



Alternative Curriculum Review Bookworms K–5 Reading & Writing

Summary Evaluation

Bookworms K-5 Reading & Writing is **approved** for use in the following districts through the Alternative Curriculum Review Process, in accordance with Delaware Senate Substitute 1 for [Senate Bill 4](#) of the 151st General Assembly. The review process was conducted utilizing The Reading League’s [Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines](#). The following districts have submitted and received approval based on their respective professional learning plans:

District Approvals

Laurel School District

Seaford School District

Milford School District

Woodbridge School District

Curriculum Design

Bookworms K-5 Reading & Writing includes three 45-minute instructional blocks that teachers are expected to implement daily (Shared Reading, ELA, Differentiated Instruction). The curriculum is approved for use as it is designed. It is critical to note that the program has been developed such that, together, the three 45-minute instructional blocks cohesively address the essential components of reading and writing instruction. It is the expectation, therefore, that educators teach the core curriculum as designed in order to ensure sufficient coverage of these components. Choosing to adopt or utilize one or more of these blocks in isolation from the others may result in insufficient coverage of the components required for alignment to the science of reading. If, for example, a district selects to employ only the Differentiated Instruction block (and not the Shared Reading or ELA blocks), this would not constitute sufficient coverage of the foundational literacy components required for alignment to the science of reading. The same is true if a district decides to skip the Differentiated Instruction block; without this component, students will not receive sufficient instruction and practice in foundational literacy skills.

Recommendations

The following elements are **strongly recommended** to support implementation of the Bookworms Reading & Writing curriculum in Grades K-3 in order to align with the essential components of early reading instruction.

1. **Materials: Decodable Texts**

The program should be supplemented with additional decodable text practice aligned to sound-spelling patterns in the Differentiated Instruction (DI) groupings and the Word Study scope and sequence. The Shared Reading materials do not currently include any decodable texts. As such, there is no decodable text practice aligned to the sound-spelling patterns taught during whole group Word Study. The only decodable text practice is during DI instruction (approximately one short paragraph). The decodable reading portion of the DI lesson is designed to take approximately 5 minutes and only for students placed in select small groups. Students are placed in these groups based on identified needs aligned with specific decoding skills. DI instruction includes decodable text practice in the lesson plans for the following small groups: blends and digraphs, r-controlled vowels, VCe, vowel teams. This means that, in a given instructional day, only some students are practicing with decodable text and for a maximum of 5 minutes, and that, for the majority of these instructional years (Grades K-3), students will only receive that decoding practice for a short period of time (when they are grouped in the particular levels that include decodables).

Although more research is needed, and experts indicate that frequency and dosage varies per child, current research and practice would suggest that the goal for **most children is closer to 10-20 minutes of decodable text practice per day**, depending on the age and reading skills of the child, in order to solidify the isolated patterns they have learned in context. Therefore, districts will need to ensure that teachers have the tools and resources to appropriately supplement with additional aligned decodable texts so that all students receive sufficient decodable text practice. (The Reading League has a list of [Decodable Text Sources](#).)

2. **Professional Development: Guidance for Supporting Multilingual Learners**

Implementation of the program should be supported with specific guidance and professional development on how to leverage the materials to most effectively support Multilingual Learners. Many of The Reading League's [Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines](#) criteria for "Aligned Practices" call out the need to provide

explicit support for Multilingual Learners (e.g., indicators 1.38, 1.39, 1.50, 2-4.8, 2.6, 2.17, 2.25). These include, among other things, the following expectations:

- attention is paid to positive transfer of letters and sounds from their home language in addition to explicit attention to those not present in their home language (1.39);
- an asset-based approach is used to engage in a contrastive analysis between home and school language including sentence structures, suffixes, and subject-verb agreement (2.25)
- instruction in English language development (ELD) and acquisition is included to support reading comprehension and continued reading and writing development (2-4.8);
- opportunities are identified for building background knowledge in a students' home language and/or by using visuals and clarification whenever possible (2.6).

The Delaware Department of Education recently released a policy brief on [Understanding the Science of Reading for Multilingual Learners](#) along with [DDOE Criteria for Selecting & Analyzing High-Quality Instructional Materials for Multilingual Learners in Grades K-3](#). Together, these documents provide additional information to enable selection and use of materials and determine instructional supports for Tier I instruction for Multilingual Learners.

