



Foundational Skills Instructional Guide

Table of Contents

What We Believe.....	4
Anchored in Research.....	4
Ensuring a Focus on Foundational Skills.....	11
Phonological and Phonemic Awareness.....	12
Phonics and Word Study	17
Fluency.....	20
Vocabulary.....	21
Comprehension	21
Early Literacy Foundational Skills Curricular Products at KIPP	22
Foundation-Supported Foundational Skills Curriculum	23
Overview of Foundational Skills Curriculum Adoption across KIPP.....	24
Early Literacy Foundational Skills Assessment Products	25
KIPP-Supported Foundational Skills Assessment Systems.....	26
KIPP-Reviewed Assessments for Foundational Skills	27
Assessment types and purposes.....	28
Tier 2 Intervention Guidance	30
The Importance of Diagnostic Measures.....	30
Tier 2 Instruction.....	30
Tier 3 Instruction.....	31
Progress Monitoring	31
Conditions for Effective Intervention	32
Sample Daily Schedule including Intervention in Grades K-2.....	32
Overview of Products for Early Literacy Intervention	33
Decision Making Guidance for K-2 Intervention.....	36
.....	37
.....	37
.....	37
Family Engagement	39
Family Involvement in Assessment.....	43
Resources Cited	44

Notes on using this document

This Blueprint was designed by a team of KIPP Regional Leaders, KIPP Foundation staff, and early literacy experts. In the initial design phase, we established that users of this document may range from teachers (new and veteran), coaches, school leaders, regional leaders, Foundation staff, people with and without early literacy backgrounds, and across KIPP regions with varying resources dedicated to early literacy. With such a diverse user base, we know the elements of this Blueprint will serve various needs depending on the user. Some suggested uses of the Blueprint:

- A starting place or reference point for regional blueprints and other local early literacy materials.
- Onboarding and investment tool for teachers, coaches, and leaders to ground in research and our approach at KIPP.
- Review when selecting early literacy products or to understand why certain tools were selected.

What We Believe

A vision for early literacy at KIPP

Our vision at KIPP is that every child grows up free to create the future they want for themselves and their communities. In pursuit of this we must ensure that all students are strong readers, writers, and communicators so that they can learn, discover, express themselves, and craft their future. We believe that intentional, comprehensive, research-based instruction in foundational skills for all students in grades K-2 lays the groundwork for creating a more equitable world.

Our mission at KIPP is grounded in partnership with families and communities. Through our commitment to early literacy, we are promising families that their child will:

- have the support and resources they need to be skilled, joyful readers going into third grade.
- learn to read in a way that's backed by science and in a way that deepens their understanding of themselves and others.
- have a skilled teacher, trained in both the science of how children learn to read and the art of joyful teaching.
- get the individual support they need.

We promise families that their child won't just learn to read; they'll learn to read in a text-rich and joyful classroom. And families are our partner in this effort, every step of the way. Read more in KIPP's Early Literacy [Promise to Families](#) / [Promesa a las familias](#).

Anchored in Research

This instructional guide is based in research that is widely supported and proven over decades and across school models. Becoming a strong reader helps students build confidence; learn about themselves, others, and the world; express themselves and ultimately, craft their own future. Learning to read isn't just about academic excellence, it's about unlocking new worlds, being able to access and reflect on your own history and learning how to advocate for yourself and others. Also, it's full of joy!

Being able to read is a critical tool in our society and historically, Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and communities of color have been systematically denied literacy opportunities. In the 1830s in the United States, laws were passed making it illegal to teach literacy to free or enslaved Black Americans as the ability to read was viewed by white Americans as a threat to the institution of slavery. Despite these laws, many freed and enslaved Black Americans found ways to learn to read. Following the Emancipation Proclamation, schools for Black Americans opened and literacy rates rose from 20% in 1870 to nearly 70% by 1910.¹ However, disparities in access to quality schools persisted through the 20th century and through to present day which have disproportionately and systematically impacted the opportunity for Black students to receive excellent literacy instruction.² Every classroom at KIPP must be

¹ "How Literacy Became a Powerful Weapon in the Fight to End Slavery," <https://www.history.com/news/nat-turner-rebellion-literacy-slavery>

² "Past Is Prologue: African Americans' Pursuit of Equal Educational Opportunity in the United States," by Janel George. https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/black-to-the-future/past-is-prologue/

anchored in research, equipped with the tools, and staffed with a trained teacher ready to provide excellent literacy instruction so that all students are able to pursue the paths they choose.

From “learning to read” to “reading to learn”

This concept references a transition that is generally thought to occur in third grade because by “fourth grade, students begin encountering a wider variety of texts. By then, able readers have learned to extract and analyze new information and expand their vocabularies by reading.”³ There is widespread data that highlights the importance of this transition. For example, a report written by the Annie E. Casey Foundation found that children who do not read proficiently by the end of third grade are four times more likely to leave school without a diploma than proficient readers.⁴

Students must be exposed to vocabulary-rich and knowledge building reading and writing prior to third grade, but often those texts are read aloud or have other supports as students increasingly become proficient at decoding. Because comprehension and decoding develop independently of each other, students are ready to engage with complex texts long before they are able to read the words on the page themselves.

Data shows we need to do better at “learning to read”

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (“NAEP”), a third of students in the United States cannot read at a basic level and more than six in 10 fourth graders aren’t proficient readers. It has been this way since testing began.⁵ Additionally, a recent study sponsored by Reading Plus found that by the time they finish high school, today’s students read 19% slower than their counterparts of 50 years ago.⁶ In 2019 at KIPP, based on the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Assessment, 44% of students were at or above grade level (50th percentile) at the end of 3rd grade. Like national results, at KIPP there is a difference in results across racial demographics between Black and Latinx students.

Teaching reading is rocket science⁷

There are evidence-based approaches to teaching students how to read, but teacher preparation programs, curriculum, or professional development programs do not always incorporate the research. Prior to the year 2000 and in the 20+ years since hundreds of studies have helped us to understand how children learn to read, what causes reading difficulties, and the essential components of effective reading instruction. It is this research that we base foundational literacy skills instruction in at KIPP.

Two approaches to teaching reading: phonics and whole language

Disagreements about how to best teach students to read have been happening for more than 200 years and are often referred to as the “reading wars”.⁸ One approach, known as whole language, assumes that learning to read, like learning to speak, is a natural process, which occurs without the need for explicit

³ “Learning to Read, Reading to Learn,” by the National School Boards Association. May 6, 2015.

<https://learningfirst.org/learning-read-reading-learn>

⁴ “Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters” by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. June 1, 2010.

<https://www.aecf.org/resources/early-warning-why-reading-by-the-end-of-third-grade-matters/>

⁵ 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). NAEP tests 4th and 8th graders. Accessed June 2021:

<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/highlights/reading/2019/>

⁶ “Students Are Reading Slower and Comprehending Less. Here’s What To Do About It,” by Kelli Anderson.

September 24, 2019. <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2019-09-24-students-are-reading-slower-and-comprehending-less-here-s-what-to-do-about-it>

⁷ “Teaching Reading is Rocket Science”. Louisa Moats, 2020. Update to the 1999 American Federation of Teachers Report. [Accessed here.](#)

⁸ “Ending the Reading Wars: Reading Acquisition from Novice to Expert,” by Anne Castles, Kathleen Rastle, and Kate Nation. [Accessed here.](#)

instruction. “The essential idea in the whole language approach was that children construct their own knowledge and meaning from experience. Teaching them phonics wasn't necessary because learning to read was a natural process that would occur if they were immersed in a print-rich environment.”⁹ However, scientific research has demonstrated that learning to read is not a natural process.¹⁰

The phonics approach explicitly teaches children to read by learning the sounds that letters make and how they work together to form words. In the 1990s, as the reading wars waged, Congress decided to convene a National Reading Panel, to study over 100,000 research reports and determine the best way to teach students to read. The National Reading Panel report was released in 2000 and concluded that the most effective evidence-based methods for teaching children to read include explicit phonemic awareness instruction, systematic phonics instruction, fluency through guided repeated oral reading with systematic and explicit feedback and guidance from the teacher, text comprehension, and vocabulary.

Since the 1990s, “balanced literacy” programs have attempted to rebrand whole language and add in phonics given the overwhelming research that shows that scientifically that is how children learn to read. So, while some balanced literacy programs have phonics components, they often lack explicit and systematic instruction.

“Decoding and linguistic comprehension are both necessary, and neither is sufficient alone. A child who can decode print but cannot comprehend is not reading; likewise, regardless of the level of linguistic comprehension, reading cannot happen without decoding.”
Castles, Rastle, and Nation (2018).

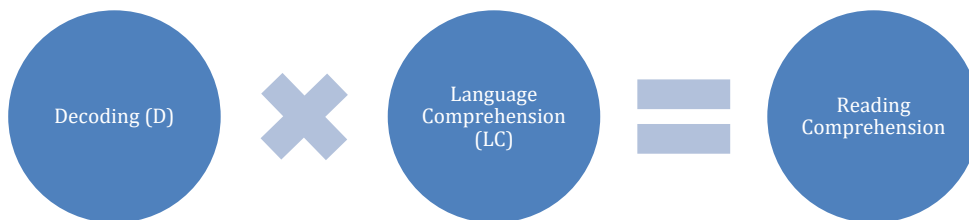
At KIPP we believe in a phonics approach. Reading is “a learned skill that typically requires years of instruction and practice.”¹¹ Teachers need to develop a system so that students can construct meaning from print. But, knowing how to decode is only one part of reading.

The Simple View of Reading

Strong readers have strong word recognition and language comprehension skills. Both are critical for effective reading comprehension, and if one is missing, reading comprehension will not be effective.

This concept of two basic components, decoding and language comprehension, leading to reading comprehension is known as the Simple View of Reading. Psychologists Philip Gough and William Tunmer introduced this formula in 1986 to clarify the role of decoding in reading.

The Simple View of Reading looks like this:



⁹ “Hard Words: Why aren’t kids being taught to read,” by Emily Hanford. September 10, 2018.

<https://www.apmreports.org/episode/2018/09/10/hard-words-why-american-kids-arent-being-taught-to-read>

¹⁰ *Proust and the Squid*. Maryanne Wolf, 2007

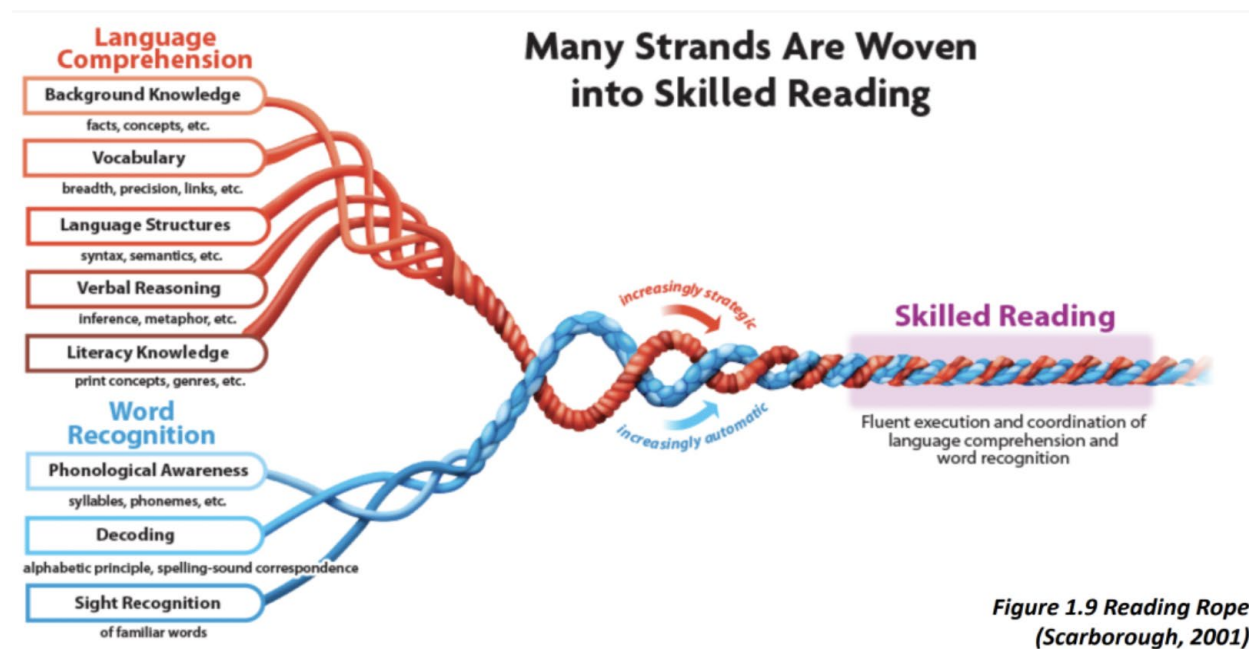
¹¹ “Ending the Reading Wars: Reading Acquisition from Novice to Expert,” by Anne Castles, Kathleen Rastle, and Kate Nation. [Accessed here](#).

