

Bluebonnet Learning Response to Reading League

April 2026

Introduction | Bluebonnet Learning Program

Bluebonnet Learning wishes to thank the Reading League for a thorough and insightful review of the Bluebonnet Learning K–5 Reading Language Arts (RLA) instructional materials. Bluebonnet Learning K–5 RLA instructional materials are designed to address student learning using research-based instructional strategies (RBIS) to ensure students are receiving high-quality, grade-level content aligned to the science of reading:

- **K–3 Foundational Skills** units follow a systematic scope and sequence aligned to the Texas state standards. The foundational skills lessons are designed to include the development of oral language and explicit instruction for decoding, spelling, and handwriting, which includes cursive instruction beginning in grade 2. The decodable readers are meticulously sequenced to include sound and letter relationships that students have previously learned. These engaging readers enable students to practice sound-spelling patterns taught through decoding, with lesson guidance supporting whole-group and small-group instruction. Through cumulative practice and review, the K–3 skills strand develops students’ ability to decode increasingly complex words, preparing them to independently engage with grade-level text in grades 4 and 5.
- **K–5 RLA** units of study are strategic and coherent, with intentionally sequenced units to build upon prior learning. This knowledge-based instructional approach connects topics within and across grades and introduces cross-curricular content that builds knowledge in science and history, while including great works of literature. Not only are students exposed to complex, grade-level texts, but they also engage in the inquiry and research process to create written responses grounded in text evidence. Writing is a daily part of each lesson and builds from short responses to extended written responses.

Additional resources embedded in the program include qualitative and quantitative text complexity measures for read-alouds and texts in Student Readers. A Foundational Skills Appendix is also included in the Teacher Resources sections of Unit 1 in grades 4–5. This resource provides teachers with a scope and sequence along with direct, explicit, and systematic instructional strategies and routines to support students with decoding multisyllabic words, understanding syllable types, and applying advanced knowledge of syllable division patterns.

Bluebonnet Learning Response | Bluebonnet Learning K–5 RLA

Challenges

Challenge #1

Bluebonnet’s foundational skills instruction lacks a clear, systematic daily routine to guide consistent skill development. Students would benefit from a more explicit, step-by-step instructional structure. Additionally, the curriculum offers limited opportunities for cumulative practice and spiral review, which are essential for reinforcing previously taught concepts. Furthermore, the heavy reliance on worksheets reduces opportunities for authentic application and more engaging practice experiences that deepen understanding.

Response to Challenge #1

Bluebonnet Learning K–3 Foundational Skills is intentionally sequenced to provide clear, systematic instruction that supports both teachers and students. Instruction begins with phonological awareness and progresses to sound-spelling correspondences, introducing the most common patterns first and expanding to additional spellings as students develop proficiency. Lessons follow a consistent structure aligned to students’ skill development, supporting instructional coherence and predictable structure and routines.

Across units, the materials embed intentional cumulative review to reinforce previously taught skills over time. This review is integrated through multiple instructional routines, including:

- Decodable texts that align to the phonics scope and sequence and allow students to practice newly introduced Tricky Words and sound-spelling patterns while applying previously learned code knowledge.
- Dictation activities that strengthen connections among listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Word chaining routines that support phonemic manipulation and spelling flexibility through the systematic building and reading of related words.

To support sustained engagement and effective practice, Bluebonnet Learning K–5 Reading Language Arts and K–3 Foundational Skills incorporates varied instructional modalities, including songs, rhymes, movement, Word Work routines, partner reading, small group activities, and games. These approaches are designed to promote active participation and meaningful practice beyond worksheet-based tasks.

Challenge #2

Bluebonnet provides limited instruction in phonemic awareness beyond kindergarten, and explicit foundational skills support decreases significantly in the upper grades. Strengthening these areas would help ensure the continued development of critical word recognition skills across grade levels.

Response to Challenge #2

Bluebonnet Learning K–3 Foundational Skills provides systematic phonemic awareness instruction aligned with the Texas standards for Reading Language Arts, which require explicit phonemic awareness instruction in grades K–2. Across these grades, the standards call for students to blend phonemes and to manipulate phonemes within base words as part of early reading development.

