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2024

Curriculum Navigation Report

Aprendo Leyendo Curriculum 2018 for Grades K-2

REPORT INTRODUCTION

Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines Description

"Decisions regarding curriculum, instructional approaches, programs, and resources are critical and must be informed by more than experience, observations, or even belief systems. If we are to succeed in implementing effective practices, then we will need to embrace learning as a part of our work as much as teaching itself." Hennessy, 2020, pg. 8.

Due to the popularity of the science of reading movement, the term "science of reading" has been used as a marketing tool, often promising a quick fix for decision makers seeking a program aligned with the scientific evidence base. However, as articulated in The Reading League's *Science of Reading: Defining Guide* (2022), *"the 'science of reading' is a vast, interdisciplinary body of scientifically-based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing. Over the last five decades, this research has provided a preponderance of evidence to inform how proficient reading and writing develop; why some students have difficulty; and how educators can most effectively assess and teach, and, therefore, improve student outcomes through the prevention of and intervention for reading difficulties."*

The Reading League's *Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines* (CEGs) are a resource developed to assist consumers in making informed decisions when selecting curricula and instructional materials that best support evidence-aligned instruction grounded in the science of reading.

The CEGs are anchored by frameworks validated by the science of reading. Findings

from the science of reading provide additional understandings that substantiate both aligned and non-aligned practices (AKA "red flags") within the CEGs. These serve as a foundation for what to expect from published curricula that claim to be aligned with the scientific evidence of how students learn to read. The CEGs highlight best practices that align with the science of reading. Red flags specify any non-aligned practices in the following areas:

- Word Recognition
- Language Comprehension
- Reading Comprehension
- Writing
- Assessment
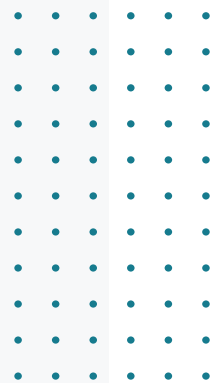
The CEGs have been used by educators, building and district leaders, local education agencies (LEAs), and state education agencies (SEAs) as a primary tool to find evidence of red flags or practices that may interfere with the development of skilled reading. This report was generated after a

review of the curriculum using the March 2023 *Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines*, which have been refined based on feedback, a lengthy pilot review, and an inter-rater reliability study.

While the CEGs have been useful for schools and districts for informing curricular and instructional decision-making, The Reading League recognized the challenge of school-based teams that might not have the capacity for an in-depth review process. Expert review teams engaged in a large-scale review of the most widely-used curricula in the United States in order to develop these Curriculum Navigation Reports.

As you read through the findings of this report, remember that red flags will be present for all curricula as there is no perfect curriculum. The intent of this report is not to provide a recommendation, but rather to provide information to curriculum decision makers to support their efforts in selecting, using, and refining instructional materials to ensure they align with findings from the science of reading.

Disclaimer: The Reading League's curriculum review is deemed an informational educational resource and should not be construed as sales pitches or product promotion. The purpose of the review is to further our mission to advance the understanding, awareness, and use of evidence-aligned reading instruction.

CURRICULUM DESCRIPTION

The following pages feature the review Aprendo Leyendo Curriculum 2018 for Grades K-2. This curriculum is a foundational reading program that incorporates reading, spelling, and handwriting using multisensory techniques. Aprendo Leyendo features authentic texts written by Latin American authors and the stories included are relevant to the culture and people of the continent.

For this report, reviewers closely examined curricular materials for Grades K-2. For specifics connected to word recognition, reviewers examined the Decodable Chapter Books and Skills Books, Alphabet Picture Cards, Pocket Alphabet Cards as well as the Teacher Editions and Teacher Handbooks for gathering evidence. For language comprehension, the team appraised the general lesson directions included within the Teacher Editions and Teacher Handbooks. Additionally, Aprendo Leyendo includes online materials that include assessments, lesson plan forms, reinforcement activities, and homework assignments. Reviewers were selected based on their deep knowledge of the science of reading and associated terminology, as well as high-quality instructional materials.. Once selected, they were assigned to teams of at least three reviewers. The team met regularly to establish reliability in their individual scores and report their findings.

For their review, each group member used The Reading League's Curriculum Reviewer Workbook to capture scores and evidence for their decisions. Once they determined which section and grade level of the *Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines* to review, they individually conducted a review of that section for red flags. Individuals then looked for evidence of red flags within the curriculum materials including scope and sequences, modules/units, and lessons as well as any ancillary Tier 1 curriculum materials (e.g., assessment documents). As each component was reviewed, individual reviewers also noted the extent to which a red flag statement was "true" and selected the appropriate rating in the Reviewer Workbook as outlined below:

01
Red Flag statement is False.

02
Red Flag statement is minimally True. Evidence is minimal or briefly mentioned.

03
Red Flag statement is mostly True. If applicable, evidence is in multiple places throughout the curriculum.

04
Red Flag statement is always true, pervasive, and/or integral to the curriculum.

A black box indicates that this component is not addressed in this curriculum, and must be addressed with other materials.

Reviewers used the notes section of each component to capture helpful evidence and notes such as keywords that described a practice listed within the CEGs, specific examples, and precise locations of evidence. Notes were included in the review of any optional aligned components, as well.

