



Core Content Evidence Guide v2.0

English Language Arts

Foundational Skills

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

Criterion 1.1

Alphabet Knowledge (Grade K only)

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

What is the purpose of this Criterion?

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

Research Connection

[Evans et al. \(2006\)](#) cite research indicating, “letter-name and letter-sound knowledge in children are strongly correlated, in the order of .70 to .80. The finding that letter-sound and letter-name knowledge intercorrelate and that knowledge of letter names so highly predicts reading has been interpreted in a variety of ways. First, it has been suggested that knowing the names of letters makes them identifiable and familiar, allowing them to be processed more efficiently and rapidly when reading and allowing easy access to their sounds because many letter names contain the phoneme associated with that letter in either initial (e.g., p, t) or final (e.g., f, s) position.” Second, they state, “letter-name knowledge appears to reinforce letter-sound learning, in a linkage that may help draw children’s attention to the sounds of spoken language and provide a name and symbol to anchor this knowledge.”

“Letter-name knowledge is the strongest predictor of a child’s knowledge of letter sounds” ([Dougherty-Stahl, 2014](#)).

[Dougherty-Stahl \(2014\)](#) states, “Contextual practice and teaching for transfer are important instructional components, but isolated practice that is systematic and explicit is more effective than relying on embedded instruction that occurs through shared storybook reading.”

Kindergarten Scoring:

Meets Expectations

- 9-10 points

Partially Meets Expectations

- 5-8 points

Does Not Meet Expectations

- < 5 points

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

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

Scoring:
1a.i. Materials provide systematic and explicit instruction in letter names and their corresponding sounds. (K)

2 points	1 point	0 points
Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a defined sequence for letter recognition instruction to be completed in a reasonable time frame over the school year. Materials contain isolated, systematic and explicit instruction for students to recognize all 26 lowercase and uppercase letters. 	Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a defined sequence for letter recognition instruction to be completed in a reasonable time frame over the school year. Materials contain isolated, systematic and explicit instruction for students to recognize all 26 lowercase and uppercase letters. 	Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a defined sequence for letter recognition instruction to be completed in a reasonable time frame over the school year. Materials contain isolated, systematic and explicit instruction for students to recognize all 26 lowercase and uppercase letters.

Scoring:
1a.ii. Materials provide opportunities for student practice in letter names and their corresponding sounds. (K)

2 points	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 sufficient practice opportunities for students to recognize all 26 lowercase and uppercase letters accurately and automatically. Materials incorporate a variety of activities and resources for students to develop, practice, and reinforce (through cumulative review) alphabet knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials include sufficient practice opportunities for students to recognize all 26 lowercase and uppercase letters accurately and automatically. Materials incorporate a variety of activities and resources for students to develop, practice, and reinforce (through cumulative review) alphabet knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials include sufficient practice opportunities for students to recognize all 26 lowercase and uppercase letters accurately and automatically. Materials incorporate a variety of activities and resources for students to develop, practice, and reinforce (through cumulative review) alphabet knowledge.
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Scoring:

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

<p>2 points</p> <p>Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a defined sequence for letter formation, aligned to the scope and sequence of letter recognition, to be completed in a reasonable time frame over the school year. Materials include clear directions for the teacher concerning how to explain and model how to correctly form each of the 26 letters (uppercase and lowercase). Materials include teacher guidance for corrective feedback when needed for students. 	<p>1 point</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a defined sequence for letter formation, aligned to the scope and sequence of letter recognition, to be completed in a reasonable time frame over the school year. Materials include clear directions for the teacher concerning how to explain and model how to correctly form each of the 26 letters (uppercase and lowercase). Materials include teacher guidance for corrective feedback when needed for students. 	<p>0 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a defined sequence for letter formation, aligned to the scope and sequence of letter recognition, to be completed in a reasonable time frame over the school year. Materials include clear directions for the teacher concerning how to explain and model how to correctly form each of the 26 letters (uppercase and lowercase). Materials include teacher guidance for corrective feedback when needed for students.
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Scoring:

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

<p>2 points</p> <p>Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p>	<p>1 point</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>
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- Materials include frequent opportunities for students to practice forming all of the 26 uppercase and lowercase letters.
- Materials include cumulative review of previously learned letter formation.

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- Materials include cumulative review of previously learned letter formation.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

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

Research or Standards connection:

[Vander Hart et al., \(2009, p. 677-678\)](#) state, "Research suggests that in order to reduce confusion for young children, teachers should introduce letters in a carefully thought-out order. For example, confusable letters (e.g., b and d) and sounds (e.g., vowels a in sad and e in bed) should be taught separately rather than in an ABC order...Explicit teacher modeling of letter formation and pencil and paper positioning is an essential instructional technique when teaching handwriting...Teachers should employ modeling both when letters are introduced and periodically throughout the school year as a reminder to students."

According to [Piasta and Wagner \(2010\)](#) in *Developing Early Literacy Skills: A Meta-Analysis of Alphabet Learning and Instruction*, "Preschool and kindergarten students with poor knowledge of letter names and sounds are more likely to struggle with learning to read and be classified as having reading disabilities."

[Turnbull et al. \(2010\)](#) state, "Alphabet knowledge is one of the strongest unique predictors of children's later reading skills...The relation between alphabet knowledge and later reading skills is based on the premise that children who can readily associate phonemes (smallest units of spoken language) with graphemes (smallest units of written language that represent phonemes and combinations of phonemes) use this knowledge in service of decoding unfamiliar words...Prior to acquiring knowledge of this alphabetic principle, research has demonstrated that knowledge of letter names facilitates children's ability to link print to speech."

[Brady \(2021\)](#) states, "Experts...in writing have long reported that poor handwriting slows and limits the quantity, content, and quality of student products in contrast to skilled, automatic handwriting...In terms of beginners, brain research has revealed that handwriting practice helps students learn their letters and letter sounds. In

addition, neurological studies highlight the interconnectedness of language systems, including of the motor patterns for letter writing....It remains very important for children to develop handwriting from the beginning, optimally by systematically including this component as children are acquiring phoneme awareness and letter knowledge with the goal to work toward automaticity.”

Resources:

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

Indicator 1a Guiding Question:

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

Evidence Collection

In the Instructional Materials being reviewed:

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

Definition of terms:

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

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Does the teacher provide explicit instruction for the distinguishing features of every letter?
 - Is there a scope and sequence for the instruction of every letter, both uppercase and lowercase?
 - Does the teacher visually present similar letters at different times in the sequence?
 - Does the teacher draw attention to letters and words in student names and well-known letter correspondences such as in environmental print, e.g., M in the McDonalds sign?
 - Does the teacher provide explicit, systematic instruction for each letter in the beginning through mid-year?
 - Is the teacher providing daily opportunities for oral fluency of letters and recognition of letters?
 - Is more time allotted for more difficult to learn letters such as h, w, y, c, g, the vowels, q and x?
 - How is corrective feedback provided to students? Is it a separate resource or is corrective feedback provided in each daily lesson with specific teacher guidance aligned to the newly taught skill?
- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Are students frequently practicing identification and written formation of letters?
 - How do students identify letters?

- Are students transferring knowledge to meaningful encounters with print such as alphabet books, shared reading of big books, poetry posters, interactive or shared writing, daily message?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of letter recognition and the printing of letters in core materials.
- Discuss the amount of time spent on letter recognition and the printing of letters over the course of the school year. Is adequate time spent? Are the skills being developed for students?
- Discuss how materials include lessons, activities, and routines for sufficient practice.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for consensus about which indicators were met fully and partially.
- Agree on the final ratings.

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

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

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

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

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

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

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

Research or Standards connection:

[Cabell et al. \(2007, p. 329-330\)](#) states, "...numerous public policy initiatives emphasize the importance of ensuring a strong knowledge base concerning print for all young children and the need for early educators to systematically monitor children's achievements in these areas to guide scientifically-based emergent literacy interventions...Measures of print concepts, alphabet and letter-sound knowledge, and emergent writing are consistently shown to be among the better predictors of later reading success...Assessing young children's knowledge of print is also important for guiding effective early instruction focused on facilitating print knowledge."

Resources:

- [Assessment of Handwriting Skills](#)

Indicator 1b Guiding Question:

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

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards at each grade level. Review:
 - Table of Contents (including prefatory materials to see the rationale for how assessment is approached)
 - Assessment sections (diagnostic assessments, checklists, rubrics, running records, observation forms)
 - Protocols for how to support students performing below grade level
- Look for evidence of systematic instruction AND assessment to support development of foundational skills.

- Teacher Edition identifies metrics and systems for progress monitoring the foundational skills to support the teacher in identifying students' growth toward reading grade level and for progress monitoring throughout the year.
- Look at questions and tasks in assessments (screeners, inventories, diagnostics).

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What assessment measures are included for foundational skills?
- Are diagnostic assessments offered at regular intervals?
- Are there pre-assessments and post-assessments?
- Do the materials provide teacher guidance on how to interpret assessment results then use the data to modify, scaffold or intensify instruction?
- What does the teacher do with the results of formal and informal assessments?
- How is letter recognition assessed in K-1?
- How frequently is student progress assessed?
- What assessments are suggested for the teacher to use during lessons for immediate teacher feedback on student learning?
- What data tracking methods are employed?
- How do students participate in assessment?
- What kinds of feedback do students receive? Is the feedback based on lesson objectives?
- What instructional adjustments and protocols are recommended after the assessment? Are there opportunities for more practice, re-teaching, and/or alternative instructional practices suggested?

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

Criterion 1.2

Phonemic Awareness (Grades K-1 only)

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

What is the purpose of this Criterion?

This criterion addresses phonemic awareness in Kindergarten and Grade 1. Because phonemic awareness is a top predictor for learning to read, students need explicit, systematic instruction and sufficient practice opportunities in phonemic awareness.

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

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

[Buckingham et al. \(2019, p. 52\)](#) state, “There is strong evidence that the acquisition of knowledge and skills required for fluent phonological decoding and word reading is most likely to occur early and successfully with systematic and explicit instruction in phonics in the first few years of school. Such instruction uses a carefully developed sequence of letter–sounds that has been developed to minimize confusion while the alphabetic principle is consolidating in a beginning reader.”

Research Connection

[Shanahan \(2005, p. 8\)](#) states, “The [National Reading Panel](#) examined 52 studies on the teaching of phonemic awareness in which researchers taught children to hear the separate sounds within words...These studies clearly showed that phonemic awareness instruction could improve children’s phonemic awareness. Moreover, phonemic awareness teaching was advantageous to children in the early stages of learning to read; such instruction led to higher achievement in early reading and spelling, and the impacts on reading were evident when measuring both word recognition and reading comprehension.”

[Ehri \(2020, p. S54\)](#) states, “...when students learn to read and spell words, a visual alphabetic representational system for speech is acquired and used to store words in memory. Letters in spellings come to penetrate and represent phonemes in pronunciations in the brain. Various lines of research have shown that learning spellings impacts phonological processes and memory for spoken words.”

“For systems that are alphabetic, the beginner has to first become aware of individual phonemes in spoken words in order to subsequently learn that those phonemes are represented by letters. Fostering phoneme awareness before introducing letters is advised because it allows focus on the spoken form of phonemes, avoiding confusion with visual letters or letter names. Once the beginner has solid awareness of some phonemes, the representation of them by letters can be introduced with continuation of the staggering of phoneme awareness and letter knowledge as students discover more speech sounds. This sequencing provides students with a necessary understanding of how the alphabetic writing system works, referred to as ‘the alphabetic principle.’” [\(Brady, 2020, p. 2\)](#)

“Multiple findings also corroborate that programs are effective when they begin with a focus on phoneme awareness rather than phonological sensitivity, and highly so when instruction then links phonemes with graphemes. This is documented both for beginning readers and for students who have struggled with acquiring reading skills. This research indicates that phonological sensitivity instruction (with larger units such as rhyme, syllables, and onset-rime) is neither a prerequisite nor a causal factor in the development of phonemic awareness” [\(International Dyslexia Association, 2022\)](#).

