

# Alignment with the Science of Reading

## Curriculum Evaluation: SPELL-Links to Reading & Writing

[The Reading League’s Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines \(2022\)](#) highlights instructional practices to look for when evaluating how well a curriculum aligns with the science of reading research.

Their curriculum evaluation guidelines identify instructional practices recognized by The Reading League as “evidence-aligned” with the current science of reading research. These practices are organized into the categories of Word Recognition, Language Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, Writing, and Assessment. For each of these five categories, the curriculum evaluation guidelines also identify “Red Flag” practices, those not aligned with the science of reading.

The Reading League’s recommendation is to first review a curriculum for Red Flags and proceed to reviewing the program for evidence-aligned practices once you decide the program “does not have enough nonaligned components to remove it from consideration”. They emphasize that “the primary decision-making mechanism for selecting a curriculum is the absence of Red Flags.”

Learning By Design, Inc. used The Reading League’s Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines to evaluate its SPELL-Links word study program, a program that teaches foundational skills and word-level reading (decoding), spelling (encoding), and meaning with immediate application of these skills to connected reading and writing.

**SPELL-Links has NO Red Flags!**

**SPELL-Links checks the boxes for these evidence-aligned practices...**

# Section 1: WORD RECOGNITION

WORD RECOGNITION NON-NEGOTIABLES	
Red Flags: Practices Not Aligned with the Science of Reading	
	Red Flag ✓
Three cueing-systems (i.e., directing students to use picture cues, context cues, or attend to the first letter of a word as a cue).	<b>NO</b>
Guidance to memorize whole words by sight without attending to the sound/symbol correspondences.	<b>NO</b>
Supporting materials do not provide a systematic scope and sequence nor opportunities for practice and review of elements taught (e.g., phonics, decoding, encoding).	<b>NO</b>
Practices Aligned with the Science of Reading	
Explicit instruction of phoneme awareness, phonics, and spelling.	
Systematic scope and sequence of skills building from simple to complex.	
Curriculum and support materials that provide opportunities for practice and interleaving of elements taught (e.g., phonics, decoding, encoding).	

# WORD RECOGNITION NON-NEGOTIABLES

Notes:

★ **NO Red Flags.**

★ In SPELL-Links...

- ★ Instruction of **phoneme awareness, phonics, and spelling** is **explicit**. **Explicit instruction** is delivered for **ALL skills, including PA, phonics, and spelling**, using a three-step direct instruction model that requires active student participation. 1) I DO – The teacher explains the purpose of the activity and demonstrates the target behavior(s). 2) WE DO – The teacher assists the student, as needed, to complete the task(s) and provides corrective feedback within the activity (accuracy of performance objective is not calculated when student receives assistance). 3) YOU DO – The student independently completes the activity without assistance (accuracy of performance objective is calculated).
- ★ There is a **systematic scope and sequence** of skills building **from simple to complex**. Instruction gradually progresses from simple consonants and short vowels in CVC single-syllable words to more phonological and orthographically complex patterns in single and multi-syllabic words, and from single morpheme words to multi-morphemic words, introducing inflectional suffixes and very early derivational prefixes before introducing more complex derivational affixes and multi-morphemic words including those containing bound roots. When introducing affixes, there is a gradual progression from fully transparent morphological junctures to those that are opaque.
- ★ The curriculum provides **ample opportunities for practice and interweaving of elements** taught (phonological, orthographic/phonics, semantic, morphological, encoding, decoding...) within activities and across all lessons. This is a hallmark of SPELL-Links' multi-linguistic Connectionist Model approach. Each activity provides explicit instruction in one or more of the five language blocks of word study: phonological awareness, orthographic knowledge/phonics, semantics/vocabulary, morphological awareness (word parts and related words), and establishing robust orthographic representations. Within a single activity one or two of these skills are directly taught and are interwoven with the other skills. Across the multiple activities of a single lesson, all word study skills are directly taught and interwoven with each other.
- ★ The support materials include writing and reading materials for application activities. The writing activities provide **guided and supported practice in the interweaving and application** of word study knowledge, skills, and strategies for correct spelling of a target spelling pattern when writing words, sentences, and paragraphs. The reading activities reinforce the link between reading and spelling, provide **guided and supported practice in the interweaving and application** of word study knowledge, skills, and strategies for correct decoding when reading words, sentences, and passages to improve decoding accuracy, and develop reading fluency.

# WORD RECOGNITION

## Phonological and Phoneme Awareness

Red Flags: Practices Not Aligned with the Science of Reading		Red Flag ✓
Instruction only attends to larger units of phonological awareness (syllables, rhyme, onset-rime) without moving to the phoneme level (e.g., blends such as /t/ /r/ are kept intact rather than having students notice their individual sounds).		<b>NO</b>
Instruction is focused on letters only without explicit instruction and practice with the phonemes that letters represent.		<b>NO</b>
Phoneme awareness is not emphasized as a foundational reading skill.		<b>NO</b>
Phonological and phoneme awareness are not assessed and monitored.		<b>NO</b>
Practices Aligned with the Science of Reading		
Instruction includes larger units of phonological awareness (syllable, rhyme, onset-rime) in Pre-K and beginning of K (Note: instruction should progress to the phoneme level as soon as possible).		
Phoneme awareness is taught directly, explicitly, and systematically.		
Instruction includes conversations about the way sounds are made in the mouth (i.e., how the articulatory gestures of air flow, tongue and lip placement, vocal cord voicing are happening).		
Instructional focus on attuning students to all phonemes in words (e.g., first, final, medial, individual phonemes in blends).		
<p><b>Glossary</b></p> <p><b>Explicit Instruction:</b> Instruction that is taught directly and clearly, leaving little to chance. Teachers begin by modeling the objective, ensuring that students know what is expected. Students then practice along with the teacher, and finally, they complete the task individually (e.g., I do, we do, you do). Explicit instruction includes practice with immediate corrective feedback.</p> <p><b>Grapheme:</b> A letter or letter combination that spells a phoneme; it can be one, two, three, or four letters in English (e.g., i, ou, igh, ough).</p> <p><b>Phoneme:</b> The smallest unit of sound in a spoken word; an individual speech sound.</p> <p><b>Phoneme Awareness:</b> The ability to notice, think about, or manipulate the individual phonemes (sounds) in spoken words. It is the highest level of phonological awareness and a potent predictor of future reading success.</p> <p><b>Phonological Awareness:</b> One's sensitivity to, or explicit awareness of, the phonological structure of words in one's language. It is an "umbrella" term that encompasses awareness of individual words in spoken sentences, syllables, onset-rime segments, and individual phonemes.</p> <p><b>Systematic Instruction:</b> The use of a planned, logical sequence to introduce elements taught, building from the simplest to those that are more complex.</p>		

