicting a character's rise from humble beginnings to success; The Quest, involving a journey to achieve a specific goal; Voyage and Return, where the protagonist ventures into an unfamiliar world and returns transformed; Comedy, characterized by misunderstandings that ultimately resolve positively; Tragedy, focusing on the protagonist's downfall due to a tragic flaw; and Rebirth, which involves a character experiencing transformation and renewal. Booker argues that

these plots reflect fundamental human experiences and emotions, providing insight into why stories resonate deeply with audiences and the roles they play in our understanding of life and culture.

Resources:

- [What Makes a High-Quality Diverse Text and How to Get These Texts Into Your Classroom](#)
- [The Seven Literary Archetypes](#)
- [NCTE Resources for Discussing Complex Topics](#)

Indicator 2e Guiding Question:

Do the materials include varied texts that offer wide-ranging perspectives and teacher guidance that supports students in engaging with these texts?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Review the Text Analysis information provided.
- Consider the types of characters or people of interest in each set across the curriculum. Consider these characters' backgrounds. Consider whether these characters or people of interest present a wide range of perspectives.
- Verify that text sets include works by authors from varied backgrounds. Consider whether the materials provide background information on authors to help contextualize their perspectives and contributions.
- Assess whether there is guidance for teachers on how to facilitate discussions and learning experiences around texts that feature characters or experiences similar to or different from students.
- Look for resources that help teachers address a range of perspectives in a respectful and informed manner, ensuring they are equipped to handle grade-appropriate topics appropriately.
- Assess whether the materials provide clear and actionable guidance for teachers on how to introduce and discuss sensitive topics with students, considering their varied backgrounds and experiences.
- Confirm that teacher resources support contextual learning about people or characters from varied groups across broader social, cultural, political, and historical frameworks.
- Look for guidance that discussions around these topics go beyond surface-level representations and allow students to engage with complex and meaningful narratives that counteract stereotypes.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What types of characters or people of interest are included in each set across the curriculum, and what are their backgrounds and identity markers?
- Do the characters or people of interest present a wide range of perspectives?
- Do the text sets include works by authors from historically excluded backgrounds? Do the materials provide background information on authors to help contextualize their perspectives and contributions?
- Is there guidance for teachers on how to facilitate discussions and learning experiences around texts featuring characters or experiences similar to or different from students' identities?
- Are there resources that help teachers address a range of perspectives in a respectful and informed manner, ensuring they are equipped to handle sensitive topics appropriately?
- Do the materials provide clear guidance for teachers on how to introduce and discuss sensitive topics with students, considering their varied backgrounds and experiences?
- Do teacher resources support contextual learning about people or characters from varied groups

across broader social, cultural, political, and historical frameworks?

- Is there guidance that ensures discussions around these topics go beyond surface-level representations, allowing students to engage with complex and meaningful narratives that counteract stereotypes?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss the types of characters or people of interest that are included in each set across the curriculum, and what their backgrounds and identity markers are.
- Discuss whether the characters or people of interest present a wide range of perspectives.
- Discuss whether the text sets include works by authors from varied backgrounds and whether the materials provide background information on authors to help contextualize their perspectives and contributions.
- Discuss whether there is guidance for teachers on how to facilitate discussions and learning experiences around texts featuring characters or experiences similar to or different from students' identities.
- Discuss whether there are resources that help teachers address a range of perspectives in a respectful and informed manner, ensuring they are equipped to handle sensitive topics appropriately.
- Discuss whether the materials provide clear guidance for teachers on how to introduce and discuss sensitive topics with students, considering their varied backgrounds and experiences.
- Discuss whether teacher resources support contextual learning about people or characters from varied groups across broader social, cultural, political, and historical frameworks.
- Discuss whether there is guidance that ensures discussions around these topics go beyond surface-level representations, allowing students to engage with complex and meaningful narratives that counteract stereotypes.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

Criterion 2.2

Knowledge Building Through Reading, Writing, and Language Comprehension

Materials include questions, tasks, and assignments that are meaningful, evidence-based, and support students in making meaning and building knowledge as they progress toward grade-level mastery of literacy skills. Materials include clear, explicit instruction guidance for teachers across all literacy skills.

What is the purpose of this Criterion?

This criterion emphasizes the importance of comprehensive and coherent materials to support students in building knowledge on various topics and developing skills across literacy domains, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Programs should encourage deep engagement with texts through text-based questions, tasks, and assignments that foster comprehension and analytical skills. Opportunities for evidence-based discussions and structured writing exercises should be woven throughout the curriculum to develop students' abilities to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information. Materials must offer structured approaches to vocabulary development, sentence composition, and writing processes, integrating these with authentic reading and writing contexts. Regular formative and summative assessments should guide instructional adjustments, ensuring that students synthesize and apply knowledge meaningfully. Curricular pacing should be reasonable, allowing for skill spiraling and reinforcing key concepts throughout the school year, while also providing clear guidance on utilizing supplemental materials. Ultimately, these indicators aim to build a robust framework for developing students' literacy and research skills, preparing them for academic and real-world challenges.

Research Connection

Research highlights the importance of coherent curriculum design and effective instructional strategies in improving literacy and overall student achievement. It emphasizes the use of close reading and text-dependent questions across disciplines to enhance comprehension and critical thinking. Vocabulary development, alongside integrated language skills, is crucial for academic success, requiring explicit instruction in language structure and the use of rich, varied texts. Effective writing instruction involves evidence-based strategies that address writing proficiency issues, while assessments should focus on providing insights to inform teaching practices. Overall, research advocates for content-rich curricula that build progressively on students' knowledge, supporting both literacy and other academic outcomes.

Scoring:

Meets Expectations

- 38–42 points

Partially Meets Expectations

- 21–37 points

Does Not Meet Expectations

- < 21 points

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 2.2 | Materials include questions, tasks, and assignments that are meaningful, evidence-based, and support students in making meaning and building knowledge as they progress toward grade-level mastery of literacy skills. Materials include clear, explicit instruction guidance for teachers across all literacy skills. |
| Indicator 2f | Materials include a clear, research-based core instructional pathway with reasonable pacing throughout the year, which allows students to work towards grade-level proficiency. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Scoring: | | |
| 4 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 2 points Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials clearly outline the essential elements for the core instructional pathway. Materials clearly explain how to use and implement the core instructional pathway, which does not deviate from currently accepted research. When present, supplemental materials are designed to work coherently with the core instructional pathway. Materials provide detailed explanations of when and how to use supplemental materials so that all students can access grade-level materials. Materials provide implementation schedules, including lesson-specific guidance, that are well paced, and can reasonably be completed in the school year, allowing students to dive deeply into content. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator considers whether a program clearly defines a primary instructional trajectory that does not deviate from current research, and guides both teachers and students through the essential content and skills required for the grade level. The pathway should be organized to pace instruction effectively throughout the academic year, allowing sufficient time for in-depth exploration and understanding of each topic. This indicator also looks for explicit guidance for when and how supplemental materials, including supplemental supports for students who need them, should be used in addition to detailing the core instructional pathway. This indicator also considers whether daily lessons are reasonably paced and whether the overall program can be reasonably completed in one school year. By including reasonable pacing, the materials help support students in gradually developing their skills and understanding, ultimately working towards achieving grade-level proficiency. This approach allows students to absorb information effectively and provides time to address any difficulties students may encounter. Overall, this indicator aims to ensure that materials are not “bloated” by ensuring that the core

instructional pathway for materials is clearly defined by the publisher and can be reasonably taught in an average school year.

Research or Standards connection:

In "[Time to Transfer: Long-Term Effects of a Sustained and Spiraled Content Literacy Intervention in the Elementary Grades](#)," Kim, Gilbert, Relyea, Rich, Scherer, Burkhauser, and Tvedt (2023) used a spiraled content literacy intervention called the Model of Reading Engagement (MORE) to teach science to students in grades 1 to 3. The intervention built on previously learned knowledge from year to year, meaning that it was sustained across grades. Each year, the content was introduced in a new context, but it always built on the previous year's instruction. For example, the intervention in grade 1 covered animal survival, which provided a foundation for understanding dinosaur survival in grade 2. In grade 3, students built on this knowledge of living systems to understand the skeletal and muscular systems of birds and how they adapt over time. The authors found that this sustained, spiraled intervention led to better long-term outcomes for students in both reading and mathematics.

In "[Curriculum Research: What We Know and Where We Need to Go](#)," Steiner (2017) reviews research on the effects of curriculum choices in K-12 education. He finds that high-quality, comprehensive curriculum is essential for student success and that curriculum choices made by individual teachers have a significant impact on learning. However, the author highlights several issues that complicate curriculum research, including:

- A lack of a clear definition of "curriculum"
- The absence of a taxonomy of curricular features to guide research
- The difficulty of measuring fidelity of implementation
- The challenge of comparing the effects of different curricula, especially when researchers compare one curriculum to "business as usual," which can vary greatly from school to school

Steiner argues for a new approach to curriculum research that focuses on understanding what makes a curriculum effective, including the importance of content-rich curricula and the need for rigorous research designs that account for fidelity of implementation. The authors conclude that curriculum must be a top priority for education reform efforts and that high-quality curriculum is a necessary component of a successful education system.

In "[Curriculum NOW: Curriculum Brings Coherence to the Whole Educational Endeavor](#)," Schmoker (2011) emphasizes that coherence in curriculum design is critical for enhancing student learning and bridging the achievement gap. A coherent curriculum, defined as a well-organized sequence of content topics and essential skills, is considered the most influential school factor in promoting learning and preparing students for college and career readiness. It should include high-quality texts and sufficient writing assignments, allowing teachers some flexibility to incorporate their own material. Research shows that such a coherent, content-rich curriculum has a significant positive effect on reading comprehension and test scores, exceeding the impact of pedagogical methods alone. The article highlights the global success of countries with coherent curricula and criticizes current educational practices for neglecting this vital component, often due to distractions from various educational fads. It calls for a focused effort in establishing coherent curricula to ensure meaningful content learning, supported by recent developments in the Common Core State Standards that advocate concentrating on core concepts rather than a sprawling array of skills. The article urges immediate action toward building coherent curricula as a fundamental step in improving education.

Resources:

- [All CCSS ELA Standards](#)

Indicator 2f Guiding Question:

Do materials include a clear, research-based core instructional pathway with reasonable pacing throughout the year, which allows students to work towards grade-level proficiency?

Evidence Collection

Note: The average school is around 180 days. This does not mean that materials should include 180 lessons; however, the amount should be reasonable to ensure teachers have enough material to teach while also leaving space in the curriculum for assessments, breaks, and other interruptions.

Also note that this indicator is also looking to determine whether materials have included practices that are not supported by research, so ensuring the materials do not include Balanced Literacy practices, etc, is important.

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Look for a clear outline of the essential elements that make up the core instructional pathway, ensuring that it is straightforward and easy for educators to follow.
- Determine whether materials provide comprehensive explanations on how to use and implement the core instructional pathway, emphasizing adherence to currently accepted research practices.
- Assess if supplemental materials are seamlessly integrated with the core instructional pathway and whether they include detailed explanations on when and how to use them effectively.
- Verify that materials explain when and how to use supplemental supports specifically designed to help all students access grade-level content, ensuring inclusivity in the learning process.
- Check for the presence of implementation schedules that offer lesson-specific guidance, ensuring that pacing is appropriate and that lessons can be realistically completed within the academic year.
- Ensure that the material allows for sufficient depth in content exploration, supporting students' ability to engage thoroughly with the subject matter.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Is there a clear outline of the essential elements that make up the core instructional pathway, ensuring that it is straightforward and easy for educators to follow?
- Do the materials provide comprehensive explanations on how to use and implement the core instructional pathway, emphasizing adherence to currently accepted research practices?
- Are supplemental materials seamlessly integrated with the core instructional pathway, including detailed explanations on when and how to use them effectively?
- Do the materials explain when and how to use supplemental supports specifically designed to help all students access grade-level content, ensuring inclusivity in the learning process?
- Is there an implementation schedule that offers lesson-specific guidance, ensuring that pacing is appropriate and that lessons can be realistically completed within the academic year?
- Do the materials allow for sufficient depth in content exploration, supporting students' ability to engage thoroughly with the subject matter?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss whether there is a clear outline of the essential elements that make up the core instructional pathway, ensuring that it is straightforward and easy for educators to follow.

- Discuss whether the materials provide comprehensive explanations on how to use and implement the core instructional pathway, emphasizing adherence to currently accepted research practices.
- Discuss whether supplemental materials are seamlessly integrated with the core instructional pathway, including detailed explanations on when and how to use them effectively.
- Discuss whether the materials explain when and how to use supplemental supports specifically designed to help all students access grade-level content, ensuring inclusivity in the learning process.
- Discuss whether there is an implementation schedule that offers lesson-specific guidance, ensuring that pacing is appropriate and that lessons can be realistically completed within the academic year.
- Discuss whether the material allows for sufficient depth in content exploration, supporting students' ability to engage thoroughly with the subject matter.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

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|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 2.2 | Materials include questions, tasks, and assignments that are meaningful, evidence-based, and support students in making meaning and building knowledge as they progress toward grade-level mastery of literacy skills. Materials include clear, explicit instruction guidance for teachers across all literacy skills. |
| Indicator 2g | Most questions, tasks, and assignments are text-based, allowing students to demonstrate their thinking in various formats. |

| Scoring: | | |
|--|---|---|
| 4 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 2 points Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials provide opportunities to support students in making meaning of the texts being studied through text-based questions and tasks in varying formats (i.e., speaking, drawing, writing). Materials include text-based questions and tasks that require students to read, re-read, and/or listen to complex parts of texts to deepen their analysis and understanding. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

The purpose of this indicator is to ensure that the majority of questions in a program require students to engage deeply with texts through reading and re-reading. By focusing on text-based questions, tasks, and assignments, students are encouraged to ground their responses in evidence from the text, which helps to improve comprehension and analytical skills. This approach also facilitates a deeper understanding of the material, as students must interact directly with the content to derive meaning and answer questions. Additionally, providing opportunities for students to demonstrate their thinking in various formats—such as written responses, discussions, presentations, or projects—caters to different learning styles and promotes a more comprehensive skill set. This diversity in format allows for more creative and personalized expressions of understanding, accommodating the varied needs and strengths of all students.

Research or Standards connection:

In “[Implementing the Common Core State Standards: A Primer on ‘Close Reading of Text’](#),” Brown and Kappes (2012) provide a definition of Close Reading and explain its importance in developing students' reading comprehension skills and their ability to analyze complex texts. They argue that close reading is not just an English language arts strategy, but can be effectively used across all academic disciplines. It also emphasizes that prior knowledge plays a crucial role in close reading and that teachers must be mindful of this when planning lessons. Finally, the document outlines key considerations for implementing close reading in practice,

including the importance of situating it within a broader literacy framework, understanding text complexity, and using text-dependent questions effectively.

In “[More Than Just Glitter: Using Text-Dependent Questions as Part of Foundational Literacy Practice](#),” Henry (2022) advocates for the use of text-dependent questions as a foundation for quality literacy instruction. She argues that these questions, which require students to cite evidence from the text to support their answers, are more effective than reader-centric questions that rely on prior knowledge or personal feelings. Henry explains how text-dependent questions can be used at different cognitive levels (literal, structural, inferential, and action-oriented) and how they can be strategically integrated into a variety of literacy activities. She highlights the importance of modeling and practicing text-dependent questioning and concludes by emphasizing that text-dependent questions are a crucial part of a comprehensive literacy framework that supports students' comprehension, understanding, and discussion of complex texts.

In *Text-Dependent Questions: Pathways to Close and Critical Reading*, Fisher and Frey (2014) provide educators with strategies for designing effective text-dependent questions that facilitate close and critical reading among students. The book emphasizes the importance of questions that require students to return to the text for evidence, thereby deepening their comprehension and analytical skills. Fisher and Frey outline how to craft questions that address different levels of understanding, from literal comprehension to inferential analysis and evaluative thinking. They offer practical examples and guidance on implementing these strategies across grade levels, from K-5 to 6-12, showing how text-dependent questions can enhance students' engagement with complex texts and support their development as critical thinkers.

Resources:

- [CCSS Appendix A](#)

Indicator 2g Guiding Question:

Do 80% or more of the questions, tasks, and assignments require students to use and/or close read the texts to answer?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Review tasks, questions, and assignments associated with texts, paired selections, text sets, and chapters/units. Consider if at least 80% of these tasks, questions, and assignments are firmly rooted in the text and require students to use/draw from the text.
- Look for tasks that specifically require students to perform close reading and re-reading of complex sections of the text, either to unpack difficult language, themes, or concepts.
- Ensure that the materials offer diverse ways for students to respond to text-based questions and tasks, including speaking, writing, presentations, and other creative formats.
- Identify questions and tasks that are not associated with a text, paired selection, or text set and compare these to the overall quantity of those that are text-based.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Are at least 80% of tasks, questions, and assignments associated with texts, paired selections, text sets, chapters, or units firmly rooted in the text and require students to draw from it?

- Are there tasks specifically requiring students to perform close reading and re-reading of complex text sections to unpack difficult language, themes, or concepts?
- Do the materials offer various ways for students to respond to text-based questions and tasks, such as through speaking, writing, presentations, and other creative formats?
- Are there questions and tasks that are not associated with a text, paired selection, or text set, and how do these compare to the overall quantity of text-based ones?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss whether 80% or more of the questions, tasks, and assignments require students to use and/or close read the texts to answer.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 2.2 | Materials include questions, tasks, and assignments that are meaningful, evidence-based, and support students in making meaning and building knowledge as they progress toward grade-level mastery of literacy skills. Materials include clear, explicit instruction guidance for teachers across all literacy skills. |
| Indicator 2h | Materials support students in developing their ability to comprehend complex ideas within and across texts through opportunities to analyze and evaluate texts. |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Scoring: | | |
| 2 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 1 point Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials provide opportunities to support students' acquisition of print concepts, including directionality, function (K-1), and structures and features of text (1-2). Materials provide opportunities for students to analyze key ideas and details (according to grade-level standards) within individual texts and across multiple texts to support students in making meaning. Materials provide opportunities for students to analyze craft and structure (according to grade-level standards) within individual texts and across multiple texts to support students in making meaning. Materials provide opportunities for students to analyze the integration of knowledge and ideas (according to grade-level standards) within individual texts and across multiple texts to support students in deepening their understanding on a topic. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator considers the types of questions, tasks, and assignments that students complete throughout the program as they interact with texts. Materials should provide opportunities for higher-order thinking skills, specifically analysis and evaluation, which are essential for deep comprehension of complex ideas. Within the CCSS, the reading standards are grouped into three different types of analyses that students should be able to do with texts: analyzing key details and ideas, analyzing craft and structure, as well as analyzing the integration of knowledge and ideas. Analyzing and evaluating texts enables students to understand not just the surface-level information but also the underlying themes, concepts, and interconnections between various texts, leading to a more profound comprehension of the material. At the K-2 level, this indicator also looks at the opportunities students have to acquire an understanding of print concepts and text structures as a precursor to more advanced analysis of texts. Overall, this indicator ensures that the questions, tasks, and assignments in a program are diversified and require students to implement these varying types of analyses as they engage with complex texts.

Research or Standards connection:

The Common Core State Standards emphasize the importance of using evidence from both literary and informational texts in reading, writing, and speaking. Rather than relying solely on students' prior knowledge and experiences, the standards require them to answer questions based on careful reading and analysis of the texts. The reading standards encourage students to comprehend information, arguments, and details by answering text-dependent questions that necessitate inferences derived from the texts ([Key Shifts in English Language Arts](#)).

In "[Implementing the Common Core State Standards: A Primer on 'Close Reading of Text'](#)," Brown and Kappes (2012) provide a definition of Close Reading and explain its importance in developing students' reading comprehension skills and their ability to analyze complex texts. They argue that close reading is not just an English language arts strategy, but can be effectively used across all academic disciplines. It also emphasizes that prior knowledge plays a crucial role in close reading and that teachers must be mindful of this when planning lessons. Finally, the document outlines key considerations for implementing close reading in practice, including the importance of situating it within a broader literacy framework, understanding text complexity, and using text-dependent questions effectively.

In *Text-Dependent Questions: Pathways to Close and Critical Reading*, Fisher and Frey (2014) provide educators with strategies for designing effective text-dependent questions that facilitate close and critical reading among students. The book emphasizes the importance of questions that require students to return to the text for evidence, thereby deepening their comprehension and analytical skills. Fisher and Frey outline how to craft questions that address different levels of understanding, from literal comprehension to inferential analysis and evaluative thinking. They offer practical examples and guidance on implementing these strategies across grade levels, from K-5 to 6-12, showing how text-dependent questions can enhance students' engagement with complex texts and support their development as critical thinkers.

In "[Developing Print Awareness: The Effect of Three Instructional Approaches on Kindergarteners' Print Awareness, Reading Readiness, and Word Reading](#)," Reutzal, Oda, and Moore examine how different instructional methods impact young children's print awareness and early reading skills. The study involved 132 kindergarteners divided into three groups: a traditional readiness group, an immersion in print group, and an immersion in print plus teacher-led instruction group. Results indicated that teacher-led print concept lessons significantly improved print awareness, but they did not directly enhance reading readiness or word reading ability. However, both experimental groups (immersion in print with and without teacher-led instruction) performed significantly better in reading readiness and word reading than the traditional readiness group. The findings suggest that a print-rich environment fosters early literacy skills, though explicit instruction on print concepts may not be essential for improving reading outcomes.

