THE
READING
LEAGUE
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2025

Curriculum Navigation Report
Superkids (2017), 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, p. 8)

Due to the popularity of the science of reading movement, the term "science of reading" has been used as a marketing tool, promising a quick fix for administrators and decision makers seeking a product to check a box next to this buzzword. 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. (p.6)

Accordingly, The Reading League's *Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines* (CEGs) is 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.

This resource is anchored by frameworks validated by findings from the science of reading research that provide additional understandings that substantiate both aligned and non-aligned practices (i.e., "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, while red flags specify any non-aligned practices in the following areas:
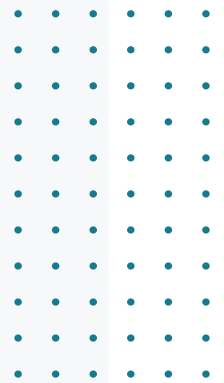
- Word Recognition

- Language Comprehension

- Reading Comprehension

- Writing

- Assessment

The CEGs have been used by educators, building and district leaders, local education agencies, and state education agencies as a primary tool to find evidence of red flags, or practices that may interfere with the development of skilled reading. 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. In the spirit of its mission to advance the awareness, understanding, and use of evidence-aligned reading instruction, expert review teams engaged in a large-scale review of the most widely-used curricula currently used in the United States in order to develop informative reports of each.

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 have undergone an inter-rater reliability study with positive results. 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 local education agencies to support their journey of selecting, using, and refining instruction and instructional materials to ensure they align with 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.*
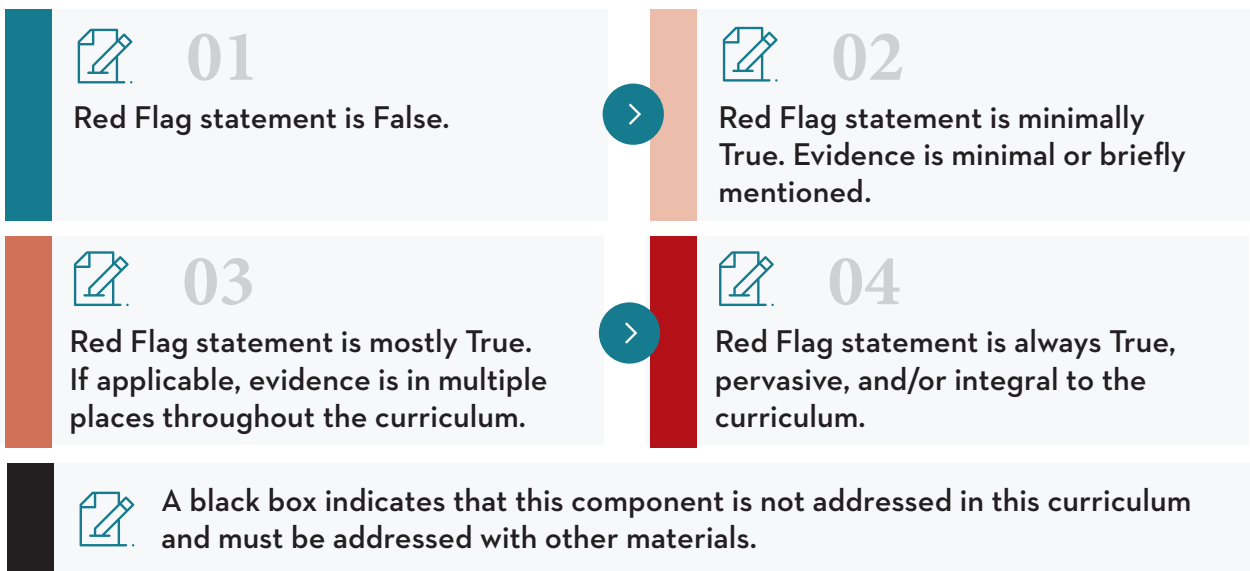
CURRICULUM DESCRIPTION

The evaluation on the following pages features the review of Superkids (2017), which is created for students in Grades K-2.

For this report, reviewers closely examined the lessons and materials aligned to the program's three strands: Word Work, Reading, and Writing. This includes teacher materials like Teacher and Program Guides, Assessment Books, Teacher Resource Books, and Letter Formation Guides for handwriting instruction. Additionally, the team reviewed classroom resources including the program's Read-Aloud texts and Big Books as well as student-focused materials like strand specific student skills books, decodable texts and magazines, and the program's Book Club books. There is an online component to the Superkids curriculum; however, the review team did not examine these materials as a part of this review.

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 based on the Red Flag rubric that follows and to report their findings. For a more comprehensive description of the review process, visit The Reading League Compass's Curriculum Decision Makers page.

01	02
Red Flag statement is False.	Red Flag statement is minimally True. Evidence is minimal or briefly mentioned.
03	04
Red Flag statement is mostly True. If applicable, evidence is in multiple places throughout the curriculum.	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: The three-cueing system is taught as a strategy 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 is given 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

Superkids' **word recognition** non-negotiables are **"mostly met."** The team found no evidence that the three-cueing system is taught as a strategy for decoding in any of the program's materials. Students participate in daily phonics instruction which follows a systematic scope and sequence. Students also engage in reading controlled text that aligns to the scope and sequence. Teachers are instructed to help students decode words if they are having difficulty as opposed to directing them to use picture cues, use context, or guess.

The K-2 Skills Overview for the entire program can be accessed from the Superkids/Zaner-Bloser website. The team, however, was unable to locate this document within the hard copy teacher materials. The Program Guide for each grade level provides an overview of the skills introduced and reviewed in each unit. This is broken down into corresponding lesson parts. For example, in Grades K-1, students participate in Phonics and Structural Analysis, Spelling, Fluency, Vocabulary, Comprehension, Writing, Grammar, Usage & Mechanics, and Lasting Lessons, which are connected to larger life lessons or social emotional learning. Students in Grade 2 participate in these components as well as Study & Research Skills. Weekly scopes and sequences for lesson content are included in the Teacher Guide for each grade level unit. Grades 1 and 2 begin the school year with review units designed to reinforce previously taught skills. For kindergarten through Grade 2, daily routines include informal assessments to evaluate students' decoding

and encoding abilities, focusing on previously taught content and skills. The K-2 Skills Overview highlights that skills taught in one grade are systematically reviewed and, if necessary, retaught in subsequent years to ensure mastery.

The team observed that guidance to memorize whole words is utilized for words identified as "Memory Words." Memory Words are high-frequency words with irregular patterns or patterns that have not yet been introduced to learners.

When teaching Memory Words, children are told the word and practice reading controlled sentences containing the word. There is no instruction to guide students identify the sounds in the word or link sounds with known, regular spellings. For example, in Grade 1, Review Unit, Lesson 3, students are tasked to review the Memory Words "I" and "a" from kindergarten. The Teacher Guide states:

> Memory Words are high-frequency words that children are taught to recognize by sight. These words are either phonetically irregular and can't be decoded, or they contain letter sounds that haven't been taught yet…Point to the two pink words *(I, a)*. Explain these are Memory Words, words that children have to remember how to read rather than sound out. Tell children these Memory Words are 'I' and 'a.' (p. 34)

This is a missed opportunity to discuss how these high-frequency words don't follow the typical letter-sound correspondences. In the Grade 2 Review Unit entitled "Goodbye Summer," educators are tasked to preview or review Memory Words with students by writing the words on the board and then referring back to them as they connect to the story; however, no other direction is offered to educators (pp. 25, 30). This lack of clarity is problematic because it leaves educators without a clear framework or strategies for effectively teaching or reinforcing these high-frequency words.