# Phonological and Phoneme Awareness

Notes:

★ **NO Red Flags.**

★ In SPELL-Links...

- ★ Units of phonological awareness instruction include **phoneme, syllable, rhyme/onset-rime, and syllable stress.**
- ★ **Phoneme awareness** is taught **directly, explicitly, and systematically** across all SPELL-Links lessons, **from simple phonological structures** (single syllable /CVC/ words **to complex phonological structures** (multi-syllabic words with complex /CV/ patterns).
- ★ Instruction includes **conversations about the way sounds** are made in the mouth (i.e., how the articulatory gestures of air flow, tongue and lip placement, vocal cord voicing are happening) determined by the target phoneme(s) of a lesson, by the individual student taking into consideration factors such as the absence/presence of a speech sound disorder and whether the student is a Multilingual Learner, and/or by the presence of a deficit in phoneme identification/discrimination as identified by the SPELL-Links prescriptive assessment.
- ★ Instructional focus is on **attuning students to all phonemes in words.**
- ★ Phonological and phoneme awareness skills are **assessed and monitored regularly.** On-going assessment is used to ensure that PA activities are completed to mastery.

## Phonics and Phonic Decoding

Red Flags: Practices Not Aligned with the Science of Reading	Red Flag ✓
Letter-sound correspondences are taught opportunistically or implicitly during text reading.	<b>NO</b>
Phonics instruction takes place in short (or optional) “mini-lessons” or “word work” sessions.	<b>NO</b>
The initial instructional sequence introduces many (or all) consonants before a vowel is introduced, or short vowels are all taught in rapid succession.	<b>NO</b>
Segmenting and blending are not explicitly taught nor practiced.	<b>NO</b>
Instruction encourages students to memorize whole words, guess at words in context, or use picture clues rather than phonic decoding.	<b>NO</b>

High-frequency words with known sound-symbol correspondences are taught as whole-word units, often as stand-alone “sight words” to be memorized.	<b>NO</b>
Few opportunities for word-level decoding practice are provided.	<b>NO</b>
Instruction is typically “one and done;” phonics/encoding skills are introduced but with very little or short-term review.	<b>NO</b>
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.	<b>NO</b>
Advanced word study (Grades 2-5) Instruction in phonics ends once single syllable phonics patterns (e.g., CVC, CVCe) are taught.	<b>NO</b>
Advanced word study (Grades 2-5) No instruction in multisyllabic word decoding strategies and/or using morphology to support word recognition is evident.	<b>NO</b>
<b>Practices Aligned with the Science of Reading</b>	
Letter-sound correspondences are taught to automaticity in an explicit manner.	
Phonics instruction includes cumulative review including application in reading and writing.	
Phonics instruction is systematic and sequential, building from simple letter-sound correspondences to complex phonic patterns (i.e., instruction begins with short vowels and consonants).	
Segmenting and blending are taught explicitly and practiced regularly, in both decoding and encoding.	
Explicit instruction directs students' attention to the structure of the word; the emphasis is on phonic decoding.	
Irregular high-frequency words are taught by drawing attention to both regular and irregular sounds once sound-spellings have been taught.	
Opportunities to practice decoding words in isolation are provided.	
Instruction includes spaced practice and interleaving of skills taught (e.g., practicing old and new phonics patterns in one activity, practicing a learned phonics pattern in reading <i>and</i> spelling).	
Phonics skills are practiced by applying letter-sound knowledge in decodable texts that match the phonics elements taught, securing phonic decoding.	
Advanced Word Study (Grades 2 and above): Instruction begins with basic letter-sound correspondences followed by increasingly more complex patterns such as syllable types, morphemes, and etymological influences (i.e., word origins).	
Advanced Word Study (Grades 2 and above): Includes more advanced phonics skills (e.g., second sounds of c/g, digraphs, variant vowels).	
For Multilingual Learners, once they decode the word accurately, supports (e.g., descriptions, pictures, or gestures) are used to teach or confirm the meaning of the decoded word(s).	
For Multilingual Learners, attention is paid to positive transfer of letters and sounds from their home language in addition to explicit attention to those not present in their home language.	

## Glossary

**Blending:** Putting phonemes together to form a word.

**Encoding:** Understanding the spelling of words; a skill that develops reciprocally to decoding when explicitly taught. **Etymology:**

The history of a word or word part that includes its origin.

**High-Frequency Words:** Words that appear most frequently in printed text.

**Interleaving:** Practice that is spaced out over time, consisting of two or more subjects or skills related to an instructional target within the same practice task. **Morpheme:**

The smallest unit of a word that carries meaning (e.g., prefix, suffix, base element)

**Phonics:** Instruction to teach how print/letters represent the sounds of spoken language.

**Phonic Decoding:** A process used when reading unfamiliar written words. The student begins by decoding the printed word's graphemes into phonemes, then the phonemes activate the word's pronunciation.

**Segmenting:** Breaking a spoken word into its individual phonemes.

**Syllable Types:** The six common syllable patterns in English: closed, open, vowel-consonant-e, r-controlled, vowel team, and consonant-le.

