2026

THE READING LEAGUE

Curriculum Navigation Report

Fundations, Grades K-3

The Reading League

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 revised Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines, 3rd Edition, published in 2026. The Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines have been refined based on feedback and 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.

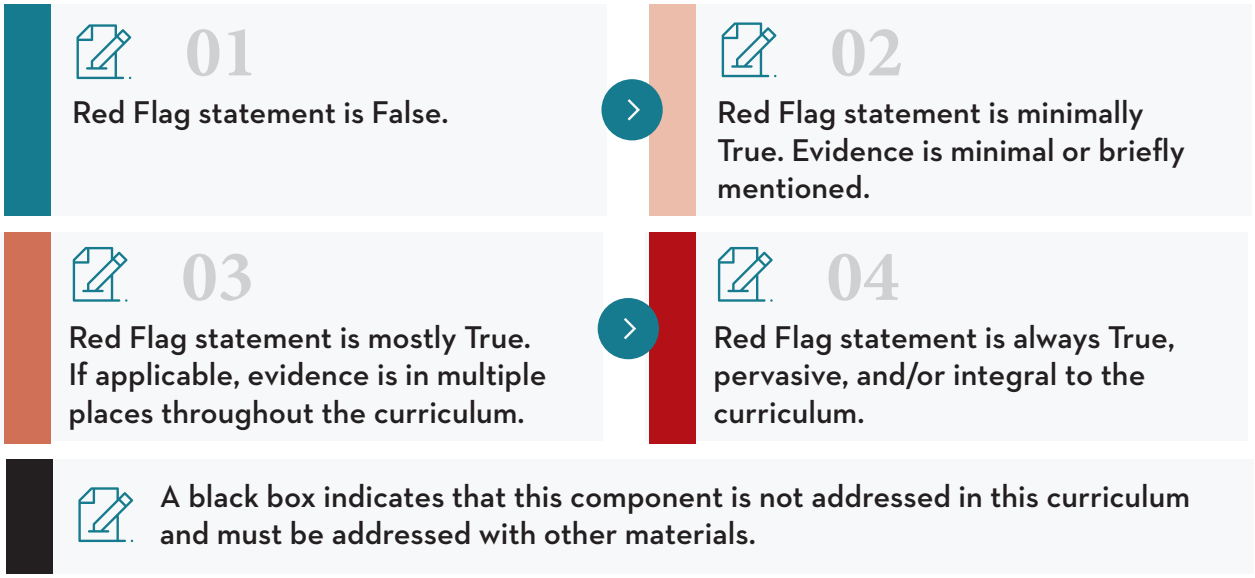
Disclaimer: The Reading League's curriculum review is deemed an informational educational resource ***and should not be construed as sales pitches or product promotion****. The purpose of the review is to further our mission to advance the understanding, awareness, and use of evidence-aligned reading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

CURRICULUM DESCRIPTION

The evaluation on the following pages features the review of Fundations, which is created for students in Grades K through 3.

For this report, reviewers closely examined teacher-facing materials, including Level Specific Teacher Manuals, Sound Cards, Flash Cards, Manuscript Letter Formation Guides (K-2), Cursive Letter Formation Guides (3), Fluency Kits, Stories Set 1, and Books to Remember 2. Additionally, they reviewed the program's student materials including the Fundations Practice Book, *Fun Hub Print Based Practice* for every unit (e.g., *Odd One Out, Roll & Write, Tap & Write, Mark Current Concepts, Make a New Word, Phrase Reading*), Fun Hub online practice activities, Fundations Readers (as well as Flyleaf decodable texts), and Fundations' Student Journal.

Reviewers were selected based on their deep knowledge of the science of reading and associated terminology, as well as high-quality instructional materials. Once selected, they were assigned to teams of at least three reviewers. The team met regularly to establish reliability in their individual scores and report their findings. For a more comprehensive description of the review process, visit The Reading League Compass's Curriculum Decision Makers page.



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.

