



## K–5 Reading & Writing

*Bookworms K–5 Reading & Writing* is authored by a university-based literacy researcher who has dedicated her life's work to making research-based literacy practices accessible to teachers. This nationally-recognized curriculum is designed to ensure students develop a lifelong love of reading and writing. By helping teachers understand and apply research around the science of reading, *Bookworms* positively impacts student achievement.

*Bookworms* is structurally different from other curricula on the market. It is composed of three, 45-minute instructional blocks: Shared Reading, English Language Arts, and Differentiated Instruction. Each block is consistent in layout and structure across modules, units, and lessons.

- The Shared Reading Block consists of grade-level reading instruction, spelling instruction, and foundational skills development.
- The English Language Arts Block consists of genre-based writing instruction, interactive read alouds with high-leverage vocabulary instruction, and explicit instruction of grammar and language standards.
- Differentiated Instruction is a multiple-entry skills block in which teachers use oral reading fluency and phonics assessment data to ensure students get additional direct instruction in the skills they need.

### **Student Achievement**

There are rich case studies that show increased achievement on multiple measures when districts adopt *Bookworms*. In a 2017 study (Walpole et al.), students using *Bookworms* (n=594) outperformed students using guided reading (n=507) in DIBELS oral reading fluency and Scholastic Reading Inventory comprehension.

In a longitudinal study published in early 2024 (May et al.), students using *Bookworms* (n=8,806) added an average 4.9 months of growth in upper elementary grades on MAP compared to their growth under the district's instructional-level guided reading curriculum; students receiving special education supports and students with the lowest achievement made the most growth.

SBAC achievement data at the Seaford School District in Delaware was evaluated in a 2019 study (Center for Research in Education and Social Policy). The number of students at the highest proficiency rating increased from 15% to 23% across the upper elementary grades. One of the elementary schools in Seaford was recognized statewide for success with African American students. Before *Bookworms*, 32% of African American students met the proficiency

benchmark; after *Bookworms*, 58% met that benchmark. Seaford serves a student population that is 36% Black and 23% Hispanic; 17% qualify for special education support, and 42% qualify for lunch subsidies.

### Curriculum Recognition

*Bookworms* has been recognized repeatedly by reading researchers and literacy organizations as a best-in-class curriculum, including:

- **2018: Acknowledged by Achieve the Core** Student Achievement Partners recognized *Bookworms* for both its attention to foundational skills and reading volume. “Bookworms also deserves praise for its approach to close reading. Struggling readers traditionally have not been allowed to experience reading grade-level rich complex texts, but Bookworms engages all students in reading grade-appropriate text multiple times daily for different purposes.”
- **2021: Featured on the Education Trust podcast ExtraOrdinary District** This podcast identified Seaford School District, which adopted *Bookworms*, as an outlier nationally for narrowing the achievement gap between White and Black students. The podcast host, Karin Chenoweth, also elevated the story of Seaford’s success in her 2021 book, *Districts That Succeed: Breaking the Correlation Between Race, Poverty, and Achievement*.
- **2022: Recognized as a knowledge-building curriculum by the Knowledge Matters Campaign** “While these curricula share common virtues and are all solidly grounded in what matters most for literacy, each has a unique and compelling identity. They present students with substantive, rich content and lack ‘fluff.’ They support access for all students. They motivate and engage students through their content and design. They help all students achieve at high levels. And teachers get ever better at their craft by using them.”
- **2022: Foundational Skills materials were featured in the documentary *The Right to Read***

### Highlights from the Report

Section	Component	Explanation
Non-Negotiables for Language Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, and Writing	2-4.1: (LC, RC, W) 2-4.2: (LC, RC, W) 2-4.3: (LC, RC, W) 2-4.4: (LC, RC, W) 2-4.5: (LC, RC, W)	The instructional framework provided emphasizes direct, explicit instruction of language comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing. The curriculum includes routines for vocabulary instruction, and the use of rich text is evident throughout.
Background Knowledge	2.1 2.3	As mentioned previously, the <i>Bookworms</i> curriculum includes a variety of complex texts, including both narrative stories and knowledge

		building expository texts. Additionally, the reviewers did not find evidence of leveled texts, and students who are automatic with the code are asked to engage with authentic, knowledge-building texts that feature varied genres and subject areas.
Language Structures	2.18 2.19 2.20	Starting in Grade 1, students move away from daily shared sentence writing to dictation. This provides an opportunity for students to write grammatically correct sentences each day, applying both words and patterns they are learning as well as practicing taught high frequency words. These dictated sentences also serve as daily progress monitoring of students' ability to apply correct grammatical and syntactic patterns. Then, in Grade 3, students are introduced to the Super Sentence graphic organizer as a means to teach sentence construction and reinforce targeted vocabulary. Finally, reviewers noted that <i>Bookworms</i> uses anchor sentences to teach designated grammar concepts. These sentences were pulled directly from texts students were reading in class, serving as tangible examples tied to the content they were learning about. This is followed by students composing their own sentences that match the targeted structure.
Literacy Knowledge	2.33 2.34	Evidence of explicit instruction in genre types and corresponding features were found in the shared reading lesson plans. This included instruction and practice with both genre-specific text structures and their corresponding signal words.
Handwriting	4.1 4.2 4.3	The team found evidence of direct instruction in handwriting within the shared reading lessons for Grades K–1. Additionally, the curriculum features a handwriting book where students practice within the shared reading block. Thus, handwriting instruction is integrated into core reading and writing instruction and follows the sequence of letter learning.