**Sound-Symbol Correspondences:** The relationship between a grapheme, or printed letter(s), and its corresponding phoneme, or individual speech sound (i.e., <c> can correspond to the phoneme /k/ or /s/).

**Spaced Practice:** Practice that occurs over time. **Types**

**of Text:**

- *Decodable:* Texts with a high proportion of phonetically regular words matched to common letter-sound relationships previously taught in phonics lessons within accompanying teacher guides.
- *Leveled:* Texts leveled according to a gradient of difficulty based on multiple supportive features of the whole *text*, which allow for an emphasis on meaning, such as text structure, themes and ideas, or language and literary features.
- *Predictable:* Texts with predictable text structures such as repetitive and predictable sentences, words, and phrases.

**Variant Vowels:** Groups of letters that produce the same vowel sound (e.g., ai, ay, eigh).

# Phonics and Phonic Decoding

Notes:

★ **NO Red Flags.**

★ In SPELL-Links...

- ★ **Letter-sound correspondences** are taught to automaticity in an explicit manner.
- ★ **Phonics instruction** includes **cumulative review**. As a student progresses through the lessons, periodic administration of writing and reading activities focusing student attention on completed spelling patterns from across multiple lessons is recommended. This approach provides additional practice for students and allows educators to monitor retention of pattern-specific knowledge and skills over time. We recommend review and practice once a student completes three word-study lessons.
- ★ **Phonics instruction** includes **application in reading and writing**. The writing activities provide **guided and supported practice in the interweaving and application** of word study knowledge, skills, and strategies for correct spelling of a target spelling pattern when writing words, sentences, and paragraphs. The reading activities reinforce the link between reading and spelling, provide **guided and supported practice in the interweaving and application** of word study knowledge, skills, and strategies for correct decoding when reading words, sentences, and passages to improve decoding accuracy, and develop reading fluency.
- ★ **Phonics** instruction is **systematic and sequential**, building from **simple letter-sound correspondences** (e.g., single syllable CVC words) to **complex phonic patterns** (e.g., multi-syllabic words with complex CV patterns).
- ★ **Segmenting and blending** are taught explicitly and practiced regularly across all lessons, in both **decoding and encoding**.
- ★ Explicit instruction directs students' attention to the **structure of the word** and the emphasis is on **phonic decoding**.
- ★ **Irregular high-frequency words** are taught by drawing attention to both regular and irregular sounds once sound-spellings have been taught.
- ★ Opportunities to practice **decoding words in isolation** are provided.
- ★ Instruction across all lessons includes **spaced practice** and **interweaving of skills** taught. SPELL-Links instruction is cumulative; students are expected to apply previously learned phonics and other skills as they advance through the lessons. The Starter Word List for each lesson reflects this cumulative progression; The phonics / linguistic structure of each word in the starter word list is carefully controlled to facilitate achievement of the activity's learning and performance objectives by not including phonics patterns that have not previously been covered. Once covered, those patterns are included in later lessons.

- ★ The curriculum provides **ample opportunities for practice and interweaving of elements** taught (phonological, orthographic/phonics, semantic, morphological, encoding, decoding...) within activities and across all lessons. This is a hallmark of SPELL-Links' multi-linguistic Connectionist Model approach. Each activity provides explicit instruction in one or more of the five language blocks of word study: phonological awareness, orthographic knowledge/phonics, semantics/vocabulary, morphological awareness (word parts and related words), and establishing robust orthographic representations. Within a single activity one or two of these skills are directly taught and are interwoven with the other skills. Across the multiple activities of a single lesson, all word study skills are directly taught and interwoven with each other.
- ★ **Phonics skills** are practiced by applying **letter-sound knowledge in decodable texts** that match the phonics elements taught, securing phonic decoding.
- ★ Advanced Word Study instruction (Grades 2+) begins with basic **letter-sound correspondences** followed by increasingly more complex patterns such as **syllable types, morphemes, and derivational affixes and root of Greek, Latin and other origins**.
- ★ Advanced Word Study instruction (Grades 2+) includes **more advanced phonics skills** (second sounds of c/g, digraphs, variant vowels...).
- ★ For ALL learners, including multilingual Learners, supports are always used to teach or confirm the **meaning of encoded and decoded word(s)**. This is consistent with the SPELL-Links multi-linguistic Connectionist Model of always integrating sounds, letters, *and meanings*.

# Fluency

Red Flags: Practices Not Aligned with the Science of Reading	Red Flag ✓
Fluency instruction focuses primarily on student silent reading.	<b>NO</b>
Rate is emphasized over accuracy; priority is given to the student's ability to read words quickly.	<b>NO</b>
Word-level fluency practice is not provided, or fluency is viewed only as text-reading fluency.	<b>NO</b>
Fluency is practiced only in narrative text or with repeated readings of patterned text.	<b>NO</b>
Fluency assessment allows acceptance of incorrectly decoded words if they are close in meaning to the target word (e.g., assessment based upon the cueing systems, M/S/V).	<b>NO</b>
Practices Aligned with the Science of Reading	
Letter names and associated sounds are given sufficient opportunities for practice with feedback to ensure accuracy and automaticity.	
Instruction includes teacher-led modeling, oral reading by students, and immediate feedback.	
Reading accuracy and automaticity are emphasized as the hallmarks of fluent reading.	
Word-level fluency practice is provided.	
Connected text fluency practice is provided.	
For Multilingual Learners, additional support is included whenever possible to ensure students understand the meaning of words being read.	
<p>Glossary</p> <p><u>Automaticity</u>: Performing a reading task without conscious effort. For example, reading words in connected text with automaticity means that there is no conscious attention paid to decoding words.</p> <p><u>Connected Text</u>: Text that includes multiple sentences that are related to one another.</p>	

# Fluency

Notes:

★ **NO Red Flags.**

★ In SPELL-Links...