Resources:

- [CCSS Key Shifts in English Language Arts](#)
- [CCSS Appendix A](#)
- [CCSS ELA Reading Anchor Standards](#) (p. 10)

Indicator 2h Guiding Question:

Do the materials support students in developing their ability to comprehend complex ideas within and across

texts through opportunities to analyze and evaluate texts?

Evidence Collection

Note:

- The first scoring bullet of this indicator attends to the key ideas and details (RI and RL.1-3) of the CCSS. The second scoring bullet of this indicator attends to craft and structure (RI and RL.4-6) of the CCSS. The third scoring bullet addresses integration of knowledge and ideas (RI and RL.7-9) of the CCSS.

In the Instructional Materials being reviewed:

- Open the CCSS for Reading and Literature for the appropriate grade-level(s) on the [CCSS website](#).
- Ensure that materials offer activities or questions that require students to identify and discuss the main ideas, themes, and supporting details of a text.
- Look for questions and tasks that encourage comparison and synthesis of information across multiple texts, fostering a deeper understanding of texts.
- Check for alignment with grade-level standards, ensuring the complexity and depth of analysis are appropriate for the students' developmental stage.
- Review whether the materials prompt students to examine literary elements such as narrative voice, point of view, and text structure.
- Assess if there are opportunities for students to explore how word choice (including figurative and connotative meanings), sentence complexity, and paragraph organization impact meaning and tone.
- Look for questions and tasks that support students in understanding the author's purpose and perspective, encouraging them to evaluate how structure enhances the text's meaning.
- Look for tasks that require students to connect ideas within and between texts, such as comparing arguments, identifying conflicting information, and synthesizing information.
- Evaluate if the materials encourage critical thinking and problem-solving, prompting students to use evidence from the text to support their analysis and conclusions.
- Review whether materials engage students in interdisciplinary connections, drawing on knowledge from history, science, or other areas to deepen understanding, when applicable.
- Look for opportunities for students to learn about directionality (left-to-right, top-to-bottom progression). (K-1)
- Look for opportunities for students to identify words, sentences, capital letters, and punctuation.
- Review whether students have opportunities to identify and use text features (e.g., headings, captions, glossaries) in informational texts.
- Review whether students have opportunities to analyze story structures (e.g., beginning, middle, end, problem/solution) in literary texts.
- Look for opportunities to support students in recognizing how authors organize information to aid comprehension.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the materials include activities or questions that require students to identify and discuss the main ideas, themes, and supporting details of a text?
- Are there questions and tasks that encourage students to compare and synthesize information across multiple texts, thus fostering a deeper understanding of the material?
- Are the materials aligned with grade-level standards in terms of complexity and depth of analysis, ensuring appropriateness for the students' developmental stage?

- Do the materials prompt students to examine literary elements such as narrative voice, point of view, and text structure?
- Is there an opportunity for students to explore how word choice (including figurative and connotative meanings), sentence complexity, and paragraph organization impact meaning and tone?
- Are there questions and tasks that help students understand the author's purpose and perspective, and do they encourage evaluation of how structure enhances the text's meaning?
- Do the materials include tasks that require students to connect ideas within and between texts, such as comparing arguments, identifying conflicting information, and synthesizing information?
- Do the materials encourage critical thinking and problem-solving, prompting students to use evidence from the text to support their analysis and conclusions?
- Do the materials engage students in interdisciplinary connections, drawing on knowledge from history, science, or other areas to deepen understanding when applicable?
- Do materials provide opportunities for students to learn about directionality (left-to-right, top-to-bottom progression)? (K-1)
- Do students have opportunities to identify words, sentences, capital letters, and punctuation?
- Do materials include opportunities for students to identify and use text features (e.g., headings, captions, glossaries) in informational texts?
- Do students have opportunities to analyze story structures (e.g., beginning, middle, end, problem/solution) in literary texts?
- Do materials support students in recognizing how authors organize information to aid comprehension?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.
- Discuss whether the materials include activities or questions that require students to identify and discuss the main ideas, themes, and supporting details of a text.
- Discuss whether there are questions and tasks that encourage students to compare and synthesize information across multiple texts, thus fostering a deeper understanding of the material.
- Discuss whether the materials are aligned with grade-level standards in terms of complexity and depth of analysis, ensuring appropriateness for the students' developmental stage.
- Discuss whether the materials prompt students to examine literary elements such as narrative voice, point of view, and text structure.
- Discuss whether there is an opportunity for students to explore how word choice (including figurative and connotative meanings), sentence complexity, and paragraph organization impact meaning and tone.
- Discuss whether there are questions and tasks that help students understand the author's purpose and perspective, and whether they encourage evaluation of how structure enhances the text's meaning.
- Discuss whether the materials include tasks that require students to connect ideas within and between texts, such as comparing arguments, identifying conflicting information, and synthesizing information.
- Discuss whether the materials encourage critical thinking and problem-solving, prompting students to use evidence from the text to support their analysis and conclusions.
- Discuss whether the materials engage students in interdisciplinary connections, drawing on knowledge from history, science, or other areas to deepen understanding when applicable.
- Discuss whether the materials provide opportunities for students to learn about directionality (left-to-right, top-to-bottom progression). (K-1)
- Discuss whether students have opportunities to identify words, sentences, capital letters, and punctuation.

- Discuss whether materials include opportunities for students to identify and use text features (e.g., headings, captions, glossaries) in informational texts.
- Discuss whether students have opportunities to analyze story structures (e.g., beginning, middle, end, problem/solution) in literary texts.
- Discuss whether materials support students in recognizing how authors organize information to aid comprehension.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 2.2 | Materials include questions, tasks, and assignments that are meaningful, evidence-based, and support students in making meaning and building knowledge as they progress toward grade-level mastery of literacy skills. Materials include clear, explicit instruction guidance for teachers across all literacy skills. |
| Indicator 2i | Materials provide clear protocols and teacher guidance that frequently allow students to engage in listening and speaking about texts they are reading (or read aloud). |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Scoring: | | |
| 2 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 1 point Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials include structured protocols that support students in participating in various types of discussions, using both background knowledge and their interpretation of the text to build upon each other's understanding. Speaking and listening instruction includes facilitation, monitoring, and feedback guidance for teachers. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator focuses on the various speaking and listening protocols included throughout a program to build students' speaking and listening skills. Regular, structured discussions can increase student engagement and motivation by making reading a more interactive and collaborative experience. Materials should provide various speaking and listening frameworks and support for teachers to facilitate meaningful discussions among students about the texts they are reading through a range of speaking and listening activities. Students should be provided multiple frameworks to work with partners, small groups, and when appropriate, large groups, to practice sharing information they have summarized and synthesized, and present research they have individually and/or in groups conducted. As students engage in speaking and listening activities, they should use a combination of their own background knowledge and their understanding of the text to articulate, listen to, and evaluate ideas and viewpoints. In order to meet all the requirements of this indicator, materials should include teacher guidance on how to facilitate, monitor, and give feedback to students as they engage in the various speaking and listening protocols throughout the program. This guidance should support teachers in increasing students' oral language skills.

Research or Standards connection:

According to [Appendix A of the Common Core State Standards](#) (p. 26), speaking and listening are crucial in literacy development, emphasizing that these skills are foundational for mastering reading and writing. It highlights that oral language skills, including listening and speaking, are strong predictors of children's reading and writing abilities. The distinction between receptive language (listening and understanding) and expressive language (speaking and producing) is made, noting that receptive language typically develops before expressive language in young children. Research indicates that the quantity of words children hear during preschool significantly impacts their vocabulary growth and reading comprehension later on. The text advocates for explicit instruction in oral language to support reading skills, calling for an emphasis on read-alouds and structured conversations to enhance comprehension. As children progress through grades, while independent reading becomes more prominent, read-alouds should still play a vital role, enriching instruction and exposing students to complex literacies they may not yet be able to decode independently.

In "[A Rationale for Classroom Listening and Speaking Instruction](#)," Pershey (2001) outlines the importance of listening and speaking skills in the classroom. She proposes a three-part model of language learning: 1) learning language, 2) learning about language, and 3) learning through language. Pershey discusses the challenges students face in each area and suggests strategies for teachers to incorporate these skills into their classroom routines. The article highlights the role of language in supporting students' understanding of academic content and emphasizes the need for teachers to provide explicit instruction in language awareness, metalinguistic awareness, and metapragmatic awareness. It concludes by emphasizing the importance of creating a balanced program of instruction that includes conferencing, small group work, and whole-class discussions, all designed to promote student engagement and improve their communication skills.

In "[Toward Integrative Reading Science: The Direct and Indirect Effects Model of Reading](#)," Kim (2020) proposes a new model of reading called the Direct and Indirect Effects Model (DIER), which builds upon and expands on existing models of reading. The DIER model identifies the skills and knowledge required for reading comprehension: word reading, listening comprehension, text reading fluency, background knowledge, reading affect, higher order cognitions and regulation, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, phonology, morphology, orthography, and domain-general cognitions. The DIER model further hypothesizes that these skills and knowledge are hierarchically related: component skills with direct relations to reading comprehension (e.g., word reading, listening comprehension, text reading fluency) and distal skills that support proximal skills and indirectly contribute to reading comprehension through them (e.g., higher order cognitions, vocabulary). The DIER model also posits that these skills and knowledge are dynamic and interactive, changing as a function of text, activity, and development.

In *Speech to Print: Language Essentials for Teachers*, Louisa Moats (2010) emphasizes the crucial relationship between spoken language and written text in literacy instruction. Moats highlights the importance of understanding the components of language, including phonology, orthography, and morphology, to effectively teach reading and writing. She advocates for explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, decoding, and spelling, providing practical strategies and evidence-based practices for educators to implement in the classroom. Through clear explanations and real-life examples, Moats equips teachers with the knowledge and tools needed to support diverse learners, ultimately aiming to enhance students' reading and writing proficiency by building a strong foundation in language structure.

Resources:

- [CCSS ELA Speaking and Listening Anchor Standards](#) (p. 23)
- [CCSS Appendix A](#)

Indicator 2i Guiding Question:

Do materials provide structured protocols and teacher guidance for student engagement in evidence-based discussions of the texts they are reading?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Look for clear protocols that facilitate various types of discussions, such as whole-class, small-group, or paired conversations.
- Ensure that the protocols encourage students to bring in their background knowledge as well as information about the texts being read/read aloud to enhance collective understanding.
- Check if the materials promote critical thinking and encourage students to build on each other's ideas.
- Review whether there are explicit instructions and strategies for teachers to facilitate discussions effectively, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to participate.
- Evaluate the guidance provided for teachers to monitor discussions, helping them identify when interventions are needed to keep discussions focused and productive.
- Assess the resources available for providing feedback to students, aimed at improving their speaking and listening skills. This includes rubrics, checklists, or sample feedback statements that focus on contributions' relevance, clarity, and evidence use.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Are there clear protocols in place that facilitate various types of discussions, such as whole class, small group, or paired conversations?
- Do the protocols encourage students to incorporate both their background knowledge and information about the texts being read/read aloud to enhance collective understanding?
- Do the materials promote critical thinking and encourage students to build on each other's ideas?
- Are there explicit instructions and strategies provided for teachers to facilitate discussions effectively, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to participate?
- Is there guidance for teachers on how to monitor discussions and identify when interventions are needed to keep discussions focused and productive?
- What resources are available for providing feedback to students aimed at improving their speaking and listening skills, such as rubrics, checklists, or sample feedback statements that focus on contributions' relevance, clarity, and use of evidence?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss whether there are clear protocols in place that facilitate various types of discussions, such as whole-class, small-group, or paired conversations.
- Discuss whether the protocols encourage students to incorporate both their background knowledge and information about the texts being read/read aloud to enhance collective understanding.
- Discuss whether the materials promote critical thinking and encourage students to build on each other's ideas.
- Discuss whether there are explicit instructions and strategies provided for teachers to facilitate discussions effectively, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to participate.
- Discuss whether there is guidance for teachers on how to monitor discussions and identify when interventions are needed to keep discussions focused and productive.

- Discuss what resources are available for providing feedback to students aimed at improving their speaking and listening skills, such as rubrics, checklists, or sample feedback statements that focus on contributions' relevance, clarity, and use of evidence.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 2.2 | Materials include questions, tasks, and assignments that are meaningful, evidence-based, and support students in making meaning and building knowledge as they progress toward grade-level mastery of literacy skills. Materials include clear, explicit instruction guidance for teachers across all literacy skills. |
| Indicator 2j | Materials provide opportunities for students to engage in listening and speaking about texts they are reading (or read-aloud). |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Scoring: | | |
| 2 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 1 point Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials provide opportunities for students to engage in collaborative conversations about the text being read/read-aloud, which require them to ask and answer questions about the key details in texts, retell texts, and provide details to clarify comprehension and knowledge. Materials provide opportunities for students to consider others' perspectives and engage in intellectual discourse about texts and topics they are reading (or read aloud). | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

While the previous indicator considered the type of speaking and listening protocols and teacher guidance provided for these protocols in a program, this indicator examines the specific opportunities provided for students to engage in discussions based on what they are reading (or being read aloud). Regular opportunities for discussion encourage students to think critically, analyze information, and evaluate different viewpoints. By discussing texts and using information from the text to support their ideas, students can deepen their understanding of the material and clarify their interpretations. In order to meet the requirements of this indicator, materials should provide frequent opportunities for students to engage in collaborative conversations about the texts they are studying. These conversations should allow students to learn from each other, building on shared insights and contributing to a collective understanding of the text.

Research or Standards connection:

According to [Appendix A of the Common Core State Standards](#) (p. 26), speaking and listening are crucial in literacy development, emphasizing that these skills are foundational for mastering reading and writing. It highlights that oral language skills, including listening and speaking, are strong predictors of children's reading and writing abilities. The distinction between receptive language (listening and understanding) and expressive language (speaking and producing) is made, noting that receptive language typically develops before

expressive language in young children. Research indicates that the quantity of words children hear during preschool significantly impacts their vocabulary growth and reading comprehension later on. The text advocates for explicit instruction in oral language to support reading skills, calling for an emphasis on read-alouds and structured conversations to enhance comprehension. As children progress through grades, while independent reading becomes more prominent, read-alouds should still play a vital role, enriching instruction and exposing students to complex literacies they may not yet be able to decode independently.

In “[A Rationale for Classroom Listening and Speaking Instruction](#),” Pershey (2001) outlines the importance of listening and speaking skills in the classroom. She proposes a three-part model of language learning: 1) learning language, 2) learning about language, and 3) learning through language. Pershey discusses the challenges students face in each area and suggests strategies for teachers to incorporate these skills into their classroom routines. The article highlights the role of language in supporting students' understanding of academic content and emphasizes the need for teachers to provide explicit instruction in language awareness, metalinguistic awareness, and metapragmatic awareness. It concludes by emphasizing the importance of creating a balanced program of instruction that includes conferencing, small group work, and whole-class discussions, all designed to promote student engagement and improve their communication skills.

In “[Toward Integrative Reading Science: The Direct and Indirect Effects Model of Reading](#),” Kim (2020) proposes a new model of reading called the Direct and Indirect Effects Model (DIER), which builds upon and expands on existing models of reading. The DIER model identifies the skills and knowledge required for reading comprehension: word reading, listening comprehension, text reading fluency, background knowledge, reading affect, higher order cognitions and regulation, vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, phonology, morphology, orthography, and domain-general cognitions. The DIER model further hypothesizes that these skills and knowledge are hierarchically related: component skills with direct relations to reading comprehension (e.g., word reading, listening comprehension, text reading fluency) and distal skills that support proximal skills and indirectly contribute to reading comprehension through them (e.g., higher order cognitions, vocabulary). The DIER model also posits that these skills and knowledge are dynamic and interactive, changing as a function of text, activity, and development.

In *Speech to Print: Language Essentials for Teachers*, Louisa Moats (2010) emphasizes the crucial relationship between spoken language and written text in literacy instruction. Moats highlights the importance of understanding the components of language, including phonology, orthography, and morphology, to effectively teach reading and writing. She advocates for explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, decoding, and spelling, providing practical strategies and evidence-based practices for educators to implement in the classroom. Through clear explanations and real-life examples, Moats equips teachers with the knowledge and tools needed to support diverse learners, ultimately aiming to enhance students' reading and writing proficiency by building a strong foundation in language structure.

Resources:

- [CCSS ELA Speaking and Listening Anchor Standards](#) (p. 23)
- [CCSS Appendix A](#)

Indicator 2j Guiding Question:

Do materials include frequent opportunities for students to engage in evidence-based discussions about the texts they are reading?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Look for specific opportunities that promote interaction among students, such as group discussions, partner dialogues, or peer reviews (these should be specific tasks, not overall protocols).
- Ensure that these activities require students to refer to what they are reading, reinforcing the practice of supporting their ideas with clear references.
- Check for prompts and questions that guide students to effectively refer back to the text.
- Review whether the materials encourage students to actively listen to and thoughtfully consider the perspectives and arguments presented by their peers.
- Assess if there are activities designed to foster respectful debate and discourse, where students can analyze differing viewpoints and deepen their understanding of the topics or texts.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Are there specific opportunities that promote interaction among students, such as group discussions, partner dialogues, or peer reviews, rather than just overall protocols?
- Do these activities require students to refer to what they are reading, reinforcing the practice of supporting their ideas with clear references?
- Are there prompts and questions that guide students to effectively refer back to the text?
- Do the materials encourage students to actively listen to and thoughtfully consider the perspectives and arguments presented by their peers?
- Are there activities designed to foster respectful debate and discourse, allowing students to analyze differing viewpoints and deepen their understanding of the topics or texts?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss whether there are specific opportunities that promote interaction among students, such as group discussions, partner dialogues, or peer reviews, rather than just overall protocols.
- Discuss whether these activities require students to refer to what they are reading, reinforcing the practice of supporting their ideas with clear references.
- Discuss whether there are prompts and questions that guide students to effectively refer back to the text.
- Discuss whether the materials encourage students to actively listen to and thoughtfully consider the perspectives and arguments presented by their peers.
- Discuss whether there are activities designed to foster respectful debate and discourse, allowing students to analyze differing viewpoints and deepen their understanding of the topics or texts.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

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|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 2.2 | Materials include questions, tasks, and assignments that are meaningful, evidence-based, and support students in making meaning and building knowledge as they progress toward grade-level mastery of literacy skills. Materials include clear, explicit instruction guidance for teachers across all literacy skills. |
| Indicator 2k | Materials include explicit instruction on independent word-learning strategies and key vocabulary words to build knowledge within and across texts. |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Scoring: | | |
| 2 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 1 point Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials include structured and explicit practices for introducing key vocabulary words and independent word-learning strategies within the context of the texts (student-friendly definitions, analyzing morphemes, word maps, and discussion of word relationships/shades of meaning, dictionary skills, context clues). Attention is paid to vocabulary essential to understanding the text and high-utility academic words. Materials provide multiple exposures to key vocabulary within (i.e., before, during, after reading) and across texts. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines whether materials include structured and explicit practices for vocabulary instruction. Materials should clearly teach students how to learn and use new words effectively, enabling them to expand their vocabulary. Students should learn techniques to decode unfamiliar words, such as using context clues, word roots, affixes, and other strategies that promote self-directed learning. By focusing on key vocabulary, materials help improve students' ability to understand and analyze complex texts. Throughout the year, students should experience multiple exposures to key vocabulary words (tier II and tier III) in order to increase their familiarity with and knowledge of those words. In addition, by targeting vocabulary words used across multiple texts, students can make connections between ideas and content areas, reinforcing their learning and retention. Overall, this indicator considers whether vocabulary instruction is intentional and integrated across the program to support students' language development.

Research or Standards connection:

[Appendix A of the Common Core State Standards](#) underscores the vital role of rich and varied vocabulary in enhancing reading comprehension and academic achievement, a link established through extensive research since 1925. Although vocabulary instruction in schools often lacks consistency and depth, developing a robust

vocabulary requires repeated, varied exposure to words in diverse contexts. While children naturally acquire vocabulary through context-rich oral interactions, vocabulary growth can stagnate without purposeful instruction, especially in written language, where 5 to 15 percent of new words are typically retained upon first encounter. Effective vocabulary development involves engaging students with words through various activities and teaching the underlying structures of language, such as syntax and morphology. The text highlights a framework by Isabel L. Beck, Margaret G. McKeown, and Linda Kucan that categorizes words into three tiers: commonly used Tier I words, cross-disciplinary Tier II words that need careful instructional focus, and domain-specific Tier III words that are often clearly taught within their respective fields. The model suggests that while Tier III words are more explicitly defined, Tier II words, critical for academic success, require teachers to identify and address them across all text types, integrating them into coherent, content-rich curricula to ensure comprehensive vocabulary acquisition for students (p. 32-33).

The [Report of the National Reading Panel](#) (2000) highlights the critical role of vocabulary knowledge in reading development, with vocabulary influencing both oral and print reading comprehension. The National Reading Panel (NRP) examined over 20,000 research citations on vocabulary instruction, filtering them down to 50 studies based on strict criteria. These studies show that vocabulary instruction improves comprehension, but methods need to be tailored to the reader's age and ability. Effective techniques include teaching words before reading and repeated exposure to words in varied contexts. Vocabulary should be taught both directly and indirectly, incorporating repetition and multiple exposures, supplemented by rich contexts and technology. Direct instruction should engage students actively, and methods should be varied.