1B: Phonological and Phoneme Awareness

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

RED FLAG 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

Superkids' **phonological and phonemic awareness** practices are **"mostly met."** Overall, both phonological sensitivity and phonemic awareness instruction is provided in the core curriculum, but it would be strengthened by leveraging supplementary phonemic awareness resources including the *Superkids Phonemic Awareness: Daily Lessons and Intervention*. Focus skills for phonological awareness instruction are listed in the K-2 Skills Overview document. However, these items are highlighted in blue to indicate this instruction is found in the supplemental resource only. This scope and sequence shows that work with sound articulation and the larger units of speech sounds (e.g., syllables and onset and rime) is a focus at the beginning of kindergarten and shifts to the phoneme level starting in Unit 7. Here students in kindergarten begin with initial phoneme isolation and move onto blending and segmenting phonemes for Units 10 through 13 at the end of the year. In Grades 1 and 2, the focus of phonological awareness work in all 16 units includes the articulation of target sounds as well as blending, segmenting, and manipulating phonemes. Blends are practiced as individual sounds. For example, in Grade 1 Teacher Guide, Unit 10, Lesson 4, educators are prompted to assist students with segmenting phonemes by stating, "The word is steam. Say it. (steam) Say each sound. (/s/.../t/.../ē/.../m/) What word? (steam)" (p. 130).

Additionally, the team noted discrepancies with the time frame designated for the instructional block. The K-2 Skills Overview provides pacing information at the top of each page that reads, "Teach 60-90 minutes each day plus 10-12 minutes for The Superkids Phonemic Awareness." However, the grade level Program Guides provide a unit organization chart that shows daily instruction broken into the following segments: 30 minutes for Word Work, 60 minutes for Reading, and 30 minutes for Writing. This creates a significant challenge, as the review team was unable to determine how the daily content of each unit could be effectively delivered within a 90-minute block (as opposed to a 120-minute block). This is particularly concerning given the expectation to incorporate both small group instruction and a whole-group comprehension component into most lessons. The reviewers felt that teachers would require the 120-minute instructional block to effectively deliver the Word Work, Reading, and Writing components, plus an additional 10-12 minutes for the program's phonemic awareness work as outlined in the supplemental phonemic awareness resource. As such, reviewers encouraged the publisher to provide educators with additional guidance around the organization of the literacy block if a reduction of 30 minutes, as reflected on the K-2 Skills Overview, is an earnest recommendation.

Regarding assessment, the teacher materials provided for each grade level include two Assessment Book resources that include testing directions and reproducibles for each unit test. In kindergarten, the Beginning-of-the-Year Test, Units 1, 2, 4, and the End-of-the-Year Assessment reflect measures of proficiency with phonological awareness skills beginning with larger units (e.g., syllables) and progressing to phonemes by the end of the year. However, most of the kindergarten units and progress measures (Units 3 and Units 5 through 13) do not include a formal measure of phonological awareness proficiency. The publisher clarified that daily routines serve as informal assessments for teachers to monitor student progress. However, the formal assessments are mostly included in the supplemental phonemic awareness resource.

1C: Phonics and Phonic Decoding

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

RED FLAG 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/).	2
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.	2
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.	2
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
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.	2

Superkids' **phonics and phonic decoding** practices are **"mostly met."** Instruction and review of letter-sound correspondences are appropriately paced throughout Grades K-2. Teachers utilize a Word Work Book and the Sound-Spelling cards to effectively teach sound-spelling relationships. As mentioned previously, the program's scope and sequence for phonics is included in the [K-2 Skills Overview](#) document. Phonics skills are introduced and practiced through decoding, encoding, and the reading of controlled text. Lesson content is cumulative, so once a skill has been introduced and reviewed within a grade, it is authentically embedded in future lessons. Reviewers observed that in Grade 2, more skills were introduced at a faster pace. However, since most of these skills had been introduced in earlier grades, the accelerated rate of instruction was deemed appropriate.

Teachers are provided with a reference list of all the Phoneme-Articulation/Sound-Spelling Card Images in the back of the supplemental *Phonemic Awareness Daily Lesson & Intervention* resource. Several representations of short vowel sounds present concerns as the target sound is followed by a phoneme that can influence the vowel sound, including "egg," "igloo," and "umbrella." Furthermore, the sound /j/ is represented by "jack-in-the-box," which consists of multiple words and sounds and may be confusing to some students. In addition to keywords that designate letter-sound correspondences, Superkids provides spelling cards. For example, the keyword image for the sound /ā/ is cake, while additional spelling cards are provided to introduce the different spellings of /ā/. This includes the VCe keyword "snake," the vowel team "ai" keyword "rain," and the vowel team "ay" keyword "play." However, the Teacher Guide does not make any explicit connections between the articulation cards and the sound-spelling cards.

Regarding blending, teachers are directed to tell students to blend or to assist them in the blending of words; however, explicit modeling of how to stretch and orally blend the letter sounds is not provided in the core Teacher Guide. The daily routine instructs teachers to have students read the words on the board or in the Big Book of Decoding aloud. For example, in the Grade 1 Teacher Guide for Unit 1, Lesson 1, teachers are directed to help students decode words featuring the final "ch." After reviewing the sound /ch/, students are directed to "read the words aloud and trace the line under 'ch' in each word" (p. 7). Later, in the Phonics and Fluency component of the lesson plan, teachers are directed to preview decodable words with students and to "help children blend the sounds to read the 'ch' words in the first two columns" (p. 7). This approach offers educators limited guidance on strategies to support students who struggle with blending, leaving teachers without the specific tools needed to address these issues.

If students struggle when decoding words, teachers are directed to use the Ten-Minute Tuck-In activities for reinforcing and reteaching target skills. However, these activities are supplemental as no dedicated time is allocated for them within the instructional block. Additionally, they do not offer explicit instruction or practice in blending sounds to support decoding skills. For example, in a Ten-Minute Tuck-In activity that focuses on decoding rhyming words featuring "_le" (/el/), teachers are instructed to write the word "tickle" on the board. They are then directed to underline "le" and ask what sound the letters stand for.

Teachers assist children with blending the letter-sounds to decode the word. Educators are then prompted to erase the "t" and replace it with a "p," to create the new word "pickle." Again, educators are instructed to help students decode the new word. However, this scripting lacks explicit directives on blending to support both teachers and students.

The only explicit instruction in oral blending is provided in the supplemental *Superkids Skill-Building Book: Activities and Resources for Differentiating Instruction*. This resource includes a section on blending with an explicit routine and guidance for teachers on how to help students blend. Additionally, this resource includes suggestions for blending nonsense and real words through the use of activities such as blending races and other games to assist students in developing this skill. However, this is not a component of the Tier 1 instruction as it is not referenced in the Teacher Guide as a resource. Adopters of this curriculum must be mindful of this when delivering the Superkids program and look to this supplemental resource for additional guidance on blending.

As mentioned previously, the team observed that guidance to memorize whole words is utilized during the Memory Words routine. However, this was generally not true for the word reading component of the Word Work block. Occasional exceptions occur, particularly when introducing texts for independent reading. In these instances, the Story Words that are not controlled or decodable are told to students, and no effort is made to make connections to known sound-spellings in targeted words. For example, in the Grade 1 Teacher Guide, Unit 8, Lesson 2, teachers are provided with the following scripting:

> Read the Story Words and review the Memory Words. Point to and say the Story Words (horse, play, Mrs. Dearing, together, toy, eyes). Have children repeat each word after you. Explain that the word Mrs. is used by some married women before their last name. Tell them that a character in the story is called Mrs. Dearing. Then have them read aloud the Memory Words in the banner. (p. 17)

Additionally, in Grade 1, Unit 6, Lesson 2, which features the Superkids Reader, "The Foolish Giant," the team observed the use of rebuses for the words "giant," "castle," and "knight." Students are instructed to remember what each picture represents, as the rebus is used in place of the word throughout the text. However, the majority of the curriculum consistently drives students to decode the words on the page. For instance, the Book Club Teacher Guide for Grade 2, Unit 1, Lesson 3, directly tells teachers to "listen to each child read while other children in the group follow along. Help children sound out decodable words. Pictures are used to make predictions and revise these predictions rather than to identify unknown words" (pp. 19-23). This reflects the program's emphasis on teaching students to rely on the words and their decoding skills to read the text.

While Superkids is designed for students in Grades K-2, it does include some optional instruction to chunk longer words into syllables for decoding. This occurs within the Ten-Minute Tuck-In lessons, beginning in Grade 1, Unit 1. Additionally, in Grade 1, Unit 7, core phonics lessons introduce prefixes and suffixes that add syllables to words. The meanings of

prefixes and suffixes are taught, but instruction is inconsistent and lacks guidance on applying these elements as strategies for decoding words, including the use of morphemes to decode multisyllabic words. By Unit 12, explicit syllabication instruction begins and is practiced consistently throughout the rest of Grade 1 and into Grade 2. Students learn that each syllable contains a vowel sound and are taught to divide words between vowels. When there are two consonants between vowels, they are generally instructed to divide the word between the consonants, read each syllable separately, and then blend the syllables together. However, the program does not explicitly teach syllable types or provide systematic strategies for using syllables to decode longer, multisyllabic words.

