edreports.org

Review Criteria
English Language Arts
Foundational Skills

v2.0

Table of Contents

About EdReports

Our Mission: EdReports is an independent nonprofit designed to improve K-12 education. EdReports increases the capacity of teachers, administrators, and leaders to seek, identify, and demand the highest quality instructional materials. Drawing upon expert educators, our reviews of instructional materials and support of smart adoption processes equip teachers with excellent materials nationwide.

Our Vision: All students and teachers will have access to the highest quality instructional materials that will help improve student learning outcomes. Our Theory of Action: Credible information against quality criteria in a quickly changing marketplace helps educators make better purchasing decisions and improve student performance. Identifying excellence and improving demand for high-quality, aligned instructional materials will improve the supply of quality materials over time, leading to better student achievement outcomes.
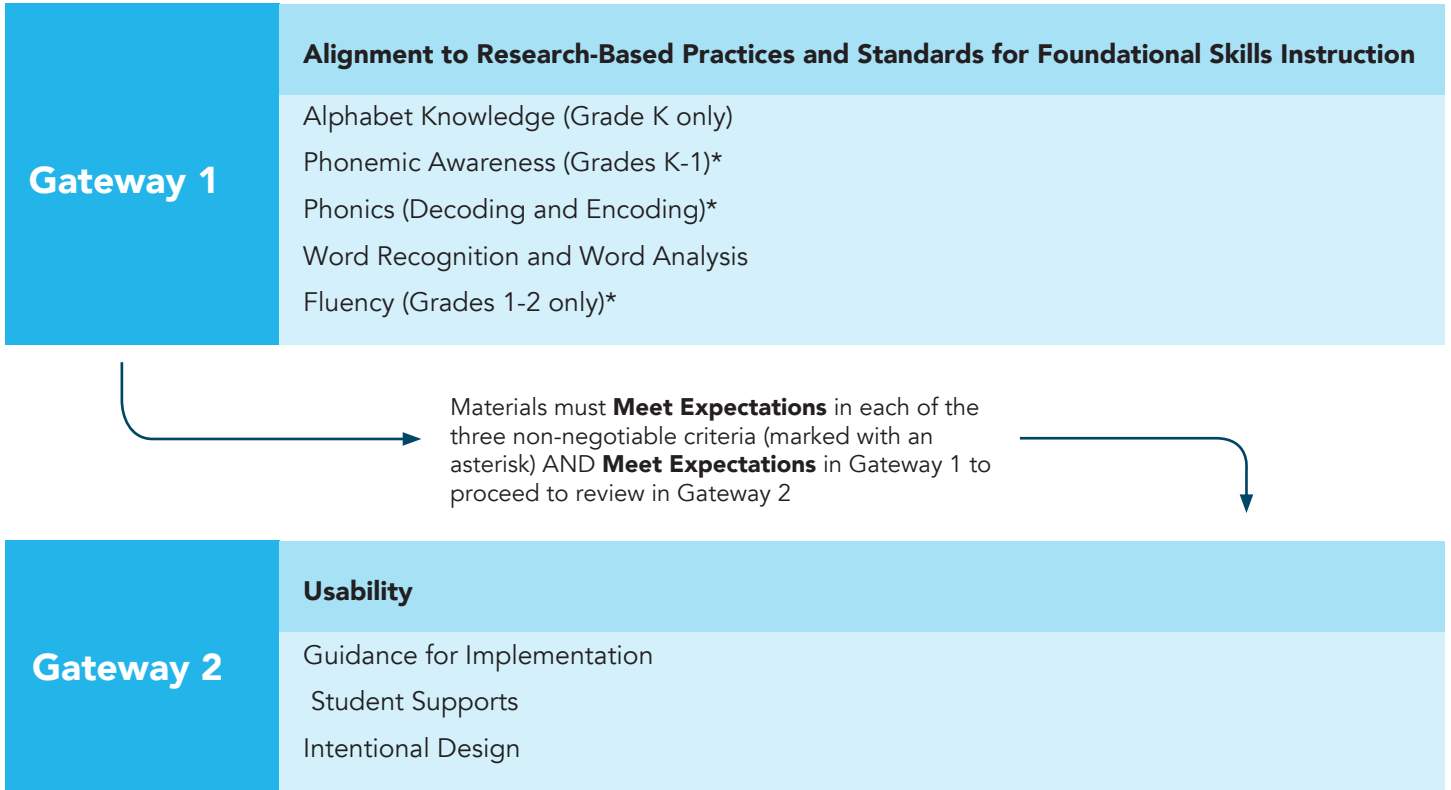
About Our Review Tools

EdReports reviewers use these review tools to create free, evidence-rich reports available on EdReports.org. These reports are developed to provide educators, stakeholders, and leaders with independent, evidence-rich information about the quality of instructional materials from those who will be using them in classrooms. Expert educators use our tools to evaluate full sets of instructional materials against criteria (see Figure 1). The tools are built from the experience of educators, curriculum experts, and leading rubric developers and organizations that have conducted reviews of instructional materials, lessons, and tasks.

