



Core Content Evidence Guide v2.1

**English Language Arts**

**Foundational Skills**

# Introduction

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

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

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

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

## Criterion 1.1

### Alphabet Knowledge (Grade K only)

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

### What is the purpose of this Criterion?

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

### Research Connection

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

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

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

### Kindergarten Scoring:

<b>Meets Expectations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9-10 points</li> </ul>	<b>Partially Meets Expectations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5-8 points</li> </ul>	<b>Does Not Meet Expectations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&lt; 5 points</li> </ul>
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# Gateway 1: Alignment to Research-Based Practices and Standards for Foundational Skills Instruction

<b>Criterion 1.1</b>	Materials and instruction provide systematic and explicit instruction and practice for letter recognition.
<b>Indicator 1a</b>	<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>

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

<b>Scoring:</b> 1a.ii. Materials provide opportunities for student practice in letter names and their corresponding sounds. (K)		
<b>2 points</b>  Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.	<b>1 point</b>  Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.	<b>0 points</b>  Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Materials include sufficient practice opportunities for students to recognize all 26 lowercase and uppercase letters accurately and automatically.</li> <li>• Materials incorporate a variety of activities and resources for students to develop, practice, and reinforce (through cumulative review) alphabet knowledge.</li> </ul>		

### Scoring:

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

2 points

Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.

1 point

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

0 points

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

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

### Scoring:

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

2 points

Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.

1 point

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

0 points

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

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

## About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

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

### Research or Standards connection:

Alphabet knowledge is widely recognized as one of the most reliable predictors of children’s future reading achievement. Research consistently shows that students who enter kindergarten with limited knowledge of letter names and sounds are more likely to experience reading difficulties. [Piasta and Wagner \(2010\)](#) highlight that early deficits in letter-name and letter-sound knowledge are linked to a higher likelihood of later reading challenges and classification as having reading disabilities. [Turnbull et al. \(2010\)](#) further affirm that children who can rapidly associate phonemes with graphemes—an ability rooted in solid alphabet knowledge—are better equipped to decode unfamiliar words and connect print to speech through the alphabetic principle.

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

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

### Resources:

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

## Indicator 1a Guiding Question:

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

### Evidence Collection

In the Instructional Materials being reviewed:

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

Definition of terms:

- Letter identification: the ability to say the names of both upper- and lowercase letters of the alphabet quickly, without having to think very long about each letter.
- Letter recognition: the ability to identify letters by name, shape, and sound
- Letter naming: the ability to recognize letter shapes and 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-sound correspondences in student names and familiar environmental print (e.g., “M” in *McDonald’s*)?
  - Does the teacher provide explicit, systematic instruction for each letter in the beginning through mid-year?
  - Is the teacher providing daily opportunities for students to practice oral fluency in letter naming and visual recognition?
  - Do materials allocate additional time and practice for letters that are more difficult to learn (e.g., *h, w, y, c, g, vowels, q, x*)?
  - How is corrective feedback provided to students? Is it a separate resource or is corrective feedback provided in each daily lesson with specific teacher guidance aligned to the newly taught skill?
- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
  - Are students frequently practicing identification and written formation of letters?
  - How do students identify letters?
  - Are students applying letter knowledge during meaningful print-rich experiences such as alphabet books, sharing reading, poetry posters, interactive writing, or daily message activities?

### During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of letter recognition and the printing of letters in core materials.
- Discuss the amount of time spent on letter recognition and the printing of letters over the course of the school year. Is adequate instructional time devoted to letter recognition and printing across the year, and are students demonstrating development of these skills?
- Discuss how materials include lessons, activities, and routines for sufficient practice.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for 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

<b>Criterion 1.1</b>	Materials and instruction provide systematic and explicit instruction and practice for letter recognition.
<b>Indicator 1b</b>	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)

<b>Scoring:</b>		
<b>2 points</b>	<b>1 point</b>	<b>0 points</b>
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"> <li>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.</li> <li>Assessment materials provide teachers and students with information concerning students' current skills/level of understanding of letter recognition, and letter formation.</li> <li>Materials support teachers with instructional suggestions for assessment-based steps to help students to progress toward mastery in letter recognition, and letter formation.</li> </ul>		

## About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

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

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

Assessments of foundational skills are not intended to be a battery of tests administered to students. Materials

should contain assessment opportunities that help the teacher monitor students' progress and then provide the teacher with support to reteach when students are not successful in learning the foundational skill.

#### Research or Standards connection:

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

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

#### Resources:

- [Assessment of Handwriting Skills](#)

### Indicator 1b Guiding Question:

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

#### Evidence Collection

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

#### Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

steps ?

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

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Do the materials provide regular and systematic assessment opportunities?
- Do the assessments include success criteria and help the teacher identify student progress toward mastery of letter recognition and formation?
- Do the assessment materials provide progress information for students to be supported and move toward independence in foundational skills?
- What guidance and/or protocols exist for the teacher to help students performing below grade level?
- Are the assessment materials aligned to the instruction?
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for 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 of later reading achievement, instruction in this area must be explicit, systematic, and aligned to a clear scope and sequence. Students benefit from carefully designed instructional progressions that introduce phonemic awareness skills in a logical order, from simpler tasks like isolation and blending to more complex tasks like manipulation.

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

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

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

### Research Connection

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

Recent work in reading science further emphasizes the cognitive processes behind these gains. Ehri (2020) explains that as students learn to read and spell, they build on an internal alphabetic system that links

graphemes to phonemes in the brain. This system not only supports decoding but also enhances memory for spoken words, deepening phonological processing and reinforcing the reciprocal relationship between speech and print.

