Extending and Enhancing Literacy Learning in Afterschool Programs:
A Practice Guide

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**BARBARA BUSH FOUNDATION
FOR FAMILY LITERACY**

THE **POLICY EQUITY** GROUP
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Contents

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Introduction

The period between 4 and 8 years old is a critical time in a child's literacy development. The amount of literacy learning that takes place during these years is nothing short of remarkable, with a typical child moving from developing oral language skills and an emerging understanding of letters and their sounds at age 4 to reading basic informational and fictional texts by age 8. The age of eight, when most children attend third grade, represents the "pivot point" in literacy development. The pivot point is a time when a child typically shifts from *learning to read* to *reading to learn*.[1] The implications of not reaching this pivot point in third grade can be devastating for a child's future success and is a key predictor of dropping out of high school and numerous other negative academic and life outcomes.[2] Therefore, supporting the foundations of literacy in our youngest learners—particularly those who struggle to learn to read—is a matter of national importance.

High-quality afterschool programs with a focus on literacy are an ideal tool to help overcome the challenges of struggling readers. Research indicates that students who are at greatest risk for reading difficulties show the greatest gains from participating in quality afterschool programs.[3] Although originally designed as safe and supervised environments for children while parents work, afterschool programs often go beyond solely providing care to offering rich opportunities to supplement and extend children's learning from the school day. Numerous research studies have demonstrated that when afterschool programs intentionally and thoughtfully integrate literacy skills development into their programming, they can have a positive impact on a full range of reading-related outcomes and skills.[4]

Afterschool programs have the potential to make a broad impact in the effort to build a nation of avid, young readers. Given parents' often long work hours, children in prekindergarten programs and the early elementary grades often require "wrap-around care" to cover the difference in hours between typical work and school schedules. Recent data indicates that nearly one in four families has a child enrolled in an afterschool program,[5] which underscores the incredible opportunity for these programs to support literacy development.

Practitioners can learn from research on afterschool program effectiveness

Decades of research on afterschool programs has demonstrated that high-quality afterschool programs can have positive effects on children and

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[1] We use the term "afterschool programs" to include programs that take place outside of normal school hours, such as before- and afterschool care and summer programs. However, it is important to note that dosage, or amount of exposure to a program, is critically important in determining a program's effect on child outcomes. Therefore, a summer program of limited duration would not be expected to have the same impact as an afterschool program that a child attends every day throughout the school year.

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families. Participation in a quality afterschool program can increase school attendance and engagement in learning, improve children's academic performance, narrow the achievement gap, contribute to social and emotional well-being, and help relieve parents' concerns about their children's safety. However, all programs are not created equal, and research has also identified key "ingredients" that contribute to the success of afterschool programs. If executed correctly, programs can enhance student experience and support improved reading outcomes with reasonable, but intentional changes to programming. Looking across the body of research on afterschool programs, several important points for practitioners emerge:

- **"Dosage" matters.** The amount of children's exposure to a program—or the "dosage"—affects how much they benefit from the program. No matter how high the quality, if the total proportion of instructional time in an afterschool program is too low, the program may not produce meaningful benefits for children's academic achievement. Several studies have found that the frequency and duration of students' participation in afterschool programs is important, underscoring the need to encourage consistent program attendance.[8]

- **Program design, content, and implementation affect outcomes.** Simply adding time to students' days is not enough to produce meaningful gains in children's learning and development. To be impactful, afterschool programs need to provide literacy support that is developmentally appropriate, engaging to students, tailored to each child's developmental level, and aligned with the academic instruction provided during the school day. Additionally, program practitioners should be knowledgeable about the developmental trajectory of reading skills and should be appropriately trained in reading instruction to promote fidelity of implementation.[9]

- **Different impacts for different populations.** Research indicates that the effects of afterschool programs may be more pronounced for some groups of students. Some studies have found that children who are the furthest behind to start with or who have the most risk factors (e.g., free/reduced lunch status, single-parent households) show the greatest gains in connection with participation in an afterschool program.[10] Additionally, children in the early elementary grades are more likely to benefit from afterschool programming than older students.[11]

It is also important to note that afterschool programs vary widely in schedule and activities. One study found that programs that produced positive outcomes tended to incorporate teaching practices and learning experiences that were *sequenced, active, focused,* and *explicit*[12] (following the acronym "SAFE"; See Section II for more information on these characteristics of effective programs). Programs that did not use practices consistent with the SAFE approach tended not to be successful. Another study found that effective programs tended to implement activities such as shared book reading and book discussions. In contrast, this study found that among most programs, the most common literacy activities were homework and independent reading, which documented a disconnect between effective practices and those most commonly implemented.[13] It is important to note that the SAFE approach outlines broad characteristics of effective programs and that afterschool programs can find success with a variety of instructional practices.