In *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction*, Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2013) examine effective strategies for vocabulary instruction grounded in extensive research. They emphasize the importance of teaching “tier II” words, which are versatile and applicable across various subjects, thus significantly impacting students' academic performance. The authors present a research-based framework for vocabulary instruction that includes explicit teaching of word meanings, facilitating rich language experiences, and promoting active engagement with new words. A key aspect of their approach is fostering word consciousness, encouraging students to become aware of and interested in words and their meanings.

In the article, “[Advancing our Students' Language and Literacy: The Challenge of Complex Texts](#),” Marilyn Jager Adams (2010-2011) argues that to enhance students' reading comprehension and vocabulary development, educators should employ a combination of direct vocabulary instruction and extensive reading. Direct instruction helps with specific word learning, while extensive reading builds vocabulary through context. Cognitive research highlights the importance of prior domain knowledge and suggests that simplifying texts can hinder advanced comprehension. A well-sequenced curriculum, starting with simpler texts and progressing to more complex materials, helps build background knowledge and vocabulary incrementally. Supporting these efforts with a well-structured core curriculum ensures that students receive rigorous and relevant instruction, preparing them for advanced academic challenges and real-world literacy demands.

In [Effects of Instruction in Morphological Awareness on Literacy Achievement: An Integrative Review](#), Carlisle (2010) reviews 16 studies on the effects of teaching morphological awareness (the ability to identify and analyze word parts) to students. She explores how this practice impacts literacy development (including phonology, orthography, and word meaning). Carlisle concludes that morphological awareness holds potential to improve literacy, particularly when it deepens students' understanding of morphemic structure, spelling, and word meaning.

Resources:

- [Appendix A of the CCSS](#)

Indicator 2k Guiding Question:

Do the materials include explicit instruction on independent word-learning strategies and key vocabulary words to build knowledge within and across texts?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Ensure the materials focus on vocabulary critical to understanding the texts being studied and include high-utility academic words that are relevant across various subjects.
- Look for vocabulary selection criteria that emphasize words' frequency, utility, and relevance to students' academic and real-world contexts.
- Verify that the materials provide opportunities for students to encounter and use targeted vocabulary multiple times, in different contexts, and through varied activities.
- Ensure materials encourage the use of vocabulary across different texts and subjects, promoting reinforcement and deeper understanding.
- Ensure that the materials have a clear framework for introducing vocabulary words, making it easy for both teachers and students to follow.
- Look for variety in the types of practices used to accommodate diverse learning styles.
- Evaluate how effectively the materials teach students to use strategies like word maps, dictionary skills, and context clues independently. Consider the clarity and accessibility of these strategies for students, ensuring they are student-friendly and practical for real-world application.
- Check for explicit instruction of vocabulary that includes relatable examples and non-examples, helping students understand the nuances of word meanings.
- Assess the quality of student-friendly explanations, ensuring they relate to various contexts beyond just the text being studied.
- Ensure that materials provide students with repeated encounters with key vocabulary before, during, and after reading, allowing for reinforcement and deeper understanding.
- Check for coherence in how vocabulary is integrated with the rest of the program, reinforcing overall knowledge and skills.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the materials focus on vocabulary critical to understanding the texts being studied and include high-utility academic words relevant across various subjects?
- Are there criteria for vocabulary selection that emphasize words' frequency, utility, and relevance to students' academic and real-world contexts?
- Do the materials provide opportunities for students to encounter and use targeted vocabulary multiple times, in different contexts, and through varied activities?
- Do the materials encourage the use of vocabulary across different texts and subjects, promoting reinforcement and deeper understanding?
- Is there a clear framework in the materials for introducing vocabulary words, making it easy for both teachers and students to follow?
- Is there variety in the types of practices used to accommodate diverse learning styles?
- How effectively do the materials teach students to use strategies like word maps, dictionary skills, and context clues independently, and are these strategies clear, accessible, and practical for real-world application?

- Are the student-friendly explanations of vocabulary high-quality, ensuring they relate to various contexts beyond just the text being studied?
- Do the materials provide students with repeated encounters with key vocabulary before, during, and after reading, enabling reinforcement and deeper understanding?
- Is there coherence in how vocabulary is integrated with the rest of the program, reinforcing overall knowledge and skills?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss whether the materials focus on vocabulary critical to understanding the texts being studied and include high-utility academic words relevant across various subjects.
- Discuss whether there are criteria for vocabulary selection that emphasize words' frequency, utility, and relevance to students' academic and real-world contexts.
- Discuss whether the materials provide opportunities for students to encounter and use targeted vocabulary multiple times, in different contexts, and through varied activities.
- Discuss whether the materials encourage the use of vocabulary across different texts and subjects, promoting reinforcement and deeper understanding.
- Discuss whether there is a clear framework in the materials for introducing vocabulary words, making it easy for both teachers and students to follow.
- Discuss whether there is variety in the types of practices used to accommodate diverse learning styles.
- Discuss how effectively the materials teach students to use strategies like word maps, dictionary skills, and context clues independently, and whether these strategies are clear, accessible, and practical for real-world application.
- Discuss if the materials include student-friendly definitions of vocabulary are high-quality, ensuring they relate to various contexts beyond just the text being studied.
- Discuss whether the materials provide students with repeated encounters with key vocabulary before, during, and after reading, enabling reinforcement and deeper understanding.
- Discuss whether there is coherence in how vocabulary is integrated with the rest of the program, reinforcing overall knowledge and skills.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

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|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 2.2 | Materials include questions, tasks, and assignments that are meaningful, evidence-based, and support students in making meaning and building knowledge as they progress toward grade-level mastery of literacy skills. Materials include clear, explicit instruction guidance for teachers across all literacy skills. |
| Indicator 2I | Materials include opportunities for students to practice independent word-learning strategies, as well as newly taught vocabulary words. |

| Scoring: | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 2 points Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials include opportunities for students to use independent word-learning strategies to understand the meaning of challenging words (inferring from context, using morphological awareness). Materials include opportunities for students to use academic and content-specific vocabulary in various contexts. Practice opportunities incorporate the review of previously learned words based on their connection to the topic of study. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

The purpose of this indicator is to ensure that materials include opportunities for students to practice using essential vocabulary words and independent word learning strategies. This approach helps students build a robust vocabulary, which is crucial for reading comprehension and overall literacy development. By providing opportunities for students to practice independent word-learning strategies, materials help students become self-sufficient learners who can decipher and understand unfamiliar words on their own. Practicing newly taught vocabulary words allows students to reinforce their understanding and enhance retention through use in varied contexts. By interacting with key academic vocabulary consistently, students can build a robust vocabulary base that enhances their comprehension and communication skills across subjects. A strong vocabulary is crucial for understanding texts and is often integral to higher-level academic work.

Research or Standards connection:

[Appendix A of the Common Core State Standards](#) underscores the vital role of rich and varied vocabulary in enhancing reading comprehension and academic achievement, a link established through extensive research since 1925. Although vocabulary instruction in schools often lacks consistency and depth, developing a robust vocabulary requires repeated, varied exposure to words in diverse contexts. While children naturally acquire

vocabulary through context-rich oral interactions, vocabulary growth can stagnate without purposeful instruction, especially in written language, where 5 to 15 percent of new words are typically retained upon first encounter. Effective vocabulary development involves engaging students with words through various activities and teaching the underlying structures of language, such as syntax and morphology. The text highlights a framework by Isabel L. Beck, Margaret G. McKeown, and Linda Kucan that categorizes words into three tiers: commonly used Tier I words, cross-disciplinary Tier II words that need careful instructional focus, and domain-specific Tier III words that are often clearly taught within their respective fields. The model suggests that while Tier III words are more explicitly defined, Tier II words, critical for academic success, require teachers to identify and address them across all text types, integrating them into coherent, content-rich curricula to ensure comprehensive vocabulary acquisition for students (p. 32-33).

The [Report of the National Reading Panel](#) highlights the critical role of vocabulary knowledge in reading development, with vocabulary influencing both oral and print reading comprehension. The National Reading Panel (NRP) examined over 20,000 research citations on vocabulary instruction, filtering them down to 50 studies based on strict criteria. These studies show that vocabulary instruction improves comprehension, but methods need to be tailored to the reader's age and ability. Effective techniques include teaching words before reading and repeated exposure to words in varied contexts. Vocabulary should be taught both directly and indirectly, incorporating repetition and multiple exposures, supplemented by rich contexts and technology. Direct instruction should engage students actively, and methods should be varied.

In *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction*, Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2013) examine effective strategies for vocabulary instruction grounded in extensive research. They emphasize the importance of teaching "tier II" words, which are versatile and applicable across various subjects, thus significantly impacting students' academic performance. The authors present a research-based framework for vocabulary instruction that includes explicit teaching of word meanings, facilitating rich language experiences, and promoting active engagement with new words. A key aspect of their approach is fostering word consciousness, encouraging students to become aware of and interested in words and their meanings.

In [Effects of Instruction in Morphological Awareness on Literacy Achievement: An Integrative Review](#), Carlisle (2010) reviews 16 studies on the effects of teaching morphological awareness (the ability to identify and analyze word parts) to students. She explores how this practice impacts literacy development (including phonology, orthography, and word meaning). Carlisle concludes that morphological awareness holds potential to improve literacy, particularly when it deepens students' understanding of morphemic structure, spelling, and word meaning.

Resources:

- [Appendix A of the CCSS](#)

Indicator 2I Guiding Question:

Do the materials include opportunities for students to practice independent word-learning strategies, as well as newly taught vocabulary words?

Evidence Collection

In the Instructional Materials being reviewed:

- Check if materials provide clear instructions and support for strategies like inferring meaning from context and using morphological awareness.
- Assess whether these strategies are integrated into activities that encourage students to practice and apply them independently.

- Determine whether materials offer varied contexts for students to use academic and content-specific vocabulary, such as discussions, writing assignments, and projects, ensuring meaningful engagement with the vocabulary.
- Look for activities that require students to demonstrate understanding and correct use of this vocabulary in different contexts.
- Verify that practice opportunities are designed to reinforce and review previously learned vocabulary, emphasizing how these words connect to the current topic of study.
- Confirm that materials encourage connections between new and existing vocabulary knowledge, aiding comprehension and retention through thematic or conceptual links.
- Evaluate how materials promote the application of vocabulary beyond rote memorization, fostering deeper understanding and exploration of word meanings.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the materials provide clear instructions and support for strategies like inferring meaning from context and using morphological awareness?
- Are these strategies integrated into activities that encourage students to practice and apply them independently?
- Do the materials offer varied contexts for students to use academic and content-specific vocabulary, such as discussions, writing assignments, and projects, ensuring meaningful engagement with the vocabulary?
- Are there activities that require students to demonstrate understanding and correct use of vocabulary in different contexts?
- Are practice opportunities designed to reinforce and review previously learned vocabulary, emphasizing how these words connect to the current topic of study?
- Do the materials encourage connections between new and existing vocabulary knowledge, aiding comprehension and retention through thematic or conceptual links?
- How effectively do the materials promote the application of vocabulary beyond rote memorization, fostering deeper understanding and exploration of word meanings?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss whether the materials provide clear instructions and support for strategies like inferring meaning from context and using morphological awareness.
- Discuss whether these strategies are integrated into activities that encourage students to practice and apply them independently.
- Discuss whether the materials offer varied contexts for students to use academic and content-specific vocabulary, such as discussions, writing assignments, and projects, ensuring meaningful engagement with the vocabulary.
- Discuss whether there are activities that require students to demonstrate understanding and correct use of vocabulary in different contexts.
- Discuss whether there are practice opportunities designed to reinforce and review previously learned vocabulary, emphasizing how these words connect to the current topic of study.
- Discuss whether the materials encourage connections between new and existing vocabulary knowledge, aiding comprehension and retention through thematic or conceptual links.
- Discuss how effectively the materials promote the application of vocabulary beyond rote memorization, deeper understanding, and exploration of word meanings.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.

- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

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|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 2.2 | Materials include questions, tasks, and assignments that are meaningful, evidence-based, and support students in making meaning and building knowledge as they progress toward grade-level mastery of literacy skills. Materials include clear, explicit instruction guidance for teachers across all literacy skills. |
| Indicator 2m | Materials include explicit instruction on sentence composition appropriate to grade-level standards, embedded in what students are studying throughout the unit. |

Scoring:

| 2 points | 1 point | 0 points |
|---|--|--|
| Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials include explicit instruction and modeling guidance in sentence-composition skills (use of punctuation, sentence elaboration, sentence combining using cohesive ties, sentence fluency), embedded in what students are studying throughout the unit. Materials utilize exemplar sentences from core and mentor texts that contain clear, varied, and rich examples of sentence structure. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

The purpose of this indicator is to ensure that materials provide clear and direct instruction on sentence composition that aligns with grade-level standards and is embedded in what students are studying throughout the unit. This involves explicit instruction that helps students understand sentence structure, syntax, and grammar, forming the foundation for effective writing. Teaching sentence composition helps students develop a nuanced understanding of language, enabling them to vary sentence structures and lengths for rhetorical effect. Mastery of sentence composition is crucial for academic writing across subjects, and aligning with grade-level standards ensures that instruction is developmentally appropriate. By focusing on sentence composition, students learn to craft clear and coherent sentences, improving their ability to communicate ideas effectively.

Research or Standards connection:

According to the [Introduction of the Common Core State Standards](#) (pg. 8), "The Language standards include the essential 'rules' of standard written and spoken English, but they also approach language as a matter of craft and informed choice among alternatives. The vocabulary standards focus on understanding words and phrases,

their relationships, and their nuances and on acquiring new vocabulary, particularly general academic and domain-specific words and phrases.”

In “[Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools](#),” Graham and Perin (2007) summarize research findings on grammar instruction, revealing that explicit and systematic teaching of parts of speech and sentence structure generally have a negative effect on students' writing quality. This negative impact is statistically significant across various ability levels, including low-achieving writers, challenging the traditional emphasis on grammar instruction in writing education. However, alternative instructional methods like sentence combining show positive outcomes by enhancing both writing quality and syntactic skills. Additionally, teaching grammar within the practical context of writing, rather than as a separate activity, has been found to significantly improve students' writing. Overall, the research suggests that while grammar instruction is important, employing more integrative and context-focused methods is more effective for improving student writing.

In “[Grammar Intertwined Throughout the Writing Process: An ‘Inch Wide and a Mile Deep](#),” Weaver, Bush, Anderson, and Bills (2006) argue that grammar should be taught within the writing process, not as a separate subject, by focusing on a few key concepts and teaching them in depth using real-world examples from literature and student writing. The authors suggest integrating grammar into writing workshops through mini-lessons, focus lessons, and peer editing sessions, where students can practice and apply grammar concepts as they arise naturally in their writing. They also emphasize the importance of modeling good writing and teaching students to understand the underlying principles of grammar, rather than simply focusing on correcting errors, empowering them to become independent editors who can diagnose and correct their own writing.

In *Teaching Grammar in Context*, Weaver (1996) advocates for integrating grammar instruction into the context of reading and writing rather than teaching it in isolation. Weaver argues that this contextual approach helps students understand the practical application of grammar in real communication. The book emphasizes the importance of teaching grammar as a tool for enhancing clarity and effectiveness in written expression, rather than mere adherence to rules. She addresses different aspects of grammar instruction, including sentence structure, punctuation, and usage, and presents research that supports learning grammar through context.

Resources:

- [CCSS Anchor Language Standards](#) (p. 25)

Indicator 2m Guiding Question:

Do the materials include explicit instruction in sentence-composition skills that align with grade-level standards, embedded in what students are studying throughout the unit?

Evidence Collection

In the Instructional Materials being reviewed

- Look for lessons or activities that focus specifically on teaching sentence-composition skills, including proper use of punctuation, techniques for sentence elaboration, and strategies for sentence combining using cohesive ties.
- Ensure that materials address sentence fluency, helping students understand how to create varied sentences that flow naturally.
- Check for exercises that explicitly teach sentence composition skills and provide opportunities for students to practice and apply them in their writing.

- Verify that the materials include exemplar sentences drawn from core/anchor texts that demonstrate clear, varied, and rich sentence structures.
- Ensure that these examples are integrated into instruction to model effective sentence construction for students, illustrating how different elements of grammar and composition work together.
- Look for opportunities where students analyze and discuss these exemplar sentences to gain a deeper understanding of effective writing techniques and styles.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the lessons or activities focus specifically on teaching sentence-composition skills, including the proper use of punctuation, techniques for sentence elaboration, and strategies for sentence combining using cohesive ties?
- Do the materials address sentence fluency, helping students understand how to create varied sentences that flow naturally?
- Do the materials explicitly teach sentence composition skills and provide opportunities for students to practice and apply them in their writing?
- Do the materials include exemplar sentences drawn from core or anchor texts that demonstrate clear, varied, and rich sentence structures?
- Are these examples integrated into instruction to model effective sentence construction for students, illustrating how different elements of grammar and composition work together?
- Are there opportunities for students to analyze and discuss these exemplar sentences to gain a deeper understanding of effective writing techniques and styles?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss whether the lessons or activities focus specifically on teaching sentence-composition skills, including the proper use of punctuation, techniques for sentence elaboration, and strategies for sentence combining using cohesive ties.
- Discuss whether the materials address sentence fluency, helping students understand how to create varied sentences that flow naturally.
- Discuss whether the materials explicitly teach sentence composition skills and provide opportunities for students to practice and apply them in their writing.
- Discuss whether the materials include exemplar sentences drawn from core or anchor texts that demonstrate clear, varied, and rich sentence structures.
- Discuss if the examples used instruction to model effective sentence construction for students, and illustrate how different elements of grammar and composition work together.
- Discuss whether there are opportunities for students to analyze and discuss these exemplar sentences to gain a deeper understanding of effective writing techniques and styles.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 2.2 | Materials include questions, tasks, and assignments that are meaningful, evidence-based, and support students in making meaning and building knowledge as they progress toward grade-level mastery of literacy skills. Materials include clear, explicit instruction guidance for teachers across all literacy skills. |
| Indicator 2n | Materials include evidence-based opportunities for students to practice sentence composition and editing of their own writing, appropriate for their grade level. |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Scoring: | | |
| 2 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 1 point Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials include opportunities for students to write sentences about the texts under study while practicing and applying sentence composition skills. Materials include opportunities for students to practice and apply sentence composition skills by examining their own writing. Materials include opportunities for students to adapt their language based on the intended audience and purpose. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

While the previous indicator focuses on explicit instruction for sentence composition, this indicator focuses on student practice opportunities with sentence composition included in materials. The purpose of this indicator is to ensure that materials provide students with practical, evidence-based activities for practicing sentence composition and editing within authentic writing contexts. By engaging in sentence composition and editing during real writing tasks, students can develop and refine their writing skills in a meaningful context. These authentic writing opportunities allow students to apply grammatical and compositional skills they have learned, reinforcing their understanding and through practice. Practicing editing during authentic writing helps students learn to critically evaluate and improve their own and others' work, promoting self-assessment and peer feedback. By practicing these skills, students build a foundation for more complex writing tasks in higher grades and real-world settings, enhancing their overall communication abilities. Overall, this indicator aims to ensure that students have regular, meaningful opportunities to hone their sentence composition and editing skills through writing activities that are authentic and appropriate to their grade level.

Research or Standards connection:

According to the Introduction of the [Common Core State Standards](#) (pg. 8), "The Language standards include

the essential ‘rules’ of standard written and spoken English, but they also approach language as a matter of craft and informed choice among alternatives. The vocabulary standards focus on understanding words and phrases, their relationships, and their nuances and on acquiring new vocabulary, particularly general academic and domain-specific words and phrases.”

In “[Grammar Intertwined Throughout the Writing Process: An ‘Inch Wide and a Mile Deep,’](#)” Weaver, Bush, Anderson, and Bills (2006) argue that grammar should be taught within the writing process, not as a separate subject, by focusing on a few key concepts and teaching them in depth using real-world examples from literature and student writing. The authors suggest integrating grammar into writing workshops through mini-lessons, focus lessons, and peer editing sessions, where students can practice and apply grammar concepts as they arise naturally in their writing. They also emphasize the importance of modeling good writing and teaching students to understand the underlying principles of grammar, rather than simply focusing on correcting errors, empowering them to become independent editors who can diagnose and correct their own writing.

In *Teaching Grammar in Context*, Weaver (1996) advocates for integrating grammar instruction into the context of reading and writing rather than teaching it in isolation. Weaver argues that this contextual approach helps students understand the practical application of grammar in real communication. The book emphasizes the importance of teaching grammar as a tool for enhancing clarity and effectiveness in written expression, rather than mere adherence to rules. She addresses different aspects of grammar instruction, including sentence structure, punctuation, and usage, and presents research that supports learning grammar through context.

Resources:

- [CCSS Anchor Language Standards](#) (p. 25)

Indicator 2n Guiding Question:

Do the materials include evidence-based opportunities for students to practice sentence composition and editing of their own writing, appropriate for their grade level?

Evidence Collection

In the Instructional Materials being reviewed:

- Look for structured activities that prompt students to write sentences directly related to the texts they are studying, ensuring that writing practice is meaningful and contextually relevant.
- Determine whether the materials provide opportunities for students to reflect on and analyze their own writing, allowing them to practice sentence composition skills and identify areas for improvement.
- Verify that materials include opportunities for students to practice adapting language and tone according to different audiences and purposes, helping students develop awareness of context in their writing.
- Ensure that the materials have opportunities for students to practice sentence composition skills, such as varied sentence structures, grammar, and punctuation, alongside opportunities for application in writing assignments.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the materials include structured activities that prompt students to write sentences directly related to the texts they are studying, ensuring that writing practice is meaningful and contextually relevant?