1D: Fluency

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

RED FLAG 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.	2
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

Superkids' **fluency** practices are **"mostly met."** Fluency is a component of daily instruction across all grades, with students regularly practicing fluent reading and spelling of individual words. In kindergarten and Grade 1, teachers model fluency for the whole group by reading aloud selections from the *Superkids* or *Super Smart* texts. Differentiation tips are provided and can be used to guide small-group fluency instruction as well as partner activities. By Grade 2, fluency with independently read texts becomes a greater instructional focus. Here, students participate in daily practice using Superkids Readers and receive explicit fluency instruction within text.

Reviewers did note that teacher guidance for providing fluency feedback is somewhat limited and primarily focuses on having students mimic the teacher's model.

Fluency instruction targets a number of skills besides rate, including reading with expression, observing dialogue, using appropriate stress and phrasing, distinguishing between related words, and reading longer words. However, the team observed that lessons that target accuracy are limited. Reviewers noted one example in Grade 2, Unit 2, Lesson 7, on distinguishing related words, where fluency instruction targeted accuracy. Teacher support materials state the following:

> Point out invent, invention, inventing, inventors, and inventions. Have children repeat each word after you. Explain that when words begin with the same letters, it can be easy to mix them up. Remind children to look at all the letters in a word to make sure they read the word correctly. Demonstrate this by reading aloud the fourth paragraph. You may wish to misread inventors as inventing and self-correcting. (p. 61)

This is the only instance of such instruction observed in Grade 2. In Grade 1, the team identified one directive for teachers to assist students in sounding out decodable words. However, a thorough review of the daily lesson revealed no explicit fluency instruction in accuracy aside from the guidance for teachers to offer decoding help to students on an as needed basis. These directives provide educators with limited direction and fail to offer students the explicit modeling and practice opportunities needed to read with proper accuracy.

All units include both narrative and informational text for partner and small-group practice. The teacher models and engages students in fluency practice with each of these genres. Students also practice individual word reading before they engage in reading a controlled text. The fluency of decodable words as well as Memory Words are assessed at the end of every other unit. Oral reading fluency of connected text is not assessed until the second half of Grade 1. Once this begins, teachers are instructed to collect a words correct per minute score (WCPM) and reference the program guidance provided to determine if students are "below," "meeting," or "exceeding" expectations. Although errors are collected, no accuracy score is generated. Additionally, there are no clear guidelines defining the number of errors that would indicate whether a student is performing "below," "meeting," or "exceeding" expectations regarding accurate word reading. Finally, the assessment instructions advise teachers to mark any omitted or incorrectly read words as errors. Insertions, repetitions, and self-corrections are the only types of misread words that are not counted as errors.

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 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.	1
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.	3
2-4.5: (LC, RC) Questioning during read-alouds focuses mainly on lower-level thinking skills.	1

Superkids' non-negotiables for **language comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing** are **"mostly met."** The curriculum features structured reading and writing lessons that include explicit vocabulary instruction, shared texts for teacher read-alouds and student reading, and teacher modeling of comprehension and writing skills. Students are provided with structured opportunities to practice applying these skills both in text and writing. In kindergarten and Grade 1, the *Super Smart* informational text read-alouds provide students with access to more advanced science and social studies content than they can read independently. Students engage in daily

practice with Tier 2 vocabulary words and receive instruction in skills such as identifying synonyms and antonyms, understanding multiple-meaning words, categorizing words, using context clues, and recognizing common prefixes and suffixes.

Several lessons per unit feature explicit instruction of comprehension skills that support the process of comprehending text. These lessons generally focus on one of the following:

- Story elements of narrative text including setting, characters, plot, problem and solution, and theme as well as narrative story structure (e.g., beginning, middle, and end)
- Informational text structures including compare and contrast, cause and effect, sequence of events, how-to (steps in a process), their corresponding text features as well as picture-text relationships
- Identification of main idea and supporting details
- Drawing conclusions (i.e., inferencing)
- Author's purpose

Comprehension instruction is a component of daily lessons and includes activities around fluency and vocabulary. However, the team observed that many of Superkids' comprehension activities involved students reading a text independently or in small groups with a teacher prompting them to support and assess. Though the prompts support comprehension of the text, there are many questions included that cover a broad range of skills with no guidance for educators on how to support students if comprehension breaks down. The table below highlights the wide range of questions included in the Grade 1, Unit 7, Lesson 2 Teacher Guide, designed to support instruction as students read the eight-page decodable text, *The Very Best Gift*.

Target skill	Question
Understand picture-text relationships	• What is Tic looking at? • This map shows all the different states that make up the United States, the country we live in. What is Tic going to do with this map? • What is Grandad's next gift? • What do we learn about it? • A blossom is a flower that has opened up. Point to the blossom in the picture. Spines are sharp things that stick out of a cactus. Point to them. • Does Grandad send a real fish? How do you know?
Understand Maps	• What do you notice about the map in the picture? • The letters on each state are a short way of writing the state name.

Connect Events	• Why is Tic putting a flag on Texas? • What does her grandad do in Texas? • Look at the postcard by the hat and the rope. A Ranch is a place where people can act like cowboys and ride horses.
Draw Conclusions	• What does this part of the page show? • How can you tell this letter is from Tic? • Why does she write this letter? • The title of the story is *The Very Best Gift*. What is the very best gift in this story? What makes you think that?
Compare and Contrast	• This page shows an email, a note Tic writes and sends on her computer. How is it like Tick's other note? How is it different?
Recognize Patterns in a Text	• What things keep happening in the story?
Make and Confirm Predictions	• Think aloud: When I read a story, I ask myself, "What will happen next?" Grandad keeps sending Tic gifts and she writes him thank you notes, so I think we'll read about more gifts and notes. Is that what you think will happen? • Are you surprised that Grandad has come to visit?
Understand Text Features and Word Play	• Look at how "fantastic" is written at the end. Why do you think Tic writes it like this? • What do you notice about the words "the best" on this page? Why do you think they look like that?
Understand Multiple-Meaning Words	• Tic writes "Your fan." A fan can be something that blows air around or a person who likes what someone else does. What meaning of fan makes sense here?
Understand Characters and Cite Text Evidence	• How do you think Tic feels now? What makes you think that? • How does Tic feel about her grandad? What are some of the things she does in the story that show that?
Connect Text to Self	• In what ways could a visit by someone feel like getting a gift?

In Grade 2, comprehension skill instruction primarily takes place during student Book Clubs. Here teachers are guided to prepare students for reading by discussing the story's genre and setting a purpose for reading. After reviewing key vocabulary, students begin reading as the teacher prompts them with questions on each page. These prompts focus on the elements of narrative text and are often followed by inference-based questions like, "Why do you think people react this way?" However, there is minimal explicit instruction in comprehension skills. Most of the time spent on comprehension involves teachers prompting students to answer questions.

The team noted inconsistencies regarding the integration of reading and writing across grade-levels. In general, reviewers observed that writing instruction is included, but takes place at a separate time and is largely disconnected from the program's core instruction apart from the occasional overlap of vocabulary strategies or grammar instruction.

In Grades K and 1, there is little to no writing instruction in the Word Work and Reading blocks. While grammar, usage, and mechanics are sometimes taught in these blocks, they are generally stand-alone skills and are not connected to a text or used to deepen comprehension. Occasionally, students complete a practice page during small group reading instruction; however, students in Grades K and 1 are more frequently asked to draw, cut and paste, or number/match as opposed to writing in response to text. Recommended independent activities for daily lessons sometimes include these practice pages or opportunities to complete a Reader's Response. These activities vary but are not required. Furthermore, there is no explicit writing instruction that accompanies Reader's Responses. Instead, this solely provides students with an opportunity to write about a given text. Some examples of Grade 1 Reader's Response prompts include the following:

- Unit 6, Lesson 6: Have children write and decorate a short note based on the story. Tell them they can write to Toc, Cass, Hot Rod, or Ettabetta.
- Unit 7, Lesson 8: After children have read "Race Day," have them write their own short messages like the messages shown on pages 163 and 168. Tell them to draw a row of kites and write words on the kites like the Superkids did.
- Unit 7, Lesson 10: Have children write to tell if they would like to be a race car driver or a pit stop helper. Tell them to give a reason that explains why they'd like one of these jobs. Children can draw a picture to illustrate their sentence.