Afterschool programs encounter many challenges to implementing effective practices. Beyond the typical variation in children's abilities, afterschool programs generally span multiple ages, widening the range of effective approaches to effectively meet learning needs. In addition, when children enter the program, they have already spent a long day in school. Afterschool prac-

titioners must balance the opportunities to provide literacy learning with the equally important need to incorporate play and physical activity into the hours they spend with children. Furthermore, programs often face barriers such as a lack of resources to help plan specifically for literacy activities, pressure to provide highly engaging activities to encourage children's participation and attendance, and a lack of support for practitioners to understand the science of reading development.

This practice guide and overview seeks to offer concrete support for programs in understanding the development of early literacy skills, guiding their design of the learning environment, and selection of a literacy curriculum. It is important to note that afterschool programs can vary significantly in their capacity in terms of practitioner qualifications, funding, and access to other resources. Therefore, this guide is meant to be one facet of a larger set of supports that programs would need to implement high-quality literacy practices. Foundational elements such as recruitment and retention of qualified staff, professional development and technical assistance, and effective leadership are all critical to implementing the best practices outlined in this guide. That being said, it is also important to acknowledge that with even some modest adjustments to programming, with intentionality and effort, every afterschool program can contribute to literacy skill development in some shape or form.

Practice guide and curriculum overview goals

This practice guide and curriculum overview provides support for early literacy programming in 21st Century Community Learning Centers and other formal afterschool programs. The goal of this work is to provide useful information to inform the following questions:

- What is the typical developmental progression of literacy skills in the early years?

- What are features of effective literacy instruction?

- Which literacy curricula/programs have evidence of effectiveness and are most appropriate for afterschool programs?

The practice guide and curriculum overview is divided into three sections to answer these questions and support practitioners in implementing high-quality literacy programs in afterschool learning settings. For a detailed description of the methodology used to develop each section, see Appendix A.

Section I: Literacy Skill Development Progressions

To effectively support children's literacy development through afterschool programming, it is important to understand how reading develops and which early literacy skills are most important to support between ages 4 and 8. Given that literacy development changes rapidly during this time, there is a range of important developmental milestones from the time that literacy and language skills begin to emerge to the time in which children should start "reading to learn." This section presents developmental progressions from early childhood (age 4) through the early elementary years (age 8) in key skill areas identified by research as foundational to future reading and academic success.

Section II: Features of Effective Literacy Programs

While using an evidence-based curriculum or program (see Section III) is a critical part of supporting children's literacy development, the general design of the program must create a language- and literacy-rich environment to support children's skills. This section outlines the latest research describing characteristics of effective programs and guidance on program design, including organization of instructional time, types of instructional practices, and materials that are associated with high-quality early literacy instruction.

Section III: Overview of Evidence-Based Curricula and Programs

The decision regarding which curriculum or program an afterschool program should use sets the stage for the literacy-learning environment. The program must consider several factors in determining the best fit for staff and the children and families they serve, including alignment between the goals of the program, the curriculum or program they select, and any outcomes they intend to measure. Many curricula and programs were reviewed and evaluated for their goodness-of-fit for afterschool programs (see Appendix A). Section III presents the selected curricula/programs and information that will be useful in guiding programs' decision-making such as cost, the results (and level of rigor) of supporting research, practitioner training and qualifications, alignment with standards, targeted skills, and implementation considerations.

Section I:
Literacy Development Progressions

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Throughout children's development, important milestones represent key accomplishments on the road to reading. It is important for practitioners to understand these milestones in order to support children in building key foundational literacy skills and to tailor instruction to meet children where they are in their progression toward reading. Reading is a complex process that encompasses much more than the sounding out of words. Rather, literacy development involves a constellation of skills that build on each other, including language development, foundational understanding of how print and sound are related, listening and reading comprehension, and writing skills. The foundation of these skills is an environment rich with language and opportunities to practice skills in engaging, real-world formats. Providing these learning opportunities is a natural extension of afterschool programming. With the knowledge of how children's literacy develops, practitioners can structure their program environment and interactions with children in ways that effectively support literacy skill development.

This section highlights the key skill areas necessary for reading and provides a description of the progression of development for each skill area. Like a roadmap, these descriptions help practitioners understand where children are

developmentally and where they are going. Sections II and III, which outline specific strategies and curricula/programs to support reading development, provide the means to reach these destinations.

> How to use the literacy progressions

The progressions of foundational skills that are essential for literacy development are presented in narrative form below and are also included graphically and in more detail in Appendix B. The progressions are meant to be used along with the teaching tools and strategies outlined in Section II, and to support the use of one or more research-based curricula/programs described in Section III. For example, a practitioner might read one of the progressions and use formative assessment—a strategy outlined in Section II—to identify the current skill level of a child in the program. By understanding the next step in the learning progression, the practitioner would then determine an appropriate learning goal to work toward and select curriculum activities that support this goal. Within an afterschool program, it is likely that children will have skill levels and learning goals that span multiple points across a progression because of the range of ages of children served and individual variation in development. This fact makes the understanding of how literacy development

unfolds that much more important. Therefore, it is important that practitioners use the progressions to tailor effective strategies such as small groups and tiered activities (see Section II) and curricula/programs (see Section III) that best meet the needs of each child based on where he or she is on the path to literacy.