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

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

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

### Scoring:

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

<b>Criterion 1.2</b>	Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based phonemic awareness.
<b>Indicator 1c</b>	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:		
<b>4 points</b>  Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.	<b>2 points</b>  Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.	<b>0 points</b>  Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Materials contain a clear, evidence-based explanation for the expected sequence for teaching phonemic awareness skills.</li> <li>Materials have a cohesive sequence of phonemic awareness instruction based on the expected hierarchy to build toward students' immediate application of the skills.</li> <li>Materials prioritize phonemic awareness instruction (isolation, blending, segmenting, manipulation) and introduce phonological sensitivity tasks (e.g., rhyming, syllables, onset-rime) only briefly and early in Kindergarten.</li> <li>Materials contain a phonemic awareness sequence of instruction and practice aligned to the phonics scope and sequence.</li> </ul>		

## About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

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

#### Research or Standards connection:

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

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

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

#### Resources:

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

### Indicator 1c Guiding Questions:

What is the scope and sequence for phonemic awareness skills?

#### Evidence Collection

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

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

## Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

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

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

## About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

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

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

By combining explicit modeling with intentional corrective feedback, materials help ensure students receive the support needed to internalize and master individual phoneme awareness skills, which are foundational to accurate decoding and fluent reading.

#### Research or Standards connection:

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

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

#### Resources:

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

### Indicator 1d Guiding Question:

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

#### Evidence Collection

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

#### Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

phonemic awareness instruction?

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

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of grade-level phonemic awareness instruction in core materials.
- Discuss the amount of time spent on grade-level phonemic awareness instruction over the course of the school year. Is adequate time spent? Are the skills being developed for students?
- Discuss the structure and consistency of instructional routines for phonemic awareness. Are these routines modeled explicitly and maintained across the year?
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for 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:		
4 points Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.	2 points Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.	0 points Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daily phonemic awareness instruction aligns to the scope and sequence, progressing from isolation, blending, and segmenting to more advanced phoneme manipulations, with phoneme-grapheme correspondences introduced to connect sounds to letters.</li> <li>Materials include opportunities for students to practice connecting sounds to letters.</li> <li>Materials include directions to the teacher for demonstrating how to pronounce each phoneme (articulation/mouth formation).</li> </ul>		

## About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

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

Consistent and well-structured practice in phoneme-grapheme mapping ensures students internalize these connections. By integrating phonemic awareness instruction with targeted phonics application in the same lesson, students are more likely to apply their understanding in authentic reading and writing contexts. This

practice strengthens memory for both spoken sounds and written word forms, building a bridge between oral language and print-based literacy skills.

#### Research or Standards connection:

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

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

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

#### Resources:

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

## Indicator 1e Guiding Question:

### Evidence Collection

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

### Cluster Meeting

#### Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss and share the evidence of daily phonemic awareness activities, including opportunities for students to connect phonemes to graphemes.
- 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 provide structured and repeated student practice opportunities for phonemic awareness and phoneme-grapheme mapping.

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

Scoring:		
<b>4 points</b>	<b>2 points</b>	<b>0 points</b>
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"> <li>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.</li> <li>Assessment materials provide teachers-and, when appropriate, caregivers-with clear information about students' current skill levels in phonemic awareness.</li> <li>Materials support teachers with instructional suggestions or next steps based on assessment results to support student progress toward mastery.</li> </ul>		

## 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 Alphabetics (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-Alphabetics-TRLJ.pdf>
- Burns, M. K., Maki, K. E., Helman, L., McComas, J. J., & Young, H. (2018). Contributions of the components of phonemic awareness to letter-sound knowledge with kindergarten students in high-poverty urban

elementary schools. *Reading & Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*, 34(5), 409–418.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10573569.2018.1468835>

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

## Indicator 1f Guiding Question:

How do the materials provide assessment for phonemic awareness?

### Evidence Collection

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

### Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Do the materials provide regular, systematic, and instructionally embedded assessment opportunities aligned to the phonemic awareness scope and sequence?
- Do the assessments help the teacher find evidence of a student's progress toward mastery of key phonemic awareness subskills (e.g., isolation, blending, segmentation, manipulation)?
- Do the assessment materials provide progress information for students to be supported and move toward independence in foundational skills?
- What protocols exist for the teacher to help students performing below grade level?
- Are the assessment materials aligned to the instruction and scope and sequence for phonemic awareness?
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for 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 (Foundational Decoding and Encoding)

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

### What is the purpose of this Criterion?

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

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

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

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

## Research Connection

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

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

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

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

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

## Scoring:

### Meets Expectations

- 30-32 points

### Partially Meets Expectations

- 16-29 points

### Does Not Meet Expectations

- < 16 points

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

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

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

## About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

Regardless of the phonics approach utilized in the materials, (i.e., synthetic/letter-sound based or analytic), certain patterns and phonics generalizations have higher utility. When instructional materials explicitly target

phonics patterns and common phonics generalizations, students build a deeper understanding of the more reliable patterns to decode words. Generalization patterns are not meant to be memorized. With repeated and engaging instruction, patterns become understood and can be applied.

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

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

Examples of known generalizations with high validity are:

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

Research or Standards connection:

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

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

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

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

Resources:

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

## Indicator 1g Guiding Questions:

What is the scope and sequence for phonics skills?

## Evidence Collection

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

## Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

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

Scoring:	
4 points	0 points
Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.	Materials meet NONE of the requirements of this indicator.
Materials do not contain elements of instruction that are based on the three-cueing system for teaching decoding.	

## About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

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

Research or Standards connection:

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

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

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

#### Resources:

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

## Indicator 1h Guiding Question:

### Evidence Collection

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

### Cluster Meeting

#### Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

<b>Criterion 1.3</b>	Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based phonics.
<b>Indicator 1i</b>	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.

