



Curriculum Navigation Report

Arts & Letters: Language Arts (2025)



2026 Publication
Reviewed with Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines (3rd Edition, 2026)

Introduction

CURRICULUM EVALUATION GUIDELINES DESCRIPTION

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

Hennessy, 2020, pg. 8.

Due to the popularity of the science of reading movement, the term “science of reading” has been used as a marketing tool, often promising a quick fix for decision makers seeking a program aligned with the scientific evidence base. However, as articulated in The Reading League’s [*Science of Reading: Defining Guide \(2022\)*](#),

The science of reading is a vast, interdisciplinary body of scientifically-based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing. Over the last five decades, this research has provided a preponderance of evidence to inform how proficient reading and writing develop; why some students have difficulty; and how educators can most effectively assess and teach, and, therefore, improve student outcomes through the prevention of and intervention for reading difficulties. (p.6)

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

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



- Word Recognition
- Language Comprehension
- Reading Comprehension
- Writing
- Assessment



The CEGs have been used by educators, building and district leaders, local education agencies, 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 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 a review of Arts & Letters (2025), created for students in Grades K-5.

For this report, reviewers closely examined both teacher-facing and student-facing materials. Teacher-facing materials included the TEACH book, the Teacher Manual for each of the four modules at a given grade level; the Prologue section, which contains supplemental lessons and practice materials specifically designed for multilingual learners; and digital resources available on the Great Minds platform, including lesson slide decks, videos, vocabulary cards, and the assessment platform. Additionally, the team reviewed student-facing materials, including the LEARN book, the corresponding student workbook for each of the four modules at a given grade level, and digital student resources available on the Great Minds platform. However, reviewers noted that access to the digital resources requires an additional purchase.

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 review process description, visit [The Reading League Compass's Curriculum Decision Makers page](#).



1 Red Flag statement is False.



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



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



4 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.

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).	2	
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).	2	
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.	2	

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Arts & Letters offers whole-group literacy instruction with some intentional design. The curriculum includes shared learning experiences, with select literacy components building on previously taught skills. While the supplemental Prologue supports K–8 multilingual learners and students with language needs through front-loading of key content and language, reviewers felt the materials would benefit from more differentiated and purposeful opportunities for students to apply and practice skills in listening comprehension, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and writing. Reviewers also observed that the program often assumes prior exposure and mastery of foundational skills, which may disadvantage students who did not participate in the program in previous grade levels. While there is evidence of knowledge building within individual modules, connections across modules were less apparent. As a result, opportunities for retrieval practice—revisiting and reinforcing previously learned content over time—are limited, making it more difficult for learning to build coherently across units.

“Arcs” are organized to support spaced practice within the program’s modules. Similarly, cumulative practice within modules is a clear strength. Across activities such as the World Knowledge Chart, ELA Chart, sentence work, and writing tasks, skills and knowledge are intentionally built over time, allowing students to revisit and deepen their understanding. However, this cumulative design is not always made explicit. It can be difficult for teachers to easily identify where and how cumulative practice is developed across lessons. Additionally, opportunities for student-generated work, particularly those that require students to independently apply and extend their learning, were limited.

Reviewers found the module topics to be of high-interest and relevant to students’ lives. Additionally, the program’s essential questions and knowledge threads support overall coherence. The structure is well organized, with consistent routines that are repeated across modules, enhancing Arts & Letters’ overall cohesion.

Regarding usability, the program includes a significant volume of materials, and the review team required considerable time to review their corresponding implementation guidance documents. This may pose a challenge, as adopters of the curriculum will need sufficient time to understand and effectively review all of its guidance documents. In addition, the program relies heavily on the Arts & Letters online platform, which houses key implementation guidance and essential resources. Reviewers noted that several guidance documents are lengthy and questioned the practicality of expecting teachers to utilize them efficiently within typical planning constraints. The review team noted that significant professional development and planning time will be necessary for successful implementation.

While support and guiding questions are provided in some places, they are not always consistently embedded. Anchor texts are often drawn from additionally purchased books, and although each module includes a materials list, planning requires considerable effort. Teachers must not only manage materials but also determine how to structure instruction, including what to emphasize and when, as they move through the texts.