- Do the materials provide opportunities for students to reflect on and analyze their own writing, allowing them to practice sentence composition skills and identify areas for improvement?
- Do the materials include opportunities for students to practice adapting language and tone according to different audiences and purposes, helping them develop awareness of context in their writing?
- Do the materials offer opportunities for students to practice sentence composition skills, such as varied sentence structures, grammar, and punctuation, alongside opportunities for application in writing assignments?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss whether the materials include structured activities that prompt students to write sentences directly related to the texts they are studying, ensuring that writing practice is meaningful and contextually relevant.
- Discuss whether the materials provide opportunities for students to reflect on and analyze their own writing, allowing them to practice sentence composition skills and identify areas for improvement.
- Discuss whether the materials include opportunities for students to practice adapting language and tone according to different audiences and purposes, helping them develop awareness of context in their writing.
- Discuss whether the materials offer opportunities for students to practice sentence composition skills, such as varied sentence structures, grammar, and punctuation, alongside opportunities for application in writing assignments.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 2.2 | Materials include questions, tasks, and assignments that are meaningful, evidence-based, and support students in making meaning and building knowledge as they progress toward grade-level mastery of literacy skills. Materials include clear, explicit instruction guidance for teachers across all literacy skills. |
| Indicator 2o | Materials include a mix of both on-demand and process writing opportunities that are appropriately-aligned in purpose, genre, and/or topic to the reading of that unit. |

Narrative Only Criteria (this information will be included in the narrative report but will not affect scoring):

- Materials reflect the distribution indicated by the standards for process writing (K–5 30/35/35 persuade/explain/convey experience).

Scoring:

| 2 points | 1 point | 0 points |
|---|--|--|
| Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |

- Materials include a mix of grade-appropriate on-demand and process writing.
- Writing opportunities are appropriately aligned to the purpose, genre, and/or topic of the unit’s reading.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

The purpose of this indicator is to ensure that materials provide students with varied writing experiences that complement their reading activities. Materials should include both on-demand and process-writing opportunities to ensure that students practice different types of writing. On-demand writing develops the ability to quickly organize and articulate ideas, while process writing emphasizes planning, drafting, revising, and editing. By engaging in a variety of writing tasks, students are better prepared to meet the diverse demands of academic and real-world writing, enhancing their versatility as writers. To strengthen the connection between reading and writing, writing tasks throughout the program should be directly linked in purpose, genre, and/or topic to the reading of each unit. Aligning writing opportunities with the genre and topic of the reading unit reinforces comprehension and critical thinking. It enables students to make connections between what they read and what they write, enhancing their overall understanding of the content. Overall, this indicator emphasizes the importance of integrating writing practice with reading instruction to create a cohesive and comprehensive literacy experience that supports student growth as both readers and writers.

Research or Standards connection:

In the [Introduction to the Writing Standards](#) (pg. 19), the Common Core State Standards state, “Each year in their writing, students should demonstrate increasing sophistication in all aspects of language use, from vocabulary and syntax to the development and organization of ideas, and they should address increasingly demanding content and sources.”

In “[Reading and Writing Relationships and Their Development](#),” Fitzgerald and Shanahan (2000) examine the intricate relationship between reading and writing, arguing that while they share a significant amount of knowledge and rely on similar mental processes, they are not identical and their relationship evolves over time. The authors discuss four categories of shared knowledge: metaknowledge, domain knowledge, text attributes, and procedural knowledge. They advocate for an integrated approach to teaching reading and writing, recognizing that focusing on their shared aspects can be more effective than teaching them separately. Ultimately, the authors advocate for a more holistic understanding of literacy development, recognizing the importance of both shared and distinct aspects of reading and writing in fostering successful learners.

In “[Reading and Writing Relations Are Not Uniform: They Differ by the Linguistic Grain Size, Developmental Phase, and Measurement](#),” Kim, Wolters, and Lee (2024) investigated the complex relationship between reading and writing, examining how the relationship varies depending on linguistic grain size (word-level vs. text-level), developmental stage (grade level), and measurement methods. A meta-analysis of 395 studies found that overall, reading and writing were strongly related ($r = .72$). However, the strength of the relationship varied depending on linguistic grain size, developmental phase, measurement, and language. The study emphasizes the multifaceted nature of reading-writing relations and highlights the importance of considering these factors when teaching and researching literacy. It suggests that integrating reading and writing instruction can be more effective than teaching them separately. Additionally, the findings emphasize the importance of using multiple measures of reading comprehension and written composition to gain a more complete understanding of the complex relationship between these skills.

Resources:

- [CCSS Anchor Writing Standards](#) (p .18)
- [CCSS Anchor Reading Standards](#) (p. 10)
- [CCSS Anchor Writing Standard 10](#) (p. 18)
- [NAEP Writing Framework \(2017\)](#)
- [Introduction to the Writing Standards](#) (pg. 19)

Exhibit 1.2. Percentage Distribution of Communicative Purposes by Grade

| Purpose | Grade 4 | Grade 8 | Grade 12 |
|----------------------|---------|---------|----------|
| To Persuade | 30% | 35% | 40% |
| To Explain | 35% | 35% | 40% |
| To Convey Experience | 35% | 30% | 20% |

Indicator 2o Guiding Question:

Do the materials include a mix of both on-demand and process writing opportunities that are appropriately-aligned in purpose. genre and/or topic to the reading of that unit?

Evidence Collection

Note:

- Writing with the purpose to persuade refers to argumentative writing.
- Writing with the purpose to explain refers to informative writing.
- Writing with the purpose to convey experience refers to narrative writing.

In the Instructional Materials being reviewed:

- Ensure that materials provide a balanced range of grade-appropriate on-demand and process writing opportunities. On-demand writing might involve quick responses or timed essays, while process writing should engage students in drafting, revising, and editing over more extended periods.
- Verify that the materials reflect the distribution of writing types as indicated by relevant educational standards (e.g., K-5: 30/35/35 persuade, explain, convey experience).
- Assess whether the materials offer sufficient variety in prompts and writing tasks.
- Check that writing opportunities are explicitly connected to the purpose, genre, and topic of the unit's reading. For example, if the reading includes persuasive texts, writing opportunities should encourage students to practice persuasive writing techniques.
- Evaluate whether the materials provide clear prompts or frameworks that help students understand how to relate their writing to the reading content, encouraging deeper engagement and comprehension.
- Assess whether the writing tasks are appropriately challenging for the grade level and support students' development of both content knowledge and writing skills.
- Look for opportunities where writing tasks can enhance reading comprehension, such as writing reflections, responses, or analyses related to the texts being studied.
- Ensure that the materials encourage students to draw connections between their reading and writing, fostering a deeper understanding of both.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the materials provide a balanced range of grade-appropriate on-demand and process writing opportunities, with on-demand writing involving quick responses or timed essays, and process writing engaging students in drafting, revising, and editing over extended periods?
- Do the materials reflect the distribution of writing types as indicated by relevant educational standards (e.g., K-5: 30/35/35 for persuade, explain, convey experience)?
- Do the materials offer sufficient variety in prompts and writing tasks?
- Are writing opportunities explicitly connected to the purpose, genre, and topic of the unit's reading? For example, if the reading includes persuasive texts, do the writing opportunities encourage students to practice persuasive writing techniques?
- Do the materials provide clear prompts or frameworks that help students understand how to relate their writing to the reading content, thereby encouraging deeper engagement and comprehension?
- Are the writing tasks appropriately challenging for the grade level and supportive of students' development of both content knowledge and writing skills?
- Do the materials include opportunities where writing tasks can enhance reading comprehension, such as writing reflections, responses, or analyses related to the texts being studied?
- Do the materials encourage students to draw connections between their reading and writing, fostering a deeper understanding of both?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.

- Discuss whether the materials provide a balanced range of grade-appropriate on-demand and process writing opportunities, with on-demand writing involving quick responses or timed essays, and process writing engaging students in drafting, revising, and editing over extended periods.
- Discuss whether the materials reflect the distribution of writing types as indicated by relevant educational standards (e.g., K-5: 30/35/35 persuade, explain, convey experience).
- Discuss whether the materials offer sufficient variety in prompts and writing tasks.
- Discuss whether there are writing opportunities explicitly connected to the purpose, genre, and topic of the unit's reading. For example, if the reading includes persuasive texts, the writing opportunities should encourage students to practice persuasive writing techniques?
- Discuss whether the materials provide clear prompts or frameworks that help students understand how to relate their writing to the reading content, thereby encouraging deeper engagement and comprehension.
- Discuss whether the writing tasks are appropriately challenging for the grade level and supportive of students' development of both content knowledge and writing skills.
- Discuss whether the materials include opportunities where writing tasks can enhance reading comprehension, such as writing reflections, responses, or analyses related to the texts being studied.
- Discuss whether the materials encourage students to draw connections between their reading and writing, fostering a deeper understanding of both.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 2.2 | Materials include questions, tasks, and assignments that are meaningful, evidence-based, and support students in making meaning and building knowledge as they progress toward grade-level mastery of literacy skills. Materials include clear, explicit instruction guidance for teachers across all literacy skills. |
| Indicator 2p | Materials include explicit instruction in varied writing processes, embedded in what students are studying throughout the unit. |

| Scoring: | | |
|--|---|---|
| 2 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 1 points Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials include explicit instruction in writing processes, including teacher modeling of writing strategies and processes, embedded in what students are studying throughout the unit. Materials provide teachers with mentor texts and/or student exemplars to support students in examining how the genre works. Materials provide guidance and instruction to teachers on how to provide timely and constructive feedback on student writing. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

While the previous indicator considered whether materials include opportunities for students to practice both on-demand and process writing, this indicator solely looks at process writing. Materials should include clear and structured guidance on the various stages of writing processes, as well as ample opportunities to apply these processes through proven, evidence-based strategies. This indicator uses the term “processes” instead of process to emphasize that, depending on the genre and intended audience of a piece of writing, the writing process differs. Through exposure to varied writing processes, students learn how to adapt their writing style and approach to suit different contexts, genres, and audiences, enhancing their versatility as writers. Teacher guidance should include explicit instruction to help students understand and navigate the stages of writing—prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing—enhancing their overall writing proficiency. By breaking down the writing process into clear, manageable steps, students can approach writing tasks with more confidence and clarity and master organizing and developing their ideas. In order to meet expectations for this indicator, materials should also include teacher guidance on providing timely and constructive writing feedback that supports students in improving their writing skills.

Research or Standards connection:

In the [Introduction to the Writing Standards](#) (pg. 19), the Common Core State Standards state, “Each year in their writing, students should demonstrate increasing sophistication in all aspects of language use, from vocabulary and syntax to the development and organization of ideas, and they should address increasingly demanding content and sources.”

In “[Evidence-Based Recommendations for Teaching Writing](#),” Graham, Collins, and Ciullo (2024) provide 11 evidence-based recommendations for effective writing instruction, drawing on a comprehensive review of nearly 1,000 research studies. They emphasize the importance of providing support for students as they write, teaching foundational writing skills, incorporating twenty-first century tools, and encouraging students to write across the curriculum, connecting writing with reading. The authors also highlight the crucial role of creating a motivating writing environment where students are encouraged to try hard and believe in their abilities. They conclude by emphasizing the importance of teaching writing effectively, advocating for a more holistic approach that recognizes the evolving landscape of technology and communication in society.

Resources:

- [CCSS Anchor Writing Standards](#) (p. 18)
- [Introduction to the Writing Standards](#) (p. 19)

Indicator 2p Guiding Question:

Do the materials include explicit instruction in varied writing processes, embedded in what students are studying throughout the unit?

Evidence Collection

Note: This indicator uses the term “processes” instead of process to emphasize that depending on the genre and intended audience of a piece of writing, the writing process differs.

In the Instructional Materials being reviewed:

- Look for clear, structured lessons that provide explicit instruction on each stage of the writing process, including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.
- Ensure that the materials include teacher modeling of writing strategies and processes, demonstrating how to approach writing tasks effectively.
- Verify that the materials provide mentor texts and student exemplars that illustrate how different genres work and highlight effective writing techniques.
- Look to see that the materials include clear, step-by-step guidance on writing processes for constructing paragraphs and multi-paragraph texts for various purposes (e.g., narrative, persuasive, expository).
- Check to see that the materials provide clear guidance and strategies for teachers on how to offer timely and constructive feedback on student writing. This includes criteria for evaluating writing and suggestions for improvement.
- Evaluate whether the materials encourage a supportive feedback approach, focusing on developmental growth and specific areas for revision, rather than only on errors.
- Ensure that the instruction on writing processes is integrated with activities that allow students to practice these processes, reinforcing learned strategies in authentic writing tasks.
- Ensure that guidance is included to help teachers support students in improving their writing skills through targeted and actionable feedback.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the materials provide clear, structured lessons that offer explicit instruction on each stage of the writing process, including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing?
- Do the materials include teacher modeling of writing strategies and processes, demonstrating effective approaches to writing tasks?
- Do the materials provide mentor texts and student exemplars that illustrate how different genres work and highlight effective writing techniques?
- Is there clear, step-by-step guidance in the materials on writing processes for constructing paragraphs and multi-paragraph texts for various purposes (e.g., narrative, persuasive, expository)?
- Do the materials offer clear guidance and strategies for teachers on how to provide timely and constructive feedback on student writing, including criteria for evaluating writing and suggestions for improvement?
- Do the materials encourage a supportive feedback approach that focuses on developmental growth and specific areas for revision, rather than solely on errors?
- Is the instruction on writing processes integrated with activities that allow students to practice these processes, reinforcing learned strategies in authentic writing tasks?
- Is there guidance included to help teachers support students in improving their writing skills through targeted and actionable feedback?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss whether the materials provide clear, structured lessons that offer explicit instruction on each stage of the writing process, including prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.
- Discuss whether the materials include teacher modeling of writing strategies and processes, demonstrating effective approaches to writing tasks.
- Discuss whether the materials provide mentor texts and student exemplars that illustrate how different genres work and highlight effective writing techniques.
- Discuss whether there is clear, step-by-step guidance in the materials on writing processes for constructing paragraphs and multi-paragraph texts for various purposes (e.g., narrative, persuasive, expository).
- Discuss whether the materials offer clear guidance and strategies for teachers on how to provide timely and constructive feedback on student writing, including criteria for evaluating writing and suggestions for improvement.
- Discuss whether the materials encourage a supportive feedback approach that focuses on developmental growth and specific areas for revision, rather than solely on errors.
- Discuss whether the instruction on writing processes is integrated with activities that allow students to practice these processes, reinforcing learned strategies in authentic writing tasks.
- Discuss whether there is guidance included to help teachers support students in improving their writing skills through targeted and actionable feedback.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <p>Criterion 2.2</p> | <p>Materials include questions, tasks, and assignments that are meaningful, evidence-based, and support students in making meaning and building knowledge as they progress toward grade-level mastery of literacy skills. Materials include clear, explicit instruction guidance for teachers across all literacy skills.</p> |
| <p>Indicator 2q</p> | <p>Materials include frequent opportunities for students to practice the writing processes using evidence-based strategies, embedded in what students are studying throughout the unit.</p> |

| Scoring: | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>2 points</p> <p>Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> | <p>1 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> | <p>0 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials include multiple opportunities for students to plan writing (e.g., with graphic organizers). Materials include multiple opportunities for students to draft their writing. Materials include multiple opportunities for students to revise and edit their writing with grade-appropriate strategies and tools. Materials include multiple opportunities for students to use technology to produce and publish writing. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

While the previous indicator considered whether materials include opportunities for students to practice both on-demand and process writing, this indicator solely looks at process writing (at the paragraph and multi-paragraph level). Materials should include ample opportunities to apply these processes through proven, evidence-based strategies. Frequent practice helps students refine their ability to express ideas clearly and effectively. This indicator uses the term “processes” instead of process to emphasize that, depending on the genre and intended audience of a piece of writing, the writing process differs. Through exposure to varied writing processes, students learn how to adapt their writing style and approach to suit different contexts, genres, and audiences, enhancing their versatility as writers. This indicator also considers whether students have opportunities to use technology to produce and publish writing pieces. Understanding and practicing the writing process—planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing—can lead to more organized and coherent writing.

Research or Standards connection:

In the [Introduction to the Writing Standards](#) (pg. 42), the Common Core State Standards state, “Each year in their writing, students should demonstrate increasing sophistication in all aspects of language use, from vocabulary

and syntax to the development and organization of ideas, and they should address increasingly demanding content and sources.”

In “[Evidence-Based Recommendations for Teaching Writing](#),” Graham, Collins, and Ciullo (2024) provide 11 evidence-based recommendations for effective writing instruction, drawing on a comprehensive review of nearly 1,000 research studies. They emphasize the importance of providing support for students as they write, teaching foundational writing skills, incorporating twenty-first century tools, and encouraging students to write across the curriculum, connecting writing with reading. The authors also highlight the crucial role of creating a motivating writing environment where students are encouraged to try hard and believe in their abilities. They conclude by emphasizing the importance of teaching writing effectively, advocating for a more holistic approach that recognizes the evolving landscape of technology and communication in society.

Resources:

- [CCSS Anchor Writing Standards](#) (p. 18)
- [Introduction to the Writing Standards](#) (p. 19)

Indicator 2q Guiding Question:

Do materials include frequent opportunities for students to practice the writing processes using evidence-based strategies, embedded in what students are studying throughout the unit?

Evidence Collection

Note: This indicator uses the term “processes” instead of process to emphasize that depending on the genre and intended audience of a piece of writing, the writing process differs. It is also possible that students in the lower grades will be dictating their writing to an adult.

Note: If materials do not include writing opportunities for all types of writing processes (to inform, to persuade, to convey experience), they can not fully meet expectations for this indicator.

In the Instructional Materials being reviewed:

- Check to see that the materials provide graphic organizers (e.g., mind maps, outlines, storyboards) to help students organize their thoughts/writing effectively.
- Identify if there are dedicated timeframes in the curriculum for planning writing across different types of writing.
- Assess the presence of activities where students create initial drafts, possibly with prompts or templates.
- Check whether materials suggest breaking down the drafting process into manageable sections.
- Evaluate if there are opportunities for teacher and peer feedback on drafts, allowing students to refine their work.
- Look for specific strategies provided for revision.
- Assess the inclusion of grade-appropriate editing tools (e.g., grammar checklists, peer review guidelines).
- Check for the presence of recommendations for specific technologies and platforms (e.g., word processors, blogs, collaborative documents) that facilitate writing.
- Assess if there are suggestions for avenues to publish or share student writing, such as online platforms, class newsletters, or school websites.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the materials provide graphic organizers (e.g., mind maps, outlines, storyboards) to help students organize their thoughts and writing effectively?
- Do the materials provide opportunities for students to plan their writing?
- Are there activities that allow students to create initial drafts, possibly with prompts or templates?
- Do the materials suggest breaking down the drafting process into manageable sections?
- Are there opportunities for teacher and peer feedback on drafts to help students refine their work?
- What specific strategies are provided for revision?
- Are grade-appropriate editing tools (e.g., grammar checklists, peer review guidelines) included in the materials?
- Do the materials include recommendations for specific technologies and platforms (e.g., word processors, blogs, collaborative documents) that facilitate writing?
- Are there suggestions for avenues to publish or share student writing, such as online platforms, class newsletters, or school websites?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss whether the materials provide graphic organizers (e.g., mind maps, outlines, storyboards) to help students organize their thoughts and writing effectively.
- Discuss whether the materials provide opportunities to plan their writing.
- Discuss whether there are activities that allow students to create initial drafts, possibly with prompts or templates.
- Discuss whether the materials suggest breaking down the drafting process into manageable sections.
- Discuss whether there are opportunities for teacher and peer feedback on drafts to help students refine their work.
- Discuss the strategies provided for revision.
- Discuss whether there are grade-appropriate editing tools (e.g., grammar checklists, peer review guidelines) included in the materials.
- Discuss whether the materials include recommendations for specific technologies and platforms (e.g., word processors, blogs, collaborative documents) that facilitate writing.
- Discuss whether there are suggestions for avenues to publish or share student writing, such as online platforms, class newsletters, or school websites.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 2.2 | Materials include questions, tasks, and assignments that are meaningful, evidence-based, and support students in making meaning and building knowledge as they progress toward grade-level mastery of literacy skills. Materials include clear, explicit instruction guidance for teachers across all literacy skills. |
| Indicator 2r | Materials include frequent opportunities for students to practice evidence-based writing (by drawing from the texts and knowledge built throughout the unit) to ask and answer questions about key details in a text. |

| Scoring: | | |
|---|--|---|
| 2 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 1 point Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials provide frequent writing opportunities that require students to ask and answer questions about key details in a text by drawing from the texts and knowledge built throughout the unit. Materials provide frequent writing opportunities focused on students' recall or analysis of information to develop opinions based in part on textual evidence. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator considers whether materials provide students with ample opportunities to engage in evidence-based writing in order to ask and answer questions about key details in the texts they are reading. Frequent practice in writing with evidence encourages students to communicate ideas clearly and concisely, ensuring that information is conveyed effectively and accurately. By reading closely in order to produce stronger evidence-based writing, students learn to identify key ideas supported by evidence. Overall, this indicator aims to foster students' proficiency in writing that is grounded in evidence, supporting their development as effective communicators and thinkers.