In Grade 2, each comprehension lesson includes Book Talk Journal questions, which are used as writing prompts during the independent activities segment of the 60-minute small-group reading instruction block. However, this writing component does not include explicit instruction or teacher modeling on how to respond to text or craft a piece of writing connected to the reading units. For example, in the Grade 2 Book Club Teacher Guide, Unit 4, Lesson 3, the journal prompt reads: "Read the journal question with the children. Tell them to write about what Detective Gordon is like. Then have them write about a time when they were mistaken about someone" (p. 8). The guidance provided for both teachers and students lacks explicitness, and does not serve to adequately support the development of writing skills.

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).	1
2.2: Opportunities to bridge existing knowledge to new knowledge is not apparent in instruction.	2
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.	3

Superkids' practices for **background knowledge** are **"somewhat met."** In Grades K and 1, teachers read-aloud select narrative and fictional texts when introducing and modeling the Superkids Decodable Readers to the class. Additional texts, such as those included in the Super Smart series, are intentionally utilized as read-alouds based on their complexity and their focus on informational text. Titles for optional read-aloud opportunities are also recommended, though these are not a required component of the curriculum. When students transition to Grade 2, there are no mandated texts for read-aloud lessons. As with Grades K and 1, there are trade book titles recommended for classroom read-alouds, but again, these are optional. Students are expected to read aloud with other students, with the teacher, and by themselves, but in Grade 2, the teacher does not typically read text aloud to students.

Reviewers identified some opportunities to bridge existing knowledge to new knowledge. In Grades K-1, this happens during the introduction of the *Super Smart* texts (e.g., informational read-aloud in Week 1 of a unit) and the Super Duper Readers (e.g., controlled informational text in Week 2 of a unit). Students are also able to bridge existing knowledge to new knowledge when educators connect the content of the Superkids Readers fictional text to the content of the Super Duper Readers informational text. Furthermore, writing instruction sometimes connects to texts or concepts in reading. For instance, in Grade 1, Unit 7, Lesson 1, students participate in a series of lessons centered on informational writing. Here students are tasked to make signs, and the Teacher Guide directs educators to do the following:

> Remind children that in the Super-Duper Signs, they learned how signs can provide helpful information, such as what or where something is or what to do or not do. Explain that today they'll make a sign for the classroom to share information the class thinks is important. (p. 11)

Learners build their understanding of story elements, text structure, and comprehension skills throughout the year; however, this doesn't typically extend to content knowledge. Text sets and topics only span a week of instruction and reviewers were unable to determine how topics connect or build upon one another. For example, in Grade 1, Unit 8, Week 1, students learn about toys and horses, while in week 2, the topic shifts to performing and creativity. These topics lack a clear throughline. As such, in day-to-day instruction, there is limited evidence that students are expected to bridge existing content knowledge to new knowledge.

In Grade 2, Super Magazines are introduced as components of the program. There are eight issues across the school year, and they include informational articles connected to a different theme or big idea. The Super Shorts feature five to six mini articles that connect to a large theme. The themes do not build on one another or connect. For example, the following is a list of the Grade 2 Super Magazine themes:

1. *What's New?*: Things that are new, including new inventions, new skateboard moves, and new words

2. *It's Tricky*: All kinds of tricks from magic tricks, to art that tricks the eye, to animals with tricks for staying alive

3. *Lights out!*: What happens at night, including how animals sleep, work people do, and events in the night sky

4. *Go, Go, Go!*: People, animals, and machines that move at different speeds in different ways, using feet, wings, or wheels

5. *Color Crazy*: Our colorful world from blue jeans, to dark brown chocolate, to animals whose color protects them

6. *The Inside Story*: What it's like inside some familiar and not-so-familiar places, such as caves, a dog's mind, and the White House

7. *Splish, Splash!*: The story of water on our planet—where it comes from, how people get it, and how they use it

8. *That's Wild!*: Wild places, adventures, and ideas, such as the Grand Canyon, Lewis and Clark's journey, and art by Salvador Dalí

When a new magazine is introduced, teachers are directed to "share background information to build understanding or activate prior knowledge before reading" (Superkids Program Guide, p. 26). However, reviewers were unable to locate more specific directives in the Teacher Manual. For example, when introducing the article "New Moves" in Magazine 1, educators are instructed to "read the title aloud. Explain that moves are a special way of moving...Ask children what kind of new moves they think the article is about" (p. 7). While this provides a general approach for engaging students, it lacks further guidance on how to effectively activate prior knowledge or deepen understanding of the topic. More concrete strategies or prompts could be helpful in supporting teachers to make these connections more explicit and build a stronger foundation for the article's content.

Finally, reviewers noted that Superkids' text selection introduces students to a variety of literary genres, text structures, and topics. While these texts may help students build general background knowledge across different subject areas, the team found no evidence of an intentional design of text sets to systematically build knowledge in a specific subject area. Although the texts are loosely connected to broader themes, the connections are not strong enough for students to effectively use information from one text to enhance their understanding of another. For instance, the Super Magazine issue, *What Happens at Night?*, includes articles on Thailand's Festival of Lights, nocturnal animals, capsule hotels, pillow fights, and glowing octopuses which lack a cohesive connection other than nighttime. Furthermore, students are not always reading from a curated text set, and in some units, they may read only one text. This was noted in Grade 2, Unit 2, where students read, *Stink: The Incredible Shrinking Kid*, over the course of the unit.

2C: Vocabulary

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

RED FLAG 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.	1
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.	2
2.10: Students are not exposed to and taught Tier 3 words.	2
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

Superkids' practices for **vocabulary** are **"somewhat met."** While the program does not use vocabulary worksheets to teach vocabulary, there are limited opportunities for students to develop a deep understanding of targeted terminology or expectations for students to incorporate these words into their oral and written language. Each unit highlights 3 - 4 "Words to Know" for explicit instruction. Students encounter these words through the Words to

Know cards, reader stories, Super Magazines, and Book Club books. In Grade 2, Unit 1, Lesson 2, teachers are encouraged to display the word cards and "to call attention to these words when they're used or could be used in the classroom" (p. 8). Words to Know are typically introduced in the first lesson of each unit, using an image, a discussion of the word's meaning in connection to the picture, an example sentence, and opportunities for students to repeat the word and engage in questioning or activities to demonstrate understanding. Educators are frequently directed to have children tell about, share, or name something in connection to the word. However, while best practices suggest having students partner-share to ensure all learners actively engage with the new vocabulary, this is not clearly defined for educators but could be a helpful addition to engage all learners in active usage of targeted terminology. In a later lesson, students revisit these words using a similar instructional routine, but again, there are no additional requirements for students to use these words in their speech or writing.

Some lessons include suggestions for incorporating practice of individual vocabulary words into independent activities. For example, an independent activity in Grade 1, Unit 6, Lesson 4 states the following:

> Display the Word to Know card for expect. Remind children that to expect something means to believe it will probably happen. Have children draw and write about what they expect to happen the next time Ettabetta, Sal, and Alf play together. (p. 38)

While this activity encourages students to demonstrate their understanding of the word expect, it does not explicitly require them to use the word in their response. Additionally, these independent activities are optional, limiting student participation in consistent vocabulary practice.

Outside of the Words to Know routine, Tier 2 words taken from texts students are reading or listening to in Grades K and 1 are introduced during whole-group or small-group lessons. Here, educators provide a brief, student-friendly definition either before or during reading, or they guide students to infer the meaning using context clues from the text. Some lessons include practice suggestions featuring a target vocabulary word, but again, these activities are optional.

