



CURRICULUM EVALUATION TOOL

This curriculum evaluation tool features components that align with the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) and Scarborough's Rope (Scarborough, 2001). Word Recognition and Language Comprehension are broken down into subcomponents and writing and spelling as well as assessment are included.

Green Flags indicate instructional practices that are aligned with the science of reading.

Red Flags indicate instructional practices that are *not aligned* with the science of reading.

If the curriculum you are evaluating features a particular Red Flag, place an X in the adjacent red box. If many/most of the red boxes are checked for a particular component, it is likely that the program is not aligned with the Science of Reading. Keep searching!

NOTES: This tool is to be considered a "living document" meaning that it will be periodically updated based on user feedback, suggestions for optimizing use, etc. We thank those who contributed to its content.

THE SIMPLE VIEW OF READING

DECODING (word recognition) × LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION = READING COMPREHENSION

Scarborough's Reading Rope (2001)

LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

- Background Knowledge
- Vocabulary Knowledge
- Language Structures
- Verbal Reasoning
- Literacy Knowledge

WORD RECOGNITION

- Phonological Awareness
- Decoding (and Spelling)
- Sight Recognition

increasingly strategic

increasingly automatic

SKILLED READING: fluent execution and coordination of word recognition and text comprehension.

Reading is a multifaceted skill, gradually acquired over years of instruction and practice.

WORD RECOGNITION

Phonological and Phoneme Awareness

Green Flags	Red Flags	Red flag present
Instruction includes larger units of phonological awareness (syllable, rhyme, onset-rime) as well as the phoneme level.	Instruction only attends to larger units of phonological awareness (syllables, rhyme, onset-rime) without moving to the phoneme level (e.g., blends such as 'tr' are kept intact rather than having students notice their individual sounds).	
Instruction includes all phoneme awareness tasks including those that feature advanced manipulation (isolating, blending, segmenting, deletion, substitution, reversal).	Phoneme awareness instruction does not include more advanced manipulation tasks.	
Advanced phoneme proficiency instruction is evident <i>beyond</i> K-1; students are both accurate and automatic with these skills.	Phoneme awareness instruction discontinues after K-1.	
Phonemic awareness is taught directly, explicitly, and systematically.	Phonemic awareness is taught implicitly and briefly.	
When phoneme awareness is taught, awareness of individual phonemes is established prior to introduction of corresponding graphemes.	When phoneme awareness is taught, phonemes are immediately connected to graphemes (printed letters).	
All levels of phonological and phoneme awareness are assessed and monitored regularly.	Phonological and phoneme awareness are not assessed and monitored regularly.	

GLOSSARY

Phonological awareness: One's sensitivity to, or explicit awareness of, the phonological structure of words in one's language. This is an "umbrella" term that is used to refer to a student's sensitivity to any aspect of phonological structure in language. It encompasses awareness of individual words in sentences, syllables, and onset-rime segments, as well as awareness of individual phonemes.

Phoneme awareness: The ability to notice, think about, or manipulate the individual phonemes (sounds) in words. It is the ability to understand that sounds in spoken language work together to make words. This term is used to refer to the highest level of phonological awareness: awareness of individual phonemes in words.

Phoneme: The smallest unit of sound within our language system. A phoneme combines with other phonemes to make words.

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

NOTES:

Phonics		
Green Flags	Red Flags	Red flag present
Letter-sound correspondences are taught in an explicit, systematic, and sequential fashion, from simple to complex.	Letter-sound correspondences are taught opportunistically or implicitly during text reading.	
Phonics instruction is robust with explicit instruction, cumulative review, and application in reading and writing.	Phonics instruction takes place in short “mini-lessons.”	
The initial instructional sequence includes a mixture of short vowels and consonants.	The initial instructional sequence introduces a large number of (or all) consonants before a vowel is introduced, or vowels are all taught in rapid succession.	
Segmenting and blending are taught explicitly and practiced regularly, in both decoding and encoding.	Segmenting and blending are not explicitly taught nor practiced.	
Explicit instruction directs students’ attention to the structure of the word; the emphasis is on phonic decoding.	Instruction encourages students to memorize whole words, guess at words in context, or use picture clues.	
Instruction includes letter sounds correspondences, syllable types, word families, word analysis skills for multisyllabic words, and morphemes.	Instruction in phonics ends once letter sounds correspondences are taught.	
Irregular high-frequency words are taught by drawing attention to both regular and irregular sounds.	Irregular high-frequency words are taught as whole-word units, often as stand-alone “sight words” to be memorized.	
Opportunities to practice decoding words in isolation are provided.	No opportunities for word-level decoding practice are provided.	
Instruction includes recursive review of phonics/encoding skills.	Instruction is typically “one and done”; phonics/encoding skills are introduced but with very little or very short-term review.	
Phonics skills are practiced by applying letter-sound knowledge in decodable texts that match the phonics elements taught, securing phonic decoding.	Early text is predominantly predictable, leveled texts which includes phonic elements that have not been taught and encourages memorizing patterns and using picture clues rather than phonic decoding.	