FINDINGS:

Components Supporting Word Recognition

1A: Word Recognition Non-Negotiables

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

WORD RECOGNITION NON-NEGOTIABLES	SCORE
1.1: Three cueing-systems are taught as strategies for decoding in early grades (i.e., directing students to use picture cues, context cues, or attend to the first letter of a word as a cue).	1
1.2: Guidance to memorize any whole words, including high frequency words, by sight without attending to the sound/symbol correspondences.	2
1.3: Supporting materials do not provide a systematic scope and sequence nor opportunities for practice and review of elements taught (e.g., phonics, decoding, encoding).	1

Aprendo Leyendo's word recognition non-negotiables are **"mostly met."** The curriculum includes explicit instruction of phonemic awareness, phonics, and spelling, and Aprendo Leyendo's supporting materials do provide a systematic scope and sequence that moves from simple to complex. Moreover, the program affords learners opportunities to practice and review all the elements taught.   The team did observe that the "Palabras Con Prisa" or "Words in a Hurry" instructional routines could be interpreted as whole-word memorization. They are entitled "Hurry Words" as students are introduced to these words before learning all the individual letters that compose them. Thus, these words are in a hurry to meet the students. There are only 25 Palabras con Prisa in five chapter books throughout Aprendo Leyendo's instructional sequence, including high frequency words like está, ella, porque, and su. The publisher clarified that students should use phonic decoding as a primary reading strategy for these words and will amend the instructional language to emphasize this for educators in the teacher's handbook.

1B: Phonological and Phoneme Awareness

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAGS PRACTICES FOR PHONOLOGICAL AND PHONEME AWARENESS	SCORE
1.7: Instruction only attends to larger units of phonological awareness (syllables, rhyme, onset-rime) without moving to the phoneme level (e.g., blends such as /t/ /r/ are kept intact rather than having students notice their individual sounds).	1
1.8: Instruction is focused on letters only without explicit instruction and practice with the phonemes that letters represent.	1
1.9: Phoneme awareness is not taught as a foundational reading skill.	1
1.10: Phonological and phoneme awareness is not assessed or monitored.	2

Aprendo Leyendo's practices for phonological and phoneme awareness are **"mostly met."** Aprendo Leyendo's instruction attends to work at the phoneme level and students are offered frequent opportunities to practice using phonemes that represent various letters found in the Student Skills Books. The team observed that the curriculum places great emphasis on instruction at the syllable level through tasks that ask students to count and separate words in syllables. This approach aligns with literacy development in Spanish, where the development of syllable awareness is critical for language mastery. Reviewers did note that activities at the phoneme level concentrate primarily on the initial phoneme. These activities, however, quickly became easy and routine and did not offer students sufficient challenge or opportunity for deeper phonemic understanding beyond the initial sounds of words. Thus, Aprendo Leyendo's curricular programming could be enhanced by incorporating more opportunities for students to work with sounds in the medial and final positions, thereby enhancing their foundational phoneme awareness.

1C: Phonics and Phonic Decoding

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAGS PRACTICES FOR PHONICS AND PHONIC DECODING	SCORE
1.15: Letter-sound correspondences are taught opportunistically or implicitly during text reading.	1
1.16: Instruction is typically "one and done;" phonics skills are introduced but with very little or short-term review	1
1.17: Key words for letter/sound correspondences are not aligned with the pure phoneme being taught (e.g., earth for /ĕ/, ant for /ă/, orange for /ŏ/).	1
1.18: Phonics instruction takes place in short (or optional) "mini-lessons" or "word work" sessions.	1
1.19: The initial instructional sequence introduces many (or all) consonants before a vowel is introduced, short vowels are all taught in rapid succession and/or all sounds for one letter are taught all at once.	1
1.20: Blending is not explicitly taught nor practiced.	1
1.21: Instruction encourages students to memorize whole words, read using the first letter only as a clue, guess at words in context using a "what would make sense?" strategy, or use picture clues rather than phonic decoding.	1
1.22: Words with known sound-symbol correspondences, including high frequency words, are taught as whole-word units, often as stand-alone "sight words" to be memorized.	2
1.23: Few opportunities for word-level decoding practice are provided.	1
1.24: Early texts are predominantly predictable and/or leveled texts which include phonic elements that have not been taught; decodable texts are not used or emphasized.	1
1.25: Advanced word study (Grades 2-5) Instruction in phonics ends once single syllable phonics patterns (e.g., CVC, CVCe) are taught.	
1.26: Advanced word study (Grades 2-5) No instruction in multisyllabic word decoding strategies and/or using morphology to support word recognition is evident.	

Aprendo Leyendo's practices for phonics and phonic decoding are **"mostly met."** Phonics instruction is systematic and sequential, building from simple letter-sound correspondences to more complex phonic patterns. Letter-sound correspondences are taught systematically and practiced in the Student Skills Books and Decodable Chapter Books. Generally, each letter and associated phoneme are introduced during a short lesson. Additionally, the key words for letter/sound correspondences are aligned with the pure phoneme being taught.

Aprendo Leyendo does introduce many consonants with the limited introduction of vowels. For example, reviewers found the following progression:

- Skills Book 1: introduce consonants c, s, m, l, p, t, g, n, d, and the vowel "a".
- Skills Book 2: builds upon Book 1 and introduces consonants v, r, j, f, ñ, and the vowel "e".
- Skills Book 3: builds upon Books 1 & 2 and introduces consonants y, b, h, z, and vowel "o".
- Skills Book 4: builds upon Books 1, 2 & 3 and introduces consonants x, k, w, and vowels "i", and "u".

However, the program scaffolds the introduction of vowel sounds intentionally, introducing the open vowels "a," "e," and, "o," which occur more frequently than the closed vowels "i" and "u." Additionally, the program introduces letters based on motor planning and begins with the presentation of letters that may cause confusion when transcribing because they follow a clockwise direction.