<b>Scoring:</b>		
<b>4 points</b>	<b>2 points</b>	<b>0 points</b>
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"> <li>Materials include reasonable pacing of newly taught phonics skills.</li> <li>The lesson plan design allots time to include sufficient student practice to work towards automaticity.</li> <li>Materials contain distributed, cumulative, and interleaved opportunities for students to practice and review all previously learned grade-level phonics.</li> </ul>		

## About this indicator:

### What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

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

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

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

#### Research or Standards connection:

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

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

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

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

#### Resources:

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

## Indicator 1i Guiding Question:

### Evidence Collection

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

- Lessons for each phonics skill for design and pacing.

## Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

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

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

## 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:

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

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

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

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

#### Resources:

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

## Indicator 1j Guiding Question:

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

### Evidence Collection

In the Instructional Materials being reviewed:

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

### Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

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

## About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

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

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

## Research or Standards connection:

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

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

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

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

## Resources:

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

## Indicator 1k Guiding Question:

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

## Evidence Collection

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

evaluate the quality of phonics practice.

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

## Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
  - How does the teacher engage students in decoding words based on sounds?
  - How does the teacher engage students in decoding words based on looking at syllables?
  - Do materials explicitly provide strategies students can use to identify words such as 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

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

<b>Scoring:</b>		
<b>4 points</b>	<b>2 points</b>	<b>0 points</b>
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"> <li>• Spelling rules and generalizations are aligned to the phonics scope and sequence.</li> <li>• Materials include explanations for spelling of specific words or spelling rules.</li> <li>• Students have sufficient opportunities to practice spelling rules and generalizations.</li> </ul>		

## About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

Research or Standards connection:

Instruction in grade-level spelling patterns is a critical component of foundational literacy development, and research consistently supports the need for intentional, explicit instruction in this area. Effective spelling instruction includes attention to both high-utility spelling patterns—such as vowel teams that consistently

represent one sound—and more variable or complex patterns—such as *r*-controlled vowels or vowel patterns with multiple pronunciations. Students benefit from instructional activities that support flexible thinking about these patterns, such as word sorts, which can be used to examine phonograms, rimes, or alternate spellings of the same sound across a developmental progression ([Johnston, 2001](#)).

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

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

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

#### Resources:

- [Clymer's utility of phonic generalizations](#)
- [How Words Cast 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 spelling rules and phonics generalizations in core materials.
- Discuss the amount of time spent on students' practice of phonics over the course of the school year. Is adequate time spent? Are the skills being developed for students?
- Discuss how materials include lessons, activities, and routines for sufficient practice.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for 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

<b>Criterion 1.3</b>	Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based phonics.
<b>Indicator 1m</b>	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:		
<b>4 points</b>	<b>2 points</b>	<b>0 points</b>
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"> <li>Decodable texts reflect grade-level phonics patterns aligned to the program’s scope and sequence.</li> <li>Lessons include detailed plans for repeated readings of decodable texts to reinforce accuracy, automaticity, and confidence.</li> <li>Reading practice occurs in decodable texts aligned to the taught phonics patterns and reflects an absence of predictable texts. Use of decodable texts decreases over time as students demonstrate decoding proficiency and transition into increasingly complex texts.</li> </ul>		

## About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

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

With multiple readings, students can read the decodable text for different purposes, such as reading for

accuracy of the phonetically controlled elements and reading for consistent practice of phonics elements.

#### Research or Standards connection:

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

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

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

#### Resources:

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

### Indicator 1m Guiding Question:

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

#### Evidence Collection

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

#### Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

in decodable texts?

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

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

<b>Criterion 1.3</b>	Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based phonics.
<b>Indicator 1n</b>	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:		
<b>4 points</b>	<b>2 points</b>	<b>0 points</b>
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"> <li>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.</li> <li>Assessment materials provide teachers and students with information concerning students' current skills/level of understanding of phonics.</li> <li>Materials support teachers with instructional suggestions for assessment-based steps to help students to progress toward mastery in phonics.</li> </ul>		

## About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

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

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

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

#### Research or Standards connection:

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

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

#### Resources:

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

## Indicator 1n Guiding Question:

How do the materials provide assessment of phonics skills?

### Evidence Collection

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

### Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

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

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

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

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

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

## Scoring:

### Meets Expectations

- 10-12 points

### Partially Meets Expectations

- 6-9 points

### Does Not Meet Expectations

- < 6 points

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

<b>Criterion 1.4</b>	Materials and instruction support students in learning and practicing regularly and irregularly spelled words.
<b>Indicator 1a</b>	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:		
<b>2 points</b>	<b>1 point</b>	<b>0 points</b>
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"> <li>Materials include systematic and explicit instruction of high-frequency words with an explicit and consistent instructional routine.</li> <li>Materials include teacher modeling of the spelling and reading of high-frequency words that includes connecting the phonemes to the graphemes.</li> <li>Materials include a sufficient quantity of high-frequency words for students to make reading progress.</li> </ul>		

## 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:

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

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

#### Resources:

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

### Indicator 1o 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 high frequency word instruction in core materials.
- Discuss the amount of time spent on high-frequency word instruction over the course of the school year. Is adequate time spent? Are the skills being developed for students?
- Discuss how materials include lessons, activities, and routines for sufficient practice.
- Discuss any questions that were not answered by this instructional material.
- Look for 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:		
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"> <li>• Students practice decoding high-frequency words in isolation.</li> <li>• Lessons provide students with frequent opportunities to decode high-frequency words in context.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul>		

## About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

Research or Standards connection:

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

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

#### Resources:

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

### Indicator 1p Guiding Question:

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

#### Evidence Collection

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

#### Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

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

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

<b>Scoring:</b>		
<b>4 points</b>	<b>2 points</b>	<b>0 points</b>
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"> <li>Materials contain explicit instruction of syllable types and syllable division that promote decoding and encoding of words.</li> <li>Materials contain explicit instruction in morpheme analysis to decode unfamiliar words.</li> <li>Multiple and varied opportunities are provided over the course of the year for students to learn, practice, and apply word analysis strategies.</li> </ul>		