Because Bluebonnet Learning K–5 Reading Language Arts—including K–3 Foundational Skills—has been reviewed and determined to be fully aligned with Texas standards, phonemic awareness instruction is intentionally sustained beyond kindergarten rather than tapered. In grades 1 and 2, these skills are reinforced through consistent teacher-led chaining routines that provide structured opportunities for students to blend phonemes, attend to changes in individual sounds within words, and manipulate phonemes to form new words. This approach supports continued development of phonemic awareness as students’ progress through the early grades.

Challenge #3

While Bluebonnet effectively uses discussion to support comprehension and oral language development, it provides limited explicit instruction in comprehension strategies. For instance, although the program includes inference-level questions following a read-aloud, it does not explicitly teach what an inference is or model how students can make inferences while reading.

Response to Challenge #3

Bluebonnet Learning K–5 Reading Language Arts provides systematic, explicit instruction in comprehension strategies across all RLA units with additional support embedded in K–3 Foundational Skills. Strategies are modeled during teacher-led read-a-louds in grades K–3 and reinforced through whole-group reading and re--reading- routines in grades 4–5. Teachers intentionally model strategy use and guide student application, gradually releasing responsibility as students’ progress. Over the course of a unit, students move from identifying comprehension elements, such as a text’s central idea, to independently applying these strategies in writing.

Challenge #4

Bluebonnet places a strong emphasis on Western civilizations within its content-specific texts. Expanding the curriculum to include a broader range of cultures, histories, and perspectives would

provide students with more opportunities for “mirrors and windows,” texts that both reflect their own experiences and offer insight into those of others. Additionally, descriptions of Native Americans tend to be limited, offering little depth on essential topics such as displacement, contested treaties, and the long-standing oppression Native communities have faced. For example, in Grade 3, Unit 8, Lesson 1, the curriculum emphasizes cultural adaptation and diversity rather than conflict, displacement, colonization, or treaties. There is no mention (in this lesson) of genocide, forced removal, or European-Native treaties.

Response to Challenge #4

Bluebonnet Learning K–5 Reading Language Arts provides students with an age-appropriate introduction to essential historical ideas, establishing a strong foundation for deeper and more complex historical analysis in later grades. Through its integration of literature, science, the arts, and history, Bluebonnet Learning encourages students to deepen their understanding of how our society has changed over time. This holistic approach not only enriches students’ intellectual development but also prepares students with the background knowledge necessary to be successful in later study. This approach cultivates a depth of understanding and appreciation for historical contexts, enabling students to draw connections between past and present, while handling sensitive topics with care and nurturing civic responsibility.

Challenge #5

Bluebonnet’s online-only materials made the program challenging to implement. The sheer volume of digital pages was overwhelming, and without a clearly defined scope and sequence, it was difficult to identify coherence and progression across units and grade levels.

Response to Challenge #5

Bluebonnet Learning are print-based, high-quality instructional materials with a clearly defined scope and sequence. Instruction is delivered through teacher guides, student activity books, readers, and ancillary materials that are organized into sequenced units and lessons, making coherence and progression across units and grade levels clear and consistent.

Districts order and receive complete sets of printed materials for teachers and students through the state’s procurement system (EMAT), ensuring access to a comprehensive, organized instructional package that supports consistent implementation.

Findings

1A: Word Recognition Non-Negotiables

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) | Score: 2

Response

Bluebonnet Learning K–5 Reading Language Arts and K–3 Foundational Skills provides a clearly articulated, systematic scope and sequence supported by comprehensive pacing guidance at the program, course, and unit levels. This guidance is documented across the Program & Implementation Guide, course-level Pacing, Scope & Sequence Guides, in the Unit Overview of each Teacher Guide, and in several Teacher Guide Resource or Appendix sections—all of which explain how skills and knowledge build intentionally within and across grades.

Across grades K–3, foundational skills instruction includes explicit, sequenced phonics, encoding, and decoding with regular opportunities for cumulative practice. Students engage in consistent instructional routines that provide practice in isolation and in connected text, including chaining routines, dictation, fully decodable texts, and additional whole-group, collaborative, and independent activities aligned to previously taught sound-spelling patterns. Skills are intentionally revisited and reinforced over time, with complexity increasing gradually while ensuring students are never asked to read or spell patterns that have not yet been taught. This design supports systematic review, sustained practice, and coherent skill development rather than isolated instruction.