Blending is explicitly taught and practiced, and there is frequent use of "la cartelera de bolsillo," or the pocket card set, which allows students to practice blending. During this

routine, the teacher says a word and uses it in a sentence. For example, on page 33 of the Teacher's Manual, the teacher says the word "mapa" and uses it in the sentence. Learners repeat the word and then identify the first sound of the word while writing it in the air. Then students locate the initial sound card and place it in the pocket chart. If students can't isolate the first sound, the teacher is tasked to repeat the word by stretching the sound of the first letter: "mmmm-apa".

Students continue this process with each sound in the word, placing the letter cards next to each. Finally, learners read the whole word.

The curriculum introduces syllable types starting with the open syllable as the ratio of open syllables is far higher than that of closed in Spanish. The progression follows:

- Skills Book 1: vcv with two syllables (e.g., casa)
- Skills Book 2: vcv words (e.g. semana)
- Skills Book 3: vccv words (e.g.. árbol)
- Skills Book 4: inclusion of consonant digraphs
- Skills Book 5: vv words (e.g. después)
- Skills Book 6: vcccv words (e.g. mientras)

Furthermore, Aprendo Leyendo teaches strategies to divide words when decoding through the "Dividir Palabras para Leer" routine. This strategy is mostly applied to long, difficult or unknown words and stresses that by dividing the targeted word, students will be able to read with greater precision. This routine is initially applied to vcv words, and learners are introduced to more complex structures as they progress in the program. The procedure for dividing open syllables vcv words includes: first, underline all the vowels; next, divide the word before the consonant so

that each part has a vowel. The teacher models the steps with the word "casa," using teacher think aloud to answer the following questions: What are the vowels and the consonants? What is the first step when I divide words? What do I do next? Where do I divide the word? How many vowels does it have? How many parts am I going to separate the word into? The teacher then writes "casa" on the board divided (ca/sa) and asks students to read the word. Finally, students are tasked to do the same with all of the words provided in the lesson, reading them again once they have divided them.

As mentioned previously, "Palabras Con Prisa" or "Words in a Hurry" instructional routines could be interpreted as whole word memorization. For example, reviewers noted that "ella" is introduced as a whole word as a part of the "Words in a Hurry" component of the lesson before introducing the sound for the digraph "ll" in Skills Book 4. It is introduced with the pronoun él. The same goes for "está," the conjugation of estar in the present tense for the third person. Since many of the "palabras con prisa" are decodable, the team noted this was a missed opportunity for learners to apply their decoding skills. The publisher clarified that students should use phonic decoding as a primary reading strategy for these words and will amend instructional language to emphasize this for educators in the teacher's handbook.

1D: Fluency

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAGS PRACTICES FOR FLUENCY	SCORE
1.40: Fluency instruction focuses primarily on student silent reading.	1
1.41: Rate is emphasized over accuracy; priority is given to the student's ability to read words quickly.	1
1.42: Word-level fluency practice to automaticity is not provided, or fluency is viewed only as text-reading fluency.	1
1.43: Fluency is practiced only in narrative text or with repeated readings of patterned text.	1
1.44: Fluency assessment allows acceptance of incorrectly decoded words if they are close in meaning to the target word (e.g., assessment based upon the cueing systems, M/S/V).	1

Aprendo Leyendo's fluency practices are **"met."** Fluency instruction focuses on reading out loud, and learners are offered several instances of practice, first with syllables, then with lists of words, and finally with phrases before moving on to connected text. Additionally, fluency assessment measures do not permit incorrectly decoded words, and miscues are marked as errors. The review team did note that Aprendo Leyendo emphasizes narrative text and students are not exposed to expository text until Skills Book 4. Thus, one recommendation would be to incorporate more expository text earlier in the program. Finally, the curriculum focuses on accuracy over speed and emphasizes the importance of fluency for reading comprehension. Thus, learners are offered repeated reading opportunities to develop precision, automaticity, and fluency, which, with explicit instruction and practice, ultimately allow learners to shift their attention from decoding to making meaning of text. The team did note that reading rate is also important in Spanish due to the transparent nature of the Spanish language. While Aprendo Leyendo emphasizes that reading speed should be aligned with an understanding of the text, the program also leaves student reading rates to teacher discretion, which may cause confusion with novice teachers or those new to the science of reading. Furthermore, educators are not prompted to record the time so there is no true words per minute score captured. Again, the program bases its rationale for this as fluency is a bridge to comprehension and educators would need to look to outside assessment measures to capture an oral reading fluency (ORF) score.

FINDINGS:

Components Supporting Language Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, and Writing

SECTIONS 2-4: Non-Negotiables for Language Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, and Writing

This section begins with a review of non-negotiable elements for language comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing before moving on to the language comprehension strands highlighted in Scarborough's (2001) reading rope. Therefore, identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

NON-NEGOTIABLES FOR LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION, READING COMPREHENSION, AND WRITING	SCORE
2-4.1: (LC, RC, W) In early grades, the instructional framework is primarily a workshop approach, emphasizing student choice and implicit, incidental, or embedded learning.	1
2-4.2: (LC, RC, W) Students are not exposed to rich vocabulary and complex syntax in reading and writing materials.	2
2-4.3: (RC) Comprehension activities focus mainly on assessing whether students understand content (the product of comprehension) instead of supporting the process of comprehending texts.	2
2-4.4: (RC, W) Writing is not taught or is taught separately from reading at all times.	
2-4.5: (LC, RC) Questioning during read-alouds focuses mainly on lower-level questioning skills.	2

Aprendo Leyendo's non-negotiables for language comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing were **"mostly met."** Reviewers found that the program's instructional framework is highly structured, as all of the comprehension activities accompany decodable text. Thus, it does not emphasize student choice or the workshop method. However, reviewers also observed that this focus on decodable text limits student exposure to rich vocabulary and complex syntax as learners are constrained to taught patterns. However, the program does provide instruction in some higher tier vocabulary through work with synonyms, antonyms, and math vocabulary. Aprendo Leyendo also acknowledges its emphasis on decodable text and reinforces that its partner schools must provide students with access to rich academic texts that include sophisticated vocabulary, diverse genres, and complex grammar, in addition to the materials provided within the curriculum.