Students are exposed to, but not explicitly taught Tier 3 words. For example, in Grade 1, Unit 6, the vocabulary students are introduced to through student readers and read-aloud texts include the words "maple syrup," "liquid," "boil," "armor," "defend," and "chicken pox." In Grade 2, the Super Magazines offer students exposure to a higher incidence of Tier 3 vocabulary. For instance, in Grade 2, Units 5 and 7, students are introduced to the following words in small-group reading: "nocturnal," "chemical," "meteor," "pollution," "filament," "helium," "endorphins," "cobblestone streets," "nectar," and "chrysalis." However, little work is done with these words other than providing a brief explanation before reading, and practice after reading is not expected.

Finally, morphology is addressed within the program, and its scope and sequence does progress from simple to complex. However, students are not consistently engaged in morphology work; it can befound in the Phonics/Structural Analysis lessons, the Vocabulary lessons, and within the Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics lessons, but some units fail to include any morphology instruction or practice at all.

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

Superkids' practices for **language structures** are **"mostly met."** Conventions of print, grammar, and syntax are taught and follow a systematic scope and sequence that progresses from simple to complex. However, reviewers observed that instruction varies in its explicitness, and it is not a consistent component of daily lessons. For example, in Grade 1, Unit 4, Weeks 1 and 2, grammar, usage, and mechanics objectives are included in 4 out of the 5 lessons. In contrast, in Unit 6, Weeks 1 and 2, only one lesson per week includes a grammar, usage, and mechanics objective. Like vocabulary, instruction is embedded into different components of the lesson plan, including Phonemic Awareness, Phonics/Structural Analysis, Spelling, and/or Writing. This is problematic because it makes it difficult for teachers to provide clear, consistent instruction on grammar, usage, and mechanics. In Grade 2, grammar lessons are included 1 to 2 times per unit. Additionally, grammar instruction is sometimes placed in optional components of the program. For example, in Grade 1, Unit 6, the only objective for the week—punctuating dialogue—is addressed in the Ten-Minute Tuck-In lesson, which is designated as an activity to differentiate instruction. This particular activity is labeled as an "extend" activity, meaning it is intended for learners progressing at an advanced pace, rather than for whole-class Tier 1 instruction.

Instruction includes some instances of teacher modeling. However, reviewers found no evidence of opportunities for student discussion and practice. For example, the pacing guide specifies comparative and superlative adjectives as a focus for study in Grade 2, Unit 4. This topic is addressed during spelling for one day of instruction and is not revisited again until Unit 14. Much of the grammar instruction and practice is workbook based. This generally requires minimal teacher modeling or opportunities for student discussion. In the previously mentioned Grade 2 lesson focused on comparative and superlative adjectives, the Teacher Guide directs teachers as follows:

> Display Workbook page 57 and have children turn to the page. Read aloud Ms. Blossom's first tip and the example words. (Words with er or est ending often compare things. The example given is grand, grander, grandest). Explain that *grand* means fancy, *grand* with the -er ending means more fancy, and *grand* with the -est ending means most fancy. (p. 68)

Teachers then complete a singular "we do" activity with students focused on attending to the spelling rule changes, followed by students completing the workbook page during independent time. On this same day, students also engage in spelling practice with -er and -est with the focus of changing the y→i and adding -er or -est. However, this week's spelling words do not follow this pattern.

In Grade 1, Unit 6, Lesson 10, the one grammar, usage, and mechanics objective for the week is "edit for capitalization and end marks." This is included in the writing portion of the lesson. Although the title of the activity is "Guide Editing and Sharing" and includes a section entitled "Instruction and Modeling," the team found no evidence of explicit instruction. Teachers are instead instructed to do the following:

> Review the purpose of sharing and how to edit for capitalization and end marks. Point out to children that by sharing their informational paragraphs and illustrations, they can teach each other what they know about different topics. Remind children that before they share their writing, they should check their sentences and fix mistakes. Ask what they should check for at the beginning and at the end of each sentence. (p. 105)

The next component of the lesson is "Practice and Application" where teachers are directed to "have children edit and share their informational paragraphs" (p. 106). This approach relies heavily on student independence and lacks detailed guidance for explicit grammar instruction.

Finally, reviewers noted that students are never asked to memorize parts of speech as isolated lists of words. While some review and practice activities involve sorting individual words into categories out of context, these words are initially introduced with a thorough explanation of the role each part of speech plays within a sentence.

2E: Verbal Reasoning

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

RED FLAG 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.	1

Superkids' practices for **verbal reasoning** are **"mostly met."** In the program, this skill is titled "drawing conclusions" as opposed to "inferencing." Despite the terminology difference, students still receive explicit instruction on how to analyze the text and infer things that are not directly stated by the author. In Grade 1, Unit 6, Lesson 3, students learn to draw conclusions about a literary text. In this lesson, teachers are guided to "tell children that sometimes a story doesn't say all that is happening, what characters think or feel, or why they act the way they do. Explain that certain clues can help readers figure those things out" (p. 31). The lesson then goes on to highlight that pictures are one clue, things characters say and do in the story are another clue, and finally thinking about how we would feel if we were that character can also be a clue. Teachers draw a T-chart and gather evidence from the text to assist students in drawing conclusions about story characters. In future lessons, whenever drawing conclusions is highlighted, this skill is a focus for questioning after reading and not a point for modeling or direct instruction.

In Grade 2, lessons on "Determine Character Motivation" and "Draw Conclusions" are included in the pacing overview but are designated for specific Book Club groups. While these skills are addressed, there is minimal explicit instruction or modeling of inferencing. Instead, students are frequently expected to infer meaning through teacher prompting, without a clear, systematic approach to developing this skill. For example, in Grade 2, Unit 4, *Keena Ford and the Second Grade Mix-Up*, the student objective is to determine character motivations. Teacher guidance states the following:

> Remind children that characters in a story often act the way they do, think what they think, and say the things they say for a reason. Remind children this is called motivation. Motivation explains the reasons behind a character's actions and words. Discuss character motivation in the story. (p. 47)

Learners later move onto independent practice by creating a list of Keena's thoughts and actions. Reviewers noted this as a missed opportunity for explicit teacher modeling. Without such modeling, students may struggle to effectively connect a character's actions, thoughts, or dialogue with their underlying motivations.

2F: Literacy Knowledge

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

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR LITERACY KNOWLEDGE	SCORE
2.33: Genre types and features are not explicitly taught.	1
2.34: Genre-specific text structures and corresponding signal words are not explicitly taught and practiced.	2

Superkids' practices for **literacy knowledge** are **"mostly met."** In Grades K and 1, students learn about the differences between fiction and informational text, and they practice comparing the two. They also receive instruction on the features of both narrative and informational text. Regarding these, students are explicitly taught the story elements of character, setting, plot, problem and solution, and "lasting lessons" or theme. Explicit instruction in the features of informational text include topic and main idea, text structure, and text features. During small group reading, students may be asked whether they think the book they are about to read is real or make-believe. However, discussions about the genre of the texts are not consistently incorporated into the lessons.

Instruction in Grade 2 includes a more consistent and robust focus on genre, text type, and their corresponding features. Every new Book Club text includes a cover page that provides the genre and an overview of the text. Teachers are directed to discuss the genre with students. The following table highlights two examples of how genre is incorporated into Book Club discussions in Grade 2.

Book Club Lesson	Text	Genre	Introduction
Book Club 4	*Lost in Bermooda*	Science Fiction	"Tell children the genre of the story is science fiction. Explain that in science fiction, the story is often set in the future, and technology, time travel, and unexpected life forms are often an important part of the story" (p. 49).
Book Club 4	*Maybelle in the Soup*	Fantasy	"Ask children to recall what kind of stories have talking animals (fantasy). Review the characteristics of fantasy stories. Ask children if the stories feature characters, settings, and events that are realistic or if the story elements could not happen in real life. Remind students that some parts of fantasy could be realistic, such as where the story takes place or certain characters" (p. 75).

The team observed that while the program teaches students about varying text structures and the ways authors organize information, instruction on signal words is limited. Signal words are addressed in the context of sequencing, compare and contrast, and problem and solution. However, these words are not explicitly taught as tools to help students identify the text structure; instead, they are used primarily to support discussions about the structure after it has already been identified. For example, in Grade 1, Unit 7, Lesson 9, Discuss Sequence of Events in an Informational Text, the teacher is prompted to say the following:

> Often events happen in a certain order, or sequence. Explain that sometimes action happens before something else can happen. Point out, for example, that race car drivers have to get into their cars before they can drive them. Tell children that when they read about events that happen, paying attention to the order, or sequence, in which things happen can help them understand the events better. (p. 95)

However, learners are not taught to notice these words as they engage with the text. Instead the teacher uses the terms "First," "Next," "Then," and "Last" to assist students in sequencing their retelling of story events. Additionally, there is no evidence of students being taught to use signal words in their writing. For example, across two units of opinion writing, students are taught to give reasons but are not encouraged to use common signal phrases such as "One reason" or "Another reason." This presented a missed opportunity to help students organize their ideas and develop more coherence in their writing.