## About this indicator:

### What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

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

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

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

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

#### Research or Standards connection:

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

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

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

#### Resources:

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

### Indicator 1q Guiding Question:

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

### Evidence Collection

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

## Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

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

During the cluster meeting:

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

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

<b>Scoring:</b>		
<b>4 points</b>	<b>2 points</b>	<b>0 points</b>
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"> <li>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.</li> <li>Assessment materials provide the teacher and students with information concerning students' current skills/level of understanding of word recognition and word analysis.</li> <li>Materials support the teacher with instructional suggestions for assessment-based steps to help students progress toward mastery in word recognition and word analysis.</li> </ul>		

## About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

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

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

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

#### Research or Standards connection:

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

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

#### Resources:

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

### Indicator 1r Guiding Question:

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

#### Evidence Collection

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

#### Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

During the cluster meeting:

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

### Reading Fluency Development (Grades 1-2 Only)

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

### What is the purpose of this Criterion?

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

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

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

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

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

### Research Connection

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

A key component of fluency is prosody—the expressions, intonation, and rhythm used during oral reading.

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

### Scoring:

#### Meets Expectations

- 10-12 points

#### Partially Meets Expectations

- 6-9 points

#### Does Not Meet Expectations

- < 6 points

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

<b>Criterion 1.5</b>	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).
<b>Indicator 1s</b>	Instructional opportunities are built into the materials for systematic, evidence-based, explicit instruction in oral reading fluency.

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

## About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

Research or Standards connection:

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

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

#### Resources:

- [Components of Fluency](#)

### Indicator 1s Guiding Question:

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

#### Evidence Collection

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

#### Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

reader reads aloud?

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

During the cluster meeting:

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

<b>Criterion 1.5</b>	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).
<b>Indicator 1t</b>	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:		
<b>4 points</b>  Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.	<b>2 points</b>  Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.	<b>0 points</b>  Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Varied, frequent opportunities are provided over the course of the year for students to gain automaticity and prosody in connected text, aligned to program expectations and developmental readiness.</li> <li>• Materials provide practice opportunities for word reading fluency in a variety of settings (e.g. repeated readings, dyad or partner reading, continuous reading), with sufficient frequency to support progress towards mastery.</li> <li>• Materials include teacher-facing guidance on modeling fluent reading and delivering corrective feedback that supports students’ growth in rate, expression, and phrasing.</li> </ul>		

## About this indicator:

### What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

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

By becoming fluent readers, students can allocate more cognitive resources to comprehension. When students

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

#### Research or Standards connection:

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

#### Resources:

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

### Indicator 1t Guiding Question:

How do the materials address oral reading fluency practice?

#### Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for alignment to Foundational Standards at each grade level. Review:
  - Guidance for systematic instruction and practice in oral reading fluency.
  - Lessons that focus on use of phrasing, punctuation and expression.
  - Lessons for different types of oral reading fluency opportunities (i.e., reader’s theater, dialogues, song lyrics, narratives, speeches, whisper reading, repeated readings, choral reading, oral recitation, echo reading)
  - Texts, books, and passages (decodable and grade level) that support students at different levels for small groups, whole group, and independent reading.
  - Opportunities for students to read 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 (e.g., reader’s theater, dialogues, song lyrics, narratives, speeches, whisper reading, repeated readings, choral reading, oral recitation, echo reading) across the year in whole group, small group, individual, and intervention settings to increase fluency?
- What should the student be doing in materials that meet this indicator?
  - Do students read texts with a focus on rate, accuracy, and expression?
  - Do students practice reading fluency through varied fluency opportunities?
  - Do students receive fluency instruction in whole group and in small groups?

During the cluster meeting:

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

<b>Criterion 1.5</b>	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).
<b>Indicator 1u</b>	Materials regularly and systematically offer assessment opportunities that measure student progress in oral reading fluency (as indicated by the program scope and sequence).

<b>Scoring:</b>		
<b>4 points</b>  Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.	<b>2 points</b>  Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.	<b>0 points</b>  Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>Assessment materials provide the teacher—and, when appropriate, caregivers—with information about students' current skills/levels in rate, accuracy, and prosody.</li> <li>Materials support the teacher with instructional adjustments to help students make progress toward mastery and include guidance aligned to developmentally appropriate fluency benchmarks (e.g., WCPM, prosody rubrics, or progress-monitoring targets).</li> </ul>		

## About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

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

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

Quality materials will provide assessments for the teacher and students that assess student progress of foundational skills regularly and systematically during the day, week, month, and year and offer developmentally appropriate benchmarks (e.g., WCPM, prosody rubrics, or growth indicators) to support interpretation and instructional planning.

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

Research or Standards connection:

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

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

Resources:

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

## Indicator 1u Guiding Question:

How do the materials provide assessment of fluency?

### Evidence Collection

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

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

## Cluster Meeting

### Preparing for the cluster meeting:

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

### During the cluster meeting:

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

# Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

## Criterion 3.1

### Teacher Supports

Materials include embedded guidance to support effective implementation of foundational skills instruction and build teacher knowledge of grade-level expectations.

### 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

- 14-16 points

#### Partially Meets Expectations

- 8-13 points

#### Does Not Meet Expectations

- < 8 points

# Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

<b>Criterion 3.1</b>	Materials include embedded guidance to support effective implementation of foundational skills instruction and build teacher knowledge of grade-level expectations.
<b>Indicator 3a</b>	Materials provide teacher guidance with useful annotations and suggestions for how to enact the student materials and ancillary materials, with specific attention to supporting students' foundational literacy development.