1B: Phonological and Phoneme Awareness

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) | Score: 2

Response

Bluebonnet Learning includes multiple, systematic tools and routines for assessing and monitoring students’ phoneme awareness across grades K–1, including students’ ability to identify and manipulate initial, medial, and final phonemes. In kindergarten, teachers use embedded observational assessments and progress monitoring tools—such as segmenting, blending, word reading, fluency, and writing measures—to track phoneme level skills throughout the year. The materials provide clear guidance for identifying students who need additional support and specify which progress monitoring tools to use, how often to administer them, and how to document growth over time. In grade 1, the program includes structured, one-on-one phoneme level progress monitoring with explicit scoring criteria that help teachers analyze errors. Mid-unit assessments and designated Pausing Points further support ongoing monitoring and targeted reteaching. Across lessons, checks for understanding and follow-up activities

ensure that phoneme awareness is consistently assessed, reinforced, and supported rather than treated as a one-time skill.

1C: Phonics and Phonics Decoding

1.19: The first letters of key words for letter-sound correspondences are not aligned with the pure phoneme being taught (e.g., earth for /ě/, ant for /ă/, orange for /ǒ/) | Score 2

Response

Across K–1 Foundational Skills, the program consistently uses phonemically accurate key words when introducing and reinforcing letter-sound correspondences. In kindergarten, for example, short vowels are introduced using words that contain the target pure phoneme in appropriate positions, with explicit teacher guidance and multisensory routines to support accurate perception and articulation. Students analyze sounds through listening, repetition, and visual supports such as mirrors to confirm correct mouth position.

This phonemic alignment is maintained in grade 1 through explicit segmentation routines, phoneme level analysis, and consistent use of aligned key words and instructional tools, including Sound Cards, Vowel Code Flip Books, and Individual Code Charts. Short vowels are introduced using instructionally appropriate examples that clearly model the target phoneme, ensuring students receive reliable, consistent representations of each sound. Together, these practices demonstrate that the program systematically teaches pure phonemes using accurate key words and structured routines that support correct phoneme identification, production, and encoding.

1.25: There are few opportunities provided for word-level decoding practice of new phonics patterns and interleaving practice for prior phonics patterns | Score 2

Response

The program offers extensive, systematic, and varied opportunities for students to practice decoding at the word level—both with newly introduced phonics patterns and previously taught skills. For example, the kindergarten sequence is intentionally designed to introduce a small set of consonants and a vowel early in the year so students can begin decoding real words immediately; this early decoding practice establishes the foundation for interleaving skills across subsequent units.

Likewise, grade 1 materials provide systematic decoding practice that moves from isolation to connected text and builds directly on prior instruction, with lesson objectives following a clear progression from simple to complex word structures, ensuring cumulative practice across units. In grades 2 and 3, the materials provide systematic decoding and encoding practice for multisyllabic words through progression from isolation to connected text.

1D: Fluency

1.44: Word-level fluency practice to automaticity is not provided, or fluency is viewed only as text-reading fluency | Score 2

Response

Across grades 1–3, the Bluebonnet Learning RLA materials include extensive, systematic, and varied opportunities for students to build word-level fluency, practice decoding patterns to automaticity, and apply fluency skills in multiple instructional settings. For example, in grade 1, word-level fluency is explicitly and repeatedly practiced in multiple formats, not only through connected text, while grade 2 materials provide structured, repeated opportunities for word-level fluency practice across independent, partner, and teacher-guided settings. Grade 3 materials continue to emphasize word-level fluency through structured lists, decodable phrases, and controlled texts.

2C: Vocabulary

2.9: Tier 2 words are not taught explicitly and practiced; students are not given opportunities to use them in speech, see them in print, and use them in writing | Score 2

Response

Bluebonnet Learning lessons embed vocabulary in listening, speaking, reading, and writing tasks, ensuring students repeatedly encounter and apply vocabulary words.