To create the Foundational Skills review tool, EdReports utilizes information from seminal research, theoretical frameworks, and standards. We also conduct research into the application of commonly used rubrics, gather input from researchers, and interview content experts, educational leaders and educator reviewers, during nationwide listening tours. EdReports engages in iterative cycles of feedback with its advisory, including educators, researchers, and key stakeholders, to develop and revise the review tools. Continuous improvement is important to this development, and each tool is used with multiple sets of materials before being finalized.The EdReports' Review Criteria for foundational skills programs has two major gateways (see Figure 1) to guide the evaluation process. Reviewers apply the two gateways sequentially to ensure EdReports reports convey to the field the extent to which materials are aligned to research-based practices and standards for foundational skills instruction and are usable by educators. Those materials that meet the expectations for Gateway 1, including meeting expectations for all three non-negotiable criteria (marked with an asterisk), will move to Gateway 2.

The EdReports' Review Criteria include indicators and aligned scoring criteria. Scoring criteria language is written at the Meets Expectations level. Materials must meet the expectations of all scoring criteria in order to receive full points for the indicator.

Figure 1: Gateway Evaluation Process for Review of English Language Arts Foundational Skills Materials

Gateway 1	**Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction**
	Alphabet Knowledge (Grade K only)
	Phonemic Awareness (Grades K-1)*
	Phonics (Decoding and Encoding)*
	Word Recognition and Word Analysis
	Fluency (Grades 1-2 only)*

Materials must **Meet Expectations** in each of the three non-negotiable criteria (marked with an asterisk) AND **Meet Expectations** in Gateway 1 to proceed to review in Gateway 2

Gateway 2	**Usability**
	Guidance for Implementation
	Student Supports
	Intentional Design

Gateway 1

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

Gateway 1 Overview	Available Points
Criterion 1.1: Alphabet Knowledge (Grade K only) Indicators 1a-1b Materials and instruction provide systematic and explicit instruction and practice for letter recognition.	**10** (Kindergarten)
Criterion 1.2: Phonemic Awareness (Grades K-1 only)* Indicators 1c-1f Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based phonemic awareness. 　*Criterion 1.2 is non-negotiable. Instructional materials being reviewed must score Meet Expectations in this criterion to proceed to Gateway 2.	**16** (Kindergarten and Grade 1)
Criterion 1.3: Phonics (Decoding and Encoding) * Indicators 1g-1n Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based phonics. 　*Criterion 1.3 is non-negotiable. Instructional materials being reviewed must score Meet Expectations in this criterion to proceed to Gateway 2.	**32**
Criterion 1.4: Word Recognition and Word Analysis Indicators 1o-1r Materials and instruction support students in learning and practicing regularly and irregularly spelled words.	**12**
Criterion 1.5: Fluency (Grades 1-2 only)* Indicators 1s-1u Materials provide systematic and explicit instruction and practice in fluency by mid-to-late 1st and 2nd grade. Materials for 2nd grade fluency practice should vary (decodables and grade-level texts). 　*Criterion 1.5 is non-negotiable. Instructional materials being reviewed must score Meet Expectations in this criterion to proceed to Gateway 2.	**12** (Grades 1 and 2)
Total Available Points in Gateway 1 (Kindergarten)	**70** — Meets: 63-70 / Partially Meets: 35-62 / Does Not Meet: < 35
Total Available Points in Gateway 1 (Grade 1)	**72** — Meets: 64-72 / Partially Meets: 36-63 / Does Not Meet: < 36
Total Available Points in Gateway 1 (Grade 2)	**56** — Meets: 50-56 / Partially Meets: 28-49 / Does Not Meet: < 28

Criterion 1.1 Alphabet Knowledge (Grade K only)	Materials and instruction provide systematic and explicit instruction and practice for letter recognition.

Indicators + Scoring Criteria	Scoring
1a. Alphabet Knowledge	
1a.i. Materials provide systematic and explicit instruction in letter names and their corresponding sounds. • 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.	0 1 2 (Not Scored for Grades 1-2)
1a.ii. Materials provide opportunities for student practice in letter names and their corresponding sounds. • 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.	0 1 2 (Not Scored for Grades 1-2)
1a.iii. Materials provide explicit instruction and teacher modeling in printing and forming the 26 letters (uppercase and lowercase). • 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.	0 1 2 (Not Scored for Grades 1- 2)
1a.iv. Materials provide opportunities for student practice in printing and forming the 26 letters (uppercase and lowercase). • 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.	0 1 2 (Not Scored for Grades 1- 2)
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). • 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.	0 1 2 (Not Scored for Grades 1- 2)

Materials must meet the expectations of all scoring criteria in order to receive full points for the indicator.