Research or Standards connection:

The [Introduction to the Common Core State Standards](#) (pg. 7) states, “Students cite specific evidence when offering an oral or written interpretation of a text. They use relevant evidence when supporting their own points in writing and speaking, making their reasoning clear to the reader or listener, and they constructively evaluate others’ use of evidence.”

In “[Writing to Read: Evidence for How Writing Can Improve Reading](#),” Graham and Hebert (2010) provide strong evidence for the effectiveness of writing in improving student reading. The report highlights the benefits of

having students write about the texts they are reading, as opposed to simply reading them. The researchers found that when students write personal reactions, summaries, or notes about a text, it enhances their comprehension of the material. Furthermore, the report emphasizes the importance of teaching students the writing skills and processes that go into creating text, including things like spelling, sentence construction, and text structure. This kind of instruction was found to directly improve reading fluency and word recognition. The report also emphasizes that simply increasing how much students write, regardless of the specific activity, can lead to improved reading comprehension. These findings suggest that incorporating writing into the curriculum is essential for fostering strong reading skills.

In “[Evidence-Based Recommendations for Teaching Writing](#),” Graham, Collins, and Ciullo (2024) provide 11 evidence-based recommendations for effective writing instruction, drawing on a comprehensive review of nearly 1,000 research studies. They emphasize the importance of providing support for students as they write, teaching foundational writing skills, incorporating twenty-first century tools, and encouraging students to write across the curriculum, connecting writing with reading. The authors also highlight the crucial role of creating a motivating writing environment where students are encouraged to try hard and believe in their abilities. They conclude by emphasizing the importance of teaching writing effectively, advocating for a more holistic approach that recognizes the evolving landscape of technology and communication in society.

Resources:

- [Introduction to the Common Core State Standards](#) (p. 3-8)

Indicator 2r Guiding Question:

Do the materials include frequent opportunities for students to practice evidence-based writing by drawing from the texts and knowledge built throughout the unit to ask and answer questions about key details in a text?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Consider how frequently students are required to use textual evidence in their writing.
- Assess whether students are prompted to develop claims supported by their analyses.
- Look for specific writing assignments that prompt students to cite textual evidence from the material they are studying.
- Determine whether there are activities that require students to analyze both explicit content and make inferences, thus encouraging deeper engagement with the text.
- Look for whether there are frequent prompts that encourage students to develop their analyses and claims based on the texts.
- Verify that students are expected to work with multiple texts or sources, allowing them to compare perspectives or viewpoints in their analyses.
- Look for examples or models provided to help students structure their analyses and claims effectively.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- How frequently are students required to use textual evidence in their writing?
- Are students prompted to develop claims supported by their analyses?
- Are there specific writing assignments that prompt students to cite textual evidence from the material they are studying?

- Do the materials include activities that require students to analyze both explicit content and make inferences, encouraging deeper engagement with the text?
- Are there frequent prompts that encourage students to develop their analyses and claims based on the texts?
- Are students expected to work with multiple texts or sources, allowing them to compare perspectives or viewpoints in their analyses?
- Are there examples or models provided to help students structure their analyses and claims effectively?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss how frequently students are required to use textual evidence in their writing.
- Discuss whether students are prompted to develop claims supported by their analyses.
- Discuss whether there are specific writing assignments that prompt students to cite textual evidence from the material they are studying.
- Discuss whether the materials include activities that require students to analyze both explicit content and make inferences, encouraging deeper engagement with the text.
- Discuss whether there are frequent prompts that encourage students to develop their analyses and claims based on the texts.
- Discuss whether students are expected to work with multiple texts or sources, allowing them to compare perspectives or viewpoints in their analyses.
- Discuss whether there are examples or models provided to help students structure their analyses and claims effectively.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <p>Criterion 2.2</p> | <p>Materials include questions, tasks, and assignments that are meaningful, evidence-based, and support students in making meaning and building knowledge as they progress toward grade-level mastery of literacy skills. Materials include clear, explicit instruction guidance for teachers across all literacy skills.</p> |
| <p>Indicator 2s</p> | <p>Materials include explicit instruction of research skills that guide shared research to develop students' knowledge using multiple texts and source materials.</p> |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Scoring:</p> | | |
| <p>2 points</p> <p>Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> | <p>1 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> | <p>0 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials include research projects to build research skills that lead to mastery of the grade-level standards. Materials include explicit instruction of research skills that encourage students to develop knowledge of a topic using multiple texts and source materials. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

The purpose of this indicator is to ensure that materials include explicit instruction to support students in building the research skills they need to be successful throughout their education and careers. Students should participate in shared research that helps them deepen their understanding of a particular topic through multiple texts and sources. This indicator examines whether research projects are present in materials, and that teacher guidance for these research projects is thorough. Consequently, as students develop their research and analysis skills, they develop the media literacy skills that they need to be successful citizens in the digital age.

Research or Standards connection:

The [Introduction to the Common Core State Standards](#) (p. 7) states, “Students establish a base of knowledge across a wide range of subject matter by engaging with works of quality and substance. They become proficient in new areas through research and study. They read purposefully and listen attentively to gain both general knowledge and discipline-specific expertise. They refine and share their knowledge through writing and speaking.”

In “[Measuring the Acquisition of Media-Literacy Skills](#),” Hobbs and Frost (2003) investigate the impact of a yearlong media literacy curriculum on students' reading comprehension, writing skills, and critical thinking skills. They compared a group of students who received media literacy instruction with a control group who did not.

The results showed that the media literacy treatment group outperformed the control group in reading comprehension, identifying specific details, and using more sophisticated message analysis skills. The study also found that the treatment group significantly outperformed the control group in writing and in identifying the purpose, target audience, and construction techniques of media messages.

In “[Students’ Civic Online Reasoning: A National Portrait](#),” Breakstone, Smith, Wineburg, Rapaport, Carle, Garland, and Saavedra (2019) investigated high school students’ ability to evaluate information online. The study found that students nationwide struggled to demonstrate basic skills of civic online reasoning, such as identifying the source of information, evaluating evidence, and considering alternative perspectives. Only a small percentage of students performed at the Mastery level on the tasks. The study concludes that the current dominant approach to teaching digital literacy, which relies heavily on checklists and focuses on evaluating a single website, is inadequate for equipping students with the skills they need to navigate the complex and often misleading information environment of the internet. Instead, the authors advocate for research-based approaches to teaching civic online reasoning, which will necessitate a shift in educational practices and a greater investment in professional development for teachers.

In *Mind Over Media: Propaganda Education for the Digital Age*, Hobbs and Rushkoff (2020) explore how propaganda influences our digital world and the importance of educating individuals to critically analyze media messages. The book delves into the history and techniques of propaganda and how it has evolved in the digital age with the advent of social media and online platforms. It provides educators with tools and strategies to help students recognize different types of propaganda, distinguish between credible and misleading information, and develop critical thinking skills. Hobbs emphasizes the role of media literacy in empowering individuals to navigate the complex media landscape and make informed decisions.

In “[Digital Readiness Gaps](#),” Horrigan (2016) highlights that digital readiness shifts focus from mere access to technology to how effectively individuals use it for learning. He notes that digital skills and trust in online information are pivotal readiness factors separate from demographics like education or age. Despite the potential for change over time with evolving e-learning tools, these findings provide a snapshot of current digital readiness and its impact on personal growth and learning engagement in the digital age.

In “[Critical Media Literacy, Democracy, and the Reconstruction of Education](#),” Kellner and Share (2007) emphasize the importance of critical media literacy in helping students navigate the complex media landscape of the 21st century. They critique existing approaches to media education—the protectionist, media arts, and media literacy movements—as inadequate because they either focus too much on shielding students or lack a strong ideological component. Instead, the authors propose a comprehensive approach that includes ideology critique, multiperspectival analysis, alternative media production, and a connection to social justice. These elements aim to prepare students to be active citizens in a media-saturated world. The article also advocates for transformative pedagogy that encourages dialogue and critical reflection, empowering students to contribute to a democratic and equitable society. Educators are called to embrace new methods that challenge traditional literacy instruction, promote critical analysis and social change, and ensure access to quality media literacy education. Overall, the article argues that critical media literacy is crucial for empowering students and transforming education and society.

Resources:

- [Introduction to the Common Core State Standards](#) (p. 3-8)

Indicator 2s Guiding Question:

Do the materials include explicit instruction of research skills that guide shared research to develop students’ knowledge using multiple texts and source materials?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Look for materials that build research skills, ensuring mastery of grade-level standards.
- Ensure materials provide clear, step-by-step guidance on research skills such as formulating research questions and conducting searches.
- Verify that students are instructed and encouraged to use a variety of texts and resources to gain a comprehensive understanding of a topic.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the materials build research skills, ensuring mastery of grade-level standards?
- Do the materials provide clear, step-by-step guidance on research skills, such as formulating research questions and conducting searches?
- Are students instructed and encouraged to use a variety of texts and resources to gain a comprehensive understanding of a topic?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss whether the materials build research skills, ensuring mastery of grade-level standards.
- Discuss whether the materials provide clear, step-by-step guidance on research skills, such as formulating research questions and conducting searches.
- Discuss whether there are students instructed and encouraged to use a variety of texts and resources to gain a comprehensive understanding of a topic.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 2.2 | Materials include questions, tasks, and assignments that are meaningful, evidence-based, and support students in making meaning and building knowledge as they progress toward grade-level mastery of literacy skills. Materials include clear, explicit instruction guidance for teachers across all literacy skills. |
| Indicator 2t | Materials include multiple opportunities for students to apply research skills to develop their knowledge of topics. |

| Scoring: | | |
|--|---|---|
| 2 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 1 points Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials include multiple opportunities for students to apply research skills to shared research projects using multiple texts and sources. With guidance and support from adults, materials provide opportunities for students to recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question (grades K-1). Materials provide opportunities for students to recall information from experiences or gather information from provided sources to answer a question (grade 2). | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

The purpose of this indicator is to ensure that materials provide numerous chances for students to practice and hone their research skills, such as identifying credible sources, gathering information, and critically evaluating data. Students must build research skills to be successful throughout their education and careers. Students should participate in shared research that helps them deepen their understanding of a particular topic through multiple texts and sources. This indicator examines the opportunities that materials include for students to engage in the research process. As students develop their research and analysis skills, they develop the media literacy skills that they need to be successful citizens in the digital age and become critical thinkers who can navigate information-rich environments effectively.

Research or Standards connection:

The [Introduction to the Common Core State Standards](#) (p. 7) states, “Students establish a base of knowledge across a wide range of subject matter by engaging with works of quality and substance. They become proficient in new areas through research and study. They read purposefully and listen attentively to gain both general knowledge and discipline-specific expertise. They refine and share their knowledge through writing and speaking.”

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Resources:

- [Introduction to the Common Core State Standards](#) (p. 3-8)

Indicator 2t Guiding Question:

Do the materials include multiple opportunities for students to apply research skills to develop their knowledge of topics?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Check for a variety of short research projects that allow students to explore different questions and topics, encouraging curiosity and engagement.
- Look for materials that provide adequate guidance and support from adults, especially for younger students (grades K-1), to help them effectively recall information from experiences or gather details from sources.
- Assess whether the opportunities for recalling and gathering information differentiates according to the grade level. For example, ensure that grade 2 materials build on the skills established in earlier grades while introducing more complex tasks.
- Verify that the materials encourage students to answer specific questions, guiding their research process and promoting critical thinking about the information they gather.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Is there a variety of short research projects that allow students to explore different questions and topics, encouraging curiosity and engagement?
- Do the materials provide adequate guidance and support from adults, especially for younger students (grades K-1), to help them effectively recall information from experiences or gather details from sources?
- Do the opportunities for recalling and gathering information differentiate according to the grade level, ensuring that grade 2 materials build on the skills established in earlier grades while introducing more complex tasks?
- Do the materials encourage students to answer specific questions, guiding their research process and promoting critical thinking about the information they gather?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss whether there is a variety of short research projects that allow students to explore different questions and topics, encouraging curiosity and engagement.
- Discuss whether the materials provide adequate guidance and support from adults, especially for younger students (grades K-1), to help them effectively recall information from experiences or gather details from sources.
- Discuss whether there are opportunities for recalling and gathering information differentiated according to the grade level, ensuring that grade 2 materials build on the skills established in earlier grades while introducing more complex tasks.
- Discuss whether the materials encourage students to answer specific questions, guiding their research process and promoting critical thinking about the information they gather.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 2.2 | Materials include questions, tasks, and assignments that are meaningful, evidence-based, and support students in making meaning and building knowledge as they progress toward grade-level mastery of literacy skills. Materials include clear, explicit instruction guidance for teachers across all literacy skills. |
| Indicator 2u | Materials include formative assessments and guidance that provide the teacher with information for instructional next steps. |

| Scoring: | | |
|---|---|---|
| 4 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 2 points Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. | 0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials include formative assessments and support for the teacher in determining students' current skills/level of understanding. Materials include guidance that supports the teacher in making instructional adjustments to increase student progress. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines the formative assessments included throughout a program. Formative assessments are informal assessments that provide ongoing feedback to both students and teachers, allowing them to identify learning needs and adjust teaching strategies accordingly. This indicator also examines the guidance for instructional next steps included in the materials to support teachers in making informed decisions about how to modify their instruction, differentiate learning activities, and provide targeted support to enhance student learning outcomes. Overall, the purpose of this indicator is to ensure that instructional materials include tools and resources that help teachers assess students' understanding and learning progress throughout the instructional process.

Research or Standards connection:

In "[Revising the Definition of Formative Assessment](#)," the FAST SCASS of CCSSO (2018) provides a revision of the definition of formative assessment by the Formative Assessment for Students and Teachers (FAST) State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards (SCASS) organization. It explains the changes to the original definition of formative assessment as well as the new attributes and practices that comprise effective formative assessment. They define formative assessment as:

“Formative assessment is a planned, ongoing process used by all students and teachers during

learning and teaching to elicit and use evidence of student learning to improve student understanding of intended disciplinary learning outcomes and support students to become self-directed learners.

Effective use of the formative assessment process requires students and teachers to integrate and embed the following practices in a collaborative and respectful classroom environment:

- Clarifying learning goals and success criteria within a broader progression of learning;
- Eliciting and analyzing evidence of student thinking;
- Engaging in self-assessment and peer feedback;
- Providing actionable feedback; and
- Using evidence and feedback to move learning forward by adjusting learning strategies, goals, or next instructional steps.” (pp. 2-3)

In “[Reaping the Benefits of Deep Formative Assessment: Lessons from Around the World](#),” the FAST SCASS of CCSSO (2016) report highlights the importance of formative assessment as a process of continuous learning for both teachers and students. The authors, experts in formative assessment from New Zealand, England, and Australia, discuss how formative assessment practices have evolved, emphasizing the need for educators to embrace the process and empower students as active participants. The key takeaway is that formative assessment is not just about measuring student learning; it's about using evidence of student learning to adapt the teaching work to meet learning needs. This can only happen when teachers have a deep understanding of their subject matter and students’ needs and when they are willing to collaborate with colleagues and students to create a learning environment that fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility for learning.

In “[Formative Assessment and Next-Generation Assessment Systems: Are We Losing an Opportunity?](#)” Heritage (2010) argues that formative assessment is not just a tool or a test, but a process that involves teachers and students working together to monitor student learning and to make adjustments to teaching and learning in response to that evidence. This process, she argues, is more than just "giving feedback"; it's about helping students develop the skills they need to become independent learners who can monitor their own progress and take responsibility for their own learning. The paper explores the theoretical underpinnings of formative assessment, drawing on research in cognitive psychology and sociocultural theory, and then examines a number of definitions of formative assessment that have been adopted by various policy groups.

Resources:

- N/A

Indicator 2u Guiding Question:

Do the materials include formative assessments and guidance that provide the teacher with information for instructional next steps?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Check if the materials offer a range of formative assessment types, such as quizzes, observations, student reflections, peer assessments, or informal checks for understanding.
- Look for specific instructions or resources that help teachers interpret assessment results. This might include scoring rubrics, exemplars of student work, or analysis tools that make it easier to understand student performance and areas of need.

- Ensure that the materials provide actionable guidance for teachers on how to adjust instruction based on assessment results. This might involve differentiated instruction strategies, targeted interventions, or enrichment activities for students who need more challenge.
- Look for resources that help teachers use assessment data to plan future lessons. This might include planning tools or templates that assist in identifying focus areas for subsequent instruction.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the materials offer a range of formative assessment types, such as quizzes, observations, student reflections, peer assessments, or informal checks for understanding?
- Are there specific instructions or resources provided that help teachers interpret assessment results, such as scoring rubrics, exemplars of student work, or analysis tools to understand student performance and areas of need?
- Do the materials provide actionable guidance for teachers on how to adjust instruction based on assessment results, possibly involving differentiated instruction strategies, targeted interventions, or enrichment activities for students who need more challenge?
- Are there resources available that help teachers use assessment data to plan future lessons, including planning tools or templates that assist in identifying focus areas for subsequent instruction?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss whether the materials offer a range of formative assessment types, such as quizzes, observations, student reflections, peer assessments, or informal checks for understanding.
- Discuss whether the materials include specific instructions or resources provided that help teachers interpret assessment results, such as scoring rubrics, exemplars of student work, or analysis tools to understand student performance and areas of need.
- Discuss whether the materials provide actionable guidance for teachers on how to adjust instruction based on assessment results, possibly involving differentiated instruction strategies, targeted interventions, or enrichment activities for students who need more challenge.
- Discuss whether there are resources available that help teachers use assessment data to plan future lessons, including planning tools or templates that assist in identifying focus areas for subsequent instruction.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 2: Comprehension Through Texts, Questions, and Tasks

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <p>Criterion 2.2</p> | <p>Materials include questions, tasks, and assignments that are meaningful, evidence-based, and support students in making meaning and building knowledge as they progress toward grade-level mastery of literacy skills. Materials include clear, explicit instruction guidance for teachers across all literacy skills.</p> |
| <p>Indicator 2v</p> | <p>Materials include culminating tasks/summative assessments that require students to demonstrate the knowledge and skills acquired throughout the unit/module while integrating multiple literacy skills (e.g., a combination of reading, writing, speaking, and listening).</p> |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Scoring:</p> | | |
| <p>4 points</p> <p>Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> | <p>2 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> | <p>0 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culminating tasks/summative assessments are evident in each unit/module and align to the unit's/module's topic or theme. • Culminating tasks/summative assessments provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate the knowledge and skills acquired throughout the unit/module while integrating multiple literacy skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening). • Materials provide opportunities to support students in gaining the knowledge and skills needed to complete the culminating tasks/summative assessments. • Materials include guidance that supports the teacher in determining and evaluating student performance on the culminating tasks/summative assessments in the program. | | |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

While the previous indicator examined formative assessments, this indicator examines the culminating tasks/summative assessments included in a program. These culminating tasks/summative assessments should be designed to require students to synthesize and apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired throughout the instructional period. By integrating multiple literacy skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening, these assessments evaluate a student's ability to use and combine these skills in a coherent and meaningful way, reflecting real-world applications. By being rooted in the content of the unit/module, these assessments should provide the teacher with information about how much each student grasped the content they learned in the unit/module and provide each student with the opportunity to synthesize their learning on the topic/theme. Overall, the purpose of this indicator is to ensure that materials include culminating tasks or

summative assessments at the end of a unit or module that evaluate students' overall understanding and mastery of the content and skills learned.

Research or Standards connection:

According to the [Common Core State Standards Anchor Writing Standard 10](#) (pg. 41), students should be able to “write routinely over extended time frames.”

In “[To Make Progress in Reading, We Need to Monitor It Differently](#),” Wexler (2023) argues that “data-driven” reading instruction is often ineffective because the standardized tests used to guide it are flawed. These tests, which are widely used to assess reading levels and predict performance, fail to accurately evaluate students' reading comprehension. Often, they do not account for a student's background knowledge, which significantly affects comprehension. Additionally, many assessments conflate decoding skills with comprehension, leading to inappropriate instructional focus. The article suggests that assessments should separately measure decoding and comprehension abilities, be grounded in content that has been taught, and focus on building students' knowledge base. Instead of relying on standardized reading comprehension tests, educators should implement assessments that reflect the curriculum content and enhance retention through retrieval practice. This approach, combined with content-rich instruction and writing practice, can improve overall reading proficiency. Educators should communicate these limitations to parents who ask about reading levels, and focus on meaningful progress in knowledge and analytical skills.

In “[Performance Assessment - What Is It and Why Is It Useful?](#),” the Assessment Learning Network (2017), explains that performance assessments are a type of assessment that asks students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills by creating a product, presentation, or demonstration. Performance assessments can be used to measure a variety of literacy skills and can also be used to assess student understanding of complex concepts.

In “[Performance-Based Assessment in the Classroom](#),” McTighe and Ferrara (1994) advocate for a more student-centered approach to classroom assessment, emphasizing its primary purpose as a tool to inform teaching and improve learning rather than sorting, selecting, or justifying grades. The authors outline three essential principles for effective assessment: promoting learning, using multiple sources of information, and ensuring fairness, validity, and reliability. They then present a framework for selecting assessment methods based on identified learning outcomes, purposes, and audience, exploring the strengths and weaknesses of different types of assessment, such as performance-based and process-focused. The article stresses the importance of collaborative assessment practices, involving students in the process, and encouraging teachers to communicate assessment results effectively to students, parents, and school administrators. The authors conclude by underscoring the need for teachers to develop their assessment literacy and to use a variety of methods to gain a richer understanding of student learning and guide students in developing their critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills.