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.	2
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.	3

Superkids' practices for **reading comprehension** are **"mostly met."** Students only independently read controlled text aligned to the decoding skills they have mastered to date. Teachers support students in their independent reading of texts, and recommendations are provided to differentiate the Tier 1 controlled texts for below-level readers to support accurate decoding. Students are not offered independent book choice and engage in reading either the Superkids Reader stories, texts from the Superkids Library Bundle, or controlled Super-Duper informational text readers. Leveled texts are not used. Furthermore, the majority of student reading is either with the teacher or involves rereading texts. Teachers are also directed to allow students to listen to the text if they struggle with decoding.

Readings are connected but not to the degree that they serve as a knowledge-building text set. For example, in Grade 1, Unit 7, Lesson 5, during the Super Smart text introduction, the teacher is instructed to connect this reading to the Superkids Reader featured in a lesson from earlier in the week. Specifically, teachers make connections between a toy cheetah in the earlier reading and the day's Super Smart reader which focuses on "speedy or fast things" (p. 48). This was the extent to which the texts are connected, making it unlikely that students will leverage much of the key content from the Superkids Reader, which was more focused on the main character's correspondence with her grandpa and the gifts he sent from the places he visited. Additionally, the Superkids Library Bundle texts from that week were, "The Princess,"

"Getting Samantha to Smile," and "Going Places," which did not feature a clear throughline to support students in building knowledge across the week. In Grade 2, every other unit in the small-group work is focused on informational Super Magazines. Again, while these texts all fall under an umbrella topic, the team observed that they share a loose connection at best.

Although nearly every reading activity in the program focuses on comprehension, the team found no evidence of explicit instruction to help students actively monitor their understanding while reading. Strategies such as recognizing when something doesn't make sense, rereading, annotating text, breaking the text into manageable chunks, summarizing while reading, or asking questions are not explicitly taught nor practiced. During small-group instruction, teachers are encouraged to monitor student's reading by listening to them read. Educators are instructed to use questions as a way to check students' understanding after they read aloud to them. However, this does not address students' ability to self-monitor when reading independently. The team also noted some support for comprehension monitoring during select fluency lessons. For example, in Grade 1, Unit 3, Lesson 6, the teacher is instructed to model pausing mid-sentence and then asking students, "What didn't sound right?" The manual then instructs teachers to "tell children to notice long sentences and keep reading until they get to the period or other end mark" (p. 58). However, this is the extent of the instruction provided on monitoring comprehension, offering only a limited focus on this critical reading skill.

4A: Writing — Handwriting

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

RED FLAG 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

Superkids' practices for **handwriting** are **"met."** In Grades K and 1, there is explicit instruction in manuscript handwriting integrated into core programming. Teachers model proper handwriting during the handwriting component of the Daily Routines: Informal Assessment. Here, students watch instances of teacher modeling and then practice copying letters and sentences with attention to letter formation. No handwriting instruction is included in the Grade 2 curriculum. However, the team noted that this is not unusual as handwriting mastery

is a focus in Grades K and 1. Additionally, a separate Zaner-Bloser cursive workbook is provided if teachers want to instruct cursive, but time for this is not allotted into the pacing of daily lessons. Superkids' handwriting paper is lined and features the use of "Ice Cream Lines" (e.g., chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry) in the student workbooks, on student and teacher white boards, and on individual sheets of handwriting paper for student use. The Ice Cream Lines approach offers a fun way to help children distinguish between top, middle, and bottom lines during handwriting instruction and practice. As previously mentioned, optional cursive handwriting instruction is offered as an add-on in Grade 2, and the team observed some opportunities for handwriting practice embedded in the Daily Instructional Routines: Informal Assessment. However, there is minimal guidance on supporting students' manuscript handwriting in Grade 2. Teachers are simply directed to "have students copy and complete" tasks as practice activities, with little additional support or instructional strategies provided (p. 63).

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, 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.	3
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).	3
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 graphemes/phonemes.	1

Superkids' practices for **spelling** are **"somewhat met."** The program's spelling scope and sequence is aligned with the phonics/decoding scope and sequence, and weekly spelling instruction and lists are composed of pattern words, which often feature the same rime. Encoding activities do not consistently direct students to sound-spelling relationships. For example, in Grade 1, Unit 3, Lesson 1, teachers are instructed to "help children encode words with final 'ng'" by using a worksheet that focuses on the word "hung" from the week's story.

Students are provided with a word bank and four pictures. Children are then told to trace the word, connect it to one of the given images, and write the word that matches the picture. The manual then states,

> Some children might have difficulty associating words with pictures. Use the correct word for each picture in a sentence. Have children identify the "ng" word you used. Then help them find that word at the top of the page and write it on the lines. (p. 8)

Reviewers questioned the effectiveness of this approach since it seemed more concerned with learner knowledge of the image as opposed to the application of encoding skills. Additionally, the word bank provided could limit students' opportunities to practice independent encoding as it reduces the need for the active application of words with the final "ng."

In the next lesson, children write the initial letter sound to match a picture and then trace the rime. If students struggle with encoding, teachers are directed to do the following:

> Help them blend the sounds of the letters on the handwriting lines. Then say two words with those ending sounds, and have children identify which word tells about the picture. For example, say "ring" and "sing" for box 2. Once they've named the correct word, help them identify and then write the letter for the beginning sound r. (p. 14)

Reviewers noted that this was a missed opportunity to highlight sound-spelling connections since students are not asked to connect the sounds to the written letters themselves while they are tracing the rime.

During core instruction, phoneme segmentation and phoneme-grapheme mapping are not the primary strategies for spelling instruction. Some of the optional Ten-Minute Tuck-Ins incorporate phoneme-grapheme mapping along with other strategies, such as encoding word families and using word ladders to reinforce spelling skills. However, the team observed that this instruction is inconsistent, and, as mentioned previously, these activities are supplemental and not a part of Tier 1 instruction. *The Superkids Skill-Building Book: Activities for Differentiating Instruction*, includes an activity, Encoding Using Letter-Sound Boxes. However, this resource is intended to provide "reteaching information and targeted practice [if children] need additional support or challenge beyond the Ten-Minute Tuck-Ins" (p. ii). This suggests that students would only receive this type of instruction if they struggle with spelling rather than it being a part of a comprehensive and consistent approach to spelling instruction for all learners.

Evidence that students practice spelling through memorization was also noted. For example, after the weekly phonics pattern is introduced, students practice reading and writing (e.g., tracing or copying) some pattern words. Teachers are then directed to introduce the spelling list by having students trace the letters before reading and spelling the words aloud. The class then discusses the similarities and differences between the words. While students practice

tracing, copying, and orally spelling the words, this approach focuses more on the recognition of similarities and differences rather than actively engaging students in encoding through sound-spelling relationships.

In Grade 2, Unit 4, Lesson 1, teachers are offered the following scripting when working with words spelled with ar, or, and er:

> Ask what sound is the same in the words (/er/) and which letters stand for that sound (a,r,). Repeat with each group of words on the spelling list. Point out that because the sound /er/ can be spelled three different ways, children will have to memorize which spelling to use with which words on the list. (p. 7)

Students are informed that there will be a spelling test in subsequent lessons. Prior to this, they will complete a variety of independent activities such as copying the words to create flashcards to study, matching or copying spelling words from a word bank next to a picture, grouping and copying words, and so forth. Again, activities such as this prioritize memorization and repetition over meaningful engagement with sound-spelling relationships.