Additionally, Aprendo Leyendo targets foundational transcription skills, like handwriting, spelling, and sentence composition, laying the foundation for teaching expository writing (e.g., capitalization, punctuation, sentence types, conjunctions, sentence structure). However, the writing process is not explicitly taught, and publishers recommend additional instruction outside of Aprendo Leyendo to address both the writing process and composition. Finally, questioning is utilized as a part of the curriculum, and the program emphasizes varied strategies, including visualizing, retelling, summarizing, making predictions and inferences, re-reading, paraphrasing vocabulary, and interpreting idioms. Additional activities for reading comprehension are also presented in the Teacher's Editions and include activities that target sequencing, cause and effect, and problem and solution. Still, students may benefit from more explicit routines and practice in how to monitor their own comprehension while reading consistently.

2B: Background Knowledge

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE	SCORE
2.1: Read-aloud opportunities emphasize simple stories or narrative texts. Read-aloud text is not sufficiently complex and/or does not include knowledge-building expository texts (i.e., topics related to science, social studies, current events).	
2.2: Opportunities to bridge existing knowledge to new knowledge is not apparent in instruction.	
2.3: Advanced (Grades 2-5): For students who are automatic with the code, texts for reading are primarily leveled texts that do not feature a variety of diverse, complex, knowledge-building text sets to develop background knowledge in a variety of subject areas.	

Aprendo Leyendo's practices for background knowledge were **"not applicable."** The curriculum's main focus is teaching students to acquire accurate and automatic decoding skills, and as such, practices for building background knowledge are not emphasized. The program's creators acknowledge this and stress that educators must provide students with access to age and grade-appropriate read-aloud opportunities as well as knowledge-building expository texts to develop their background knowledge.

2C: Vocabulary

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAGS PRACTICES FOR VOCABULARY	SCORE
2.7: Vocabulary worksheets and activities are used with little opportunity for deep understanding of vocabulary words.	3
2.8: Instruction includes memorization of isolated words and definitions out of context.	2
2.9: Tier 2 words are not taught explicitly and practiced; students are not given opportunities to use them in their speech, see them in print, and use them in writing.	3
2.10: Students are not exposed to and taught Tier 3 words.	3
2.11: Explicit instruction in morphology is not present and/or not taught according to a scope and sequence (i.e., simple to complex) consistently throughout K-5 instruction.	2

Aprendo Leyendo's practices for vocabulary were **"somewhat met."** Overall, the team observed that the curriculum does not emphasize a deep understanding of vocabulary. While the program does include lessons on multiple-meaning words, categorization, and figurative language, the overall focus is on decoding. At times, discussion of unknown words is avoided to interrupt the flow of the story because "...discussing the definition may obstruct understanding" (Teacher's Edition: En la Escuela, pg. vii). However, point-of-contact teaching could be utilized in this situation, where the teacher provides a quick synonym or substitution to learners. Additionally, Aprendo Leyendo's creators acknowledge that educators must provide students with access to rich academic vocabulary outside of program time.

The team noted that all vocabulary included is controlled and aligns with the patterns students have been explicitly taught. This made it challenging to observe sophisticated Tier 2 or Tier 3 words. Aprendo Leyendo includes the concept of synonyms and antonyms, multiple-meaning words, and mathematical vocabulary, including ordinal and cardinal numbers and counting by 10s to 100. However, the team was unable to locate instances of direct, explicit instruction of either Tier 2 or Tier 3 words. Furthermore, while there is a morphology present in the program, it is primarily instruction in derivational and inflectional suffixes. The reviewers felt that additional instruction in morphemes as units of meaning to support vocabulary development may be beneficial, particularly for older students.

2D: Language Structures

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAGS PRACTICES FOR LANGUAGE STRUCTURES	SCORE
2.18: Conventions of print, grammar, and syntax are taught implicitly or opportunistically with no evidence of consistent, explicit, simple to complex instruction across all grade levels.	2
2.19: Instruction does not include teacher modeling nor sufficient opportunities for discussion.	2
2.20: Students are asked to memorize parts of speech as a list without learning in context and through application.	1

Reviewers found that Aprendo Leyendo's practices for language structures were **"mostly met."** Reviewers found that the curriculum provides opportunities for students to learn about the conventions of print, grammar, and syntax explicitly. The curriculum provides educators with an instructional sequence that includes the following progression:

• Skills Book 1: common and proper nouns, tildes and accent use, basic punctuation (capital letters and periods)

• Skills Book 2: pronouns, suffix (-s), introduction of interrogative and exclamatory sentences, and agreement between articles and nouns

• Skills Book 3: conjunctions - understanding and use of but, that's why, and because, and agreement between articles, nouns, and adjectives

• Skills Book 4: suffixes (-es, & -ito/ita), verbs in simple present tense

• Skills Book 5: interrogative pronouns, question mark use, verbs in present, past, and future tenses

• Skills Book 6: • Suffixes (-mente, -ción, -ísimo/ísima) and pronominal verbs

Capitalization, punctuation, parts of speech, different sentence types, and the use of conjunctions are all explicitly taught. The teacher addresses this orally first, guiding students to answer questions in complete sentences before making the transition to written expression. The table below includes examples highlighted throughout.