Reviewing for the full range of instructional supports for MLLs is outside the scope of this review; however, the findings of this Alternative Curriculum Review would suggest that the program materials include many of the components necessary to support Multilingual Learners, including:

- substantial emphasis on oral language development;
- explicit and systematic instruction in decoding and word recognition;
- intentional focus on language comprehension; and
- attention to the development of writing skills.

The program design also allows for and includes built-in scaffolds that can support Multilingual Learners. However, while there is a brief description in the Teacher Manual explaining that these elements are consistent with research on support for Multilingual Learners, there is very little discussion of *how* teachers can and should leverage the materials to both provide necessary instructional supports and activate students' linguistic and cultural assets. Currently, there is no Multilingual Learner Guide offered as a companion resource to the materials. Neither the Teacher Manuals, nor the Module/Unit/Text overviews, nor the lesson content itself provides ample teaching notes specific to Multilingual Learners that educators can use in their planning. There is, for example, no

guidance on how teachers can leverage a student’s home language for the purposes of developing foundational literacy skills (i.e., transfer of letters and sounds), understanding language structures (i.e., contrastive analysis), or building background knowledge to support vocabulary and comprehension. This challenge is present in a number of ELA curricula and is not unique to Bookworms. Nonetheless, it is imperative that **districts provide additional professional development and support to teachers implementing this program to ensure they have the knowledge and tools for effectively providing instructional supports for MLLs in Tier 1 instruction.**

Strengths & Challenges

The following is a brief summary of overall strengths and challenges in the design of the curriculum. The challenges below are listed to support districts in ensuring necessary enabling conditions and determining critical topics that should be included in a comprehensive professional learning plan to support effective implementation of the Bookworms Reading & Writing curriculum in Grades K-3.

Strengths	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Systematic and explicit instruction in foundational literacy skills ● Robust instruction in Tier II and Tier III vocabulary ● Rich, engaging, complex, knowledge-building read aloud texts covering a variety of genres and topics ● Extensive teacher modeling for comprehension and writing development ● Many opportunities for students to build oral reading fluency ● Simple, consistent instructional routines ● Clear explanations in the Teacher Manuals about the research behind the design of each component 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teaching all three instructional blocks requires 135 instructional minutes daily. ● The curriculum incorporates a large volume of texts, at varying levels of complexity and for various purposes. Leveraging each text for its intended purpose will be challenging without deep internalization and careful planning. ● Comprehension is not taught using a gradual release model. Inferencing strategies (and specifically metacognition) are not taught explicitly; the program relies on teacher modeling instead, with few opportunities to debrief and check for student understanding.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grammar instruction is likely to look quite different from what teachers may be familiar with. During the Sentence Composing lesson component, there are four research-based routines in all grade levels: Imitate, Combine, Unscramble, and Expand. ● Teachers will need to develop their ability to use ongoing assessment data to create, manage, and adjust flexible student groupings for Differentiated Instruction.
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The Reading League’s [Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines](#) criteria highlight the importance of a systematic scope and sequence (e.g., indicators 1.3, 1.5, 2-4.6, 2.11, 2.21, 4.7, 4.12). It is important to note that the lesson content in all three instructional blocks follows a research-based scope and sequence throughout the program; however, there is no comprehensive document that lays out this scope and sequence for teachers. Appendix E of the digital Teacher Manual outlines the Word Study scope and sequence, but this is not comprehensive of all instructional components. Educators have to assemble and compile information from the Teacher Manuals, Appendices, Module/Unit/Text overviews, *How to Plan Differentiated Reading Instruction: Resources for Grades K–3* manual and daily lesson content across the three blocks of instruction in order to see the full progression of foundational literacy skills; language comprehension; reading comprehension; and writing development. This creates additional burden on teachers in terms of planning and preparation. A missing essential tool is a comprehensive overview document that clearly maps the scope and sequence across the three blocks of instruction, which would provide critical support for educators’ understanding and use of the materials.

Suggested additional enhancements to further align with The Reading League’s [Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines](#):

- There is no pure diagnostic assessment of phonological awareness. This may be a helpful supplement to support placing students in initial Differentiated Instruction groupings (indicator 1.10).
- There are no curricular resources for teachers to understand and articulate the way sounds are made in the mouth. Additional resources (e.g., articulation videos) may assist teachers in building their knowledge on how to support students with pronunciation (indicator 1.13).

- The program includes substantial explicit instruction in morphology starting in Grade 3. There is, however, a missed opportunity to introduce instruction in morphology earlier in ways that would support students' ability to learn about and draw connections between meaningful word parts (indicator 2.11).