Findings:

COMPONENTS SUPPORTING WORD RECOGNITION

1A: Word Recognition Non-Negotiables

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

WORD RECOGNITION NON-NEGOTIABLES	SCORE
1.1: Three cueing-systems are taught as strategies for decoding in early grades (i.e., directing students to use picture cues, context cues, or attend to the first letter of a word as a cue).	n/a
1.2: Guidance to memorize any whole words, including high frequency words, by sight without attending to the sound/symbol correspondences.	n/a
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).	n/a

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Arts & Letters’ Word Recognition Non-Negotiables are not applicable. Arts & Letters is a comprehensive language arts curriculum that focuses on an integrated approach to reading comprehension, writing, language development, and fluency. As such, it does not emphasize the word recognition components of skilled reading, including phonological awareness, decoding, and sight recognition. For that reason, adopters must ensure that additional high-quality materials are in place to provide systematic instruction in word recognition. Without a complementary program, students will not receive the full range of instruction necessary to develop into skilled, proficient readers. Additionally, adopters of the curriculum should designate time to intentionally plan connections between foundational skills instruction and the knowledge strand in order to strengthen coherence and support deeper comprehension.

1B: Phonological and Phoneme Awareness

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

RED FLAGS PRACTICES FOR PHONOLOGICAL AND PHONEME AWARENESS	SCORE
1.7: Instruction only attends to larger units of phonological awareness (syllables, rhyme, onset-rime) as a focus of instruction without moving to the phoneme level.	n/a
1.8: Blends such as /b/ /l/ are kept intact rather than having students notice their individual sounds.	n/a
1.9: Students do not practice the phonemes as soon as they learn the graphemes.	n/a
1.10: Instruction is focused on letters only without explicit instruction and practice with the phonemes that letters represent.	n/a
1.11: Phoneme awareness is not taught as a foundational reading skill.	n/a
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).	n/a

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Arts & Letters' practices for Phonological and Phonemic Awareness are not applicable. Arts & Letters is a comprehensive language arts curriculum that focuses on an integrated approach to reading comprehension, writing, language development, and fluency. As such, it does not emphasize the word recognition components of skilled reading, including phonological awareness, decoding, and sight recognition. For that reason, adopters must ensure that additional high-quality materials are in place to provide systematic instruction in word recognition. Without a complementary program, students will not receive the full range of instruction necessary to develop into skilled, proficient readers.

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.	n/a	
1.18: Instruction is typically “one and done”; phonics skills are introduced but with very little or short-term review.	n/a	
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 /ĕ/, ant for /ă/, orange for /ŏ/).	n/a	
1.20: Phonics instruction takes place in short (or optional) “mini-lessons” or “word work” sessions.	n/a	
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.	n/a	
1.22: Blending is not explicitly taught nor practiced.	n/a	
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.	n/a	
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.	n/a	
1.25: There are few opportunities provided for word-level decoding practice of new phonics patterns and interleaving practice for prior phonics patterns.	n/a	
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.	n/a	
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:

Arts & Letters' practices for Phonics and Phonic decoding are largely not applicable. Arts & Letters is a comprehensive language arts curriculum that focuses on an integrated approach to reading comprehension, writing, language development, and fluency. As such, it does not emphasize the word recognition components of skilled reading, including phonological awareness, decoding, and sight recognition. For that reason, adopters must ensure that additional high-quality materials are in place to provide systematic instruction in word recognition as well as designate time to thoughtfully determine how to connect this foundational skills work to the texts and activities within Arts & Letters. Without a complementary program, students will not receive the full range of instruction necessary to develop into skilled, proficient readers.

Reviewers did note that in Grades 3–5, the program's Word Analysis lessons support multisyllabic word decoding and morphological awareness. The words selected are primarily Tier 2, with the inclusion of relevant Tier 3 terms, and are aligned to the unit themes and revisited throughout the arc. While word webs connected to roots are provided in select grades, reviewers noted that morphology work is an area Arts & Letters could enhance moving forward, suggesting the addition of morphology routines for both K–2 and 3–5.

1D: Fluency

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

RED FLAGS 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.	n/a
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:

Arts & Letters provides support for fluency instruction across multiple components. Lessons in the first arc of each module include explicit fluency instruction. Additional guidance is provided in the Assessment Guide for each Reading Comprehension Assessment, offering direction on how to assess and support students' fluency. The Arts & Letters Implementation Guide also outlines approaches to fluency instruction, and the resource *Teaching Arts & Letters: Teaching Fluency* offers a comprehensive overview of fluency instruction within the program. It is important to note that Arts & Letters formally introduces fluency instruction in Grade 2. Prior to this, the program indicates that students in kindergarten and Grade 1 should develop fluency through their foundational skills programs. Beyond teacher modeling of fluent reading during read-alouds, the curriculum provides limited explicit support for fluency development in these earlier grades.

All areas of fluency are targeted and receive ongoing coaching and reflection. The curriculum's fluency reference chart identifies and defines multiple target areas, including accuracy, phrasing, expression, and rate. Additionally, students practice fluency across a variety of text types and genres, and reviewers noted this as a strength of Arts & Letters. These texts are read repeatedly throughout lessons, and students participate in various practice activities, including Choral and Echo Reading.

