



Tier 1 Reading Curriculum Resource Review and Selection Considerations

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Tier 1 Reading Curriculum Resource Review and Selection Considerations

This document should be used **IN CONJUNCTION WITH** your district's approved process for reviewing and selecting innovations (e.g., curriculum resources, assessments, participation in initiatives). If your district's process aligns with the components of the Hexagon Tool (Metz and Louison, 2019), the information outlined in this document would be added to information within the "need," "usability," and "evidence" sections of your district's process.

Materials Needed

- District-approved innovation review and selection process (see example "District Initiative and Innovation Review Process" from the MiMTSS Technical Assistance Center) [MiMTSS Initiative and Innovation Review](#) (PDF that is titled, "Review Process")
- A rubric for evaluating the reading curriculum resources (options below)

[The Reading League Curriculum Evaluation Tool](#)

[Rubric for Evaluating Reading / Language Arts Materials for Kindergarten to Grade 5](#)

Beginning the Process

Explore the Need for Tier 1 Reading Curriculum Resources

- Create a Needs Assessment to disseminate to all staff (survey is coming from Portland)
- Ask teachers to bring the resources they are using to teach the Big Ideas of Reading to a common meeting time (e.g., PLC or grade level meeting)
- Review district data (e.g., Curriculum Based Measurement data, NWEA, and state assessment data)

Establishing the Review Team

- One person was selected per grade level as well as a special education teacher that had the highest level of reading expertise. This was determined through observation and interviews with staff. It would be helpful if this team was diverse in terms of race, culture, gender, etc. so that multiple perspectives can be represented during the review process.
- When speaking to potential review team members, ensure they can accurately define the Simple View of Reading, Scarborough's Reading Rope (2001), the Big Ideas of Reading, the changing emphasis of the Big Ideas, and how the skills build upon one another.

Initial Team Meeting

- Building the Review Team's Background Knowledge: **Knowledge in the Science of Reading is critical.** If you have teachers who have been LETRS trained or have participated in comparable in-depth learning about developing skilled readers, the review of the curriculum materials will be more robust and will likely contribute to greater

consensus for the selection. However, you can begin to develop background knowledge by doing the things listed below.

- Review state legislation that warrants the district engaging in a review and selection process for new curriculum resources (e.g., 3rd grade reading legislation)
- Provide an overview of the Simple View of Reading so the team understands the “ingredients” necessary for successful readers
- Demonstrate the alignment of the Big Ideas of Reading to the Simple View of Reading
- Provide an overview of the elements of Explicit Instruction
- Provide an overview of Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Practices (This is needed so that the materials and teaching practices included allow opportunities for teachers to draw on the experiences and cultural ways of learning.)
- Outline the steps of a high-quality review process (this would infuse some items from the district’s Effective Innovation review, selection, de-selection process)
- Divide teachers into teams to review each grade level of the core reading programs being considered. Teams begin the review process outlined below. Additional time will be needed to complete the review of the materials.

Review of Tier 1 Reading Curriculum Resources

- Teams begin to review portions of the reading program (guided by initial questions) and debriefing their findings with the group. Already some programs will start to be taken off the list for consideration. The teachers need to be able to substantiate why and provide examples for the whole group to review. A vote is taken by the whole team to remove the program.

Initial Questions to Consider for Reviewing Materials

Specific questions for Kindergarten and First Grade related to skills in the Word Recognition (Decoding) domain of the Simple View of Reading are listed given the importance of preventing reading difficulties and establishing a good foundation for developing skilled readers. A comprehensive review should be done for all grade level materials.