The values of decoding (D) and language comprehension (LC) must be between 0 and 1 (0% and 100%) with a 0 meaning no skill or ability and a 1 indicating perfection. The fact that D and LC are multiplied and not added indicates the importance of each in achieving reading comprehension. A student may have incredible comprehension when a story is read aloud to them (LC = 1), but their decoding is only at a 25%, therefore, their reading comprehension is only 25% despite such strong language comprehension ($0.25 \times 1 = 0.25$).¹²

Reading is the combination of many discrete skills that need to be woven together

Learning to read is not a natural process, and while some students may pick up on patterns and sounds, research estimates that 40-65 percent of children need highly explicit instruction to avoid reading difficulties.¹³ Reading consists of many different skills that a student must possess to be a proficient reader. Hollis Scarborough's "Reading Rope" highlights the skill strands and how they work together to serve as the foundation for a strong reader.¹⁴

In the image of the rope, there is a lower strand Word Recognition, and an upper strand, Language Comprehension. Scarborough's model shows that when students build automaticity in word recognition and become more strategic in language comprehension, they become skilled readers. The skills in the Word Recognition strand represent a constrained body of knowledge while the skills in the Language Comprehension strand represent an unconstrained body of knowledge. The goal is building automaticity with each of these. Building off the Simple View of Reading, the Reading Rope visualizes the concept that reading comprehension cannot exist without proficiency in both the upper and lower strands. There is more information about the elements of the Word Recognition strand [here](#).



¹² "The Article that Introduced the Simple View of Reading", David Kilpatrick.

https://www.thereadingleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/13-14_Kilpatrick.pdf

¹³ "Identifying and Teaching Students with Significant Reading Problems", Sharon Vaughn.

https://www.aft.org/ae/winter2020-2021/vaughn_fletcher

¹⁴ "The Orchestra of the Reading Rope Harmony." <https://brainspring.com/ortongillinghamweekly/harmony-scarboroughs-reading-rope/>

The literacy block at KIPP is designed for explicit instruction in all strands. Typically, skills in the Word Recognition strand are taught during a block called “Foundational Skills” while skills in the Language Comprehension strand are taught during the “Core Reading” block using KIPP Wheatley. This guide is primarily focused on the foundational skills component.

Literacy instruction goes beyond just being explicit

In addition to explicitly teaching these skills, instruction must also be logical and follow a progression of how humans learn language. This is referred to as being systematic. Finally, instruction must include a way to understand what students know and practice, practice, practice. These are the three main principles of Structured Literacy. In 2016, the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) chose the name “Structured Literacy” as an encompassing term to refer to a variety of programs that teach reading aligned to the phonics approach. Other related names include Orton Gillingham, Multi-Sensory.¹⁵ While IDA advocates for Structured Literacy as effective reading instruction for children with dyslexia, its principles are markers of high-quality reading instruction for all students.

Structured Literacy includes six components that span both the Word Recognition strands and Language Comprehension strands.¹⁶ This demonstrates how interconnected the strands are so while there may be distinct time blocks in the classroom, it’s important to apply skills across the foundational skills and core reading blocks. For example, if a student is unable to read a word during small group reading with a decodable text, encourage them to use what they’ve learned in the foundational skills block to sound it out instead of guessing the word based on pictures or context clues.

Elements of Structured Literacy

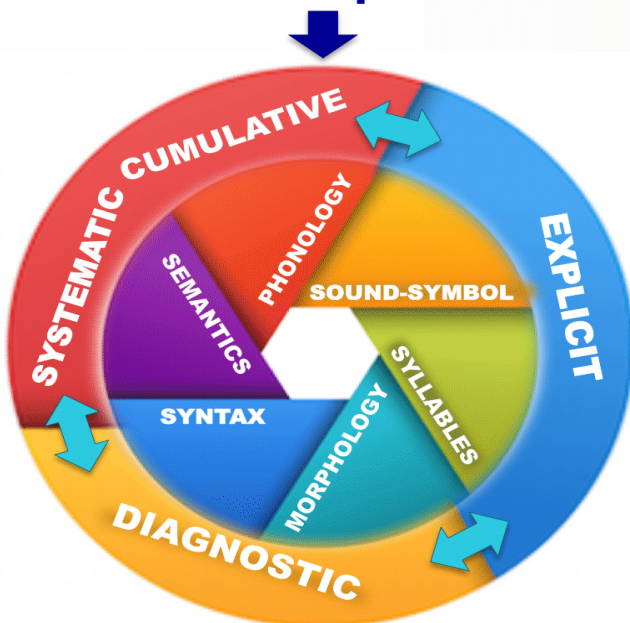
1. **Explicit:** Each concept is explained directly with guided practice. There are clear systems and routines utilized and constant immediate feedback is given.
2. **Systematic and Cumulative:** Each step builds on what was taught before and follows the logical order of language.
3. **Diagnostic and Responsive:** The teacher is constantly adjusting and adapting based on where the student is. The goal is to build towards automaticity, so students have mental space for comprehension.

¹⁵ <https://dyslexiaida.org/structured-literacy/>

¹⁶ <https://dyslexiaida.org/what-is-structured-literacy/>

STRUCTURED LITERACY PRIMER

Effective reading instruction for most children incorporates *all* this.



Inner Circle: Elements
Outer Circle: Teaching Principles

Phonology (study of sound structure of spoken words) is a key element of Structured Literacy Instruction. **Phonemic awareness** (ability to distinguish / segment / blend / manipulate sounds relevant to reading/spelling) is central to phonology.

Sound-Symbol Association Once students develop phoneme awareness, they must learn the **alphabetic principle**—how to map phonemes to letters (**graphemes**) and vice versa.

Syllables Knowing the six syllable / vowel grapheme types helps readers associate vowel spellings with vowel sounds. Syllable division rules help readers divide / decode unfamiliar words.

Morphology A **morpheme** is the smallest unit of meaning in language. Studying base elements and affixes helps readers decode and unlock the meanings of complex words.

Syntax—the set of principles that dictate the sequence and function of words in a sentence—includes grammar, sentence structure, and the mechanics of language.

Semantics Semantics is concerned with meaning. The Structured Literacy curriculum (from the start) includes instruction in the comprehension and appreciation of written language.

High quality instruction requires high quality programs and materials

There are a lot of products in the marketplace addressing these skills, but given that teaching reading is so complex, there is no perfect product. In addition to scope and sequence of the curriculum, the teacher training and materials, it is also critically important that the curriculum adequately and appropriately reflects the diversity of our student body. In “Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors,” Rudine Sims Bishop notes that for years people of color have not found themselves represented in children’s books. This lack of representation matters because, “when children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative or laughable they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part.”¹⁷ The flip side is problematic as well. For children from dominant social groups, if they only see mirrors of themselves, they will grow up with an “exaggerated sense of their importance and value.”¹⁸

This guide contains recommendations on [curricular products](#) used at KIPP. KIPP is committed to identifying materials that celebrate and reflect the cultures of our students and families.

¹⁷ “Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors,” by Rudine Sims Bishop. <https://scenicregional.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Mirrors-Windows-and-Sliding-Glass-Doors.pdf>

¹⁸ Ibid.

Ultimately, excellent foundational skill instruction is necessary to achieve educational equity

Given what research tells us through the Simple View of Reading and the Reading Rope, a student will not develop reading comprehension skills without the ability to decode. If a student lacks these foundational skills, they will not be able to make that transition to “reading to learn.” As a student progresses through school, “reading to learn” becomes increasingly important and without those comprehension skills a student will fall further behind. To achieve educational equity is not just about stocking libraries with more diverse texts (multicultural education), or helping students develop their critical consciousness (social justice), but it is about making sure that all kids can read those texts.

Different from multicultural or social justice education, culturally responsive education focuses on improving the learning capacity of diverse students who have been marginalized by society. Critically, it centers around the effective and cognitive aspects of teaching and learning while building cognitive capacity and academic mindset by pushing back on dominant narratives about people of color. According to author and teacher educator, Zaretta Hammond, “the biggest problem is [school teams] treat these three as if they are interchangeable, do the same things for student learning, and have the same impact on student outcomes. But they are not interchangeable and not all will get you to educational equity.”¹⁹ Hammond says, “this is the vital equity work: students must comprehend what they’re reading, possess advanced decoding skills, have word wealth, and be able to command all of these literacy skills. Our social justice frame should prompt us to ask these questions: How are students code breakers, how are they text users, how are they text critics, and how are they meaning-makers? Our culturally responsive pedagogies arm us to build these dispositions and skills in our most vulnerable kids.”²⁰

At KIPP we are committed to teaching students the foundation skills necessary to make them code breakers, text users, text critics, and meaning makers.

To research more, check out [the resources cited section](#) for suggested reading.

¹⁹ “A Conversation About Educational Equity with Zaretta Hammond” by Zaretta Hammond.
<https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/blog/a-conversation-about-instructional-equity-with-zaretta-hammond/>

²⁰ Ibid.

Ensuring a Focus on Foundational Skills

Since being introduced in 2010, the Common Core State Standards initiative has driven the instructional focus for many school districts and networks, including KIPP. For much of the past decade, KIPP's instructional focus has been on creating and implementing a rigorous, Common Core-aligned curriculum primarily focused on literary and informational comprehension. This curriculum is KIPP Wheatley, and as an organization, teachers, families, and students have benefitted in a variety of ways from this focus. But, our reading results demonstrate that we need to refocus on foundational skills, because as the research shows us, without mastering these a student will not be able to reach their full potential as a reader.

Foundation Skills instruction should be present every day in every K-2 KIPP classroom

Based in our anchoring research, there are five components that mark high quality early literacy instruction. For KIPP students to become “codebreakers” and “meaning-makers” the following components must be present in daily literacy blocks:

Component	Explicit instruction during the...	Extended practice during...
Phonological and Phonemic Awareness	Foundational Skills block	Small Group Reading block with decodable texts
Phonics and Word Study	Foundational Skills block	Writing & Small Group Reading block
Fluency	Foundational Skills block	Small Group Reading block
Vocabulary	Core Reading block	Small Group Reading block
Comprehension Skills & Strategies	Core Reading block	Small Group Reading block

This table represents “Tier 1” instruction, there may also be intervention blocks where certain skills will be reinforced or retaught based on the individual needs of students.