OVERALL DESIGN AND DELIVERY

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

OVERALL DESIGN AND DELIVERY	*SCORE*
No evidence of deliberate and purposeful practice: "These two terms refer to practice that goes beyond rote repetition and involves practicing for a purpose (e.g., accuracy, fluent retrieval, generalization) with the deliberate goal of long-term improvement of skill performance" (Hughes & Riccomini, 2019, p. 406).	1
No evidence of retrieval practice: Retrieval practice "consists of tasks requiring retrieval of targeted skills and knowledge from memory without prompts or cues" (Hughes & Riccomini, 2019, p. 407). "Retrieval practice is a strategy in which calling information to mind subsequently enhances and boosts learning" (Agarwal, Roediger, McDaniel, & McDermott, 2020, p. 2).	1
No evidence of spaced or distributed practice: Spaced or distributed practice "involves taking a given amount of time devoted to learning and arranging that time into multiple sessions that are spread over time" (Carpenter & Agarwal, 2019, p. 3).	1
No evidence of cumulative practice: Cumulative practice is "the systematic addition of a just-learned skill to previously learned and related skills, allowing them to be practiced together" (Hughes & Lee, 2019, p. 414; Archer & Hughes, 2011). "It requires that new (and usually related) skills are added to a practice activity as they are acquired, thus providing distributed practice for multiple skills within one session" (Hughes & Riccomini, 2019, p. 407).	1
No evidence of interleaved practice: Interleaved practice "is similar to cumulative practice but involves mixing the order of skills and problems to be practiced by distributing them in a random fashion, causing the learner to have to discriminate" (Kirschner, P. & Hendrick, C., 2020).	1
Student Interest: The materials are generally not intrinsically interesting and engaging for most students in that grade.	1
Cohesion: The program components are disjointed and not seamlessly related to one another. Instruction based on the science of reading must be integrated, acknowledging the impact of various component skills upon each other.	1
Usability: The materials are confusing and/or difficult to manage and use in a classroom setting.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Reviewers found that the curriculum provides appropriate and consistent practice opportunities. Each lesson includes both new learning and built-in review. For instance, during the dictation portion of the routine, educators are directed to choose three current words and one review word from the list. The dictated sentence also combines new and previously taught words to reinforce learning.

Reviewers also highlighted the virtual FUN HUB® as an engaging resource that extends practice opportunities for students. Additionally, they found the program's decodable readers to be appealing to students. However, the team noted that the volume of materials—ranging from digital and hard copy teacher materials, student materials, videos, and supplemental resources—can be overwhelming to navigate. Fortunately, each daily lesson includes a clear list of required materials that support organization and planning. Furthermore, instructional videos are readily available through the Fundations Learning Community and Wilson Academy platforms, offering further support for teacher implementation.

FINDINGS:

Components Supporting Word Recognition

1A: Word Recognition Non-Negotiables

Identification of the following red flag practices was 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 letter-sound correspondences.	1
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

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Reviewers found no evidence of the three-cueing system or guidance encouraging memorization of whole words by sight. Instead, instruction is grounded in explicit, systematic teaching of word recognition skills.

The Fundations Learning Community provides educators with clear routines for modeling self-correction using guided questioning and teacher think-alouds. Supporting materials present a well-organized scope and sequence, progressing from simple to more complex skills. Instruction follows a gradual release model, with ample opportunities for guided and independent practice embedded throughout the lessons.

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) as a focus of instruction without moving to the phoneme level.	1
1.8: Blends such as /b/ /l/ are kept intact rather than having students notice their individual sounds.	1
1.9: Students do not practice the phonemes as soon as they learn the graphemes.	1
1.10: Instruction is focused on letters only without explicit instruction and practice with the phonemes that letters represent.	1
1.11: Phoneme awareness is not taught as a foundational reading skill.	1
1.12: Phoneme awareness is not assessed and monitored (e.g., a student's ability to identify the initial, final, and medial phonemes in a word).	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Reviewers found that although instruction progresses from larger units of phonological awareness (syllable, rhyme, onset-rime) to the phoneme level in kindergarten, these larger units are still included in the scope and sequence until the middle of the year in Level 1. The manual moves students through the larger units of phonological awareness before being able to move to the phoneme level, stating "These are fundamental skills that are precursors to isolating, identifying, and differentiating between individual sounds" (Fundations Level K Teacher's Manual, 2025; p.8). Reviewers also noted that students are introduced to phoneme isolation in the beginning of K, but do not begin practicing phoneme isolation until the middle of K (Fundations Level K Teacher's Manual, 2025; p. 9). Regarding assessment, Fundations utilizes the Acadience benchmark and progress monitoring measures. This includes phoneme segmentation fluency as a measure for Levels K and 1.