1. Word Recognition (Decoding) Skills:
 - Phonological awareness:
 - Go to the **kindergarten** unit / weekly lesson planner
 - List the phonological awareness skills that are taught?
 - What unit and week are students blending and segmenting individual phonemes?
 - Access a few instructional routines for teaching phonological awareness to determine if there is teacher modeling of the skills, opportunities for students to practice and for independent practice?
 - Do students use any manipulatives or hand gestures when learning phonological awareness skills?
 - Access the first three **1st grade** units.
 - Outline the phonemic awareness skills that are taught

- Are there similarities in the phonemic awareness and phonics skills; meaning, are they practicing hearing sounds in words that include the phonics and word recognition skills they will be learning in the phonics portion of the lesson?
- Are kids practicing spelling words that include the phonics skill they are learning? If so, how many words include the phonics skill?
- Phonics and Word Recognition:
 - Go to the **kindergarten** teacher manual (first unit).
 - List the order of letter / sound introduction from the beginning to the end of the school year. (Compare the letter / sound scope and sequence to recommendations from reading experts)
 - In what unit and week do students first blend sounds together into words?
 - Find the instructional routine that is used the first-time students are blending sounds into words.
 - Does that routine include concise teacher language?
 - Does it begin with the teacher modeling?
 - Does it include guided practice where students are learning to apply what the teacher has modeled?
 - How many guided practice opportunities are accessible for students?
 - Is there independent practice opportunities? If yes, how many are accessible to students?
 - How many decodable readers are accessible to students per week for having them generalize the phonics and word recognition skill to connected text?
 - Access the decodable readers. Which paragraph does the first word that includes the phonics skill students are learning appear in the decodable reader?
 - How many opportunities students have to read words that include the phonics skill they are learning? Is that sufficient practice so students can generalize the learning to connected text?
 - Are there diverse characters and cultural representation?
 - Access the **first-grade** teacher manual.
 - Review the order of letter / sound introduction from the beginning to the end of the school year. (Compare the letter / sound scope and sequence to other high-quality example scope and sequences that can be found in LETRS Volume 1 or the book, Direct Instruction Reading)
 - Access the **3rd-5th grade** teacher manuals.
 - List the order of phonics / word analysis (prefixes, suffixes, root word) skills that are taught to students
 - Access the instructional routines for teaching phonics to older students.
 - Does that routine include concise teacher language?
 - Does it begin with the teacher modeling?
 - Does it include guided practice where students are learning to apply what the teacher has modeled?
 - How many guided practice opportunities are accessible for students?
 - Is there independent practice opportunities? If yes, how many are accessible to students?

2. Fluency:
 - How do the program authors define fluency?
 - Find the instructional routine and activities for fluency to determine how students are reminded they need to be accurate in their reading, read at an appropriate rate and with the proper expression / intonation.
 - Are there opportunities for the teacher to incorporate a fluency connection during group and monitored independent reading like parsing sentences based on syntactic patterns?
3. Language Comprehension Skills:
 - What genres are accessible to students in the program?
 - Do the reading selections include representations of diverse cultures, race, gender, disability, etc.? Students need to see themselves represented in the text (e.g., handicapped, gender, Black, Latina) and making significant contributions (e.g., science field). These representations should disrupt the status quo norms and at the same time, no perpetuate stereotypes.
 - Comprehension instruction:
 - To what extent does the program use comprehension strategies before students read, while they are reading, and after they have read? (find examples to share with the group)
 - What does the curriculum resource suggest teachers say / do to teach the strategy?
 - Access the “The Reading Comprehension Blueprint” by Nancy Hennessey. Refer to the Blueprint for Comprehension Instruction (p.44) to determine if the curriculum resource addressing the following elements necessary for effective understanding of the information:
 - Text reading (vocabulary)
 - Language Structures (phrases, clauses, sentence comprehension)
 - Knowledge (text structure and background knowledge)
 - Levels of understanding and inference
 - Expression of understanding
 - Find the instructional routines used for teaching vocabulary words. To what extent the routine includes the following components:
 - Teacher introduces the word
 - Students say the word (begin by tapping out the parts of the word if it is a multi-syllabic word and difficult to pronounce)
 - Teacher provide a student-friendly definition
 - Teacher illustrates the definition of the word with examples (and if appropriate non-examples) Where applicable, there are cultural elaborations where the lesson text prompts students to share other ways they use the work and / or meanings that are not represented in the text.
 - Students are provided at least 5-7 opportunities to say and use the words
 - List some of the vocabulary words the publisher recommends teaching. Are those words:
 - Known or unknown words?
 - Critical to understanding the passage / story / selection?
 - Likely to be used by students in the future?
4. How is writing to enhance text comprehension incorporated into the program?