- ★ Letter names and associated sounds are given sufficient opportunities for practice with feedback to ensure accuracy and automaticity. These skills are not practiced in isolation but are practiced to mastery within the encoding and decoding of meaningful words, pattern-by-pattern.
- ★ Instruction includes **teacher-led modeling, oral reading by students**, and immediate **feedback**.
- ★ Reading **accuracy** and **automaticity** are emphasized as the hallmarks of fluent reading.
- ★ **Word-level fluency practice** is provided.
- ★ **Connected text fluency practice** is provided.
- ★ For ALL learners, including for multilingual learners, support is included whenever possible to ensure students **understand the meaning of words** being read and spelled. This is consistent with the SPELL-Links multi-linguistic Connectionist Model of always integrating sounds, letters, *and meanings*.

# Sections 2-4: LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION, READING COMPREHENSION, AND WRITING

NON-NEGOTIABLES FOR LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION (LC), READING COMPREHENSION (RC), AND WRITING (W)		
Red Flags: Practices Not Aligned with the Science of Reading		Red Flag ✓
LC, RC, W	In early grades, the instructional framework is primarily a workshop approach, emphasizing student choice and implicit, incidental, or embedded learning.	<b>NO</b>
LC, RC, W	Students are not exposed to rich vocabulary and complex syntax in reading and writing materials.	<b>NO</b>
RC	Comprehension activities focus mainly on assessing whether students understand content (the product of comprehension) instead of supporting the process of comprehending texts.	<b>NO</b>
RC, W	Writing is not taught or is taught separately from reading at all times.	<b>NO</b>
LC, RC	Questioning during read-alouds focuses mainly on lower-level questioning skills.	<b>NO</b>
Practices Aligned with the Science of Reading		
LC, RC, W	There is a clear and consistent instructional framework, featuring a comprehensive scope and sequence of elements of language comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing taught in an explicit system.	
	Students are exposed to rich vocabulary and complex syntax in reading and writing materials and orally, including but not limited to read alouds, at language levels beyond students’ reading levels.	
	For Multilingual Learners, instruction in English language development (ELD) and acquisition is included to support reading comprehension and continued reading and writing development.	

# Section 2: LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

## LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION EVALUATION

### Background Knowledge

Red Flags: Practices Not Aligned with the Science of Reading	Red Flag ✓
Read-aloud opportunities emphasize simple stories or narrative texts. Read-aloud text is not sufficiently complex and/or knowledge-building.	<b>NO</b>
Opportunities to bridge existing knowledge to new knowledge is not apparent in instruction.	<b>NO</b>
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.	<b>NO</b>
Practices Aligned with the Science of Reading	
Read-aloud opportunities (for students who are still learning the code) and text reading opportunities (for students who are automatic with the code) feature a variety of diverse, complex texts, including narrative and expository texts above grade-level to develop background knowledge and vocabulary in a variety of subject areas.	
Opportunities are provided to make connections between a new word or concept and other known words or concepts, relating ideas to experiences.	
For Multilingual Learners, opportunities are identified for building background knowledge in a students' home language whenever possible.	
<p>Glossary</p> <p><b>Background Knowledge:</b> A specific subset of knowledge needed to comprehend a particular situation, lesson, or text.</p> <p><b>English Language Development (ELD):</b> Instruction that is specially designed for Multilingual Learners to develop their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in English.</p> <p><b>Expository Text:</b> Text that provides factual information about a topic.</p> <p><b>Narrative Text:</b> Text that relates a series of events; this can include both fiction and nonfiction.</p>	

# Background Knowledge

Notes:

★ **NO Red Flags.**

SPELL-Links delivers specialized instruction for the sub-lexical (phonological, orthographic, morphological) skills and word-level reading and writing skills (decoding, encoding, automatic word recognition and production, vocabulary development) with application of these skills to connected reading and writing. Dynamic engagement in oral language (listening and speaking) activities and with reading and writing materials is a hallmark of SPELL-Links, but SPELL-Links is *not* a reading comprehension or background knowledge curriculum.

★ In SPELL-Links...

- ★ **Conversational, narrative, and academic discussions provide** modeling and practice with a **variety of vocabulary, language structures, and knowledge building opportunities; text reading opportunities** during application of word study knowledge, skills, and strategies to connected reading and writing provide an opportunity to engage students with a variety of diverse, complex texts, including narrative and expository texts above grade-level to develop background knowledge.
- ★ Opportunities are provided to **make connections between a new word or concept and other known words or concepts**, relating ideas to experiences.

# Vocabulary

Red Flags: Practices Not Aligned with the Science of Reading		Red Flag ✓
Vocabulary instruction does not include opportunities for rich conversations; worksheets or activity sheets are used heavily instead.		<b>NO</b>
Instruction includes memorization of isolated words and definitions out of context.		<b>NO</b>
Tier 2 words are not taught explicitly, and students are not given opportunities to use them in their speech, see them in print, and use them in writing.		<b>NO</b>
Students are not exposed to Tier 3 words.		<b>NO</b>
Explicit instruction in morphology is not apparent.		<b>NO</b>
Practices Aligned with the Science of Reading		
Vocabulary instruction includes robust teacher-student and student-student conversations in order to support an understanding of literal and inferential comprehension of word knowledge within text.		
Explicit instruction in vocabulary for Tier 2 and 3 words is evident, as well as instruction in the context of texts (most Tier 1 words).		
Tier 2 words are taught explicitly, and students are given opportunities to use them in their speech, see them in print, and use them in writing (when appropriate).		
Explicit instruction in morphology is provided with numerous opportunities for students to read and write words with these morphemes		
For Multilingual Learners, instruction in ELD is included to support continued vocabulary development.		
<p><b>Glossary</b></p> <p><b>English Language Development (ELD):</b> Instruction that is specially designed for Multilingual Learners to help develop their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in English.</p> <p><b>Morphology:</b> The system of meaningful parts, or morphemes, that make up words.</p> <p><b>Tiered Vocabulary Words:</b> A means of classifying words due to their level of difficulty and frequency of use. It is important to note that these tiers are <i>not</i> related to tiers of instruction in a Multi-Tiered System of Supports.</p> <p><b>Tier 1 Vocabulary Words:</b> Words students already know the meaning of (e.g., house, car, dog, school).</p> <p><b>Tier 2 Vocabulary Words:</b> Words that are not likely to be familiar to young children but reflect a concept they can identify with and can use in conversation (e.g., shiver, excitement, remarkable). Tier 2 words can appear in multiple domains and content areas.</p> <p><b>Tier 3 Vocabulary Words:</b> Words that are low frequency and domain or content-area specific (e.g., words from math, science, history, music, art).</p>		