Total Available Points	**10**	Meets: 9-10 Partially Meets: 5-8 Does Not Meet: < 5

Criterion 1.2 Phonemic Awareness* (Grades K-1 only)	Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based phonemic awareness.

Indicators + Scoring Criteria	Scoring
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. ● 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.	0 2 4 (Not Scored for Grade 2)
1d. Materials include systematic and explicit instruction in phonemic awareness with repeated teacher modeling. ● 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.	0 2 4 (Not Scored for Grade 2)
1e. Materials include daily, brief lessons in phonemic awareness. ● 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).	0 2 4 (Not Scored for Grade 2)
1f. Materials regularly and systematically offer assessment opportunities that measure student progress of phonemic awareness (as indicated by the program scope and sequence). ● 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 phonemic awareness. ● Assessment materials provide teachers and students with information concerning students' current skills/level of understanding of phonemic awareness. ● Materials support teachers with instructional suggestions for assessment-based steps to help students to progress toward mastery in phonemic awareness.	0 2 4 (Not Scored for Grade 2)

Materials must meet the expectations of all scoring criteria in order to receive full points for the indicator.

*Criterion 1.2 is non-negotiable. Instructional materials being reviewed must score Meet Expectations in this criterion to proceed to Gateway 2.

Total Available Points	16	Meets: 14-16* Partially Meets: 8-13 Does Not Meet: < 8

Criterion 1.3
Phonics (Decoding and Encoding)*

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

Indicators + Scoring Criteria	Scoring
1g. Scope and sequence clearly delineate an intentional sequence in which phonics skills are to be taught, with a clear evidence-based explanation for the order of the sequence. • 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.	0 2 4
1h. Materials are absent of the three-cueing system. • Materials do not contain elements of instruction that are based on the three-cueing system for teaching decoding.	0 4
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. • 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.	0 2 4
1j. Materials include systematic and explicit phonics instruction with repeated teacher modeling. • 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.	0 2 4
1k. Materials include frequent practice opportunities for students to decode and encode words that consist of common and newly-taught sound and spelling patterns. • 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.	0 2 4
1l. Spelling rules and generalizations are taught one at a time at a reasonable pace. Spelling words and generalizations are practiced to automaticity. • 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.	0 2 4
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. • 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.	0 2 4

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).
    ● 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.
	0 2 4

Materials must meet the expectations of all scoring criteria in order to receive full points for the indicator.

*Criterion 1.3 is non-negotiable. Instructional materials being reviewed must score Meet Expectations in this criterion to proceed to Gateway 2.

Total Available Points	32	Meets: 30-32* Partially Meets: 16-29 Does Not Meet: < 16

Criterion 1.4 Word Recognition and Word Analysis	Materials and instruction support students in learning and practicing regularly and irregularly spelled words.

Indicators + Scoring Criteria	Scoring
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. ● 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.	0　1　2
1p. Instructional opportunities are frequently built into the materials for students to practice and gain decoding automaticity of high-frequency words. ● 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.	0　1　2
1q. Materials include explicit instruction in syllabication and morpheme analysis and provide students with practice opportunities to apply learning. ● 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.	0　2　4
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). ● 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 to progress toward mastery in word recognition and word analysis.	0　2　4

Materials must meet the expectations of all scoring criteria in order to receive full points for the indicator.

Total Available Points	**12**	Meets: 10-12 Partially Meets: 6-9 Does Not Meet: < 6

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).

Indicators + Scoring Criteria	Scoring
1s. Instructional opportunities are built into the materials for systematic, evidence-based, explicit instruction in oral reading fluency. • Materials include frequent opportunities for explicit, systematic instruction in rate, accuracy, and prosody using grade-level connected text (e.g. decodable texts, poetry, readers' theater, paired reading). • 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.	0 2 4 (Not Scored for K)
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). • Varied, frequent opportunities are provided over the course of the year for students to gain automaticity and prosody. • Materials provide practice opportunities for oral 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.	0 2 4 (Not Scored for K and early Grade 1)
1u. Materials regularly and systematically offer assessment opportunities that measure student progress in oral reading fluency (as indicated by the program scope and sequence). • 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.	0 2 4 (Not Scored for K)

Materials must meet the expectations of all scoring criteria in order to receive full points for the indicator.