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*
1.17: Letter-sound correspondences are taught opportunistically or implicitly during text reading.	1
1.18: Instruction is typically "one and done"; phonics skills are introduced but with very little or short-term review.	1
1.19: The first letters of key words for letter/sound correspondences are not aligned with the pure phoneme being taught (e.g., earth /ĕ/, ant for /ă/, orange for /ŏ/).	1
1.20: Phonics instruction takes place in short (or optional) "mini-lessons" or "word work" sessions.	1
1.21: 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
1.22: Blending is not explicitly taught nor practiced.	1
1.23: Instruction encourages students to memorize whole words, read using the first letter only as a clue, guess at words in context using a "What would make sense?" strategy, or use picture clues rather than phonic decoding.	1
1.24: Words with known letter-sound correspondences, including high-frequency words, are taught as whole-word units, often as standalone "sight words" to be memorized.	1
1.25: There are few opportunities provided for word-level decoding practice of new phonics patterns and interleaving practice for prior phonics patterns.	1
1.26: 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
1.27: Advanced word study (Grades 2-5): Instruction in phonics ends once single syllable phonics patterns (e.g., CVC, CVCe) are taught.	1
1.28: Advanced word study (Grades 2-5): There is no evident instruction in multisyllabic word decoding strategies and/or using morphology to support word recognition.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Reviewers found that letter-sound correspondences are taught in a systematic way and instruction emphasizes a structured literacy approach with explicit teaching, cumulative review, and opportunities for practice. Fundations' keywords align to the pure phoneme targeted, including examples like “a - apple - /ă/,” “e - Ed - /ĕ/” and “o - octopus - /ŏ/.” The instructional sequence is well thought out and intentional, introducing consonants and vowels in a carefully paced progression that supports early word reading and student success. Blending is explicitly taught and practiced, along with ample opportunities for students to apply newly introduced phonics patterns through word-level decoding, including interleaved practice to reinforce previously taught skills. Reviewers found that Fundations' decodable library included an engaging assortment of student texts. Additionally, advanced word study includes instruction to support multisyllabic word decoding strategies as well as the use of morphology to support word recognition. However, the team noted that direct instruction on affixes was not as explicit as expected. Finally, while Fundations does not encourage rote memorization, reviewers noted that the Trick Word routine is described broadly and does not include guidance for why words are “tricky,” nor what specific part of the word is “tricky.” For example, in Level K, Unit 3, Week 3, Day 3, the tricky words “and” and “are” are introduced. The manual explains, “these words are called trick words because they have a tricky part, so we do not tap them out. Discuss known and tricky parts of the word” (Level K Teacher’s Manual, 2025, pp. 260-262). Additionally, the routine is described at the beginning of each grade-level manual and on the Teach Tricky Words Activity Cue Card; however, it is up to the educator to ensure that this routine is incorporated into each lesson.

1D: Fluency

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

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR FLUENCY	*SCORE*
1.42: Fluency instruction focuses primarily on student silent reading.	1
1.43: Rate is emphasized over accuracy; priority is given to the student's ability to read words quickly.	1
1.44: Word-level fluency practice to automaticity is not provided, or fluency is viewed only as text-reading fluency.	1
1.45: Fluency is practiced only in narrative text or with repeated readings of patterned text.	1
1.46: Fluency assessment allows acceptance of incorrectly decoded words if they are close in meaning to the target word (e.g., accepting the word "house" instead of the printed word "home").	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Reviewers found that fluency instruction does not focus on student silent reading, and phrasing and prosody are addressed during choral reading. There are some activities where accuracy is prioritized over rate, and others where fluency is addressed as "accuracy and automaticity." The review team noted a lack of consistent, explicit guidance on the importance of developing student accuracy prior to phrasing and prosody. Fluency is practiced at the sound, word, phrase, and text level through Fundations' fluency kit to ensure accurate, smooth, and expressive reading. Furthermore, both the fluency kit and decodable readers offer students practice with informational and other nonfiction texts. For example, the fluency kit includes informational passages about hopscotch, Babe Ruth, Mars (*The Red Planet*), and adjectives (*Adjectives are Handy*). Finally, regarding assessment, Fundations utilizes Acadience fluency measures, which do not allow for the acceptance of incorrectly decoded words if they are close in meaning to the target word.