- Are students provided opportunities to write about what they read to enhance their comprehension of the text?
 - How often are students engaged in short writing about what they have read?
 - How often are students engaged in writing longer essays / reports about what they have read?
5. What type of activities occur for whole group and small group instruction?
- Does the program suggest any active participation strategies to be used during whole group learning to engage all learners?
 - Does the program provide guidance about how to arrange the learning in such a way that is safe and inclusive of diverse students and their experiences? (It is important to be aware of how text and instruction can feel inclusive to some students and exclusive to others.)
 - Does the program provide any general guidelines for the length of time for whole group instruction?
 - What type of activities are used for small group instruction?
 - Do the activities used for small group instruction support the mastery of the skills within the word recognition and language comprehension domains that are being taught for that week?
 - Does the program provide any general guidelines for the length of time for small group instruction?

Summary of In-Depth Analysis

- Determine if additional reading curriculum resources (core programs) can be eliminated from consideration. Determine why and ask the team to vote to remove the program from consideration.
- Take a piece of chart paper per core reading program and have teams divide the following: Each section should be labeled:
 1. Word Recognition Skills (e.g., print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics, fluency): summarize information addressed in the questions above)
 2. Language Comprehension Skills (e.g., oral language which includes vocabulary, syntax, and sentence level comprehension, background knowledge/topic knowledge for levels of understanding and inferencing, quality of the selected vocabulary words and explicitness of instructional routines)
 3. Whole group: summarize which of the big ideas of reading are addressed during this time and for how many minutes
 4. Small group: summarize the types of activities that are addressed during this time and for how many minutes
 5. Culturally Responsive Elaboration
 6. Safe and Inclusive
- If there are questions that the program representative needs to address, list those in the appropriate quadrant or a separate list. This list will guide the presentation from the representative.

Compiling Review Information

Any information compiled to guide formal presentations to other staff, leaders, and the Board of Education will need to be thoroughly reviewed by individuals with the appropriate level of expertise as well as district administrators responsible for curriculum decisions.

- Have the team arrive to this meeting with their copy of the rubric that was selected to be used. Have additional copies accessible to the team depending on how many programs you will be reviewing using the rubric.
- Assign an official recorder that will document the information. For sections that require detail such as, “support for your rating,” recorders may want to type that information as opposed to write.
- If applicable, have K-2 team members work on the K-2 portion of the rubric for each of the programs. Make sure they provide unit, week, lesson, page numbers to support their rating.
- If applicable, have 3-5 team members work on the 3-5 portions of the rubric for each of the programs. Make sure they provide unit, week, lesson, page numbers to support their rating.
- The information is compiled and presented to the larger group. The K-2 and 3-5 teams will need time to meet to discuss how their program was rated using the rubric to present an overall summary of the findings. It is possible that programs will come out higher or lower for lower elementary vs. upper elementary based on the explicit teaching of decoding and word recognition skills. It will be important for district leadership to consider their specific data to determine what to prioritize to make the best decision. For example, if lower elementary data suggests students do not have sufficient background knowledge in the skills that encompass the decoding domain of the Simple View of Reading, then it would be wise to consider selecting the program that was stronger in this area since the increased instructional time devoted to the primary cueing system will allow more students to access and benefit from the language development that is also needed for successful reading comprehension. Materials like *The Comprehension Blueprint* (by Nancy Hennessy) can be used to make instruction in the language comprehension skills more robust.
- It is always important to remember that no program is perfect and the support of the program after a selection is made will be critical to successful use. One aspect of “support” includes professional learning. The professional learning would include teaching in the components of the selected program but it also should include Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Practice considerations. Your district’s review and selection process has specific items that address how to ensure sufficient capacity and support for use. Keep bringing the items for those components of the district’s review and selection process to the forefront as you engage in the core reading program review process to ensure all the critical variables for a high-quality selection have been considered.

Finalizing the Decision for Recommendation:

- A final decision is made that considers the information compiled from the rubric, the district review and selection process, and the program representative.

- A Board of Education presentation is created outlining the process that was used to make a recommendation. The district follows the remaining steps of their budgeting and approval process.

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