



Core Content Evidence Guide v2.1

**English Language Arts
Grades 3-5**

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Introduction

The Evidence Guides are designed to be used alongside the Review Criteria and show how indicators are scored, the purpose and rationale behind them, 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 1.3

Application of Foundational Skills for Word Reading

Materials support students in applying advanced word reading strategies—including multisyllabic decoding and morpheme analysis—to build accurate, automatic, and meaningful reading.

What is the purpose of this Criterion?

This criterion addresses the critical role of phonics and word reading instruction in Grades 3-5 foundational skills development.

In the upper elementary grades, students must move beyond basic letter-sound correspondences to master complex phonics patterns, multisyllabic word decoding, and morphological analysis. Proficient readers at this stage can rapidly and accurately decode longer, unfamiliar words, supporting their ability to access increasingly sophisticated grade-level texts across content areas.

According to the Simple View of Reading ([Hoover & Gough, 1990](#)), skilled reading depends on two interdependent components: decoding (word recognition) and linguistic comprehension (language understanding). In Grades 3-5, decoding instruction must evolve to address the greater complexity of English orthography, ensuring that students have the tools to read multisyllabic words, recognize prefixes, suffixes, roots, and meaning-bearing units, and transfer their decoding skills to content-area vocabulary.

Scarborough's Reading Rope ([Scarborough, 1998; 2001](#)) reinforces that as students move into upper elementary grades, their word recognition must become increasingly automatic and accurate, allowing cognitive resources to shift toward reading comprehension. Without strong foundational skills in advanced phonics and morphology, students may struggle to access grade-level content, hampering their reading development overall.

Effective phonics instruction in Grades 3-5 remains explicit and systematic:

- **Explicit Instruction** provides clear explanations, modeling, guided practice, and feedback to support student mastery of increasingly complex word-reading skills ([Archer & Hughes, 2011](#)).
- **Systematic instruction** follows a logical progression from simpler to more complex patterns, with intentional review and application to authentic texts ([Mesmer & Griffith, 2005](#)).

Research also highlights the importance of multisyllabic word reading and morphological awareness in upper elementary:

- [Bhattacharya and Ehri \(2004\)](#) found that systematic instruction in chunking multisyllabic words

significantly improves decoding and comprehension for struggling readers.

- Goodwin and Ahn (2013) demonstrated that teaching morphological structures (prefixes, suffixes, roots) enhances students’ ability to decode complex words and supports vocabulary growth.

Therefore, high-quality foundational skills materials for Grades 3-5 must provide explicit, systematic instruction in phonics and word reading that builds toward automaticity with multisyllabic words, morphological analysis, and flexible decoding of complex words to support full participation in grade-level literacy tasks.

Research Connection

Research consistently supports the importance of systematic and explicit phonics instruction for developing strong word-reading skills. The National Reading Panel (2000) emphasizes that systematic phonics programs are characterized by a clearly delineated, sequential set of phonics elements taught with explicit instruction, ensuring students develop the knowledge and application skills necessary for reading and writing. Phonics instruction is viewed as a means to an end—critical for building decoding skills that support overall literacy growth.

The National Research Council (2015) further highlights that explicit instruction in foundational skills directs students’ attention to the essential relationships between sounds and letters, helping them focus on the structures necessary for reading development.

Shanahan (2014) notes that while the specific order of phonics skills can vary, the presence of a coherent, systematic program is crucial for effective student learning. Consistency and organization in phonics instruction allow students to build and consolidate their word recognition skills over time.

Building on this, Buckingham et al. (2019) assert that decades of scientific reading research consistently demonstrate the critical role of systematic phonics instruction in teaching the alphabetic principle. Logical sequencing of letter-sound correspondences and application through blending and decoding tasks lead to more accurate and fluent word reading.

Finally, Ehri (2020) underscores that early grapheme-phoneme knowledge, phonemic segmentation, and systematic decoding instruction lay the foundation for later reading development. As students progress, their decoding skills evolve into understanding syllabic and morphemic structures, reinforcing vocabulary growth and deepening reading comprehension.

Together, these findings affirm that explicit, systematic phonics instruction, integrated with opportunities for students to practice increasingly complex word-reading skills, is essential for supporting literacy development in Grades 3-5.

Scoring:

Meets Expectations

- 22-24

Partially Meets Expectations

- 12-21

Does Not Meet Expectations

- <12

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

Criterion 1.3	Materials support students in applying advanced word reading strategies—including multisyllabic decoding and morpheme analysis—to build accurate, automatic, and meaningful reading.
Indicator 1g	Materials support students in applying a range of evidence-based strategies to read and spell multisyllabic words in connected text, including syllable division, syllable types, and morpheme-based approaches.

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 emphasize flexible application over fixed sequences, with supports for targeted review of prerequisite skills as needed. Materials include explicit, grade-appropriate instruction for applying multisyllabic word reading strategies, including syllable types, syllable division, and morpheme-based approaches. Materials provide structured, embedded opportunities for students to decode and encode multisyllabic words in connected text, with instructional guidance aligned to expectations for fluent word reading. Materials include guidance and supports for reviewing prerequisite foundational skills or identifying students who may require targeted intervention, and monitoring progress toward accuracy and automaticity through informal or embedded assessment opportunities. 		

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator addresses students’ ability to read and spell multisyllabic words through the application of evidence-based decoding and encoding strategies, including syllable division principles, syllable types, and morpheme-based approaches.

In Grades 3-5, foundational skills instruction must extend beyond basic phonics to explicitly support students in flexibly analyzing and reading complex words they encounter in grade-level texts. Students need to be taught how to recognize common syllable types (e.g., closed, open, vowel-consonant-*e*, *r*-controlled, vowel teams, consonant-*e*), how to divide multisyllabic words into manageable chunks, and how to apply morphemic knowledge (e.g., prefixes, suffixes, Greek and Latin roots) to decode and encode unfamiliar words.

Research emphasizes that students become more accurate, fluent readers when they are explicitly taught

strategies for breaking down multisyllabic words and when these strategies are consistently applied within meaningful, connected reading and writing tasks. Instruction must emphasize flexibility—students should learn to select and apply strategies based on the structure of the word, rather than rigidly following a fixed order of steps.

Additionally, materials must provide supports for targeted review of prerequisite foundational skills (e.g., phoneme-grapheme correspondence, basic word decoding) for students who may struggle, ensuring all learners have access to grade-level reading expectations.

Instructional materials should also support teachers in assessing students' ability to apply multisyllabic word reading strategies with accuracy and increasing automaticity. Informal checks for understanding and embedded practice routines should be included across the year, allowing teachers to monitor whether students can decode complex words independently in connected text and apply strategies flexibly based on word structure.

By developing flexible, strategic approaches to reading and spelling multisyllabic words, students strengthen their ability to independently access complex texts, deepen their vocabulary knowledge, and enhance overall reading comprehension.

Research or Standards connection:

Research demonstrates that as students progress into the upper elementary grades, systematic foundational skills instruction must evolve to address the increasing complexity of the English language. Early decoding proficiency lays the groundwork for reading success; however, mastery of multisyllabic word reading and morphological analysis becomes critical for students in Grades 3-5.

According to [Ehri \(2020\)](#), early phoneme-grapheme correspondence and decoding skills provide the foundation that allows students to move into more advanced word-reading tasks. Similarly, [Lyon \(2023\)](#) emphasizes that decoding automaticity is essential for fluent reading, making flexible word analysis skills increasingly important as students encounter longer, more complex words.

Research by [Bhattacharya and Ehri \(2004\)](#) shows that explicit instruction in syllable division and chunking strategies significantly improves the word reading and spelling ability of struggling older readers. Teaching students how to divide multisyllabic words into manageable parts supports their decoding efficiency and enhances comprehension of complex texts.

In addition, [Goodwin and Ahn \(2013\)](#) found that direct instruction in morphological awareness—including recognition of prefixes, suffixes, and roots—contributes meaningfully to students' ability to decode unfamiliar words, spell accurately, and expand vocabulary knowledge. Morphology provides students with tools for flexible, meaning-centered word analysis.

Together, these findings emphasize that effective foundational skills instruction in Grades 3-5 must:

- Provide explicit, flexible instruction in applying syllable types and division strategies.
- Integrate morpheme-based decoding approaches to deepen vocabulary and comprehension.
- Support students in applying strategies within connected text, rather than relying solely on isolated word lists.
- Offer targeted review of prerequisite decoding skills for students who require additional support.

Strategic, scaffolded instruction in multisyllabic word reading equips students with the skills they need to access increasingly sophisticated academic texts across content areas.

Resources:

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

Indicator 1g Guiding Questions:

Do the materials provide explicit instruction and structured opportunities for students to apply a range of evidence-based strategies to read and spell multisyllabic words, including syllable division, syllable types, and morpheme-based approaches, with an emphasis on flexible application in connected text?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition, student materials, and lesson plans across the program. Review:
 - Lessons for explicit instruction in reading and spelling multisyllabic words, using syllable division, syllable types, and morpheme-based strategies.
 - Embedded opportunities for students to decode and encode multisyllabic words in connected text, not only in isolated word lists.
 - Teacher guidance for flexible application of word reading strategies—encouraging students to use multiple approaches (e.g., breaking words into syllables, analyzing affixes and roots.)
 - Supports and guidance for reviewing prerequisite skills (e.g., basic phonics patterns) when students struggle to apply multisyllabic word reading strategies.
 - Any informal assessments, observational protocols, or embedded practice routines that check students' ability to apply syllable division, syllable type recognition, or morpheme analysis when reading unfamiliar words. Look for whether materials include opportunities for teachers to monitor accuracy, automaticity, and strategy use over time.
- Look at the Teacher Edition and student materials for specific examples. Examples may include:
 - Anchor charts, visuals, or routines that model different syllable types (closed, open, vowel-consonant-*e*, *r*-controlled, vowel teams, consonant-*e*).
 - Guided practice breaking down multisyllabic words based on syllable types and morphemes.
 - Instructional routines for flexibly chunking and decoding long words during fluency passages or content-area texts.
 - Suggestions for how teachers can reteach or reinforce syllable division strategies if students struggle.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Are teachers modeling explicit multisyllabic word reading strategies (syllable types, division, morphology)?
 - Are teachers guiding students to flexibly apply strategies based on the structure of the word?
 - Are teachers provided with scaffolds for reviewing prerequisite skills when needed?
- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Are students practicing decoding and encoding multisyllabic words regularly in connected text (not only in isolation)?
 - Are students applying a range of strategies to figure out unfamiliar long words?
 - Are students demonstrating flexibility—choosing appropriate strategies rather than rigidly following a single sequence?
 - Are students demonstrating increasing accuracy and automaticity when reading multisyllabic words, and are teachers prompted to monitor and respond to this progress?

- Are there supports and teacher prompts for providing additional practice or intervention when students need support with applying multisyllabic decoding strategies?
- Are the strategies clearly explained and appropriately challenging for grades 3-5 readers?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of how materials support flexible, explicit instruction and practice in reading and spelling multisyllabic words.
- Discuss how materials embed decoding practice within connected reading and writing tasks, not just isolated exercises.
- Discuss the extent to which materials support teachers in reviewing prerequisite skills if necessary.
- 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 support students in applying advanced word reading strategies—including multisyllabic decoding and morpheme analysis—to build accurate, automatic, and meaningful reading.
Indicator 1h	Materials are absent of the three-cueing system.