Scoring:

Meets Expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14-16 points 	Partially Meets Expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8-13 points 	Does Not Meet Expectations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • < 8 points
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Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

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

Scoring:		
<p>4 points</p> <p>Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials contain a clear, evidence-based explanation for the expected sequence for teaching phonemic awareness skills. Materials have a cohesive sequence of phonemic awareness instruction based on the expected hierarchy to build toward students' immediate application of the skills. Materials attend to developing phonemic awareness skills and avoid spending excess time on phonological sensitivity tasks. Materials contain a phonemic awareness sequence of instruction and practice aligned to the phonics scope and sequence. 	<p>2 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials contain a clear, evidence-based explanation for the expected sequence for teaching phonemic awareness skills. Materials have a cohesive sequence of phonemic awareness instruction based on the expected hierarchy to build toward students' immediate application of the skills. Materials attend to developing phonemic awareness skills and avoid spending excess time on phonological sensitivity tasks. Materials contain a phonemic awareness sequence of instruction and practice aligned to the phonics scope and sequence. 	<p>0 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials contain a clear, evidence-based explanation for the expected sequence for teaching phonemic awareness skills. Materials have a cohesive sequence of phonemic awareness instruction based on the expected hierarchy to build toward students' immediate application of the skills. Materials attend to developing phonemic awareness skills and avoid spending excess time on phonological sensitivity tasks. Materials contain a phonemic awareness sequence of instruction and practice aligned to the phonics scope and sequence.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator focuses on the scope and sequence of phonemic awareness instruction. The learning of phonemic awareness includes a range of skills from simple to complex. Therefore, there is a hierarchy of phonemic awareness. Because each phonemic awareness skill builds upon previous skills, it is important that materials include resources for teaching each component of phonemic awareness and delineate the sequence in which phonemic awareness skills are to be taught, with a clear, evidence-based explanation for the expected hierarchy. Materials should include the evidence-based explanation with the intended scope and sequence. The sequence should progress from simpler tasks such as identifying the initial, final, and medial (vowel) sounds in words to more complex skills such as isolating and identifying the inner consonant clusters in words (eg: the /t/ in stop, the /n/ in bank). The sequence of phonemic awareness instruction should also align to the phonics scope and sequence. Materials may include a documented scope and sequence that provides instruction in phonemic awareness skills to include blending and segmenting phonemes and isolating and identifying phonemes that have been taught in previous lessons. In addition, the lesson should also include a phonemic awareness warm-up activity that aligns to the phonics portion of the lesson. Materials should connect the phoneme to the grapheme as soon as possible. Majority of instruction should focus on phonemic awareness skills such as isolation, blending, and segmenting. Phonological awareness instruction such as rhyming, onset/rime, and syllables should be limited to the beginning of Kindergarten. Phonemic awareness instruction should include phonemes/groups of phonemes previously taught or the current instructional focus. According to Louisa Moats, “Tasks associated with early phonological awareness, while serving as ‘red flags’ or indicators of potential reading problems, are only moderately associated with early reading and spelling. Learning to be better at them is not necessarily going to lead to proficiency in what really counts. It is phoneme awareness—specifically, the ability to say the individual phonemes in words, to pull them apart, and to put them together—that enables kids to read and spell in an alphabetic writing system like English. That is what instruction should focus on, especially from mid-kindergarten onward ([Moats, Louisa. \(n.d.\)](#).”

Research or Standards connection:

“In brief, phoneme awareness development can be summarized as typically progressing from awareness of external phonemes at the beginning of words, followed by those at the ends of words, to advanced awareness of internal phonemes: first the medial vowel in a CVC (i.e., consonant-vowel-consonant) item, followed by ability to segment and identify the internal consonants in consonant clusters (or blends)” ([Brady, 2020, p. 10](#)).

[Brady \(2020, p. 16\)](#) states, “Phoneme identity skills are important to attain in kindergarten, focusing first on the external phonemes in CVC words (the initial phoneme, followed by the final phoneme) and progressing to the medial vowel. In addition, blending and segmentation activities should be conducted with CV, VC, and CVC words...Phoneme awareness instruction in first grade should continue the sequence of instruction, ensuring that students are able to identify each of the phonemes of English, that is, the remaining consonants and vowels in the language beyond those taught in kindergarten, including diphthongs, remaining consonant digraphs, etc. Phoneme awareness blending and segmentation skills, after mastery with CVC words, now should extend to the next phase of phoneme awareness development: the internal consonants in consonant blends in words with complex syllable patterns. In addition, deletion skills with writing activities would be beneficial.”

Resources:

- [Building Phoneme Awareness: Know What Matters](#)
- [A 2020 Perspective on Research Findings on Alphabetics \(Phoneme Awareness and Phonics\):](#)

[Implications for Instruction](#)

- [They Say You Can Do Phonemic Awareness Instruction “In the Dark”, But Should You? A Critical Evaluation of the Trend Toward Advanced Phonemic Awareness Training](#)

Indicator 1c Guiding Questions:

What is the scope and sequence for phonemic awareness skills?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards at each grade level. Review:
 - The overview and scope and sequence of phonemic awareness.
 - Unit overviews for phonemic awareness objectives.
 - The daily lesson plans for the phonemic awareness instruction per day.
- Examine when phonemic awareness instruction begins in the scope and sequence.
- Examine how long materials spend on other phonological sensitivity tasks such as: alliteration, creating and recognizing rhyme, syllables, onset/rime.
- Examine supplemental documents for information about the sequence of phonemic awareness.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - What is the sequence of instruction of phonemic awareness across the grade levels (K-1)?
 - Does the sequence of instruction align with research and introduce phonemic awareness skills from simple to complex? Does the sequence of instruction include a logical progression of identifying and isolating phonemes in the initial spot, final spot, and then medial spot? Does the sequence of instruction include blending and segmenting? Does the sequence of instruction limit manipulation of phonemes to the end of the year and/or later grades?
 - Follows this general progression:
 - 1. isolating (initial, final, medial)
 - 2. segmenting and blending
 - 3. manipulating (initial, final, medial) (end of year)
 - For application and development of skills:
 - Kindergarten scope and sequence includes segmenting and blending with two and three phoneme words
 - Grade 1 scope and sequence includes segmenting and blending with three and four phoneme words (can progress towards multisyllabic words)
 - What is the amount of recommended time allocated for phonemic awareness instruction and activities? Is the majority of phonemic awareness instruction focused on the phoneme versus phonological awareness? Is phonological awareness work limited to the beginning of Kindergarten?
 - How do the materials provide regular practice of phonemic learning?
 - What research is cited in the materials about the phonemic awareness sequence?
 - When do students begin phonemic awareness instruction (which week in the school year)?

- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - What phonemic activities do students practice?
 - Do students practice all phonemic awareness skills in the sequence?
 - How do students practice phonemic awareness skills? Are manipulatives given to students such as Elkonin boxes and chips with a gradual release so that eventually students do not need manipulatives?
 - Do students see the grapheme and connect the grapheme to the phoneme or are phonemic awareness activities limited to oral activities only?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of materials providing a scope and sequence for phonemic awareness 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 1.2	Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based phonemic awareness.
Indicator 1d	Materials include systematic and explicit instruction in phonemic awareness with repeated teacher modeling.

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

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator focuses on materials’ incorporation of explicit instruction and teacher modeling of each newly taught sound (phoneme) and spelling pattern across the K - 1 grade band. This indicator focuses on phonemic awareness onl (not phonological awareness) and corrective feedback. Materials should prompt the teacher to ask questions to help students identify errors and correct themselves. Materials should provide guidance to teachers to know what types of questions to ask. This can be broad and a framework for teachers to follow, but also specific to individual questions and tasks that warrant specific corrective feedback (For example, corrective feedback is a student says “sweet” instead of “sweat”). Indicator 1f focuses on students’ opportunities to practice each newly taught sound (phoneme) and sound pattern.

Phonemic awareness: “Phonemic awareness is the ability to notice, think about, and work with the individual sounds in spoken words. Before children learn to read print, they need to become aware of how the sounds in words work. They must understand that words are made up of speech sounds, or phonemes.” ([Armbruster et al., Put Reading First, 2001](#), p. 8). In other words, phonemic awareness is about sounds not printed letters or words.

A student engaged in phonemic awareness instruction would be able to successfully complete all tasks with his or her eyes closed. The incorporation of the direct connection to the grapheme within the phonics portion of the lesson occurs in indicator 1f.

The development of phonemic awareness and phonics skills/strategies are essential so that students have the context to build upon to be able to distinguish individual sounds, or phonemes, within words and learn the necessary sound/spelling relationship critical to reading complex texts and spelling success. The strategic use of an explicit, research-based logical progression supports students in transferring learning to long-term memory. Additionally, materials should include explicit instruction with examples for teacher modeling.

Research or Standards connection:

“In sum, phoneme awareness supports understanding (of) what letters represent and is a factor in the specificity of phonological and orthographic representations in the brain. Because learning grapheme knowledge in turn strengthens phoneme awareness and is pivotal to the establishment of orthographic representations and reading, phoneme awareness programs should integrate this area of skill, following a coordinated sequence of introduction.” ([Brady, 2020, p. 3](#))

Resources:

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

Indicator 1d Guiding Question:

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

Evidence Collection

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

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - How do the materials provide regular, systematic modeling of phonemic awareness learning?
 - Do materials include explicit instruction with the use of supports such as Elkonin boxes, tapping, or

manipulatives?

- What are the directions to the teacher for demonstrating how to pronounce different phonemes?
- Do materials include language that addresses voicing, airflow, and tongue and/or lip placement, when appropriate?
- Do materials include key words for letter/sound correspondences that are aligned with the pure phoneme being taught for teacher modeling?
- Do materials include visual representations of articulation?
- What is the sequence of grade-level phonemic awareness concepts being introduced?
- How are new concepts being built and previously taught concepts being reviewed/maintained?
- Does the program explicitly teach all grade-level phonemes from simple to complex?
- Does the program include guidance on corrective feedback? Are teachers given information on how to respond to students when they make a mistake? Is this in the form of questioning that guides students to identify errors and fix them? Is it a separate resource and/or is corrective feedback provided in each daily lesson with specific teacher guidance aligned to the newly taught skill?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of grade-level phonemic awareness instruction in core materials.
- Discuss the amount of time spent on grade-level phonemic awareness instruction over the course of the school year. Is adequate time spent? Are the skills being developed for students?
- Discuss the instructional routines used for the explicit teaching of phonemic awareness. Are they structured and consistent across the year? Do teachers provide modeling for students of the routines?
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for consensus about which indicators were met fully and partially.
- Agree on the final ratings.

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

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

Scoring:		
<p>4 points</p> <p>Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily phonemic awareness instruction correlates to the phonics portion of the lesson and includes letters (phoneme-grapheme correspondence). Materials include opportunities for students to practice connecting sounds to letters. Materials include directions to the teacher for demonstrating how to pronounce each phoneme (articulation/mouth formation). 	<p>2 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily phonemic awareness instruction correlates to the phonics portion of the lesson and includes letters (phoneme-grapheme correspondence). Materials include opportunities for students to practice connecting sounds to letters. Materials include directions to the teacher for demonstrating how to pronounce each phoneme (articulation/mouth formation). 	<p>0 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Daily phonemic awareness instruction correlates to the phonics portion of the lesson and includes letters (phoneme-grapheme correspondence). Materials include opportunities for students to practice connecting sounds to letters. Materials include directions to the teacher for demonstrating how to pronounce each phoneme (articulation/mouth formation).

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator focuses on daily student practice of phonemic awareness skills, as well as practice with the associated grapheme taught within the same lesson (i.e., phonics portion of the lesson). Connecting phonemes to graphemes early on is crucial for laying a solid foundation for literacy. It helps students understand the alphabetic principle, wherein letters represent sounds in systematic and predictable ways. This understanding forms the basis for proficient reading and spelling. According to Ehri (2014), "phonological and orthographic processing become mutually reinforcing" and "orthographic information enhances the development of phonological representations" (p. 98). This supports the idea that connecting phonemes to graphemes strengthens both phonological awareness and spelling skills.

This indicator, along with indicator 1e, ensures students not only receive explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, but also daily opportunities to practice each newly taught sound/sound pattern, and the associated grapheme.

Research or Standards connection:

[Otaiba, et al. \(2019, p.15\)](#) states, “Teachers who are prepared to use explicit and systematic approaches for early intervention and remediation will help reduce the prevalence of students who are not able to read on grade level within RTI/MTSS implementation. These approaches are also effective to support reading instruction for all students, and for reading interventions for students with dyslexia and other specific reading disabilities.”

Resources:

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

Indicator 1e Guiding Question:

Evidence Collection

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

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of daily phonemic awareness activities.
- Discuss the amount of time spent on grade-level phonemic awareness instruction over the course of the school year. Is adequate time spent? Are the skills being developed for students?
- Discuss how materials include lessons, activities, and routines for sufficient practice.

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of grade-level phonemic awareness instruction in core materials.
- Discuss the amount of time spent on grade-level phonemic awareness instruction over the course of the school year. Is adequate time spent? Are the skills being developed for students?
- Discuss how materials include lessons, activities, and routines for sufficient practice.

- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for consensus about which indicators were met fully and partially.
- Agree on the final ratings.

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

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

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

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

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

Quality materials include assessment opportunities that are regular, systematic, and embedded across the day, week, month, and year (e.g., screening and/or progress monitoring three times per year or at major instructional benchmarks). These assessments are not intended to be a battery of disconnected tests, but rather a mechanism for progress monitoring that directly informs instruction and intervention. Materials should provide teachers—and, when appropriate, caregivers—with clear information about student performance and concrete suggestions for next steps when students are not yet demonstrating mastery.