In “[Integrating Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing in the Classroom](#),” Dolan (1985) argues for an integrated approach to teaching language arts in the classroom, where listening, speaking, reading, and writing are interconnected and used to achieve a common goal. Dolan outlines the aims and priorities of an integrated classroom, emphasizing the importance of oracy (listening and speaking) as well as literacy (reading and writing), and the use of thematic units to create a more engaging and relevant learning experience. She suggests including a variety of materials and resources to tap the full potential of the topic and encourage student identification with the subject matter. Dolan concludes by advocating for a process-oriented approach to writing, which involves students in the entire process from brainstorming to revising and publishing.

Resources:

- [CCSS Anchor Writing Standard 10](#) (pg. 41)

Indicator 2v Guiding Question:

Do materials include culminating tasks/summative assessments that require students to demonstrate the knowledge and skills acquired throughout the unit/module while integrating multiple literacy skills?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Check if there are the culminating tasks or summative assessments present in each unit or module, and if these tasks/assessments clearly align with the unit's or module's topic or theme. The assessments should feel relevant and connected to the material covered.
- Consider if the tasks require students to integrate multiple literacy skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Check if the assessments are designed to evaluate students' ability to synthesize and apply these skills comprehensively.
- Verify if the materials provide opportunities and resources that help students gain and refine the knowledge and skills needed to successfully complete the culminating tasks or summative assessments. Look for activities, practice exercises, and instructional support embedded throughout the unit.
- Check if there is clear guidance provided for teachers on how to assess and evaluate student performance on the culminating tasks. This might include rubrics, scoring guides, exemplar responses, and criteria for measuring proficiency.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Are there culminating tasks or summative assessments present in each unit or module, and if these tasks/assessments clearly align with the unit's or module's topic or theme?
- Do the tasks require students to integrate multiple literacy skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening?
- Do the materials provide opportunities and resources that help students gain and refine the knowledge and skills needed to successfully complete the culminating tasks or summative assessments?
- Is there clear guidance provided for teachers on how to assess and evaluate student performance on the culminating tasks, such as rubrics, scoring guides, exemplar responses, and criteria for measuring proficiency?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss whether there are the culminating tasks or summative assessments present in each unit or module, and if these tasks/assessments clearly align with the unit's or module's topic or theme.
- Discuss whether the tasks require students to integrate multiple literacy skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening.
- Discuss whether the materials provide opportunities and resources that help students gain and refine the knowledge and skills needed to successfully complete the culminating tasks or summative assessments.
- Discuss whether there is clear guidance provided for teachers on how to assess and evaluate student performance on the culminating tasks, such as rubrics, scoring guides, exemplar responses, and criteria for measuring proficiency.
- Look for and discuss whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet in the scoring section.
- Agree on the final rating.

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

Criterion 3.1

Teacher Supports

Materials include opportunities for teachers to effectively plan and utilize materials with integrity and to further develop their own understanding of the content.

What is the purpose of this Criterion?

This criterion examines how the materials support teachers in several key areas: delivering student and ancillary materials with a particular focus on students' literacy development, understanding the instructional approaches of the program and the research-based strategies employed, and comprehending the range of supplies used throughout the program. Additionally, it supports teachers in improving their own knowledge of the subject beyond the grade level and in understanding the role and coverage of standards throughout the program. It also aids in planning effective instruction by detailing appropriate materials and offering guidance on how caregivers can support student progress and achievement. Lastly, the materials provide support for interpreting and evaluating student performance throughout the assessment system, ensuring teachers have the tools they need to assess and respond to student learning needs effectively.

Scoring:

Meets Expectations

- 8-10 points

Partially Meets Expectations

- 5-7 points

Does Not Meet Expectations

- <5 points

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 3.1 | Materials include opportunities for teachers to effectively plan and utilize materials with integrity and to further develop their own understanding of the content. |
| Indicator 3a | Materials provide teacher guidance with useful annotations and suggestions for how to enact the student materials and ancillary materials to support students' literacy development. |

| Scoring: | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p>2 points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials provide comprehensive guidance that will assist teachers in presenting the student and ancillary materials. <li style="text-align: center;">AND Materials include sufficient and useful annotations and suggestions that are presented within the context of the specific learning objectives. | <p>1 point</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials provide comprehensive guidance that will assist teachers in presenting the student and ancillary materials. <li style="text-align: center;">OR Materials include sufficient and useful annotations and suggestions that are presented within the context of the specific learning objectives. | <p>0 points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials do not provide comprehensive guidance that will assist them in presenting the student and ancillary materials. <li style="text-align: center;">AND Materials do not include sufficient and useful annotations and suggestions that are presented within the context of the specific learning objectives. |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines whether materials offer comprehensive guidance for teachers, including annotations and practical suggestions, to effectively implement both the core student materials and any supplementary resources. This support aims to enhance teachers' ability to facilitate student literacy development by providing strategies and insights on how to engage with the materials. Such guidance can include tips for differentiating instruction, addressing diverse learning needs, and integrating ancillary materials to reinforce learning. Ultimately, it helps teachers optimize the use of the provided resources to improve student literacy outcomes.

Indicator 3a Guiding Question:

Do the materials provide teacher guidance with useful annotations and suggestions for how to enact the student and ancillary materials to support students' literacy development?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Check that the guidance for teachers is clear and detailed, providing explicit instructions on how to use

both the student and ancillary materials effectively.

- Ensure that annotations and suggestions are directly linked to the specific learning objectives. They should provide context for how instructional strategies support students in achieving these objectives.
- Confirm that the guidance includes ways to integrate ancillary materials seamlessly within lessons to enhance learning. This might involve cross-referencing with core materials or suggested supplementary activities.
- Look for references to additional resources or professional development opportunities that could further support teachers in using the materials effectively.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Is the guidance for teachers clear and detailed, providing explicit instructions on how to use both the student and ancillary materials effectively?
- Are the annotations and suggestions directly linked to the specific learning objectives, providing context for how instructional strategies support students in achieving these objectives?
- Does the guidance include ways to integrate ancillary materials seamlessly within lessons to enhance learning, such as cross-referencing with core materials or suggesting supplementary activities?
- Are there references to additional resources or professional development opportunities that could further support teachers in using the materials effectively?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss whether the guidance for teachers is clear and detailed, providing explicit instructions on how to use both the student and ancillary materials effectively.
- Discuss whether the annotations and suggestions are directly linked to the specific learning objectives, providing context for how instructional strategies support students in achieving these objectives.
- Discuss whether the guidance includes ways to integrate ancillary materials seamlessly within lessons to enhance learning, such as cross-referencing with core materials or suggesting supplementary activities.
- Discuss whether there are references to additional resources or professional development opportunities that could further support teachers in using the materials effectively.

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Criterion 3.1 | Materials include opportunities for teachers to effectively plan and utilize materials with integrity and to further develop their own understanding of the content. |
| Indicator 3b | Materials contain explanations and examples of grade-level/course-level concepts and/or standards and how the concepts and/or standards align to other grade/course levels so that teachers can improve their own knowledge of the subject. |

| Scoring: | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>2 points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials contain explanations and examples of grade/course-level concepts and/or standards so that teachers can improve their own knowledge of the subject. <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials contain explanations and examples of how the concepts and/or standards align to other grade/course levels so that teachers can improve their own knowledge of the subject. | <p>1 point</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials contain explanations and examples of grade/course-level concepts and/or standards so that teachers can improve their own knowledge of the subject. <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials contain explanations and examples of how the concepts and/or standards align to other grade/course levels so that teachers can improve their own knowledge of the subject. | <p>0 points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials do not contain explanations and examples of grade/course-level concepts and/or standards so that teachers can improve their own knowledge of the subject. <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials do not contain explanations and examples of how the concepts and/or standards align to other grade/course levels so that teachers can improve their own knowledge of the subject. |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines whether materials deepen teacher understanding of ELA standards and concepts that are specific to each grade level. It also aims to show how these concepts and standards align with those taught in other grades or courses. By offering this information, the materials support teachers in deepening their understanding of the subject matter they are teaching, facilitating more effective instruction. This alignment helps educators see the progression of learning objectives and how current content builds on prior knowledge while preparing students for future learning. Ultimately, it aids teachers in delivering more cohesive and informed instruction, benefiting student learning outcomes.

Indicator 3b Guiding Question:

Do the materials contain explanations and examples of the more complex grade/course-level concepts and concepts beyond the current course so that teachers can improve their own knowledge of the subject?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Ensure that explanations of grade- or course-level concepts and standards are thorough, clear, and accessible. This helps teachers deepen their understanding of the subject matter and facilitates better teaching.
- Look for relevant, concrete examples that illustrate the concepts and standards. Examples should be practical and applicable to classroom instruction, helping teachers visualize how to teach the material effectively.
- Check for explanations of how concepts and standards align with those taught in previous and subsequent grade or course levels. This can help teachers understand the progression and continuity of learning objectives.
- Look for clear descriptions of how skills and knowledge build upon each other from one grade or course to the next. This can guide teachers in ensuring they are preparing students for future learning challenges.
- Identify whether the materials include visual aids, such as charts, diagrams, or flowcharts, to help illustrate how concepts and standards are connected across grade levels.
- Look for insights or annotations aimed explicitly at teachers, which explain the rationale behind the concepts and standards and how they fit into the broader curriculum.
- Check if there are suggestions or links to professional development resources that can further enhance teachers' understanding of subject matter progression.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Are the explanations of grade- or course-level concepts and standards thorough, clear, and accessible to help teachers deepen their understanding of the subject matter and facilitate better teaching?
- Are there relevant, concrete examples that illustrate the concepts and standards, which are practical and applicable to classroom instruction, to help teachers visualize how to teach the material effectively?
- Do the materials include explanations of how concepts and standards align with those taught in previous and subsequent grade or course levels to help teachers understand the progression and continuity of learning objectives?
- Are there clear descriptions of how skills and knowledge build upon each other from one grade or course to the next, guiding teachers in preparing students for future learning challenges?
- Do the materials include visual aids, such as charts, diagrams, or flowcharts, to help illustrate how concepts and standards are connected across grade levels?
- Are there insights or annotations aimed explicitly at teachers that explain the rationale behind the concepts and standards and how they fit into the broader curriculum?
- Are there suggestions or links to professional development resources that can further enhance teachers' understanding of subject matter progression?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss whether the explanations of grade- or course-level concepts and standards are thorough, clear, and accessible to help teachers deepen their understanding of the subject matter and facilitate better teaching.
- Discuss whether there are relevant, concrete examples that illustrate the concepts and standards, which are practical and applicable to classroom instruction to help teachers visualize how to teach the material effectively.

- Discuss whether the materials include explanations of how concepts and standards align with those taught in previous and subsequent grade or course levels to help teachers understand the progression and continuity of learning objectives.
- Discuss whether there are clear descriptions of how skills and knowledge build upon each other from one grade or course to the next, guiding teachers in preparing students for future learning challenges.
- Discuss whether the materials include visual aids, such as charts, diagrams, or flowcharts, to help illustrate how concepts and standards are connected across grade levels.
- Discuss whether there are insights or annotations aimed explicitly at teachers that explain the rationale behind the concepts and standards and how they fit into the broader curriculum.
- Discuss whether there are suggestions or links to professional development resources that can further enhance teachers' understanding of subject matter progression.

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 3.1 | Materials include opportunities for teachers to effectively plan and utilize materials with integrity and to further develop their own understanding of the content. |
| Indicator 3c | Materials include a standards correlation information document. |

Scoring:

| | |
|--|---|
| 1 point <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Correlation information is present for the ELA standards addressed throughout the grade level/series. Materials identify the standards assessed for formative assessments. Materials identify the standards assessed for culminating tasks/summative assessments. | 0 points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards correlations are inaccurate or missing. |
|--|---|

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines whether materials contain a standards correlation information document, which maps or aligns the content and activities within the materials to specific ELA Common Core State Standards. This document serves as a resource for teachers to quickly identify how and where the material addresses particular standards, enabling better planning and instruction. It helps ensure that teaching is aligned with required educational benchmarks and offers transparency on how the materials support meeting those standards. Lastly, this indicator looks at whether materials clearly identify the CCSS assessed in each formative and summative assessment to further maximize teacher clarity.

Resources:

- [Common Core English Language Arts Standards](#)

Indicator 3c Guiding Question:

Do the materials include a standards correlation information document?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Consider how teacher materials provide documentation that addresses how individual units, lessons, or activities throughout the series are aligned to reading, writing, speaking, and/or listening (Common Core ELA Standards), as applicable.

- Ensure that the correlation document covers all relevant ELA standards for the entire grade level or series, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening standards.
- Look to see that the materials identify the standards assessed in formative and summative assessments.

Note:

- If standards correlation is inconsistent between levels (i.e., from the overview to a module or a lesson).
- If standards correlation is inaccurate.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- How do teacher materials provide documentation that addresses how individual units, lessons, or activities throughout the series are aligned to reading, writing, speaking, and/or listening (Common Core ELA Standards), as applicable?
- Does the correlation document cover all relevant ELA standards for the entire grade level or series, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening standards?
- Do the materials identify the standards assessed in formative and summative assessments?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss how teacher materials provide documentation that addresses how individual units, lessons, or activities throughout the series are aligned to reading, writing, speaking, and/or listening (Common Core ELA Standards), as applicable.
- Discuss whether the correlation document covers all relevant ELA standards for the entire grade level or series, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening standards.
- Discuss whether the materials identify the standards assessed in formative and summative assessments.

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Criterion 3.1 | Materials include opportunities for teachers to effectively plan and utilize materials with integrity and to further develop their own understanding of the content. |
| Indicator 3d | Materials provide strategies for informing all stakeholders, including students, parents, or caregivers about the program and suggestions for how they can help support student progress and achievement. |

Scoring: Narrative Evidence Only

Note: No score is given for this indicator. Only qualitative evidence is provided.

- Materials contain strategies for informing students, parents, or caregivers about the program.
- Materials contain suggestions for how parents or caregivers can help support student progress and achievement.
- Materials for parents (like letters home) have been translated into languages other than English.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines whether the materials include strategies for effectively communicating with all stakeholders, such as students, parents, and caregivers, about the program. This involves offering clear information on the goals, structure, and expectations of the program, as well as practical suggestions on how these stakeholders can actively support student learning and achievement at home and in other settings. By engaging stakeholders, the materials foster a collaborative approach to education, enhancing student support systems and increasing the likelihood of student success through consistent reinforcement and involvement beyond the classroom.

Indicator 3d Guiding Question:

Do the materials provide strategies for informing all stakeholders, including students, parents, or caregivers, about the program and suggestions for how they can help support student progress and achievement?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Ensure that information about the ELA program is presented clearly and in a manner that is easy for all stakeholders to understand. This includes avoiding jargon and using straightforward language.
- Look for comprehensive explanations of the ELA program, including its objectives, the skills students will develop, and the types of activities they will engage in. This helps parents and caregivers understand the educational goals and expectations.
- Ensure the materials provide actionable suggestions for how parents and caregivers can support student learning at home, such as reading together, discussing books, or encouraging writing activities.
- Confirm that materials for parents have been translated into languages commonly spoken in the community to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for non-English speaking families.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Is information about the ELA program presented clearly and in a manner that is easy for all stakeholders to understand, avoiding jargon and using straightforward language?
- Are there comprehensive explanations of the ELA program, including its objectives, the skills students will develop, and the types of activities they will engage in, to help parents and caregivers understand the educational goals and expectations?
- Do the materials provide actionable suggestions for how parents and caregivers can support student learning at home, such as reading together, discussing books, or encouraging writing activities?
- Have the materials for parents been translated into languages commonly spoken in the community to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for non-English speaking families?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss whether information about the ELA program is presented clearly and in a manner that is easy for all stakeholders to understand, avoiding jargon and using straightforward language.
- Discuss whether there are comprehensive explanations of the ELA program, including its objectives, the skills students will develop, and the types of activities they will engage in, to help parents and caregivers understand the educational goals and expectations.
- Discuss whether the materials provide actionable suggestions for how parents and caregivers can support student learning at home, such as reading together, discussing books, or encouraging writing activities.
- Discuss whether the materials for parents have been translated into languages commonly spoken in the community to ensure inclusivity and accessibility for non-English speaking families.

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 3.1 | Materials include opportunities for teachers to effectively plan and utilize materials with integrity and to further develop their own understanding of the content. |
| Indicator 3e | Materials provide explanations of the instructional approaches of the program, identify the research-based strategies, and explain the role of the standards. |

Scoring:

| 2 points | 1 point | 0 points |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials explain the instructional approaches of the program. AND Materials include and reference research-based strategies. AND Materials include and reference the role of the standards in the program. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials explain the instructional approaches of the program. OR Materials include and reference research-based strategies. OR Materials include and reference the role of the standards in the program. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials do not explain the instructional approaches of the program. AND Materials do not include and reference research-based strategies. AND Materials do not include and reference the role of the standards in the program. |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines whether materials provide a clear and comprehensive explanation of the instructional approaches used within the program. It emphasizes the identification and justification of research-based strategies employed in the curriculum, demonstrating how these methods are grounded in educational research to enhance teaching effectiveness and student learning. Additionally, the indicator highlights the role of the standards, explaining how the program aligns with and supports these benchmarks to meet educational goals and ensure consistency across different instructional settings. This transparency helps educators understand the rationale behind the teaching methods and how they contribute to achieving desired learning outcomes, thereby enhancing instructional fidelity and effectiveness.

Indicator 3e Guiding Question:

Do the materials provide explanations of the instructional approaches of the program, identification of the research-based strategies, and reference the role of the standards in the program?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Ensure that the materials clearly outline the instructional approaches used within the program, providing a comprehensive overview of how these methods guide teaching and learning activities.
- Check for detailed descriptions of how these approaches are implemented in various lessons and activities, helping educators visualize their practical application.
- Look for explicit references to research-based strategies, including citations of studies or educational research that support the effectiveness of the strategies employed.
- Assess whether the materials explain the reasoning behind choosing specific strategies, illustrating how they are designed to enhance learning outcomes and support evidence-based teaching practices.
- Confirm that the materials clearly explain how the program aligns with educational standards, such as state, national, or Common Core standards, highlighting their role in shaping the curriculum.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the materials clearly outline the instructional approaches used within the program, providing a comprehensive overview of how these methods guide teaching and learning activities?
- Are there detailed descriptions of how these instructional approaches are implemented in various lessons and activities to help educators visualize their practical application?
- Do the materials include explicit references to research-based strategies, along with citations of studies or educational research that support the effectiveness of the strategies employed?
- Do the materials explain the reasoning behind choosing specific strategies, illustrating how they are designed to enhance learning outcomes and support evidence-based teaching practices?
- Do the materials clearly explain how the program aligns with educational standards, such as state, national, or Common Core standards, highlighting their role in shaping the curriculum?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss whether the materials clearly outline the instructional approaches used within the program, providing a comprehensive overview of how these methods guide teaching and learning activities.
- Discuss whether there are detailed descriptions of how these instructional approaches are implemented in various lessons and activities to help educators visualize their practical application.
- Discuss whether the materials include explicit references to research-based strategies, along with citations of studies or educational research that support the effectiveness of the strategies employed.
- Discuss whether the materials explain the reasoning behind choosing specific strategies, illustrating how they are designed to enhance learning outcomes and support evidence-based teaching practices.
- Discuss whether the materials clearly explain how the program aligns with educational standards, such as state, national, or Common Core standards, highlighting their role in shaping the curriculum.

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 3.1 | Materials include opportunities for teachers to effectively plan and utilize materials with integrity and to further develop their own understanding of the content. |
| Indicator 3f | Materials provide a comprehensive list of supplies needed to support instructional activities. |

Scoring:

1 point

- Materials include a comprehensive list of supplies needed to support the instructional activities.

0 points

- Materials do not include a comprehensive list of supplies needed to support instructional activities.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines whether the materials include a thorough and detailed list of all supplies and resources required to support the instructional activities in a program. This comprehensive list allows teachers to effectively plan and prepare for lessons by ensuring they have all necessary materials available for successful implementation. By clearly identifying what is needed, educators can minimize disruptions, manage their time efficiently, and create a conducive learning environment. Ultimately, this clarity supports smoother lesson delivery and enhances the overall effectiveness of the instructional activities.

Indicator 3f Guiding Question:

Do the materials provide a comprehensive list of supplies needed to support instructional activities?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Look for an organized and easy-to-navigate list, possibly categorized by lesson, unit, or type of activity, so teachers can quickly find and gather materials.
- Ensure that both digital resources (software, online tools) and physical supplies are included, with clear indications of what is required for digital learning environments, if applicable.
- Look for suggested alternatives or substitutions for the materials listed to accommodate different teaching environments or available resources, adding flexibility for teachers.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Is the list organized and easy to navigate, possibly categorized by lesson, unit, or type of activity, so that teachers can quickly find and gather materials?

- Are both digital resources (software, online tools) and physical supplies included, with clear indications of what is required for digital learning environments, if applicable?
- Are there suggested alternatives or substitutions for the materials listed to accommodate different teaching environments or available resources, adding flexibility for teachers?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss whether the list is organized and easy to navigate, possibly categorized by lesson, unit, or type of activity, so that teachers can quickly find and gather materials.
- Discuss whether both digital resources (software, online tools) and physical supplies are included, with clear indications of what is required for digital learning environments, if applicable.
- Discuss whether there are suggested alternatives or substitutions for the materials listed to accommodate different teaching environments or available resources, adding flexibility for teachers.