Scoring:	
4 points	0 points
Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.	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:

Research emphasizes that phonics-based decoding must remain the primary strategy for students when encountering unfamiliar words in text. Instructional approaches that encourage students to rely on unreliable guessing strategies—such as using pictures, rereading the sentence for context, or predicting words based on the first letter—may result in occasional correct guesses, but ultimately hinder the development of accurate and independent word reading skills.

The Primary National Strategy (2006b) underscores that when students consistently use alternative cues rather than decoding, their acquisition and application of phonics knowledge is delayed. Over time, as texts become more complex and meaning becomes less predictable, these guessing strategies fail to support fluent reading. Students who are not anchored in strong decoding skills often struggle with comprehension and overall reading achievement as they advance through grade levels.

Effective foundational skills instruction prioritizes explicit, systematic phonics instruction as the primary route to decoding unfamiliar words. Securing students' ability to decode based on sound-symbol correspondences ensures that they develop the fluency, accuracy, and automaticity necessary for successful reading comprehension and long-term literacy success.

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 support students in applying advanced word reading strategies—including multisyllabic decoding and morpheme analysis—to build accurate, automatic, and meaningful reading.
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. <i>Note: This is not an assessed indicator in grades 3-5.</i>

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

Criterion 1.3	Materials support students in applying advanced word reading strategies—including multisyllabic decoding and morpheme analysis—to build accurate, automatic, and meaningful reading.
Indicator 1j	Materials include systematic and explicit modeling and guided practice in applying multisyllabic word reading strategies, including syllable types, syllable division, and morpheme analysis.

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 contain explicit guidance for systematic and repeated teacher modeling of multisyllabic word reading strategies. Lessons include blending and segmenting practice using structured routines that reflect syllable division and morphological word parts. Lessons include guided spelling or dictation practice using grade-appropriate multisyllabic words with embedded morphemes. Materials include teacher guidance for providing corrective feedback aligned to word-level reading and spelling strategies. 		

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines whether materials provide systematic and explicit teacher modeling and guided student practice for reading and spelling multisyllabic words using a range of evidence-based strategies, including syllable types, syllable division patterns, and morpheme analysis.

In Grades 3-5, students encounter increasingly complex vocabulary in both literary and informational texts. To access this content independently and confidently, they must learn how to break down unfamiliar multisyllabic words using flexible and transferable decoding strategies. Explicit teacher modeling is critical in helping students internalize these processes. Lessons should demonstrate how to apply strategies for identifying syllable boundaries, recognizing common syllable types, and analyzing affixes and base words for meaning and structure.

Foundational skills instruction at this level must also include structured blending and segmenting routines that move beyond basic phoneme manipulation and instead reflect syllable-level and morpheme-based word analysis. These routines support students in decoding and encoding multisyllabic words with accuracy and fluency.

Additionally, guided spelling (dictation) practice provides students with opportunities to apply newly learned word analysis skills in writing. This supports orthographic mapping and reinforces the reciprocal relationship between reading and spelling.

Effective materials also include teacher-facing guidance on providing corrective feedback, ensuring students are redirected using the appropriate word-reading or spelling strategy. Rather than relying on surface-level prompts (e.g., “Try again”), high-quality guidance connects the feedback directly to the decoding or encoding process, reinforcing both skill mastery and metacognitive awareness.

Through systematic modeling, structured routines, and corrective feedback, students develop the ability to approach complex words strategically—building toward fluent reading, accurate spelling, and increased comprehension across the content areas.

Research or Standards connection:

Research strongly supports the importance of explicit and systematic instruction in foundational reading skills, particularly as students transition to decoding and spelling multisyllabic words in Grades 3-5.

Buckingham et al. (2019) emphasize that effective early literacy programs must provide daily, structured opportunities for students to build phonics knowledge through explicit modeling, clear learning objectives, and unambiguous language. Systematic instruction, which follows a logical progression of skills with sufficient practice and review, ensures that students master foundational word-reading and spelling strategies.

Research also highlights the critical role of blending and segmenting instruction. Brady (2020) notes that while phoneme-level blending and segmenting are essential for early readers, these skills continue to predict reading success through the end of third grade. Blending supports students’ ability to synthesize decoded parts into words, while segmentation builds spelling skills and reinforces the ability to analyze and encode word structures.

The importance of corrective feedback is also well documented. A synthesis of research by Fyfe et al. (2023) demonstrates that children across age groups benefit significantly when provided with task-specific corrective feedback. Rather than simply practicing skills, students who receive targeted, actionable feedback improve their performance more rapidly and consolidate their learning more effectively.

At the multisyllabic word reading level, Archer, Gleason, and Vachon (2003) found that upper elementary and secondary students often struggle with long, complex words, negatively impacting fluency and comprehension. Instructional approaches that focus on segmenting words, understanding syllable types, and applying flexible decoding strategies are critical for closing reading gaps. In addition, providing repeated practice through oral guided reading, choral reading, and partner reading enhances fluency and supports mastery of multisyllabic word reading skills.

Together, these findings affirm that high-quality foundational skills materials must integrate systematic and explicit modeling, structured blending and segmenting routines, guided spelling and dictation tasks, and specific, strategy-aligned corrective feedback to support students’ development into fluent, accurate readers of complex, multisyllabic words.

Resources:

- [Explicit Instruction Explanation](#)
- [What is Explicit Instruction?](#)
- [Exploring the Foundations of Explicit Instruction](#)
- [When Young Readers Get Stuck](#)
- [CCSS Grades 3-5 Foundational Skills Standards \(pg. 17\)](#)

Indicator 1j Guiding Question:

How do the materials provide systematic and explicit teacher modeling, guided practice, and corrective feedback in applying multisyllabic word reading and spelling strategies, including syllable types, syllable division, and morpheme analysis?

Evidence Collection

In the Instructional Materials being reviewed:

- Examine the Teacher Edition, student materials, and lesson plans. Review:
 - Lessons that include explicit teacher modeling of how to apply multisyllabic word reading strategies (e.g., identifying syllable types, breaking words into syllables, analyzing prefixes, roots, and suffixes).
 - Structured blending routines that move beyond single-syllable blending to multisyllabic word blending across syllable types and morphemes.
 - Structured segmenting routines that emphasize analyzing word parts for accurate spelling, particularly using morphological units (e.g., base words, prefixes, suffixes).
 - Lessons that include guided dictation using grade-appropriate multisyllabic words, reinforcing decoding and encoding skills together.
 - Teacher guidance for providing specific corrective feedback during decoding and spelling activities, aligned to the word reading or spelling strategy being taught.
 - Support for multiple opportunities for student practice in applying these strategies during connected text reading and writing.
- Look for examples such as:
 - Blending and segmenting practice routines that explicitly reflect syllable division and morpheme use.
 - Dictation activities using real, grade-appropriate multisyllabic words drawn from instruction.
 - Teacher prompts for modeling error correction based on the structure of words, not generic correction.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Is the teacher explicitly modeling multisyllabic word reading strategies during lessons?
 - Are blending and segmenting routines included that focus on multisyllabic words and morphemes?
 - Are dictation activities embedded that align with current word-reading instruction?
 - Are teachers provided with clear guidance on delivering corrective feedback tied directly to the strategies (e.g., re-blending syllables, analyzing affixes)?

- What should the students be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Are students practicing decoding and spelling multisyllabic words during lessons?
 - Are students demonstrating application of syllable division, syllable type recognition, and morpheme analysis when reading or spelling?
 - Are students receiving targeted feedback that helps correct decoding and encoding errors at the word part level?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of how materials support systematic, explicit modeling, guided practice, and corrective feedback tied to multisyllabic word reading and spelling.
- Discuss the integration of multisyllabic reading and spelling strategies across the year (not isolated in one unit).
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by the instructional materials.
- Look for consensus about whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or did not meet any scoring bullet.
- Agree on the final rating.

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

Criterion 1.3	Materials support students in applying advanced word reading strategies—including multisyllabic decoding and morpheme analysis—to build accurate, automatic, and meaningful reading.
Indicator 1k	Materials include frequent, varied opportunities for students to decode and encode multisyllabic words that contain advanced sound and spelling patterns, including affixes and syllable types.

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"> Lessons provide frequent opportunities for students to decode multisyllabic words containing grade-level sound and spelling patterns. Lessons provide frequent opportunities for students to encode multisyllabic words through dictation, word building, or sentence-level tasks. Student-guided practice and independent practice include varied activities focused on blending, segmenting, and analyzing multisyllabic words. Materials include structured practice designed to build accuracy and automaticity in word-level reading and spelling, with embedded opportunities for teachers to monitor progress and determine when students are approaching mastery. 		

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

The purpose of this indicator is to ensure that materials provide systematic, frequent, and varied opportunities for students to decode and encode multisyllabic words containing advanced phonics patterns, including affixes and syllable types. As students move through upper elementary grades, the complexity of texts increases, and so does the demand for proficient word analysis skills. Instruction must equip students with strategies to accurately read and spell multisyllabic words, reinforcing the application of sound-symbol correspondences, morphological knowledge, and syllabication rules.

By integrating decoding and encoding practice, materials can foster deeper orthographic mapping and support the transition from accuracy to automaticity in word recognition and spelling. Practice tasks may include dictation, word building, analysis of word parts, and sentence-level application. When students engage in structured and purposeful practice with increasingly complex word forms, they build the foundational knowledge

necessary for fluent reading and effective writing. This indicator emphasizes the role of explicit and embedded opportunities for applying phonics to real words in varied formats to support advanced literacy development.

Instructional materials should also support teachers in monitoring student progress toward fluent and accurate reading and spelling of multisyllabic words. Informal checks for understanding and embedded routines across the year should help determine when students are moving from guided practice to independent mastery.

Research or Standards connection:

Proficient reading requires more than accuracy—it demands that foundational decoding skills become automatic in order to free up cognitive resources for higher-order comprehension processes. Research confirms that automaticity in word recognition is essential for fluent reading and allows students to efficiently engage with complex texts ([Hudson et al., 2011](#)). As students progress to reading multisyllabic words in upper elementary grades, they must apply learned phonics patterns and generalizations effortlessly in order to navigate increasingly challenging academic texts.

The English writing system presents unique challenges due to its deep orthography, including approximately 44 phonemes represented through more than 250 spellings. Because of this complexity, students need repeated, structured opportunities to decode and encode multisyllabic words that reflect grade-level phonics patterns. Reading and spelling should not be taught in isolation; when integrated, they provide reciprocal benefits. Instruction that couples encoding tasks—such as dictation, word building, and sentence writing—with decoding practice fosters robust understanding of letter-sound relationships and supports long-term retention of word patterns ([Reed, 2012](#)).