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 was prioritized in the review of this section.

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

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Reviewers assessed the Fundations curriculum for language comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing; however, the program's primary purpose is the development of foundational word-reading skills. It is essential to note, however, that the primary purpose of the program is to develop foundational word-reading skills. To support this, it is critical that students also have access to robust language knowledge and instructional materials that foster comprehension-building. Within the program, Fundations features a direct and explicit structure for instruction and does not emphasize student choice or embedded learning. The decodable texts offer students exposure to some vocabulary and include a "Did You Know?"

page at the back of each book, containing "knowledge-building words" and "academic words" for the teacher to build students' vocabulary and background knowledge. However, complex syntax is not present, and experience with more complex syntactic structures will need to come from the school's core curriculum. Fundations uses the Comprehension S.O.S.™ (Comprehension: Stop-Orient-Support/Scaffold) strategy, a teacher-directed routine during the storytime part of the lesson. This routine prompts students to engage in the process of making a movie in their mind as they read. Paired books are included for students in Level K decodables, supporting connections between foundational reading practice and building learner background knowledge. However, given the program's focus on foundational literacy, it is not intended to be a knowledge-building curriculum, and additional knowledge-building materials should be incorporated into a school's suite of instructional materials. Finally, Fundations is also not intended to be used for explicit writing instruction. The focus of its lessons is on letter formation, capitalization, punctuation, sentence types (i.e., declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory), and spelling dictation, with emphasis on spelling accuracy. Adopters of this curriculum should be mindful of this and plan to supplement with dedicated writing instruction.

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).	n/a
2.2: Opportunities to bridge existing knowledge to new knowledge is not apparent in instruction.	1
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.	n/a

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

While Fundations does include read-aloud opportunities during its Storytime activity, this, alongside its decodable readers and fluency passages, is not rigorous or complex enough to build sufficient student knowledge or vocabulary. As noted previously, paired books are included in the Level K decodable texts, offering opportunities for students to make connections across texts to build and integrate knowledge. However, given the program's focus on foundational literacy, it is not intended to be a knowledge-building curriculum, and additional knowledge-building materials should be incorporated into a school's suite of instructional materials. Teachers are also encouraged to ask "What do you know about this topic?" before reading, helping students activate relevant background knowledge and make meaningful connections to the text. In addition, educators are prompted to build background knowledge for multilingual learners prior to reading, thereby supporting equitable access to content. Finally, Fundations is a foundational literacy program and does not provide complex, knowledge-building text sets for students who have achieved automaticity with the code. Curriculum adopters should be aware of this and plan to supplement with additional materials that support continued reading development and content knowledge growth.

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.	1
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.	n/a
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

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Fundations does not emphasize worksheets or memorization of isolated words and definitions out of context. The Word of the Day activity introduces students to Tier 2 words, which are aligned to the word structure being studied. However, reviewers noted that the word is not explicitly taught with a focus on vocabulary. For example, in Level 2, Fundations introduces students to the word "predict." To build meaning, teachers are prompted to ask students, "Who predicts the weather?" This is the extent to which the lesson focuses on the word's meaning. Instead, teachers are instructed to reteach the concept of syllable division using the word of the day by asking, "How many consonants are between the two vowels in this word? How can we divide it and keep the first syllable open?" (Teacher's Manual, Unit 7, p. 242). Students then practice scooping the word into its syllables and marking the syllable types as indicated. After practice using the word in a sentence, students are directed to add the word to the vocabulary section of their notebook. This was also the case with Tier 3 words: students were exposed to these words, but direct instruction connecting the words to their meanings was limited. Additionally, while Tier 3 "knowledge-building" words appear in the decodable texts, they are not explicitly taught. Finally, morphology is not taught in kindergarten. Grade 1 features inflectional endings and plurals, but the majority of instruction connects to reading and spelling. In Grade 2, students have more opportunities to learn prefixes and suffixes, and there is some morphology instruction. However, this does not appear consistently. For example, morphology is included in the Unit 5 Make it Fun activities (p. 193), but is not revisited until Unit 7 (p. 249).