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

Research or Standards connection:

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

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

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

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

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

Resources:

- Brady, S. (2020). *A 2020 Perspective on Research Findings on Alphabetsics (Phonics and Phonemic Awareness)*. Reading Science: Implications for Instruction and Assessment. American Federation of Teachers.
<https://www.thereadingleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Brady-Expanded-Version-of-Alphabetsics-TRLJ.pdf>
- Burns, M. K., Maki, K. E., Helman, L., McComas, J. J., & Young, H. (2018). Contributions of the components of phonemic awareness to letter-sound knowledge with kindergarten students in high-poverty urban elementary schools. *Reading & Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*, 34(5), 409–418.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10573569.2018.1468835>
- Moats, L. C. (2020). *Speech to Print: Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading* (3rd ed.). Paul H. Brookes Publishing.
- National Center on Improving Literacy. (2022). *Screening and Assessment Practices in Early Literacy*. Retrieved from <https://improvingliteracy.org>
- [Phonemic Awareness Assessment](#)

Indicator 1f Guiding Question:

How do the materials provide assessment for phonemic awareness?

Evidence Collection

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

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What assessment measures are included for foundational skills?
 - Are diagnostic assessments offered at regular intervals?
 - Are there pre-assessments and post-assessments aligned to the phonemic awareness scope and sequence?
 - What does the teacher do with the results of formal and informal assessments? Are next steps such as re-teaching, additional practice, or instructional adjustments suggested?
 - How is phonemic and phonemic awareness assessed in K-1? Do the materials include oral tasks, encoding or decoding activities, or structured observational checklists?
 - How frequently is student progress assessed?
 - What assessments are embedded in instruction to provide the teacher with immediate feedback on student learning (e.g., oral checks, dictation, decoding tasks)?
 - What data tracking methods are employed (e.g., observation forms, checklists, portfolios, digital trackers)?
 - How do students participate in assessment? Are tasks interactive or embedded in lesson routines?
 - What feedback do students receive, and is it aligned to the lesson's phonemic awareness objectives?
 - What instructional adjustments and protocols are recommended after the assessment? Are there opportunities for more practice, re-teaching, and/or alternative instructional practices suggested?
-
- Share evidence of the indicator.
 - Do the materials provide regular, systematic, and instructionally embedded assessment opportunities aligned to the phonemic awareness scope and sequence?
 - Do the assessments help the teacher find evidence of a student's progress toward mastery of key phonemic awareness subskills (e.g., isolation, blending, segmentation, manipulation)?
 - Do the assessment materials provide progress information for students to be supported and move toward independence in foundational skills?
 - What protocols exist for the teacher to help students performing below grade level?
 - Are the assessment materials aligned to the instruction and scope and sequence for phonemic awareness?
 - Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
 - Look for consensus about which indicators were met fully and partially.
 - Agree on the final ratings.

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

Criterion 1.3

Phonics (Decoding and Encoding)

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

What is the purpose of this Criterion?

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

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

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

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

Research Connection

“The hallmark of a systematic phonics approach or program is that a sequential set of phonics elements is

delineated and these elements are taught along a dimension of explicitness depending on the type of phonics method employed” [National Reading Panel \(2000\)](#).

“It is important to recognize that the goals of phonics instruction are to provide children with key knowledge and skills and to ensure that they know how to apply that knowledge in their reading and writing. In other words, phonics teaching is a means to an end” [National Reading Panel \(2000\)](#).

[National Research Council \(2015\)](#) writes, “The goal of explicit instruction is one of helping children to focus their attention on the relations that matter, because, again, that which one learns depends on that to which one attends.”

“No one has ever found that one order of phonics skills is more beneficial than another. The NRP ([National Reading Panel, 2000](#)) found that sequence mattered when it came to phonics teaching...but NRP didn’t find that one sequence was any better than another...Kids do better when teachers follow a systematic program of instruction for these foundational skills” ([Shanahan, 2014](#))

“It has now been established, by scientific reading research carried out over the last 30–40 years, that phonics instruction is the best way to teach the alphabetic principle...Central to effective phonics instruction is the systematic teaching of letter–sound correspondences in a logical sequence, so that all correspondences and blends are taught...The multi-disciplinary evidence supporting the efficacy of explicit and systematic instruction for teaching children the alphabetic principle, and how to apply it to achieve accurate and fluent word reading, is extensive, rigorous and remarkably consistent” ([Buckingham et al., 2019, p. 55-56, 65](#)).

“Readers must know grapheme–phoneme relations and have decoding skill to form connections, and must read words in text to associate spellings with meanings. Readers move through four developmental phases as they acquire knowledge about the alphabetic writing system and apply it to read and write words and build their sight vocabularies. Grapheme–phoneme knowledge and phonemic segmentation are key foundational skills that launch development followed subsequently by knowledge of syllabic and morphemic spelling–sound units. Findings show that when spellings attach to pronunciations and meanings in memory, they enhance memory for vocabulary words. This research underscores the importance of systematic phonics instruction that teaches students the knowledge and skills that are essential in acquiring word reading skill” ([Ehri, 2020, p. S45](#)).

Scoring:

Meets Expectations

- 30-32 points

Partially Meets Expectations

- 16-29 points

Does Not Meet Expectations

- < 16 points

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

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

Scoring:		
<p>4 points</p> <p>Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials contain a clear, evidence-based explanation for the expected sequence for teaching phonics skills. Materials clearly delineate a scope and sequence with a cohesive, intentional sequence of phonics instruction, from simpler to more complex skills, and practice to build toward the application of skills. Phonics instruction is based in high utility patterns and/or specific phonics generalizations. 	<p>2 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials contain a clear, evidence-based explanation for the expected sequence for teaching phonics skills. Materials clearly delineate a scope and sequence with a cohesive, intentional sequence of phonics instruction, from simpler to more complex skills, and practice to build toward the application of skills. Phonics instruction is based in high utility patterns and/or specific phonics generalizations. 	<p>0 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials contain a clear, evidence-based explanation for the expected sequence for teaching phonics skills. Materials clearly delineate a scope and sequence with a cohesive, intentional sequence of phonics instruction, from simpler to more complex skills, and practice to build toward the application of skills. Phonics instruction is based in high utility patterns and/or specific phonics generalizations.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator focuses on the scope and sequence of phonics instruction. While there is no research to support a perfect sequence for teaching phonics, there is research supporting an intentional, timely sequence of phonics instruction. For example, learning one letter and a corresponding sound is intentional; however, students are left with only a few weeks in a school year to learn other sounds such as long vowels or digraphs. To learn five letters and corresponding sounds in one week can be just as challenging for students since that scenario

involves a plethora of new information for a student’s working memory. In any systematic program, the phonics sequence in instructional materials must be organized in a way that early readers build graphophonic relationships in a timely manner to help students make progress towards and success in the grade level standards. The scope and sequence for the instructional materials will clearly delineate an intentional sequence in which phonics skills are to be taught, with a clear explanation for the order of the sequence.

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

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

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

Examples of known generalizations with high validity are:

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

Research or Standards connection:

Systematic phonics instruction “provides the foundational knowledge that launches students’ development as alphabetic readers and enables them to move through the phases. Scope and sequence charts specify the major grapheme–phoneme relations that must be mastered and their order of presentation” ([Ehri, 2020, p. S55](#)).

“All good readers are good decoders. Decoding should be taught until children can accurately and independently read new words. Decoding depends on phonemic awareness: a child's ability to identify individual speech sounds. Decoding is the on-ramp for word recognition” ([Lyon, 2023](#)).

“Synthetic phonics is highly explicit and systematic, and is characterized by a number of steps involving grapheme–phoneme correspondence (GPC) (being able to match a phoneme to a grapheme and vice versa):

- Clearly define a sequence of letter–sound (grapheme–phoneme) correspondences.
- Introduce new GPCs cumulatively.
- Start with single letters and a sound for each, moving onto common digraphs (sh, oo) and larger grapheme units (eigh, air, igh).
- Introduce blended phonemes for reading with the first set of GPCs, adding more GPCs as they are taught.
- Introduce segmented phonemes for spelling with the first set of GPCs, adding more GPCs as they are taught.
- Introduce the most common spellings for sounds first, and then the alternative sounds for spellings and alternative spelling for sounds.
- Introduce strategies for reading and spelling high-frequency words containing unusual letter– sound correspondences.
- Provide opportunities for applying word-reading skills in reading decodable books matched to the phonics sequence to support students in using phonological strategies as a first approach to reading ([Buckingham et al., 2019, p. 56-57](#)).

Resources:

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

Indicator 1g Guiding Questions:

What is the scope and sequence for phonics skills?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards at each grade level. Review:
 - The overview and scope and sequence of phonics.
 - Unit overviews for phonics objectives.
 - The daily lesson plans for the phonics instruction per day.
 - The research-based and/or evidence-based rationale provided for rules to be taught.
- Examine supplemental documents for information about the sequence of phonics instruction.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - What is the sequential instruction of phonics across the grade levels (K-2)?
 - What is the amount of recommended time allocated for each component of lessons and activities?
 - What research is cited in the materials about the phonics sequence?
 - What “rules” are being taught to students?
 - Are the phonics patterns of high utility?
 - Are resources provided to promote students’ learning of phonics patterns and common generalizations?
- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Do students practice all phonics skills in the sequence?
 - Are phonics skills organized in a way that early readers build graphophonic relationships in a timely manner to help students make progress toward and succeed with grade level standards?
 - How do students practice phonics skills?
 - Do students practice patterns that are common?
 - Will the resources provided promote students’ learning of phonics patterns and common generalizations?
 - Are there catchy phrases for remembering common phonics patterns?

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

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

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

“... attention should be focused on decoding words rather than the use of unreliable strategies such as looking at the illustrations, rereading the sentence, saying the first sound or guessing what might ‘fit’. Although these strategies might result in intelligent guesses, none of them is sufficiently

reliable and they can hinder the acquisition and application of phonic knowledge and skills, prolonging the word recognition process and lessening children’s overall understanding. Children who routinely adopt alternative cues for reading unknown words, instead of learning to decode them, later find themselves stranded when texts become more demanding and meanings less predictable. The best route for children to become fluent and independent readers lies in securing phonics as the prime approach to decoding unfamiliar words (Primary National Strategy, 2006b, p.9).”

Resources:

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

Indicator 1h Guiding Question:

Evidence Collection

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

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

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

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

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator focuses on pacing and timing within individual lessons, as well as across the year. This indicator also reviews for cumulative review of previously taught phonics skills. Pacing, timing, and cumulative review are reviewed in materials to ensure students are provided with sufficient opportunities to work towards student mastery of newly taught phonics skills.

While Indicator 2c also reviews for pacing, the pacing reviewed is for all foundational skills across this year, indicator 1i reviews for pacing of newly taught phonics skills and accounts for the instructional time spent, as well as student practice to mastery.

“We underestimate the amount of time it takes young learners to master phonics skills. When a new skill is introduced, it should be systematically and purposefully reviewed for at least the next 4–6 weeks. The goal must be to teach to mastery rather than just exposure. Only then can students transfer the skill to all reading situations. With the fast pacing of most curricula, a more substantial review and repetition cycle often must be added. This can be achieved through increased opportunities to practice previous skills in blending work, dictation, and the repeated readings of previously read accountable texts” ([Blevins, 2019](#); International Literacy Association).

Research or Standards connection:

“Fluency deficits caused by weak word-level skills pose a continuing challenge for teachers of developing readers...word-level practice improves word-level skills, both in lists and in connected text. Practice that emphasizes only accuracy allows students exposure to more text, which in turn seems to enhance comprehension while practice that emphasizes both accuracy and automaticity promotes the development of decoding efficiency. Both approaches have advantages, and the best instructional method may be a sequential combination of these approaches, beginning with a focus on accuracy and progressing to a focus on automaticity” ([Hudson et al. \(2011, p. 24\)](#)).

“Phonics instruction may be provided systematically or incidentally. The hallmark of a systematic phonics approach or program is that a sequential set of phonics elements is delineated and these elements are taught along a dimension of explicitness depending on the type of phonics method employed. Conversely, with incidental phonics instruction, the teacher does not follow a planned sequence of phonics elements to guide instruction but highlights particular elements opportunistically when they appear in text” ([National Reading Panel through Reading Rockets](#)).

“...cumulative practice provides an opportunity for students to practice a variety of related skills during the same practice session for the purpose of (a) strengthening discrimination skills (i.e., under these conditions, do this; under these related but different conditions, do that), (b) building long-term retention, and (c) improving accuracy. Unfortunately, the benefits of this opportunity are often decreased when the skills are blocked when being practiced (Rohrer & Taylor, 2007). That is, the components of each skill are presented, and completed as, a group (i.e., a block). When students have completed all the tasks or items requiring performance of one skill, they move on to the next skill block, and so on. Interleaved practice does the opposite by mixing up the accumulated skills within a single practice session so that none of the skills are practiced consecutively” ([Hughes and Joo-Young, 2020](#)).