<b>Scoring:</b>		
<b>4 points</b> Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.	<b>2 points</b> Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.	<b>0 points</b> Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Materials provide a well-defined, teacher resource for presenting content and instructional routines.</li> <li>Materials include annotations and suggestions to support implementation, presented in the context of specific learning objectives.</li> </ul>		

## 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 3a 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 3: Teacher and Student Supports

<b>Criterion 3.1</b>	Materials include embedded guidance to support effective implementation of foundational skills instruction and build teacher knowledge of grade-level expectations.
<b>Indicator 3b</b>	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.

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

## 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.

## Indicator 3b Guiding Question:

How do the materials educate the teacher about foundational skills?

### Evidence Collection

- 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 3: Teacher and Student Supports

<b>Criterion 3.1</b>	Materials include embedded guidance to support effective implementation of foundational skills instruction and build teacher knowledge of grade-level expectations.
<b>Indicator 3c</b>	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:		
<b>4 points</b>  Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.	<b>2 points</b>  Materials DO NOT meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.	<b>0 points</b>  Materials DO NOT meet ANY of the requirements of this indicator.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lesson plans utilize effective, research-based lesson plan design for early literacy instruction.</li> <li>The effective lesson design structure includes both whole group and small group instruction.</li> <li>The pacing of each component of daily lesson plans is clear and appropriate.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> </ul>		

## 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 3c 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 3: Teacher and Student Supports

<b>Criterion 3.1</b>	Materials include embedded guidance to support effective implementation of foundational skills instruction and build teacher knowledge of grade-level expectations.
<b>Indicator 3d</b>	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.

- 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 print concepts, phonemic awareness, phonics, word recognition, and fluency that will support students in progress toward and achievement of grade-level foundational skills standards.

## 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 3d 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 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 3: Teacher and Student Supports

Criterion 3.1	Materials include embedded guidance to support effective implementation of foundational skills instruction and build teacher knowledge of grade-level expectations.
Indicator 3e	Materials explain the program’s instructional approaches, identify research-based strategies, and explain the role of the standards.

## Scoring:

Note: Content for this indicator is fully addressed in 3b, which covers adult-level explanations and examples of foundational skills concepts. No separate scoring is required.

# Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

<b>Criterion 3.1</b>	Materials include embedded guidance to support effective implementation of foundational skills instruction and build teacher knowledge of grade-level expectations.
<b>Indicator 3f</b>	Materials embed consistent teacher guidance for the use of instructional tools and supports necessary for foundational skills instruction.

<b>Scoring:</b>	
<b>1 point</b>  Materials meet ALL of the requirements of this indicator.	<b>0 points</b>  Materials meet NONE of the requirements of this indicator.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Materials consistently identify tools (e.g., Elkonin boxes, letter tiles, sound walls, mirrors) within lesson routines and instructional steps.</li> <li>Materials provide teacher-facing guidance on how and when to use these tools to support instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, and encoding.</li> </ul>	

## About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines whether materials consistently embed clear teacher guidance for the use of instructional tools and supports necessary for foundational skills instruction. Instructional materials should not only list important tools like Elkonin boxes, sound walls, mirrors, and letter files, but also integrate specific guidance within lesson routines on how and when to use these tools effectively to support phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, and encoding instruction.

Providing consistent, embedded guidance ensures that teachers—regardless of their level of expertise—can implement these tools purposefully to maximize student engagement and foundational literacy growth. Clear and systematic integration of tools within lessons helps create coherent, efficient instruction, minimizes disruptions, and ensures that foundational skills practices are both explicit and hands-on. Ultimately, this clarity supports smoother delivery of instruction and enhances the effectiveness of foundational skills learning experiences.

### Indicator 3f Guiding Question:

Do the materials consistently embed instructional tools (e.g., Elkonin boxes, letter tiles, sound walls, mirrors) within lesson routines and provide clear teacher-facing guidance on how and when to use them to support foundational skills instruction?

## Evidence Collection

In the instructional materials being reviewed:

- Look for consistent identification of instructional tools (such as Elkonin boxes, letter tiles, sound walls, mirrors) within the lesson routines or steps themselves.
- Verify that the materials provide explicit teacher-facing guidance (not just mentions) on how and when to use each tool during instruction.
- Ensure the tools are aligned to support explicit instruction in phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, and encoding.
- Confirm that tool usage is embedded systematically across the lessons, not treated as optional or incidental.
- Identify whether the teacher guidance for tools matches the instructional objectives and supports student learning progression.
- Check for clarity: Teachers should be able to implement the tool easily because of the embedded directions.

## Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Are instructional tools (e.g., Elkonin boxes, letter tiles, sound walls, mirrors) clearly identified within lesson routines and instructional steps?
- Is there explicit teacher guidance provided on how to use the tools during instruction?
- Is there explicit teacher guidance provided on when in the lesson or learning sequence the tool should be used?
- Are the tools consistently embedded across lessons for phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, and encoding instruction?
- Does the guidance make it easy for a teacher to implement the tools purposefully and effectively?
- Do the materials ensure that tool use directly supports foundational skills objectives and activities?

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss whether instructional tools are consistently identified within the lesson routines and steps.
- Discuss whether teacher-facing guidance for how and when to use the tools is provided clearly and systematically.
- Discuss whether tool use is embedded across foundational skills instruction areas (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, and encoding).
- Discuss whether the use of tools is practical and manageable for teachers within the structure of the lessons.
- Come to consensus on whether the indicator was met or not met based on the evidence collected.
- Agree on the final rating.

# Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

<b>Criterion 3.1</b>	Materials include embedded guidance to support effective implementation of foundational skills instruction and build teacher knowledge of grade-level expectations.
<b>Indicator 3g</b>	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: Narrative Evidence Only

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

- 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 3g 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 3: Teacher and Student Supports

Criterion 3.1	Materials include embedded guidance to support effective implementation of foundational skills instruction and build teacher knowledge of grade-level expectations.
Indicator 3h	Note: <i>This is not an assessed indicator in ELA.</i>

## Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

Criterion 3.1	Materials include embedded guidance to support effective implementation of foundational skills instruction and build teacher knowledge of grade-level expectations.
Indicator 3i.	Note: <i>This is not an assessed indicator in ELA.</i>

# Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

## Criterion 3.2

### Student Supports

Materials are designed for each child’s regular and active participation in grade-level foundational skills content and include embedded supports for student access, engagement, and differentiation.

### 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 points

**Does Not Meet Expectations**  
 • < 2 points

# Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

<b>Criterion 3.2</b>	Materials are designed for each child’s regular and active participation in grade-level foundational skills content and include embedded supports for student access, engagement, and differentiation.
<b>Indicator 3j.</b>	Materials provide strategies and supports for students in special populations to work with grade-level content and to meet or exceed grade-level standards.

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

## About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

Effective foundational skills instruction must be grounded in evidence-based practices. Research emphasizes the importance of explicit phonics instruction and systematic decoding support for all students, particularly those performing below grade level (National Reading Panel, 2000; Moats, 2000). Providing students with differentiated scaffolds and small-group reteaching opportunities is critical for ensuring that all learners can master phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, fluency, and encoding skills (Foorman et al., 2016; Torgesen, 2004).

Strong materials provide actionable teacher guidance for scaffolding and adapting lessons without removing access to grade-level expectations. This approach ensures that all students, regardless of their starting point, are supported in achieving the foundational skills necessary for future academic success.

### Indicator 3j. Guiding Question:

Do the materials provide strategies and supports for students who are below grade level in foundational skills to work with and achieve grade-level content and standards, including opportunities for small-group reteaching and embedded teacher scaffolds?

### Evidence Collection

- Examine the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for support materials. Review:
  - The Unit overviews for teacher guidance to support students who are reading, writing, speaking, or listening below grade level.
  - The supplemental resources that provide additional support for students needing reteaching or scaffolding in foundational skills.
  - Specific guidance within daily lesson plans for scaffolding, differentiation, and small-group reteaching opportunities.
  - Suggestions embedded in core lessons for adapting instruction without removing access to grade-level standards.
- Look at the Teacher Edition and student materials of the resource for support materials. Examples may include:
  - Structured small-group reteaching plans aligned to the core foundational skills sequence.
  - Sentence frames, sound-spelling cards, or visual supports to scaffold student responses during lessons.
  - Opportunities for hands-on, multisensory activities (e.g., Elkonin boxes, letter tiles) used strategically to reteach or reinforce skills.
  - Clear guidance on adjusting pacing, providing additional modeling, or offering extended practice based on student needs.
  - Specific lesson-level callouts that indicate when and how to differentiate instruction for students who need additional foundational skills support.

## Cluster Meeting

### Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- What opportunities are provided for small-group reteaching of foundational skills concepts and skills?
- Are multiple learning pathways offered for students (e.g., hands-on activities, visual supports, oral practice) beyond traditional worksheets?
- What teacher guidance is provided to ensure that students below grade level have meaningful access to grade-level foundational skills instruction?
- Are small-group supports and scaffolds woven into daily lessons rather than only listed separately?
- Are supports evident across the range of foundational skills areas (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, and encoding)?

### During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss how the materials provide embedded supports and scaffolds for struggling students while maintaining grade-level standards alignment.
- Discuss whether the materials offer clear pathways for teachers to provide small-group intervention and individualized scaffolding.
- Determine if the supports address both skill development and student asset amplification.
- Identify any gaps where supports may be missing or insufficient.
- Look for consensus about whether the indicator was met fully or not met.
- Agree on the final rating.

## Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

Criterion 3.2	Materials are designed for each child’s regular and active participation in grade-level foundational skills content and include embedded supports for student access, engagement, and differentiation.
Indicator 3k.	Note: <i>This is not an assessed indicator in FS</i>

## Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

Criterion 3.2	Materials are designed for each child’s regular and active participation in grade-level foundational skills content and include embedded supports for student access, engagement, and differentiation.
Indicator 3I.	Note: <i>This is not an assessed indicator in FS</i>

## Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

Criterion 3.2	Materials are designed for each child’s regular and active participation in grade-level foundational skills content and include embedded supports for student access, engagement, and differentiation.
Indicator 3m.	Note: <i>This is not an assessed indicator in FS</i>

## Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

Criterion 3.2	Materials are designed for each child’s regular and active participation in grade-level foundational skills content and include embedded supports for student access, engagement, and differentiation.
Indicator 3n.	Note: <i>This is not an assessed indicator in FS</i>

# Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

<b>Criterion 3.2</b>	Materials are designed for each child’s regular and active participation in grade-level foundational skills content and include embedded supports for student access, engagement, and differentiation.
<b>Indicator 3o</b>	Materials provide a range of representation of people and include detailed instructions and support for educators to effectively incorporate and draw upon students’ different cultural, social, and community backgrounds to enrich learning experiences.

**Scoring: Narrative Evidence Only**

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

- Decodable and connected texts provide a range of representation of people, ensuring a broad range of cultural, racial, gender, and ability backgrounds are accurately and authentically represented.
- Materials provide detailed instructions and support for teachers on incorporating and drawing upon students' different cultural, social, and community backgrounds to enrich learning experiences.

## About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

In 2022, EdReports conducted a [landscape analysis](#) of 15 different resources to help educators understand trends and best practices in culturally responsive education, highlighting ongoing efforts and areas for improvement in providing adequate support for culturally relevant instruction. This indicator examines whether foundational skills instructional materials authentically reflect a range of diverse identities and provide educators with guidance on how to incorporate students’ cultural, social, and community backgrounds into early literacy experiences.

Foundational skills programs should ensure that decodable texts, connected readings, and student-facing materials represent a broad spectrum of students’ identities and that instructional supports empower teachers to build culturally relevant connections within phonics, decoding, fluency, and early writing lessons. Authentic representation and cultural connection are essential for fostering student engagement, belonging, and early literacy success.