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.	n/a
2.19: Instruction does not include teacher modeling nor sufficient opportunities for discussion.	n/a
2.20: Students are asked to memorize parts of speech as a list without learning in context and through application.	n/a

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Given the program's focus on foundational literacy, developing language, syntax, and grammar is not emphasized. These important components of literacy must be addressed elsewhere in a school's suite of instructional materials. However, reviewers did note some evidence of these components that they found in the program. In kindergarten, students are introduced to print conventions, such as the cover, back of the book, title, and author. While grammar and syntax are not explicitly taught, students practice producing complete sentences and are expected to use correct capitalization and end punctuation. Teachers model sentence construction using the program's provided sentence frames, offering students opportunities to discuss and engage with the completed sentence. There is no explicit instruction within the program that attends to the building blocks of meaning (e.g., parts of speech, phrases, clauses) and their function in context.

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).	n/a
2.27: Students do not practice inference as a discrete skill.	n/a

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Given the program's focus on foundational literacy, building inferencing as a discrete skill is not emphasized. This important skill must be addressed elsewhere in a school's suite of instructional materials. While the team noted some use of inferencing strategies during the program's Storytime think-alouds, these opportunities were infrequent and lacked explicit instruction. The program also includes a list of potential comprehension questions teachers can use during instruction. This list includes the following inference questions: *It doesn't say in the text, but what do you think when…? How do you know? What specific words lead you to think that?* However, these prompts are presented as optional, relying entirely on educator discretion. Also, they lack accompanying instances of teacher modeling or opportunities for student-guided practice—both of which are essential features of explicit instruction.

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 types and text structures (e.g., cause and effect, problem and solution, sequence, compare and contrast) are not used to understand the purpose of what is being read.	2
2.35: Specific text structures and corresponding signal words are not explicitly taught and practiced.	3

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Reviewers found that genre types and features are explicitly taught in the Fundations curriculum. For example, in Level K, students are introduced to key elements of story grammar during the Storytime activity. They also explore distinctions between narrative and narrative nonfiction texts. Additionally, Storytime includes some attention to common text structures—such as cause and effect, problem and solution, sequence, and compare and contrast—to support students in understanding the author's purpose. However, this is not a central focus of the routine. Similarly, while specific text structures and their associated signal words are referenced within the Storytime activity, they are not explicitly taught. Finally, reviewers noted that while Fundations provides a graphic organizer outlining various text types and signal words, guidance for teacher implementation is limited.

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: Comprehension strategies such as identifying the main idea, summarizing, noting text structure, inferencing, and fix ups are not taught and practiced throughout the year using a gradual release of responsibility (i.e., I do, we do, you do) using appropriate instructional text that students can accurately decode.	n/a
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.	n/a
3.3: Emphasis is on independent reading and book choice without engaging with complex texts.	n/a
3.4: Materials for comprehension instruction are predominantly predictable and/or leveled texts.	n/a
3.5: Students are not taught methods to monitor their comprehension while reading.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Fundations features the Comprehension S.O.S.™ (Comprehension: Stop-Orient-Support/Scaffold) strategy, a teacher-directed routine during the Storytime part of the lesson. This routine prompts students to engage in the process of making a movie in their mind as they read. However, because Fundations is designed as a supplemental foundational skills program, it does not include many components of comprehensive reading comprehension instruction. For instance,

while the program includes decodable texts that are neither predictable nor leveled, these texts are not complex and are not intended to build knowledge or deepen student comprehension. Thus, adopters of this curriculum must be mindful of this limitation and plan to supplement with additional materials that support the development of students' reading comprehension.