# Vocabulary

Notes:

★ **NO Red Flags.**

SPELL-Links delivers specialized instruction for the sub-lexical (phonological, orthographic, morphological) skills and word-level reading and writing skills (decoding, encoding, automatic word recognition and production, vocabulary development). Multi-linguistic integration (interweaving) of phonology, orthography, and semantics/morphology is a hallmark of SPELL-Links, but SPELL-Links is *not* a vocabulary curriculum.

★ In SPELL-Links...

- ★ **Vocabulary instruction** includes robust teacher-student and student-student conversations to support an understanding of word meaning.
- ★ Explicit instruction in **vocabulary for Tier 2 and 3 words** is evident, as well as instruction in the context of texts (most Tier 1 words).
- ★ **Tier 2 words are taught explicitly** and students are given opportunities to use them in their speech, see them in print, and use them in writing (when appropriate).
- ★ Explicit **instruction in morphology** is provided with numerous opportunities for students to read and write words with these morphemes.

## Knowledge of Language Structures

Red Flags: Practices Not Aligned with the Science of Reading	
Red Flag ✓	
There is no clear scope and sequence for teaching conventions of print, grammar, and syntax (sentence structure); these elements are taught implicitly or opportunistically.	N/A see notes
Instruction does not include teacher modeling nor sufficient opportunities for discussion.	<b>NO</b>
Students are asked to memorize parts of speech as a list without learning in context and through application.	<b>NO</b>
Practices Aligned with the Science of Reading	
There is a clear scope and sequence for teaching conventions of print, grammar, and syntax (sentence structure) in reading and writing.	
Instruction attends to sentence-level comprehension including simple, compound, and complex sentences, as well as cohesive devices within and among sentences.	
Instruction includes sufficient time for discussion, including teacher modeling of conversational conventions, appropriate tone and rate, and development of full ideas and complete sentences.	
For speakers of English language variations, use an asset-based approach to engage in a contrastive analysis between home and school language including sentence structures, suffixes, and subject-verb agreement.	
<p>Glossary</p> <p><u>Cohesive Devices</u>: Words used to connect ideas within a sentence or text (e.g., pronouns, synonyms, connectives including coordinate and subordinate conjunctions).</p> <p><u>Contrastive Analysis</u>: A systematic study of two languages (or language variations) with the intent of identifying their structural similarities and differences.</p> <p><u>Syntax</u>: The arrangement of words to form sentences in a given language.</p>	

# Knowledge of Language Structures

Notes:

★ **NO Red Flags.**

SPELL-Links delivers specialized instruction for the sub-lexical (phonological, orthographic, morphological) reading skills and word-level reading and writing skills (decoding, encoding, automatic word recognition and production, vocabulary development). SPELL-Links instruction includes application practice of these skills at the sentence and passage levels, but SPELL-Links is not a syntax/grammar program.

★ In SPELL-Links...

- ★ Word- and sentence-level conventions of print for reading and writing are explicitly taught throughout SPELL-Links reading and writing activities. **Students gain experience with syntax and grammar while reading and writing at the sentence and passage levels;** however, SPELL-Links is *not* a syntax and grammar curriculum; consequently there is no separate scope and sequence for syntax and grammar skills; SPELL-Links is a word study program that delivers specialized instruction for foundational skills and word-level reading (decoding), spelling (encoding), and meaning with immediate application of word recognition and word production skills to connected reading and writing. (Included with SPELL-Links Worditivities.)
- ★ Instruction includes direct modeling of and practice with **complete sentences including simple, compound, and complex sentences** throughout the curriculum.
- ★ Instruction includes ample time for **discussion**, including **teacher modeling of conversational conventions**, appropriate **tone and rate**, and **development of full ideas and complete sentences**.

# Verbal Reasoning

Red Flags: Practices Not Aligned with the Science of Reading

Red Flag  
✓

Inferencing is not taught explicitly and may be based only on picture clues and not text (i.e., picture walking).

N/A see notes

Practices Aligned with the Science of Reading

Inferencing is explicitly taught within text, including opportunities for metacognition and use of appropriate and accurate background knowledge.

Students are instructed how to articulate ideas by using inferential language (i.e., ideas beyond the immediate context of what they read) in conversation.

Students are instructed how to use narrative language to describe a series of events, both fictional and non-fictional.

Instruction includes queries to develop a student's ability to think about their thinking while they read.

Glossary

Inference: Using what you know and parts of text to comprehend what is not directly said in a text.

Metacognition: Developing an interactive approach with text to recognize when a text does not make sense and have options to know what to do about it.