*Criterion 1.5 is non-negotiable. Instructional materials being reviewed must score Meet Expectations in this criterion to proceed to Gateway 2.

Total Available Points (Grades 1-2)	12	Meets: 10-12* Partially Meets: 6-9 Does Not Meet: < 6

Total Available Points in Gateway 1 (Kindergarten)	70	Meets: 63-70 Partially Meets: 35-62 Does Not Meet: < 35
Total Available Points in Gateway 1 (Grade 1)	72	Meets: 64-72 Partially Meets: 36-63 Does Not Meet: < 36
Total Available Points in Gateway 1 (Grade 2)	56	Meets: 50-56 Partially Meets: 28-49 Does Not Meet: < 28

Gateway 2

Usability

Gateway 2 Overview	Available Points
Criterion 2.1: Guidance for Implementation Indicators 2a-2e 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.	14
Criterion 2.2: Student Supports Indicators 2f-2i The program includes materials designed for each child's regular and active participation in grade-level/grade-band/series content.	8
Criterion 2.3: Intentional Design Indicators 2j-2l The program includes a visual design that is engaging and references or integrates digital technology, when applicable, with guidance for teachers.	Narrative Evidence Only

Total Available Points in Gateway 2	22	Meets: 19-22 Partially Meets: 11-18 Does Not Meet: < 11

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.

Indicators + Scoring Criteria	Scoring
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. • 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.	0 2 4
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. • 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.	0 2 4
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. • 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), materials clearly explain how students would be able to master ALL the grade-level foundational skills standards within one school year.	0 2 4
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. • 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.	0 1 2
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. • Materials contain jargon-free resources and processes to inform all stakeholders about foundational skills taught at school. • Materials provide stakeholders with strategies and activities for practicing alphabet knowledge, phonemic awareness, phonics, word recognition, and fluency that will support students in progress toward and achievement of grade-level foundational skills standards.	Narrative Evidence Only

Materials must meet the expectations of all scoring criteria in order to receive full points for the indicator.

Total Available Points	14	Meets: 13-14 Partially Meets: 7-12 Does Not Meet: < 7

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.

Indicators + Scoring Criteria	Scoring
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. • Materials provide support, such as embedded language and content scaffolds, for multilingual learner (MLL) students. • General statements about multilingual learner (MLL) students 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 MLL instruction throughout the lessons.	0 2 4
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. • 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.	0 2 4
2h. Materials provide a balance of images or information about people, representing various demographic and physical characteristics. • Decodable and connected texts depict individuals with different or varying cultures, genders, races, ethnicities, linguistic backgrounds, abilities, and other characteristics. • Decodable and connected texts balance positive portrayals of different or varying characteristics. Materials avoid stereotypes or language that might be offensive to a particular group.	Narrative Evidence Only
2i. Materials provide guidance to encourage teachers to draw upon student home language to facilitate learning. • Materials include a contrastive analysis document establishing cognates in more than one language (e.g., Spanish, French, Mandarin, German). • Materials include a contrastive analysis document with a description of phonology, phonemes, and morphemes based in more than one language. • Materials provide support for speakers of English language varieties. • 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.	Narrative Evidence Only

Materials must meet the expectations of all scoring criteria in order to receive full points for the indicator.

Total Available Points	8	Meets: 6-8 Partially Meets: 4-5 Does Not Meet: < 4

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.

Indicators + Scoring Criteria	Scoring
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. • Digital technology and interactive tools, such as data collection tools, simulations, and/or modeling tools are available to students. • Digital tools support student engagement in foundational skills. • Digital materials can be customized for local use (i.e., student and/or community interests).	Narrative Evidence Only
2k. The visual design (whether in print or digital) is not distracting or chaotic, but supports students in engaging thoughtfully with the subject. • Images, graphics, and models support student learning and engagement without being visually distracting. Images, graphics, and models clearly communicate information or support student understanding of topics, texts, or concepts. • Teacher and student materials are consistent in layout and structure across lessons/modules/units. • Organizational features (table of contents, glossary, index, internal references, table headers, captions, etc.) in the materials are clear, accurate, and error-free.	Narrative Evidence Only
2l. Materials provide teacher guidance for the use of embedded technology to support and enhance student learning, when applicable. • Teacher guidance is provided for the use of embedded technology to support and enhance student learning, when applicable.	Narrative Evidence Only

Total Available Points	Narrative Evidence Only	Meets: N/A Partially Meets: N/A Does Not Meet: N/A

Total Available Points in Gateway 2	22	Meets: 19-22 Partially Meets: 11-18 Does Not Meet: < 11