Developing spelling proficiency also reinforces students' knowledge of orthographic patterns, enabling them to more efficiently recognize and read words. As students learn to analyze affixes, syllable types, and morphological structures within multisyllabic words, their ability to decode unfamiliar words improves. This integration strengthens phonics knowledge and builds a foundation for reading fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension ([Graham, 2020](#)).

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](#)
- [CCSS Grades 3-5 Foundational Skills Standards \(pg. 17\)](#)

Indicator 1k Guiding Question:

Do the materials include frequent practice opportunities for students to decode and encode multisyllabic words that consist of more advanced sound and spelling patterns?

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 are approached).
 - Instructions, questions, and tasks in foundational skill sections, including introductory materials, to evaluate the quality and frequency of decoding and encoding opportunities.

- The scope and sequence, particularly for advanced phonics patterns, multisyllabic words, affixes, and syllable types.
- The unit and/or weekly overviews show intentional placement of multisyllabic word practice and cumulative review.
- The daily lessons in the Teacher Edition that target decoding and encoding of grade-level phonics patterns.
- Activities and routines that support student practice with newly taught and previously learned multisyllabic word patterns.
- Evidence of opportunities for:
 - Decoding multisyllabic words through segmenting, blending, and word analysis.
 - Encoding multisyllabic words through dictation, word building, sentence writing, or applied tasks.
 - Structured and repeated practice designed to support automaticity and accuracy.
 - Informal opportunities for teachers to observe and monitor student progress in reading and spelling multisyllabic words, such as teacher-guided dictation review, decoding checks during fluency tasks, or tracking accuracy and automaticity over time.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - How do students decode multisyllabic words using sounds, syllables, affixes, or morphological patterns?
 - How do materials guide students in applying sound-spelling knowledge to more complex word structures (e.g., closed/open syllables, prefixes, suffixes)?
 - How do students encode multisyllabic words in response to dictation or word-building activities?
 - Do materials provide students with explicit strategies to identify and decode/encode unfamiliar words (e.g., sound it out, divide the word, try another sound)?
 - Do students decode and encode words aligned to grade-level phonics standards, including advanced sound and spelling patterns?
 - Are physical strategies (e.g., arm tapping, clapping, finger tapping) used to support segmentation and blending?
 - Are phonics patterns introduced aligned to appropriate grade-level complexity and application?
- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - How does the teacher model and guide decoding and encoding of multisyllabic words?
 - What routines or scaffolds support the transfer of phonics knowledge to both reading and writing?
 - How are advanced phonics skills (e.g., affixes, syllable types, derivational morphemes) introduced, practiced, and reviewed?
 - Are instructional routines designed to build accuracy and automaticity in word reading and spelling?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator across multiple lesson types and practice activities.
- Discuss the quality and frequency of decoding and encoding opportunities provided throughout the year.
- Consider how much instructional time and practice is dedicated to reinforcing advanced phonics knowledge through multisyllabic words.
- Evaluate whether materials provide sufficient distributed, cumulative, and varied practice across formats.

- Discuss whether practice activities build fluency, automaticity, and word analysis skills.
- Address any unanswered questions from the instructional materials.
- Look for consensus about whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or not at all.
- Agree on the final rating.

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

Criterion 1.3	Materials support students in applying advanced word reading strategies—including multisyllabic decoding and morpheme analysis—to build accurate, automatic, and meaningful reading.
Indicator 1l	Spelling rules are introduced in a logical progression, embedded in grade-level content, and connected to word structure. Students receive sufficient practice to support accurate and automatic spelling.

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"> • Spelling rules and generalizations are taught in a logical order aligned to grade-level word reading and spelling expectations, including morphological patterns. • Materials include clear explanations for spelling of specific words and word parts, including rules, patterns, and meaningful units (e.g., roots, prefixes, suffixes). • Students have frequent opportunities to practice spelling rules and generalizations through connected tasks that promote accuracy and automaticity. 		

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

The purpose of this indicator is to ensure that spelling instruction is intentionally designed and embedded within grade-level foundational skills instruction. Spelling rules and generalizations should be introduced in a logical progression that mirrors students’ developing knowledge of word structure, including phoneme-grapheme correspondences, syllable types, and morphological patterns such as roots, prefixes, and suffixes. Rather than treating spelling as isolated memorization, high-quality materials provide explicit instruction that helps students understand how and why words are spelled the way they are.

Effective spelling instruction enhances students’ ability to decode and encode unfamiliar words by reinforcing underlying patterns and meaningful word parts. When students learn the structure of words and receive clear explanations of rules and generalizations, they are better equipped to apply that knowledge across varied contexts—supporting both accurate spelling and efficient word recognition. Spelling instruction also plays a critical role in vocabulary development, fluency, and written expression.

Ultimately, this indicator underscores the importance of integrating spelling into core foundational skills

instruction, ensuring that students receive sufficient and connected practice opportunities that promote both accuracy and automaticity. Mastery of spelling patterns helps lay the foundation for increasingly sophisticated language use and supports students' broader literacy development.

Research or Standards connection:

Effective spelling instruction contributes meaningfully to students' reading, writing, and phonological awareness development. Research has shown that when spelling rules and generalizations are taught through structured, rule-based approaches, students are better able to apply their knowledge to both familiar and unfamiliar words. Teaching students to analyze patterns, such as vowel teams, syllable types, and morphological units, builds the flexibility and accuracy needed to read and spell words with increasing complexity ([Johnston, 2001](#)).

A comprehensive meta-analysis by [Graham and Santangelo \(2014\)](#) confirmed that direct, formal spelling instruction yields significant benefits—not only for spelling performance, but also for phonological awareness, word reading, and written expression. Their review of over 50 studies found consistent, positive effects when spelling was taught intentionally, rather than incidentally, with lasting impacts on student performance and generalization to authentic writing tasks.

Further research supports the effectiveness of structured approaches that emphasize rule-based instruction over rote memorization. [Dymock and Nicholson \(2017\)](#) found that students who were taught spelling through explicit strategies (e.g., spelling rules, syllable division, the doubling rule) demonstrated greater ability to apply these skills to untaught words than students using visual memory techniques alone. These findings suggest that rule-based spelling instruction not only supports the mastery of individual words but also fosters transfer and flexible application—key components of reading and writing proficiency.

Together, this body of research reinforces the importance of embedding spelling instruction within foundational skills programs, ensuring that students receive frequent, connected opportunities to practice spelling patterns and develop the automaticity necessary for fluent written expression.

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:

Are spelling rules and generalizations introduced in a logical progression, embedded in grade-level content, and connected to word structure, with sufficient practice to support accurate and automatic spelling?

Evidence Collection

- Review the Teacher and student materials for the following:
 - Scope and sequence for spelling instruction, including alignment to word reading, phonics, and morphological expectations.
 - How the program introduces spelling rules and generalizations, including the logical order of instruction (e.g., CVCe before multisyllabic derivations, or inflectional endings before derivational affixes).
 - Whether the materials include clear explanations for spelling of specific words or patterns, including phoneme-grapheme correspondences, syllable patterns, and meaningful word parts (prefixes, roots, suffixes).

- How frequently students engage in connected spelling tasks (e.g., dictations, word building, sentence-level spelling, writing with focus patterns).
- How materials build cumulative practice of previously taught spelling rules and generalizations.
- Whether spelling instruction is connected to other foundational elements (e.g., decoding, morphology, vocabulary).

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What is the sequence of spelling instruction in the materials? Is it logical and aligned to grade-level expectations?
- Do materials attend to both phonics-based and morphology-based spelling patterns (e.g., doubling rules, silent-e, *-ed*, *-ing*, *-ful*, *-ness*)?
- Are spelling rules presented with clear explanations of why words are spelled the way they are?
- Are students taught to analyze and apply spelling rules through practice, not just memorize word lists?
- How do materials support frequent, varied, and cumulative practice to build automaticity in spelling?
- Are spelling tasks embedded within meaningful activities, such as writing sentences or responding to text?
- Are spelling skills reinforced in connection with grade-level reading and writing tasks?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of spelling instruction embedded within core lessons, foundational routines, and cumulative review.
- Discuss the amount and type of practice students engage in over the course of the year. Are they moving toward accurate and automatic application of spelling rules?
- Evaluate whether spelling instruction is explicitly connected to decoding, morphology, and grade-level vocabulary.
- Identify any gaps in the logical progression, frequency, or clarity of instruction.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by the materials.
- Look for consensus on whether the indicator was met fully, partially, or not at all.
- Agree on the final rating.

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

Criterion 1.3	Materials support students in applying advanced word reading strategies—including multisyllabic decoding and morpheme analysis—to build accurate, automatic, and meaningful reading.
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. <i>Note: This is not an assessed indicator in grades 3-5.</i>

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

Criterion 1.3	Materials support students in applying advanced word reading strategies—including multisyllabic decoding and morpheme analysis—to build accurate, automatic, and meaningful reading.
Indicator 1n	Materials include targeted assessment opportunities that identify students who require additional support with foundational phonics skills and provide guidance for appropriate instructional responses.

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 diagnostic and/or formative assessments that may be administered at entry points or as needed to identify students requiring additional phonics support. These assessments are not expected to be part of routine whole-class instruction. Assessment materials provide teachers with clear guidance on interpreting results to determine student needs. Materials support teachers with instructional suggestions, scaffolds, reteaching routines, or intervention pathways based on assessment results to help students progress towards mastery. 		

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

The purpose of this indicator is to ensure that materials provide targeted, actionable assessment tools that help teachers identify students who require additional support with foundational phonics skills. These assessments are diagnostic or formative in nature and intended to be used flexibly—at entry points or as needed—not as part of routine whole-class assessment cycles. When used appropriately, such assessments allow teachers to pinpoint gaps in students’ phonics understanding, including decoding, encoding, and phonics generalizations.

High-quality materials equip teachers not only with tools to assess student progress but also with the knowledge to interpret the results and take responsive instructional action. This includes scaffolds, reteaching guidance, grouping suggestions, or intervention pathways tailored to students’ identified needs. Assessments should yield clear, usable data to support instructional decisions, particularly for students at risk of falling behind in the acquisition of foundational reading skills. Materials should support teachers in recognizing when students are demonstrating accuracy and automaticity in targeted phonics skills, signaling readiness to transition from intervention to grade-level instruction.

This indicator reinforces the importance of early identification and targeted instructional support to prevent long-term reading difficulties. Rather than functioning as standalone assessment batteries, these tools should be embedded within a responsive instructional model that helps all students make meaningful progress toward automatic and accurate decoding.

Research or Standards connection:

Targeted phonics assessments play a critical role in identifying students who may require additional instructional support before reading difficulties become entrenched. Research emphasizes that diagnostic assessment should go beyond simple accuracy checks and include a combination of phonemic decoding tasks, word reading in and out of context, and reading fluency measures ([Otaiba et al., 2012](#)). Out-of-context word reading, in particular, can uncover challenges that may not be visible when students are able to rely on context clues—especially for those with reading disabilities.

Effective assessment systems do not rely solely on summative or benchmark tests but include ongoing, flexible tools that teachers can administer as needed to evaluate specific phonics subskills. Observations of oral reading behaviors and responses to appropriately leveled text offer additional insight into how students apply phonics knowledge in real-time.

