



# Science of Reading Research

## EVALUATION CHECKLIST

**Developed by Wiley Blevins**

Benchmark Phonics & Word Study Workshop Program Consultant and Principal Author,  
ILA 2019 Literacy Leadership Brief: Meeting the Challenges of Early Literacy Phonics Instruction

Category	Criteria		Program Evaluation		
	MEETS SCIENCE OF READING	DOES NOT MEET SCIENCE OF READING	MEETS	PARTIALLY MEETS	DOES NOT MEET
<b>I. Scope and Sequence</b>	✓ <b>Clearly defined scope and sequence</b> that provides the "spine" for foundational skills instruction.	✗ <b>No clearly defined scope and sequence</b> —based primarily on books students are reading in small group.			
	✓ <b>Proceeds from easier to more complex skills</b> , separating easily confused letters and sounds.	✗ <b>Incidental and random phonics learning</b> , often jumping around from easier to more complex skills (e.g., short vowel one week, long vowel the next, back to short vowel, and so on).			
	✓ <b>MUST include a robust review and repetition cycle</b> to ensure mastery of taught skills (extend the learning 4–6 weeks after introduction).	✗ <b>Skills are taught but not reviewed</b> (e.g., "skill of the week" with little to no review in subsequent weeks).			
	✓ <b>Skills taught are tightly connected to the texts students read</b> to provide ample practice/ application to get to mastery and opportunities to transfer the skill.	✗ <b>Exposure-focused</b> , rather than mastery-focused, which doesn't provide consistent focus and won't lead to student learning for a large number of students.			
	✓ <b>Includes</b> phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and concepts of print instruction.	✗ <b>Does not include all areas of foundational skills</b> and may not meet grade-level state standards.			
<b>Category I. Overall</b>					



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<b>II. Phonics/Decodable Readers</b> <i>Becoming a Nation of Readers</i> (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott & Wilkinson, 1985)	✓ <b>Comprehensible</b> —with <b>vocabulary</b> that is understandable and derived from students' speaking and listening vocabularies.	✗ Decodable text uses <b>low-utility words</b> (vat, rut), <b>nonstandard sentence structures</b> (He did hit it.), <b>nonsensical tongue twisters</b> (Slim Stan did spin, splat, stop.), <b>confusing concepts</b> (The sun will make plants rise.), <b>odd names</b> (Mem had a pup.), and <b>underuses the word "the"</b> —the most common word in English.			
	✓ <b>Comprehensible—stories</b> should <b>make sense</b> and follow natural-sounding English spoken and written patterns.	✗ Decodable text is <b>so controlled</b> that the <b>text doesn't make sense</b> or presents unnatural-sounding English.			
	✓ <b>Instructive</b> —majority of the words must be <b>decodable</b> , based on <b>sound-spellings previously taught</b> , with a strong connection between instruction and the text.	✗ <b>Relies on patterned, leveled texts</b> (e.g., Levels A–D) for <b>decodable text</b> . These do not offer enough decodable words for students to practice their skills and may <b>force students to rely on memorizing words and guessing using picture clues</b> .			
	✓ <b>Engaging</b> —connected text must be engaging with beautiful illustrations, photos, and interesting story lines so that text is worth revisiting for developing fluency, and worth talking and writing about it.	✗ <b>Poor visual quality or story lines</b> compared to other texts students see in school.			
	✓ <b>Decodable texts</b> should be an integral part of the phonics lesson.	✗ <b>Decodable texts</b> are not an integral part of the phonics lesson.			
	✓ <b>Good Examples of Decodable Texts</b>  <b>What Is It?</b> This has six legs. It is little. It can hop. What is it? (It is a grasshopper, supported by a photo in the text.)  <b>The Big Rip</b> Tim is a little bit sad. His coat has a big rip. Tim will go to Rick. Can Rick help him? "I can not zip it," said Tim. "Can you fix it?"	✗ <b>Weak Examples of Decodable Texts (Texts to Avoid)</b>  <b>Mac</b> Mac had a bag. The bag had a dog. Mac had a bag and a dog. Mag had a rag. Mac can tag Mag. Mac got the rag. Mac sat on the rag. Mag sat on the bag.  <b>Pam</b> Pam sat on the mat. A cat sat on the mat. Tap, tap. Sap is on Pam. Sap is on the cat. Sap is on the mat. Mmmm!			
<b>Category II. Overall</b>					