Note on Guided Reading

Guided Reading is not included in this table. Our initial examination of the Guided Reading block at KIPP indicates that we need to better leverage this instructional time using decodable texts. In the 2021-2022 school year we plan to further examine this recommendation via action research and traditional research. Since Guided Reading is associated with certain instructional method, this table suggests that the time previously dedicated to Guided Reading stay in the schedule but now be designated as Small Group Reading with decodable (rather than leveled) texts.

Over the 21-22 school year we will further develop examples of what happens during Small Group Reading. Ideally this time would focus on the explicit application of recently learned foundational skills to text.

Phonological and Phonemic Awareness

This section will dive into each component of foundational skills more closely: Phonological Awareness, Phonics, Print Concepts and Fluency

What is phonological and phonemic awareness?

The first component of the lower strand of Word Recognition skills in [Scarborough's Rope](#) is phonological awareness, which is "the ability to recognize and manipulate the spoken parts of words."²¹ Phonological awareness is an umbrella term that includes multiple sub-skills such as rhyming, segmenting a sentence into separate words, breaking words into syllables, segmenting and blending onsets and rimes, and manipulating phonemes (this sub-skill is called phonemic awareness, and is essential to reading acquisition), and is entirely oral.

Phonemic awareness is "the ability to hear and manipulate the sounds in spoken words and the understanding that spoken words and syllables are made up of sequences of speech sounds."²²

"Phonemic awareness has been shown to be a better indicator of early reading success than *anything* else, including socioeconomic status. The reason for this is that it sets the stage for successful decoding."

[Student Achievement Partners](#)

Phonemic awareness is a critical component of foundational literacy skills because it is:

- essential to learning to read in an alphabetic writing system, because letters represent sounds or phonemes. Without phonemic awareness, phonics makes little sense.
- fundamental to mapping speech to print. If a child cannot hear that "man" and "moon" begin with the same sound or cannot blend the sounds /r/ /u/ /n/ into the word "run", they may have great difficulty connecting sounds with their written symbols or blending sounds to make a word.
- essential to learning to read in an alphabetic writing system and a strong predictor of children who experience early reading success.²³

²¹ <https://www.readingrockets.org/reading-topics/phonological-and-phonemic-awareness#:~:text=Phonemic%20awareness%20is%20the%20ability,later%20reading%20success%20or%20difficulty.>

²² Yopp, H. K. (1992). Developing Phonemic Awareness in Young Children. [Reading Teacher](#), 45, 9, 696-703.
http://reading.uoregon.edu/big_ideas/pa/pa_what.php

²³ http://reading.uoregon.edu/big_ideas/pa/pa_what.php

Phonological and Phonemic Awareness: Glossary

Phonological Awareness: This is a broad umbrella term used for all things related to the sound of spoken language. Specifically, the ability to identify, think about, and mentally manipulate the building blocks of language.

Phonemic Awareness: The ability to hear and manipulate the sounds in spoken words and the understanding that spoken words and syllables are made up of sequences of speech sounds. This is a part of phonological awareness that only focuses on phonemes.

Syllable: A unit of pronunciation having one vowel sound, with or without surrounding consonants, forming the whole or a part of a word; e.g., there are two syllables in water and three in inferno.

Onset and Rime: The onset is the initial consonant or consonant cluster of a word. The rime is the vowel and consonants that follow it. For example, in the word bat, b- is the onset, and -at is the rime. In swim, sw- is the onset, and -im is the rime.

Phoneme: The smallest unit of sound in speech that can be combined to make words. Some phonemes correspond to letters (each letter in the word "bat" is a separate phoneme, as in /b/ /a/ /t/) and others, groups of letters (the word "day" consists of two phonemes, /d/ from "d" and /ā/ from "ay"). There are 44 phonemes in the English language: 25 consonants and 19 vowels. Most consonant sounds have one phoneme (the /p/ sound in pat is the first phoneme in the word). Vowels can have more than one phoneme associated with them (consider the a in pat and the a in late). In addition, two or more letters can represent one phoneme (such as the /ch/ sound in chat or the /ng/ sound in ring).

Phonological and Phonemic Awareness: Practices and Conditions for Success

Explicit Instruction

- Teach phonological awareness in a multisensory and multimodal way
 - o This can be done through short activities, including songs and games
 - o These can be a brief 10 minutes of activities each day
 - o This [attachment](#) contains a list of possible activities from Student Achievement Partners
- Model exactly what is expected and provide time for guided practice.

Systematic and Cumulative

Dr. Carol Tolman, a co-author of the teacher professional learning LETRS, created a helpful visual known as the Hourglass Figure, which details the order in which students learn phonological awareness.²⁴ The Hourglass Figure illustrates that for students, phonological awareness begins with syllables, alliteration,

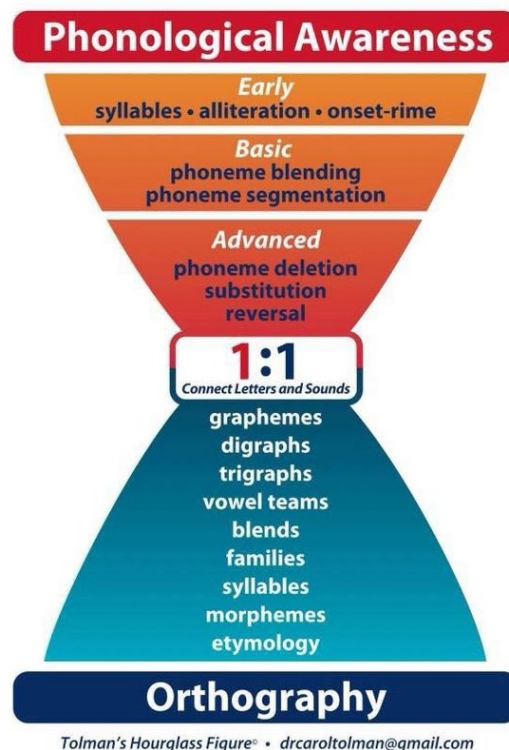
²⁴ "Phonemic Awareness," by Angie Schaal. March 2019.

<http://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Literacy/Striving-Readers-Comprehensive-Literacy-Grant/Literacy-Academy/2-01-Phonological-Awareness-Development-in-Emergent-Readers.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US>

and onset-rime, before progressing to phoneme blending and phoneme segmentation; and ending with phoneme deletion, substitution, and reversal.

Principle 1: Teach phonological awareness in the order in which students learn it (see sample activities in Table 1):

- **Oral Rhymes and Alliteration:** recognizing the beginning and ending sounds of words.
 - (Example: “The end of the word cast sounds just like blast. These words rhyme.”)
- **Words:** Hearing and counting the number of words when we read or speak.
 - (Example: “I hear five words in the sentence “I ran to the cone.””)
- **Syllables:** Breaking words up into their largest parts— hearing and counting these parts.
 - Example: “I hear two syllables in the word “kitten.””)
 - **Onset/Rime:** Hearing and identifying the onset (the sounds before the vowel in a word) and the rime (the vowel and subsequent sounds in a word).
 - (Examples: “Map: the onset is *m*; the rime is *ap*. Skip: the onset is *sk*, the rime is *ip*. Note--not all words have onsets. For example, “it” does not have an onset. The words rime and rhyme are not similar by accident. Think of pat and bat, or here and dear, the rime provides the rhyme)



Principle 2: Teach phonemic awareness by explicitly teaching the discrete skills that make up phonemic awareness (see Table 1 for more sample activities)

- **Articulating** phonemes, paying attention to the features of the sound and the positioning of the mouth. This can be done through techniques such as:
 - Modeling, using a mirror, describing the speech sound, or using a hand gesture or mouth picture to illustrate the way the speech sound is produced.²⁵
- **Identifying** sounds orally, and matching the related phoneme.
 - (Example: The middle sound in bat makes the /a/ sound.)
- **Blending** individual phonemes to make words.
 - (Example: /b/ /a/ /t/ makes what word?)
- **Segmenting** words into their individual phonemes
 - (Example: What sounds do you hear in bat?)
- **Identifying**, isolating, rhyming, and manipulating phonemes
 - (Example: Listen: bat, back, baby. What sound do these three words start with? What is the beginning/ending sound in cab? What word would you get if you changed the middle sound of bat to /i/?)²⁶

²⁵ https://www.idaontario.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/FINAL-KPS-FOR-PUBLICATION_May2018.pdf

²⁶ <https://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Foundational%20Skills%20Guidance%20Document.pdf>

Principle 3: Teach phonological awareness using a culturally responsive approach

Because phonological awareness [PA] is entirely oral, it provides an opportunity to instruct and make connections in different languages for students who are multi-lingual and multi-dialectal. From *Beyond What's Essential, Effective, and Efficient* by Rohde, Paciga, and Cassano:

Effective PA instruction invites students to attend to the sounds of language (e.g., syllables and phonemes) in any language. Moreover, because PA knowledge acquired in one language can transfer to another (i.e., cross-linguistic transfer), considering equity during PA instruction offers incredible potential to provide all students with access to 4-E [essential, effective, efficient, and equitable] instruction.²⁷

Phonological awareness provides students with the unique opportunity to demonstrate understanding across languages and dialects while building the same skills.

- Learning phonological awareness in one language will apply to another language, so encourage your students to use their knowledge of their home language.
 - o When doing activities such as, “count and write the sounds you hear,” consider how the home language and/or dialect impact a child’s response. See [Teaching Language to African American Children](#) by Julie Washington and Mark Seidenberg for more.
 - o This will still provide teachers with valuable information about the way sounds work in words.²⁸
- Explicitly model differences in way students’ mouths should form sound(s).

Table 1: Sample Activities for Phonological and Phonemic Awareness

Component	Possible Activity or Game ²⁹
Phonological Awareness	
Oral Rhymes and Alliteration	Say, “Words rhyme if the last part of each word sounds the same. Cake and bake rhyme, so do merry and cherry. Listen while I say the poem and get ready to say the rhyming word. Jack and Jill went up the hill. What words rhyme?”
	Say, “Listen carefully. Rhyming Robot wants to find a match for each of his favorite words. If one of his favorite words is shake, then which of these words can he have: meat, steak or corn?”
	Say: “Peter piper picked a peck of pickled peppers. Let’s make a silly sentence with /n/ words. Neat Nancy...”
Syllables	<i>Blending</i> Say, “Silly Caesar speaks very slowly. What word is Silly Caesar saying?”

²⁷ Rohde, Leigh, et al. (2021) *Beyond What's Essential, Effective, and Efficient: Ensuring phonological awareness instruction and assessment are equitable*. *Literacy Today*. 38, 5, 36-37.