Across grades K–5, Word Work activities reinforce listening to and speaking with vocabulary words, while reading and writing with vocabulary words occurs throughout grades 1–5. As students gain more literary skills, they encounter more complex texts with glossaries, and do more writing in response to reading, with multiple written assignments that require students to accurately use Tier 2 vocabulary.

2E: Verbal Reasoning

2.27: Inferencing strategies are not taught explicitly and may be based only on picture clues | Score 2

Response

Bluebonnet Learning RLA explicitly teaches inferencing and consistently requires students to justify their thinking with text-based evidence. Teachers prompt students to locate and cite specific quotes to support inferences during discussion and written responses, reinforcing that conclusions must be grounded in the text rather than picture clues alone. Instruction integrates listening, speaking, and writing as students defend claims, respond to peers, and transfer ideas from discussion to written analysis. Teachers model this process through guided examples and think-alouds, supporting students as they plan, justify, and write evidence-based inferences. Together, these practices demonstrate that inferencing is explicitly taught, modeled, and applied within authentic reading and writing tasks.

2.28: Students do not practice inferencing as a discrete skill | Score 3

Response

Bluebonnet Learning K–5 RLA lessons embed inferencing within knowledge-building reading and writing tasks, where strategies are explicitly modeled and practiced in context. This design reflects research indicating that early reading comprehension develops through the integration of accurate word recognition, oral language, vocabulary, and background knowledge, rather than through isolated strategy practice.

K–3 instruction focuses on building coherent knowledge through sequenced texts, strengthening listening comprehension through read-a-louds and discussion, and developing academic language in meaningful contexts. Within this work, students explain ideas, justify interpretations with evidence, and connect information across texts, engaging in inferential thinking as part of authentic meaning-making. As students’ progress through the program, they practice inferencing with increasing independence, laying the foundation for more explicit attention to comprehension processes in later grades.

2F: Literacy Knowledge

2.33: Genre types and features are not explicitly taught | Score 2

Response

Examples from multiple grade levels in Bluebonnet Learning K–5 RLA demonstrate systematic instruction on genre characteristics and their application in both reading and writing tasks. Bluebonnet Learning K–5 RLA units teach genre features through mentor texts, explicit modeling, and scaffolded writing tasks, as aligned to the Texas state standards.

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 | Score 2

Response

Bluebonnet Learning K–5 RLA includes explicit instruction on genre types and text features in multiple units across each grade level. The program includes specific instruction on literary genres such as nursery rhyme, poetry, fables, folktales, fairy tales, tall tales, myths, and personal narratives, as well as informational, persuasive, and argumentative texts, to help students understand how structure conveys meaning. Instruction on genre consistently includes the author’s purpose, like bringing enjoyment or new information to the reader, or persuading the audience.

2.35: Specific text structures and corresponding signal words are not explicitly taught and practiced | Score 2

Response

Bluebonnet Learning K–5 RLA units include direct instruction and guided practice with text structures and their associated signal words to strengthen both comprehension and writing. For example, in grades

2 and 3, students learn to identify and apply signal words that support sequencing, cause and effect, and opinion and informational writing. Instruction is reinforced through reading and writing tasks in which students use signal words to organize ideas, summarize events, and connect claims with evidence. Across units, teachers provide scaffolds such as modeling, graphic organizers, and guided practice to support students in applying text structures and signal words in context, with opportunities to demonstrate understanding in increasingly independent writing.

3: Reading Comprehension

3.1: Comprehension strategies such as identifying the main idea, summarizing, noting text structure, inferencing, and fixups 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 | Score 2

Response

Bluebonnet Learning K–5 RLA uses a gradual release of responsibility to teach comprehension strategies at every grade level. Across grades K–3, comprehension instruction occurs primarily in the RLA strand through teacher-led read-a-louds and discussion of complex texts, with select opportunities to apply strategies to decodable texts in Foundational Skills as students’ decoding skills develop. Instruction is scaffolded across multiple lessons, moving from teacher modeling and guided practice to increasing student independence rather than following a single lesson “I do, we do, you do” structure. As students’ progress through grades 1–3, comprehension tasks become more complex and independent, including retelling, summarizing, identifying central ideas with supporting details, making predictions based on text structure, and using text features to support understanding.