GLOSSARY

Explicit: Explicit instruction involves direct explanation. The teacher’s language is concise, specific, and related to the objective. Another characteristic of explicit instruction is a visible instructional approach which includes a high level of teacher/student interaction. Explicit instruction means that the actions of the teacher are clear, unambiguous, direct, and visible. This makes it clear what the students are to do and learn. Nothing is left to guess work.

Implicit: Implicit instruction does not provide direct or specific guidance on what is to be learned.

Systematic: The material follows a sequence beginning with the easiest/basic elements preceding to the most difficult.

Morpheme: The smallest meaningful unit of a word.

Irregular high-frequency words: Words that BOTH highly frequent in text and not spelled phonetically (e.g., said, of, one)

NOTES:

Fluency		
Green Flags	Red Flags	Red flag present
Instruction includes teacher-led modeling, oral reading by students, and immediate feedback.	Instruction focuses primarily on student silent reading.	
Reading accuracy and automaticity are emphasized.	Rate is emphasized over accuracy; attention is given to students reading words quickly.	
Word-level fluency practice is provided.	Word-level fluency practice is not provided. Fluency is viewed only as text-reading fluency.	
Fluency is practiced in a variety of texts (narrative, informational, poetry, lists, etc.).	Fluency is practiced only in narrative text or with repeated readings of patterned text.	
Fluency is measured using a normed Oral Reading Fluency assessment.	Fluency assessment allows teachers acceptance of incorrectly decoded words if they are close in meaning to the target word.	

GLOSSARY

Automaticity: Performing a reading task without conscious effort. For example, reading connected text with automaticity means that there is no conscious attention paid to decoding words.

Normed: A normed assessment results in scores that are norm-referenced; test takers' scores can be compared in relation to how others in that same age/grade group performed. It allows results to have meaningful interpretation and it allows educators to understand if a student is performing below, at, or above expectations.

NOTES:

LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

Background Knowledge

Green Flags	Red Flags	Red flag present
Read-aloud opportunities feature a variety of complex texts (narrative and expository texts above grade-level) to develop background knowledge and vocabulary in a variety of subject areas.	Read-aloud opportunities emphasize stories or narrative texts. Read-aloud text is not sufficiently complex.	
Opportunities are provided to make connections between a new word or concept and other known words or concepts, relating ideas to experiences.	Opportunities to bridge existing knowledge to new knowledge is not apparent in instruction.	

GLOSSARY

Narrative: Text that relates a series of events - can include fiction and nonfiction

Expository: Text that provides factual information about a topic.

Background knowledge: A specific subset of knowledge needed to comprehend a particular situation, lesson, or text.

NOTES:

Vocabulary

Green Flags	Red Flags	Red flag present
Vocabulary instruction includes robust conversations in order to support an understanding of literal and inferential comprehension of word knowledge within text.	Vocabulary instruction does not include opportunities for rich conversations; worksheets or activity sheets are used instead.	
Explicit instruction in vocabulary for Tier 2 and 3 words is evident, as well as instruction in the context of texts (most Tier 1 words).	Instruction includes memorization of isolated words and definitions out of context.	
Tier 2 words are taught explicitly, with students taught to use these words in their speech, see them in print, and use them in writing (when appropriate).	Tier 2 words are not taught deeply.	
Explicit instruction in morphology is provided.	Explicit instruction in morphology is not apparent.	

GLOSSARY

Tier 1 vocabulary words: Words students already know the meaning of (e.g., house, car, dog, school)

Tier 2 vocabulary words: Words that are not likely to be familiar to young children but reflect a concept they can identify with and can use in conversation (e.g., shiver, excitement, remarkable, coax).

Tier 3 vocabulary words: Words that are low frequency and domain specific (i.e., they appear in specific content areas such as math, science, history, music.)

