



Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI)
Early Literacy Curriculum Council

PI-9520 (New 11-2023)

Early Literacy Curriculum and Instructional Materials Criteria

Vendors must list specific location(s) of evidence within the instructional materials for each criterion in the rubric below.

General Things to Look for in the Curriculum

Should not be included:

- Leveled reader approach that denies many students access to rigorous texts in favor of providing universal student access to less rigorous texts.
- Single skills or isolated standards (like “find the main idea” or “find the key details”) that employ texts and topics as a vehicle for discrete skills attainment.

General - Things to be included	Specific location of evidence
Curriculum is designed to seamlessly integrate practices from the ELA standards. The standards themselves are not the goal of daily instruction; instead, the goal of instruction is that students understand the texts encountered and can express that understanding in multiple ways. Standards mastery is the end result of, not a design principle for, reading instruction.	
Curriculum is purposeful in design, including regular, predictable instructional routines that teachers and students can rely on from the moment the new program is enacted.	
Teacher-facing materials are clear and concrete about what program elements are essential for core instruction, and which are “nice to have” additional dimensions. This clarity extends to communicating high-level program dimensions for caregivers and community stakeholders.	
Curriculum encourages professional learning that deals concretely with how the materials can be effectively implemented and supports ongoing and systematic work in teacher study groups and professional learning communities. This is in contrast with one- or two-day “unpack the boxes and organize the materials” training sessions. Professional learning should offer aligned sessions for teachers, coaches and administrators.	

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<p>Curriculum invites professional learning by vetted vendors or proxies that deal concretely with how the materials can be effectively implemented and supports ongoing and systematic work in collaborative teams.</p>	
<p>Curriculum is well designed and curated. Lessons: 1) are well-paced, 2) dive deeply into content and the core texts spending at least two to three weeks on a topic, 3) can reasonably be completed within the school year, and 4) avoids bulk and bloat, by ensuring there is a strong rationale for each component of the curriculum.</p>	
<p>Curriculum has an extensive assessment system that effectively and efficiency measures what is taught.</p>	
<p>Curriculum provides a range of supports designed to address results from informal and more formal assessments (gathered from observations, assignments and test questions), and promotes timely and concrete feedback to students.</p>	
<p>Curriculum provides the means to ensure all students work with and can meet grade-level standards. The curriculum provides both the systematic guidance and resources required for building in time and support for students reading below grade level, and/or students whose first language is other than English so that they can access the text and learn alongside peers.</p>	
<p>Curriculum includes regular communal practice for all students with high-quality, complex texts that anchor each unit. These texts are at students' grade level, as defined by quantitative and qualitative analyses. In grades K-2, interactive read-alouds that are two to three years above what children can read themselves are a staple. Read-alouds are interactive with specific instructional goals and continue to contribute to knowledge-building well into adolescence.</p>	
<p>Curriculum expects students to regularly engage in a volume of reading materials of their choice related to the topics being studied. The curriculum includes teacher and student scaffolds, and structures, including lightweight student accountability (e.g. book talks, journals) to foster productive use of the reading time.</p>	

Additional reasoning and evidence for the General section



Comprehension

Language Comprehension - Often referred to by various other names including linguistic comprehension, listening comprehension, and comprehension. These terms are defined as the ability to derive meaning from spoken words when they are part of sentences or discourse.

Reading Comprehension - Language comprehension is different from reading comprehension because of a reliance on print, not oral language, to perceive words and derive meaning (Hoover and Gough, 1990).

Comprehension Strategies - The National Reading Panel (2000) described comprehension strategies as cognitive strategies that guide students as they attempt to read. They are particular mental activities that support readers' understanding of what they are reading (Duke et al., 2021). These are highlighted in the “Reading” strand of the Wisconsin Standards for English Language Arts (2020). There is no research to support that these skills transfer from text to text and should be approached holistically with the text pointing to which distinct standards (strategies) arise from its particular demands (Liben & Pimentel, 2018). A high-quality curriculum might include explicit cognitive strategy instruction as necessary when teaching students text cohesion--for example, when a text is complex teaching students to summarize the essential points or infer critical ideas in a plot might be necessary. However, a curriculum should focus on text-based comprehension that develops knowledge on a topic with cognitive strategies serving a supporting role and only when the text demands it.