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Criterion 3.1 | Materials include opportunities for teachers to effectively plan and utilize materials with integrity and to further develop their own understanding of the content. |
| Indicator 3g | The assessment system provides consistent opportunities to determine student learning throughout the school year. The assessment system provides sufficient teacher guidance for evaluating student performance and determining instructional next steps. |

Scoring:

| 2 points | 1 point | 0 points |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The assessment system provides opportunities to determine student learning throughout the school year. AND • The assessment system provides sufficient teacher guidance for evaluating student performance. AND • The assessment system provides sufficient teacher guidance for interpreting student performance and determining next instructional steps. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The assessment system provides opportunities to determine student learning throughout the school year, but not consistently. OR • The assessment system provides sufficient teacher guidance for evaluating student performance, but not consistently. OR • The assessment system provides sufficient teacher guidance for interpreting student performance and determining next instructional steps, but not consistently. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The assessment system does not provide opportunities to determine student learning throughout the school year. AND • The assessment system does not provide sufficient teacher guidance for evaluating student performance. AND • The assessment system does not provide sufficient teacher guidance for interpreting student performance and determining next instructional steps. |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines whether the assessment system within materials offers regular and consistent opportunities to evaluate student learning progress throughout the school year. It emphasizes the importance of a well-structured assessment system that not only tracks student performance consistently over time but also provides teachers with clear guidance on how to interpret assessment results. This includes offering insights on evaluating student understanding and making informed decisions about instructional next steps. By doing so, teachers identify areas where students may need additional support or enrichment, allowing for timely

interventions and personalized learning pathways that enhance student growth and achievement. For programs that include foundational skills, coherence in assessment systems across the program is even more important.

Indicator 3g Guiding Question:

Does the assessment system provide consistent opportunities to determine student learning throughout the school year, sufficient teacher guidance for evaluating student performance, and sufficient teacher guidance for determining instructional next steps?

Evidence Collection

Note: This indicator looks at the assessment system as a whole and how all of the types of assessments in a program work together to show student progress toward mastery and provide guidance to teachers about how to adjust instruction. Information specific to formative and summative assessments is looked at in Gateway 2.

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Ensure the assessment system provides regular and structured opportunities throughout the school year to measure student learning. This should include formative assessments that offer ongoing insights and summative assessments that evaluate cumulative learning.
- Look for a variety of assessment types (e.g., quizzes, projects, observations, standardized tests) to capture different aspects of student learning and demonstrate a comprehensive view of progress.
- Ensure that there is comprehensive guidance for teachers on how to administer the system of assessments, including instructions, rubrics, and criteria for consistent and fair evaluation of student performance.
- Confirm that the materials include clear guidance on how to interpret the results of student assessments throughout all assessments.
- Across the assessment system as a whole, look for specific recommendations or strategies for teachers on how to use assessment data to inform instructional decisions, adjust teaching plans, and provide targeted interventions or enrichment activities based on student needs.
- Assess whether the system includes support for providing timely and constructive feedback to students, helping them understand their progress and areas for improvement.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Does the assessment system provide regular and structured opportunities throughout the school year to measure student learning, including both formative assessments that offer ongoing insights and summative assessments that evaluate cumulative learning?
- Is there a variety of assessment types (e.g., quizzes, projects, observations, standardized tests) to capture different aspects of student learning and demonstrate a comprehensive view of progress?
- Is there comprehensive guidance for teachers on how to administer the assessment system, including instructions, rubrics, and criteria for consistent and fair evaluation of student performance?
- Do the materials include clear guidance on how to interpret the results of student assessments across all assessments?
- Are there specific recommendations or strategies for teachers on how to use assessment data to inform instructional decisions, adjust teaching plans, and provide targeted interventions or enrichment activities based on student needs?
- Does the system include support for providing timely and constructive feedback to students, helping them understand their progress and areas for improvement?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss whether the assessment system provides regular and structured opportunities throughout the school year to measure student learning, including both formative assessments that offer ongoing insights and summative assessments that evaluate cumulative learning.
- Discuss whether there are a variety of assessment types (e.g., quizzes, projects, observations, standardized tests) to capture different aspects of student learning and demonstrate a comprehensive view of progress.
- Discuss whether there is comprehensive guidance for teachers on how to administer the assessment system, including instructions, rubrics, and criteria for consistent and fair evaluation of student performance.
- Discuss whether the materials include clear guidance on how to interpret the results of student assessments across all assessments.
- Discuss whether there are specific recommendations or strategies for teachers on how to use assessment data to inform instructional decisions, adjust teaching plans, and provide targeted interventions or enrichment activities based on student needs.
- Discuss whether the system includes support for providing timely and constructive feedback to students, helping them understand their progress and areas for improvement.

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Criterion 3.1 | Materials include opportunities for teachers to effectively plan and utilize materials with integrity and to further develop their own understanding of the content. |
| Indicator 3h | <i>*This is not an assessed indicator in ELA.</i> |

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Criterion 3.1 | Materials include opportunities for teachers to effectively plan and utilize materials with integrity and to further develop their own understanding of the content. |
| Indicator 3i | <i>*This is not an assessed indicator in ELA.</i> |

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

Criterion 3.2

Student Supports

Materials are designed for each student's regular and active participation in grade-level/grade-band/series content.

What is the purpose of this Criterion?

This criterion examines how materials provide student supports throughout the program. It considers how the materials are designed to provide appropriate support and accommodations for students in special populations, ensuring their regular and active participation in learning English language arts and literacy. It also examines whether materials should offer extensions for advanced students, allowing them to engage with literacy concepts at a greater depth. Additionally, this criterion looks at whether materials provide opportunities for teachers to employ a variety of grouping strategies and include varied opportunities for students to share their thinking. Furthermore, this criterion considers whether materials ensure a range of representation of people, leveraging the diverse cultural and social backgrounds of students to enrich the educational experience and foster an inclusive learning environment.

Scoring:

Meets Expectations

- 4 points

Partially Meets Expectations

- 2-3 points

Does Not Meet Expectations

- <2 points

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Criterion 3.2 | Materials are designed for each student’s regular and active participation in grade-level/grade-band/series content. |
| Indicator 3j | Materials provide strategies and support for students in special populations to work with grade-level content and meet or exceed grade-level standards, which support their regular and active participation in learning. |

| Scoring: | | |
|---|--|--|
| 2 points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials provide strategies, supports, and resources for students in special populations to support their regular and active participation in grade-level literacy work. | 1 point <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials provide strategies, supports, and resources for students in special populations to support their regular and active participation in grade-level literacy work, but not consistently. | 0 points <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials do not provide strategies, supports, and resources for students in special populations to support their regular and active participation in grade-level literacy work. |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator considers whether materials include strategies and support designed to help students in special populations, such as students with exceptional needs and those requiring additional learning support, to access and engage with grade-level content. This indicator aims to promote equity by ensuring that materials enable all students to meet or exceed grade-level standards. By providing targeted support and resources, the materials facilitate regular and active participation in learning for all students, helping them to overcome barriers and achieve success alongside their peers. This approach fosters an inclusive learning environment that recognizes and accommodates diverse learning needs and styles.

Resources:

- [Supporting Special Populations, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education](#)

Indicator 3j Guiding Question:

Do materials provide strategies, supports, and resources for students in special populations to support their active participation in grade-level literacy work?

Evidence Collection

- Ensure the materials include specific strategies for differentiating instruction to meet the diverse needs of students in special populations. These strategies should be adaptable to individual learning styles and needs.

- Check if the materials provide scaffolding strategies, such as breaking down tasks into manageable steps, using graphic organizers, or providing sentence starters to support students in building their understanding and skills.
- Confirm that the materials include comprehensive guidance for teachers on how to implement these strategies effectively, including professional development resources if applicable.
- Ensure there are tools and resources for monitoring the progress of students in special populations, allowing teachers to assess effectiveness and adjust strategies as needed.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the materials include specific strategies for differentiating instruction to meet the diverse needs of students in special populations, adaptable to individual learning styles and needs?
- Do the materials provide scaffolding strategies, such as breaking down tasks into manageable steps, using graphic organizers, or providing sentence starters to support students in building their understanding and skills?
- Do the materials include comprehensive guidance for teachers on how to implement these strategies effectively, including professional development resources if applicable?
- Are there tools and resources for monitoring the progress of students in special populations, allowing teachers to assess effectiveness and adjust strategies as needed?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss whether the materials include specific strategies for differentiating instruction to meet the diverse needs of students in special populations, adaptable to individual learning styles and needs.
- Discuss whether the materials provide scaffolding strategies, such as breaking down tasks into manageable steps, using graphic organizers, or providing sentence starters to support students in building their understanding and skills.
- Discuss whether the materials include comprehensive guidance for teachers on how to implement these strategies effectively, including professional development resources if applicable.
- Discuss whether there are tools and resources for monitoring the progress of students in special populations, allowing teachers to assess effectiveness and adjust strategies as needed.

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 3.2 | Materials are designed for each student’s regular and active participation in grade-level/grade-band/series content. |
| Indicator 3k | Materials regularly provide extensions and/or opportunities for advanced students to engage with grade-level/course-level literary content at greater depth. |

Scoring:

| 2 points | 1 points | 0 points |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials regularly provide multiple extensions and/or opportunities for advanced students to engage with grade-level/course-level literary concepts at greater depth. <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are no instances of advanced students doing more assignments than their classmates. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials regularly provide multiple extensions and/or opportunities for advanced students to engage with grade-level/course-level literary concepts at greater depth. <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are some instances of advanced students doing more assignments than their classmates. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials do not regularly provide multiple extensions and/or opportunities for advanced students to engage with grade-level/course-level literary concepts at greater depth. <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are instances of advanced students doing more assignments than their classmates. |

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines whether materials include opportunities for students who perform above grade level to delve deeper into literacy content and concepts. By providing extensions and more challenging activities, the materials support advanced learners in further developing their skills and comprehension beyond the standard curriculum. This approach helps to keep advanced students engaged and motivated, ensuring they continue to be challenged and experience academic growth. In order to meet expectations for this indicator, there must be no instances of advanced students doing more assignments than their classmates; rather, assignments should be differentiated in a way that extends learning. By catering to the needs of advanced learners, the indicator promotes a more personalized learning experience and fosters a classroom environment where all students have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Indicator 3k Guiding Question:

Do the materials regularly provide extensions for students who are above grade level to engage with literacy content and concepts at greater depth?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Ensure there are activities that allow advanced students to explore grade-level content at a deeper level, encouraging higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
- Look for tasks that are more complex rather than just more of the same work.
- Check for enrichment activities that extend the content in meaningful ways without simply adding to the workload. These could include advanced readings, thematic projects, or interdisciplinary connections.
- Verify that advanced learners are given choices in how they explore topics or demonstrate understanding, allowing for greater autonomy and personalized learning experiences.
- Ensure that the advanced materials remain connected to the core curriculum, maintaining relevance and ensuring coherence with overall learning objectives.
- Ensure that there are no instances of advanced students doing more assignments than their classmates.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Are there activities that allow advanced students to explore grade-level content at a deeper level, encouraging higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation?
- Do the tasks offer complexity rather than just more of the same work?
- Are there enrichment activities that extend the content in meaningful ways without simply adding to the workload, such as advanced readings, thematic projects, or interdisciplinary connections?
- Are advanced learners given choices in how they explore topics or demonstrate understanding, allowing for greater autonomy and personalized learning experiences?
- Do the advanced materials remain connected to the core curriculum, maintaining relevance and ensuring coherence with overall learning objectives?
- Are there any instances of advanced students doing more assignments than their classmates?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss whether there are activities that allow advanced students to explore grade-level content at a deeper level, encouraging higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.
- Discuss whether the tasks offer complexity rather than just more of the same work, possibly involving open-ended projects, independent research, or inquiry-based learning opportunities.
- Discuss whether there are enrichment activities that extend the content in meaningful ways without simply adding to the workload, such as advanced readings, thematic projects, or interdisciplinary connections.
- Discuss whether advanced learners are given choices in how they explore topics or demonstrate understanding, allowing for greater autonomy and personalized learning experiences.
- Discuss whether the advanced materials remain connected to the core curriculum, maintaining relevance and ensuring coherence with overall learning objectives.
- Discuss whether there are any instances of advanced students doing more assignments than their classmates.

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

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| Criterion 3.2 | Materials are designed for each student’s regular and active participation in grade-level/grade-band/series content. |
| Indicator 3I | Materials provide varied approaches to learning tasks over time and variety in how students are expected to demonstrate their learning with opportunities for students to monitor their learning. |

Scoring: Narrative Evidence Only

Note: No score is given for this indicator. Only qualitative evidence is provided.

- Materials provide varied tasks for students to show their thinking and make meaning.
- Students have opportunities to share their thinking, to demonstrate changes in their thinking over time, and to apply their understanding in new contexts.
- Materials leverage the use of a variety of formats over time to deepen student understanding and ability to explain and apply literacy concepts.
- Materials provide for ongoing review, practice, self-reflection, and feedback.
- Materials provide multiple strategies, such as oral and/or written feedback, peer or teacher feedback, and self-reflection.
- Materials provide a clear path for students to monitor and move their own learning.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines whether materials offer diverse and dynamic approaches to learning tasks, thereby catering to different learning styles and preferences over time. By providing variety in how students are expected to demonstrate their learning, the materials promote engagement and allow students to showcase their understanding in multiple ways, such as through projects, presentations, writing, or discussions. This approach recognizes the individual strengths and interests of students, encouraging more personalized and effective learning experiences. Additionally, by including opportunities for students to monitor their own learning, the materials foster self-assessment skills and help students become more aware of their progress, strengths, and areas needing improvement. This self-monitoring aspect supports the development of independent learners who are equipped to take responsibility for their educational journeys.

Indicator 3I Guiding Question:

Do the materials provide varied approaches to learning tasks over time and variety in how students are expected to demonstrate their learning with opportunities for students to monitor their learning?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Ensure that the materials include a wide range of tasks that allow students to express their thinking and make meaning. These tasks could include projects, essays, presentations, discussions, and creative works.
- Look for opportunities where students can share their initial thinking, demonstrate how their thinking evolves over time, and apply their understanding in new and varied contexts.
- Ensure there are built-in opportunities for ongoing review and practice. Materials should support repeated engagement with concepts to reinforce learning and solidify skills over time.
- Confirm that materials provide strategies for self-reflection and feedback. This should include oral and written feedback from teachers and peers, as well as opportunities for students to assess their own work and progress.
- Look for clear structures or tools within the materials that help students monitor their own learning. This could include progress tracking systems, self-assessment checklists, or goal-setting frameworks.
- Review how the materials guide students in reflecting on their learning process, offering scaffolding that supports students in moving from one level of understanding to the next.
- Verify that there are tasks requiring students to apply their learning to new situations or problems, fostering transfer of knowledge and skills beyond the original context.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the materials include a wide range of tasks that allow students to express their thinking and make meaning, such as projects, essays, presentations, discussions, and creative works?
- Are there opportunities for students to share their initial thinking, demonstrate how their thinking evolves over time, and apply their understanding in new and varied contexts?
- Are there built-in opportunities for ongoing review and practice, supporting repeated engagement with concepts to reinforce learning and solidify skills over time?
- Do the materials provide strategies for self-reflection and feedback, including oral and written feedback from teachers and peers, as well as opportunities for students to assess their own work and progress?
- Are there clear structures or tools within the materials to help students monitor their own learning, such as progress tracking systems, self-assessment checklists, or goal-setting frameworks?
- How do the materials guide students in reflecting on their learning process, offering scaffolding that supports students in moving from one level of understanding to the next?
- Are there tasks that require students to apply their learning to new situations or problems, fostering the transfer of knowledge and skills beyond the original context?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss whether the materials include a wide range of tasks that allow students to express their thinking and make meaning, such as projects, essays, presentations, discussions, and creative works.
- Discuss whether there are opportunities for students to share their initial thinking, demonstrate how their thinking evolves over time, and apply their understanding in new and varied contexts.
- Discuss whether there are built-in opportunities for ongoing review and practice, supporting repeated engagement with concepts to reinforce learning and solidify skills over time.
- Discuss whether the materials provide strategies for self-reflection and feedback, including oral and written feedback from teachers and peers, as well as opportunities for students to assess their own work and progress.
- Discuss whether there are clear structures or tools within the materials to help students monitor their own learning, such as progress tracking systems, self-assessment checklists, or goal-setting frameworks.
- Discuss how the materials guide students in reflecting on their learning process, offering scaffolding that supports students in moving from one level of understanding to the next.

- Discuss whether there are tasks that require students to apply their learning to new situations or problems, fostering the transfer of knowledge and skills beyond the original context.

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

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| Criterion 3.2 | Materials are designed for each student’s regular and active participation in grade-level/grade-band/series content. |
| Indicator 3m | Materials provide opportunities for teachers to use a variety of grouping strategies. |

Scoring: Narrative Evidence Only

Note: No score is given for this indicator. Only qualitative evidence is provided.

- Materials provide grouping strategies for students.
- Materials provide guidance for varied types of interaction among students.
- Materials provide guidance for the teacher on grouping students in a variety of grouping formats.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator looks at whether materials offer teachers diverse strategies for grouping students during instruction. By providing opportunities for various grouping methods, such as whole-class, small group, pair, or individual work, teachers can effectively address different instructional goals, engage students with varied learning styles, and meet diverse student needs. These strategies can enhance collaboration, communication, and peer learning while also allowing for targeted instruction and differentiated support. Ultimately, the indicator aims to create a more dynamic and interactive learning environment that supports student engagement and maximizes learning outcomes.

Indicator 3m Guiding Question:

Do the materials provide opportunities for teachers to use a variety of grouping strategies?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Ensure the materials suggest a variety of grouping strategies, such as whole-class, small groups, pairs, and individual work. These should cater to different instructional objectives and student needs.
- Look for guidance on how to align grouping strategies with specific instructional goals, such as fostering collaboration, enhancing understanding, or providing differentiated instruction.
- Check if the materials offer recommendations for flexible grouping, allowing teachers to adjust groups based on student progress, skill levels, or specific learning activities.
- Ensure that there are explicit instructions or criteria for teachers on how to form groups, taking into account factors like student ability, learning preferences, or interpersonal dynamics.
- Confirm that the materials provide guidance on facilitating different types of student interactions, such as cooperative learning, peer review, discussions, and problem-solving activities.
- Look for embedded support and scaffolding suggestions to help teachers manage and support student interactions effectively within various group settings.

- Assess whether the grouping strategies are designed to promote active student engagement and participation, ensuring all students have the opportunity to contribute and learn.

Note: If you identify grouping strategies specifically targeted to differentiated populations, please assign that evidence to the associated indicators (special populations will be in 3j; advanced students in 3k; MLL learners in 3m.MLL).

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the materials suggest a variety of grouping strategies, such as whole-class, small groups, pairs, and individual work that cater to different instructional objectives and student needs?
- Is there guidance on how to align grouping strategies with specific instructional goals, such as fostering collaboration, enhancing understanding, or providing differentiated instruction?
- Do the materials offer recommendations for flexible grouping, allowing teachers to adjust groups based on student progress, skill levels, or specific learning activities?
- Are there explicit instructions or criteria for teachers on how to form groups, considering factors like student ability, learning preferences, or interpersonal dynamics?
- Do the materials provide guidance on facilitating different types of student interactions, such as cooperative learning, peer review, discussions, and problem-solving activities?
- Are there embedded support and scaffolding suggestions to help teachers manage and support student interactions effectively within various group settings?
- Are the grouping strategies designed to promote active student engagement and participation, ensuring all students have the opportunity to contribute and learn?
- Do the materials include opportunities for feedback and reflection on group interactions, helping students to improve their collaborative skills and self-awareness?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss whether the materials suggest a variety of grouping strategies, such as whole-class, small groups, pairs, and individual work that cater to different instructional objectives and student needs.
- Discuss whether there is guidance on how to align grouping strategies with specific instructional goals, such as fostering collaboration, enhancing understanding, or providing differentiated instruction.
- Discuss whether the materials offer recommendations for flexible grouping, allowing teachers to adjust groups based on student progress, skill levels, or specific learning activities.
- Discuss whether there are explicit instructions or criteria for teachers on how to form groups, considering factors like student ability, learning preferences, or interpersonal dynamics.
- Discuss whether the materials provide guidance on facilitating different types of student interactions, such as cooperative learning, peer review, discussions, and problem-solving activities.
- Discuss whether there are embedded support and scaffolding suggestions to help teachers manage and support student interactions effectively within various group settings.
- Discuss whether the grouping strategies are designed to promote active student engagement and participation, ensuring all students have the opportunity to contribute and learn.
- Discuss whether the materials include opportunities for feedback and reflection on group interactions, helping students to improve their collaborative skills and self-awareness.

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

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| Criterion 3.2 | Materials are designed for each student’s regular and active participation in grade-level/grade-band/series content. |
| Indicator 3n | Assessments offer accommodations that allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills without changing the content of the assessment. |

Scoring: Narrative Evidence Only

Note: No score is given for this indicator. Only qualitative evidence is provided.