# Verbal Reasoning

Notes:

★ **NO Red Flags.**

★ **In SPELL-Links...**

- ★ A variety of **meta-cognition skills** are explicitly taught and extensively used throughout SPELL-Links as students learn to decode, encode, and apply their word recognition and production skills to reading and writing at the sentence and passage levels. Inferencing ideas from text is *not* one of the meta-cognitive skills specifically addressed because SPELL-Links is *a word study program* that delivers specialized instruction for foundational skills and word-level reading (decoding), spelling (encoding), and meaning with immediate application of word recognition and word production skills to connected reading and writing.
- ★ Students receive ample structured and supported practice with **using conversational and narrative language** for a variety of tasks including describing a series of events, retelling a story, explaining the meanings of words, using think out louds during task completion, completing verbal analogies, etc.
- ★ Instruction includes queries to **develop a student’s ability to think about their thinking** when they encounter an unfamiliar word during reading or want to use a word they don’t know how to spell in their authentic writing. This meta-linguistic instruction and explicit instruction in linguistic problem solving is a hallmark of SPELL-Links!

## Literacy Knowledge

Red Flags: Practices Not Aligned with the Science of Reading	Red Flag ✓
Genre types and features are not explicitly taught.	<b>NO</b>
Text structures and signal words are not explicitly taught and practiced.	N/A see notes
Practices Aligned with the Science of Reading	
Appropriate genre types and features are explicitly taught.	
Explicit instruction of text types (e.g., cause and effect, problem/solution, sequence, time order, compare and contrast) and signal words.	
Graphic organizers are provided to support student understanding of text and genre types.	
<p>Glossary</p> <p><b>Genre:</b> A type of text or literature that has a particular form and style (e.g., poetry, fiction, nonfiction).</p> <p><b>Signal Words:</b> Words that signal readers as to the text type. For example, signal words for cause and effect texts include <i>for</i>, <i>because</i>, and <i>as a result</i> whereas signal words for problem and solution texts include <i>however</i>, <i>in contrast</i>, and <i>on the other hand</i>.</p>	

# Literacy Knowledge

Notes:

★ **NO Red Flags.**

Narratives and other genres are included in the application to connected reading and writing materials of SPELL-Links and students receive explicit instruction for story grammar elements (i.e., narrative genre). Direct instruction in other genres and aspects of Literacy Knowledge (e.g., signal words) is not applicable to SPELL-Links because SPELL-Links is *a word study program* that delivers specialized instruction for foundational skills and word-level reading (decoding), spelling (encoding), and meaning with immediate application of word recognition and word production skills to connected reading and writing. These word level skills are necessary for and can be applied to *any* genre.

SPELL-Links delivers specialized instruction for the sub-lexical (phonological, orthographic, morphological) reading skills and word-level reading and writing skills (decoding, encoding, automatic word recognition and production, vocabulary development) that support higher-level reading (comprehension) and writing (expression) skills. SPELL-Links instruction includes application practice with different genres. With reference to the Simple View of Reading and Writing, by teaching all subcomponents of written word recognition and production (WR & WP) and by practicing application of these skills to a variety of genres, SPELL-Links supports written language *comprehension* and *expression* (LC & LE), but SPELL-Links is not a reading comprehension or writing composition program.

★ In SPELL-Links...

★ **Narrative genre features** are explicitly taught.

# Section 3: READING COMPREHENSION

READING COMPREHENSION EVALUATION	
Red Flags: Practices Not Aligned with the Science of Reading	
	Red Flag ✓
Comprehension strategy instruction (e.g., making inferences, predicting, summarizing, visualizing) is emphasized using texts that students are not able to decode accurately and independently.	<b>NO</b>
Comprehension strategy instruction is practiced primarily in short, disconnected readings at the expense of engaging in knowledge-building text sets.	<b>NO</b>
Emphasis on independent reading and book choice without exposure to complex texts.	<b>NO</b>
Materials for comprehension instruction are predominantly predictable and/or leveled texts.	<b>NO</b>
Practices Aligned with the Science of Reading	
The foundation for reading comprehension is built through rich read-aloud experiences before children are able to read independently.	
Comprehension strategies (e.g., making inferences, summarizing) are taught via gradual release of responsibility (i.e., I do, we do, you do) using appropriate instructional text that students can accurately decode.	
Advanced (Grades 2-5) For students automatic with the code, materials for reading comprehension instruction include sufficiently complex literary and knowledge-building informational texts.	
Glossary <u>Types of Text:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Decodable</i>: Texts with a high proportion of phonetically regular words matched to common letter-sound relationships previously taught in phonics lessons within accompanying teacher guides.</li> <li>● <i>Leveled</i>: Texts leveled according to a gradient of difficulty based on multiple supportive features of the whole <i>text</i>, which allow for an emphasis on meaning, such as text structure, themes and ideas, or language and literary features.</li> <li>● <i>Predictable</i>: Texts with predictable text structures such as repetitive and predictable sentences, words, and phrases.</li> </ul>	

# READING COMPREHENSION

Notes:

## ★ NO Red Flags.

SPELL-Links delivers specialized instruction for the sub-lexical (phonological, orthographic, morphological) reading skills and word-level reading skills (decoding, automatic word recognition, vocabulary development) that support higher-level reading (comprehension) skills. SPELL-Links instruction includes development of oral language comprehension, conventions of print, some syntax structures, and application practice with different text types of reading. With reference to the Simple View of Reading, by teaching all subcomponents of written word recognition (WR) and some components of language structure and comprehension, and by practicing with application of these skills to a variety of reading text types, SPELL-Links supports written language comprehension (LC), but SPELL-Links is *not* a reading comprehension program.

## ★ In SPELL-Links...

- ★ The foundation for reading comprehension is built through **rich oral language experiences** across lessons and grade levels. (Included with SPELL-Links Wordtivities.)
- ★ Students are explicitly taught how to use morphological analysis (word analysis) as a **comprehension strategy** to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words encountered when reading.
- ★ Reading materials include sufficiently **complex literary and knowledge-building informational texts**.

# Section 4: WRITING

## WRITING EVALUATION

Note: These elements may or may not be included in a comprehensive Tier I curriculum. For this section, review all available instructional materials both within and outside of the core curriculum.

### Handwriting

Red Flags: Practices Not Aligned with the Science of Reading

Red Flag  
✓

There is no direct instruction in handwriting.