Within the classroom, there is typically one encoding focused worksheet in the student Word Work book. These sheets are revisited throughout the week and provide students with targeted spelling words in a word bank. Students must trace or match and copy the words onto a line that corresponds with a sentence or image. Practice of spelling words is also included as part of the daily routines, but lacks explicit instruction or guidance in encoding. For instance, in Grade 2, Unit 4, Lesson 1, teachers are instructed to "dictate the words and sentences. Remind children about the two t's in better. Help them check their spelling and fix any mistakes" (p. 77). There is no modeling of spelling strategies, explanation of sound-spelling relationships, or scaffolding to support students in understanding why the words are spelled the way they are. Spelling is also designated as one of the weekly Independent Activities. This typically involves students quizzing each other by dictating spelling words for a partner to write. This approach again lacks direct instruction and could lead to inconsistent feedback as it relies on peers to dictate and evaluate spelling.

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.	1
4.18: Writing is primarily unstructured with few models or graphic organizers.	1
4.19: Conventions, grammar, and sentence structure are not explicitly taught and practiced systematically (i.e., from simple to complex) with opportunities for practice to automaticity; instead they are taught implicitly or opportunistically.	2
4.20: Writing instruction is primarily narrative or unstructured choice.	1
4.21: Students are not taught the writing process (e.g., planning, revising, editing).	1
4.22: Writing is taught as a standalone and is not used to further reading comprehension.	2

Superkids' practices for **composition** are **"mostly met."** Writing instruction is highly structured and incorporates modeling, planning, and brainstorming activities throughout the lessons. The program also includes the use of graphic organizers as needed to support students in organizing their ideas. Although the writing process is not always explicitly named, students engage in its key components—such as prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing—throughout the weekly writing lessons. The curriculum also features a variety of writing genres to ensure students are provided with exposure to diverse types of writing. For example, in Grade 1, students practice genre-specific writing in the following formats: narrative, informative, opinion, descriptive, and poetry.

While conventions and grammar are taught, sentence structure is not explicitly targeted, and opportunities to practice skills to automaticity are limited. The team observed that some conventions and grammar objectives are spiraled throughout units. For example, in Grade 1, Edit for Capitalization and End Marks appears in Units 1, 4 and 6; however, in each of these two week long units, this skill is only practiced in two lessons as part of the culminating writing process. The team noted that additional work with editing could be integrated into the daily

handwriting routines. For instance, when students copy sentences from the board, they could be instructed to identify and correct errors in beginning capitalization and ending punctuation. However, this approach is not explicitly recommended or incorporated into the program.

Aspects of convention, grammar, and sentence structure are sometimes taught in isolation outside the Writing Block. For example, in Grade 1, Unit 2, Lesson 10, there is a grammar lesson titled "Give Practice Writing Complete Sentences" in the Word Work block. In this activity, students are provided a worksheet with three sentence starters and asked to draw a picture of a pet rock, which connects to concepts in the Superkids Reader. Teachers are then instructed to tell students the following:

> Read the sentence starters and complete the sentences about their drawing. The first sentence ("My pet rock is __.") should name what the pet rock is. The second sentence starter (It said, "__.") should tell the sound it makes. The last sentence ("My pet rock can __.") should tell an action the pet rock can do. Briefly discuss some actions the rock could do and list them on the board. Provide support as children work. After they've finished writing, you can have them color their picture or share their work with another child. (p. 94)

Though this activity focuses on completing sentences, it does not provide instruction on sentence structure, such as identifying the "who" (noun) and the "do" (verb). Instead, students are simply asked to complete a sentence stem without understanding the function of its building blocks or parts of speech.

In another lesson in this unit, students are taught to write answers to questions by first having the teacher model how to write a complete sentence in response to a question. The teacher emphasizes using words from the question in the answer to make it clearer for the reader. Students are also taught to use the pronoun "I" in their response. However, there is no explicit instruction or practice on identifying the parts of a sentence or understanding what makes a sentence complete.

Finally, there is minimal writing instruction in the Word Work and Reading blocks in Grades K and 1. Although grammar, usage, and mechanics are sometimes taught in these blocks, they are generally stand-alone skills and not linked to a text or used to deepen comprehension. Small group reading of texts occasionally includes a practice page linked to comprehension skills, but these often have students draw a picture, cut and paste, or number or match rather than write in response to text. Independent activities for daily lessons often include recommendations to complete a Reader's Response, but, as mentioned previously, these activities are not required. Teachers are instructed to identify and introduce which activities they'd like students to do during independent time; however, there is no writing instruction that accompanies these Reader's Responses. Instead, this is just an opportunity for students to write about a text. In Grade 2, journals for book groups include writing prompts that ask learners to respond to the text in writing, but there is no direct instruction to accompany this.

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).	1
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.	4
5.11: Oral reading fluency (ORF) assessments are not used.	1
5.12: The suite of assessments does not address aspects of language comprehension (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, listening comprehension).	2
5.13: Multilingual learners are not assessed in their home language.	4

Superkids' non-negotiables and practices for **assessment** are **"mostly met."** The team observed that unit assessments include a mix of phonemic/phonological awareness (sporadically), phonics, decoding, encoding, fluency, comprehension of independently read controlled text, and writing skills. When students are asked to read connected text for assessment purposes, the teacher is instructed to mark the entire sentence as correct if there are no hesitations or errors. If there are hesitations or errors, the sentence is coded as incorrect. Reviewers also found no evidence of guided-reading levels anywhere in the program. Tier 1 texts are identified as decodable (e.g., controlled) or read aloud (e.g., not controlled). Texts for differentiated, small-group instruction are identified as "easy," "on-level," or "challenging." These texts follow the same phonetic patterns as the corresponding Tier 1 readers but may vary in the number of targeted letter-sound correspondences, words, and sentence lengths.

The team did note that phonemic awareness is not consistently assessed through Grades K and 1 and is not assessed at all in Grade 2. Supplemental assessments for phonemic awareness are included in the *Superkids Phonemic Awareness: Daily Lessons and Intervention Teacher's Guide*. This resource includes five comprehensive phonemic awareness assessments including three benchmarks to be delivered at the beginning, middle, and end of the year, and two progress monitoring measures to be delivered between benchmarks. This, however, is not a required component of the Tier 1 program. As mentioned, phonics skills are assessed regularly as a part of the Superkids curriculum. However, student decoding abilities are assessed using real words only as the review team found no K-2 assessments that utilize nonsense or pseudo words. The assessment suite includes tools to evaluate vocabulary skills, focusing on broader vocabulary usage as opposed to individual word knowledge. Additionally, syntax is assessed through use of the program's writing rubric, but Superkids does not include any measures to assess students' listening comprehension. Finally, educators would need to look to outside assessment tools to ensure that multilingual learners are assessed in this manner. However, the team also noted that this would most likely be the case with most core curricula programs.

FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

Overall, the **reviewed components** for Superkids curriculum were found to **"mostly"** or **"somewhat meet"** most criteria for Grades K-5. This means there was some 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

Superkids offers students developmentally appropriate, kid-friendly texts that engage them daily with topics tailored to foster a love of reading. Additionally, the Superkids' characters offer students a consistent throughline that connects to and builds upon prior learning.

Superkids' handwriting instruction provides explicit instruction that integrates reading and writing. Additionally, the program's "Ice Cream Lines" approach offers a fun way to help children distinguish between the top, middle, and bottom lines during handwriting instruction and practice.

The Superkids Phonemic Awareness: Daily Lessons and Intervention resource is an excellent tool for supporting the development of foundational reading skills. Since this is a supplemental resource, the team suggested integrating it within core instructional materials to ensure comprehensive skill development.

When included, Superkids' explicit instruction is clear and supportive for students. The program uses straightforward language and breaks down complex concepts into manageable parts. This clarity helps build student confidence and supports their acquisition of new skills.

CHALLENGES

While Superkids fluency instruction targets a number of skills besides reading rate, the team observed that lessons and activities specifically targeting accuracy are limited, suggesting a need for more focused practice to ensure students develop accurate word recognition skills in order to read without errors.

Superkids Memory Word instruction emphasizes memorization and fails to guide students to to identify the sounds in words or link target sounds with known, regular spellings. The team identified this as a missed opportunity to address how these high-frequency words deviate from typical letter-sound correspondences.

Superkids offers teachers minimal support for differentiation, posing challenges to effectively meet the needs of diverse populations of students. This includes support and strategies for working with multilingual learners.