<http://viewer.zmags.com/publication/b46eaa78#/b46eaa78/38>

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Speech to Print by Louisa Moats (page 82-85)

	ta-ble hos-pi-tal tan-ger-ine roll-er-blades
	<i>Addition</i> Say, "pow." Add "/er/" to the end and you get...?
	<i>Deletion</i> Say: "Let's play a game with words. We're going to break some long words into parts and leave a part out. If I say toothpaste and then leave off the tooth, then what's left? What's baseball without ball? What's butterfly without butter? What's power without /er/? Say potato without /po/.
Onset-Rime Segmenting and Blending	Say, "Let's say some words in parts. I'll say the whole word. Then you say the whole word and divide it into two parts. Touch a syllable square (colored felt square) for each part, like this (teacher models) c-ar sh-ip w-ave p-ie sk-at d-esk
Phonemic Awareness	
Identifying sounds orally and matching the related phoneme	Say, "Listen while I say two words. If they end with the same last sound, then repeat the sound." moon, pen bridge, page wish, mash brick, steak
Phoneme Addition, Substitution, Deletion, and Reversal	<i>Addition</i> Initial sound: "Say <i>ing</i> with /s/ at the beginning." Final sound: "What is fly with /t/ at the end?" Initial blend: "The word is rib. Add /c/ to the beginning and you get...?" Final blend: "The word is miss. Add /t/ to the end and you get...?"
	<i>Deletion</i> Initial sound: "Say peas without the p." Final sound: "Say sheet without the t." Initial blend: "Say stop without the s." Final blend: "Say wild without the d."
	<i>Phoneme Reversal</i> Say the last sound first and the first sound last: zone (nose) church (church) pose (soap) cord (dork) perch (chirp)
	Say, "I'm going to say a name sound by sound. If you hear your name, then stand up."

	<p>Say, "I'm going to say some sounds slowly and you'll help me put them together to make a word. Listen. "Put two colored squares on the board a few inches apart while you say the two sounds very slowly "s---ee." Push the colored squares together. Say: "Say it fast- see"</p> <p>Then do an example together as a class before giving the children a chance to try it on their own.</p>
Identifying, isolating, rhyming, and manipulating phonemes	<p><i>Middle Vowel Substitution</i></p> <p>Move same-colored chips to show the segmentation of the word. As the vowel is changed, show which chip is changing. For example, show the word moose and change it to mouse.</p>

Consider using a sequence like those from [Heggerty](#).

Diagnostic and Responsive

Phonological and phonemic awareness assessments will ideally be formative assessments part of your foundational skills curriculum. Any assessment should measure both accuracy and automaticity.³⁰ For more information about assessing phonological awareness look through the [Phonological Awareness Screening Test](#) (PAST) or these [assessment options](#) from Student Achievement Partners. Students should have at least multiple practice opportunities for each skill that is taught.

Concepts of Print

Around the same time students are building phonological skills, they are also building an understanding that print has meaning, which is often referred to as Concepts of Print. This is mostly done in Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten; however, some concepts won't be taught until 1st grade. Some related terms to developing print concepts include:

Return Sweep: Moving your eyes from the end of one line of text to the start of another line.

One-to-one correspondence of words: Matching the printed word to the spoken word.

Letter Recognition: Visually recognizing the name of a printed letter.

Phonics and Word Study

What is phonics and word study?

The second element of the Word Recognition strand in [Scarborough's Reading Rope](#) is Decoding. Adding phonics to students' phonological and phonemic awareness allows them to decode. Phonics is the instruction that links sound to print. Phonics instruction allows students to take the 44 phonemes (smallest component sounds) of English and translate them into graphemes (letters that represent phonemes). This will then provide students with the skills needed to decode or identify the sounds letters make and blend them into

"Scientific studies have repeatedly found that explicit systematic phonics instruction is the most effective way to teach children how to read."

[*Professor Dr. Hua Chen Wang*](#)

³⁰ Moats, Speech to Print, (68)

words.³¹ By learning to decode letters into their respective sounds, students will be able to read unfamiliar words by themselves.

For the majority of students who are learning to read, most words they read in print will be unfamiliar. Having letter-sound knowledge allows students to make the link between those unfamiliar print words and their spoken language. Phonics instruction also includes spelling, which is the process of encoding or writing the letters that make the spelling pattern. The process of teaching phonics must be done using a research backed program that provides students many opportunities to practice with frequent teacher feedback. To actually decode, students need to be able to do these skills quickly and with automaticity.

Phonics and Word Study: Glossary

Orthography: A writing system

Encoding: Using letter sounds to write

Decoding: Learning to read words by recognizing and stringing together sounds

Graphemes: Letters or groups of letters that represent sounds

Sound and Spelling Pattern: The phonics-based skill of focus in a scope and sequence, usually a letter, letter pair, or word part

Phonics and Word Study: Practices and Conditions for Success

Explicit Instruction

- When teaching letter recognition, students must learn to identify the visual representation of letters as well as the sound that goes along with the letter. At the most fundamental level this starts with learning the alphabet and sounds that match with each letter.
- Incorporate multisensory learning when possible:
 - o Use looking, listening, moving, and touching (at least 2-3) as often as possible
 - o Use tangible materials to help students master phonics concepts. Examples include sound-symbol tiles and grapheme cards.
- Teach high frequency words (regular and irregular) through orthographic mapping.³² This is sound-to-spelling work that teaches students to break the word into phonemes and then compare the word's sound structure to its spelling pattern. Provide multiple opportunities for students to practice recognizing and spelling these words. high frequency words (regular and irregular) through orthographic mapping. This is sound-to-spelling work that teaches students to break the word into phonemes and then compare the word's sound structure to its spelling pattern. Provide multiple opportunities for students to practice recognizing and spelling these words.

³¹ <https://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Foundational%20Skills%20Guidance%20Document.pdf>

³² Kilpatrick, D. A. (2016). *Equipped for reading success: A comprehensive, step-by-step program for developing phonemic awareness and fluent word recognition*. Syracuse, NY: Casey & Kirsch Publishers.

- Teach truly irregular words through a multisensory approach, emphasizing spelling regularities, word origin, meaning, and/or pronunciation whenever possible to make sense of the word's spelling.³³

The general lesson format for a phonics lesson should include review of a previously learned skill or concept, introduction of a new skill or concept, supported practice, independent practice, and fluent application to meaningful reading and/or writing.³⁴

Systematic and Cumulative

Follow a carefully designed research-based scope and sequence, from a [KIPP-recommended](#) foundational skills curriculum or a comprehensive literacy curriculum.

- There are many different programs that may have slightly different scope and sequences.
- General principles for any program are:
 - o Skills build over time
 - o Students read real words as well as nonsense words
 - o Consonant phonemes are taught before blends (2 or 3 letters together) or consonant blends (clusters of two or three consonant letters that represent one sound)³⁵
 - o Closely linked sounds are not taught back-to-back because that can be confusing to students
 - o Concepts go from easier to harder
- Systematically teach how to decode multisyllabic words a part of your overall phonics scope and sequence:
 - o Teach written syllable types in a logical sequence (e.g., closed, open, vowel-consonant-e, vowel team, consonant-le, r-controlled).
 - o Identify the difference between syllable division in natural speech and syllable division in printed words.

Types of Syllable	Explanation	Example
Closed	A syllable with a short vowel spelled with a single vowel letter ending in one or more consonants	gos sip
V-C-e ("Magic e")	A syllable with a long vowel spelled with one vowel + one consonant + silent e	in vite
Open	A syllable that ends with a long vowel sound, spelled with a single vowel letter	yo yo
Vowel team	Syllables that use two to four letters to spell the vowel	see saw
Vowel-r	A syllable with er, ir, or, ar, ur that changes the pronunciation of the vowel	scar let
Consonant-le	An unaccented final syllable containing a consonant before /l/ followed by a silent e	drib ble

³³ https://www.idaontario.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/FINAL-KPS-FOR-PUBLICATION_May2018.pdf

³⁴ https://www.idaontario.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/FINAL-KPS-FOR-PUBLICATION_May2018.pdf

³⁵ <https://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Foundational%20Skills%20Guidance%20Document.pdf>

Diagnostic and Responsive

- **Frequent and Ongoing Assessment:** Through your curriculum, there should be ongoing formative assessments on the skills being taught that week. Additionally, students will have different skills they are working to build that should be progressed monitored throughout the year until accuracy and automaticity is achieved.
- **Use Decodable Texts:** Decodable texts allow students to apply their skills with text that follows predictable patterns aligned to recent instruction. aligned to the scope and sequence. For more information about using decodables see [this example protocol](#) from Student Achievement Partners.
- **Examine Developmental Spelling:** Analyze students' developmental spelling to ascertain which phonics patterns they have mastered and where they still need more explicit instruction.

Fluency

What is fluency?

Fluency is made up of three distinct components: rate, accuracy and expression. Accuracy is addressed primarily through the teaching of phonemic awareness and phonics. It must come first. Expression can come after. Students need to learn to read fluently so that they do not spend all of their energy trying to decode what they are reading and can spend most of their time making meaning of the text. If students have the basic skills of phonemic awareness and phonics but lack skill in fluency, they will still struggle to ultimately comprehend and make meaning.

Fluency: Glossary

Rate: Reading at an appropriate speed.

Accuracy: Correctly identifying and saying the words on the page.

Decodable Texts: Texts that are selected because they are aligned to the letter-sound relationships that have already been taught.

Expression: Timing, phrasing, emphasis and intonation when reading.

Fluency: Practices and Conditions for Success

Explicit Instruction

- Incorporate fluency routines and activities frequently:
 - o Some examples include brief speed drills, phrase-cued reading, simultaneous oral reading, alternate oral reading, and/or repeated readings.

Systematic and Cumulative

- Use decodables:
 - o Students can practice using their phonics skills with decodables
 - o In K and 1 the focus should primarily be on accuracy and as students become more proficient, expression can be added.
- Read-alouds
 - o Read-alouds can be a helpful tool for students to hear what fluent reading sounds like.

- Use read-alouds that are at a level of complexity students couldn't access on their own, which will help with comprehension.
- "While there is always value in modeling fluent reading, the work early readers should focus on most is getting to a point where they are accurate and automatic in decoding words and sentences."³⁶

Diagnostic and Responsive

- Include curriculum based oral reading fluency assessments
 - Use the assessments to identify the reading subskills that could be remediated through speed drills.³⁷

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a part of the upper strand of [Scarborough's Reading Rope](#), under the Language Comprehension portion. While most vocabulary instruction will take place during the Core Reading block there is overlap with foundational skills. Often, we learn vocabulary through morphology and semantics. Morphology is the study of the smallest unit of meaning in a language, such as prefixes, roots, base words and suffixes. Semantics is an understanding of sentences, phrases, and sometimes single words. Given the sheer volume of new words students need to learn each year, knowledge of morphemes will help them form words and build meaning from those words.

It is estimated that a reader must know the meanings of 90% of the content words in a text in order to comprehend it.³⁸ Therefore, teachers should always preview texts to determine if there are new words that students need to learn in advance of reading because they cannot determine the word in context within the text. Foundational skills programs should anticipate any vocabulary needs, but if combining texts from various programs, be sure to audit in advance for any words whose meaning would be unfamiliar to students.

Comprehension

The ultimate purpose of reading is to make meaning, which we do through comprehension. It is possible for students to be excellent decoders, and yet not be able to comprehend what they read. However, it is impossible for students to effectively comprehend if they cannot decode. During the Foundation Skills block, since students are reading, there is a natural element of comprehension. However, the focus of the Foundational Skill block should be on word recognition not comprehension.

Comprehension skills are explicitly taught during the Core Reading block. For example, KIPP Wheatley, KIPP's core reading curriculum, systematically builds knowledge by exploring topics and themes across grade levels, engages students in rich read-aloud with content-specific vocabulary, and provides aligned grade-level text sets.