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: There is no direct instruction in handwriting.	1
4.2: Handwriting instruction is an isolated add-on.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

The program includes direct, explicit instruction in handwriting that is integrated into its daily lessons to support students' handwriting development.

4B: Writing — Spelling

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

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR SPELLING	*SCORE*
4.5 There is 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
4.6: There is no evidence of phoneme segmentation or phoneme-grapheme mapping to support spelling instruction.	1
4.7: 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
4.8: Students practice spelling by memorization only (e.g., rainbow writing, repeated writing, pyramid writing).	1
4.9: Spelling patterns for each phoneme are taught all at once (e.g., all spellings of long /ā/) instead of a systematic progression to develop automaticity with individual grapheme/phonemes.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Reviewers found clear evidence of explicit spelling instruction, supported by a well-defined scope and sequence that aligns with the phonics and decoding progression. Reviewers observed that in kindergarten, students are taught to use "c" before "a," "o," and "u," and "k" before "e" and "i." Spelling patterns are taught one at a time to help students develop automaticity with individual letter-sound correspondences. Additionally, memorization is not used to practice spelling. Instead, students are offered extensive and recursive practice opportunities, both in isolation and in context.

4C: Writing — Composition

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

RED FLAG PRACTICES FOR COMPOSITION	*SCORE*
4.15: Writing tasks and prompts are provided with minimal instruction for the skills needed to complete them and little time for planning prior to writing.	n/a
4.16: Writing assignments are primarily unstructured with few models or graphic organizers.	n/a
4.17: Conventions, grammar, and sentence structure are not explicitly taught, and opportunities for practice to develop automaticity are not provided; instead, they are addressed opportunistically.	n/a
4.18: Writing instruction and assignments are focused primarily on narrative writing or unstructured student choice.	n/a
4.19: Students are not taught the writing process (i.e., planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing).	n/a
4.20: Writing is taught as a standalone and is not used to further reading comprehension.	n/a

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

As a foundational reading program, Fundations focuses on transcription skills such as letter formation, spelling, and sentence writing, including correct capitalization and ending punctuation. It is designed to be used in conjunction with a literature-based language arts program to more thoroughly address writing composition. As such, adopters of this curriculum should plan to supplement with additional instruction and practice in writing and composition skills.

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 are marked correct if the mistake does not substantially alter the meaning of the text.	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., guess 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.	1
5.10: Decoding skills are assessed using real words only.	1
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).	n/a
5.13: Multilingual learners are not assessed in their home language.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Fundations utilizes the Acadience suite of assessment tools to measure students' foundational skills, including phonemic awareness, phonics, and oral reading fluency. Native French and Spanish speakers also have access to assessments in their home languages through Acadience. Notably, Fundations assessments do not address components of language comprehension—such as vocabulary, syntax, or listening comprehension—which is expected given its focus on foundational skills. Therefore, adopters of the program should plan to incorporate additional assessments that capture these essential aspects of reading development.

FINAL REPORT SUMMARY

Overall, the **reviewed components** for Fundations' curriculum demonstrate strengths as well as areas that would benefit from further refinement. Continued attention to these elements can help ensure high-quality instruction across Fundations. 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

Fundations' curriculum provides comprehensive support for developing students' foundational literacy skills, including phonological and phoneme awareness, phonics and phonic decoding, fluency, spelling, and handwriting.

Fundations' curriculum is highly structured and explicit, and its well-established routines—reinforced by the routine cards—are a key strength that supports student learning.

Fundations' curriculum provides educators with high-quality materials, such as sound cards, key words, and magnetic journals. Reviewers noted that these materials are not only well designed but also notably "teacher-friendly," making daily routines easier to implement and allowing teachers to focus more on instruction and student engagement.

Fundations' curriculum includes the Fun Hub, which offers resources for building background knowledge and a comprehensive section for multilingual learners. Additionally, this digital platform includes professional learning tools and lesson and unit materials to assist teachers with their delivery and planning of the program.