Comprehension - Things to be included	Specific location of evidence
Curriculum includes the use of strategies in context and as needed: when students encounter challenging sections of text, encouraging students to engage in mental moves to support their comprehension. As with standards, strategy instruction is not the goal of lessons but a means to build comprehension and knowledge.	
Curriculum is designed to seamlessly integrate practices from the ELA standards in reading, writing, speaking and listening, as well as facility with language. The standards themselves are not the goal of daily instruction; instead, the goal of instruction is that students understand the texts encountered and can express that understanding in multiple ways. Standards mastery is the end result of, not a design principle for reading instruction.	
Culminating assignments regularly reflect what is essential for students to learn from the text(s) and address several grade-level (or above) standards.	
Curriculum includes regular practice for all students with high-quality, complex anchor texts at students' grade-level as defined by qualitative and quantitative analyses.	

Additional reasoning and evidence for the Comprehension section

Building Background Knowledge

The most dominant model of reading comprehension, The Construction Integration Model (Kintsch & Welsch, 2018), suggests that information in text is combined with and integrated into the reader’s knowledge and personal store of experience. Hennessy (2021) notes that “background knowledge differs from prior knowledge in that it is specific to the situations, problems, and concepts presented in targeted texts used in an academic setting” (p.149). Adams (2015) suggests that knowledge about the topic at hand is like mental velcro. The relevant knowledge gives the words of the text places to stick and make sense, thereby supporting comprehension and propelling the reading process forward” (p.8).

Building Background Knowledge - Things to be included	Specific location of evidence
Explicit knowledge building begins in kindergarten and continues as students get older.	
Curriculum provides repeated encounters with challenging, content-rich complex texts- each time with a different purpose-to allow students to grapple with sequences of high-quality, text-specific questions and building and understanding of the text with discussions being a regular part of these repeated encounters so students develop an ear for more sophisticated vocabulary.	
Curriculum is intentionally designed to give students grounding in a diverse range of topics in arts, history, literature, and science by providing enough time (at least several weeks) to explore each topic to allow for knowledge and vocabulary growth.	

<p>Curriculum provides a series of conceptually coherent texts (or relies on full-length books) organized around conceptually related topics available at various complexity levels with less complex texts supporting access to more complex texts to build knowledge. These texts offer a range of different knowledge-building resources with a substantial number of nonfiction texts represented.</p>	
<p>Culminating assignments regularly reflect what is essential for students to learn from the text(s), including the information contained within them; offer practice in speaking, writing, or projects using more sophisticated vocabulary and syntax, and address several grade-level (or above) standards.</p>	
<p>In grades K-2, interactive read-aloud texts are 2-3 years above grade level and intentionally paired (e.g. through a text set) to develop background knowledge on a range of topics.</p>	

Additional reasoning and evidence for the Building Background Knowledge section

Vocabulary Building to Build Lexical and Morphological Knowledge

Similar to background knowledge, Appendix 1 of the Wisconsin Standards for ELA (2020), note in key shift number three that all students will engage in regular practice with complex text and build academic vocabulary. It also notes that the standards call for students to build their vocabularies through text-based conversations, direct instruction, and reading. It further points out that “ability to understand complex text and the development of vocabulary are critical to engaging meaningfully with complex texts and topics and, therefore, finding success in college, careers, and communities” (p71). The standards express the importance of developing general academic vocabulary and discipline-specific vocabulary. Wisconsin Language Anchor Standards L2-L4.

Vocabulary Building to Build Lexical and Morphological Knowledge - Things to be included	Specific location of evidence
Words chosen for study in context are 1) essential to understanding the text, 2) more academic or discipline specific words, 3) part of a semantic word family when possible making them good candidates for morphological study, and 4) high utility words.	
Curriculum provides robust vocabulary and syntax routines both in context (through text-based questions and tasks) and out of context (through games, exercises, etc.). These routines are designed to strengthen verbal reasoning as well as knowledge of morphology.	
Curriculum revisits newly learned words and phrases in multiple contexts, including encouraging students to use them in their discussions and speaking and writing activities.	
Explicit instruction in morphology is provided with numerous opportunities for students to read and write words with these morphemes	

Additional reasoning and evidence for the Vocabulary Building to Build Lexical and Morphological Knowledge section



Oral Language Development Through Rich Text-Based Discussion

Oral language can best be defined as “the ability to produce or comprehend spoken language, including vocabulary and grammar” (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008, p viii).