³⁶ <https://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Foundational%20Skills%20Guidance%20Document.pdf>

³⁷ https://www.idaontario.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/FINAL-KPS-FOR-PUBLICATION_May2018.pdf

³⁸ Moats, Speech to Print, (219)

Early Literacy Foundational Skills Curricular Products at KIPP

High-quality foundational skills curriculum and assessment products are fundamental to excellent early literacy instruction. The current priority at KIPP is to support regions in the adoption of a vetted product and to leverage lessons learned from other regions about selection and implementation. To that end we have two resources for curriculum selection:

1. List of **vetted, stand-alone foundational skills curriculum**. The KIPP Foundation’s recommendation is to use KIPP Wheatley as the core reading curriculum and select one of these programs as the curriculum for the foundational skills block in grades K-2.
2. Overview of **foundational skills curriculum adoption** across KIPP.

The intention for these resources is to set a bar, narrow the scope of options, aggregate materials, and provide context.

Guidance for Regional Teams in Selecting a Curriculum

Regional teams can use the resources provided here to conduct their own [curriculum selection process](#).

Teams should consider:

1. Local context and instructional vision for high-quality early literacy instruction. Such as: other K-5 curricular and assessment offerings; infrastructure (schedules and technology); budget; and implementation/training needs.
2. If EdReports.org and/or Louisiana Believes has completed a review of the curriculum, read it to learn about the strengths of the program and where you might need to supplement.
3. Leveraging the scale of the KIPP Network and national partnerships. This could bring benefit in the opportunity to learn together, potential discounts, etc. Reach out to the KIPP Early Literacy team to learn about the product, get connected with the vendor, or connect with a regional lead who is currently implementing the curriculum.
4. There is no “silver bullet” curriculum or assessment on the market. Although there has been increased attention paid to creating inclusive curriculum, adjustments may still need to be made to better address your students’ and communities’ identities.³⁹
5. Create a plan for how you will engage teachers and families in the decision-making process and where/how you will seek their input

Additionally, the quality of the curriculum is closely tied to the [quality of implementation](#). Effective implementation of a selected foundational skills curriculum includes:

- Developing teacher content knowledge & delivery of curriculum on an ongoing basis;
- Consistent opportunities for teacher teams to engage in planning analysis of student work
- Understanding potential gaps in the curriculum and adjusting sequence or supplementing content as needed;
- Observing and coaching of teachers frequently and consistently;
- Establishing and adhering to a cadence of assessment that allows for timely reteaching and intervention opportunities;
- Teaching to student mastery of content to the degree of automaticity needed to free up cognitive resources for comprehension or oral/written expression.

³⁹ Some suggestions of adjustments on page 28 of New York State’s [Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework](#).

Foundation-Supported Foundational Skills Curriculum

The curricular landscape is constantly evolving. New products enter the marketplace, curricula are updated, and existing products undergo independent reviews. We value the external vetting of EdReports.org and Louisiana Believes as it establishes a bar aligned with research to encourage adoption of high-quality products. We also value lessons learned from implementation in KIPP schools. The KIPP Foundation's recommendation is to use KIPP Wheatley as the core reading curriculum and select a stand-alone program for the foundational skills block in grades K-2.

KIPP Regions participating in the Early Literacy PLC may receive funding to support adoption of new curricula. Curricula that qualify for financial support must:

- Currently be used at KIPP
- Meet expectations on EdReports.org/Tier I on Louisiana Believes
- Stand-alone (i.e. it is not embedded into a broader reading program)

As of February 2022, only Amplify CKLA Skills meets these criteria.

Additionally, in the future KIPP may provide network wide supports such as establishing Network Improvement Communities (NICs). Curricula will be supported based on the criteria above, rate of adoption across the network, and product alignment to elements of structured literacy. **Currently, this includes Amplify CKLA Skills and Open Court Foundational Skills Kit.**

Curriculum	Curriculum address(es) (Yes, Limited, No) all components of structured literacy including:						Grades Covered	Length of Lesson (min)	Designed with a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens	Type of Support Offered 1 = passive online 2 = + webinars 3 = + custom PD 4 = + coaches	Cost per class (starts at)	Qualifies for KIPP Passthrough Funds
	phonological and phonemic awareness	sound-symbol (phoneme-grapheme) correspondence (phonic decoding)	patterns and conventions of print (orthography)	morphology	syntax	semantics and pragmatics						
Amplify CKLA Skills	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	K-2	60	Y	4	\$3,500	Yes
Open Court Foundational Skills Kit	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	K-3 4-6	45-75 (K-1) 30-45 (2 nd)	N	3	\$1,000	No

This chart will be updated annually to identify any additional programs that meet the parameters listed above. Last update: February 2022.

There are stand-alone foundational skills programs that aren't used at KIPP but meet expectations on EdReports.org.⁴⁰ Additionally, reviews are conducted throughout the year, so we encourage you to check for updates on [EdReports.org ELA Foundation Skills reviews](#) and [Louisiana Believes reviews](#) as part of the curriculum selection process.

⁴⁰ Louisiana Believes has not currently vetted any stand-alone foundation skills curricula.

Overview of Foundational Skills Curriculum Adoption across KIPP

Adoption of Foundational Skills programs varies across KIPP based on core reading curriculum, resources, and implementation needs. By sharing this we hope to enable collaboration across regions in the selection and adoption of the curriculum.

Curriculum	List of Regions	Ratings from EdReports.org and/or Louisiana Believes	Standalone ⁴¹
Bookworms	North Carolina	Partially Meets Expectations Tier I – Grade 2	N*
CKLA Skills	Baltimore, Chicago, Delta, Detroit, OKC, Memphis, MN	Meets Expectations	Y
CR Success	Kansas City	Not Reviewed	Y
Foundations		Partially Meets Expectations	Y
+ Fountas and Pinnell	NJ/Miami	Partially Meets Expectations	
+ Heggerty ⁺	Massachusetts	Not Reviewed	
+ Heggerty & Geodes	Indy, Philly, St. Louis, Jax, NorCal	Vendor Response	
Open Court	Colorado, Atlanta, SoCal, Texas, Columbus	Partially Meets Expectations⁴²	Y
Reading Mastery	Nashville, NOLA	Not Reviewed	Y
Really Great Reading	DC	Under Review	Y
Success for All	Albany, NYC	Tier II – Grade K Tier III – Grade 1	N*

*These programs are reviewed as core reading products but the foundational skills elements have been used at KIPP separate from the rest of the program.

⁺More than just these regions are using the [Heggerty Curriculum](#) for daily phonemic awareness. KIPP strongly recommends, regardless of your curriculum, to incorporate these lessons into your early literacy program.

⁴¹ The program is “sold separately” or can be used with no modifications needed to separate it from a larger reading curriculum.

⁴² After examining the review, we found two areas leading to Open Court partially meeting expectations are thoroughly covered in KIPP Wheatley: a teacher modeling fluent reading and concepts about print. Utilizing Open Court with KIPP Wheatley can supplement gaps identified by Ed Reports. (Review is of only digital materials, not print resources. Open Court is updating materials in 2022 at no cost for users.)

Early Literacy Foundational Skills Assessment Products

Consider the whole system

When selecting assessments for any system you must acknowledge the different purposes of assessments and varying needs across stakeholders. It is important to consider all assessment products that are part of the region's assessment system when identifying the specific tools for foundational skills assessment. An effective assessment system is **comprehensive, coherent, and continuous**.⁴³ Tools that assess foundational skills may cover other elements of the Reading Rope and they might not. As much as possible we recommend streamlining assessment vendors and leveraging assessments from a high-quality curriculum. Comprehensive systems assess the full range of learning goals. Coherent assessment systems include multiple, coordinated, valid measures to assess the range of learning goals. And continuous assessment systems provide continuity of data throughout the year but also year-over-year.

The assessment system is strategic, but it's not a strategy

In addition to selecting a system of assessments, there needs to be an assessment strategy which lays out the cadence of data cycles and what decisions will be made based on the data. The strategy should articulate the different uses of the assessment based on stakeholders. It should also consider what professional development is available regarding administration and/or analysis, and which assessments will be used to communicate with families about student progress.

Guiding questions for designing your foundational skills assessment system

1. What assessments are you required to give by state/district? What purpose(s) do those assessments serve? How is that data used?
2. What assessments are part of your region/school-wide system? What purpose(s) do those assessments serve? How is that data used?
3. What type of assessment/data need is not currently met for foundational skills?
4. Which assessments might meet this need? What decisions will be made based on the data?
5. By adding a new assessment, is there any overlap in purpose or use with other assessments in the system? How will you explain the difference?

Using Leveled Reading Assessments

Leveled reading assessments have long been a staple in literacy frameworks. These types of assessments typically involve a one-on-one conference between student and teacher wherein the student reads aloud from a text of a certain difficulty level, the teacher listens to the student's word-solving and takes notes on the student's oral reading, and then the teacher engages the student in questions that check for comprehension. Listening to students' oral reading can provide the teacher with anecdotal data points but **leveled reading assessments cannot be at the nexus of a comprehensive assessment system**. This is because leveled assessments are not designed to screen students for reading difficulties, assesses against grade-level skills/texts, and they are not designed to diagnose students' specific skill gaps in the areas of phonological awareness and phonics.

For example, if a student reads aloud from a leveled text and reads several words incorrectly, there is not enough information for the teacher to determine which specific letter/sound patterns are presenting a challenge to the student. That is, a reading level assessment could determine that a student is working at reading level "E," but the assessment would not provide the teacher with clear information as to which word patterns the student has and hasn't yet mastered. Additionally, leveled reading assessments typically include analysis of students' errors using the three-cueing system (MSV), which can lead to instructional practices that de-emphasize orthography.⁴⁴

⁴³ Knowing What Students Know: The Science and Design of Educational Assessment (Pellegrino, Chudowsky & Glaser, 2001, p.9).

⁴⁴ Three-cueing is a popular practice that is sometimes used as a substitute to phonics, helping children access a book but not supporting them in learning how to decode the text. You can read more about this [here](#).

KIPP-Supported Foundational Skills Assessment Systems

As mentioned above, your foundational skill assessment decisions will be influenced by your broader regional assessment system and your early literacy assessment curriculum selections.

A KIPP-supported foundational skills assessment systems include assessments that are:

- currently used at KIPP
- externally research validated
- designed to assess the following components of Structured Literacy:
 - Phonological Awareness
 - Phonics Decoding
 - Fluency
 - Letter Sound
 - Orthography
 - Phonological retrieval - Random Automated Naming (RAN)⁴⁵

These skills should be assessed in multiple ways and frequently to meet the needs of every student. Your region may already have a universal screener for reading but it might not comprehensively assess these skills. To ensure actionable data is available for teachers as well as have common data that enables collaboration, **all KIPP regions participating in the Early Literacy Professional Learning Community (PLC) must use one of the following foundational skill screener options:**

- **iReady Early Reading** (to be used if using iReady Diagnostic Suite)
- **mCLASS** (can be used by itself or paired with another screener such as MAP Growth)
- **Star CBM** (to be used if using Star Early Literacy and Star Reading)

Each of these products also include methods for progress monitoring. In addition, curricula-embedded assessments from a high-quality program will also support progress monitoring, diagnostic, and formative assessment. Additional diagnostic assessments that may support some students in your program include: either the [Quick Phonics Screener \(QPS\)](#) or [LETRS Phonics Screener](#), the [LETRS Spelling Screener](#), or the [Phonological Awareness Screening Test \(PAST\)](#).

Example Assessment Programs

Reading Universal Screener	Foundational Skills Screener	Progress Monitoring	Diagnostic	Formative
iReady	iReady Early Reading	iReady Diagnostic	Diagnostic choices would be made based on students who need more support	Assessments from a high-quality foundation skills curriculum
MAP	mCLASS	mCLASS		
Star Early Literacy/Reading	Star CBM	Star Early Literacy/Reading		
mCLASS (K-6)	mCLASS	mCLASS		

More information is available about the types and purposes of assessment following the table of KIPP-reviewed foundational skills assessments.