Instructional materials that include targeted diagnostic or formative assessments—paired with clear interpretation guidance and suggested interventions—support a responsive instructional model. This ensures that students receive timely and tailored support, reinforcing their ability to master foundational phonics skills and move forward with fluent, independent reading.

Resources:

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

Indicator 1n Guiding Question:

Do the materials include targeted assessments to identify students who require additional phonics support, and do they provide clear guidance for teachers on how to respond instructionally?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Phonics Standards and to assess how the materials support identification and intervention. Review:
 - Table of Contents and prefatory materials for a rationale or overview of how diagnostic or formative phonics assessments are intended to be used.
 - Assessment sections (e.g., diagnostic tools, screeners, observation checklists) that are not routine whole-class assessments, but rather targeted or on-demand tools for identifying specific phonics needs.
 - Guidance for teachers on interpreting results, including scoring rubrics, cut points, checklists, or look-fors that help identify which students may require additional support.
 - Protocols for instructional response, including reteaching routines, scaffolded practice, small group guidance, or pathways for intervention—along with guidance for monitoring student progress toward mastery (e.g., accuracy, automaticity, readiness to return to core instruction).
 - Questions and tasks within assessments that target phonics knowledge explicitly (e.g., decoding unfamiliar words, sound-symbol correspondences, multisyllabic word reading).

- Any tools or sections that support flexible administration—such as entry-point diagnostics, lesson-based checks, or informal observations used to adapt instruction in real time.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What types of diagnostic or formative phonics assessments are provided, and when are they designed to be used?
- Are assessments designed for individual administration or use with specific students rather than whole-class routines?
- How do materials help teachers identify students who are not meeting grade-level phonics expectations?
- What guidance is provided for interpreting assessment results (e.g., what constitutes “meeting,” “approaching,” or “at risk”)?
- What specific instructional recommendations or scaffolds are suggested based on assessment results?
- Do materials include examples of how teachers should respond instructionally to assessment findings (e.g., small-group plans, alternate practice routines)?
- How are assessments aligned to the grade-level phonics expectations, and how do they support targeted intervention?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share examples of diagnostic or formative assessments and discuss what skills they are measuring.
- Evaluate whether assessments are targeted to support students *below grade level* and are not intended as whole-class benchmark tools.
- Discuss how teachers are guided to interpret the data and what instructional next steps are explicitly supported.
- Review whether the assessments support responsive, differentiated phonics instruction.
- Identify gaps—such as missing guidance for intervention or lack of clarity around what to do with assessment data.
- Reach consensus on whether the materials fully, partially, or do not meet the expectations of this indicator.
- Finalize the score for the indicator.

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

Criterion 1.4

Word Recognition and Word Analysis

Materials support students in reading and analyzing grade-level words through instruction in spelling patterns, syllable structure, and meaningful word parts. Instruction emphasizes automaticity and supports vocabulary development through word analysis.

What is the purpose of this Criterion?

The purpose of this criterion is to ensure that materials provide explicit and systematic instruction in analyzing and recognizing grade-level words by attending to their spelling patterns, syllable structures, and meaningful word parts (such as prefixes, suffixes, and roots). As students progress through Grades 3-5, word recognition instruction must go beyond high-frequency words and incorporate increasingly complex, multisyllabic words that require students to apply knowledge of phonics and morphology.

Instruction in this area should help students read unfamiliar words with efficiency and accuracy by developing automaticity in decoding and spelling. Simultaneously, students should be supported in breaking words into meaningful parts, which strengthens their vocabulary development and contributes to deeper reading comprehension. Materials should emphasize both word analysis strategies and repeated, embedded practice in connected text to reinforce skill application and support fluent reading.

This criterion highlights the critical role of word recognition and analysis in building fluent, capable readers who can independently decode, understand, and use increasingly complex academic vocabulary.

Research Connection

Effective word recognition and word analysis instruction helps students move from laborious decoding to fluent reading by building a robust bank of words that can be recognized automatically. A key mechanism in this transition is orthographic mapping—the process by which students form mental connections between the spellings, pronunciations, and meanings of words. Through repeated exposure and successful decoding, words become permanently stored in memory, allowing them to be read effortlessly in the future ([Miles, Rubin, & Gonzalez-Frey, 2017](#)).

Instruction that supports orthographic mapping must include both opportunities to decode unfamiliar words and intentional instruction in spelling patterns, syllable structures, and meaningful word parts. These components help students not only read and spell with increased accuracy, but also understand and retain new vocabulary. [Ehri \(2020\)](#) emphasizes that decoding is not just a reading tool—it is a critical method by which students encode words into memory so they can later retrieve them automatically by sight.

Systematic instruction plays a vital role in this process. According to [Brady \(2020\)](#), programs that gradually introduce increasingly complex spelling and decoding patterns—beginning with regular patterns and building toward more advanced forms—help students develop automaticity and support vocabulary growth. Instruction that incorporates both phonics-based and morphological patterns allows students to flexibly analyze unfamiliar words and make meaning from complex grade-level texts.

Together, these findings reinforce the need for instructional materials to include explicit word analysis instruction, meaningful practice, and repeated exposure to complex word forms in both isolation and connected text.

Scoring:

Meets Expectations

- 10-12

Partially Meets Expectations

- 9-6

Does Not Meet Expectations

- <6

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

Criterion 1.4	Materials support students in reading and analyzing grade-level words through instruction in spelling patterns, syllable structure, and meaningful word parts. Instruction emphasizes automaticity and supports vocabulary development through word analysis.
Indicator 1o	Materials include instruction and practice in analyzing and applying meaningful word parts (prefixes, suffixes, roots) to support decoding, spelling, and vocabulary development.

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 explicit instruction in common prefixes, suffixes, and roots appropriate to grade-level texts. Materials provide opportunities for students to apply morphological analysis to decode unfamiliar words and determine word meaning. Instruction connects morphological patterns to spelling, pronunciation, and meaning across content areas (e.g., science, social studies, or informational texts). 		

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

The purpose of this indicator is to ensure that students receive explicit, systematic instruction in morphological analysis, including common prefixes, suffixes, and roots that appear in grade-level texts. As students encounter increasingly complex academic vocabulary in Grades 3-5, knowledge of meaningful word parts becomes essential for decoding multisyllabic words, spelling them accurately, and understanding their meanings across content areas.

By learning to identify and analyze morphemes—such as the prefix *un-*, the suffix *-ful*, or the root *struct*—students develop strategies to read and spell unfamiliar words. This instruction enhances word recognition and supports vocabulary acquisition by enabling students to infer the meaning of new words based on their structure. Morphological awareness also supports accurate pronunciation and helps students understand how spelling patterns are linked to meaning and grammar (e.g., *inform/information*, *act/action*). This instruction is especially impactful when applied to vocabulary in science, social studies, and other academic content, where unfamiliar

multisyllabic words often follow consistent morphological structures.

This indicator emphasizes that morphology should not be taught in isolation. Instead, it should be embedded across texts and tasks to help students flexibly apply their understanding of word parts in reading, writing, and content learning. The goal is to equip students with a transferable set of tools that fosters word analysis skills, expands vocabulary, and supports fluent, meaningful reading.

Research or Standards connection:

As students advance into upper elementary grades, morphological awareness becomes essential for decoding unfamiliar multisyllabic words, spelling accurately, and understanding academic vocabulary across disciplines. Morphological instruction teaches students how to analyze and apply meaningful word parts—prefixes, suffixes, and roots—supporting both reading fluency and comprehension.

Foundational research by [Nagy, Berninger, and Abbott \(2006\)](#) demonstrated that morphological knowledge makes a unique and measurable contribution to students' vocabulary development and reading comprehension beyond phonological skills. [Carlisle \(2010\)](#) emphasized that explicit instruction in morphology—especially when embedded in reading and writing tasks—helps students identify and make sense of new words based on familiar parts.

Building on the findings, [Goodwin and Ahn \(2012\)](#) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis and found that morphological interventions significantly improved students' literacy outcomes in reading, vocabulary, and spelling. These benefits were especially notable for students with or at risk of reading difficulties. More recent guidance from [Moats \(2020\)](#) and [Sedita \(2021\)](#) affirms the role of morphology as a central pillar of structured literacy, encouraging explicit, transferable instruction that ties word parts to spelling, pronunciation, and meaning.

Together, these studies and practitioner resources underscore the importance of embedding morphology instruction across grade-level texts and content areas to equip students with flexible, generalizable strategies for lifeline word learning.

Resources:

- [Word Study Routines or Morphology-Focus Lesson Models](#)

Indicator 1o Guiding Question:

Do the materials provide explicit instruction and practice in analyzing and applying prefixes, suffixes, and roots to support decoding, spelling, and vocabulary development?

Evidence Collection

In the Instructional Materials being reviewed:

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to morphology standards in Grades 3-5. Review:
 - Scope and sequence for instruction in prefixes, suffixes, and roots, including their progression across the year(s).
 - Instructional routines used to teach students how to analyze and apply morphemes (e.g., *-ful*, *pre-*, *struct*) in context.
 - Tasks or exercises in which students decode unfamiliar multisyllabic words using morphemes and

infer meaning based on word parts.

- Examples of instruction that connect spelling, pronunciation, and meaning, especially when morphology affects all three (e.g., *sign*-> *signal*, *disrupt* -> *disruption*).
- Cross-curricular word analysis, such as science/social studies vocabulary broken into root + affix combinations.
- The presence of spiraling or review structures for word parts across units or grade levels.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What types of morphemes are taught (e.g., inflectional, derivational, Greek/Latin roots)?
- Are prefixes, suffixes, and roots taught explicitly and connected to grade-level text and vocabulary?
- Are there clear routines for teaching and practicing morphological analysis?
- Do students apply morphological strategies to decode unfamiliar words and determine word meaning?
- How do lessons support the connection between morphemes and spelling patterns?
- Do materials provide repeated opportunities for analysis and use of meaningful word parts in reading and writing tasks?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of morphological instruction and application across lessons.
- Discuss how students are supported in connecting morphemes to meaning and spelling.
- Evaluate whether materials include varied and cumulative practice of morphological word analysis.
- Identify whether instruction supports students in applying word analysis across texts and content areas.
- Discuss questions that remain unresolved based on the materials.
- Come to consensus on whether the indicator is fully or partially met, and determine the final rating.

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

Criterion 1.4	Materials support students in reading and analyzing grade-level words through instruction in spelling patterns, syllable structure, and meaningful word parts. Instruction emphasizes automaticity and supports vocabulary development through word analysis.
Indicator 1p	Materials support students in applying word reading strategies to decode unfamiliar multisyllabic words encountered in connected text, using knowledge of syllable types, morphology, and spelling patterns.

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 instruction and modeling for how to approach unfamiliar multisyllabic words in context using syllabication and morphology. Lessons include guided and independent practice applying decoding strategies in grade-level reading materials. Instruction emphasizes strategic decision-making when decoding new words, including rereading and self-monitoring for meaning. 		