- Materials offer accommodations that ensure all students can access the assessment (e.g., text-to-speech, increased font size) without changing its content.
- Materials include guidance for teachers on the use of provided accommodations.
- Materials include guidance for teachers about who can benefit from these accommodations.
- Materials do not include modifications to assessments that alter grade level/expectations.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines whether the materials ensure that assessments include accommodations that enable all students, especially those with diverse learning needs or disabilities, to demonstrate their knowledge and skills effectively without altering the core content or objectives of the assessment. These accommodations are designed to provide equitable access to the assessment process, ensuring that the results are a true reflection of a student's understanding and abilities rather than their ability to navigate barriers unrelated to the content. This can include changes in the assessment environment, format, timing, or presentation that help level the playing field while maintaining the integrity and rigor of the assessment content.

Indicator 3n Guiding Question:

Do assessments offer accommodations that allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills without changing the content of the assessment?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Ensure the materials provide a variety of accommodations, such as text-to-speech, increased font size, alternative formats (e.g., Braille, large print), and extended time, ensuring accessibility for students with different needs.
- Check that there is clear and comprehensive guidance for teachers on how to implement these accommodations effectively during assessments, including step-by-step instructions if necessary.
- Confirm that the accommodations provided do not change the content or expectations of the assessments, ensuring that grade-level standards and rigor are maintained.
- Look for flexibility in how accommodations can be implemented, allowing teachers to tailor them to the specific needs of their students while adhering to the assessment's core objectives.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the materials provide a variety of accommodations, such as text-to-speech, increased font size, alternative formats (e.g., Braille, large print), and extended time, ensuring accessibility for students with different needs?
- Is there clear and comprehensive guidance for teachers on how to implement these accommodations effectively during assessments, including step-by-step instructions if necessary?
- Do the accommodations provided ensure that the content or expectations of the assessments are not changed, maintaining grade-level standards and rigor?
- Is there flexibility in how accommodations can be implemented, allowing teachers to tailor them to the specific needs of their students while adhering to the assessment's core objectives?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss whether the materials provide a variety of accommodations, such as text-to-speech, increased font size, alternative formats (e.g., Braille, large print), and extended time, ensuring accessibility for students with different needs.
- Discuss whether there is clear and comprehensive guidance for teachers on how to implement these accommodations effectively during assessments, including step-by-step instructions if necessary.
- Discuss whether the accommodations provided ensure that the content or expectations of the assessments are not changed, maintaining grade-level standards and rigor.
- Discuss whether there is flexibility in how accommodations can be implemented, allowing teachers to tailor them to the specific needs of their students while adhering to the assessment's core objectives.

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

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| Criterion 3.2 | Materials are designed for each student’s regular and active participation in grade-level/grade-band/series content. |
| Indicator 3o | Materials provide a range of representation of people and include detailed instructions and support for educators to effectively incorporate and draw upon students’ different cultural, social, and community backgrounds to enrich learning experiences. |

Scoring: Narrative Evidence Only

Note: No score is given for this indicator. Only qualitative evidence is provided.

- Materials provide a range of representation of people, ensuring a broad range of cultural, racial, gender, and ability backgrounds are accurately and authentically represented.
- Materials provide detailed instructions and support for teachers on incorporating and drawing upon students’ different cultural, social, and community backgrounds to enrich learning experiences.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

In 2022, EdReports conducted a [landscape analysis](#) of 15 different resources to help educators understand trends and best practices in culturally responsive education, highlighting ongoing efforts and areas for improvement in providing adequate support for culturally relevant instruction. This indicator examines whether materials reflect diverse identities, connect learning to real-world and culturally relevant contexts, and promote student engagement through authentic representation, high expectations, and community involvement. In doing so, the indicator supports communities in engaging in deep discourse and aligning educational practices with their local contexts.

Research or Standards Connection:

In “[Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors](#),” Bishop (2015) argues that children's literature should reflect the diversity of our society, acting as both mirrors (for children to see themselves) and windows (for children to learn about others). Bishop points out that for many years, non-white children have been underrepresented in literature, leading to a lack of mirrors for them and a sense of being devalued in society. She emphasizes the importance of providing children with books that celebrate both our differences and similarities, ultimately helping us to understand and accept each other. Bishop uses examples of diverse voices and authors in children's literature to illustrate the power of stories to reflect authentic cultural experiences and traditions. She argues that when children are exposed to a variety of voices and perspectives, they are better able to understand and appreciate the richness and diversity of our world.

In “[Culturally Responsive Education: A Primer for Policy and Practice](#),” Johnston, Montalbano, and Kirkland (2017) explore the significance and implementation of culturally responsive education (CRE). The primer highlights the need to move beyond simply including culture as a token in the curriculum and emphasizes the importance of designing curricula that truly reflect the diverse cultural experiences of students. The authors raise questions about how to create curricula that are not only inclusive of diverse backgrounds but also address issues of historical oppression, and how to foster a true understanding of the dynamic and evolving nature of culture,

going beyond static representations. The primer also points to the need to develop culturally responsive standards that can be implemented within the current standards-based educational framework, ensuring that cultural responsiveness is not merely a superficial add-on but a fundamental element of the educational system. The authors argue that a truly culturally responsive curriculum should go beyond simply including diverse cultures as a token or a one-day event. It should reflect a deep understanding of the complexities of culture and address historical injustices and current inequalities. Furthermore, it should foster a sense of agency and empowerment for all students, enabling them to see their own cultural backgrounds as valuable assets and empowering them to engage in meaningful learning experiences.

Indicator 3o Guiding Question:

Do the materials provide guidance and a range of representation of people that support educators in leveraging students' cultural, social, and community backgrounds to enhance learning?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Describe how the materials reflect and affirm the diverse identities of students, ensuring a broad range of cultural, racial, gender, and ability backgrounds are accurately and authentically represented.
- Describe images and representations that depict students actively participating in learning experiences that are connected to real-world contexts.
 - These should include diverse students collaborating, problem-solving, or exploring concepts in ways that highlight their cultural and personal identities. Explicitly note if these images show students of different backgrounds in leadership roles, working together in a variety of group settings, and utilizing culturally relevant tools or methods.
- Describe specific examples where instructional content is linked to students' cultural experiences, interests, or community knowledge, fostering a deeper engagement and understanding of (Mathematics, ELA, or Science).
- Identify instructional guidance that encourages high expectations for all students, including those that differentiate learning to meet diverse cultural needs while maintaining academic rigor.
- Identify prompts that invite students to draw from their cultural backgrounds and personal experiences, enhancing their connection to the material and fostering a deeper sense of identity within the learning environment.
- Describe any other teacher materials that include guidance on how to actively involve community and family perspectives, drawing on local knowledge and cultural practices to enrich the learning experiences and promote students' roles as contributors to their communities.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the materials include a wide range of student identities represented, reflecting the diversity of the classroom and broader society?
 - Do these portrayals challenge stereotypes and offer diverse narratives that contribute to an inclusive learning environment?
- How and where does instructional guidance actively connect to students' cultural knowledge and lived experiences, promoting meaningful learning?
- How and where do materials include specific strategies to ensure that all students have the opportunity to engage deeply with the content, regardless of their cultural background?
 - Do these strategies enhance the relevance of classroom content by drawing on the experiences, values, and resources of students' families and communities?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss whether the materials include a wide range of student identities represented, reflecting the diversity of the classroom and broader society.
 - Discuss whether these portrayals challenge stereotypes and offer diverse narratives that contribute to an inclusive learning environment.
- Discuss how and where instructional guidance actively connects to students' cultural knowledge and lived experiences, promoting meaningful learning.
- Discuss how and where materials include specific strategies to ensure that all students have the opportunity to engage deeply with the content, regardless of their cultural background.
 - Discuss whether these strategies enhance the relevance of classroom content by drawing on the experiences, values, and resources of students' families and communities.

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

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| Criterion 3.2 | Materials are designed for each student’s regular and active participation in grade-level/grade-band/series content. |
| Indicator 3p | <i>*This is not an assessed indicator in ELA.</i> |

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

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|---------------|--|
| Criterion 3.2 | Materials are designed for each student’s regular and active participation in grade-level/grade-band/series content. |
| Indicator 3q | <i>*This is not an assessed indicator in ELA.</i> |

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

Criterion 3.3

Intentional Design

Materials include a visual design that is engaging and references or integrates digital technology, when applicable, with guidance for teachers.

What is the purpose of this Criterion?

This criterion examines whether materials effectively integrate technology to enhance student engagement and learning. These technological integrations help students interact with grade-level content through interactive and diverse learning approaches, meeting diverse learning needs and preparing students for a tech-savvy world. The indicator evaluates whether materials provide opportunities and guidance for collaboration among teachers and students, leveraging digital tools to enhance communication and collaborative learning. It also assesses the visual design of materials to ensure they are engaging without being distracting and examines the consistency and clarity of layout across resources. Additionally, the indicator considers whether materials offer teacher guidance for embedding technology in teaching practices, aiming to improve lesson interactivity and accessibility. By including these elements, materials support critical skills development such as teamwork, communication, and digital literacy, while enhancing student understanding and engagement.

Scoring: Narrative Evidence Only

Note: No score is given for this criterion. Only qualitative evidence is provided.

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

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| Criterion 3.3 | Materials include a visual design that is engaging and references or integrates digital technology, when applicable, with guidance for teachers. |
| Indicator 3r | Materials integrate technology such as interactive tools, virtual manipulatives/objects, and/or dynamic software in ways that engage students in the grade-level/series standards, when applicable. |

Scoring: Narrative Evidence Only

Note: No score is given for this indicator. Only qualitative evidence is provided.

- Digital technology and interactive tools, such as data collection tools and/or modeling tools are available to students.
- Digital tools support student engagement in ELA.
- Digital materials can be customized for local use (i.e., student and/or community interests).

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

The purpose of this indicator is to ensure that materials incorporate technology effectively to enhance student engagement and learning. Such technological integrations can help students better understand and interact with grade-level standards by providing interactive and diverse approaches to learning. This use of technology not only helps to meet diverse learning needs and styles but also prepares students for a tech-savvy world by familiarizing them with digital tools important for their future academic and career pursuits.

Indicator 3r Guiding Question:

Do the materials integrate interactive tools and/or dynamic software in ways that support student engagement in ELA and literacy, when applicable?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed (when applicable):

- Consider if the digital materials include a range of technology and interactive tools, such as data collection and modeling tools, that are accessible to students. These tools should facilitate hands-on learning and exploration.
- Check that the digital tools align with and support engagement in English language arts (ELA) by enhancing literacy skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening, through interactive and multimedia content.
- Verify that the digital materials can be customized or adapted for local use, allowing teachers to tailor content to reflect student interests and community contexts, thereby making learning more relevant and engaging.
- Assess whether the digital tools are easy to use for both teachers and students, with clear instructions and intuitive interfaces that facilitate seamless integration into the classroom.

- Confirm that the digital tools are integrated with core curriculum content, providing a cohesive learning experience that enhances rather than distracts from the main educational objectives.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the digital materials include a range of technology and interactive tools, such as data collection and modeling tools, that are accessible to students and facilitate hands-on learning and exploration?
- Do the digital tools align with and support engagement in English Language Arts (ELA) by enhancing literacy skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening, through interactive and multimedia content?
- Can the digital materials be customized or adapted for local use, allowing teachers to tailor content to reflect student interests and community contexts, thereby making learning more relevant and engaging?
- Are the digital tools easy to use for both teachers and students, with clear instructions and intuitive interfaces that facilitate seamless integration into the classroom?
- Are the digital tools integrated with core curriculum content, providing a cohesive learning experience that enhances rather than distracts from the main educational objectives?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss whether the digital materials include a range of technology and interactive tools, such as data collection and modeling tools, that are accessible to students and facilitate hands-on learning and exploration.
- Discuss whether the digital tools align with and support engagement in English Language Arts (ELA) by enhancing literacy skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening, through interactive and multimedia content.
- Discuss whether the digital materials can be customized or adapted for local use, allowing teachers to tailor content to reflect student interests and community contexts, thereby making learning more relevant and engaging.
- Discuss whether the digital tools are easy to use for both teachers and students, with clear instructions and intuitive interfaces that facilitate seamless integration into the classroom.
- Discuss whether the digital tools are integrated with core curriculum content, providing a cohesive learning experience that enhances rather than distracts from the main educational objectives.

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

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| Criterion 3.3 | Materials include a visual design that is engaging and references or integrates digital technology, when applicable, with guidance for teachers. |
| Indicator 3s | Materials include or reference digital technology that provides opportunities for teachers and/or students to collaborate with each other, when applicable. |

Scoring: Narrative Evidence Only

Note: No score is given for this indicator. Only qualitative evidence is provided.

- Materials include or reference digital technology that provides opportunities for teachers and/or students to collaborate with each other, when applicable.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator considers if the materials provide opportunities and guidance for teachers and/or students to collaborate with each other, and is applicable to materials with digital components only. By providing these tools, the materials aim to enhance communication and collaborative learning experiences, allowing participants to work together on projects, share ideas, and contribute to collective problem-solving efforts. This collaboration supports the development of critical skills such as teamwork, communication, and digital literacy, which are increasingly important in today's interconnected and technology-driven world.

Indicator 3s Guiding Question:

Do the materials include or reference digital technology that provides opportunities for teachers and/or students to collaborate with each other, when applicable?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed (when applicable):

- Look for a diverse range of digital tools that cater to different types of collaboration, such as communication platforms, project management tools, shared document and workspace solutions, or forums for discussion.
- Check for interactive features that promote real-time collaboration, such as live chat, video conferencing, or collaborative editing capabilities. These features should enable seamless interaction and cooperative work among participants.
- Assess whether the technology is user-friendly, with intuitive interfaces and clear instructions, ensuring that all intended users can easily navigate and utilize the collaborative features.
- Confirm that the collaborative tools are integrated with or complement the existing curriculum, aligning with learning objectives and enhancing educational outcomes through collaborative activities.
- Check if the materials include or reference support resources or training opportunities for teachers and students to effectively use the collaborative digital tools.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Is there a diverse range of digital tools that cater to different types of collaboration, including communication platforms, project management tools, shared document and workspace solutions, or forums for discussion?
- Are there interactive features that promote real-time collaboration, such as live chat, video conferencing, or collaborative editing capabilities, enabling seamless interaction and cooperative work among participants?
- Is the technology user-friendly with intuitive interfaces and clear instructions, ensuring that all intended users can easily navigate and utilize the collaborative features?
- Are the collaborative tools integrated with or do they complement the existing curriculum, aligning with learning objectives and enhancing educational outcomes through collaborative activities?
- Do the materials include or reference support resources or training opportunities for teachers and students to effectively use the collaborative digital tools?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss whether there is a diverse range of digital tools that cater to different types of collaboration, including communication platforms, project management tools, shared document and workspace solutions, or forums for discussion.
- Discuss whether there are interactive features that promote real-time collaboration, such as live chat, video conferencing, or collaborative editing capabilities, enabling seamless interaction and cooperative work among participants.
- Discuss whether the technology is user-friendly with intuitive interfaces and clear instructions, ensuring that all intended users can easily navigate and utilize the collaborative features.
- Discuss whether the collaborative tools are integrated with or if they complement the existing curriculum, aligning with learning objectives and enhancing educational outcomes through collaborative activities.
- Discuss whether the materials include or reference support resources or training opportunities for teachers and students to effectively use the collaborative digital tools.

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

| | |
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| Criterion 3.3 | Materials include a visual design that is engaging and references or integrates digital technology, when applicable, with guidance for teachers. |
| Indicator 3t | The visual design (whether in print or digital) supports students in engaging thoughtfully with the subject, and is neither distracting nor chaotic. |

Scoring: Narrative Evidence Only

Note: No score is given for this indicator. Only qualitative evidence is provided.

- Images, graphics, and models support student learning and engagement without being visually distracting. They also clearly communicate information or support student understanding of topics, texts, or concepts.
- Teacher and student materials are consistent in layout and structure across lessons/modules/units.
- Materials' organizational features (table of contents, glossary, index, internal references, table headers, captions, etc.) are clear, accurate, and error-free.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines whether the visual design of materials effectively supports student engagement with the content without being distracting or chaotic. This indicator considers the consistency in layout of the teacher and student materials, examines whether resources clearly communicate information, and examines whether resources contain any errors as they relate to usability. A well-designed visual layout can enhance understanding by organizing information clearly, highlighting key concepts, and guiding students' attention to important elements. By ensuring the design is clean, intuitive, and supportive of the subject matter, the materials can facilitate a more focused and meaningful learning experience, helping students to concentrate on and thoughtfully engage with the content.

Indicator 3t Guiding Question:

Does the visual design (whether in print or digital) support students in engaging thoughtfully with the subject, and is neither distracting nor chaotic?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Ensure that images, graphics, and models used in the materials clearly support and enhance student learning and engagement. They should be directly related to the content, helping to clarify or illustrate key concepts without causing visual distraction.
- Check that the visuals contribute to a deeper understanding of topics, texts, or concepts by being clear, relevant, and appropriately detailed.
- Confirm that the layout and structure of both teacher and student materials are consistent across lessons, modules, or units. This consistency helps students and teachers familiarize themselves with the format, easily locate information, and understand how different sections connect.

- Ensure that organizational features such as the table of contents, glossary, index, and internal references are clear, accurate, and free from errors, facilitating easy navigation and comprehension.
- Verify that the materials make balanced use of space, avoiding overcrowding or excessive whitespace, to maintain a tidy and organized appearance that aids focus and comprehension.
- Check for seamless integration of visuals with the content, ensuring that text and images complement each other and contribute to a cohesive learning experience.
- Look for clear and informative captions and labels on visuals that help explain and contextualize their content, making it easier for students to connect visuals with the written material.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do images, graphics, and models used in the materials clearly support and enhance student learning and engagement by being directly related to the content, helping to clarify or illustrate key concepts without causing visual distraction?
- Do the visuals contribute to a deeper understanding of topics, texts, or concepts by being clear, relevant, and appropriately detailed?
- Is the layout and structure of both teacher and student materials consistent across lessons, modules, or units, helping students and teachers familiarize themselves with the format, easily locate information, and understand how different sections connect?
- Are organizational features such as the table of contents, glossary, index, and internal references clear, accurate, and free from errors, facilitating easy navigation and comprehension?
- Do the materials make balanced use of space, avoiding overcrowding or excessive whitespace, to maintain a tidy and organized appearance that aids focus and comprehension?
- Is there seamless integration of visuals with the content, ensuring that text and images complement each other and contribute to a cohesive learning experience?
- Are there clear and informative captions and labels on visuals that help explain and contextualize their content, making it easier for students to connect visuals with the written material?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss whether there are images, graphics, and models used in the materials that clearly support and enhance student learning and engagement by being directly related to the content, helping to clarify or illustrate key concepts without causing visual distraction.
- Discuss whether the visuals contribute to a deeper understanding of topics, texts, or concepts by being clear, relevant, and appropriately detailed.
- Discuss whether the layout and structure of both teacher and student materials are consistent across lessons, modules, or units, helping students and teachers familiarize themselves with the format, easily locate information, and understand how different sections connect.
- Discuss whether there are organizational features such as the table of contents, glossary, index, and internal references clear, accurate, and free from errors, facilitating easy navigation and comprehension.
- Discuss whether the materials make balanced use of space, avoiding overcrowding or excessive whitespace, to maintain a tidy and organized appearance that aids focus and comprehension.
- Discuss whether there is seamless integration of visuals with the content, ensuring that text and images complement each other and contribute to a cohesive learning experience.
- Discuss whether there are clear and informative captions and labels on visuals that help explain and contextualize their content, making it easier for students to connect visuals with the written material.

Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Criterion 3.3 | Materials include a visual design that is engaging and references or integrates digital technology, when applicable, with guidance for teachers. |
| Indicator 3u | Materials provide teacher guidance for the use of embedded technology to support and enhance student learning, when applicable. |

Scoring: Narrative Evidence Only

Note: No score is given for this indicator. Only qualitative evidence is provided.

- Teacher guidance is provided for the use of embedded technology to support and enhance student learning, when applicable.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines whether the materials provide teacher guidance for the use of embedded technology to support and enhance student learning, and is applicable to materials with digital components only. This guidance helps teachers integrate technology into their teaching practices seamlessly and effectively, maximizing the potential benefits of digital tools and resources. By doing so, materials can empower teachers to leverage technology to make lessons more interactive, engaging, and accessible, thus improving student understanding and engagement.

Indicator 3u Guiding Question:

Do the materials provide teacher guidance for the use of embedded technology to support and enhance student learning, when applicable?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed (when applicable):

- Check to see that the materials provide clear and detailed instructions for teachers on how to use embedded technology in the classroom, including step-by-step guides or tutorials if necessary.
- Ensure there are resources or references for technical support and troubleshooting, helping teachers address any issues that may arise with technology use.
- Look for links or references to professional development opportunities or resources that can help teachers improve their proficiency in using technology for instructional purposes.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the materials provide clear and detailed instructions for teachers on how to use embedded technology in the classroom, including step-by-step guides or tutorials if necessary?
- Are there resources or references for technical support and troubleshooting, helping teachers address any issues that may arise with technology use?

- Are there links or references to professional development opportunities or resources that can help teachers improve their proficiency in using technology for instructional purposes?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss whether the materials provide clear and detailed instructions for teachers on how to use embedded technology in the classroom, including step-by-step guides or tutorials if necessary.
- Discuss whether there are resources or references for technical support and troubleshooting, helping teachers address any issues that may arise with technology use.
- Discuss whether there are links or references to professional development opportunities or resources that can help teachers improve their proficiency in using technology for instructional purposes.

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