⁴⁵ RAN refers to Rapid Automatized Naming. This tests a student's ability to name aloud a series of familiar items, such as letters, numbers, or objects. It shows whether a student can quickly retrieve information from phonological memory. RAN helps screen students for dyslexia risk. Letter Naming Fluency (in DIBELS) is an example.

KIPP-Reviewed Assessments for Foundational Skills

These are the most used assessments across the network reviewed for their alignment to KIPP's criteria for foundational skills assessments.

Assessment	Measures								Other Information						
	Phonological Awareness	Phonic Decoding	Fluency	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Letter Sound	RAN	Orthography	Ideal Admin. Mode (Digital, Paper, Both)	Admin. Method (with teacher or independently)	Time (min.)	Grades	NCII at AIR Research Review	Dyslexia Screener	Cost per student (starts at)
iReady Diagnostic	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Both	Both	45-60	K-6	Link	N	\$6+
iReady Early Reading+	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Paper	Teacher	5-15	K-3	n/a	Y	Included
MAP Growth	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Digital	Indep.	30	K-2	Link	N	\$11.50
mCLASS	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Both	Both	3-7	K-6	Link ⁴⁶	Y	\$14.90
Star Early Literacy	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Digital	Indep.	15-20	PK-3	Link ⁴⁷	Y	\$5.10
Star CBM	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N ⁴⁸	Both	Teacher	2-5	K-6	Link ⁴⁹	N	

+iReady Early Reading includes Early Reading Tasks & Oral Reading Fluency and the Dyslexia Screener

KIPP-reviewed and not recommended:

- **AMIRA:** based on a KIPP pilot of this product in SY 2020-2021 this product is not ready to support early literacy assessment and analysis at KIPP.
- **F&P:** Fountas and Pinnell does not comprehensively assess word recognition or language and reading comprehension.
- **MAP Reading Fluency:** this does not comprehensively assess the necessary foundational skills to inform instruction. It was piloted in some KIPP schools and does not provide the actionable data teacher need to plan and adjust instruction.
- **STEP:** STEP does not comprehensively assess the necessary foundational skills to provide teachers actionable information for foundational skills instruction. KIPP Regions who have participated in the Early Literacy Professional Learning Community have chosen to stop using STEP.

For more information about these recommendations, please reach out to the [KIPP Early Literacy Team](#).

⁴⁶ Review is of the composite – individual reviews of different components are also available. Information provided by University of Oregon not Amplify.

⁴⁷ Review is of Star Reading which students move to as their skills progress on Star Early Literacy. Star Early Literacy is not reviewed.

⁴⁸ To supplement this area of measurement we recommend the LETRS free spelling screener included in unit 4 (K-2 and 3-5 version available).

⁴⁹ Review is not of the complete assessment.

Assessment types and purposes

Screeners are given to all students, typically in the beginning, middle, and end of year. Typically, universal screeners test a broad range of skills and students are shown different items to assess their [zone of proximal development](#) and determine which students might need additional supports to achieve grade-level expectations. These tests are usually norm-referenced and highly reliable.

Diagnostics are intended to help a teacher understand which specific skills a student needs additional support on to be successful with grade-level, whole group instruction. In a [Multi-Tiered System of Supports \(MTSS\)](#) model, diagnostic assessments are given to students who are flagged from the screener to identify further areas of support. Other schools may choose to give diagnostic assessments to all students to further instructional planning and supports.

Frequency of **Progress Monitoring** assessments will vary by vendor, assessment strategy, and individual students. The point of progress monitoring is to determine between more formal assessment opportunities (i.e. universal screening or diagnostic opportunity) if a student is making progress. Progress monitoring will not look the same for every student and not every student may be progress monitored depending on your assessment strategy and system.

Formative assessments will also help monitor student progress and may provide diagnostic information depending on the curriculum. Formative assessments will typically cover skills in the current unit, so this data will complement diagnostic and progress monitoring information which assess skills previously taught.

Tier 1 & Intervention

Most assessment products are marketed based on the multi-tier system of supports (MTSS) model that approximately 80% of students will meet the benchmark on the universal screener and then 20% of students will require more intensive support. In this model, teachers might choose to only administer the diagnostic assessment to that 20% of students and then progress monitor specific interventions from there. If significantly less than 80% of students are meeting the benchmark, then the focus needs to be improving Tier 1 instruction.⁵⁰ Given that in 2019, 44% of KIPP 3rd graders met the grade-level benchmark in Reading on MAP, it is likely that a majority of KIPP students will need the support of a diagnostic tool to drill down to specific skills that need remediating and progress monitoring. As Tier 1 instruction improves over time, fewer students may need the diagnostic.

Each assessment type has a purpose and use

It's helpful to name for all stakeholders who is testing, when they are testing, and how the information from each assessment is going to be used. Assessments are only valuable if there is a structure for using the data to drive decision making, but not every stakeholder needs to use every piece of data to make it valuable. For example, teachers should be constantly looking at formative assessment data, but a school leader may only look at aggregated data periodically, but that is not a reflection on the value of the assessment or data, just a different use by stakeholder. The table below includes some question starters to indicate how the different assessment types might be used.

⁵⁰ <http://www.rtinetwork.org/essential/tieredinstruction/tier1/accurate-decision-making-within-a-multi-tier-system-of-supports-critical-areas-in-tier-1>

Questions to define purpose and use of assessments

Assessment Type	Frequency	For Whom	Questions to highlight purpose and use ⁵¹
Foundational Skills Screener	BOY, MOY, EOY	All students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which (and how many) students are at or above benchmark? (or similar cut points based on the specific assessment) Which students (and how many) are at risk for not meeting end of [year, quarter, etc.] goals and need additional instructional support? What do the students in the school know and what are the ongoing learning needs and interests of students in the school? Where do we need to devote more school resources?
Diagnostic	At least BOY, MOY, EOY, use vendor recommendations	Students who need support to meet grade level standards by end of year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For which specific literacy skills do students need support through small group instruction or supplemental/Tier 2 intervention or intensive/Tier 3 intervention? Does this student have a learning disability or other disability that impedes learning? Are the assessment and intervention systems at our school effective for most students? Is instruction being implemented as intended or do we need to provide more support to implement effective practices for students?
Progress Monitoring	Skill-based, at least monthly, use vendor recommendations	Students who are receiving additional supports to meet end of year expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are students making progress toward meeting end-of-year expectations? Who needs more intensive intervention?
Formative	Regularly, varies by curriculum.	All students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are students learning what is being taught? What instructional adjustments are needed? For which students? What instruction is needed next for each student?

⁵¹ <https://www.michiganassessmentconsortium.org/policy-and-practice/early-literacy-assessment-systems-elas/>

Tier 2 Intervention Guidance

Schools need to have systems in place to provide prompt reading interventions; we cannot wait for students to catch up on their own. Strong tier 1 instructional programming is the first line of defense as it can prevent the risk of reading failure for many students. Working in conjunction with Tier 1 (or core) ELA curriculum, a school's assessment system provides critical information to support reading success. Universal screening data tell us which students are not meeting the benchmarks and may be at risk for reading difficulties. These students are candidates for tier 2 support, which takes shape through intensive, systematic small group instruction focused on priority skills. If students do not make adequate progress with tier 2 instruction, school teams will need to activate a process for more intensive tier 3 supports.

The Importance of Diagnostic Measures

- Universal screeners are critical to an effective assessment system, but the data from a universal screener alone do not pinpoint specific skill deficits. Diagnostic measures allow teachers to pinpoint skill gaps and group students according to skill need. It can be helpful to think about the universal screener as the tool that shows you the students who are not at benchmark, while the diagnostic tells you *why* students are not at benchmark -- and help you address their precise instructional needs⁵². Diagnostic assessments are teacher-administered and typically take more time than screening assessments, so it's important to allocate time in the schedule for this critical step. Many Tier 1 curriculum-embedded assessments and intervention resources include diagnostic tools. Once diagnostics have been administered, teachers can plan for tiered small group instruction. If your tier 1 curriculum or intervention programs do not have embedded diagnostic tools, it will be important to identify a set of diagnostic tools for the region. Listed below are examples of diagnostic tools that are intervention-agnostic:
- Phonological Awareness: [PAST](#)
- Phonics: [Core Phonics Survey](#), [LETRS Phonics and Word Reading Survey](#), [QPS](#)

Tier 2 Instruction

The research is clear: Tier 2 interventions that focus on foundational reading skills are effective in improving students' reading proficiency.⁵³ Thus, early literacy intervention should include foundational skills instruction. Tier 2 interventions are for students who are not meeting the benchmark, according to the universal screener. In addition, given the effects and impact of the pandemic, you may find that many of your students will benefit from Tier 2 interventions, and that it is necessary to utilize small group instruction during Tier 1 instruction as well to meet the needs of students. Once these students have been given a [diagnostic assessment](#) to identify their specific skill needs, you can create groups accordingly. According to the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), tier 2 instruction "should take place in small homogeneous groups ranging from 3-4 students using curricula that address the major

⁵² Hall, S. 10 Success Factors for Literacy Intervention: Getting Results with MTSS in Elementary Schools. 2018. ASCD.

⁵³ Wanzek, J., Vaughn, S., Scammacca, N., Gatlin, B., Walker, M. A., & Capin, P. (2016). Meta-analyses of the effects of tier 2 type reading interventions in grades K-3. *Educational Psychology Review*, 28(3), 551-576

components of reading instruction.”⁵⁴ Further, the small group instruction should be targeted to precise student needs as evidenced by universal screening and diagnostic tools. The WWC recommends that students who need tier 2 support receive small group instruction 3-5 times per week for about 30 minutes. It is important to reminder that Tier 2 instruction is provided in addition to Tier 1, or core lessons. ALL students must receive at least 60 minutes of Tier 1 instruction. Part of this Tier 1 instruction will likely need to be differentiated to support students successfully engaging with the objective; a foundational skills schedule which incorporates Tier 2 instruction may look like this:

- Tier 1 Instruction (60 min): Combination of whole group and small group instruction
- Tier 2 Instruction (30 min): Small Group instruction focused on students’ specific skill gaps based on diagnostics

Keep in mind

- If most of your students are in need of extra support, look to your Tier 1 instructional resource and the guidance it offers for how to support students’ needs during Tier 1; this will likely take the form of flexible small group instruction, and these small groups may likely stay the same for Tier 2 instruction to continue to support students.
- Remember that the WWC suggestions are guidance, and that you may find that your groupings need to be a bit larger depending on the size of your classroom, and the number of students who need Tier 2 support.
- If some students are using instructional tech like Lexia while teachers support small groups, consider [Guidelines for InsTech Use \(Draft v2 Aug 22\).docx](#).

Tier 3 Instruction

While tier 2 instruction is designed to provide preventive services to students who may be at risk for reading difficulties, there may be a small percentage of students who are candidates for more intensive and individualized tier 3 intervention because they have not made adequate progress with tier 2 instruction. Tier 3 instruction differs from tier 2 in that it is more intensive, typically delivered daily for longer periods of time in a smaller group setting. Many intervention curricula can be used for both tier 2 and tier 3 instruction; the key differences in lesson implementation are the length of the lesson (tier 3 lessons are typically longer), who is facilitating (typically, tier 3 instruction is led by a specialist), and the size of the group (tier 3 groups are smaller to provide students with more opportunities to respond and receive teacher feedback).