Morphology: the system of meaningful parts that make up words

NOTES:

Knowledge of Language Structures

Green Flags	Red Flags	Red flag present
There is a clear scope and sequence for teaching conventions of print, grammar, and syntax (sentence structure) in reading and writing.	There is not a clear scope and sequence for teaching; conventions of print, grammar, and syntax are taught implicitly or opportunistically.	
Instruction includes sufficient time for discussion, including teacher modeling of conversational conventions, appropriate tone and rate, and development of full ideas and complete sentences.	Instruction does not include sufficient opportunities for discussion. Teacher modeling is not apparent.	

Verbal Reasoning

Green Flag	Red Flag	Red flag present
Inferencing is explicitly taught within text, including opportunities for metacognition and use of appropriate/accurate background knowledge.	Inferencing is not taught explicitly and may be based only on picture clues and not text ("picture walking").	

Literacy Knowledge

Green Flag	Red Flag	Red flag present
Appropriate genre types and features are explicitly taught.	Genre types and features are not explicitly taught.	

GLOSSARY

Metacognition: Thinking about thinking

Inference: Using what you know and parts of text to comprehend what is not directly said in a text.

Genre: A type of text or literature that has a particular form and style (e.g., poetry, fiction, nonfiction)

NOTES:

READING COMPREHENSION

Green Flags	Red Flags	Red flag present
The foundation for reading comprehension is built through rich read-aloud experiences before children are able to read independently.	The foundation for reading comprehension emphasizes strategy instruction in text before children are able to read independently.	
Emphasis on direct teaching of comprehension strategies via gradual release of responsibility (I do, we do, you do) using appropriate instructional text.	Emphasis on independent reading and book choice; no evidence of direct teaching of comprehension strategies.	
Materials for comprehension instruction include sufficiently complex literary and informational texts.	Materials for comprehension instruction are predominantly leveled texts and repetitive patterned texts.	

NOTES:

WRITING

Green Flags	Red Flags	Red flag present
Handwriting		
There is explicit instruction related to letter formation, posture, grip, and opportunities for cumulative practice.	There is no direct instruction in handwriting.	
Handwriting instruction utilizes lined paper that guides letters formation.	Unlined paper and picture paper are featured.	
Handwriting instruction is integrated into core reading and writing instruction and follows the sequence of letter learning.	Handwriting instruction is treated as an isolated add-on.	
NOTES:		
Spelling		
There is a clear scope and sequence for explicit spelling instruction, closely aligned with the phonics scope and sequence in K-1.	No evidence of explicit spelling instruction; scope and sequence is not aligned with any other aspect of instruction.	
Patterns taught for decoding are also practiced in encoding/spelling lessons.	Patterns in decoding are not featured in encoding/spelling; spelling lists are relatively random.	
NOTES:		
Composition		
Writing is taught through a gradual release of responsibility (I do, we do, you do) and includes sufficient time for modeling, planning, and brainstorming ideas before drafting.	Writing prompts are provided with little time for modeling, planning, and brainstorming ideas.	
Writing is structured; models and graphic organizers are provided to support composition and promote executive functioning.	Writing is primarily unstructured, with few models or graphic organizers.	
Conventions of print, grammar, and syntax (sentence structure) are taught explicitly in the context of writing.	Conventions, grammar and sentence structure are not taught or are taught implicitly or opportunistically.	
Writing instruction includes a variety of text types (narrative, informational, persuasive).	Writing instruction is primarily narrative or unstructured choice.	
NOTES:		

ASSESSMENT

Green Flags	Red Flags	Red flag present
Assessments include screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring.	Assessments result in benchmarks according to a leveled text gradient.	
Foundational skills assessments identify students' instructional needs.	Foundational skills assessments are primarily running records (or similar assessments that focus on assessment of high frequency words and can be read by looking at the first letter or blend and confirming with picture support).	
Phonics skills are assessed using both real and nonsense words in all syllable patterns.	Phonics skills are assessed using real words only.	
Normed ORF (Oral Reading Fluency) assessments are used.	Normed ORF assessments are not available.	

GLOSSARY

Normed: A normed assessment results in scores that are norm-referenced; test takers' scores can be compared in relation to how others in that same age/grade group performed. It allows results to have meaningful interpretation and it allows educators to understand if a student is performing below, at, or above expectations.

NOTES:

OVERALL INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

Green Flag	Red Flag	Red flag present
There is a clear and consistent instructional framework, featuring a comprehensive scope and sequence of foundational skills taught in an explicit system. The system features application of taught skills in real reading and writing.	The instructional framework is primarily a workshop approach, emphasizing student choice and implicit, incidental, or embedded teaching of foundational skills.	

NOTES: