

## Bookworms Publisher's Background

It was odd for us to have Bookworms 3-5 split from K-2 in the previous Ed Reports review. Bookworms is K-5. And it is even odder for me to be composing this description of the K-2 lessons alone. When we responded to the 3-5 review, we began by introducing our work as a Mom and Pop shop, the collaborative work of two cognitively-oriented university reading researchers who spent extensive time in schools. My Bookworms partner, Michael C. McKenna, died unexpectedly in December 2016. Now it's just Mom, I guess. I am both heavy hearted and even more committed to honoring Mike's legacy by making research both real and realistic for teachers.

We created Bookworms to help schools who were struggling with multiple mandates – new standards, new text difficulty requirements, new testing, and Response to Intervention mandates. We created Bookworms to ensure that *all* children in *all* schools had access to the magic, the language development opportunities, and the knowledge-building potential of high quality children's literature. Bookworms is our personal shared vision of research to practice. Bookworms is also affordable for many communities who cannot afford to pay commercial publishers.

Bookworms is not really a curriculum, not really a program, and not really an intervention. It is a structured school reform model. It requires 3 45-minute blocks of instructional time every day. Those blocks address both grade-level tier 1 instruction *and* either tier 2 instruction for students with weak foundational skills or acceleration for students with strong foundational skills. Materials for Bookworms are the online lesson plans, a specific set of intact trade books for teachers to read aloud, a specific set of intact trade books for children to read with teacher support, a classroom library of books for children to read on their own, and a set of foundational skills lessons in our Guilford Press book *How to plan differentiated reading instruction: Resources for grades K-3* that can be printed inexpensively. Most schools also need to purchase Coker and Ritchey's (2015) *Teaching beginning writers*.

To understand Bookworms in K-2, you have to understand a few key concepts that we adopted as our initial charges:

1. Oral language is a foundational skill for reading, for writing, and for learning;
2. Expert attention to on-time development of decoding and spelling skills is essential for future success;
3. The sheer number of engaged chances children have to develop skills and ideas matters;
4. Young children's concept development must outpace their reading and writing skills during this acquisition phase; and
5. Only real reading and real writing can create "bookworms" over time.

You should also know that Bookworms was not created by committee. It reflects a very specific vision of the requirements of new standards and the lessons of research. It was written by us, put to the test in many classrooms, and revised to reflect what we learned in the field. We

designed the differentiation lessons in 2007 and published them in 2009. They have been used widely since then, and a new version (informed by these trials) will be available in July of 2017. We first wrote the shared and interactive reading lessons for K-2 in 2012, watched their use, and made a substantial revision in summer 2016. Beginning in summer 2017, I will make a third revision, adding additional direction for the teaching of writing. Below I provide you with a birds-eye view of K-2.

Kindergarten is different from any other grade level. Just ask any kindergarten teacher. Our goal for kindergarten was automaticity in print concepts, letter names, letter sounds, letter production, phonemic segmentation, phonemic blending, and spelling for sounds – all constrained foundational skills. At the same time, we wanted to introduce persuasive, narrative, and informational text structures in reading and writing, build an excitement for learning, and enhance oral vocabulary and grammar knowledge – all unconstrained thinking skills. We applied the cognitive science of reading acquisition to reduce the total time needed for the foundational skills so that we could maximize time for unconstrained knowledge-building efforts.

In kindergarten, we assumed that children could engage most productively in 15-minute chunks of time, and that if we set very specific goals for those chunks, we could maximize chances for every child to understand the tasks and participate productively.

The first chunk is dialogic reading with a big book (or a projected one) with the goal of oral language production all week and summary generation on Friday. The next chunk is phonological awareness and word study with a poem and with compare and contrast spelling instruction. The third chunk is finger-point reading to generate concept of word in print with a nursery rhyme. Those three daily activities, separated by dance or exercise, comprise shared reading in kindergarten.

The kindergarten interactive read aloud and writing block includes a read aloud with extensive discussion and teacher modeling, grammar instruction through sentence composing, and a written response which begins as shared writing and eventually becomes student drawing and spelling for sounds.

The differentiation block begins in the second quarter, and provides small-group instruction and automaticity practice with letter names, letter sounds, and decoding. Children move from synthetic decoding to decoding by analogy for short vowel word families. Once they master those skills, they use this time for discussion and transcription of dictated sentences that stretch all of their phonological and phonics and handwriting muscles. When kindergarteners are not at the teacher table, they practice their handwriting and explore their classroom library. Our assumption for kindergarten is that children who enter first grade excited about reading and confident in their ability to use spelling for sounds to represent their ideas will be fluent readers by the end of first grade.

The first-grade plan is structurally simpler than kindergarten. The first month of the school year reviews kindergarten foundational skills concepts. After that, shared reading begins with word study, which compares and contrasts letters and then words for their sound and pattern. Word study has its foundation in the differentiated spelling approach designed by University of Virginia researchers. For us, though, it is whole-class, conceptually oriented spelling instruction. It is designed to make spellings for sounds and patterns transparent. We augment it with 5 high frequency words each week. Word study ends with a dictated sentence Monday through Thursday and with a traditional spelling test on Fridays.

Next in shared reading comes a brief purpose for reading, followed by choral reading of new text. It's all about the books! By January of first grade, that new text is a chapter a day from timeless, beloved authors – Sid Hoff, then Else Minarik. By the end of the year it is Sharmat's detective Nate the Great. The teacher interrupts the reading once each day to model a comprehension strategy. The class quickly discusses the first purpose for reading, sets a new one, and this time the children read in partners. They come together again to discuss the second purpose and then to engage in a broader inferential discussion. Finally, the teacher documents the main idea from the day's text in an anchor chart. Shared reading ends with the assignment of a text-based, written response to complete during the small-group rotation. When they finish, they read from the classroom library.

Differentiation is what we call our small-group rotation. Children's needs for decoding skills are diagnosed with a simple assessment which we validated for first graders. Depending on the results, they get the decoding instruction they need or they read an additional real book to strengthen their fluency and comprehension and foster their love of reading.

Interactive read alouds for first and second grade have the same structure. The teacher reads aloud from a trade book, selected because it is challenging, interesting and can build knowledge. Lesson plans provide extensive support to the teacher for modeling comprehension strategies and engaging children in discussion during reading, and there is also plenty of room for teachers to add their own reactions and explanations. The segment ends with sentence composing grammar instruction and the assignment of another text-based response.

We originally left time during this block (about half the days) for teachers to engage in process writing. Based on the feedback we've gotten from schools, and consistent with the EdReports reviews, teachers want more direction. I will provide that direction beginning summer 2017.

The interactive read aloud block is the same in structure for second grade, as is the differentiation block. Differentiation for second graders also allows for a vocabulary and comprehension group for students with strong fluency. They read silently and engage in a discussion with the teacher and their peers. Second grade shared reading is different in that narratives alternate with interesting, content-rich units: science cycles, native American culture, biographies, and mummies.

We are ready to help you. If you would like to see the shared and interactive lesson plans, they are available for free at [Boowormsreading.org](http://Boowormsreading.org). If you would like to see the differentiation lessons in action, you can watch them at <https://www.youtube.com/c/bookwormslessons>. If you would like to engage with your colleagues in professional learning, you can access our many free modules at [comprehensivereadingsolutions.com](http://comprehensivereadingsolutions.com), or contact us for other training options at [comprehensivereadingsolutions@gmail.com](mailto:comprehensivereadingsolutions@gmail.com).