Progress Monitoring

The goal of early literacy intervention is to catch students up to grade level as quickly as possible; there is no time to waste. To this end, progress monitoring systems are essential to successful intervention plans. The data from progress monitoring tools tell us whether the intervention is effective in helping students meet grade-level outcomes, overall. The data also help us make instructional decisions about what students need next. Most intervention programs include specific progress monitoring tools that align with the daily lessons; schools can decide to use components of their universal screener to track progress. Collecting the progress monitoring data is an essential element of an intervention system, but

⁵⁴ What Works Clearinghouse. <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>

teachers also need time and protocols to analyze the data, make instructional decisions, and communicate updates to families. In tier 2 intervention, it is recommended students are progress monitored every 1-2 weeks.

Conditions for Effective Intervention

For intervention systems to be effective, it's important for schools to consider the following topics and questions:

Instructional materials

- *What evidence-based instructional resources are available to teachers? Keep in mind that the intervention being used should complement Tier 1 instruction (use similar explanations, teaching methods) so students can focus on the specific skills they are learning.*
- *What training and supports for teachers are necessary to ensure effective implementation of Tier 2 intervention materials?*

Time and space

- *How will the schedule provide for additional instructional time? It is recommended that Tier 2 intervention is included within the instructional block, so that all students can get additional practice targeted towards their specific needs. (See sample schedule below)*
- *What meaningful and intentional activities will students engage in who might not be meeting with a teacher? Consider a consistent schedule here that supports students in building off of Tier 1 or Tier 2 Instruction (Ex. Independent Reading with Decodables text, Blended/online learning activities, etc.)*

Assessment tools

- *How will we know each student's specific starting point?*
- *How will students' progress be monitored and when will the data be analyzed?*

Staff

- *How will staffing support Tier 2 instruction? It can be helpful to have all hands-on deck during Tier 2 instruction to support small group instruction (consider Specialists teachers, deans, coaches, etc.)*
- *How will you ensure that your students below and well below grade level are working with their classroom teacher (or teacher equipped to support their needs)?*

Sample Daily Schedule including Intervention in Grades K-2

8:10-8:30	Arrival/Morning Meeting
8:30-9:45	Language Comprehension and Writing
9:45-10:45	Tier 1 Foundational Skills Instruction
10:45-11:30	ELA Intervention/Differentiation Block
11:30-12:30	Lunch and Recess
12:30-12:40	Read Aloud or Mindfulness
12:40-1:40	Math
1:40-2:30	Science
2:30-2:45	Closing Circle/Dismissal
2:45-3:29	Specials

Overview of Products for Early Literacy Intervention

The following tables are designed to provide more details about commonly used intervention products and how they compare to each other.

Please note that another option for providing Tier 2 instruction is to use supplemental materials in your Tier 1 curriculum. As an example, CKLA Skills' Assessment and Remediation Guide offers activities that build from core instruction that can be used in small groups to support students with specific skills in an intervention block.

*Please note that the “Suggested Tier” column is an attempt to provide the clearest guidance on how to employ a given intervention resource. Many products are marketed to target a range of tiers but are best suited for certain types of intervention structures.

Intervention Product	Publisher	Focus Areas					Length of Lesson (min)	Max Group Size	Tier(s)*	Grades	Computer-based	Training	Notes
		Awareness	Phonics	Fluency	Vocabulary	Comprehension							
mCLASS Intervention	Amplify	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	30	6	Tier 2	K-6	No	Light	mCLASS Intervention takes data from the online assessment, groups students, and creates specific lesson plans for the teacher to deliver to the group. There is also an online practice component.
Wilson Reading	Wilson Language	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	60	6	Tier 3	2-12	No	Intensive	Recommended 5 days a week. A lesson includes three 30-minute blocks that can be divided up across the day/week.
Lexia Core5 Reading	Lexia	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	NA	NA	Tier 2	K-5	Partially	Light	K-3: Recommended 40-60 min./week (varies based on student need)

													4-5: Recommended 40-80 min./week (varies based on student need)
iReady	Curriculum Associates	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	NA	NA	Tier 2 Tier 3	K-8	Partially	Light	Core iReady is implemented online, using diagnostic data to place student at point of need. For intervention, it provides lesson plans for small group or individual interventions.
Blast Countdown Blast Foundations	Really Great Reading	Y	Y	Y	N	N	20	6	Tier 2 & Tier 3	K-2	No	Light	
Sonday System	Winsor Learning	Y	Y	N	N	N	35	6	Tier 2 & Tier 3	K-2	No	Medium	
Foundations	Wilson Language	Y	Y	Y	N	N	30	6	Tier 2	K-3	No	Medium	A placement test determines point of need. Teachers use the “Double Dose” format to provide supplemental Tier 2 instruction with the Foundations lessons.
SIPPS	Center for Collaborative Classroom	Y	Y	Y	N	N	30	6	Tier 2 Tier 3	K-3	No	Medium	
LiPS	Lindamood Bell	Y	Y	N	N	N	60	6	Tier 3	K-12	No	Intensive	Training requirements are relatively intensive

Phonics Lesson Library	95% Group	Y	Y	Y	N	N	30	5	Tier 2	K-5	No	Medium	
Bridge the Gap	Heggerty	Y	N	N	N	N	5-7	6	Tier 2 Tier 3	2 and up	No	Light	Bridge the Gap is intended to be a short PA component of a full intervention lesson for older (2nd+) students, not a comprehensive intervention curriculum.
SPIRE	EPS/School Specialty	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	60		Tier 2 Tier 3	PreK-8+	Hybrid option	Medium	Each lesson can be split into two 30 min lessons if needed. Hybrid option allows for larger groups.

Leveled Literacy Intervention (F&P/Heinemann) and Reading Recovery were reviewed but not recommended for the following reasons:

- LLI addresses phonics, but not in an explicit and systematic way. There is not a focus on phonemic awareness. The guided reading model upon which LLI is based emphasizes use of cueing systems rather than decoding.
- Reading Recovery requires a full year of teacher training. Cost per student is extremely high. The RR model rests upon 3-cueing systems. Recent research suggests that any gains may be short-term.

Supplemental Phonological Awareness Products

These are two effective resources that can be used as an extension of tier 1 core instruction (facilitated with the whole group for an additional ~5-10 minutes) or as one component of full tier 2 or tier 3 lessons (e.g., a tier 2 lesson could include a Heggerty phonemic awareness warm-up before a Wilson lesson). Both resources target phonemic awareness and are a relatively light training lift for teachers.

- o [Heggerty Phonemic Awareness](#)
- o [Equipped for Reading Success by David Kilpatrick](#)

Decision Making Guidance for K-2 Intervention

Step 1: Confirm Tier 1 Instruction.	Make sure you have a Tier 1 Instruction Block for all students that is at least 60 minutes long. If it's less than 30 minutes, revisit your highly aligned curriculum and make adjustments to ensure this time is 60 minutes long. Refer to your instructional resource for how small group instruction can be leveraged to support students' varying needs during this time.
Step 2: Determine Time.	Determine how long your intervention or differentiated literacy block will be (suggested time 30-60min). Plan this into your schedule. Make sure this block is in addition to your Tier 1 instruction (60 minutes).
Step 3: Craft a Vision for Tier 2 Intervention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draft a vision for what you want Tier 2 Intervention to look like, sound like and feel like in your region.
Step 3: Research and Select a Tier 2 Intervention Program.	<p>Research and Select a Tier 2 Intervention using the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does the program align with your vision for Tier 2 Intervention? - Could you potentially use resources from your current Tier 1 curriculum to support Tier 2 intervention? (Ex. Assessment and Remediation Guide from CKLA Skills) - Is there a Tier 2 Program that is compatible with and supports your Tier 1 Curriculum (mCLASS Intervention with CKLA Skills; Wilson with Foundations, etc.)? - Does the program teach and build foundational skills to mastery? Specific components may vary by grade level. - Does the resource provide opportunities for systematic and explicit foundational skills instruction with frequent opportunities to practice the skills and receive clear, specific corrective feedback?

Setting up Tier 2 Interventions Flow Chart

Use high quality Tier 1 Foundational Skills curriculum for all children.



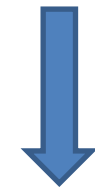
STEP 1: Screen all children within the first 30 school days to determine who will need extra support.

STEP 2: Administer diagnostics as needed to pinpoint specific needs and the focus of instruction.



STEP 3: Use data to create groups.

STEP 4: Set a schedule for small group instruction. For students well below benchmark, meet with them daily.



STEP 5: Use your instructional resource to plan for small group instruction. Use the suggested LETRS plan template (included below) or a high-quality tier 2 product to plan small group lessons.



STEP 6: Progress monitor students using the following guidance (using mCLASS progress monitoring if using mCLASS)

- Well Below benchmark: every 1-2 weeks
- Below benchmark: every 3-4 weeks
- At benchmark: As necessary
- Well Above Benchmark: As necessary
-

Move student within groups based on needs.

Suggested Phonics Lesson Plan from LETRS (can support Tier 2 Intervention)

(Based on ideas in *Phonics Lesson Library*™. Copyright© 2015, 95 Percent Group Inc., *Phonics Lesson Library*™. Used with permission.)

Component of Lesson	Instructional Routines and Techniques	Approx. Time
State Goal and Purpose	State concept focus and expectations for outcomes ("Today we will study . . .")	1 min.
Practice Phonological Awareness	Warm-up exercises, listening to and manipulating sounds in spoken words	3 min.
Review Previous Lesson	Fluency drills; rereading familiar text; checking retention of learned words or concepts	3 min.
Introduce New Concept	Explicit, direct teaching of new phoneme-grapheme correspondence or letter pattern	3–5 min.
Provide Guided Practice	Teacher-led practice blending words, reading pattern-based words, phoneme-grapheme mapping, reading phrases and sentences	5 min.
Provide Extended Practice	Word sorts, word chains, word families, cloze tasks; timed reading of learned words	5 min.
Practice Dictation	Dictation of sounds, words, sentences	8 min.
Connect to Word Meaning	With phonics vocabulary, construct multiple-meaning web; locate words that have similar meanings or that go together; find the odd one out in a set of words; use two vocabulary words in a sentence, etc.	5 min.
Read Text	Read decodable text with a high proportion of words that have been taught	8 min.

Family Engagement

Family partnerships matter! Engaging families in their children's education has a positive impact on students' literacy achievement. The research is clear that family involvement can have dramatic and long-term effects on children's life chances. We know how important it is to partner with families in support of their children's language and reading skills, but it's not always clear how we do this in manageable and effective ways. School-family partnerships require thoughtful design to support students' academic achievement. To create conditions for early literacy success, schools need to think about creating a welcoming environment, establishing strong communication systems, and equipping families with high-impact actions.