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

The purpose of this indicator is to ensure that students are explicitly taught how to approach unfamiliar multisyllabic words when reading connected text. Instruction should emphasize the application of decoding strategies—not just isolated skill practice—so students can independently read increasingly complex words encountered in grade-level materials. This includes teaching students how to analyze syllable types, apply morphological knowledge (prefixes, suffixes, roots), and recognize spelling patterns that signal how words are pronounced and understood.

Effective instruction in this area goes beyond rote decoding. Students need explicit modeling of how to flexibly apply multiple strategies, including syllabication rules and word analysis techniques, when encountering new words in context. Lessons should include both guided and independent practice in grade-level texts, ensuring students not only decode words correctly but also confirm their understanding through rereading, self-monitoring, and attention to meaning.

By providing strategic support for decoding multisyllabic words within authentic reading experiences, materials strengthen students' fluency, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension—all essential for navigating academic language in upper elementary grades.

Research or Standards connection:

Strategic decoding is essential for students in Grades 3-5 as they encounter increasingly complex multisyllabic words in connected texts. Effective readers do not rely solely on memorization or isolated phonics rules—they use a flexible, analytic approach that integrates syllable recognition, morphological awareness, and spelling pattern knowledge to decode unfamiliar words.

Research highlights that proficient readers apply decoding strategies automatically, allowing their mental energy to focus on comprehension. [Miles \(2018\)](#) explains that through repeated analysis and decoding of words—especially in connected text—students build strong visual-phonological connections that support orthographic mapping, leading most words to become instantly recognizable by sight.

To support this transition, instruction must model how to approach unfamiliar words strategically, with attention to syllable types (e.g., closed, open, vowel team), meaningful word parts (e.g., *-tion*, *pre-*, *struct*), and in-context clues. Materials should provide frequent opportunities for students to decode in authentic reading tasks, while also promoting self-monitoring and rereading to confirm accuracy and meaning.

Together, these approaches equip students to independently navigate multisyllabic words in connected text and build the fluency and comprehension needed for academic success.

Resources:

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

Indicator 1p Guiding Question:

Do materials include frequent instructional opportunities for students to apply syllabication, morphology, and decoding strategies to unfamiliar multisyllabic words in connected texts?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to this indicator. Review:
 - Scope and Sequence for multisyllabic word reading and morphology-related decoding.
 - Lessons and tasks where students are taught to apply syllable division rules (e.g., VC/CV, V/CV, prefix-root-suffix) to decode unfamiliar words.
 - Instructional routines or modeling that show how to break apart longer words using syllable types and morphemes.
 - Reading tasks in connected grade-level text (not isolated lists) that include decoding multisyllabic or content-rich vocabulary.
 - Teacher supports for modeling strategic reading, including rereading, self-correction, and confirmation of word meaning through context.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- How do the materials support students in analyzing unfamiliar multisyllabic words while reading

connected text?

- What strategies are explicitly taught for syllable division, morpheme analysis, or decoding unusual spellings?
- Where and how are students given guided or independent opportunities to decode unfamiliar words in reading passages?
- How do materials support strategic thinking, such as rereading or checking for meaning after decoding?
- Are decoding strategies applied across content areas (e.g., science, social studies, vocabulary)?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of instructional routines and strategy modeling for multisyllabic word reading.
- Discuss how often and how well students are supported in decoding unfamiliar words during authentic reading tasks.
- Examine whether instruction ties decoding to comprehension and vocabulary meaning.
- Look for repeated opportunities and varied practice across units, with scaffolds for increasing independence.
- Address gaps in strategy modeling, decoding instruction, or connection to meaningful reading.
- Determine if the materials meet all parts of the scoring criteria.
- Reach consensus on full, partial, or no alignment and assign a final rating.

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

Criterion 1.4	Materials support students in reading and analyzing grade-level words through instruction in spelling patterns, syllable structure, and meaningful word parts. Instruction emphasizes automaticity and supports vocabulary development through word analysis.
Indicator 1q	Materials include explicit instruction in syllabication and morpheme analysis and provide students with practice opportunities to apply these strategies within grade-level content.

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 explicit instruction of syllable types and syllable division patterns that support decoding, spelling, and pronunciation of multisyllabic words. Materials include explicit instruction in morpheme analysis (e.g., prefixes, suffixes, roots) to support decoding and determining word meaning. Materials provide frequent and varied opportunities for students to apply word analysis strategies in connected texts across content areas (e.g., science, social studies). 		

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

The purpose of this indicator is to ensure that materials explicitly teach students how to decode and understand unfamiliar multisyllabic words by analyzing syllable types and meaningful word parts (prefixes, suffixes, and roots). This instruction should help students develop flexible strategies for decoding and spelling, while also supporting vocabulary development and reading comprehension.

As students read increasingly complex grade-level texts across subject areas, they must be able to break words into syllables, apply knowledge of common syllable division patterns, and analyze morphemes to determine both pronunciation and meaning. Instruction should not only include modeling and explanation, but also guided and independent practice embedded in authentic reading and writing tasks.

Effective materials help students apply word analysis strategies flexibly, including adjusting vowel sounds (e.g., applying short, long, or schwa) and recognizing meaningful word families and morphemes. This equips students with the tools to decode and comprehend new words in real time and supports their literacy growth across all

academic content areas. This includes supporting vocabulary decoding and meaning-making in texts from science, social studies, and other disciplines where multisyllabic academic vocabulary is prominent.

Research or Standards connection:

Reading increasingly complex multisyllabic words is a central demand of literacy in Grades 3-5. Research emphasizes that students benefit from explicit instruction in both syllabication and morpheme analysis, which supports decoding, accurate pronunciation, spelling, and vocabulary growth across disciplines.

Foorman et al. (2016) recommend structured word analysis routines that teach students to break words into parts based on vowel patterns, pronounce each part, and then reread for meaning in context. Similarly, Kearns et al. (2022) underscore that effective decoding instruction must help students identify and use vowel information to divide words into manageable units.

The challenge of decoding long, multisyllabic words is well-documented. As Heggie & Wade-Woolley (2017) explain, multisyllabic words often contain ambiguities in stress, vowel pronunciation, and grapheme-phoneme correspondences—all of which increase reading demands starting in Grade 3. Instruction in syllable types and morphological units (prefixes, suffixes, and roots) helps students navigate these complexities and improves decoding accuracy.

Instruction that moves from part to whole—beginning with morphemes, moving to full words, and then embedding practice in connected text—supports automaticity and orthographic mapping. Toste et al. (2017) show that repeated, meaningful practice with multisyllabic words in context leads to better word recognition and word meaning retention over time.

These findings reinforce the importance of instructional materials that not only teach syllabication and morpheme analysis but also provide varied opportunities to apply these strategies in authentic, grade-level texts across subject areas.

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:

Do the materials provide explicit instruction and frequent opportunities for students to apply syllabication and morpheme analysis strategies to decode and understand multisyllabic words in grade-level content?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials for alignment to foundational skills standards for Grades 3-5. Review:
 - Scope and sequence that includes syllable types, syllable division patterns, and common affixes (prefixes, suffixes).
 - Prefatory materials or rationales that explain how word analysis (syllabication + morphology) is taught and reinforced.
 - Teacher lesson guidance that includes modeling, routines, and correction protocols for analyzing multisyllabic words

- Word analysis routines that include decoding, pronunciation, and meaning strategies tied to connected text.
- Activities such as:
 - Word sorting by syllable type or affix
 - Word building using root + affix combinations
 - Breaking down academic vocabulary (e.g., *disrupt* -> *disruption*)
 - Decoding and defining multisyllabic words in science or social studies texts
- Opportunities for spiraled review and cumulative practice of syllabication and morphological analysis across units and grade levels.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Are teachers explicitly modeling how to break down unfamiliar multisyllabic words using syllable and morpheme strategies?
 - Are there instructional routines that help teachers introduce and review word parts systematically?
 - Do materials support teachers in scaffolding instruction across the year?
- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Are the students analyzing multisyllabic words for syllable boundaries and affixes in real reading tasks?
 - Do students practice decoding and spelling using common affixes and syllable patterns?
 - Are they identifying roots and using context to derive word meaning?
 - Are students applying word analysis strategies independently in connected texts?
 - Are there visuals, reference tools, or anchor charts provided to help students remember decoding strategies?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share and compare evidence of syllabication and morphology instruction embedded in core content.
- Discuss the quality and frequency of student practice across the year.
- Consider whether instruction and tasks promote independent transfer of strategies to reading and writing.
- Identify any instructional gaps or missed opportunities for application.
- Reach consensus on whether the indicator is fully met, partially met, or not met.
- Finalize the score and rating for the indicator.

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

Criterion 1.4	Materials support students in reading and analyzing grade-level words through instruction in spelling patterns, syllable structure, and meaningful word parts. Instruction emphasizes automaticity and supports vocabulary development through word analysis.
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 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 a variety of assessment opportunities throughout the year to monitor student progress in word recognition and word analysis. Assessment materials provide information about the students’ skills in decoding, spelling, and morphological analysis, including their ability to apply these skills across a range of text types. Materials include guidance for using assessment results to inform instructional next steps, including targeted support or enrichment. 		

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

The purpose of this indicator is to ensure that instructional materials provide consistent and actionable assessment opportunities to monitor student progress in word recognition and word analysis throughout the school year. These assessments should be aligned to the program’s scope and sequence and reflect the expectations of Grades 3-5: namely, accurate decoding of multisyllabic words, application of spelling patterns, and use of morphological knowledge to derive meaning.

Effective assessments help teachers determine students’ strengths and needs in areas such as syllable-based decoding, morphological analysis, and accurate word reading in context. This includes tasks that assess knowledge of common prefixes, suffixes, roots, and spelling conventions. To be instructionally useful, assessment should not only identify students’ current levels of proficiency but also provide guidance for interpreting results and planning responsive instruction—whether through targeted reteaching, differentiated groupings, or enrichment opportunities. These materials should also support teachers in monitoring student progress toward mastery over time, including indicators of accuracy, automaticity, and readiness to return to

grade-level expectations.

This indicator emphasizes that word recognition assessments should be embedded within instruction, regularly administered, and supported by resources that help teachers take next steps to ensure all students build the fluency, vocabulary, and decoding skills needed for success in upper elementary reading.

Research or Standards connection:

Assessment of word recognition and analysis is essential for identifying students' needs and informing responsive instruction. [Al Otaiba et al. \(2012\)](#) emphasize that effective diagnostic tools should assess both in- and out-of-context word reading, decoding, accuracy, and fluency. These types of assessments help teachers uncover how students integrate different sources of information—especially for those with reading difficulties—and guide next steps in instruction.

In upper elementary grades, assessments must go beyond basic phonics and capture students' ability to decode and analyze multisyllabic words, apply morphological knowledge, and recognize spelling patterns. As [Foorman et al. \(2016\)](#) note, formative assessments should be frequent, embedded in instruction, and used to differentiate support. Assessments that reflect real reading tasks and provide clear guidance for interpreting results ensure that instructional responses are timely and targeted.

When materials include regular assessment opportunities in decoding, spelling, and morphology—and provide tools to translate those results into instructional action—students are more likely to build the fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills needed for academic success.