Resources:

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

Indicator 1i Guiding Question:

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials.
Review:
 - The Table of Contents, any pacing guides, and phonics scope and sequence provided by the

publisher.

- Look at the overview and phonics scope and sequence for the number of lessons and/or number of days of instruction.
- Unit overviews for number of days/weeks spent on each new phonics skill.
- Unit overviews for amount of opportunities for cumulative review.
- The time needed per lesson per day to teach phonics skills, as well as time spent on cumulative review.
- Lesson overviews, pacing guides, daily lessons, scope and sequences
- Lessons for each phonics skill for design and pacing.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

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

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

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator focuses on explicit phonics instruction through systematic and repeated modeling. The key to this indicator is that the materials contain lessons for the teacher to explicitly model and explain each phonics skill, as well as provide teacher guidance for corrective feedback. Furthermore, the materials provide lessons that contain structured blending and segmenting routines that are consistent across the academic year. Blending routines provide opportunities for students to practice decoding words, while segmenting routines provide opportunities for students to practice spelling words. In order to become skilled phonic decoders, students will need to have strong phoneme-grapheme knowledge as well as skills in phonological blending. This means a

student must sound out the individual graphemes in a word and then blend those phonemes together to pronounce the word. There are several different blending techniques that can be modeled for students and practiced, such as continuous, additive, or whole word blending. “This is the main strategy for teaching students how to sound out words and must be frequently modeled and applied. It is simply the stringing together of letter-sounds to read a word. It is the focus of early phonics instruction but still plays a role when transitioning students from reading monosyllabic to multisyllabic words” ([Blevins, 2019](#); International Literacy Association).

The use of consistent dictation routines where the teacher provides words for students to encode are pivotal in materials for students to practice transferring the knowledge of the newly taught phonics skills to spelling. “To best transfer students’ growing phonics skills to writing, dictation (i.e., guided spelling with teacher think-alouds) is critical and begins in kindergarten. Although not a spelling test, this activity can accelerate students’ spelling abilities and understanding of common English spelling patterns and assist students in using these phonics skills in writing. Used in combination with word building and structured and unstructured writing experiences in phonics instruction, students have increased opportunities to “try out” their developing skills to express ideas in written form” ([Blevins, 2019](#); International Literacy Association).

Research or Standards connection:

[Buckingham et al. \(2019, p. 56\)](#) state, “An effective program of early literacy instruction will have at its core an explicit and systematic phonics component to teach the alphabetic code. This should be included daily...Well-designed programs will provide multiple engaging activities within this session to ensure that children’s attention is sustained. Explicit instruction is an evidence-based pedagogy in which the teacher: 1) explains, models and demonstrates the content or skill to be learned, 2) has a stated learning objective for each lesson, and, 3) uses clear and unambiguous language. Systematic instruction means that there is a planned sequence of phonics elements that comprises a logical progression of skills and knowledge, with sufficient practice and cumulative review for mastery to be achieved.”

[Brady \(2020, p. 10, 15\)](#) states, “In the NRP report, large benefits were reported for studies that taught blending and segmenting skills at the phoneme level. One can argue that segmenting words helps children build decoding and spelling skills and that blending supports synthesizing decoded phonemes into words...Blending measured at the end of kindergarten was a significant predictor of reading ability at the end of first grade; likewise blending performance at the end of second grade again predicted reading achievement in third grade, after which it no longer predicted subsequent reading development. Segmentation ability had a reciprocal relationship with reading attainment from kindergarten through third grade, indicating both that segmentation skill contributed to reading ability and that reading skills likewise facilitated segmenting.”

[Fyfe et al. \(2023, p. 141\)](#) state, “Our synthesis revealed that young children can, and often do, benefit from basic corrective feedback on task-level performance. This result is consistent with research on adults that often demonstrates positive effects of feedback for learning outcomes...In the research surveyed here, it was common for children, regardless of age or topic area, to use the information in the feedback message to improve their performance on the target task more so than children who practiced the same task without feedback.”

Resources:

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

- [Review Grade 1 Phonics and Word Recognition](#)
 - RF.1.3a-f
- [Review Grade 2 Phonics and Word Recognition](#)
 - RF.2.3a-c

Indicator 1j Guiding Question:

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

Evidence Collection

In the Instructional Materials being reviewed:

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

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of grade-level phonics instruction in core materials.
- Discuss the amount of time spent on grade-level phonics instruction over the course of the school year. Is adequate time spent? Are the skills being developed for students?
- Discuss how materials include lessons, activities, and routines for sufficient practice.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.

- Look for consensus about which indicators were met fully and partially.
- Agree on the final ratings.

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

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

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

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

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

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

Research or Standards connection:

[Hudson et al. \(2011, p. 15\)](#) state, “Decoding accuracy is necessary but not sufficient for proficient reading; readers need to develop decoding skills to a level of automaticity. Automaticity is a necessary component of skill, and higher-level aspects of skill cannot be acquired until lower-level aspects have become automatized...If reading subskills are performed automatically, then comprehension and other higher-order aspects of reading can function effectively at the same time...”

[Reed \(2012, p. 6\)](#) states, “Put simply, the English writing system is complex and, therefore, challenging to learn. The 26 letters of the alphabet can produce approximately 44 sounds (phonemes) that are represented in 250 different spellings...Developing automaticity in decoding and spelling requires redundant exposures to the grapho-phonemic patterns of the language...Therefore, reading and spelling can be mutually beneficial if taught together, rather than separately, because they create additional opportunities to practice applying common patterns...A synthesis of studies conducted with developing readers in the lower elementary grades concluded that integrated decoding and encoding instruction led to significant gains in phonemic awareness, alphabetic decoding, word reading, spelling, fluency, and comprehension.”

[Graham \(2020, p.S38\)](#) states, “Students acquire knowledge about how to spell words when they receive instruction designed to improve phonological awareness, phonics skills, and reading fluency, as it provides them with information about how letters and sounds are connected. Correspondingly, teaching spelling should enhance word reading, as it provides students with schemata about the connections between letter patterns, making it easier to read words containing these same patterns.”

Resources:

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

- RF.1.3a-e
- [Review Grade 2 Phonics and Word Recognition](#)
- RF.2.3a-c

Indicator 1k Guiding Question:

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

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards at each grade level. Review:
 - Table of Contents (including prefatory materials to see the rationale for how phonics instruction and student practice is approached).
 - Instructions, questions and tasks in relevant foundational sections including prefatory material to evaluate the quality of phonics practice.
 - The scope and sequence.
 - The unit and/or weekly overviews.
 - The daily lessons in the Teacher Edition.
- Teacher Edition identifies lessons and activities for phonics student practice.
- Teacher Edition identifies lessons and activities about previously taught spelling patterns.
- Teacher Edition has evidence of daily activities designed to reinforce previously taught phonics skills.
- Do materials rely on the three-cueing system? Is the use of the cueing system distracting students from decoding words?

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of students' practice of phonics in core materials.

- Discuss the amount of time spent on students' practice of phonics over the course of the school year. Is adequate time spent? Are the skills being developed for students?
- Discuss how materials include lessons, activities, and routines for sufficient practice.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for consensus about which indicators were met fully and partially.
- Agree on the final ratings.

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

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

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

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

groundwork for more advanced language skills, including grammar, syntax, and composition. Mastering spelling rules early on can pave the way for future language learning and academic success.

Research or Standards connection:

[Johnston \(2001, p. 10\)](#) states, “...teachers need to know what patterns have high utility (such as vowel pairs that represent one sound consistently and final e); as well as those that are variable and less reliable but still common (such as vowel pairs in which sounds alternate and r-controlled vowels). This latter group will be more challenging to teach but activities in which students categorize words by sound and patterns, as in word sorts..., hold promise for effective instruction within a comprehensive reading program that includes lots of reading and writing...Word sorting activities encourage students to think flexibly about letter-sound correspondences and include the examination of exception words. Word sorts can also examine patterns at different levels of specificity. Word families might be sorted by rimes or phonograms (cat, mat, sat, vs. bag, rag, tag) in the early part of first grade..., while words might be sorted by different spellings of the long-a sound (ai, ay, a-e) in the latter part. In preparation for the study of two-syllable words and the addition of suffixes, students might sort words by CVC, CVCe, or CV patterns across the different vowels in second or third grade.”

[Graham & Santangelo \(2014\)](#) state, “Despite the importance of spelling for both writing and reading, there is considerable disagreement regarding how spelling skills are best acquired. During this and virtually all of the last century, some scholars have argued that spelling should not be directly or formally taught as such instruction is not effective or efficient. We conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis of experimental and quasi-experimental studies to address these claims. The corpus of 53 studies in this review included 6,037 students in kindergarten through 12th grade and yielded 58 effect sizes (ESs) that were used to answer eight research questions concerning the impact of formally teaching spelling on spelling, phonological awareness, reading, and writing performance. An average weighted ES was calculated for each question and the quality of included studies was systematically evaluated. Results provided strong and consistent support for teaching spelling, as it improved spelling performance when compared to no/unrelated instruction (ES = 0.54) or informal/incidental approaches to improving spelling performance (ES = 0.43). Increasing the amount of formal spelling instruction also proved beneficial (ES = 0.70). Gains in spelling were maintained over time (ES = 0.53) and generalized to spelling when writing (ES = 0.94). Improvements in phonological awareness (ES = 0.51) and reading skills (ES = 0.44) were also found. The positive outcomes associated with formal spelling instruction were generally consistent, regardless of students’ grade level or literacy skills.”

[Dymock & Nicholson \(2017\)](#) state, “The ubiquitous weekly spelling test assumes that words are best learned by memorisation and testing but is this the best way? This study compared two well-known approaches to spelling instruction, the rule based and visual memory approaches. A group of 55 seven-year-olds in two Year 3 classrooms was taught spelling in small groups for three lessons a week, 20-min per lesson, over ten weeks. In the first intervention, students learned statistically likely spelling strategies for vowel sounds, syllable breaking strategies, and the doubling rule. In the second intervention, students used a look, say, cover, write, check, fix strategy, listed words in alphabetical order, and wrote them in sentences. The control group completed non-spelling activities. Results showed that although both intervention groups learned to spell taught words better than the control group, the rule-based approach had greater transfer to spelling of new words for both proficient and less proficient spellers.”

Resources:

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

Indicator 1I Guiding Question:

Evidence Collection

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

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Consider the sequence of instruction for phonics rules and generalizations.
- Consider how students practice phonics rules and generalizations.
- Consider how often students practice new phonics rules and generalizations.
- Are students provided ample opportunities to progress towards student mastery?
- Is instruction aligned to high-utility phonics rules and generalizations?

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

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

Scoring:		
<p>4 points</p> <p>Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decodable texts contain grade-level phonics skills aligned to the program’s scope and sequence. Materials include detailed lesson plans for repeated readings of decodable texts to address acquisition of phonics skills. Reading practice occurs in decodable texts (i.e., an absence of predictable texts) until students can accurately decode single syllable words. 	<p>2 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decodable texts contain grade-level phonics skills aligned to the program’s scope and sequence. Materials include detailed lesson plans for repeated readings of decodable texts to address acquisition of phonics skills. Reading practice occurs in decodable texts (i.e., an absence of predictable texts) until students can accurately decode single syllable words. 	<p>0 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decodable texts contain grade-level phonics skills aligned to the program’s scope and sequence. Materials include detailed lesson plans for repeated readings of decodable texts to address acquisition of phonics skills. Reading practice occurs in decodable texts (i.e., an absence of predictable texts) until students can accurately decode single syllable words.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

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

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

Research or Standards connection:

[Wolf \(2018\)](#) states, “A majority of early studies found repeat reading the same text (for) fluency helped children improve decoding, and ultimately improve children’s reading comprehension of the specific text repeatedly read (sec. 3.3)...There is convincing data that simple, decodable text is ideal for the beginning reader because a) during children’s very first reading attempts, decodable text promotes the use of letter sound knowledge and spelling pattern knowledge as the primary reading strategy, and b) children are usually successful in applying their letter sound knowledge to decode words (sec. 7.0).”

[Cheatham & Allor \(2012, p. 2224, 2226, 2241\)](#) states, “Researchers agree that decodable text allows students to practice and improve their decoding skills and is consistent with theories of reading development that view deliberate decoding of text as critical to early stages of reading development...When students read decodable texts they can more readily apply their knowledge of letters and sounds, making it more likely that they will process all of the letters within words and develop fully specified orthographic representations of words. Recognizing words in this way allows the reader to focus mental energy on comprehension rather than word recognition...decodability is a critical characteristic of early reading text as it increases the likelihood that students will use a decoding strategy and results in immediate benefits, particularly with regard to accuracy.”