### Research or Standards Connection:

The importance of cultural responsiveness in foundational skills instruction is strongly supported by literacy research. Bishop (2015) emphasizes that children’s early literacy experiences should offer both mirrors-allowing students to see themselves reflected in texts-and windows-providing opportunities to learn about others. When foundational skills materials reflect diverse experiences and voices, students can better develop positive self-concepts, empathy, and deeper engagement in literacy development.

Similarly, Johnston, Montalbano, and Kirkland (2017) argue that culturally responsive education must move beyond surface-level inclusions to authentically incorporate students’ cultural experiences into daily learning. Foundational skills programs that integrate students’ lived realities, community traditions, and cultural

knowledge into phonics, decoding, fluency, and early writing instruction allow students to connect meaningfully with the content while maintaining high academic expectations.

Together, these findings underscore that culturally responsive foundational skills instruction is not an add-on, but an essential component of creating equitable, engaging early literacy learning environments.

## Indicator 3o Guiding Question:

Do the materials provide guidance and a range of representation of people that supports educators in leveraging students' cultural, social, and community backgrounds to enhance learning?

### Evidence Collection

Examine the Teacher Edition, decodable texts, connected readings, and student-facing materials. Review:

- The decodable and connected texts for representation of a wide range of cultural, racial, gender, and ability backgrounds, ensuring authentic and affirming portrayals. .
- The illustrations, examples, and literacy activities for depictions of diverse students actively participating in foundational skills learning (e.g., reading with family members, storytelling, playing with letters and sounds).
- Teacher guidance that connects phonics, decoding, fluency and early writing instruction to students' cultural backgrounds, community experiences, and real-world knowledge.
- Suggestions for adapting literacy examples (such as connecting letter sounds to familiar student names, local places, or culturally meaningful objects) to deepen engagement.

Look at the Teacher Edition and student materials for support examples. Examples may include:

- Decodable passages and connected readings feature diverse families, community traditions, and storytelling practices.
- Lesson suggestions encouraging teachers to link phonological awareness activities (such as sound matching) to familiar culturally significant words or names.
- Teacher prompts to draw on family literacy traditions, oral storytelling, and cultural community resources during foundational skills instruction.
- Activities that encourage students to share words, names, songs, or stories from their home and community backgrounds, connecting them to new phonics learning.

### Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Do the foundational skills materials include a wide range of student identities authentically represented in decodable texts, illustrations, and early literacy activities?
- Are culturally responsive teaching strategies embedded within the foundational skills instructional guidance?
- How and where do materials suggest that teachers draw on students' cultural experiences to support early literacy development (phonological awareness, decoding, fluency, early writing)?
- Are there opportunities for students to connect literacy learning to their home languages, traditions, stories, and community experiences (without requiring multilingual-specific strategies)?
- Do the materials maintain high expectations for all students while affirming their cultural identities?

During the cluster meeting:

- Share evidence of the indicator.
- Discuss the authenticity and breadth of representation within decodable and connected texts.
- Discuss how teacher guidance promotes culturally responsive connections in foundational skills

instruction.

- Discuss examples where literacy learning is anchored in students' real-world cultural experiences.
- Identify any gaps or missed opportunities for deeper cultural relevance.
- Look for consensus about whether the indicator was fully supported through narrative evidence.
- Agree on the final qualitative rating.

## Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

Criterion 3.2	Materials are designed for each child’s regular and active participation in grade-level foundational skills content and include embedded supports for student access, engagement, and differentiation.
Indicator 3p.	Note: <i>This is not an assessed indicator in ELA</i>

## Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

Criterion 3.2	Materials are designed for each child’s regular and active participation in grade-level foundational skills content and include embedded supports for student access, engagement, and differentiation.
Indicator 3q.	Note: <i>This is not an assessed indicator in ELA</i>

# Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

<b>Criterion 3.2</b>	Materials are designed for each child’s regular and active participation in grade-level foundational skills content and include embedded supports for student access, engagement, and differentiation.
<b>Indicator 3.MLL</b>	Materials provide embedded supports to help multilingual learners (MLLs) develop foundational reading and writing skills. Instruction draws on oral and home language resources and reflects the interdependence of language and literacy development.

## Scoring: Narrative Evidence Only

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

- Materials include embedded language and content, and visual scaffolds (e.g., pictures, graphic organizers, anchor charts) that help MLL students access grade-level foundational skills instruction.
- Materials include modeling and cross-linguistic comparisons of phonemes, graphemes, and sound-symbol correspondences where English and home language patterns differ.
- Materials include tasks or routines that develop oral language as a bridge to literacy (e.g., structured speaking, listening, and vocabulary development).
- Materials avoid the use of nonsense words in instruction or assessment for MLLs and may acknowledge that unfamiliar real words can function as nonsense words for these students.
- Materials support meaning-making through early literacy instruction, rather than emphasizing isolated decoding alone.

## About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines whether foundational skills instructional materials provide embedded supports for multilingual learners (MLLs) to develop early reading and writing skills.

High-quality materials recognize that oral language, home language resources, and cross-linguistic knowledge are critical for early literacy development. Instruction should build upon the interdependence of language and literacy, drawing strategically on students’ home languages and English language varieties to support phonological awareness, decoding, encoding, vocabulary development, and meaning-making from the beginning of instruction. High-quality materials provide embedded scaffolds-including oral, visual, and linguistic supports-to ensure that multilingual learners can access and engage with grade-level foundational skills content.

Rather than treating multilingualism as a barrier, strong foundational skills materials leverage students’ full linguistic repertoires to support engagement, comprehension, and skill acquisition. Materials should provide structured oral language opportunities, cross-linguistic comparisons (e.g., letter-sound patterns), and avoid overreliance on isolated nonsense words that may confuse multilingual learners. Early literacy instruction should prioritize meaningful, authentic language use as a bridge to word reading and writing success.