Establish a Welcoming Environment

For these partnerships to be effective, schools must work to create welcome and affirming environments that foster trusting and positive relationships between teachers and families. These relationships serve as the foundation for ongoing communication about students' literacy growth. To affirm families' funds of knowledge, schools can:

- Celebrate students' home languages
- Provide opportunities for families to communicate in their home language and ensure translation of family-facing communication
- Plan classroom events that invite families to share their histories and knowledge (e.g., read aloud, songs)

Communicate

Parents and caregivers need to know what their child is expected to learn, know, and do in literacy at each grade level. There are myriad ways to communicate with and invest families in actionable early literacy support. The following are examples of tools large and small that can bolster early literacy home-school partnerships:

- **Data Dialogue:** Effective data sharing systems can improve student performance. Educators can make student data accessible and actionable by sharing relevant data in multiple ways (e.g., student's performance on a universal screener as well as the student's growth from fall to winter), providing clear next steps for families, and letting families' questions drive the conversation.⁵⁵
- **Family Engagement Notebooks:** A family engagement notebook can present caregivers with clear, upfront information about learning goals and assessments in each subject area. The goal of an engagement notebook is to facilitate two-way conversations; that is, families know what to look for (e.g., progress with letters/sounds) and ask for (e.g., benchmark screening scores), and teachers can leverage shared language. An engagement notebook can be a booklet given to families at the beginning of the school year or an online platform (like a Google Site) -- or both. This [example](#) from the Syracuse City School District highlights family-facing language and provides clear descriptions of what students will learn, know, and do. (See: ELA p. 45-47)

⁵⁵ Harvard Family Research Project. (2013). Tips for administrators, teachers, and families: How to share data effectively. Family Involvement Network of Educators (FINE) Newsletter, 5(2)

- **Remind:** The Remind app provides an easy way to engage families in two-way text communication. The app allows teachers to share bite-sized pieces of information about student learning and progress; this aligns with promising research on the positive impact of text messaging on young children's early literacy skills.⁵⁶
- **Seesaw:** Seesaw is one example of an app that positions the child as a key player in the home-school partnership. From an early literacy frame, Seesaw provides families with an opportunity to hear students engaged in reading routines or reading aloud.

Empower Parents with a Literacy Playbook

Effective teaching involves helping families to support their children's academic growth at home. Communication is critical, but schools also need a coherent, consistent approach to what they share with caregivers to reinforce early literacy concepts at home.⁵⁷ The following tables include well-researched and high-impact actions that families can take to support early literacy development.

Family Action	Read to your child
Why it's Important	<p>Children benefit from listening to books read aloud -- these books can be well above the level they could read to themselves. When we think about the Simple View of Reading, read alouds support the language comprehension side of the equation. Research suggests that caregiver-child book reading is an impactful practice across socio-economic statuses.⁵⁸</p> <p>It's also important to provide children with a read aloud diet that includes both nonfiction read alouds and fictional read alouds. Nonfiction texts help students build vocabulary and background knowledge essential to comprehension, while fictional narratives offer complex grammar and story structures.</p> <p>During reading or listening, parents can ask their child questions and share their own reactions to the book. Reading aloud sends the message that reading is enjoyable!</p>
Tools/Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit school and community libraries and allow children to select books of interest. • Families can also engage in read alouds through free audiobook platforms, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Epic ○ Audible
School Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students gain critical background knowledge when they read widely on a specific topic (ocean life) or theme (making friends). We can send home

⁵⁶ York, B. (2014). One Step at a Time: The Effects of an Early Literacy Text Messaging Program for Parents of Preschoolers. *AEA Randomized Controlled Trials*.

⁵⁷ Lusse, M., Notten, T., & Engbersen, G. (2019). School-family partnership procedures in urban secondary education, part A: Strengths and limitations. *School Community Journal*, 29(1), 201– 226.

⁵⁸ Bus, A. G., van IJzendoorn, M. H., & Pellegrini, A. D. (1995). Joint Book Reading Makes for Success in Learning to Read: A Meta-Analysis on Intergenerational Transmission of Literacy. *Review of Educational Research*, 65(1), 1–21.

	<p>specific recommendations for read aloud (or audiobook) titles to support and extend the knowledge-building happening in the KIPP Wheatley instruction. school.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage an early family event (e.g., Open House) to build excitement and investment in the purpose behind read alouds and to demonstrate audiobook app set-up. • Send books and magazines home with students!
--	---

Family Action	Listen to your child read to you
Why it's Important	<p>It's so important for young readers to practice reading short books with words they can sound out. This supports the decoding component of the Simple View of Reading. Students need to practice the letter-sound patterns they are learning in school in connected text, which are texts that provide opportunities for them to apply the specific skills that they have been taught.</p> <p>When students are reading to their families, caregivers should listen carefully and help readers sound out any unknown words. They can also ask children questions about what they are reading.</p>
Tools/Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connected text for students to practice foundational skills in context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Decodable readers embedded in the curriculum ○ External supplements, such as Flyleaf (free online readers) • Parent participatory workshops: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide families with key strategies to support young readers via parent/family workshops. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Springboard is an example of a program designed to enrich home-school learning. Its model involves teachers coaching families on how to support at-home reading goals.
School Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because students need to connect skills learned at school to home practice, teachers need to guide families to specific connected texts (in other words, these are not books to grab from the library). • Procure connected texts that represent and affirm families' identities • Provide caregivers with specific prompts to use when listening to children read (via video, bookmark, etc.).

Family Action	Provide your child with opportunities to practice specific foundational skills
Why it's Important	<p>Students need high-volume practice with foundational skills. Since foundational skills are constrained, meaning they have an endpoint, they can be targeted in isolation as well as in context (see decodable reading above). Many of these practice activities can be done in an engaging online format at school and at home.</p> <p>While we don't yet have a strong research base on the effects of apps on the development of literacy skills, the market is full of options for families. If a school has a personalized learning component for foundational skills, that should be the primary recommendation for home-school partnerships, as practice on the aligned online platform ensures consistency for the student.</p>
Tools/Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personalized learning/online programs connected to the skills curriculum (e.g., mCLASS) • Teacher-recommended apps that align with the science of reading. The best apps clearly build from what students are working on in school and provide interactive opportunities. • Family-facing webinars from your specific curriculum provider. Heggerty, for example, has many family resources with quick phonemic awareness activities that can easily be done at home.
School Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are recommending apps to families, be careful to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fully vet the app to make sure it works with your in-school approach and doesn't provide conflicting information (e.g., apps that rely on leveled book reading may encourage students to guess at words they cannot yet decode). ○ Keep the list short and update it throughout the year to match the skills you are working on, or that certain students need more practice with. • Remember that it is important to have guardrails on children's screen time. Suggest short amounts of time for at-home online practice.

Family Involvement in Assessment

Regardless of the program(s) used for reading intervention, teachers will want to have plans in place to provide updates to families about student progress.

Sample Family Letter

To help start a conversation between parents and students, Amplify offers mCLASS Home Connect® letters. These letters contain results from Benchmark assessments completed during the current time of year using any or all of the following: mCLASS with DIBELS® 8th Edition and/or mCLASS with Dyslexia Screening (Vocabulary, Spelling, and RAN). Home Connect letters provide information about student results for completed measures and explain the relevance of the DIBELS 8th Edition measures, Vocabulary, Spelling, or RAN.

Front	Back
<div><p>mCLASS® Home Connect 3rd Grade, Middle-of-Year Assessment</p><p>NATIONAL KIPP FOUNDATION North Philadelphia Academy Last assessment: March 2, 2022 Next assessment: May 16, 2022</p><p>Why is [redacted] being assessed? The teachers and administrators at our school want [redacted] to read successfully. As part of this commitment, we use DIBELS® 8th Edition (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), which evaluates [redacted] performance on the literacy skills necessary to become a successful reader.</p><p>What do the below assessments mean? [redacted] has met grade-level expectations in DIBELS. The DIBELS composite score reflects performance on the skills shown below.</p><p>Phonics Knowing the sounds of letters and sounding out written words, measured by DIBELS Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF). Can your child... ...sound out simple words like van? (vvv...aah...nnn) ...easily read a list of two- and three-letter words? ...easily read more complicated words over time?</p><p>Accurate and Fluent Reading Reading common words easily, quickly and correctly, measured by DIBELS Word Reading Fluency (WRF). Can your child... ...recognize familiar words without sounding them out? ...recognize common words such as: "there, one, color"? Reading words in stories easily, quickly, and correctly, measured by DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency (ORF). Can your child... ...read stories quickly and easily? ...read aloud smoothly and accurately? ...read words and sentences in short stories easily?</p><p>Reading Comprehension Understanding and gaining meaning from texts, measured by DIBELS Maze. Can your child... ...fill in the blank in this sentence?: "Before you eat, be sure to [] your hands!"</p></div> <div><p>404 DIBELS Composite Score Has Met Goal</p><p>Performance Level Key Well Below Benchmark Below Benchmark At Benchmark Above Benchmark</p><p>116 78 94 138 Reading letter sounds (NWF-Correct Letter Sounds)</p><p>37 23 30 46 Reading whole words (NWF-Words Recoded Correctly)</p><p>51 40 50 65 Reading common words (WRF)</p><p>99 91 96 Reading with accuracy (ORF-Accu)</p><p>110 85 105 141 Reading with fluency (ORF)</p><p>13.5 9.5 12 20.5 Constructing meaning from text (MAZE)</p></div>	<div><p>[redacted] 3rd Grade, Middle-of-Year</p><p>Activities for [redacted] Even if you have just a few minutes each day, you may be surprised by how much you can help Jakayla learn to read. Here are some activities we recommend based on [redacted] most recent mCLASS reading test. Most of these activities can be done just about anywhere. Feel free to change them a bit to match Jakayla's interests or to fit your schedule.</p><p>Where Jakayla needs support</p><p>Phonics Knowing the sounds of letters and sounding out written words</p><p>Accurate and Fluent Reading Reading words in stories easily, quickly, and correctly</p><p>Grocery List Give your child a sheet of paper and dictate the items you need to buy. If your child requests the correct spelling, write the words for your child to copy, or spell the words as he or she writes them. You can also allow your child to use inventive spelling for items on the list and locate the correct spelling at the grocery store.</p><p>Go Fish Choose 10 words your child is learning in school. Write each word down on two separate cards, making 10 pairs of cards, 20 cards in total. To play, give each player six cards and put the remaining cards in a drawing pile. Ask your child, "Do you have the word _____?" (Read one word card in your hand.) If he or she has a matching card, you may take it. If not, you can go fish in the pile of remaining cards. Next, it's your child's turn. Repeat until one player matches all his or her cards.</p><p>Words on Flash Cards Have your child practice saying common words quickly. Use flash cards to display words your child is learning in school. Have your child practice reading and saying the words rapidly.</p><p>We are working hard to ensure that [redacted] development is on target for success, and we thank you for your efforts at home. Together, we will help [redacted] become a successful reader.</p><p>For more activities, visit our Home Connect site: https://www.mclass.amplify.com/homeconnect</p></div>

Resources Cited

[Structured Literacy](#), International Dyslexia Association

[National Reading Panel Findings](#), National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

[The Simple View of Reading](#), Article about research of Philip Gough and William Tunmer in 1986

The Reading Rope ([article/image](#), [video](#)), Research by Dr. Hollis Scarborough, video by the AIM Institute for Learning and Research

[“Ending the Reading Wars: Reading,” by Anne Castles, Kathleen Rastle, and Kate Nation](#)

[“Teaching Reading is Rocket Science”. Louisa Moats, 2020. Update to the 1999 American Federation of Teachers Report](#)

[Speech to Print: Language Essentials for Teachers](#), Dr. Louisa Moats

[“Research Supporting Foundational Skills in Reading,” Student Achievement Partners](#)

[“Developing Early Literacy,” National Early Literacy Panel](#)

[A Conversation about Instructional Equity with Zaretta Hammond](#)

[“Early Warning Confirmed: A research update on third-grade reading,” Annie E. Casey Foundation](#)

Recommended PD: LETRS – [Research Base](#)

(Washington & Seidenberg, Summer 2021)

(Lee-James & Washington, 2018)

Kilpatrick, D. A. (2016). *Equipped for reading success: A comprehensive, step-by-step program for developing phonemic awareness and fluent word recognition*. Syracuse, NY: Casey & Kirsch Publishers.