In grades 4 and 5, teachers continue to model and guide comprehension processes—such as identifying themes, paraphrasing, and citing text evidence—before gradually releasing responsibility as students apply these strategies independently in discussion and writing. This progression reflects a coherent, developmentally appropriate approach to comprehension instruction across the program.

3.5: Students are not taught methods to monitor their comprehension while reading | Score 2

Response

Examples from across grade levels in Bluebonnet Learning K–5 RLA demonstrate that students learn comprehension monitoring strategies such as correcting and confirming predictions, generating questions before, during, and after reading, tracking understanding of vocabulary, and making adjustments such as re-reading, using background knowledge, asking questions, and annotating—as required by the Texas state standards.

4B: Writing – Spelling

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. | Score 2

Response

Spelling instruction is systematically embedded throughout the Foundational Skills program in grades K–3 and integrated into Reading Language Arts units in grades 4 and 5. Instruction begins in kindergarten, with students connecting sounds to spellings and progressing to increasingly complex patterns. Across grades, students practice encoding alongside decoding through explicit instruction, guided practice, and dictation routines, with opportunities for cumulative review and assessment. Spelling expectations and routines are explicitly outlined in unit level Teacher Guides, ensuring consistent, developmentally appropriate instruction across K–5.

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 | Score 2

Response

Across the K–3 Foundational Skills units, spelling lists feature words with sound/spelling patterns that have been explicitly taught as aligned to the decoding scope and sequence. In RLA units for grades 4 and 5, spelling lists include words that both align with the knowledge topic of the unit *and* feature explicitly taught sound spelling patterns.

5: Assessment

5.9: Phoneme awareness is not assessed | Score 2

Response

Bluebonnet Learning includes multiple, systematic tools and routines for assessing and monitoring students’ phoneme awareness across grades K–1, including students’ ability to identify and manipulate initial, medial, and final phonemes. In kindergarten, teachers use embedded observational assessments and progress monitoring tools—such as segmenting, blending, word reading, fluency, and writing measures—to track phoneme-level skills throughout the year. The materials provide clear guidance for identifying students who need additional support and specify which progress monitoring tools to use, how often to administer them, and how to document growth over time.

In grade 1, the program includes structured, one-on-one phoneme-level progress monitoring with explicit scoring criteria that help teachers analyze errors. Mid-unit assessments and designated Pausing Points further support ongoing monitoring and targeted reteaching. Across lessons, checks for understanding and follow-up activities ensure that phoneme awareness is consistently assessed, reinforced, and supported rather than treated as a one-time skill.

5.11: Oral reading fluency (ORF) assessments are not used | Score 2**Response**

Across grades 1–5, Bluebonnet Learning RLA and Foundational Skills provides regular, age-appropriate opportunities for fluency monitoring and assessment, with decoding accuracy treated as a foundational component of fluency. Beginning in grade 1, students participate in oral reading fluency assessments that include reading aloud from decodable or grade-level texts, analysis of errors, and consideration of accuracy, rate, and expression, alongside word reading in isolation measures that focus specifically on decoding accuracy.

This approach becomes increasingly explicit in grades 2 and 3, where teachers are guided to analyze error patterns to inform targeted support and to prioritize accuracy when interpreting fluency results. In later grades, fluency assessment expands to include unit-level and benchmark diagnostics that measure oral reading accuracy, rate, and comprehension, with optional tools for progress monitoring as needed. Across grade levels, fluency assessments are embedded throughout the year to monitor growth over time, reflecting a coherent and intentional design that emphasizes accurate, smooth, and meaningful reading rather than speed alone.

5.13: Multilingual learners are not assessed in their home language | Score 4**Response**

The Texas State Board of Education Approved Aprendizaje Bluebonnet Artes del lenguaje y lectura K–5 and Destrezas Fundamentales K–3 in November of 2025. These programs provide opportunities for Multilingual learners to be assessed in Spanish. Aprendizaje Bluebonnet materials also include a Biliteracy Resource Guide, which contains different unit and lesson level comparison documents detailing the interconnectedness of the English and Spanish programs, including assessments.