### Research or Standards Connection:

Research emphasizes that multilingual learners develop foundational literacy skills most effectively when instruction builds upon their oral language and home language knowledge, rather than treating English proficiency as a prerequisite for learning to read.

The National Literacy Panel (August & Shanahan, 2006) highlights that oral language development-in both English and students' home languages-is deeply connected to early reading outcomes. Strategic use of home language resources facilitates phonological awareness, vocabulary development, and decoding skills in English.

Escamilla, Hopewell, and Slavick (2021) demonstrate that leveraging students' home languages (such as Spanish) during early literacy instruction strengthens biliteracy development and accelerates decoding, spelling, and meaning-making processes. Cross-linguistic strategies, such as using cognates and connecting morphological patterns across languages, allow multilingual learners to transfer existing knowledge to new reading tasks in English.

Together, these findings underscore that early foundational skills instruction for multilingual learners must integrate oral language development, cross-linguistic comparisons, and meaning-centered literacy activities to maximize student success.

### Resources:

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

## Indicator 3.MLL Guiding Question:

Do the foundational skills materials present multilingualism and English language varieties as assets in early reading and writing, and provide embedded supports that leverage students' home languages to promote literacy development?

### Evidence Collection

Examine the Teacher Edition, student materials, and lesson routines across the program. Review:

- Guidance for teachers on using students' home languages or English language varieties to support learning foundational skills (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, early writing).
- Embedded scaffolds that build oral language as a bridge to literacy, such as structured speaking, listening, and vocabulary tasks connected to decoding and encoding lessons.
- Visual scaffolds and graphic supports that reinforce foundational skills instruction (e.g., labeled diagrams, anchor charts, gesture prompts, visual routines).
- Cross-linguistic comparisons that model differences and similarities between English and students' home languages to support access to and understanding of phonics, phonology, and word structure.
- Teacher-facing cautions about avoiding unnecessary nonsense word use for multilingual learners, or guidance that real unfamiliar English words can serve the same instructional purpose.
- Early literacy tasks that emphasize meaning-making-building comprehension alongside word recognition, not isolating decoding without connection to understanding.

Look at the Teacher Edition and student materials for specific examples. Examples may include:

- List of cognates and cross-linguistic transfer supports embedded in phonics and vocabulary lessons.

- Phonological and orthographic contrastive analysis charts between English and common home languages.
- Lesson prompts encouraging use of students' oral storytelling traditions or home language knowledge during sound and letter work.
- Modeling examples showing teachers how to connect sounds and words across English and home languages.
- Vocabulary and decoding activities that maintain focus on meaningful word usage in context.

## Cluster Meeting

Preparing for the cluster meeting:

- Review the materials for teacher guidance on using multilingualism and English language varieties as assets during foundational skills instruction.
- Collect narrative evidence that aligns with whether and how these practices are embedded.

During the cluster meeting:

- Discuss and answer the following questions to support consensus scoring conversations:
  - What strategies are present for using students' home languages to support reading and writing development?
  - Are these strategies generalized or tailored to specific skills and lessons (e.g., phonics, spelling, fluency)?
  - Do materials promote home language knowledge as an asset to engage students meaningfully in foundational skills learning?
  - Do materials use home language and oral traditions as a support to access English literacy, rather than requiring mastery of English first?
  - Are cross-linguistic supports inclusive of multiple home languages, or focused mainly on Spanish?
  - Identify: Any missing opportunities where supports could have been embedded more intentionally.

# Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

## Criterion 3.3

### Intentional Design

Materials include a visual design that is engaging and supportively organized, and integrate 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 3: Teacher and Student Supports

<b>Criterion 3.3</b>	Materials include a visual design that is engaging and supportively organized, and integrate digital technology, when applicable, with guidance for teachers.
<b>Indicator 3r.</b>	Materials integrate technology such as interactive tools, virtual manipulatives/objects, and/or dynamic software in ways that engage students in the grade-level/series standards, when applicable.

## Scoring: Narrative Evidence Only

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

- Digital technology and interactive tools, such as data collection tools, 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).

## 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 3r Guiding Question:

Do the materials integrate interactive tools and/or dynamic software in ways that support student engagement in ELA and literacy, when applicable?

## Evidence Collection

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 interactive decodable texts, phonics games, or literacy skill-building apps 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 3: Teacher and Student Supports

Criterion 3.3	Materials include a visual design that is engaging and supportively organized, and integrate digital technology, when applicable, with guidance for teachers.
Indicator 3s.	Note: <i>This is not an assessed indicator in ELA</i>

# Gateway 3: Teacher and Student Supports

<b>Criterion 3.3</b>	Materials include a visual design that is engaging and supportively organized, and integrate digital technology, when applicable, with guidance for teachers.
<b>Indicator 3t.</b>	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.

- 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.

## 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 3t Guiding Question:

Does the visual design (whether in print or digital) support students in engaging thoughtfully with the subject, and is neither distracting nor chaotic?

## Evidence Collection

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 3: Teacher and Student Supports

<b>Criterion 3.3</b>	Materials include a visual design that is engaging and supportively organized, and integrate digital technology, when applicable, with guidance for teachers.
<b>Indicator 3u.</b>	Materials provide teacher guidance for the use of embedded technology to support and enhance student learning, when applicable.

**Scoring: Narrative Evidence Only**

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

- Teacher guidance is provided for the use of embedded technology to support and enhance student learning, when applicable.

## About this indicator:

What is the purpose of this Indicator?

This indicator examines 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 3u Guiding Question:**  
Do the materials provide teacher guidance for the use of embedded technology to support and enhance student learning, when applicable?

**Evidence Collection**

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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