Although the program indicates that it provides opportunities for word-level fluency practice through its syllable type instruction and corresponding charts, minimal evidence of sustained word-level fluency practice was observed. In practice, word-level work in Grades 3-5 primarily involves identifying and highlighting multisyllabic words and labeling the syllable types present. Finally, fluency assessments in Grades 2-5 are included in the reading comprehension assessment suite. These assessments can be conducted one-to-one with a teacher or recorded on the digital platform. They score rate and accuracy, which the program refers to as “accumaticity,” resulting in a WCPM (or CWPM) score. Additionally, oral reading fluency rates are based on the research of Hasbrouck and Tindal (2006, 2017).

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.	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.	1
2-4.4: (RC, W) Writing is not taught or is taught separately from reading at all times.	1
2-4.5: (LC, RC) Questioning during read-alouds focuses mainly on lower-level questioning skills.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Arts & Letters does not use a workshop approach. Lessons are structured in a Launch-Learn-Land sequence that includes explicit instruction. The teacher leads the learning in an intentional and integrated fashion. Vocabulary, grammar, and writing skills are explicitly named, defined, and explored. All students read the same core texts and complete the same assignments that follow a systematic inquiry framework (i.e., Wonder, Organize, Reveal, Distill, Know). This framework is used to support students through the process of deciphering texts and deepening their thinking, and learners are explicitly taught how to question, summarize, annotate, and collect evidence.

Students are exposed to rich vocabulary and complex syntax at all grade levels, and in the early grades, complex texts are read aloud. Lessons include explicit instruction in Tier 2 academic words and Tier 3 content-specific words. Texts are intentionally chosen to build both knowledge and language skills, and writing instruction is connected to the featured text sets. Students respond to texts that they have just read or listened to using the program's Learn-Respond lessons. Writing exemplars are also provided.

Finally, Arts & Letters content stages (Wonder, Organize, Reveal, Distill, Know) promote higher-level thinking and deeper learning; however, the team noted that this places a significant demand on teacher planning, as the target text is not included with annotations within the Teacher's Guide. Additionally, because students spend extended time engaging with a single text, teachers must continually develop purposeful, engaging questions that deepen comprehension, sustain discussion, and move students' thinking forward. Reviewers noted that this level of questioning may require considerable teacher expertise and preparation to implement effectively across lessons.

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.	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.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Arts & Letters features complex, diverse texts and explicit opportunities to build knowledge across a module. For example, in Grade 1, Module 3, the knowledge threads students build and reinforce throughout the module include:

- Wind is air that moves as warmer air rises and colder air sinks.
- A person cannot see wind, but they can observe its effects.
- Wind can be useful to people, but it can also cause difficulties.
- People can use wind to make electricity.

The program uses trade books, initially read to students in the early grades, but increasingly read by students as they progress in their reading skills. Each module uses a knowledge-building text set. Module topics across grades reflect varied content areas, including history and social studies, science, literature, and the arts, supporting breadth of background knowledge (Arts & Letters in Brief, pp.4-6).

2C: Vocabulary

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

RED FLAGS PRACTICES FOR VOCABULARY	SCORE
2.7: Vocabulary worksheets and activities are used with little opportunity for deep understanding of vocabulary words.	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.	1
2.10: Students are not exposed to and taught Tier 3 words.	1
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:

Arts & Letters vocabulary instruction is thematically aligned, with words primarily drawn from Tier 2, along with select Tier 3 terms. Students engage with these words through activities such as syllable segmentation (e.g., clapping out syllables) and are provided with definitions to support initial understanding. Visual supports, including graphics and vocabulary cards, further reinforce word learning. For example, the curriculum's knowledge cards include the word (e.g., "study"), a picture, its definition (e.g., to read, observe, or attend school in order to learn about a subject), and its use in a sentence (e.g., He likes to study different types of animals by watching them carefully).

Grades 3–5 include a morphology scope and sequence, and instruction includes word web activities that help students explore roots and make connections among related words. Additionally, students in the upper grades use the Word Analysis Chart to focus on morphology and spelling patterns. Reviewers were unable to find a morphology scope and sequence for students in Grades K–2; however, these grades do include some instruction on the most commonly occurring inflections and affixes. For instance, in kindergarten students analyze words like "discover" and "endless"; in Grade 1, they analyze words like "renewable," "harmful," and "helpful"; and in Grade 2, students examine and analyze words like "interdependent" and "displaced."

The program features a Vocabulary Exploration Routine that follows a four-step sequence for explicit modeling of word structure. Students are exposed to vocabulary through activities like reading, sentence work, and Knowledge Deck Cards. For example, when reading “A Surrender,” teachers are directed to introduce a word and display its definition; however, this is not explicitly identified as vocabulary instruction and does not provide a structured approach to support deeper understanding. Vocabulary instruction would be strengthened by providing an explicit routine and teacher guidance, like those found in the fluency materials.

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.	1
2.19: Instruction does not include teacher modeling nor sufficient opportunities for discussion.	1
2.20: Students are asked to memorize parts of speech as a list without learning in context and through application.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Arts & Letters takes an integrated approach to teaching style, grammar, and conventions. Students build skills within the module content and in integrated reading and writing tasks. The program also emphasizes oral language as a bridge to written language, with students in Grades K-2 building their oral language skills and using oral rehearsal before writing activities. Additionally, students in Grades 3-5 often engage in oral language practice and rehearsal before writing. Students are expected to apply style, grammar, and conventions skills within their writing, and the program's writing assessments check for application.

Instruction includes repeated modeling of routines, with explicit grammar and syntax instruction embedded several times throughout each module. The materials also provide teaching suggestions and tips related to style, grammar, and conventions. Additional practice opportunities are incorporated through structured sharing, partner discussions, targeted discussion prompts, and writing activities such as sentence expansion, where work with parts of speech is applied within the context of module topics. However, reviewers noted that some routines and supports were difficult to locate within the materials and felt that the program may not provide sufficient guidance and scaffolding for newer teachers implementing the instruction.

2E: Verbal Reasoning

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

RED FLAGS PRACTICES FOR VERBAL REASONING	SCORE
2.27: Inferencing strategies are not taught explicitly and may be based only on picture clues (i.e., picture walking), and not connecting them to background knowledge and instructional texts.	1
2.28: Students do not practice inferencing as a discrete skill.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Arts & Letters Achievement Descriptors in Grades K-2 emphasize that students will be able to “read, listen, or observe closely to comprehend a grade-level text, determining what it says explicitly, making logical inferences, and supporting observations, questions, and conclusions with specific textual evidence” (K-2 Achievement Descriptors, p. 3). Opportunities to develop inferencing are embedded throughout instruction. For example, in Grade 1, Module 2, Lesson 10, students are asked to determine which details about a character are realistic and which are imaginary. To respond, students must use evidence from the text and images in combination with their background knowledge to draw conclusions, demonstrating inferential thinking. Additionally, the program’s listening comprehension assessments include measures of verbal reasoning and inferencing.

2F: Literacy Knowledge

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

RED FLAGS PRACTICES FOR LITERACY KNOWLEDGE	SCORE
2.33: Genre types and features are not explicitly taught.	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.	1
2.35: Specific text structures and corresponding signal words are not explicitly taught and practiced.	2

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Arts & Letters explicitly teaches genre types and their corresponding features. In Grades K-2, students engage in the analysis of texts through the use of graphic organizers. However, it is less clear how instruction explicitly builds students' understanding of genre features over time. While reviewing lessons aligned to standards addressing text structure, reviewers did not consistently observe explicit instruction on specific genre features or how these features develop across modules. This level of specificity would enhance coherence across instruction and support students in applying their understanding of genre features across contexts. In Grades 3-5, text analysis is more clearly supported, with designated portions of instruction attending to text structure. However, this work often appears text-specific rather than systematically aligned to broader genre features (e.g., signal words or consistent characteristics across texts).

There are examples of students analyzing story elements, such as character and setting (e.g., Grade 5, Module 1, p. 192), as well as using evidence organizers to deconstruct texts. However, these activities do not appear to be consistently connected to a broader genre study or to the development of student knowledge of genre features, such as signal words or defining characteristics. Although resources such as the Writing Progression may address this, reviewers were unable to locate clear instructional examples within the materials. That said, Arts & Letters text analysis and deconstruction, as well as its genre exposure, are overall strengths of the program.

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.	1
3.2: Students are asked to independently apply reading comprehension strategies primarily in short, disconnected readings at the expense of engaging in knowledge-building text sets.	1
3.3: Emphasis is 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.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Arts & Letters provides students with both instruction in and opportunities to practice comprehension-monitoring strategies. In Grades 2–5, students who are automatic with the code engage with complex literary and knowledge-building informational texts during reading comprehension instruction.

4A: Writing – Handwriting

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

RED FLAGS PRACTICES FOR HANDWRITING	SCORE	
4.1: No direct instruction in handwriting.	n/a	
4.2: Handwriting instruction is an isolated add-on.	n/a	

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Arts & Letters’ practices for handwriting are not applicable. Arts & Letters is a comprehensive language arts curriculum that focuses on an integrated approach to reading comprehension, writing composition, language development, and fluency. As such, it does not emphasize foundational transcription skills, like handwriting. For that reason, adopters must ensure that additional high-quality materials are in place to provide systematic instruction in handwriting and spelling. Without a complementary program, students will not receive the full range of instruction necessary to develop into skilled, proficient readers and writers.

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.	n/a
4.6: There is no evidence of phoneme segmentation or phoneme-grapheme mapping to support spelling instruction.	n/a
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.	n/a
4.8: Students practice spelling by memorization only (e.g., rainbow writing, repeated writing, pyramid writing).	n/a
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 graphemes/phonemes.	n/a

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Arts & Letters’ practices for spelling are not applicable. Arts & Letters is a comprehensive language arts curriculum that emphasizes an integrated approach to reading comprehension, writing composition, language development, and fluency. As such, it does not prioritize foundational transcription skills, such as spelling. However, during Word Analysis in Grades 3–5, some attention is given to “challenging letter-sound correspondences” alongside meaningful word parts (see Level 3, Module 1 Word Analysis Chart). While this provides limited support, it does not constitute systematic spelling instruction. For that reason, adopters must ensure that additional high-quality materials are in place to provide explicit, systematic instruction in handwriting and spelling. Without a complementary program, students will not receive the full range of instruction necessary to develop into skilled, proficient readers and writers.

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.	1
4.16: Writing assignments are primarily unstructured with few models or graphic organizers.	1
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.	1
4.18: Writing instruction and assignments are focused primarily on narrative writing or unstructured student choice.	1
4.19: Students are not taught the writing process (i.e., planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing).	1
4.20: Writing is taught as a standalone skill and is not used to further reading comprehension.	1

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Arts & Letters outlines explicit instruction for writing in its implementation materials. Additionally, writing assignments are structured, and students are provided with access to graphic organizers for writing within their student workbooks. Instruction in conventions, grammar, and sentence structure is embedded within its writing lessons, and students are then tasked to apply target skills within their own writing. Students also have the opportunity to write across different genres.

Reviewers were unable to locate clear examples of instruction anchored in a comprehensive writing process. While components of writing—such as planning, drafting, oral rehearsal, and limited revision—are consistently supported, they do not appear to be organized within a cohesive framework that explicitly guides students through all stages of the writing process. For example, planning and drafting are explicitly taught; however, instruction in revision and editing is not clearly articulated or consistently embedded, as reflected in the Writing Progression document.

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).	n/a
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.	n/a
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).	n/a
5.8: Phonics skills are not assessed.	n/a
5.9: Phoneme awareness is not assessed.	n/a
5.10: Decoding skills are assessed using real words only.	n/a
5.11: Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) assessments are not used.	n/a
5.12: The suite of assessments does not address aspects of language comprehension (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, listening comprehension).	1
5.13: Multilingual Learners are not assessed in their home language.	2

Evidence from the curriculum materials indicates the following:

Arts & Letters practices for assessment are largely not applicable. Because the curriculum does not provide systematic instruction in areas such as phonics, phonemic awareness, decoding, and encoding, corresponding assessment measures are not included. As such, adopters would need to look to outside assessment suites to ensure foundational skills instruction was both assessed and monitored.

Arts & Letters includes assessments of fluency, content knowledge, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and self-reflection within each module's Assessment Guide. Fluency is assessed through a timed reading of a passage, during which correct words and errors are recorded, and performance is evaluated using a rubric for "automaticity" that considers accuracy, phrasing, and expression. Performance levels for fluency are defined as advanced, on-target, developing, and not yet demonstrated. The program's reading comprehension assessments do not identify specific strategies or skills previously taught, making it challenging to use the results to guide future instruction or intervention. The assessments are available in both paper-and-pencil and digital formats. When administered in paper-and-pencil form, certain components require one-on-one administration, and scoring can be time-intensive for teachers. Reviewers noted that Arts & Letters features strong support for multilingual learners, including fluency practice resources in Spanish and glossaries for each module in 15 languages; however, first language assessment is not provided outside of Spanish fluency practice. As such, program adopters would also need to look to outside assessment tools to ensure that multilingual learners are assessed in their home language. However, the team noted that this would most likely be the case with most core curricula programs.

Final Report Summary

Overall, the reviewed components for the Arts & Letters 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 Grades K-5. 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

1. Arts & Letters provides students with access to literature through its rich text and tradebook selections. For example, in kindergarten, students have access to read-aloud texts like *Last Stop on Market Street*, by Matt de la Peña, and *Fry Bread*, by Kevin Noble Maillard. Students in Grade 5 read texts like *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, by Brian Selznick, and *Love That Dog*, by Sharon Creech. Text selections such as these ensure students are exposed to high-quality academic language.
2. Arts & Letters integrates reading and writing through lessons that explicitly connect both to the varied text types (e.g., narrative, informational, opinion). Thus, students learn about a text type during the reading comprehension portion of the lesson plan, and then write within that same text type, reinforcing the connection between reading and writing. Reviewers noted that this is a definite strength of the program, and combining this instruction with Self-Regulated Strategy use would only serve to strengthen the materials further.
3. Arts & Letters' Prologue Books have excellent components to support multilingual learners. Each grade level, K-5, includes four of these resources, one for each module. This companion text assists teachers in front-loading key language and content connected to each module, helping students build the background knowledge and language needed to engage with instruction.
4. Arts & Letters thematic modules are a strength of the program. Each module is designed to build student knowledge and is based on important topics across science and social studies. For example, in kindergarten, the first module students participate in is *The Five Senses*, which is centered on the essential question: "How do people use their senses to experience the world?" Thus, both literary (e.g., *Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña) and informational texts (e.g., *Let's Explore the Sense of Hearing* by Emma Carlson Berne) are connected to this throughline. Arts & Letters also includes its fine arts components, which provides students with access to paintings and other works of art.
5. Arts & Letters' structures and routines are clearly articulated; however, reviewers found them challenging to locate efficiently within the materials.

1. Reviewers noted that the overall usability of Arts & Letters may be challenging initially, as teachers would need time to orient themselves to the program's many tools, resources, and instructional components. The first years of implementation may require a substantial investment in planning and professional learning. However, reviewers acknowledged that, as teachers become more comfortable with the program, they may be able to more effectively layer in additional instructional supports, such as stronger vocabulary routines and explicit writing-process instruction. Yet, this would depend on teachers and schools persevering through the initial complexity of the program's implementation.
2. Reviewers strongly recommend that the publisher include a quick-start guide to help adopters navigate and utilize the program's extensive materials and resources more efficiently. Given the breadth and complexity of the program components, reviewers felt that clearer guidance for organizing, locating, and implementing materials would support teacher usability and reduce the initial burden of implementation.
3. Arts & Letters would benefit from the inclusion of a clearer instructional framework within the teacher-facing materials to help educators integrate foundational literacy knowledge into day-to-day teaching moments. Reviewers noted that this additional guidance would be particularly supportive for newer teachers and for educators who may be less familiar with evidence-aligned literacy instruction. Without a strong understanding of how foundational literacy practices connect, implementation inconsistencies could limit the effectiveness of instruction for some students.
4. Reviewers noted that Arts & Letters may be challenging to implement effectively without strong teacher knowledge, significant planning time, and ongoing instructional leadership support. In particular, because the program requires educators to connect the knowledge strand to an external foundational skills program, successful implementation would likely depend on a strong instructional leadership team and sustained professional learning.

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PUBLISHER'S RESPONSE



**Arts & Letters:
Language Arts (2025)**

***Arts & Letters: Language Arts* Publisher Response to The Reading League Curriculum Review**

Great Minds® appreciates the opportunity to engage with The Reading League’s review of *Arts & Letters™: Language Arts*. We share The Reading League’s commitment to advancing evidence-aligned literacy instruction and value the time, expertise, and care invested in this review process.

Arts & Letters: Language Arts is designed to provide students with a rich, knowledge-building English language arts experience grounded in complex texts, purposeful reading, writing, discussion, vocabulary development, and inquiry. Across grades K–8, students engage deeply with literature, informational texts, and visual art as they build knowledge about compelling topics in social studies, science, the arts, and other domains while developing the literacy skills necessary for long-term success.

We are encouraged that reviewers identified numerous strengths within the program's design and instructional approach, including its knowledge-building model, integrated literacy instruction, and support for multilingual learners, and recognized strong alignment with evidence-aligned literacy instruction.

The following sections provide additional context regarding selected review findings and highlight instructional routines, curriculum resources, and implementation supports that further illustrate the design and intent of *Arts & Letters: Language Arts*.

Table of Contents

1. [Key Strengths Highlighted by the Review](#)
2. [Overall Design and Delivery](#)
3. [Vocabulary](#)
4. [Literacy Knowledge](#)
5. [Assessment of Multilingual Learners](#)
6. [Closing](#)

Key Strengths Highlighted by the Review

The Reading League's review identified substantial evidence of alignment between *Arts & Letters: Language Arts* and research-informed literacy practices. Across the curriculum, reviewers recognized several notable strengths of the program's design and instructional approach, including its knowledge-building model, integrated literacy instruction, rich text sets, and support for multilingual learners.

Highlights from the review include:

Knowledge Building Through Rich Topics and Texts

- *Arts & Letters: Language Arts* is organized around knowledge-building modules that engage students with topics from social studies, science, and the arts.
- Students develop literacy skills through sustained engagement with complex texts and meaningful content rather than isolated skill instruction.
- Topical modules, essential questions, knowledge threads, and consistent instructional routines support coherence across learning experiences and help students build understanding over time.
- Module topics and curated text sets foster the development of background knowledge, vocabulary, and reading comprehension.

Integration of Reading, Writing, and Speaking and Listening

- *Arts & Letters: Language Arts* connects reading, writing, discussion, vocabulary, and inquiry within coherent instructional experiences.
- Students regularly write and speak about what they read, helping them deepen understanding and communicate their thinking using evidence from texts.
- Students engage in planning, oral rehearsal, drafting, revision, and presentation as part of writing experiences connected to module texts and knowledge-building topics.
- Instruction promotes literacy development through authentic application across multiple domains.

Strong Support for Knowledge and Academic Language Development

- Vocabulary instruction is embedded throughout texts, discussions, and writing experiences.
- Students encounter academic and domain-specific vocabulary in meaningful contexts and revisit concepts over the course of a module.
- The curriculum emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between knowledge building, vocabulary growth, and reading comprehension.

High-Quality Texts and Content

- The curriculum includes a diverse collection of literary, informational, visual, and multimedia texts selected to build knowledge and engage students in complex ideas.
- Texts are carefully curated to support both content learning and literacy development.
- Students regularly engage with grade-level complex texts and topics that promote critical thinking and discussion.

Support for Multilingual Learners and Diverse Student Needs

- *Arts & Letters: Language Arts* includes embedded scaffolds and supports designed to increase access to grade-level instruction.
- *Prologue for Language Development* provides additional support for multilingual learners and students who would benefit from targeted pre-teaching.
- Instructional resources help educators maintain rigorous expectations while providing appropriate support.

Robust Implementation Supports

- *Arts & Letters: Language Arts* provides educators with extensive instructional guidance, lesson resources, assessment tools, digital supports, and implementation materials.
- Consistent lesson structures and module organization support coherent instructional planning and delivery.
- Teachers have access to resources designed to support successful implementation and ongoing professional learning.

Overall, the review affirms that *Arts & Letters: Language Arts* is a knowledge-rich literacy curriculum that prioritizes meaningful engagement with complex texts, integrated literacy instruction, and research-informed practices that promote student learning and growth.

Overall Design and Delivery

Deliberate and Purposeful Practice

Reviewers found evidence of opportunities for students to apply and practice skills in listening comprehension, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and writing. They also observed that these opportunities may not always be explicitly identified within the curriculum materials.

Arts & Letters: Language Arts embeds practice within authentic literacy experiences rather than relying primarily on isolated skill exercises. Students repeatedly apply developing skills while reading complex texts, discussing ideas, writing about texts, participating in inquiry, and engaging with module assessments.

Examples of purposeful practice include:

- Repeated reading and fluency routines that build accuracy, expression, and comprehension.
- Recurring content stages that ask students to summarize, organize, discuss, synthesize, and distill ideas, helping them build strong reading habits and deepen comprehension over time.
- Knowledge-building discussions that require students to apply vocabulary and content knowledge.
- Structured writing tasks that progress from oral rehearsal and planning to drafting and extended composition.
- Module tasks that allow students to revisit and apply previously learned knowledge and skills in increasingly sophisticated ways.

Because these opportunities are distributed across lessons, texts, and modules, they may not always appear as standalone practice activities. However, they are structured to support long-term transfer and application.

Retrieval Practice

Reviewers identified evidence of cumulative opportunities for students to revisit and apply knowledge and skills across the curriculum.

Arts & Letters: Language Arts incorporates retrieval practice across instruction through:

- World Knowledge Charts and ELA Knowledge Charts that require students to regularly contribute to, revisit, and build upon previously learned content.
- Ongoing discussion routines that ask students to recall ideas from prior lessons and texts.

- Writing tasks that require students to retrieve and apply accumulated knowledge from across a module.
- Assessments that build upon content and skills developed throughout the instructional sequence.

These instructional routines and resources are designed to make cumulative and spaced practice visible to educators as students build and apply knowledge over time.

Reviewers also observed that cumulative opportunities for retrieval and review may not always be explicit. While retrieval opportunities are embedded throughout the curriculum, lesson planning tools, including Plan Future Practice notes, identify where students will revisit and apply previously taught knowledge and skills. We recognize that making these connections even more visible may further support implementation and instructional planning.

Usability

Reviewers noted that *Arts & Letters: Language Arts* includes a substantial collection of instructional resources and implementation materials.

The comprehensive design of *Arts & Letters: Language Arts* reflects a commitment to supporting educators with both core instructional resources and implementation guidance. To support usability, the program includes:

- Consistent lesson structures across grades and modules.
- Detailed module overviews, learning goals, and assessment guidance.
- Embedded teacher notes and instructional supports.
- Dedicated implementation resources, including the *Arts & Letters: Language Arts* Implementation Guide.
- Digital platform resources, including lesson slides, assessment guides, videos, and family supports.

These resources are intended to help educators successfully launch, implement, and refine instruction with *Arts & Letters: Language Arts* over time.

Vocabulary

2.11: Morphology Instruction

Reviewers found evidence of foundational morphology instruction in Grades K–2 but noted that a clearly identifiable scope and sequence was not readily apparent within the materials reviewed.

Arts & Letters: Language Arts introduces foundational morphological concepts in the early grades and expands students' understanding of morphology as they progress through the curriculum. Students encounter:

- Common inflectional endings.
- Frequently occurring prefixes and suffixes.
- Vocabulary study that draws attention to meaningful word parts.
- Opportunities to analyze how word meanings change through morphological structures.

Because morphology instruction is integrated within broader vocabulary and language instruction, its progression may not always appear as a standalone scope and sequence. Morphological concepts are introduced in the early grades and build over time as students engage with increasingly complex vocabulary and word analysis. The curriculum's intent is to build morphological awareness in ways that contribute to vocabulary growth, reading comprehension, and writing development.

Literacy Knowledge

2.35: Text Structures and Signal Words

Reviewers identified *Arts & Letters: Language Arts*' text analysis, text deconstruction, and exposure to a wide range of genres as notable strengths of the program. They also observed that the progression of instruction related to genre features and signal words across modules may not always be explicit.

Arts & Letters: Language Arts is designed to build students' literacy knowledge through sustained engagement with authentic literary and informational texts. Rather than teaching genre features and text structures as isolated skills, the curriculum situates instruction within meaningful reading, discussion, and writing experiences connected to knowledge-building module topics.

Students receive direct instruction in:

- Literary and informational genres
- Text structures and organizational patterns
- Signal words and language features associated with different genres and purposes
- Relationships among author purpose, structure, and meaning

Students are expected not only to identify genre features and text structures, but also to analyze how authors make purposeful choices to shape meaning, communicate ideas, and achieve specific effects for readers.

Students revisit and apply this learning over the course of the year through:

- Close reading and text analysis routines
- Discussion and deconstruction of mentor texts
- Graphic organizers and story maps that make genre features, organizational patterns, and signal words visible
- Comparison of texts within and across genres
- Writing tasks aligned to specific genres, purposes, and organizational structures

This approach allows students not only to identify genre features and signal words, but also to analyze how authors use those features to communicate ideas effectively. As students encounter increasingly complex texts across modules, they deepen their understanding of genre conventions, text structures, and author craft while simultaneously building content knowledge.

Because instruction occurs within the context of authentic texts and module study, literacy knowledge develops cumulatively over time through repeated exposure, analysis, discussion, and application. This integrated approach reflects the program's broader commitment to developing skilled readers who can recognize, interpret, and thoughtfully engage with a wide variety of texts.

Assessment

5.13: Assessment of Multilingual Learners

Reviewers noted that multilingual learners may require additional home-language assessment tools beyond those included in the program.

Arts & Letters: Language Arts provides substantial support for multilingual learners, including:

- Dedicated *Prologue for Language Development* resources designed to support multilingual learners and students requiring additional language support.
- Glossaries available in multiple languages.
- Spanish fluency resources.
- Embedded language development supports throughout instruction.
- Guidance for teachers on supporting multilingual learners within grade-level content.

As with many core literacy programs, districts may choose to supplement curriculum-based assessments with specialized assessment tools aligned to local policies, available languages, and student populations.

Closing

Great Minds appreciates The Reading League's thoughtful review and its ongoing efforts to support educators in making informed instructional decisions.

The Reading League's review affirms what educators who use *Arts & Letters: Language Arts* experience daily: a curriculum that is rich, rigorous, and grounded in evidence-aligned practice.

We remain committed to continuous improvement and to providing educators with high-quality, knowledge-building instructional materials based in research and informed by educator feedback and classroom experience. We value opportunities to learn from expert feedback and to continue refining *Arts & Letters: Language Arts* in service of teachers and students.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide additional context regarding *Arts & Letters: Language Arts* and its design, implementation supports, and instructional approach.