Part of Speech	Examples
Nouns	-Distinction of proper from common nouns (reinforced throughout Cuadernillo 1 and all other Cuadernillos -Nouns and their meaning if they have a tilde (Step 15) -Differences between Nouns and Verbs (Step 65)
Pronouns	-"el" (as the article "the") versus "él" (as the pronoun "he"), and the concept that pronouns replace the nouns (Step 19) -Personal pronouns: la/las (Step 32) -Interrogative pronouns (Step 73)
Verbs	-Future Tense (Step 32) -Present Tense (Step 35) -Infinitive verbs (Step 41) -Reflexive Verbs (Step 57) -Conjugations (Step 67) -Present Indicative: "Now you...." (Step 72) -Reflexive Verbs. Past Indefinite (Step 81) -Gerunds (Step 93)
Adverbs	-Adverbs of Time: tomorrow (Step 32) -Adverbs of Time: now (Step 49) -Adverbs of Time: yesterday (Step 65) -Adverbs of place (Step 82) -Adverbs of Manner (Step 91)
Adjectives	-Qualifying adjectives: gender and number agreement (Step 33) -Qualifying adjectives (Step 61) -Concordance: gender, number, position (Step 70)
Prepositions	-Preposition: to - to bed/to the house (Step 8) -Preposition: with (Step 21) -Prepositions: in, of (Step 33) -Prepositions: between, about (Step 82
Conjunctions	-but (Step 35) -because (Step 37) -and (Step 39) -but/because (Step 45) -for that (Step 48)
Suffixes	-s (Step 32) -ito/ita (Step 61) -mente (Step 91) -ísimo/ísima (Step 92) -ción (Step 93)

These concepts are taught in an age and developmentally-appropriate manner and review of taught terms is continually woven into instruction.

2E: Verbal Reasoning

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAGS PRACTICES FOR VERBAL REASONING	SCORE
2.26: Inferencing strategies are not taught explicitly and may be based only on picture clues and not text (i.e., picture walking).	2
2.27: Students do not practice inference as a discrete skill.	2

Aprendo Leyendo's practices for verbal reasoning were **"mostly met."** Students were asked to practice this skill through questioning, but this is the primary method utlized, leaving room for improvement in creating programming that includes additional instruction practices. For example, after reading all of the stories in Step 37, *Skills Book 3: A la Playa*, students work to answer "because" sentences and make simple inferences. Specifically, learners must infer that Nono, one of the story characters, hid the treasure. However, reviewers were unable to find evidence of activities that teach students to use the story clues and their own knowledge to infer independently.

Additionally, while Aprendo Leyendo includes some suggestions for what to ask, when, and how to summarize the main idea, Aprendo Leyendo's verbal reasoning practices are largely dependent upon educator knowledge as it is the teacher who plans what to do before, during, and after reading (Teacher's Manual, pg. 47). For example, during reading it is the teacher who must remember to prompt students to infer characters' emotions as well as put themselves in the characters' shoes to determine what a character might be thinking and/or feeling in the moment. While the curriculum offers an example of questioning related to character emotions, such as, *"How does Maca feel about getting lost in the city? Because?"* it relies heavily on the assumption that teachers possess a comprehensive understanding of the science of reading as there is limited information and further scripting provided. This may pose challenges for educators who require more explicit guidance on how to implement evidence-based reading instruction.

2F: Literacy Knowledge

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAGS PRACTICES FOR LITERACY KNOWLEDGE	SCORE
2.33: Genre types and features are not explicitly taught.	2
2.34: Genre-specific text structures and corresponding signal words are not explicitly taught and practiced.	2

Aprendo Leyendo's practices for literacy knowledge were **"mostly met."** There is evidence of genre-specific language throughout the program, and Aprendo Leyendo includes both narrative (realistic fiction, fantasy, fairy tales, fables, poetry) and informational text. Students learn about the elements of story grammar, including character, setting, and plot, while students practice reading maps, summarizing facts, and answering questions using information from the text. While informational/ nonfiction text is featured in the later Skills Books 4 through 6, reviewers found that the majority of Aprendo Leyendo's materials centered on narrative fiction. This presents a problem as it limits learners' exposure to diverse genres and impedes the development of the critical reading skills necessary to engage with and comprehend a variety of text types. However, the program's creators stress the importance of teacher read aloud outside of program time and that teacher read aloud is a powerful component of any reading program. Here educators are encouraged to select stories from a wide variety of genres, including fantasy, realistic fiction, poetry, and informational text.