N/A see notes

Handwriting instruction predominantly features unlined paper or picture paper.

N/A see notes

Handwriting instruction is an isolated add-on.

N/A see notes

Practices Aligned with the Science of Reading

There is explicit instruction related to handwriting (e.g., letter formation, posture, grip), and there are opportunities for cumulative practice.

Handwriting instruction features lined paper to guide letter formation.

Handwriting instruction is integrated into core reading and writing instruction and follows the sequence of letter learning.

# Handwriting

★ **NO Red Flags.**

Notes:

As a speech-to-print (encoding) approach to reading and writing, **SPELL-Links provides ample opportunities for students to write by hand.** This repeated engagement in writing by hand improves handwriting at the motor level and beyond the motor skill level (i.e., the sub-lexical language level of letter formation) and fully integrates motoric and linguistic aspects of encoding. SPELL-Links is not a handwriting program and does *not* directly teach sensory-motoric aspects of letter formation, posture, grip, and other sensory-motoric aspects of handwriting.

★ In SPELL-Links...

- ★ There is extensive handwriting and **ample opportunity for *practice* related to letter formation, posture, grip.**
- ★ Lessons **include lined paper that guides letters formation.**
- ★ Handwriting opportunities are integrated throughout reading and writing instruction across grade levels.

# Spelling

Red Flags: Practices Not Aligned with the Science of Reading	
Red Flag ✓	
No evidence of explicit spelling instruction; the scope and sequence for spelling is not aligned with any other aspect of instruction such as phonics.	<b>NO</b>
Patterns in decoding are not featured in encoding/spelling; spelling lists are relatively random, not connected to decoding/phonics lessons, and/or based on frequency of use only.	<b>NO</b>
Practices Aligned with the Science of Reading	
There is a clear scope and sequence for explicit spelling instruction, closely aligned with the phonics scope and sequence.	
Patterns taught for decoding are also practiced in encoding/spelling lessons.	
(Grades 2-5 Advanced Word Study): Spelling instruction continues in grades 2 and above and includes explicit instruction in vowel teams, variant vowels, and how morphology influences spelling.	
<p>Glossary</p> <p><u>Encoding</u>: Using knowledge of individual phonemes in spoken words to build and spell printed words; a skill that develops reciprocally to decoding when explicitly taught.</p> <p><u>Morphology</u>: The system of meaningful parts, or morphemes, that make up words.</p> <p><u>Variant Vowels</u>: Groups of letters that produce the same vowel sound (e.g., ai, ay, eigh).</p>	

# Spelling

Notes:

- ★ **NO Red Flags.**
- ★ In SPELL-Links...
  - ★ There is a clear **scope and sequence** for explicit **spelling instruction**, closely aligned with the phonics scope and sequence. Spelling (encoding) and decoding is addressed in each lesson (with each lesson focusing on a target pattern) so spelling (phonics encoding) and phonics decoding are *completely* aligned. Just as with phonics decoding, there is a **systematic scope and sequence** of skills building for encoding **from simple to complex**. Instruction gradually progresses from simple consonants and short vowels in CVC single-syllable words to more phonological and orthographically complex patterns in single and multi-syllabic words, and from single morpheme words to multi-morphemic words, introducing inflectional suffixes and very early derivational prefixes before introducing more complex derivational affixes and multi-morphemic words including those containing bound roots. When introducing affixes, there is a gradual progression from fully transparent morphological junctures to those that are phonologically and orthographically opaque.
  - ★ **Patterns** taught for decoding are also **practiced in encoding/spelling lessons**. See previous bullet; decoding and encoding are taught within the same SPELL-Links lesson, each lesson focusing on a target pattern.
  - ★ (Grades 2-5 Advanced Word Study): **Spelling instruction continues in grades 2 and above** and includes explicit instruction in **vowel teams, variant vowels**, and how **morphology** influences spelling.

## Composition

Red Flags: Practices Not Aligned with the Science of Reading	Red Flag ✓
Writing prompts are provided with little time for modeling, planning, and brainstorming ideas.	N/A see notes
Writing is primarily unstructured with few models or graphic organizers.	N/A see notes
Conventions, grammar, and sentence structure (e.g., simple, compound, complex) are not taught or are taught implicitly or opportunistically.	N/A see notes
Writing instruction is primarily narrative or unstructured choice.	N/A see notes
Writing is taught as a standalone and is not used to further reading comprehension.	<b>NO</b>
Practices Aligned with the Science of Reading	
Writing is taught through a gradual release of responsibility (i.e., I do, we do, you do) and includes sufficient time for modeling, planning, and brainstorming ideas orally before drafting.	
Writing is structured; models and graphic organizers are provided to support composition and promote executive functioning.	
Conventions of print, grammar, and syntax (i.e., sentence structure) are taught explicitly in the context of writing.	
Writing instruction includes a variety of text types (e.g., narrative, informational, persuasive).	
Glossary <u>Syntax</u> : The arrangement of words to form sentences in a given language.	

# Composition

Notes:

★ **NO Red Flags.**

SPELL-Links delivers specialized instruction for the sub-lexical (phonological, orthographic, morphological) writing skills and word-level writing skills (encoding, automatic word production, vocabulary development) that support higher-level writing (expression) skills. SPELL-Links instruction includes development of oral language expression, conventions of print, some syntax structures, and application practice with different text types of writing. With reference to the Simple View of Reading (and Writing), by teaching all subcomponents of written word *production* (WP) and some components of language structure and expression, and by practicing with application of these skills to a variety of writing text types, SPELL-Links supports written language *expression* (LE), but SPELL-Links is *not* a writing process/writing composition program.

★ In SPELL-Links...