Oral Language Development Through Rich Text-Based Discussion - Things to be included	Specific location of evidence
Oral language and listening comprehension are elements of instruction.	
Curriculum engages students in productive and sustained academic discussions through thought-provoking questions that develop both literal and deep understanding of the text and content being studied, including cultivating students’ abstract reasoning and analytical thinking. When students answer questions, they are consistently required to provide evidence for their responses.	
Curriculum includes frequent opportunities for collaborative text-based discussions that develop analytical thinking as required by grade level standards. Students are taught to respond in complete sentences using text-based evidence to support thinking.	
Peer-to-Peer discussions are threaded throughout instruction to make classrooms vibrant centers of intellectual engagement and co-learning. For younger children especially, discussions should include a language expansion focus, allowing students to connect to the text/topic, repeating & clarifying, and expanding language (new words, phrases, ideas, etc.). Example: dialogic reading.	

Additional reasoning and evidence for the Oral Language Development Through Rich Text-Based Discussion section



Phonological Awareness

Including word awareness, rhyme recognition, repetition and creation of alliteration, syllable counting or identification, onset, and rime manipulation. The Wisconsin Standards for ELA (2020) define phonological awareness as the ability to detect and manipulate the units of spoken language. It is the global awareness of large chunks of speech, word awareness, spoken syllable, onset rime, and phoneme.

Phonemic Awareness - Including phonemic identification, isolation, blending, segmentation, addition, substitution, and deletion. Phonemic awareness is an oral language task that deals with individual phonemes in spoken words or syllables (Moats, 2020).

Should not be included:

- Instruction that only attends to larger units of phonological awareness (rhyme, alliteration) without moving to phoneme level.
- Instruction is focused on letters only without explicit instruction and practice with phonemes that letters represent.

Phonemic Awareness - Things to be included	Specific location of evidence
Phoneme awareness is taught as a foundational skill.	
Scope and sequence for systematic phonological awareness (syllable, onset-rime e.g.) and phonemic awareness instruction is utilized moving from simple to complex. Phonemic awareness instruction progresses from simple (eg., hearing initial sounds) to more complex activities (eg., manipulating sounds).	
Curriculum includes instruction of the larger units of phonological awareness (syllable, rhyme, onset-rime) in kindergarten, with the bulk of instruction at the phoneme level.	
Phoneme awareness is taught directly, explicitly, systematically, and frequently paired with letter instruction.	
Instruction includes conversations about the way sounds are made in the mouth (i.e., how the articulatory gestures of air flow, tongue and lip placement, vocal cord voicing are happening).	
Curriculum includes instructional focus on identifying, segmenting, and blending phonemes within a word (e.g., first, final, medial, phonemes in blends).	

Additional reasoning and evidence for Phonemic Awareness section

Phonics

The relationships between sounds and words; this includes alphabetic principle, decoding, orthographic knowledge, encoding, and fluency (creating automaticity at the skill level).

Should not be included:

- Curriculum teaches letter-sound correspondences opportunistically or implicitly during text reading.
- Phonics instruction takes place in short or optional “mini-lessons” or “word work” sessions.
- The initial instructional sequence introduces many (or all) consonants before a vowel is introduced, short vowels are taught in rapid succession and/or all sounds for one letter are taught all at once.
- Blending is not explicitly taught or practiced.
- Instruction encourages students to memorize whole words, read using the first letter only as a clue, guess at words in context using a “what would make sense?” strategy, or use picture clues rather than phonic decoding.
- Words with known sound-symbol correspondences, including high frequency words, are taught as whole-word often as stand-alone “site words” to be memorized.
- Few opportunities for word-level decoding practice are provided.
- Early texts are predominately predictable and/or leveled texts which include phonic elements that have not been taught; decodable texts are not used or emphasized.
- Advanced word study (grades 2+) instruction in phonics ends once single syllable phonics patterns are taught.
- Advanced word study (grades 2+) no instruction in multisyllabic word decoding strategies and/or using morphology to support word recognition is evident.

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Phonics - Things to be included	Specific location of evidence
Decodable text is available for all in grades K-2, and for students who still need these supports in grade 3. Support for a gradual release to less controlled text is included.	
Letter-sound correspondences are taught to automaticity in an explicit manner including letter formation.	
Phonics instruction includes cumulative review including application in reading and writing.	
Phonics instruction is systematic and sequential, building from simple letter-sound correspondences to complex phonic patterns (i.e., instruction begins with short vowels and consonants).	
Segmenting and blending are taught explicitly and practiced regularly in both decoding and encoding.	
Irregular high-frequency words are taught by drawing attention to both regular and irregular grapheme phoneme correspondences (or letter sound correspondence).	
Instruction includes spaced practice and interleaving of skills taught (e.g., practicing old and new phonics patterns in one activity, practicing a learned phonics pattern in reading and spelling).	
Phonics skills are practiced through applying letter-sound knowledge both in isolation and in decodable texts that match the phonics elements taught, securing phonic decoding.	
Students are taught to use phonics patterns to read words in connected text; context is only suggested as a confirmation strategy (not taught as a decoding strategy). Reading Foundational Skills Fluency Standard c.	
Advanced word study in grades 2 and 3 includes explicit instruction on the various routes to reading longer words, including syllable and morphological strategies that will support the acquisition of more sophisticated and context-dependent orthographic knowledge (e.g., tion; al).	