Section 3: Reading Comprehension

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR READING COMPREHENSION	SCORE
3.1: Students are asked to independently read texts they are unable to decode with accuracy in order to practice reading comprehension strategies (e.g., making inferences, predicting, summarizing, visualizing).	1
3.2: Students are asked to independently apply reading comprehension strategies primarily in short, disconnected readings at the expense of engaging in knowledge-building text sets.	1
3.3: Emphasis on independent reading and book choice without engaging with complex texts.	1
3.4: Materials for comprehension instruction are predominantly predictable and/or leveled texts.	1
3.5: Students are not taught methods to monitor their comprehension while reading.	2

Aprendo Leyendo's practices for reading comprehension were **"mostly met."** Independent reading is not a component of this curriculum, and reading activities are always accompanied by the teacher. Student Skills Books are composed of larger units divided into shorter texts, which could allow for exploration and expansion of vocabulary within related topics. Specifically, in second grade, there are informative texts, while in first grade, narrative texts could build knowledge about their context. However, this would be dependent on the teacher and their own knowledge base. Additionally, all topics presented are familiar to learners, which facilitates comprehension activities. Students are taught some practices for monitoring comprehension, and teachers monitor comprehension through questioning. However, Aprendo Leyendo has room for improvement in fostering student metacognition, another essential skill for monitoring and comprehending text.

4A: Writing — Handwriting

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAGS PRACTICES FOR HANDWRITING	SCORE
4.1: No direct instruction in handwriting.	1
4.2: Handwriting instruction predominantly features unlined paper or picture paper.	1
4.3: Handwriting instruction is an isolated add-on.	1

Aprendo Leyendo's practices for handwriting were **"met."** Handwriting stood out as one of the curriculum's strongest components as it is integrated into core reading and writing instruction and follows the sequence of letter learning. The team found ample evidence of direct instruction in and teacher modeling of handwriting. For example, the Teacher's Handbook states, "When the teacher writes in the air, he performs the mirror letter" (pg. 25). Additionally, handwriting instruction predominantly features lined paper and examples can be found within Skills Book 1: Paso a Paso in multiple locations including pages 3, 9, 15, and 21. Overall, the team observed that Aprendo Leyendo's handwriting instruction was not an isolated add-on but rather an integral part of the curriculum fully integrated into both reading and writing instruction.

4B: Writing — Spelling

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR SPELLING	SCORE
4.7: No evidence of explicit spelling instruction; no spelling scope and sequence for spelling, or the spelling scope and sequence is not aligned with the phonics / decoding scope and sequence.	1
4.8: No evidence of phoneme segmentation and/or phoneme-grapheme mapping to support spelling instruction.	1
4.9: Patterns in decoding are not featured in encoding/spelling; spelling lists are based on content or frequency of word use and not connected to decoding/phonics lessons.	1
4.10: Students practice spelling by memorization only (e.g., rainbow writing, repeated writing, pyramid writing).	1
4.11: Spelling patterns for each phoneme are taught all at once (e.g., all spellings of long /ā/) instead of a systematic progression to develop automaticity with individual grapheme/phonemes	1

Aprendo Leyendo's practices for spelling were **"met."** The spelling scope and sequence is aligned with the phonics/decoding scope and sequence. It is explicit, grows in complexity, and is tied to the text read for both decoding and fluency practice. The review team additionally observed that some Spanish spelling concepts could be more concrete (e.g., when to use accent marks, the use of "h," the difference between "b" and "v" in Spanish).

4C: Writing — Composition

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR COMPOSITION	SCORE
4.17: Writing prompts are provided with little time for modeling, planning, and brainstorming ideas	
4.18: Writing is primarily unstructured with few models or graphic organizers.	
4.19: Conventions, grammar, and sentence structure is not explicitly taught and practiced systematically (i.e., from simple to complex) with opportunities for practice to automaticity, instead it is taught implicitly or opportunistically.	2
4.20: Writing instruction is primarily narrative or unstructured choice.	
4.21: Students are not taught the writing process (i.e., planning, revising, editing).	
4.22: Writing is taught as a standalone and is not used to further reading comprehension.	

Aprendo Leyendo's practices for composition were mostly **"not applicable"** For the majority of this curriculum, learners are not asked to engage in written composition beyond the dictation of words and sentences. The review team did find some evidence of explicit instruction in conventions, grammar, and sentence structure, but again, this was relegated to lesson dictation only. However, this curriculum is promoted as a foundational reading program that addresses reading, spelling, and handwriting only. As such, the creators of Aprendo Leyendo stress that adopters of the curriculum must incorporate composition instruction in addition to the programming provided. This ensures that students learn about the writing process and engage in opportunities that connect what they are reading about to written expression.

FINDINGS:

Components Supporting Assessment

SECTION 5: Assessment

Identification of the following red flag practices were prioritized in the review of this section.

NON-NEGOTIABLES FOR ASSESSMENT	SCORE
5.1: Assessments measure comprehension only without additional assessment measures to determine what is leading to comprehension weaknesses (e.g., phonics, phoneme awareness, nonsense word fluency, decoding, encoding, fluency, vocabulary, listening comprehension).	2
5.2: Assessments include miscue analysis in which misread words that have the same meaning are marked as correct.	1

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR ASSESSMENT	SCORE
5.6: Assessments result in benchmarks according to a leveled text gradient.	1
5.7: Foundational skills assessments are primarily running records or similar assessments that are based on whole language or cueing strategies (e.g., read the word by looking at the first letter, use picture support for decoding).	1
5.8: Phonics skills are not assessed.	1
5.9: Phoneme awareness is not assessed	2
5.10: Decoding skills are assessed using real words only.	1
5.11: Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) assessments are not used.	2
5.12: The suite of assessments does not address aspects of language comprehension (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, listening comprehension).	4
5.13: Multilingual Learners are not assessed in their home language.	