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 word recognition and analysis standards in Grades 3-5. Review:
 - Assessment overview or scope and sequence, including how and when word recognition and word analysis are assessed.
 - Assessment sections (e.g., diagnostic screeners, formative checks, unit-based reviews, cumulative assessments) that evaluate:
 - Multisyllabic word decoding
 - Morphological analysis (prefixes, suffixes, roots)
 - Spelling patterns tied to word structure
 - Teacher materials for guidance on interpreting assessment results, grouping students, or providing targeted instructional supports.
 - Protocols or rubrics for identifying students needing additional support or extension.
 - Any progress monitoring tools designed for repeated administration throughout the year.
 - Embedded assessments in reading passages or tasks that reflect authentic application of word recognition and analysis strategies

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What types of word recognition and analysis assessments are included (e.g., decoding, spelling, morphology)?
- How often are these assessments administered?
- Are assessments aligned to the scope and sequence of instruction?
- How do materials guide teachers in using data to determine next instructional steps?
- Are assessment results used to identify student strengths and areas of need for targeted reteaching or enrichment?
- What tools are available to monitor student progress over time?
- Are assessments integrated with classroom instruction (i.e., not isolated tests)?
- Do materials offer teacher-facing rubrics or checklists to help interpret results?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share examples of assessments and what specific skills they evaluate.
- Discuss how well the assessments are aligned to instruction and grade-level expectations.
- Evaluate whether the materials help teachers act on assessment results in meaningful ways.
- Identify any missing assessment tools or unclear feedback mechanisms.
- Come to consensus on whether the materials offer systematic, actionable, and aligned assessments.
- Agree on the final ratings for the indicator.

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

Criterion 1.5

Fluency

Materials provide varied and frequent opportunities for students to build fluency—accuracy, rate, and prosody—through reading grade-level connected texts. Instruction supports the development of fluent reading as a bridge to comprehension.

What is the purpose of this Criterion?

This criterion focuses on ensuring that materials provide explicit instruction and regular practice in oral reading fluency, which includes accuracy (word recognition), rate (reading speed), and prosody (expression and phrasing). Fluent reading is not an end in itself, but a bridge to comprehension—when students can read text accurately and automatically, they are better able to focus their attention on understanding the meaning of what they read.

Fluency instruction in Grades 3-5 must go beyond speed or isolated word reading. Materials should include varied and frequent opportunities for students to build fluency through reading grade-level connected texts, including opportunities for teacher modeling, guided oral reading, repeated readings, and partner group practice. These instructional routines support students in developing smooth, expressive reading and support comprehension by reinforcing phrasing, punctuation, and meaning.

Effective fluency instruction also helps teachers identify students who need targeted support in one or more areas of fluency and allows them to integrate fluency practice into authentic reading tasks across content areas.

Research Connection

Fluency is a critical component of reading development that directly supports comprehension. According to the National Reading Panel (2000), fluency includes accuracy, rate, and prosody, and instruction should focus on repeated reading of connected text with teacher support and feedback. Fluency allows readers to decode words effortlessly so they can focus their attention on understanding the text.

Chard et al. (2002) emphasize that accuracy—the ability to recognize and decode words correctly—is foundational to fluent reading. Without accurate decoding, fluency cannot develop. Prosody, or reading with expression and phrasing, is fluency’s link to meaning; readers who use intonation and stress appropriately are typically those who understand the text they are reading (Rasinski, 2004).

Rasinski (2014, 2017) further explains that automaticity in word recognition reduces the cognitive load required

for decoding, freeing students' attention for comprehension. Struggling readers who are not automatic must devote substantial cognitive resources to decoding, leaving few resources available for understanding the meaning of what they read. Fluent readers, on the other hand, integrate accurate word recognition, appropriate pacing, and expressive reading, enabling deeper engagement with the author's message and purpose.

Instructional materials should therefore provide varied and frequent opportunities for fluency development using grade-level connected texts, supported by teacher modeling, guided oral reading, and structured feedback. These practices ensure that fluency serves as a bridge to comprehension, rather than an isolated reading skill.

Scoring:

Meets Expectations

- 6-8

Partially Meets Expectations

- 5-4

Does Not Meet Expectations

- <4

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

Criterion 1.5	Materials provide varied and frequent opportunities for students to build fluency—accuracy, rate, and prosody—through reading grade-level connected texts. Instruction supports the development of fluent reading as a bridge to comprehension.
Indicator 1s	Instructional opportunities are built into the materials for systematic, evidence-based, explicit instruction in oral reading fluency. <i>Note: This is not an assessed indicator in grades 3-5.</i>

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

Criterion 1.5	Materials provide varied and frequent opportunities for students to build fluency—accuracy, rate, and prosody—through reading grade-level connected texts. Instruction supports the development of fluent reading as a bridge to comprehension.
Indicator 1t	Materials include varied and frequent opportunities for students to build fluency-accuracy, rate, and prosody—through reading grade-level texts in order to support comprehension.

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 frequent and varied opportunities for students to practice oral reading fluency in connected texts (e.g., repeated readings, partner reading, poetry, reader’s theater) that develop accuracy, expression, and rate. Practice opportunities are embedded in regular reading routines and are sufficiently frequent to support the development of fluent, meaningful reading. Frequency and structure may vary based on student needs and program design. Materials include teacher guidance for providing feedback, modeling fluent reading, and using scaffolds that support student growth in fluency and comprehension. 		

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

The purpose of this indicator is to ensure that students have frequent and varied opportunities to build fluency—including accuracy, rate, and prosody—through reading grade-level connected texts. Fluency is essential not only for smooth and expressive reading but also for enabling comprehension, as automatic word recognition allows students to focus their cognitive resources on understanding the text.

Effective fluency practice in Grades 3-5 should be embedded in regular instructional routines and applied across genres and content areas. Materials should include opportunities such as repeated readings, partner reading, poetry, and reader’s theater—all of which qualify as fluency routines when they involve guided oral reading with feedback focused on accuracy, rate, and prosody—which give students authentic and engaging contexts to build fluency skills. Instruction should also support scaffolding and feedback, helping students monitor their own reading, improving phrasing and expression, and read with purpose.

By regularly integrating fluency practice with connected text and teacher support—ideally occurring at least weekly or with sufficient frequency as aligned to the program’s design—instructional materials help students develop the oral reading skills that contribute directly to comprehension and overall literacy success.

Research or Standards connection:

Reading fluency is a vital contributor to comprehension, particularly in Grades 3-5, where students are expected to read increasingly complex texts across genres and subject areas. The National Reading Panel (2000) established fluency—defined accuracy, rate, and prosody—as a critical component of reading proficiency. Students who read fluently can allocate more mental energy to understanding the meaning of what they read.

According to [Rasinski \(2014, 2017\)](#), fluency is a measurable and teachable reading competency, and numerous research-based instructional routines—such as repeated reading, poetry, partner reading, and reader’s theater—have proven effective in helping students improve fluency outcomes. These practices are most impactful when embedded within regular instructional routines, not treated as stand-alone activities.

Research also emphasizes the importance of teacher modeling, scaffolding, and feedback as essential supports for student growth in fluency and comprehension ([Hasbrouck & Glaser, 2019](#); [Archer & Hughes, 2011](#)). Materials that provide structured opportunities for oral reading across diverse text types help students develop the fluency needed to support understanding, engagement, and academic success.

Resources:

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

Indicator 1t Guiding Question:

Do the materials include varied and frequent opportunities for students to practice oral reading fluency—accuracy, rate, and prosody—through grade-level texts in ways that support reading comprehension?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials for alignment to fluency expectations in Grades 3-5.
Review:
 - Opportunities for frequent oral reading practice across the year using grade-level connected texts, including poetry, narratives, speeches, and content-area passages.
 - Instructional routines such as reader’s theater, repeated readings, partner reading, choral reading, echo reading, and oral recitation that emphasize accuracy, rate, and prosody.
 - Guidance for teachers on modeling fluent reading, providing targeted feedback, and adjusting pacing or expression based on student need.
 - Tasks and strategies that support students’ self-monitoring, including rereading, phrasing, and expressive reading that reflect the meaning of the text.
 - Embedded fluency routines that tie fluency development to purposeful reading and comprehension, rather than disconnected oral performance.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the materials provide multiple, embedded opportunities across the year for oral reading fluency

practice using connected grade-level texts?

- Do the materials include a range of text types and routines (e.g., poetry, reader's theater, repeated readings) to build fluency skills in different contexts?
- Are rate, accuracy, and prosody addressed systematically?
- Is teacher guidance provided for modeling fluent reading, delivering feedback, and scaffolding student growth?
- Do students practice strategies like rereading or adjusting expression to reflect meaning?
- Is fluency instruction clearly connected to reading comprehension goals?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of how fluency instruction is embedded in core instruction.
- Discuss the tie, variety, and text quality of fluency routines.
- Evaluate whether teacher supports are strong and actionable.
- Note whether student fluency is developed to support meaning-making, not just oral performance.
- Discuss any remaining gaps or unclear practices.
- Finalize the score and level of alignment for this indicator.

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

Criterion 1.5	Materials provide varied and frequent opportunities for students to build fluency—accuracy, rate, and prosody—through reading grade-level connected texts. Instruction supports the development of fluent reading as a bridge to comprehension.
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"> Assessment opportunities occur multiple times across the year and are aligned to fluency instruction, allowing students to demonstrate progress toward mastery of rate, accuracy, and prosody. Materials include tools such as timed readings, WCPM checks, or prosody rubrics to assess oral reading fluency with consistency and instructional relevance. Materials provide teachers with guidance for interpreting assessment results and making instructional adjustments to support fluency, growth, including reteaching, scaffolding, or enrichment. 		

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

The purpose of this indicator is to ensure that materials include regular and systematic assessments of oral reading fluency—specifically measuring accuracy, rate, and prosody—that inform instruction and support students’ progression toward fluent, meaningful reading.

Fluency assessments help teachers monitor whether students are reading connected text smoothly, with appropriate expression and speed, and whether they are progressing toward automatic word recognition. These assessments may include oral reading passages, WCPM (words correct per minute) tracking, and rubrics for evaluating prosody—all of which should be aligned to instruction and administered at regular intervals to monitor growth over time. High-quality materials also provide guidance for interpreting results, allowing teachers to identify students who may need additional fluency support or enrichment.

In addition to measurement tools, materials should offer instructional suggestions tied to fluency assessment outcomes, such as repeated reading routines, modeling strategies, or adjusted pacing and grouping.

Assessments that are used flexibly—including at least monthly or as aligned to the program’s design—help ensure that fluency instruction remains targeted, timely, and effective in supporting comprehension.

Research or Standards connection:

Oral reading fluency (ORF)—the combination of accuracy, rate, and prosody—is a critical and measurable component of skilled reading, and regular assessment of these fluency elements helps identify students who are on track for reading proficiency as well as those in need of targeted intervention. [While et al. \(2021\)](#) affirm that ORF is a strong predictor of overall reading competence and is commonly used in classrooms and intervention models as a progress monitoring tool. Assessments of oral reading fluency, particularly when embedded within instructional materials, allow teachers to make informed decisions about grouping, pacing, and support strategies.

Research also shows that fluency interventions are most effective when paired with additional instructional supports. In a meta-analysis of repeated reading studies, [Lee & Yon \(2017\)](#) found that gains in oral reading fluency were greatest when repeated reading was used in combination with teacher modeling, error correction, peer reading, or goal setting with performance feedback. These scaffolds—when informed by assessment data—help students build the automaticity and expression necessary for fluent, meaningful reading.

To be effective, fluency assessment must be regular, diagnostic, and tied to instruction. Materials that include fluency measurement tools, guidance for interpreting student performance, and concrete next steps for instructional action ensure that fluency development remains a dynamic part of literacy instruction.

Resources:

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

Indicator 1u Guiding Question:

Do the materials provide regular and systematic assessment opportunities that measure student progress in oral reading fluency (accuracy, rate, and prosody), and do they guide instructional next steps to support fluency and comprehension?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Fluency standards in Grades 3-5. Review:
 - Assessment overview or rationale for how oral reading fluency is monitored over time
 - Assessment sections that include tools such as:
 - Oral reading passages calibrated to grade level
 - WCPM (Words Correct Per Minute) scoring sheets
 - Prosody rubrics (expression, phrasing, intonation)
 - Self-monitoring checklists or student goal-setting tools
 - Guidance for interpreting student results and tracking fluency growth across the year
 - Protocols for responding to fluency data, including:
 - Targeted support or reteaching (e.g., repeated reading, modeling)
 - Enrichment for fluent readers (e.g., reading for performance, advanced phrasing work)
 - Embedded fluency assessments within authentic reading contexts (narratives, informational texts, poetry)
 - Teacher feedback structures that support comprehension through fluency

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What fluency assessment tools are included (e.g., oral reading passages, WCPM tracking, rubrics)?
- Do materials assess all key components: accuracy, rate, and prosody?
- How frequently are fluency assessments embedded throughout the year?
- Do assessments align with instruction and scope/sequence?
- How are results shared with students or used to monitor progress?
- What instructional suggestions or reteaching routines are provided based on assessment outcomes?
- Are different levels of fluency supported (e.g., scaffolds for struggling readers, extensions for fluent readers)?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share specific examples of fluency assessments in use
- Discuss how fluency data is interpreted and acted on by the teacher
- Evaluate whether assessments promote progress toward fluent, meaningful reading
- Note whether comprehension is positioned as the goal of fluency work
- Reach consensus on full, partial, or insufficient alignment to the indicator
- Finalize scoring for the indicator

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 in order 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 also learning about different cultures, which fosters empathy and combats ethnocentrism. Studies support the integration of 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 those opportunities existing 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](#)

Distribution of Literary and Informational Passages by Grade in the 2009 NAEP Reading Framework

Grade	Literary	Informational
4	50%	50%
8	45%	55%
12	30%	70%

Source: National Assessment Governing Board. (2008). *Reading framework for the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

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 in the 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?
- How do instructional materials specifically address a range and volume of reading? Consider whole texts, excerpts, and text sets.

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 and a series of texts connected to them. • 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. 		

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 order to meet the 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.

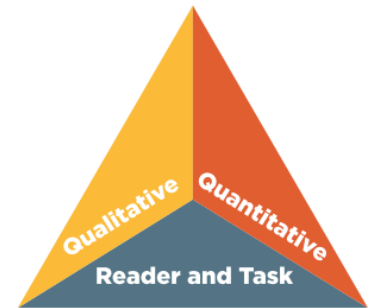


Figure 1: The Standards' Model of Text Complexity

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 identify gaps in current research and pose 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?

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.
- 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 if 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 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.

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

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 that require students to answer in varying formats (i.e., speaking, writing, etc). Materials include text-based questions and tasks that require students to closely read and/or re-read 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, 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 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. 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.

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.

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?

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.

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, evidence-based discussions among students about the texts they are reading or being read aloud 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 interpretation of the text (including textual evidence) 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 "[Engaging the Adolescent Learner: The First 20 Days: Establishing Productive Group Work in the Classroom](#)," Fisher and Frey (2011) outline a practical and effective approach to implementing productive group work in secondary classrooms. The authors emphasize the importance of establishing routines and procedures for group work, as well as fostering personal responsibility, respectful discourse, and collaborative problem solving among students. The authors advocate for a gradual release of responsibility framework, which emphasizes a shift from teacher-led instruction to student-directed learning, and advocate for the use of accountable talk, a form of academic discourse that encourages students to clarify, question, provide evidence, disagree, and develop solutions.

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 textual evidence 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 textual evidence 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 textual evidence 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 utilize, apply, and incorporate evidence from texts and/or sources. Materials provide opportunities for students to consider others' perspectives and engage in intellectual discourse about texts and topics they are reading. 		

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 evidence-based discussions. Regular opportunities for evidence-based discussion encourage students to think critically, analyze information, and evaluate different viewpoints. By discussing texts and using evidence 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 while using textual evidence. 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 “[Engaging the Adolescent Learner: The First 20 Days: Establishing Productive Group Work in the Classroom](#),” Fisher and Frey (2011) outline a practical and effective approach to implementing productive group work in secondary classrooms. The authors emphasize the importance of establishing routines and procedures for group work, as well as fostering personal responsibility, respectful discourse, and collaborative problem solving among students. The authors advocate for a gradual release of responsibility framework, which emphasizes a shift from teacher-led instruction to student-directed learning, and advocate for the use of accountable talk, a form of academic discourse that encourages students to clarify, question, provide evidence, disagree, and develop solutions.

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 cite evidence from the text or sources, reinforcing the practice of supporting their ideas with clear references.
- Check for prompts and questions that guide students to effectively utilize and apply textual evidence in their conversations.
- 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 within the materials that promote interaction among students, such as group discussions, partner dialogues, or peer reviews?
- Do these activities require students to cite evidence from the text or sources, thereby reinforcing the practice of supporting their ideas with clear references?
- Are there prompts and questions included that guide students to effectively utilize and apply textual evidence in their conversations?
- 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 within the materials that promote interaction among students, such as group discussions, partner dialogues, or peer reviews.
- Discuss whether these activities require students to cite evidence from the text or sources, thereby reinforcing the practice of supporting their ideas with clear references.
- Discuss whether there are prompts and questions included that guide students to effectively utilize and apply textual evidence in their conversations.
- 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

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, etymology, 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.

In “[Using Etymology as a Deliberate Vocabulary Learning Approach: A Psycholinguistic Analysis](#),” Alshatti (2023) explores the use of etymology as a deliberate vocabulary learning approach for English language learners. The author argues that etymology can help learners retain vocabulary, decipher unknown words, and develop a

deeper understanding of the language, surpassing the benefits of incidental learning. By understanding the origins and building blocks of words, learners can activate existing knowledge (schema) and create nonverbal associations (dual coding) to enhance retention. The author proposes a methodology incorporating contextual stories, word part analysis, and engaging activities to facilitate this process, ultimately suggesting that teaching etymology can be a valuable tool for English language learners, particularly at intermediate and advanced levels.

In “[Etymology: A Word Attack Strategy for Learning the English Vocabulary](#),” Hashemi and Aziznezhad (2011) argue that etymology is a crucial and effective method for expanding vocabulary for English language learners. The authors highlight the importance of vocabulary acquisition for successful language learning, emphasizing the limitations of traditional vocabulary instruction based solely on memorizing lists of words. They contend that etymology, the scientific study of word origins, offers a more engaging and efficient approach. By understanding the meanings of Latin and Greek roots, prefixes, and suffixes, learners can decipher the meanings of numerous English words and remember them more effectively. The paper explores the origins and historical development of the English language, categorizing words into different categories based on their source language (Indo-European, Germanic, etc.). The authors illustrate the practical application of etymology by providing examples of how understanding word parts can unlock the meanings of unknown words. They also emphasize the significance of etymology in enhancing reading comprehension and word recognition skills. The article concludes by advocating for the integration of etymology into vocabulary instruction as a powerful tool for learners to expand their word power, improve comprehension, and enhance their overall language proficiency.

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 (analyzing morphemes, etymology) 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.
- Assess the quality of student-friendly definitions, 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 (such as analyzing morphemes and etymology) 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 definitions 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 (such as analyzing morphemes and etymology) 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

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 or etymological 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).

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English words and remember them more effectively. The paper explores the origins and historical development of the English language, categorizing words into different categories based on their source language (Indo-European, Germanic, etc.). The authors illustrate the practical application of etymology by providing examples of how understanding word parts can unlock the meanings of unknown words. They also emphasize the significance of etymology in enhancing reading comprehension and word recognition skills. The article concludes by advocating for the integration of etymology into vocabulary instruction as a powerful tool for learners to expand their word power, improve comprehension, and enhance their overall language proficiency.

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 or etymological 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 or etymological 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 or etymological 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

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)

Figure 18: Language Progressive Skills, by Grade

The following standards, marked with an asterisk (*) in the main Standards document, are particularly likely to require continued attention in higher grades as they are applied to increasingly sophisticated writing and speaking.

Standard	Grade(s)							
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9-10	11-12
L.3.1f. Ensure subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement.								
L.3.3a. Choose words and phrases for effect.								
L.4.1f. Produce complete sentences, recognizing and correcting inappropriate fragments and run-ons.								
L.4.1g. Correctly use frequently confused words (e.g., <i>to/too/two</i> ; <i>there/their</i>).								
L.4.3a. Choose words and phrases to convey ideas precisely. [*]								
L.4.3b. Choose punctuation for effect.								
L.5.1d. Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb tense.								
L.5.2a. Use punctuation to separate items in a series. [*]								
L.6.1c. Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in pronoun number and person.								
L.6.1d. Recognize and correct vague pronouns (i.e., ones with unclear or ambiguous antecedents).								
L.6.1e. Recognize variations from standard English in their own and others' writing and speaking, and identify and use strategies to improve expression in conventional language.								
L.6.2a. Use punctuation (commas, parentheses, dashes) to set off nonrestrictive/parenthetical elements.								
L.6.3a. Vary sentence patterns for meaning, reader/listener interest, and style. [†]								
L.6.3b. Maintain consistency in style and tone.								
L.7.1c. Place phrases and clauses within a sentence, recognizing and correcting misplaced and dangling modifiers.								
L.7.3a. Choose language that expresses ideas precisely and concisely, recognizing and eliminating wordiness and redundancy.								
L.8.1d. Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb voice and mood.								
L.9-10.1a. Use parallel structure.								

^{*} Subsumed by L.7.3a

[†] Subsumed by L.9-10.1a

[‡] Subsumed by L.11-12.3a

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 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)

Figure 18: Language Progressive Skills, by Grade

The following standards, marked with an asterisk (*) in the main Standards document, are particularly likely to require continued attention in higher grades as they are applied to increasingly sophisticated writing and speaking.