CHALLENGES

While Fundations' online hub includes helpful explanatory videos, the overall volume of program materials can make navigation challenging, especially for novice teachers. For example, reviewers suggested the Teacher's Manual would benefit from tabs or dividers to help teachers quickly access key sections.

Although Fundations includes many high-quality decodable texts, it does not provide clear guidance on when and how teachers should incorporate these materials into instruction.

While Fundations is primarily designed to develop foundational literacy skills (e.g. phonological and phoneme awareness, phonics and phonic decoding, fluency, spelling, and handwriting), reviewers noted opportunities to strengthen students' work with vocabulary, sentence comprehension, and inferencing. For example, the curriculum does provide educators with prompts that tap into inference; however, these are presented as optional. Activities like these could be made more explicit and systematically integrated to ensure all students have regular opportunities to practice inference skills.

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PUBLISHER'S RESPONSE

Curriculum Navigation Report

Fundations, Grades K-3

WILSON fundations™

Publisher's Response to The Reading League Review

Wilson Language Training appreciates The Reading League's comprehensive, independent review of Fundations® and its recognition of the program's **strong alignment with the scientific research** on effective reading and writing instruction.

Fundations® provides Structured Literacy grounded in the science of reading. As a **foundational skills program**, it supports student success within the broader, knowledge-building ELA block, ensuring that all students develop the essential decoding and encoding skills needed for lifelong literacy.

The curriculum combines explicit, mastery-based instruction with engaging, multimodal materials that **make learning to read both fun and effective**. When paired with Acadience® Reading K–6, Fundations helps educators ensure that students consistently meet benchmarks in the critical areas of early literacy development.

No Red Flags in Foundational Domains			
8/8	Overall Design & Delivery	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	
26/26	Word Recognition Non-Negotiable ✓ ✓ ✓	Phonological & Phoneme Awareness	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
		Phonics & Phonic Decoding	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
		Fluency	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
7/7	Handwriting & Spelling	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	
9/9	Assessment	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ N/A	

✓ = No Evidence of Red Flag; N/A = Not Applicable

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Overall Design and Delivery — All 8 indicators met

Fundations met all criteria in Overall Design and Delivery, embedding all evidence-based practice types—**deliberate, retrieval, spaced, cumulative, and interleaved**—within a cohesive, teacher-friendly framework that engages students and streamlines classroom use.

Reviewers noted that, "*Fundations' curriculum is* **highly structured and explicit**, *and its well-established routines—reinforced by the routine cards—are a key strength that supports student learning.*"

Reviewers also noted that "*Each lesson includes both* ***new learning*** *and* ***built-in review****. For instance, during the dictation portion of the routine, educators are directed to choose three current words and one review word from the list. The dictated sentence also combines new and previously taught words to reinforce learning.*"

Word Recognition — All 26 indicators met

Fundations achieved a perfect review across all 26 Word Recognition indicators, demonstrating full alignment with The Reading League's evidence-based criteria. Reviewers identified no red flag practices in any subdomain. Consistent with the science of reading, reviewers confirmed that "*instruction is grounded in* ***explicit, systematic*** ***teaching of word recognition skills****"* with instruction that "*follows a* ***gradual release model,*** *with ample opportunities for* ***guided and independent practice embedded*** *throughout the lessons.*"

Writing: Handwriting & Spelling — All 7 indicators met

Fundations fully met The Reading League's criteria for handwriting and spelling, with no red flags identified. Instruction is **systematic** with **"*explicit* *instruction in handwriting that is* ***integrated*** ***into its daily lessons.***" Direct handwriting instruction builds accuracy and fluency, alongside explicit spelling instruction "*supported by a* ***well-defined scope and sequence that is aligned with the phonics and decoding progression***." Spelling patterns are introduced sequentially, practiced in context, and reinforced through phoneme–grapheme mapping rather than memorization.

Assessment — All 9 applicable indicators met

Fundations met all criteria for assessment, with the exception of one indicator marked as not applicable, reflecting the program's focus on foundational reading skills rather than higher-order comprehension.