Aprendo Leyendo's non-negotiables and practices for assessment were **"somewhat met."** The assessment suite does not provide benchmark scores based on leveled text or utilize running records based on whole language or cueing strategies. This curriculum assesses students' phonics skills, including decoding and encoding. By assessing encoding, educators are able to understand their student's ability to segment phonemes; however, a standalone assessment of phoneme awareness is not included. Outside of informal assessments, Aprendo Leyendo does not include measures of vocabulary or listening comprehension. As mentioned previously, educators are not prompted to record student oral reading rate, so there is no true words per minute score captured. Thus, for many of these areas, educators would need to look outside measures to ensure student assessment needs are met.

FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

Overall, the reviewed components for Aprendo Leyendo 's Foundational Skills Curriculum were found to "mostly meet" or "met" most criteria for Grades K-2. This means there was minimal evidence of red flag practices. While an evidence-aligned core curriculum is a critical part of any literacy program, it is no substitute for building a solid foundation of educator and leader knowledge in the science of reading as well as a coaching system to support fidelity of implementation.

STRENGTHS

Aprendo Leyendo sets itself apart by carefully considering student literacy development in Spanish to help its learners develop linguistic proficiency. Through comprehensive instructional design and thoughtful programming, the program is tailored to address the diverse needs and abilities of Spanish-speaking students.

Aprendo Leyendo's program demonstrates strengths in explicit instruction, offering clear guidance on phonemic awareness, phonics, and spelling, along with supporting materials that provide a systematic scope and sequence from simple to complex.

Aprendo Leyendo's curriculum is well-organized and provides teachers with high-quality materials to guide them in delivering systematic teaching of the Spanish code.

Aprendo Leyendo includes authentic materials written by Latin American authors. These stories are culturally relevant and affirming to students, resonating with their experiences and identities.

Aprendo Leyendo integrates foundational transcription skills, like handwriting, spelling, and sentence composition, into its core programming, laying the foundation for teaching expository writing (e.g., capitalization, punctuation, sentence types, conjunctions, sentence structure).

CHALLENGES

Since Aprendo Leyendo is a foundational skills program, educators will need to provide students with additional opportunities to build background knowledge as well as exposure to writing process and composition. The program developers are forthright about this and emphasize its necessity.

Aprendo Leyendo's instructional routine for its "Palabras Con Prisa" or "Words in a Hurry" could be interpreted as whole-word memorization. The publisher clarified that students should use phonic decoding as a primary reading strategy for these words and will amend the instructional language in the teacher's handbook to emphasize this for educators.

While Aprendo Leyendo builds student phonetic awareness through work with syllables and initial sounds, reviewers recommend including more opportunities for students to work with medial and ending sounds.

Aprendo Leyendo could build upon its vocabulary practices by incorporating more direct, explicit instruction of Tier 2 and 3 words. Additionally, learners would benefit from the opportunity to engage in activities that call for deep processing of word meanings to enhance their understanding and facilitate the development of both a depth of knowledge and ease of access to meaning.

While Aprendo Leyendo's curriculum and materials are well organized and include high-quality materials, teachers must possess a solid foundation of the science of reading to deliver the program effectively. There is limited information and scripting provided, which may pose challenges for educators who require more explicit guidance on how to implement evidence-based reading instruction.
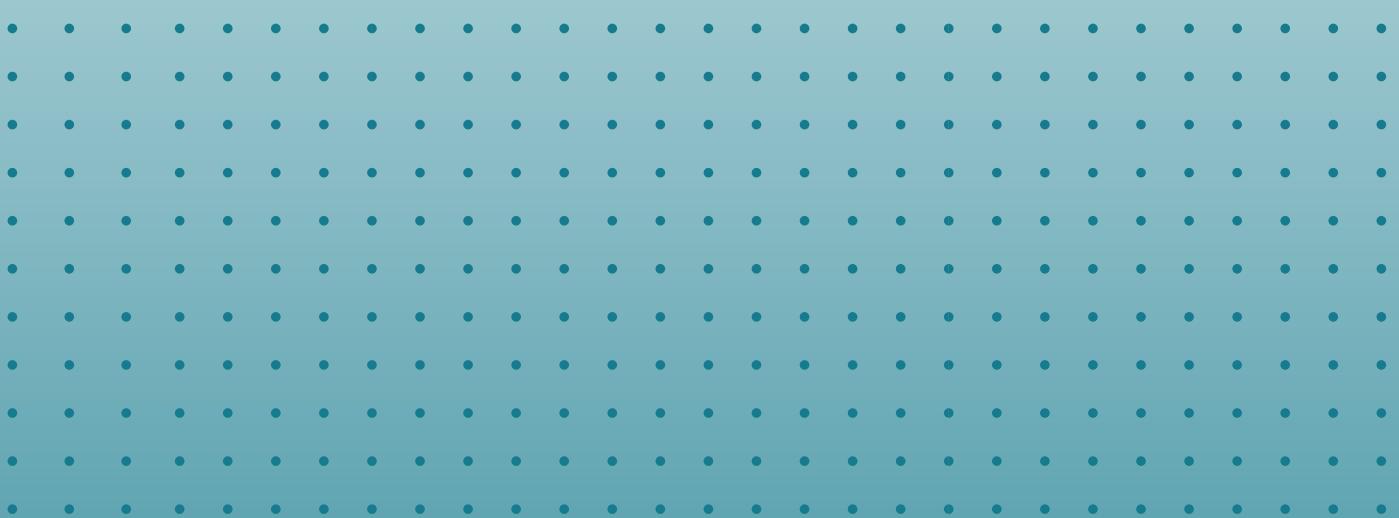
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PUBLISHER'S RESPONSE

Aprendo Leyendo Curriculum 2018 for Grades K-2

The Aprendo Leyendo (AL) reading program is committed to improving Spanish reading instruction by promoting best practices. Aprendo Leyendo appreciates The Reading League's aim to enhance awareness, comprehension, and implementation of evidence-based reading strategies. This letter contains information not included in The Reading League's review with the goal of presenting a comprehensive understanding of the full scope and reach of the Aprendo Leyendo program.