Standard	Grade(s)							
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9-10	11-12
L.3.1f. Ensure subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement.								
L.3.3a. Choose words and phrases for effect.								
L.4.1f. Produce complete sentences, recognizing and correcting inappropriate fragments and run-ons.								
L.4.1g. Correctly use frequently confused words (e.g., <i>to/too/two</i> ; <i>there/their</i>).								
L.4.3a. Choose words and phrases to convey ideas precisely. ¹								
L.4.3b. Choose punctuation for effect.								
L.5.1d. Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb tense.								
L.5.2a. Use punctuation to separate items in a series. ¹								
L.6.1c. Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in pronoun number and person.								
L.6.1d. Recognize and correct vague pronouns (i.e., ones with unclear or ambiguous antecedents).								
L.6.1e. Recognize variations from standard English in their own and others' writing and speaking, and identify and use strategies to improve expression in conventional language.								
L.6.2a. Use punctuation (commas, parentheses, dashes) to set off nonrestrictive/parenthetical elements.								
L.6.3a. Vary sentence patterns for meaning, reader/listener interest, and style. ¹								
L.6.3b. Maintain consistency in style and tone.								
L.7.1c. Place phrases and clauses within a sentence, recognizing and correcting misplaced and dangling modifiers.								
L.7.3a. Choose language that expresses ideas precisely and concisely, recognizing and eliminating wordiness and redundancy.								
L.8.1d. Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb voice and mood.								
L.9-10.1a. Use parallel structure.								

¹ Subsumed by L.7.3a

¹ Subsumed by L.9-10.1a

¹ Subsumed by L.11-12.3a

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. 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 “[Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools](#),” Graham and Perin (2007) present a critical analysis of adolescent writing instruction in the United States, highlighting a significant crisis in writing proficiency. They argue that while reading instruction has shown progress, adolescent writing skills have remained stagnant. The report uses meta-analysis to synthesize a large body of research on writing instruction and identifies 11 key elements that are supported by evidence:

- Writing Strategies: Teaching students specific strategies for planning, revising, and editing.
- Summarization: Explicitly teaching students how to summarize texts.
- Collaborative Writing: Using instructional arrangements where students work together to write.
- Specific Product Goals: Assigning students specific, achievable goals for their writing.
- Word Processing: Using computers and word processors as instructional tools.
- Sentence Combining: Teaching students to construct more complex sentences.
- Prewriting: Engaging students in activities designed to generate or organize ideas for writing.
- Inquiry Activities: Engaging students in analyzing data to develop ideas for writing.
- Process Writing Approach: Interweaving a variety of writing activities in a workshop environment.
- Study of Models: Providing opportunities for students to read, analyze, and emulate good writing.
- Writing for Content Learning: Using writing as a tool for learning content material.

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 for 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 (paragraph and multi-paragraph construction for varying purposes), 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 (at the paragraph and multi-paragraph level). Materials should include clear and structured guidance on the various stages of the 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 “[Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools](#),” Graham and Perin (2007) present a critical analysis of adolescent writing instruction in the United States, highlighting a significant crisis in writing proficiency. They argue that while reading instruction has shown progress, adolescent writing skills have remained stagnant. The report uses meta-analysis to synthesize a large body of research on writing instruction and identifies 11 key elements that are supported by evidence:

- Writing Strategies: Teaching students specific strategies for planning, revising, and editing.
- Summarization: Explicitly teaching students how to summarize texts.
- Collaborative Writing: Using instructional arrangements where students work together to write.
- Specific Product Goals: Assigning students specific, achievable goals for their writing.
- Word Processing: Using computers and word processors as instructional tools.
- Sentence Combining: Teaching students to construct more complex sentences.
- Prewriting: Engaging students in activities designed to generate or organize ideas for writing.
- Inquiry Activities: Engaging students in analyzing data to develop ideas for writing.
- Process Writing Approach: Interweaving a variety of writing activities in a workshop environment.
- Study of Models: Providing opportunities for students to read, analyze, and emulate good writing.
- Writing for Content Learning: Using writing as a tool for learning content material.

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

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 2q	Materials include frequent opportunities for students to practice the writing processes using evidence-based strategies, 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 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. 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 “[Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools](#),” Graham and Perin (2007) present a critical analysis of adolescent writing instruction in the United States, highlighting a significant crisis in writing proficiency. They argue that while reading instruction has shown progress, adolescent writing skills have remained stagnant. The report uses meta-analysis to synthesize a large body of research on writing instruction and identifies 11 key elements that are supported by evidence:

- Writing Strategies: Teaching students specific strategies for planning, revising, and editing.
- Summarization: Explicitly teaching students how to summarize texts.
- Collaborative Writing: Using instructional arrangements where students work together to write.
- Specific Product Goals: Assigning students specific, achievable goals for their writing.
- Word Processing: Using computers and word processors as instructional tools.
- Sentence Combining: Teaching students to construct more complex sentences.
- Prewriting: Engaging students in activities designed to generate or organize ideas for writing.
- Inquiry Activities: Engaging students in analyzing data to develop ideas for writing.
- Process Writing Approach: Interweaving a variety of writing activities in a workshop environment.
- Study of Models: Providing opportunities for students to read, analyze, and emulate good writing.
- Writing for Content Learning: Using writing as a tool for learning content material.

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.

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?
- Are there dedicated timeframes in the curriculum for planning writing across different types of 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 there are dedicated timeframes in the curriculum for planning writing across different types of 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 explain what the text says explicitly and implicitly.

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 refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text. Materials provide frequent writing opportunities focused on students' recall or analysis of information to develop opinions from reading closely and working with evidence from texts and sources. 		

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 enhance their analytical, argumentative, and informational writing skills. 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 explain what a text says implicitly and explicitly, identifying key ideas and drawing logical conclusions supported by evidence. By using evidence in their writing, students strengthen their argumentation skills, developing the ability to construct well-defended claims with credible support. 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 "[Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools](#)," Graham and Perin (2007) present a critical analysis of adolescent writing instruction in the United States, highlighting a significant crisis in writing proficiency. They argue that while reading instruction has shown progress, adolescent writing skills have remained stagnant. The report uses meta-analysis to synthesize a large body of research on writing instruction and identifies 11 key elements that are supported by evidence:

- Writing Strategies: Teaching students specific strategies for planning, revising, and editing.
- Summarization: Explicitly teaching students how to summarize texts.
- Collaborative Writing: Using instructional arrangements where students work together to write.
- Specific Product Goals: Assigning students specific, achievable goals for their writing.
- Word Processing: Using computers and word processors as instructional tools.
- Sentence Combining: Teaching students to construct more complex sentences.
- Prewriting: Engaging students in activities designed to generate or organize ideas for writing.
- Inquiry Activities: Engaging students in analyzing data to develop ideas for writing.
- Process Writing Approach: Interweaving a variety of writing activities in a workshop environment.
- Study of Models: Providing opportunities for students to read, analyze, and emulate good writing.
- Writing for Content Learning: Using writing as a tool for learning content material.

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 provide frequent opportunities for students to practice evidence-based writing by drawing from the texts and the knowledge built throughout the unit to explain what the text says explicitly and implicitly?

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

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 2s	Materials include explicit instruction of research skills that guide research and writing projects to develop students' knowledge using multiple texts and source materials.

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 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 structured research that helps them deepen their understanding of a particular topic by examining multiple texts and sources. This indicator examines whether research projects are present in materials and whether 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 research and writing projects to encourage students to develop knowledge of a topic by confronting and analyzing different aspects of a topic

using multiple texts and source materials?

Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Look for materials that build research skills, from identifying reliable sources to synthesizing information and presenting findings, ensuring mastery of grade-level standards.
- Ensure materials provide clear, step-by-step guidance on research skills such as formulating research questions, conducting searches, evaluating source credibility, and citing sources correctly.
- Verify that students are instructed and encouraged to use a variety of texts and resources, including books, articles, and digital media, to gain a comprehensive understanding of a topic.
- See if the materials support integrating research findings into written work, teaching students how to construct arguments and support them with evidence from their research.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the materials build research skills, from identifying reliable sources to synthesizing information and presenting findings, ensuring mastery of grade-level standards?
- Do the materials provide clear, step-by-step guidance on research skills such as formulating research questions, conducting searches, evaluating source credibility, and citing sources correctly?
- Are students instructed and encouraged to use a variety of texts and resources, including books, articles, and digital media, to gain a comprehensive understanding of a topic?
- Do the materials support integrating research findings into written work, teaching students how to construct arguments and support them with evidence from their research?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss whether the materials build research skills, from identifying reliable sources to synthesizing information and presenting findings, ensuring mastery of grade-level standards.
- Discuss whether the materials provide clear, step-by-step guidance on research skills such as formulating research questions, conducting searches, evaluating source credibility, and citing sources correctly.
- Discuss whether students are instructed and encouraged to use a variety of texts and resources, including books, articles, and digital media, to gain a comprehensive understanding of a topic.
- Discuss whether the materials support integrating research findings into written work, teaching students how to construct arguments and support them with evidence from their research.
- 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 short research projects using multiple texts and sources. Materials provide opportunities for students to recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources, summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and (beginning in grade 4) provide a list of sources. Materials provide opportunities for students to draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research (beginning in grade 4). 		

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 structured research that helps them deepen their understanding of a particular topic by examining multiple texts and sources, allowing students to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of a topic. 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.”

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.

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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 2t Guiding Question:

Do the materials include multiple opportunities for students to apply research skills to develop knowledge of a topic by confronting and analyzing different aspects 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 prompt students to generate additional related questions, fostering deeper investigation and critical thinking.
- Ensure that opportunities are provided for students to gather relevant information from a range of print and digital sources, enhancing their research skills.
- Assess if the materials provide opportunities for students to use effective search terms and strategies to locate credible information efficiently.
- Verify that materials provide students with a list of sources and summarize or paraphrase information in notes.
- Look for opportunities where students are required to draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support their analyses, reflections, and research.

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 prompt students to generate additional related questions, fostering deeper investigation and critical thinking?
- Are students provided with opportunities to provide a list of sources and summarize or paraphrase information in notes?
- Are opportunities provided for students to gather relevant information from a range of print and digital sources, enhancing their research skills?
- Are students provided with opportunities to assess the credibility and accuracy of sources, helping them discern reliable information from unreliable?
- Are there opportunities where students are required to draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support their analyses, reflections, and research?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss whether there are a variety of short research projects that allow students to explore different questions and topics, encouraging curiosity and engagement.
- Discuss whether the materials prompt students to generate additional related questions, fostering deeper investigation and critical thinking.
- Discuss whether there are opportunities provided for students to gather relevant information from a range of print and digital sources, enhancing their research skills.
- Discuss whether the materials provide students with a list of sources and summarize or paraphrase information in notes.
- Discuss whether students are provided with opportunities to assess the credibility and accuracy of sources, helping them discern reliable information from unreliable.

- Discuss whether there are opportunities where students are required to draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support their analyses, reflections, and research.
- 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

Criterion 2.2	<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>
Indicator 2v	<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>

Scoring:		
<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 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 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.
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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:

<p>2 points</p> <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. 	<p>1 point</p> <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. 	<p>0 points</p> <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.
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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.
- Determine if the assessment system allows for flexibility to accommodate diverse learning environments, student populations, and instructional methods.

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.
- Discuss whether the assessment system allows for flexibility to accommodate diverse learning environments, student populations, and instructional methods.

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

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

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?

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.

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 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

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' role 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

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

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

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

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 whether 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

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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