Advanced word study in grades 2 and above includes more advanced phonics skills (e.g., second sounds of c/g, digraphs, variant vowels).	
For multilingual learners, once they decode the word accurately, supports (e.g., descriptions, pictures, or gestures) are used to teach or confirm the meaning of the decoded word(s).	

Additional reasoning and evidence for Phonics section

Spelling

“Encoding: the process of hearing a sound and being able to write a symbol to represent that sound. For example: if a child hears the sound /t/ and then writes the letter 't', this means they can encode this sound. Encoding also involves hearing a whole word, matching speech/phoneme to print/grapheme, and writing the whole word, ultimately, with the correct spelling.” WI ELA Appendix 2 p. 76.

Spelling - Things to be included	Specific location of evidence
Patterns taught for decoding are practiced in encoding/spelling lessons.	
Explicit spelling instruction continues in grade 2 and above with the aim of building readers orthographic knowledge (etc., variant vowels, vowel teams, polysyllabic words; morphological knowledge).	

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Spelling patterns are taught in a logical sequence, with the most frequently occurring patterns emphasized, not all at once or in a non-systematic manner. Extensive and recursive practice opportunities, not based on memorization, are provided to spell words both in isolation and in context.	
Spelling instruction includes an emphasis upon phonology, orthography, and morphology.	
Spelling instruction continues in grades 2 and above and includes explicit instruction in vowel teams, variant vowels and how morphology influences spelling.	
A limited number of high-frequency words may be taught in advance of their phonic patterns to allow for the reading of interesting sentences.	

Additional reasoning and evidence for Spelling section

Writing

Writing is complex and multifaceted including transcription and craft, text structures, syntax and critical thinking (Sedita, 2022).

Should not be included:

- Primarily narrative or unstructured choice writing.

Writing - Things to be included	Specific location of evidence
Teaching of the entire writing process: planning, drafting, editing/revising, and publishing some pieces (see ELA standards).	
There is explicit instruction in handwriting including letter formation, posture, and grip, and there are opportunities for practice using lined paper to guide letter formation.	
Sentence-level writing is a focus in grade K-2 writing instruction.	
Clarify/concise: Emphasis is placed on the quality - not quantity - of written work: organization, grammar, spelling, punctuation and capitalization are prioritized.	
Writing to learn is emphasized in the curriculum; writing is used as a means to comprehend the content under study.	
Curriculum includes writing assignments that vary in purpose, length, and duration. Writing is always directly or indirectly linked to the curriculum content.	
Curriculum includes frequent writing opportunities that are evidence-based and anchored in the content students are studying to extend and solidify their learning. Writing also includes regular use of short, focused research projects with teacher support (appropriate to the grade level), again anchored in the assigned content.	
Practice automatizing transcription skills is included, and explicit handwriting instruction is part of the daily routine in grades K-2.	

Additional reasoning and evidence for Writing section

Fluency

Often referred to as the bridge between decoding and reading comprehension. It is not simply reading speed, but involves automaticity, accuracy and prosody (expression) (Pennell, 2020).

Should not be included:

- Fluency instruction focuses primarily on student silent reading.
- Rate is emphasized over accuracy; priority is given to the student's ability to read words quickly.
- Word-level fluency practice to automaticity is not provided, or fluency is viewed only as text-reading fluency.
- Fluency is practiced only in narrative text or with repeated readings of patterned text.
- Fluency assessment allows acceptance of incorrectly decoded words if they are close in meaning to the target word (e.g., assessment based upon the cueing systems, M/S/V).

Fluency - Things to be included	Specific location of evidence
Letter names and associated sounds, and word parts are given sufficient opportunities for practice with feedback to ensure accuracy and automaticity.	
Instruction includes teacher-led modeling, oral repeated reading by students and immediate feedback.	

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Word, phrase, and sentence-level fluency practice is provided as well as continuous, connected text.	
Connected text fluency practice is provided encouraging students to read with prosody: phrasing, pausing, intonation and expressiveness (e.g. decodable texts, poetry, readers' theater, paired reading).	
Curriculum should address all aspects of fluency: accuracy, speed and expression. Meaningful opportunities for fluency practice include echo, choral, partner, repeated and wide reading.	
For multilingual learners, additional support is included whenever possible to ensure students understand the meaning of words being read.	