Superkids does not provide sufficient support for developing integrated writing and reading comprehension skills, missing the opportunity to help students apply what they learn in the Word Work and Reading blocks to their writing.

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PUBLISHER'S RESPONSE

Curriculum Navigation Report
Superkids (2017), Grades K-2

Zaner-Bloser Publisher's Response to The Reading League's Curriculum Navigation Report for *The Superkids Reading Program* © 2017

Introduction

Zaner-Bloser would like to express our gratitude to The Reading League for their comprehensive evaluation of *The Superkids Reading Program* © 2017, which meticulously assessed the foundational literacy components supporting students in grades K–2. Their detailed review offers valuable insights into both the strengths of the program and areas for enhancement. The evaluation from The Reading League reinforces our dedication to ensuring all students become confident, successful readers by the end of grade 2. Building on this commitment, *The Superkids Reading Program* © 2026 will be launched in fall 2025. This updated version will address the identified areas for enhancement and align with the latest scientifically based reading and writing research practices.

Science of Reading

The science of reading is a vast body of research accumulated over the past fifty years, focused on how children learn to read and write. This compelling evidence sheds light on the brain's processes during reading and identifies the instructional strategies needed to develop skilled readers and writers. Pleasant Rowland, the author of *Superkids*, sought to create a program that blended research-based methods with a sense of joy for her students. After studying the work of leading developmental psychologists, reading experts, and education theorists, she developed and released the original version of *The Superkids Reading Program* in 1978. From the very beginning, *Superkids* has been aligned with the principles of scientific reading research.

Lesson Organization

Superkids offers a well-rounded curriculum with lessons organized into three key strands: Word Work, Reading, and Writing. Each of these strands is designed to complement and reinforce the others, with skills overlapping and integrating across the strands to create a cohesive and

comprehensive English language arts program. The Reading League reviewers conducted an in-depth evaluation of the lessons and materials within these three strands in *Superkids* © 2017. However, it is important to note that the review did not include an examination of the online component of the *Superkids* curriculum.

Program Strengths

The reviewers observed that *Superkids* provides students with developmentally appropriate, engaging texts that are both enjoyable and accessible, with topics designed to spark curiosity and foster a genuine love of reading. These texts are carefully selected to captivate young readers and keep them engaged day after day. Additionally, the characters in *Superkids* serve as a consistent thread throughout the program, helping students make connections to previous lessons while reinforcing and building upon their prior learning. *Superkids* instruction is both clear and supportive, making it easy for students to follow. The reviewers noted that the program uses simple, straightforward language to explain complex concepts, breaking them down into smaller, manageable parts. This approach not only enhances student understanding but also boosts their confidence, empowering them to master new skills and progress in their reading development.

We are pleased that the approach used in *Superkids* was recognized as strong, effective, and positive. The review team highlighted several key aspects of the program that either fully "met" or "mostly met" the established guidelines of best practices in literacy education. This acknowledgment reinforces the value of the *Superkids* program and its alignment with research-based, effective strategies that support student learning and development. The review team specifically noted the following areas where *Superkids* excelled, demonstrating its effectiveness in fostering student success.

- o Word Recognition Non-Negotiables
- o Phonological and Phonemic Awareness Practices
- o Phonics and Phonic Decoding Practices
- o Fluency Practices
- o Non-Negotiables for Language Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, and Writing
- o Language Structures Practices
- o Verbal Reasoning Practices
- o Literacy Knowledge Practices
- o Reading Comprehension Practices
- o Handwriting Practices
- o Writing Composition Practices
- o Non-Negotiables for Assessment
- o Assessment Practices

Program Enhancements

Zaner-Bloser is dedicated to ensuring that *Superkids* aligns with the best practices in literacy instruction, is firmly rooted in research, and fosters a fun and engaging learning environment that maximizes student outcomes. The Reading League's review and feedback have been invaluable in identifying opportunities for further enhancement of instructional practices and playing a crucial role in our ongoing efforts to continuously improve. The report highlighted areas where the program could be strengthened, including building background knowledge and vocabulary, providing more opportunities for students to monitor their own comprehension, and increasing meaningful spelling practice.

It's important to note that The Reading League did not review the online component of *Superkids* © 2017. This digital platform offers valuable additional resources for educators. For example, teachers can access extended read-aloud lists that complement the units' instruction at each grade level, along with a suggested read-aloud routine designed to build background knowledge and enhance vocabulary. The platform also includes specific read-aloud lessons, providing a structured approach for teachers to follow.

Additionally, the online component houses a wide range of resources on the "Materials" page, offering supplementary materials that support differentiation and further enrich the three core strands of Word Work, Reading, and Writing.

What's New?

Zaner-Bloser is excited to announce the upcoming release of *The Superkids Reading Program* © 2026, beginning in fall 2025. This new edition builds on the solid foundational literacy skills highlighted in The Reading League's review, while also addressing the growth areas identified in the feedback to enhance the program further. *Superkids* © 2026 will introduce a fresh instructional focus centered on Big Topics—overarching themes that encourage students to connect their reading to larger ideas and concepts. Through listening, reading, discussing, and writing about what they've learned, students will engage with Essential Questions that help solidify their knowledge and deepen their understanding. The Big Topics will evolve in complexity and depth throughout grades K–2, enabling students to build on their prior knowledge and progressively expand their understanding within each subject area.

Read-Aloud books will play a more central role in comprehension instruction and knowledge development within *Superkids* © 2026. These books, carefully selected for their quality and complexity, include authentic fiction and nonfiction trade books that align with the Big Topics. To reinforce vocabulary acquisition, each unit will feature Words to Know—carefully chosen sophisticated vocabulary words from the Read-Aloud books. These words will be reviewed

multiple times throughout the unit, with child-friendly definitions and context-rich sentences provided via picture cards, ensuring that students grasp and retain the vocabulary.

A key feature of *Superkids* © 2026 is the inclusion of Big Topic Projects, which will serve as culminating tasks where students can demonstrate their understanding across all three strands—Word Work, Reading, and Writing. These projects will be integrated into Writing instruction and are designed to engage students in a variety of language arts skills—reading, writing, speaking, and listening. As students advance through the grades, the complexity of the Big Topic Projects will increase, providing increasingly sophisticated tasks that challenge students to apply their knowledge more deeply.

Spelling instruction will be woven into the weekly lessons, with students practicing both Pattern Words and Memory Words. Pattern Words are words that feature the phonetic or structural elements introduced in the current unit, while Memory Words are words with irregular spelling patterns or those that students have not yet encountered. Throughout each unit, students will have multiple opportunities to practice and review these spelling words, with ongoing reinforcement of previously taught patterns. Teachers will be able to differentiate and adjust spelling lists to meet the needs of their students. Memory Words will be introduced through engaging activities such as songs or short stories and will be taught by emphasizing sound/spellings that students are already familiar with. This will help students learn to encode the words using letter-sound mapping. To aid in this process, sound boxes will be used, allowing students to focus on the sounds in each word and visually connect the appropriate letters to those sounds.

Superkids © 2026 is designed to provide an even more robust, engaging, and research-based literacy experience, fostering students' growth as readers, writers, and thinkers.

Student Outcomes

At Zaner-Bloser, we are committed to providing high-quality educational materials that not only ensure student success, but also make learning enjoyable. We take immense pride in having The Reading League review our *Superkids* curriculum; it's a partnership that we deeply value. Their expert feedback plays a pivotal role in refining our program and allows us to offer an exceptional user experience for both teachers and students. Educational practices evolve through scientifically based research, and organizations like The Reading League are instrumental in helping us meet the ever-changing needs of districts, schools, teachers, and students.

Being a part of this review process fills us with tremendous pride, as it validates our continued efforts to provide effective, research-backed instructional tools. The insights shared by The

Reading League will guide us as we further enhance our curriculum, ensuring we continue to foster a positive and impactful learning environment.

Learn More

To learn more about the *Superkids* curriculum and how it positively impacts both teachers and students, please view the case studies and independent studies that measure outcomes at https://www.zaner-bloser.com/reading/superkids-reading-program/superkids-reading-program-2017/program-results. If you would like to explore how *Superkids* can be implemented in your school or district, visit our website at https://www.zaner-bloser.com or contact us at 800.421.3018. We look forward to connecting with you and supporting your educational journey!

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