- ★ All activities, including writing, are taught through a gradual release of responsibility (**I do, we do, you do**).
- ★ Writing is structured and supported.
- ★ **Conventions of print, grammar, and syntax (sentence structure)** are taught explicitly in the context of writing.
- ★ Writing instruction includes a **variety of text types**.
- ★ Each SPELL-Links to Reading & Writing and SPELL-Links Class Links lesson includes structured writing activities for **application** of word study knowledge, skills, and strategies for word choice and correct spelling when writing sentences, paragraphs, and narratives.

# Section 5: ASSESSMENT

Note: Most assessment systems are not featured as part of curriculum packages. For this section, The Reading League recommends that you review any assessments included with curricular materials along with your school or Local Education Agency’s (LEA) entire suite of assessments.

NON-NEGOTIABLES FOR ASSESSMENT	
Red Flags: Practices Not Aligned with the Science of Reading	Red Flag ✓
Assessments measure comprehension only without additional assessment measures to determine what is leading to comprehension weaknesses	<b>NO</b>
Assessments include miscue analysis in which misread words that have the same meaning are marked as correct.	<b>NO</b>
Assessment data is vague and not used to guide instruction and intervention across a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).	<b>NO</b>
Practices Aligned with the Science of Reading	
A school or LEA’s suite of assessments provide multiple data points to understand students’ word recognition and language comprehension abilities.	
Assessment data is used to differentiate instruction across tiers of instruction based on student progress.	
Assessments are standardized, reliable, and valid for the intended purpose.	

## ASSESSMENT

Red Flags: Practices Not Aligned with the Science of Reading		Red Flag ✓
Assessments result in benchmarks according to a leveled text gradient.	<b>NO</b>	
Foundational skills assessments are primarily running/reading records (or similar assessments that focus on assessment of high frequency words and can be read by looking at the first letter or blend and confirming with picture support).	<b>NO</b>	
Phonics and phoneme awareness are not assessed.	<b>NO</b>	
Decoding skills are assessed using real words only.	N/A see notes	
Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) assessments are not used.	<b>NO</b>	
Suite of assessments does not address aspects of language comprehension.	N/A see notes	
Multilingual Learners are not assessed in their home language when available.	N/A see notes	
Practices Aligned with the Science of Reading		
Assessments include screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring to inform instruction and prevent future reading difficulties.		
Foundational skills assessments identify students' instructional needs.		
Phonics skills are assessed using both real and nonsense words in all syllable types as each has been taught to students.		
Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) assessments are used to assess fluency, usually first grade and beyond.		
A systematic spelling survey/spelling inventory is used to analyze students' applications of phonemes, graphemes, and morphemes.		
Phonological and phoneme awareness (PA) are assessed in K/1 and for older students who exhibit PA weaknesses as evidenced by appropriate assessment.		
Assessments address both word recognition and language comprehension (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, writing, listening comprehension).		
Trends in groups of student scores can be used to identify the overall effectiveness of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).		
Multilingual Learners are assessed in their home language when available.		

## Glossary

Diagnostic Assessments: Used to assess specific skills or components of reading (such as phonics or fluency) to help educators plan targeted and individualized instruction.

Grapheme: A letter or letter combination that spells a phoneme; it can be one, two, three, or four letters in English (e.g., i, ou, igh, ough).

Morpheme: The smallest unit of a word that carries meaning (e.g., prefix, suffix, base element).

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS): A framework for school improvement that ensures all students are supported to meet positive academic, behavioral, and social-emotional outcomes beginning with core instruction in Tier 1 and interventions at increasing intensity at Tiers 2 and 3.

Phoneme: The smallest unit of sound in a spoken word; an individual speech sound.

Progress Monitoring: More frequent assessments given to students receiving intervention that measure progress toward acquiring specific skills.

Reliable: The extent to which assessments are consistent over time within the same settings with the same type of subjects.

Screening/Screeners: Brief assessments given to all students to determine which students are at risk of struggling with reading.

Standardized: Administered and scored in a consistent manner.

Syllable Types: The six common syllable patterns in English: closed, open, vowel-consonant-e, r-controlled, vowel team, and consonant-le.

Systematic Instruction: The use of a planned, logical sequence to introduce elements taught, building from the simplest to those that are more complex.

Valid: The extent to which an assessment is accurate (i.e., whether or not it measures what it is supposed to measure).

## ASSESSMENT

Notes:

★ **NO Red Flags.**

★ In SPELL-Links...

- ★ Assessments include a diagnostic prescriptive assessment (SPELL-2) that identifies underlying deficits interfering with reading and spelling and automatically creates a targeted, individualized intervention plan that directly links the assessment to specific lessons and activities in the SPELL-Links curriculum. The SPELL-Links curriculum includes various progress monitoring tools to inform instruction on an on-going basis.
- ★ Foundational skills are assessed, including phonological and phonemic awareness skills, phonics/orthographic pattern awareness skills, and morphological awareness skills.
- ★ Assessments of reading rate and accuracy and word-level encoding are included along with a variety of other progress monitoring measures. Use of outside-the-program standardized assessments from the LEA's suite of assessments is recommended to obtain normed

oral reading fluency (ORF) scores and to provide an additional measure of progress as students advance through the SPELL-Links word study program.

- ★ The SPELL-2 assessment conducts a systematic spelling inventory to analyze student’s application of phonemes, graphemes, and morphemes. For each area of deficit identified using the spelling inventory, SPELL-2 additionally conducts an in-depth spelling error analysis to identify the reason why a student is struggling, and which specific type of intervention is needed for that spelling inventory pattern.
- ★ Phonological and phoneme awareness (PA) are assessed and targeted in K/1 and for older students who exhibit PA weaknesses as evidenced by appropriate assessment.
- ★ Assessments of vocabulary, syntax, writing, listening comprehension are not included; use of outside-the-program standardized assessments from the LEA’s suite of assessments is recommended.
- ★ Group data trend analyses are not included. Use of outside-the-program tools from the LEA’s suite of assessments is recommended to collect and analyze multiple data points.