Additional reasoning and evidence for Fluency section



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Definitions

(*Derived from the Reading League Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines and Wisconsin Standards for ELA)

Automaticity: The appropriate rate, or speed, of reading. Emergent readers are typically less automatic than more advanced readers because their attention is heavily focused on decoding the words. In order for automaticity in word reading to occur, it is necessary to develop fluency (i.e., automaticity and accuracy) in the underlying foundational skills. This includes proficiency in phonemic awareness (segmenting, blending, manipulation), letter knowledge (sounds and names) and ease in blending. Accurate word-level reading is essential to the development of phrase-level and passage-level fluency. Before automaticity can occur, students must have a foundation of accurate word reading which includes: (1) the ability to effortlessly decode and read regular CVC words, and (2) a large bank of words that are recognized by sight. Sight words are defined as any word that is retained in long-term memory and automatically recognized by sight; these include both regularly and irregularly spelled words.

Blending: Putting phonemes together to form words.

Explicit Instruction: Instruction that is taught directly and clearly, leaving little to chance. Teachers begin by modeling the objective, ensuring that students know what is expected. Students then practice along with the teacher, and finally, they complete the task individually (e.g., I do, we do, you do). Explicit instruction includes practice with immediate corrective feedback.

Grapheme: A letter or letter combination that spells a phoneme; it can be one, two, three, or four letters in English (e.g., i, ou, igh, ough).

Morpheme: The smallest unit of a word that carries meaning (e.g., prefix, suffix, base element).

Morphology: The system of meaningful parts, or morphemes, that makeup words.

Phoneme: The smallest unit of sound in a spoken word; an individual speech sound.

Phonics: Instruction to teach how print/letters represent the sounds of spoken language.

Phoneme Awareness: The ability to notice, think about, or manipulate the individual phonemes (sounds) in spoken words. It is the highest level of phonological awareness and a potent predictor of future reading success.

Phonological Awareness: One's sensitivity to, or explicit awareness of, the phonological structure of words in one's language. It is an "umbrella" term that encompasses awareness of individual words in spoken sentences, syllables, onset-rime segments and individual phonemes.

Phonic Decoding: The process of sounding out words using letter-sound knowledge and blending those sounds together to pronounce the word. In the research literature, this process is referred to as phonological recoding or simply recoding.

Prosody: The expression, intonation and purposeful phrasing used to give meaning to the text.

Segmenting: Breaking a spoken word into its individual phonemes.

Sound-Symbol Correspondences: The relationship between a grapheme, or printed letter(s), and its corresponding phoneme, or individual speech sound (i.e., can correspond to the phoneme /k/ or /s/).

Spaced Practice: Practice that occurs over time.

Syllable Types: The six common syllable patterns in English: closed, open, vowel-consonant-e, r-controlled, vowel team, and consonant-le.

Syntax: The arrangement of words to form sentences in a given language.

Systematic Instruction: The use of a planned, logical sequence to introduce elements taught, building from the simplest to those that are more complex.

Word Recognition: The swift identification of a previously learned word and its meaning. (Henry, p. 314)

*Other definitions for Reading Foundational Skills can be found in the Wisconsin Standards for English Language Arts Appendix 2 pages 76-89.

**Text complexity is mentioned several times in this rubric. The overarching statement for the reading standards requires students to read and comprehend a variety of complex literary and informational texts for many purposes (including enjoyment), including texts that reflect one's experiences and the experiences of others. This includes independently and proficiently understanding grade-level text. Wisconsin utilizes a four-part model for determining how easy or difficult a particular text is to read. The committee should refer to the Wisconsin Standards for English Language Arts Appendix 3 for (pp. 90-104) for text complexity determinations.

***Appendix 3 refers to the Lexile Framework as a quantitative means for measuring text complexity. Since the printing of the standards, Lexile has developed a stretch framework addressing concerns about being college and career ready. It also gives a grade breakdown rather than a grade band.

Grade	College & Career Reading "Stretch Lexile Bands"
1	190L-530L
2	420L- 650L
3	520L- 820L

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Knowledge Matters Content Rich ELA Curriculum Review Tool for Grades K-8 Public Release November 1, 2023

Wisconsin Standards for English Language Standards (2020)
<https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/standards/New%20pdfs/ELAStandards2020.pdf>

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