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<b>III. Systematic and Explicit Instruction of Foundational Skills</b>	✓ Defined scope and sequence (systematic) with a small-step <b>progression from skill to skill</b> that makes learning manageable (moves from the <b>known</b> to the <b>new</b> ).	✗ <b>Lack of scope and sequence</b> , which doesn't allow for phonics to be taught as a system that is internalized, generalized, and utilized by students efficiently.			
	✓ Initial introduction of each skill is <b>explicitly stated</b> and applied in ways that get students <b>thinking and talking about how words work</b> .	✗ <b>Uses discovery method</b> to introduce new phonics skills, which can leave too many students behind (those who don't have prerequisite skills to make the discovery).			
	✓ Active and engaging instruction (e.g., through word building, word sorts with discussions, dictation) as students <b>develop and deepen their understanding of how English words work</b> .	✗ <b>Focuses on use of the cueing systems in K–2</b> , especially an overemphasis on using context and picture clues.			
	✓ <b>Multisensory and multimodal</b> instruction included (hear, say, touch); ideal for supporting students with learning challenges, such as dyslexia.	✗ <b>Limits instructional and practice opportunities</b> to only sight or sound or rote skill-and-drill.			
<b>Category III. Overall</b>					
<b>IV. Daily Application to Reading and Writing</b> Application is where the learning “sticks.”	✓ <b>Daily reading practice</b> using controlled, decodable texts in Grades K–1.	✗ Use of controlled, decodable texts in Grades K–1 is <b>not daily</b> or is <b>nonexistent</b> .			
	✓ <b>Writing application</b> where students write about what they read to practice their skills in a purposeful and focused way.	✗ <b>Does not incorporate writing</b> during phonics time (both guided spelling/dictation and writing about stories read to process meaning).			
	✓ <b>Application should be daily</b> and a <b>substantial</b> part of the phonics lesson—at least 50%.	✗ <b>Bulk</b> of the lesson is devoted to <b>isolated skill work</b> .			
<b>Category IV. Overall</b>					
<b>V. Vocabulary and Content Knowledge Building</b>	✓ Recognizes reading comprehension as a <b>product</b> of both <b>decoding and language comprehension</b> (vocabulary and background knowledge).	✗ <b>Overemphasis on phonics</b> , which often results in students not developing the language skills needed to tackle more complex text as they move up the grades.			
	✓ Builds <b>oral language</b> and <b>vocabulary</b> through daily read-alouds with rich, interactive conversations.	✗ <b>Conversations during read-alouds are limited or nonexistent</b> , resulting in a passive listening experience.			
	✓ Readers rely on word meaning knowledge and <b>background knowledge</b> related to the topic, which intertwine with <b>decoding skills</b> .	✗ Materials focus too heavily on <b>decoding without building knowledge</b> or focus too heavily on <b>building knowledge without developing decoding skills</b> .			
<b>Category V. Overall</b>					

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<b>VI. Comprehension</b>	✓ Focused on <b>meaning making</b> and the role of language (vocabulary and knowledge) in that process.	✗ Focused almost entirely on <b>skills and strategy</b> lessons with limited content knowledge building.			
	✓ Teaches real-reader thinking <b>strategies</b> (e.g., stop and reread, summarize, predict) and applies them to grade-level and complex texts.	✗ Lessons focused too heavily on <b>individual skills and strategies</b> with limited time for deriving and discussing meaning of the text.			
	✓ <b>Builds necessary fluency</b> for students to read grade-level texts.	✗ Does not expose <b>all students to grade-level complex text</b> .			
	✓ <b>Uses writing</b> to increase understanding of text.	✗ Limited opportunities to <b>write in response to text</b> .			
<b>Category VI. Overall</b>					
<b>VII. Fluency</b>	✓ Fluency is <b>formally taught</b> and includes a focus on automaticity, accuracy, and prosody.	✗ Fluency is <b>not directly taught</b> .			
	✓ Fluency is <b>taught</b> at the <b>letter, word, and sentence level</b> .	✗ Fluency is <b>not taught</b> at the letter, word, and sentence level.			
	✓ <b>Students reread texts</b> to develop fluency.	✗ Program <b>does not contain repeated readings</b> of decodable texts to develop mastery of foundational skills quickly.			
	✓ Fluency is <b>assessed</b> .	✗ Fluency is <b>not assessed</b> .			
<b>Category VII. Overall</b>					
<b>VIII. Phonics Assessment</b>	✓ Assessments inform instruction and <b>provide granular next-steps information</b> .	✗ Students are <b>primarily assessed</b> by reading a passage and then given a <b>reading level score</b> —a level doesn't provide enough granular information about phonics skill mastery.			
	✓ Contains <b>both comprehensive assessment</b> (to determine skills needs) and frequent <b>cumulative assessments</b> (to confirm mastery and check for decayed learning in order to catch it early).	✗ Does not contain <b>both comprehensive and cumulative assessments</b> .			
<b>Category VIII. Overall</b>					
<b>PROGRAM RATING OVERALL</b>					

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