Fundations provides a **robust suite** **of formative and summative assessments**, including unit assessments, progress checks, and digital dashboards within **FUN HUB®** that track mastery of phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, and fluency. These tools allow teachers to monitor student progress, identify instructional needs, and adjust teaching in real time. The program also aligns with **Acadience Reading K–6**, which measures phonemic awareness, phonics, oral reading fluency, ensuring a coherent assessment system for foundational literacy.

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Language Comprehension

Although language comprehension is not the primary focus of Fundations, the program intentionally lays the groundwork for these skills through systematic attention to phonics, vocabulary exposure, and oral language development.

- Students engage with a range of **decodable texts** that expose them to different text purposes and structures, preparing them for deeper literary study in the core ELA program.
- **Vocabulary** is introduced and reinforced **within connected text and oral language routines**, allowing students to develop word meaning through context and use.
- Fundations supports **background knowledge** development by prompting teachers to activate students' prior knowledge before reading, encouraging questions like "What do you know about this topic?" to build **meaningful connections to text.**

Of the 19 indicators in the Language Comprehension domain, eight were marked as not applicable. Reviewers found no meaningful evidence of practices inconsistent with the science of reading.

In categories where Fundations did not fully meet all criteria, this reflected the intentional scope of the curriculum. For example, Fundations uses questioning during read-alouds to build oral comprehension and reinforce the language structures students are learning to decode. These routines strengthen listening comprehension as a bridge to reading comprehension, supporting students' transition from foundational decoding to higher order understanding as fluency develops.

In addition, text structures and signal words, by design, are presented at the introductory level since concentrated instruction in these appropriately occurs within the Tier 1 literacy block.

Reading Comprehension and Writing Composition

Reviewers found **no evidence of practices inconsistent with the science of reading** in these domains. Most indicators were marked not applicable, reflecting Fundations' intentional design as a foundational reading program.

Critical Component of Comprehensive Literacy Systems

Fundations is intentionally designed to align with MTSS and RTI frameworks. Built-in progress monitoring helps teachers quickly identify students who need additional support without disrupting instructional coherence. By design, Fundations ensures Tier 2 intervention mirrors Tier 1 instruction—students receive the same evidence-based routines, language, and instructional design used in the core classroom, promoting consistency and accelerating progress.

Fundations also supports multilingual learners through embedded differentiation and teacher guidance that activates background knowledge before reading, ensuring equitable access to instruction. This approach is further supported by **Acadience Reading K–6**, which includes Spanish and French measures to monitor progress of students with these home languages.

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Fundations Powers Comprehensive Literacy

Fundations emphasizes the word recognition components of the *Simple View of Reading* and *Scarborough's Reading Rope* while also integrating many of the other reading, language, and writing components. Its strength is in powering student success elsewhere in the Tier 1 literacy block, where comprehensive literacy instruction in language structures, verbal reasoning, literacy knowledge, reading comprehension, and writing composition is taught while also building vocabulary and background knowledge.

Fundations Readers, which are 95% or more decodable aligned to the Fundations scope and sequence, provide structured opportunities to strengthen decoding and fluency. When paired with grade-level and knowledge-building texts, they expand students' exposure to complex vocabulary, syntax, and ideas, bridging foundational skill mastery to deeper comprehension and content learning.

Continuous Improvement and Innovation

Wilson is committed to continuously enhancing Fundations based on educator and reviewer feedback. Beginning in 2026, the **Teacher's Manual** will include additional scaffolding for teachers throughout each Activity, as well as explicit guidance for integrating **FUN HUB® Practice** and **Fundations Readers**. In addition, an integration with **Acadience Reading K–6** will offer instructional recommendations aligned to assessment data. A new **Lesson Delivery Tool** will also launch, streamlining teacher planning and supporting explicit, engaging Structured Literacy instruction.

Wilson deeply values The Reading League's independent review, which affirms Fundations' strong alignment with the science of reading and helps guide our ongoing work to ensure every student has access to high-quality literacy instruction.

WILSON LANGUAGE TRAINING®

Our mission is to provide quality professional learning and ongoing support so that educators have the skills and tools they need to help their students become fluent, independent readers.

To learn more about Wilson Language Training and Fundations, please visit: https://www.wilsonlanguage.com/

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