The Review Team's Findings
Aprendo Leyendo is pleased and proud to report that the program "meets" or "mostly meets" the majority of the criteria in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, handwriting, spelling, and reading comprehension for Grades K-2.

The Reading League's findings are consistent with the outcomes in schools using Aprendo Leyendo and, especially, in a recent research trial evaluation of the program conducted by the Haskins Global Literacy Hub at Yale and the Universidad de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires. Reading outcomes for first and second graders receiving Aprendo Leyendo instruction was contrasted with that of students receiving business-as-usual instruction in public schools in the city of Buenos Aires. Students in the Aprendo Leyendo group demonstrated significantly greater growth than their control peers on important dimensions of reading and reading-related skills. Please visit the Aprendo Leyendo website and Haskins Global Literacy Hub for more detailed information about the trials and for further information about our research partners and projects.

Other Important Components of Aprendo Leyendo
In addition to the Aprendo Leyendo materials that were reviewed, it is important to note that vital components of the program crucial for successful implementation were not included in this review:

Professional Development: The professional development that is an essential component of the program includes coursework, ongoing support with a coaching model, and workshops. The goal of AL's professional development is to build teacher knowledge in the science of reading and to explain the rationale for each component of the program. This ensures effective instruction by teachers and successful reading outcomes for students.

The courses are taught in Spanish by master teachers with years of experience teaching AL in schools. The comprehensive teacher training and ongoing support can be tailored to the needs of individual schools and districts.

Aprendo Leyendo Website: Additional resources are available on the AL website. These resources include curriculum-based tests, placement tests, lesson plan forms, homework, and reinforcement activities. AL was created for teachers by teachers. Its online resources are easy to use and teacher-friendly.

In order to support teachers when choosing books to read aloud to students in Spanish, a curated list of recommended authentic books can be found on the website. Read-aloud books allow teachers to present new ideas, complex vocabulary, and thought-provoking text that students cannot yet read themselves. Students build reading comprehension and background knowledge, as well as strengthen language development when listening to and discussing books that are read to them.

In closing, Aprendo Leyendo is always striving to incorporate additional instructional practices that are based on the latest research. The Aprendo Leyendo team appreciates the valuable feedback from The Reading League and will consider the suggested recommendations.

Magdalena Zavalia

Magdalena Zavalia
Aprendo Leyendo

Highlights from The Reading League Review

Phonemic Awareness

"Aprendo Leyendo's instruction attends to work at the phoneme level and students are offered frequent opportunities to practice using phonemes that represent various letters found in the Student Skills Books."

Phonics

"Phonics instruction is systematic and sequential, building from simple letter-sound correspondences to more complex phonic patterns. Letter-sound correspondences are taught systematically and practiced in the Student Skills Books and Decodable Chapter Books."

"The curriculum places great emphasis on instruction at the syllable level. This approach aligns with literacy development in Spanish, where syllable awareness is critical for language mastery."

Vocabulary

"Aprendo Leyendo includes the concept of synonyms and antonyms, multiple-meaning words, and mathematical vocabulary, including ordinal and cardinal numbers and counting by 10s to 100."

AL exposes students to a wealth of vocabulary. As students progress through the program, this vocabulary becomes increasingly sophisticated and intricate, enriching their linguistic repertoire.

Reading Comprehension

"All instruction is teacher-directed."

"Comprehension questions are tied directly to the storyline/plot."

"Strategies for educator use are embedded within the teacher's guide."

"Finally, questioning is utilized as a part of the curriculum, and the program emphasizes varied strategies, including visualizing, retelling, summarizing, making predictions and inferences, re-reading, paraphrasing vocabulary, and interpreting idioms. Additional activities for reading comprehension are also presented in the Teacher's Editions and include activities that target sequencing, cause and effect, and problem and solution."

Handwriting

"Handwriting stood out as one of the curriculum's strongest components, as it is integrated into core reading and writing instruction and follows the sequence of letter learning. The team found ample evidence of direct instruction in and teacher modeling of handwriting."

Spelling

"The spelling scope and sequence is aligned with the phonics/decoding scope and sequence. It is explicit, grows in complexity, and is tied to the text read for both decoding and fluency practice."

Writing

"Aprendo Leyendo targets foundational transcription skills, like handwriting, spelling, and sentence composition, laying the foundation for teaching expository writing (e.g., capitalization, punctuation, sentence types, conjunctions, sentence structure)."

Decodable Chapter Books

"There is evidence of genre-specific language throughout the program, and Aprendo Leyendo includes both narrative (realistic fiction, fantasy, fairy tales, fables, poetry) and informational text. Students learn about the elements of story grammar, including character, setting, and plot, while students practice reading maps, summarizing facts, and answering questions using information from the text."

Aprendo Leyendo has a coordinated comprehensive reading series of five chapter books that are beautifully illustrated. They contain coherent and entertaining narratives that have all the basic elements of good storytelling—character, setting, plot, conflict and resolution. All of these elements support instruction in comprehension and reading strategies. Nonfiction selections are included in the series as well.

Check out Aprendo Leyendo's sister English reading program
www.pafprogram.com