Resources:

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

Indicator 1m Guiding Question:

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

Evidence Collection

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

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Do the materials contain decodable texts (small readers)?
 - Does the teacher have opportunities to explicitly teach students how to apply the new phonics skills in decodable texts?
 - Does the teacher have opportunities to explicitly teach students how to apply the new high-frequency words/irregularly spelled words in decodable texts?
 - Do the materials provide lesson plans or instructional routines for the teacher to engage students in reading decodable texts?
 - Does the teacher have more than one lesson available per decodable text?
 - Are there regular opportunities for the teacher to guide students in the reading of decodable texts?
 - How are decodable texts used?
- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Do the materials provide frequent and regular opportunities throughout the year for students to read decodable texts?
 - Do students practice decoding new phonics skills by reading the phonetically controlled words in the context of a decodable text?
 - Do the materials provide frequent and regular opportunities throughout the year for students to read decodable readers?
 - How many times does a student engage with each decodable text?

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

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

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

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

Ongoing assessment of phonics skills allows the teacher to use various instruments, tools, observations, and student work samples to determine student progress. Phonics skills assessments should help a teacher determine a student's overall reading ability as well as subcomponents of each student's growth in phonics

skills. Assessments (diagnostic, formative, summative, informal, formal, pre-assessments, post-assessments, screening assessments, portfolios, checklists, observations, etc.) support the teacher in evaluating students' skills in order to plan effective instruction and activities for all students to make academic growth. These assessments inform the teacher of next steps for the whole group, small group, and individual instruction of foundational skills.

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

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

Research or Standards connection:

[Otaiba et al. \(2012, p. 122\)](#) state, "An adequate diagnostic assessment of children's word recognition abilities should include an assessment of: (1) word-reading accuracy (both in and out of context); (2) phonemic decoding skill; and (3) reading fluency...Measures that involve out-of-context word reading more directly assess the kinds of word recognition skills that are particularly problematic for children with RD because they eliminate the contextual support on which these children rely heavily...In addition to formal assessments in these domains, it is usually useful to observe the way a child reads text at varying levels of difficulty. Careful observations of oral reading behavior can provide useful information about the way that the child integrates all sources of information about words in text."

Resources:

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

Indicator 1n Guiding Question:

How do the materials provide assessment of phonics skills?

Evidence Collection

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

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

Criterion 1.4

Word Recognition and Word Analysis

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

What is the purpose of this Criterion?

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

Research Connection

“Through the process of taking the print version of a word and pronouncing it, orthographic information about the word is stored. This process is referred to as orthographic mapping” ([Miles, Rubin, & Gonzalez-Frey, 2017, p. 715](#))

[Ehri \(2020, P. S57\)](#) states, “...teaching students to decode unfamiliar words and enabling students to store spellings of familiar words bonded to their other identities in memory should be central goals of beginning reading instruction. Decoding is a means of getting spellings of words into memory so they can be read by sight. Being able to connect letters in spellings to sounds in pronunciations spontaneously when spellings of words are seen and heard also serves to retain words in memory.”

[Brady \(2020, p. 19\)](#) states, “Programs that are more systematic cover a planned set of lessons that start with regular spelling and decoding patterns, beginning with a set of consonants (chosen based on frequency and regularity) and regular, single-letter vowel patterns. Some high frequency words are taught in tandem with the phonics content to support reading and writing of connected text. Patterns are gradually added, building on what has been learned, and increasing accuracy and automaticity. Systematic sequencing more often occurs with grapheme level instruction, but can follow a planned sequence with a word family approach.”

Scoring:

Meets Expectations
 • 10-12 points

Partially Meets Expectations
 • 6-9 points

Does Not Meet Expectations
 • < 6 points

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

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

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

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator focuses on systematic and explicit instruction of high frequency words. Materials should include an instructional routine for students to identify the regularly spelled and temporarily irregularly spelled part of words. Explicit instruction in identifying the regularly spelled part and the temporarily irregularly spelled part of words is crucial for several reasons: Teaching students to identify regular and irregular spelling patterns helps them understand the structure of words. Recognizing common patterns allows students to decode unfamiliar words and read with greater fluency. By understanding the regular patterns in words, students can apply these

patterns to their spelling, enabling them to spell words correctly even if they haven't encountered them before. This boosts their overall spelling skills. When students can accurately decode words, their reading comprehension improves. They can focus on understanding the meaning of the text rather than struggling with individual word recognition. Identifying regularly spelled parts of words allows students to read more efficiently. They can quickly recognize and process familiar word parts, speeding up their reading and making it a more enjoyable experience.

Spiraling review in high-frequency word instruction ensures that students retain these words in their long-term memory. Repetition and review help reinforce memory, making it more likely that these words will be recognized and read fluently. High-frequency words are words that appear frequently in texts. Teaching these words and incorporating spiraling review helps students achieve automaticity, meaning they can recognize and read these words quickly and effortlessly. Automatic recognition of common words is essential for fluent reading. When students can quickly recognize high-frequency words, their reading fluency improves. Fluent readers can focus on understanding the meaning of the text rather than struggling with basic word recognition.

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

Research or Standards connection:

[Colenbrander et al. \(2022, p. 545\)](#) state, “Children learning to read in English must learn to read words with varying degrees of grapheme-phoneme correspondence regularity...active processing of a word’s orthography is crucial for learning irregular words....our results clearly support the view that irregular word reading instruction should include active processing of a word’s orthography during instruction.”

Resources:

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

Indicator 1a Guiding Question:

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

Evidence Collection

In the Instructional Materials being reviewed:

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

- Teacher Edition identifies lessons and activities for high frequency word instruction.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

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

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

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

Research or Standards connection:

[Miles \(2018, p. 718, 721\)](#) states, “Proficient readers rely on their abundant sight word knowledge to read words fluently, which allows their mental energy to be spent on comprehending what they are reading...The path by which sight words become stored in memory has been widely demonstrated in the reading science literature: visual–phonological links are made between the spelling of a word and its pronunciation, and repeated encounters with the word help cement it in the reader’s mind...The goal is for students to become analytic in their approach to decoding unfamiliar words, and ultimately the majority of words will be read automatically as sight words; that is, most words categorized as irregularly spelled will feel like and function as regularly spelled words for all students.”

Resources:

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

Indicator 1p Guiding Question:

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

Evidence Collection

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

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

- Do the materials provide frequent and regular opportunities throughout the year for students to read and write high-frequency words through diverse tasks?
- Is there regular practice across diverse activities for students throughout the units?
- Do tasks provide students multiple opportunities to read regularly and irregularly spelled high frequency words?
- Do tasks provide students multiple opportunities to spell regularly and irregularly spelled high frequency words?
- Do students engage with reading and writing tasks utilizing high-frequency words (e.g., writing high frequency words in contextual sentences, reading/writing high frequency words in projects, etc.)?

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

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

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

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

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

uncommon vowel digraphs, multisyllabic words, or words with prefixes, suffixes, or roots..

Understanding syllables helps students read and decode unfamiliar words. By breaking words into syllables, they can tackle longer, multisyllabic words more easily, improving their reading fluency. Knowledge of syllables aids spelling. When students know how to divide words into syllables, they can spell more accurately. It also helps them recognize common spelling patterns within syllables. Proficiency in syllabication supports reading fluency. Fluent readers can identify syllables quickly, enabling smoother and more natural reading. While the teacher needs to have knowledge of the six different syllable types and syllabication rules (e.g., every syllable has a vowel), students do not necessarily need to know the specific terminology for syllable types, rather how the syllable type or rule helps a student determine the vowel sound in the word. For example, materials may include instruction containing short vowel syllable and long vowel syllable types without teaching the terminology of closed syllable type and open syllable type. Further, as words gain syllables, students must apply vowel flexibility (i.e., apply long and short vowel sound and schwa) to syllables as they are decoding (e.g., students flex vowel sounds in ci-vi-li-za-tion using vowel names, sounds and schwa).

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

Research or Standards connection:

[Foorman et al. \(2016, p. 27\)](#) state, "Help students decode more complex words by teaching a word-analysis strategy: identify the word parts and vowels, say the different parts of the word, and repeat the full sentence in which the word appears."

[Kearns et al \(2022, p. 14\)](#) state, "What is essential and common across programs is that students know how to break words into parts using vowel information."

[Heggie & Wade-Woolley \(2017, p. 86\)](#) state, "...the vast majority of English words are multisyllabic and constitute an increasingly large proportion of the words in elementary school texts beginning as early as grade 3. Multisyllabic words are more difficult to read simply because they are long, posing challenges for working memory capacity. In addition, syllable boundaries, word stress, vowel pronunciation ambiguities, less predictable grapheme-phoneme correspondences, and morphological complexity all contribute to long words' difficulty. Research suggests that explicit instruction in both syllabification and morphological knowledge improve poor readers' multisyllabic word reading accuracy."

[Toste et al. \(2017\)](#) state, "One approach for teaching multisyllabic word reading is to focus on the development of automaticity by providing multiple opportunities for students to manipulate and read wordsThis helps students acquire word representations through repeated exposures to words and word parts within the context of their larger word units...Specifically, instruction moves from part to whole, introducing morphemes, first in isolation, then in words, and finally in connected text."

Resources:

- [On Eating Elephants and Teaching Syllabication](#)
- [Six Syllable Types](#)
- [Helping Students With Dyslexia Read Long Words Using Syllables and Morphemes](#)

- [33. Syllables or Morphemes? When to Teach Which and Why | 2022 Literacy Symposium](#)

Indicator 1q Guiding Question:

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

Evidence Collection

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

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Do the materials have the teacher explicitly teach word analysis skills?
 - Do the materials provide teacher guidance on a progression for teaching word analysis skills?
 - Do the materials provide teacher guidance on how multisyllabic words can be decoded?
- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Do the materials provide grade-appropriate opportunities for the students to learn and analyze phoneme and grapheme relationships?
 - Do single syllable and multisyllabic activities provide students grade-appropriate opportunities to practice and learn phoneme/grapheme recognition?
 - Do multisyllabic activities provide students grade-appropriate opportunities to practice and learn morpheme analysis?

- Do single syllable and multisyllabic activities provide students grade-appropriate opportunities to practice and learn that every syllable has a vowel sound?
- Do multisyllabic activities provide students grade-appropriate opportunities to practice and learn common affixes?
- Do multisyllabic activities provide students grade-appropriate opportunities to practice and learn division of syllables?
- Do the materials provide frequent and regular opportunities throughout the year for students to practice and apply word analysis strategies in reading and writing?
- Do materials provide students with opportunities to independently use word analysis strategies in reading and writing tasks?
- Are there materials students can utilize as “tools” to help them remember word analysis strategies taught?

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

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

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

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

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

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

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

Research or Standards connection:

[Al Otaiba et al. \(2012, p. 11\)](#) state, “An adequate diagnostic assessment of children’s word recognition abilities should include an assessment of: (1) word-reading accuracy (both in and out of context); (2) phonemic decoding skill; and (3) reading fluency...Measures that involve out-of-context word reading more directly assess the kinds of word recognition skills that are particularly problematic for children with RD (reading disabilities) because they eliminate the contextual support on which these children rely heavily. However, it may be useful diagnostically to determine the difference for a specific child between “in context” and “out of context” reading accuracy to determine how well the child can use context to support the word recognition processes. In addition to formal assessments in these domains, it is usually useful to observe the way a child reads text at varying levels of difficulty. Careful observations of oral reading behavior can provide useful information about the way that the child integrates all sources of information about words in text.”

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 syllabic skills?

Evidence Collection

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

the teacher in identifying students' growth toward reading grade level and for progress monitoring throughout the year.

- Look at questions and tasks in assessments (screeners, inventories, diagnostics).
- Some materials may have grade level fluency passages with questions attached for comprehension checks.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

Criterion 1.5

Fluency (Grades 1-2 Only)

Materials provide systematic and explicit instruction and practice in oral reading fluency by mid-to-late 1st and 2nd grade. Materials for 2nd grade oral reading fluency practice should vary (decodables and grade-level texts).

What is the purpose of this Criterion?

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

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

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

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

Research Connection

[Rasinski, T. \(2014 & 2017, p. 4-5\)](#) states, “Automatic word recognition takes phonics to the next level. Automatic readers not only recognize words accurately, they do it with minimal employment of their cognitive resources...Expression in oral reading, or prosody, is fluency’s connection to meaning or comprehension. In order to read something with appropriate expression that reflects the author’s purpose and meaning, the reader must have some degree of comprehension of the passage itself...Struggling readers, on the other hand, are not automatic in their word recognition, so they must use their cognitive resources for the more basic bottom-up of word recognition, thereby depleting what they will have available for more important top-down task – making meaning....”

Scoring:

Meets Expectations

- 10-12 points

Partially Meets Expectations

- 6-9 points

Does Not Meet Expectations

- < 6 points

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

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

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

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

Research or Standards connection:

[Rasinski, T. \(2014 & 2017, p.10-11\)](#) states, “Research and scholarly writing have demonstrated that fluency is conceptually an important reading competency, that it can be measured relatively easily and quickly, and that instructional methods have been developed that have shown to be effective in improving students’ fluency...Research into students who are identified as struggling readers or who perform poorly on high stakes silent reading comprehension tests has found that poor reading fluency appears to be a major contributing factor to their poor reading...although reading fluency is identified as a foundational reading competency in the United States by the Common Core State Standards, an expanding body of research has shown that many students in the upper elementary, middle, and secondary grades have not achieved adequate levels of fluency in their reading and thus experience difficulty in others of reading, including silent reading comprehension...”

Resources:

- [Components of Fluency](#)

Indicator 1s Guiding Question:

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

Evidence Collection

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

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

■ Accuracy?

- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Do students hear the teacher model fluency?
 - Do students hear the same passage read repeatedly with fluency?
 - Do students see the teacher or proficient reader use a finger to track the reading of the words as the reader reads aloud?
 - Do students hear modeled phrasing, expression, intonation, rate, and accuracy?

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

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

Scoring:		
<p>4 points</p> <p>Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varied, frequent opportunities are provided over the course of the year for students to gain automaticity and prosody. Materials provide practice opportunities for word reading fluency in a variety of settings (e.g. repeated readings, dyad or partner reading, continuous reading). Materials include guidance and corrective feedback suggestions to the teacher for supporting students' gains in oral reading fluency. 	<p>2 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varied, frequent opportunities are provided over the course of the year for students to gain automaticity and prosody. Materials provide practice opportunities for word reading fluency in a variety of settings (e.g. repeated readings, dyad or partner reading, continuous reading). Materials include guidance and corrective feedback suggestions to the teacher for supporting students' gains in oral reading fluency. 	<p>0 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varied, frequent opportunities are provided over the course of the year for students to gain automaticity and prosody. Materials provide practice opportunities for word reading fluency in a variety of settings (e.g. repeated readings, dyad or partner reading, continuous reading). Materials include guidance and corrective feedback suggestions to the teacher for supporting students' gains in oral reading fluency.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

Automaticity in reading means recognizing words quickly and accurately without conscious effort. Frequent practice with a variety of texts helps students develop automatic word recognition skills. When words are

recognized automatically, students can focus on understanding the meaning of the text rather than struggling with word recognition. Fluent reading involves not only accurate word recognition but also appropriate speed and expression (prosody). Frequent practice with different texts and genres, supported by instructional materials, helps students read smoothly and with expression, improving their overall reading fluency.

By becoming fluent readers, students can allocate more cognitive resources to comprehension. When students read with automaticity and prosody, they can grasp the meaning of sentences and passages more effectively. Fluent reading supports comprehension by allowing students to read phrases and sentences as meaningful chunks, aiding in understanding.

Research or Standards connection:

[Rasinski \(2014 & 2017, p. 10\)](#) states, “It is clear that reading fluency is an important competency that needs to be addressed in the literacy classrooms around the world. Research and scholarly writing have demonstrated that fluency is conceptually an important reading competency, that it can be measured relatively easily and quickly, and that instructional methods have been developed that have shown to be effective in improving students’ fluency.”

Resources:

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

Indicator 1t Guiding Question:

How do the materials address oral reading fluency practice?

Evidence Collection

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

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the teacher be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Do the instructional materials adequately support the development of fluency?
 - Are supports included that teach and support fluent reading?
 - Are multiple and varied reading opportunities offered over the course of the year?
 - Does the teacher support students with varied fluency opportunities such as reader’s theater, dialogues, song lyrics, narratives, speeches, whisper reading, repeated readings, choral reading, oral recitation, echo reading over the course of the year in small groups, whole group, individualized, and

intervention instruction to increase fluency?

- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
 - Do students read texts with a focus on rate, accuracy, and expression?
 - Do students practice reading fluency through varied fluency opportunities?
 - Do students receive fluency instruction in whole group and in small groups?

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

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

Scoring:		
<p>4 points</p> <p>Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple assessment opportunities are provided regularly and systematically over the course of the year for students to demonstrate progress toward mastery and independence of oral reading fluency. Assessment materials provide the teacher and students with information about students' current skills/level of understanding of oral reading fluency. Materials support the teacher with instructional adjustments to help students make progress toward mastery in oral reading fluency. 	<p>2 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple assessment opportunities are provided regularly and systematically over the course of the year for students to demonstrate progress toward mastery and independence of oral reading fluency. Assessment materials provide the teacher and students with information about students' current skills/level of understanding of oral reading fluency. Materials support the teacher with instructional adjustments to help students make progress toward mastery in oral reading fluency. 	<p>0 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple assessment opportunities are provided regularly and systematically over the course of the year for students to demonstrate progress toward mastery and independence of oral reading fluency. Assessment materials provide the teacher and students with information about students' current skills/level of understanding of oral reading fluency. Materials support the teacher with instructional adjustments to help students make progress toward mastery in oral reading fluency.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines the quality of instructional materials intended for assessment of oral reading fluency.

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

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

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

Research or Standards connection:

[Lee & Yoon \(2017, p. 214\)](#) state, “Of those studies documenting gains in oral reading fluency, most have reported greater gains when RR (Repeated Reading) was used in combination with other interventions. The interventions used with RR are (a) word preview, which involves an initial preview and practice of isolated words before reading; (b) listening passage preview, which involves initially listening to an audiotope or teacher’s model reading the passage; (c) error correction, which involves correcting errors during oral reading; (d) performance feedback, which involves goal setting, self-evaluation, and extrinsic reward after reading; (e) peer-mediated reading, which involves peer tutoring or partner reading; and (f) textual factors, which involve introducing a gradual level of text difficulty...”

[White et al. \(2021, p. 2\)](#) state, “Most administrators and teachers understand that speed, accuracy, and expression when reading aloud are essential in support of reading comprehension and learning in subject areas. Educators also understand that ORF (Oral Reading Fluency) is a strong indicator of overall reading competence...Therefore, ORF has become the primary measurement technique for determining which students may be on track toward meeting state reading standards and which students would benefit from additional services and intervention...In addition, regular classroom assessment of oral reading, also known as curriculum-based measurement by some...and progress monitoring by others, has been widely implemented and used to place students into different tiers within response-to-intervention models of instruction and intervention.”

Resources:

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

Indicator 1u Guiding Question:

How do the materials provide assessment of fluency?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Fluency standards in

Grades 1-2. Review:

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

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

During the cluster meeting:

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

Gateway 2: Usability

Criterion 2.1

Guidance for Implementation

Materials are accompanied by information that provides the teacher with guidance for implementation of daily lessons and information to enhance teacher knowledge of foundational skills.

What is the purpose of this Criterion?

This criterion evaluates the extent to which the materials aid teachers in several key aspects. Firstly, it assesses the support provided to teachers in delivering student and ancillary materials, with a specific focus on their impact on students' literacy development. Secondly, it examines how the materials help teachers understand the instructional approaches of the program, emphasizing research-based strategies. Thirdly, it evaluates the materials' effectiveness in enhancing teachers' subject knowledge beyond the grade level. Additionally, this criterion considers the materials' guidance in helping teachers comprehend the role of educational standards within the broader context of the series. Lastly, it gauges the materials' assistance in enabling teachers to plan effective instruction, incorporating suitable materials, and guiding caregivers on supporting students' progress and achievement.

Scoring:

Meets Expectations
 • 14 points

Partially Meets Expectations
 • 7-12 points

Does Not Meet Expectations
 • < 7 points

Gateway 2: Usability

Criterion 2.1	Materials are accompanied by information that provides the teacher with guidance for implementation of daily lessons and information to enhance teacher knowledge of foundational skills.
Indicator 2a	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:		
Kindergarten		
<p>4 points</p> <p>Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials provide a well-defined, teacher resource for content presentation. The teacher resource contains detailed information and instructional routines that help the teacher to effectively implement all foundational skills content (i.e., alphabet knowledge, phonemic awareness, phonics, irregularly spelled words, word analysis). 	<p>2 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials provide a well-defined, teacher resource for content presentation. The teacher resource contains detailed information and instructional routines that help the teacher to effectively implement all foundational skills content (i.e., alphabet knowledge, phonemic awareness, phonics, irregularly spelled words, word analysis) 	<p>0 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials provide a well-defined, teacher resource for content presentation. The teacher resource contains detailed information and instructional routines that help the teacher to effectively implement all foundational skills content (i.e., alphabet knowledge, phonemic awareness, phonics, irregularly spelled words, word analysis).
Grade 1		
<p>4 points</p> <p>Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials provide a well-defined, teacher resource for content presentation. The teacher resource contains detailed information and instructional routines that help the teacher to effectively implement all foundational 	<p>2 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials provide a well-defined, teacher resource for content presentation. The teacher resource contains detailed information and instructional routines that help the teacher to effectively implement all foundational 	<p>0 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials provide a well-defined, teacher resource for content presentation. The teacher resource contains detailed information and instructional routines that help the teacher to effectively implement all foundational

skills content (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, irregularly spelled words, word analysis, fluency).	skills content (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, irregularly spelled words, word analysis, fluency).	skills content (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, irregularly spelled words, word analysis, fluency).
Grade 2		
<p>4 points</p> <p>Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials provide a well-defined, teacher resource for content presentation. The teacher resource contains detailed information and instructional routines that help the teacher to effectively implement all foundational skills content (i.e., phonics, irregularly spelled words, word analysis, fluency). 	<p>2 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials provide a well-defined, teacher resource for content presentation. The teacher resource contains detailed information and instructional routines that help the teacher to effectively implement all foundational skills content (i.e., phonics, irregularly spelled words, word analysis, fluency). 	<p>0 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials provide a well-defined, teacher resource for content presentation. The teacher resource contains detailed information and instructional routines that help the teacher to effectively implement all foundational skills content (i.e., phonics, irregularly spelled words, word analysis, fluency).

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

The teaching of foundational skills requires explicit instruction delivered by an educator. This indicator addresses the need for a teacher’s manual or resources for a teacher in order for the teacher to effectively facilitate foundational skills instruction. With a detailed teaching manual, the teacher is better able to help students acquire the necessary building blocks for becoming skilled readers.

A detailed manual should contain explanations of the instructional routines that ensure lessons consistently provide coherent instruction that is explicit and systematic in the areas of phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, fluency, and print concepts.

Indicator 2a Guiding Question:

How do the materials provide a supportive teacher resource for effective lesson delivery?

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 and the overview documents.
 - Daily lessons for consistent routines that follow the process outlined in the Teacher Edition
 - Back of the Teacher Edition or resources for the instructional routines.
 - Separate documents, or ancillary materials with instructional routines.

- Look for implementation guidance located within lessons.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What is the teacher doing?
 - Teacher uses the teacher’s manual to plan and deliver explicit, systematic instruction in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics and word recognition, fluency, and print concepts.
 - Teacher uses specific instructional routines provided in the manual or resources to engage students in foundational skill learning.
- What is the student doing?
 - Students know the routine(s) for learning foundational skills.
 - Students are engaged in the learning because they know what to expect as they learn new content.

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of materials providing a teacher’s edition/manual with detailed routines for instruction in core materials.
- Discuss how materials include lessons, activities, and routines for sufficient practice.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for consensus about which indicators were met fully and partially.
- Agree on the final ratings.

Gateway 2: Usability

Criterion 2.1	Materials are accompanied by information that provides the teacher with guidance for implementation of daily lessons and information to enhance teacher knowledge of foundational skills.
Indicator 2b	Materials contain full, adult-level explanations and examples of the foundational skills concepts included in the program so teachers can improve their own knowledge of the subject, as necessary.

Scoring:		
<p>4 points</p> <p>Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete, detailed adult-level explanations are provided for each foundational skill taught at the grade level. Detailed examples of the grade-level foundational skill concepts are provided for the teacher. 	<p>2 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete, detailed adult-level explanations are provided for each foundational skill taught at the grade level. Detailed examples of the grade-level foundational skill concepts are provided for the teacher. 	<p>0 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete, detailed adult-level explanations are provided for each foundational skill taught at the grade level. Detailed examples of the grade-level foundational skill concepts are provided for the teacher.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

Foundational Skills standards “are directed towards fostering students’ understanding and working knowledge of concepts of print, the alphabetic principle, and other basic conventions of the English writing system,” (CCSS, page 15). Teaching a child to read requires a firm pedagogical knowledge of foundational skill content and instructional strategies on how to teach those integral skills. Novice teachers and even seasoned teachers who teach Kindergarten, Grade 1, or Grade 2 do not always have the prerequisite level of expertise in foundational skills needed to provide instruction in the essential knowledge and skills that are taught in the program. Instructional materials with adult-level explanations of each foundational skill provide teachers with the necessary, vital background knowledge needed for teaching foundational skills lessons.

<p>Indicator 2b Guiding Question: How do the materials educate the teacher about foundational skills?</p>
<p>Evidence Collection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational

Standards at each grade level. Review:

- Beginning of the Teacher Edition
- Beginning of new units or modules
- Foundational skill explanations
- Review any additional materials provided by the publishers including online components for foundational skill explanations.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- If you were new to teaching foundational skills, do the materials provide you with the necessary background knowledge for teaching each skill?
- How do the materials provide background knowledge for each teaching skill? Will the teacher implementing the materials gain the essential knowledge and skills that are taught in the program and the order in which they are presented?
- How are print concepts defined? How is phonemic awareness defined? What is phonics? Where can you find the answer to these questions in the materials?
- How specific are the definitions?
- Are there examples of how to teach foundational skills concepts in the materials?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Are adult-level explanations provided throughout the materials to explain each concept?
- Does the progression of adult-level explanations and examples of foundational skills concepts progress in the order in which they are presented?
- What opportunities do the materials provide for a teacher inexperienced in foundational skills to learn the necessary foundational skill knowledge?
- 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 2: Usability

Criterion 2.1	Materials are accompanied by information that provides the teacher with guidance for implementation of daily lessons and information to enhance teacher knowledge of foundational skills.
Indicator 2c	Foundational skills lessons are well-designed and take into account effective lesson structure and pacing. Content can reasonably be completed within a regular school year, and the pacing allows for maximum student understanding.

Scoring:		
<p>4 points</p> <p>Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lesson plans utilize effective, research-based lesson plan design for early literacy instruction. The effective lesson design structure includes both whole group and small group instruction. The pacing of each component of daily lesson plans is clear and appropriate. The suggested amount of time and expectations for maximum student understanding of all foundational skills content can reasonably be completed in one school year and should not require modifications. For those materials on the borderline (e.g., approximately 130 days on the low end or 200 days on the high end), evidence clearly explains how students would be able to master ALL the grade-level foundational skills standards within one school year. 	<p>2 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lesson plans utilize effective, research-based lesson plan design for early literacy instruction. The effective lesson design structure includes both whole group and small group instruction. The pacing of each component of daily lesson plans is clear and appropriate. The suggested amount of time and expectations for maximum student understanding of all foundational skills content can reasonably be completed in one school year and should not require modifications. For those materials on the borderline (e.g., approximately 130 days on the low end or 200 days on the high end), evidence clearly explains how students would be able to master ALL the grade-level foundational skills standards within one school year. 	<p>0 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lesson plans utilize effective, research-based lesson plan design for early literacy instruction. The effective lesson design structure includes both whole group and small group instruction. The pacing of each component of daily lesson plans is clear and appropriate. The suggested amount of time and expectations for maximum student understanding of all foundational skills content can reasonably be completed in one school year and should not require modifications. For those materials on the borderline (e.g., approximately 130 days on the low end or 200 days on the high end), evidence clearly explains how students would be able to master ALL the grade-level foundational skills standards within one school year.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

Effective foundational skill lesson plans utilize components of explicit instruction with opportunities for students to practice print concepts, phonemic awareness, phonics and word recognition, and fluency skill out-of-context and in-context. Because foundational skill lessons are only one segment of English Language Arts instruction in K-2 classrooms' schedules, effective lesson structure and pacing is vital.

Print concepts, phonemic awareness, phonics and word recognition, and fluency lesson plan design includes both whole group and small group instruction. In order to be diagnostic and prescriptive, lesson plans found in the materials should include opportunities for groupings driven by assessment data (both formal and informal). Flexible small groups are often formed based on a specific skill that needs reinforcement or enrichment and dissolved once the students' need has been addressed.

Foundational skills instructional materials must be carefully designed to be taught within the time constraints of a school day and a school year. Teachers and students need print concepts, phonemic awareness, phonics and word recognition, and fluency, materials that are intentionally developed to be thoroughly taught in one school year without sacrificing grade-level content or forcing the teacher to rush through content at the end of the school year.

Indicator 2c Guiding Question:

How do the material demonstrate effective lesson planning design and pacing?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards at each grade level. Review:
 - The Table of Contents, any pacing guides, and scope and sequence provided by the publisher.
 - Look at the overview and scope and sequence for the number of lessons and/or number of days of instruction.
 - Unit overviews for number of days of lessons.
 - The time needed per lesson per day.
 - Examine the number of days recommended for re-teaching or extensions.
 - Lesson overviews, pacing guides, daily lessons, scope and sequences
 - Lessons for each foundational skill for design and pacing.
 - Lessons for what students are required to do or produce.
 - Teacher information provided on lesson purpose.
- Consider if there is too much or too little material for the amount of time allotted for the lesson.
- Consider the balance of the number of days spent on lessons/activities versus assessments.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- This metric requires qualitative judgment; there is no exact number of days that is specified by the standards.
- Keep in mind that in a normal school year, instruction will not take place on each day because of

instances such as re-teaching, assessment, field trips, start of the year routines, etc.

- Consider whether there is too much material or too little. Students should be able to master ALL the grade level standards by the end of the course.
- Be prepared to explain and justify your conclusion.
- Was there any information that you learned from the publisher's orientation that was valuable for this indicator? If so, include this information in the report.
- How are the lessons structured?
- How are lesson components sequenced?
- How much time is designated for each lesson?
- Are some lessons marked as optional or supplementary?
- Do the materials within the lesson allow students to learn at an appropriate pace for the given materials?
- Are there any instances where the sequencing of lesson components does not maintain an appropriate balance of explicit instruction with opportunities for students to practice the skill out-of-context and in-context?
- Do the requirements of the lessons seem practical for the teacher and students to complete in the suggested amount of time?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Consider whether there is too much or too little in the materials for a teacher to be able to provide quality instruction in the appropriate grade-level content of phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, fluency, and print concepts. Students should be able to master ALL the grade level standards by the end of the course.
- Would the teacher be able to understand and implement the structure?
- 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 2: Usability

Criterion 2.1	Materials are accompanied by information that provides the teacher with guidance for implementation of daily lessons and information to enhance teacher knowledge of foundational skills.
Indicator 2d	Materials include publisher-produced alignment documentation of the standards addressed by specific questions, tasks, and assessments and assessment materials clearly denote which standards are being emphasized.

Scoring:		
<p>2 points</p> <p>Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials include denotations of the foundational skills standards being assessed in the formative assessments. Materials include denotations of foundational skills standards being assessed in the summative assessments. Alignment documentation is provided for all tasks, questions, and assessment items. Alignment documentation contains specific foundational skills standards correlated to specific lessons. 	<p>1 point</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials include denotations of the foundational skills standards being assessed in the formative assessments. Materials include denotations of foundational skills standards being assessed in the summative assessments. Alignment documentation is provided for all tasks, questions, and assessment items. Alignment documentation contains specific foundational skills standards correlated to specific lessons. 	<p>0 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials include denotations of the foundational skills standards being assessed in the formative assessments. Materials include denotations of foundational skills standards being assessed in the summative assessments. Alignment documentation is provided for all tasks, questions, and assessment items. Alignment documentation contains specific foundational skills standards correlated to specific lessons.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines the assessment materials to determine whether they identify the standards being assessed for all formal assessment types. It is important to note that some assessments may be building toward the standards and not intended to measure full depth of the standards; these assessments should identify which aspects of the standards are being assessed and/or being built toward.

Formal assessments are determined by the publisher and could include all types: formative, summative, etc. Reviewers look for a list of standards assessed for the entire assessment and/or associated with each item/task. Reviewers look for evidence of identification only.

Indicator 2d Guiding Question:

Does the standards alignment document included in the materials indicate which standards are being taught?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards at each grade level. Review:
 - The Table of Contents for assessments.
 - The teacher materials and additional resources for assessments especially an alignment document for assessments.
- Look at all assessments for alignment to the grade-level standards. *Note: this is not an item analysis.
- Look at the end or beginning of the Teacher Edition or resources.
- Look for an ancillary document with listed standards alignment.
- Look at the standards alignment document provided for all questions, tasks, and assessment. Review for accuracy.

Look for and record evidence to:

- Describe how and where assessments clearly identify which standards are being assessed. Include the level at which the assessment is given (unit, lesson, etc.) and the level at which standards are identified (assessment, task, item, etc.).
- Describe any instances where standards are listed incorrectly or are not from the appropriate grade level/band.
- Describe how and where materials provide a complete standards correlation document for all tasks, questions, and assessment.
- Describe how materials include standards correlation in daily lesson plans.
- In the event that the assessments build toward grade-level or grade-band standards, describe whether the assessment information identifies which aspects of the standards are assessed. Also, describe how and where the materials include information that details how the assessments build toward the standards for the grade level or band.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Where is the alignment of each question, task, and assessment item found?
- Does each assessment clearly indicate which standards are being emphasized?
- Is documentation of the standards addressed by questions, tasks, and assessment items provided by the publisher?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss the documentation of standards provided by the publisher. Is documentation provided for all Foundational Skill standards per grade level?
- Are the questions, tasks, and assessments aligned to the specific standard(s) addressed?
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for consensus about which indicators were met fully and partially.
- Agree on the final ratings.

Gateway 2: Usability

Criterion 2.1	Materials are accompanied by information that provides the teacher with guidance for implementation of daily lessons and information to enhance teacher knowledge of foundational skills.
Indicator 2e	Materials contain strategies for informing all stakeholders, including students, parents, or caregivers about the foundational skills program and suggestions for how they can help support student progress and achievement.

Scoring: Narrative Evidence Only

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

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

Learning to read is not confined to the classroom and school. Families, parents, and caregivers who are involved in the education of their child play a vital role in helping the child become a successful reader. Instructional materials should provide information and tools that a teacher can share with families and students. This information could be daily, but the information is more likely to be shared each week or per unit/module. Information should include strategies and ideas for practice that can be completed at home for all grade level foundational skills content.

Indicator 2e Guiding Question:
 How do the materials inform and support stakeholders about foundational skills and student progress?

- Evidence Collection**
- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for support materials to guide families, parents, and caregivers.
 - Look in the supplemental resources for letters to be sent home.
 - Review the materials for letters to the family about foundational skills.
 - Review the materials for take-home copies of books taught during foundational skills lessons.
 - Review the materials for games that can be played at home to practice foundational skills.
 - Review the materials for online activities that students can access at home with a parent or caregiver.
 - Describe if and how the materials provide jargon-free instructions to ensure a parent or caregiver can understand and use the materials provided.
 - Describe if and how stakeholders are provided with strategies and activities for practicing print concepts, phonemic awareness, phonics, word recognition, and fluency that will support students in progress toward and achievement of grade-level foundational skills standards.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Review the materials for resources to support families, parents, and caregivers.
- Collect narrative evidence that aligns to the indicator.
- Do materials include useful information for families, parents, and caregivers?
- Do materials provide genuine suggestions for how families, parents, and caregivers can support students at home?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss and answer the following questions to support consensus scoring conversations:
 - Are the materials that are sent home easy for a parent or caregiver to implement?
 - Are the materials written in parent-friendly language?
 - Are there enough strategies and information sent home so a parent or caregiver can engage the student in making progress in the targeted foundational skill?
 - Across the school year, are at-home practice materials provided for each grade-level foundational skill?

Gateway 2: Usability

Criterion 2.2

Student Supports

The program includes materials designed for each child’s regular and active participation in grade-level/grade-band/series content.

What is the purpose of this Criterion?

This criterion evaluates the extent to which materials leverage the diverse cultural and social backgrounds of students. It examines whether the materials offer appropriate support, accommodations, and modifications for special populations and multilingual learner (MLL) students, facilitating their active participation in learning English language arts and literacy. Additionally, the criterion considers whether the materials provide multiple access points for students with varying ability levels, ensuring their engagement with literacy content.

This criterion also examines whether the materials adequately represent people with various demographic and physical characteristics. It also assesses if present multilingualism and English language varieties as assets in reading. Lastly, the criterion addresses the accessibility of materials by evaluating the provision of appropriate student access and supports, catering to different reading abilities.

Scoring:

Meets Expectations
 • 4 points

Partially Meets Expectations
 • 2-3 points

Does Not Meet Expectations
 • < 2 points

Gateway 2: Usability

Criterion 2.2	The program includes materials designed for each child’s regular and active participation in grade-level/grade-band/series content.
Indicator 2f	Materials provide strategies and supports for students who read, write, and/or speak in a language other than English to meet or exceed grade-level standards to regularly participate in learning English language arts and literacy.

Scoring: Narrative Evidence Only

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

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

Effective foundational skills instruction for teaching multilingual learners how to read and decode should be grounded in evidence-based practices, particularly those aligned with the science of reading. Research suggests that explicit phonics instruction is crucial for multilingual learners, emphasizing the systematic teaching of sound-symbol relationships (National Reading Panel, 2000). The science of reading also advocates for explicit instruction in decoding skills, which is especially pertinent for multilingual learners dealing with differences in phonological and orthographic systems across languages (Moats, 2000). Additionally, providing culturally and linguistically sensitive instruction is essential in recognizing the diverse linguistic backgrounds of multilingual learners (Shanahan, 2019). Materials should include a structured and systematic approach to ensure that decoding skills are taught explicitly, and materials should consider the unique linguistic challenges faced by multilingual learners in the process of learning to read.

Indicator 2f Guiding Question:
 Do the materials provide strategies and supports for students who read, write, and/or speak in a language other than English to regularly participate in learning grade-level literacy work?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for support materials. Review:
 - The Unit overviews for teacher guidance to support multilingual learner (MLL) students.
 - The supplemental resources for multilingual learner (MLL) students.
 - Specific guidance within daily lesson plans.
- Look at the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for support materials. Examples may include:
 - Lists of cognates by unit/lesson.
 - Transfer guides of language structures and phonology.
 - Guidance for amplifying and including multilingual learner (MLL) students throughout the daily lesson plans.

- Identify tasks and questions where students' linguistic differences are amplified as an asset.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What opportunities are provided for acceleration of foundational skills?
- Do students have access to multiple ways of learning and not just worksheets?
- Are there suggestions to the teacher for supporting and amplifying students' linguistic and cultural assets?
- What guidance and resources do materials provide to ensure student access and participation throughout daily lessons?
- Do materials include a list of cognates for units/lessons?
- Do materials include an appendix of multilingual learner (MLL) students, resources and/or is guidance woven into daily instruction?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of materials providing guidance and support for multilingual learner (MLL) students.
- Discuss the list of resources provided and if they adequately address the needs of multilingual learner (MLL) students.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for consensus about which indicators were met fully and partially.
- Agree on the final ratings.

Gateway 2: Usability

Criterion 2.2	The program includes materials designed for each child’s regular and active participation in grade-level/grade-band/series content.
Indicator 2g	Materials provide strategies and supports for students in special populations to work with grade-level content and to meet or exceed grade-level standards that will support their regular and active participation in learning English language arts and literacy.

Scoring:		
<p>4 points</p> <p>Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials provide opportunities for small group reteaching. Materials provide guidance to the teacher for scaffolding and adapting lessons and activities to support students who read, write, speak, or listen below grade level in extensive opportunities to learn grade-level foundational skills standards. 	<p>2 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials provide opportunities for small group reteaching. Materials provide guidance to the teacher for scaffolding and adapting lessons and activities to support students who read, write, speak, or listen below grade level in extensive opportunities to learn grade-level foundational skills standards. 	<p>0 points</p> <p>Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials provide opportunities for small group reteaching. Materials provide guidance to the teacher for scaffolding and adapting lessons and activities to support students who read, write, speak, or listen below grade level in extensive opportunities to learn grade-level foundational skills standards.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

Students learn at different rates. This means materials need to support differentiation in order for all students’ to achieve learning of foundational skills. As students develop phonological awareness, they become more able to decode and recognize words. Sufficient practice is needed for each student, but some students will need more support to develop automaticity. Furthermore, some students learn skills quicker and need opportunities for advancement and challenge. Some programs may address differentiation of foundational skills through response-to-intervention (RTI), which is a tiered form of instruction.

Materials to support each student’s development of foundational skills should include support for individual differences and rates of progress and scaffold instruction to help each student make progress to the next skill. Materials should provide guidance/instructions to the teacher for remediating or challenging students’ learning opportunities in foundational skills.

Indicator 2g Guiding Question:

What opportunities are there for students in special populations to engage with grade-level materials to support ongoing participation in learning English language arts and literacy?

Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards at each grade level. Review:
 - The Unit overviews for differentiation.
 - The supplemental resources for differentiation opportunities.
- Look at the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment of Foundational Standards aligned to each grade level. Examples may include:
 - Response-to-Intervention (RtII) tiers addressing foundational skills
 - Texts, books, and passages (support students at different levels) in small group for fluency such as guided reading
 - Decodable books and passages (support students at different levels)
 - Small group instruction lesson plans with learning targets, instructional strategies (i.e. choral reading, echo reading, whisper reading, direct instruction), list of needed materials
 - Flexible groupings
 - Schedule of lessons for small groupings
- Identify tasks and questions where students are accessing different strategies or methods to learn skills.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- How are foundational skill lessons and activities differentiated for students?
- How do the materials support the teacher in scaffolding instruction of foundational skills?
- What opportunities are provided for remedial of foundational skills?
- What opportunities are provided for acceleration of foundational skills?
- How are lessons and activities modeled?
- Is there a gradual release of responsibility?
- Do students have access to multiple ways of learning and not just worksheets?
- Are there suggestions to the teacher for supporting varying student needs?
- What is differentiated instruction, and what does it look like in lessons or in assignments?
- What is different between provided materials that are specific for differentiated instruction or the materials that are general notes about what “could be” implemented?
- How are tasks and questions designed to allow students to demonstrate that they understand the components of foundational skills?
- Do materials provide instructional opportunities to scaffold and support each student’s foundational skill needs?
- Will every student be able to achieve mastery of foundational skills?
- Are there suggestions for adapting instruction to meet all student needs?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of materials providing differentiated instruction.
- Discuss the amount of time spent on differentiated instruction over the course of the school year. Is adequate time spent? Are the skills being developed for students?
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.

- Look for consensus about which indicators were met fully and partially.
- Agree on the final ratings.

Gateway 2: Usability

Criterion 2.2	The program includes materials designed for each child’s regular and active participation in grade-level/grade-band/series content.
Indicator 2h	Materials provide a balance of images or information about people, representing various demographic and physical characteristics.

Scoring: Narrative Evidence Only

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

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines the series to determine if the materials include a balance of images or information about people, representing various demographic and physical characteristics.

Indicator 2h Guiding Question:

Do the materials provide a balance of images or information about people, representing various demographic and physical characteristics?

Evidence Collection

Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource, including Big Books and decodable readers:

- Describe if and how decodable texts depict individuals with different or varying cultures, genders, races, ethnicities, linguistic backgrounds, abilities, and other characteristics.
- Describe how depictions of different or varying characteristics are portrayed.
- Describe if and how materials avoid stereotypes or language that might be offensive to a particular group.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Review the information, portrayals, and depictions presented in decodable texts.
- Review any other resources, aside from decodable texts, and the information, portrayals, and depictions presented.
- Collect narrative evidence that aligns to the indicator.

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss and answer the following questions to support consensus scoring conversations:
 - How and where do materials depict different individuals of different genders, races, ethnicities, and other physical characteristics?

- How do decodable texts balance positive portrayals of demographics or physical characteristics? Do names or images used throughout the decodable texts depict different genders, races, ethnicities, and other physical characteristics?
- Do the materials avoid stereotypes or language that might be offensive to a particular group?
- Are depictions of demographics or physical characteristics portrayed positively across the series, or is one demographic represented more positively than others?

Gateway 2: Usability

Criterion 2.2	The program includes materials designed for each child’s regular and active participation in grade-level/grade-band/series content.
Indicator 2i	Materials provide guidance to encourage teachers to draw upon student home language to facilitate learning.

Scoring: Narrative Evidence Only

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

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines the materials for teacher guidance on connecting learning opportunities to students through use of student home language.

Resources:

- [Phonemic Inventories and Cultural and Linguistic Information Across Languages](#)

Indicator 2i Guiding Question:

Do the materials present multilingualism and English language varieties as assets in reading, and encourage teachers of English learners to use their students' home language strategically for learning how to negotiate texts in the target language?

Evidence Collection

Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials across the series:

- Describe how the materials provide suggestions and strategies to use the home language to support students in learning foundational skills.
- Describe how the materials present multilingualism and English language varieties as assets in learning how to read.
- Note how the materials establish cognates in more than one language (e.g., Spanish, French, Mandarin, German) and describe morphemes based in more than one language.
- Note if materials include a contrastive analysis document establishing cognates in more than one language (e.g., Spanish, French, Mandarin, German).
- Note if materials include a contrastive analysis document with a description of phonology, phonemes, and morphemes based in more than one language.
- Note how provide support for speakers of English language varieties.
- Describe how materials include general statements about speakers of English language varieties or strategies are noted at the beginning of a unit or at one place in the teacher resource. Teacher guidance is also provided for implementation of English language varieties instruction throughout the lessons.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Review the materials for teacher guidance on leveraging multilingualism and English language varieties.
- Collect narrative evidence that aligns to the indicator.

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss and answer the following questions to support consensus scoring conversations:
 - What strategies are present to utilize student home language, including English language varieties, in teaching students how to read? Are these strategies generalized or specific to certain content?
 - Do materials promote home language and knowledge, including English language varieties, as an asset to engage students in the content material?
 - Do the materials use student home language, including English language varieties, as an additional support to gain access to the content, or rely on students understanding the content in their home language?
 - Do the materials recognize all languages, or rely on known information about some of the more prevalent languages (i.e., cognates in Spanish)?

Gateway 2: Usability

Criterion 2.3

Intentional Design

The program includes 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 how the materials integrate digital technology and interactive tools to support student engagement. It also examines how the materials use digital technology to provide collaborative opportunities for teachers and/or students. Lastly, this criterion examines how the embedded technology and visual design supports student engagement and learning.

Scoring: Narrative Evidence Only

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

Gateway 2: Usability

Criterion 2.3	The program includes a visual design that is engaging and references or integrates digital technology, when applicable, with guidance for teachers.
Indicator 2j	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.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines whether materials integrate interactive tools and/or dynamic software in ways that support student engagement ELA and literacy and is applicable to materials with digital components only.

Indicator 2j 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

Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials across the series:

- Describe if and how digital technology and interactive tools, such as data collection tools, simulations, and/or modeling tools are available to students.
- Describe if and how included digital tools support student engagement in ELA.
- Describe if and how digital materials can be customized for local use (i.e., student and/or community interests).

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Review materials for interactive tools and/or dynamic software.
- Review how interactive tools, and/or dynamic software is utilized in the materials.
- Collect narrative evidence that aligns to the indicator.

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss and answer the following questions to support consensus scoring conversations:
 - What digital technology and interactive tools are included in the materials?
 - How are digital technology and interactive tools, such as data collection tools, simulations, and/or modeling tools made available to students?
 - How do included digital tools support student engagement in ELA?
 - How can digital materials be customized for local use (i.e., student and/or community interests)?

Gateway 2: Usability

Criterion 2.3	The program includes a visual design that is engaging and references or integrates digital technology, when applicable, with guidance for teachers.
Indicator 2k	The visual design (whether in print or digital) is not distracting or chaotic, but supports students in engaging thoughtfully with the subject.

Scoring: Narrative Evidence Only

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

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines the visual design to determine if images, graphics, and models support student learning and engagement, without being visually distracting; examines for consistency in layout of the teacher and student materials; examines resources to determine whether they clearly communicate information; examines resources to determine whether they contain any errors as they relate to usability.

Indicator 2k 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

Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials across the series:

- Describe how images, graphics, and models support student learning and engagement without being visually distracting.
- Describe whether teacher and student materials are consistent in layout and structure across lessons/modules/units.
- Describe if and how the images, graphics, and models clearly communicate information or support student understanding of topics, texts, or concepts.
- Identify any errors in the resources related to usability.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Review materials pertaining to the visual design of the instructional materials.
- Collect narrative evidence that aligns to the indicator.

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss and answer the following questions to support consensus scoring conversations:
 - Do all images, graphics, and models support student learning and engagement, without being visually distracting?

- Are the teacher and student materials consistent in layout and structure?
- Are there any directions, questions, or information in the instructional materials or assessments that are ambiguous, unclear, or inaccurate?
- Are the organizational features (Table of Contents, glossary, index, internal references, table headers, captions, etc.) in the materials clear, accurate, and error-free?

Gateway 2: Usability

Criterion 2.3	The program includes a visual design that is engaging and references or integrates digital technology, when applicable, with guidance for teachers.
Indicator 2I	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.

About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines the teacher materials to determine whether they provide teacher guidance for the use of embedded technology to support and enhance student learning and is applicable to materials with digital components only.

Indicator 2I Guiding Question:
Do the materials provide teacher guidance for the use of embedded technology to support and enhance student learning, when applicable?

Evidence Collection

Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials across the series:

- Describe where and how the materials provide guidance for using embedded technology to support and enhance student learning, where applicable.

Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Review materials for embedded technology.
- Collect narrative evidence that aligns to the indicator.

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss and answer the following questions to support consensus scoring conversations:
 - Where and how do teacher materials provide guidance for using embedded technology to support and enhance student learning, where applicable?

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