Composition	4.17 4.18 4.20 4.21 4.22	The reviewers observed that writing is taught explicitly through a gradual release of responsibility and includes the use of models and graphic organizers to support student composition. Instruction in writing occurs across a variety of genres (e.g., narrative, informational, persuasive), purposes, and audiences. Students also receive explicit instruction in the components of the writing process (e.g., planning, revising, editing) to ensure they develop strong writing skills and can effectively communicate their ideas through written expression.
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**Response to Other Individual Indicators**

Section	Component	OUR's Response to Indicator Feedback
Phonological and Phoneme Awareness	1.7	The curriculum received a higher red flag for this component because of the program's major focus on word families. <i>Bookworms</i> word study is organized to compare and contrast rimes in kindergarten. There is a 5-day sequence. When students sort their words by sound, on days 1 and 2, they work at onset-rime. On days 3 and 4, they use Elkonin boxes to move to the phoneme level. For each week's words, students work at both onset-rime level and full phonemic segmentation level. Blends are always treated as individual sounds.
Phonics and Phonic Decoding	1.16	The curriculum received a higher red flag for this component because phonics review as part of the Differentiated Instruction (DI) block was not considered. The DI block is a core component of <i>Bookworms</i> . All students participate. Teachers use a specific set of screening and diagnostic assessments to assign students to groups. The teacher can meet with three different groups every day. Student practice with decodable texts occurs within the DI block, and review is included in DI lessons if diagnostic data indicates it is needed.

	1.26	All students engage in syllable-type analysis of vocabulary words beginning in Grade 3. They also take a multisyllabic decoding subtest. Students who are not proficient with multisyllabic decoding have direct instruction in both multisyllabic decoding and morphology during Differentiated Instruction (DI). Multisyllabic decoding and fluency lessons, using this curriculum, are provided during the DI block for students identified with the diagnostic assessment included in the curriculum.
Fluency	1.42	Word level fluency practice is provided at the end Using Letter Sounds, Blends and Digraphs, R-Controlled Vowels, VCE, and Vowel Teams lessons in DI just before the decodable text reading.
Reading Comprehension	3.1	The curriculum received a higher red flag for this component because the program’s independent reading practices were misunderstood. Students do not read texts independently unless they finish all of their work and read from the classroom library. During instruction, all texts are first read chorally with the teacher and then reread with a partner.
	3.2	The curriculum received a higher red flag for this component due to an error in the review. There are no short passages; texts are organized into knowledge-building sets in both Shared Reading and in ELA.
	3.5	Comprehension monitoring is modeled by the teacher during Shared Reading and during Interactive Read Alouds, but it is not targeted as a separate skill.
Spelling	4.11	The scope and sequence for word study is cumulative. Students review previous patterns and learn new ones; they work within one short vowel and then across vowels. Word families are used to ground the scope and sequence for WS. DI groups do not use word families in Using Letter Sounds, Blends and Digraphs, R-Controlled Vowels, VCE, or Vowel Teams. They use them only in one 3-week segment: Using Letter Patterns.

Composition	4.19	Understanding English grammar is vitally important to reading, and the production of grammatically sound content is vitally important to writing. <i>Bookworms</i> follows the approach from Graham and colleagues. The type of grammar instruction that research supports is that of sentence composing/combining rather than direct grammar instruction. <i>Bookworms</i> includes sentence composing/combining throughout the ELA block. Grammar instruction in <i>Bookworms</i> has three types— expanding, imitating, and combining—which students in Grades K through Grade 5 cycle through with teacher-led instruction.
Assessment	5.11	Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) assessments are required beginning January of Grade 1 to place students in the Differentiated Instruction (DI) block.

**Summary**

The *Bookworms* curriculum distills research-based best practices into straightforward lesson structures that support reading through careful attention to foundational skills, language comprehension, and composition based on grade-level expectations and the individual needs of each student. The instructional routines build classroom communities through the use of strategies such as teacher modeling, shared reading, evidence-based writing, discussion, and intentional vocabulary instruction.

The curriculum’s systematic phonics-based foundational skills block features unique skill-based groupings, supported by frequent progress monitoring, with tailored instruction for each group. Instructional protocols are explicit and simple for teachers to follow.

Over the course of elementary school, students will study 283 full-length texts that expose them to a high volume of full-length, deeply engaging trade books to build knowledge and drive literacy instruction. These complex texts are varied and serve different purposes. Both teachers and students engage in close reads, shared reading with peers, and independent reading.

All students deserve the opportunity to have access to and engage in literacy instruction that fosters their love of reading and supports their learning potential. The simplicity of the *Bookworms* structure makes the program accessible for teachers to internalize literacy research and provide systematic instruction and practice for students that promotes rapid learning about the world while nurturing a deep appreciation of reading and writing.