> Organization of the literacy progressions

Literacy development and learning is complex and requires many interrelated skills. As such, there are several potential ways to describe phases of development and learning. To make this complexity more manageable, the key literacy skills are organized below into five main areas that are further broken into sub-skills. For each sub-skill, a progression is described that outlines the trajectory of development from prekindergarten to third grade. In Appendix B, specific indicators are provided for each sub-skill that more specifically describe the expectation for what a child should know and be able to demonstrate for that sub-skill at specific ages from prekindergarten to third grade.

Literacy Development Domains and Sub-Skills

Decades of reading research and documents, such as state English Language Arts standards, have identified key areas of literacy development that are predictive of and foundational to later reading ability. Broadly, these skills can be organized into four major areas:

1) Language,

2) Foundational skills,

3) Comprehension, and

4) Writing.

These four foundational areas are used to organize the progressions and can be further divided into the following sub-skills. The foundation areas and sub-skills are outlined below.

1. **A child's understanding and use of language**
  1.1 Engaging in conversations with others
  1.2 Understanding and using a variety of vocabulary words
  1.3 Showing knowledge of the rules of spoken and written language
  1.4 Presenting information and expressing self clearly

2. **A child's foundational skills for reading**
  2.1 Understanding the rules of how print is organized
  2.2 Noticing and manipulating the sounds of language
  2.3 Connecting letters with sounds and recognizing familiar words and parts of words
  2.4 Reading smoothly and accurately

3. **A child's ability to read and understand a variety of texts**
  3.1 Determining key ideas and details
  3.2 Using features of books and other texts to learn and gain information
  3.3 Making connections within and across texts

4. **A child's writing ability**
  4.1 Expressing opinions, presenting information, and telling stories through writing
  4.2 Exploring different ways to write and edit
  4.3 Engaging in research projects to gather and present information

LANGUAGE PROGRESSIONS

1.1 Engaging in conversations with others

By prekindergarten and kindergarten, children's language, social skills, and memory should be developed enough to engage in back-and-forth conversations with others (e.g., asking and responding to questions). As children enter elementary school, they should be able to carry on more complex conversations in which they build on others' ideas, make connections to comments, and ask related, on-topic questions. Beginning in prekindergarten, children are also beginning to understand the social rules of conversations. For example, rather than talking over each other, children begin to take turns speaking and listening. Gradually through the early grades, children increasingly improve at following agreed-upon rules for small- and large-group discussions, for example, paying attention when others are talking and raising one's hand if one wants to speak.

1.2 Understanding and using a variety of vocabulary words

Without a strong vocabulary (both spoken and printed words), children will struggle with reading comprehension. A strong vocabulary actually facilitates additional word learning as children use their existing knowledge of words to generate word options or benefit from context clues when they encounter unfamiliar words. During the early childhood period, children are using increasingly complex and varied vocabulary words to express needs and describe objects, relationships, emotions, and actions. They encounter many new words and phrases in conversations and books and are developing many strategies to determine the meaning of unknown words, such as asking questions about words or using pictures as clues in prekindergarten and kindergarten. In first through third grade, children can use other words in a sentence to figure out the meaning of an unknown word, use word parts such as prefixes or suffixes to learn new words, or use glossaries or dictionaries to determine word meaning. In prekindergarten and kindergarten, children also become better able to make "webs of meaning" by sorting words into categories (e.g., shapes, foods) to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent. As children expand their vocabularies in kindergarten and beyond, they become increasingly skilled at distinguishing differences between closely related words (e.g., *walk, march, strut, prance; or thin, skinny, slender*).

1.3 Showing knowledge of the rules of spoken and written language

In order to use language to convey meaning effectively, children must learn the various rules that apply to both spoken and written language. Children learn to use increasingly complex parts of speech, ranging from simple nouns (people, places, and things) and verbs (action words) in prekindergarten and kindergarten to more nuanced types of words such as adjectives (words that describe nouns, such as *pretty, quiet, happy*) and adverbs (words that describe how or when things happen, such as *quickly, next*) by the end of second grade to make their language more precise. By the end of third grade, children can identify and explain the function of various parts of speech. Children also show increasing knowledge regarding the rules of print. Preschoolers and kindergarteners are learning to print letters correctly and how to separate words with spaces. Elementary school children show increasing knowledge of capitalization and punctuation. In terms of spelling, preschoolers and kindergarteners may use invented spelling (for example writing *MK* for *milk*), and by the end of first grade, most children are able to spell simple words by sounding them out. In elementary school, children are gaining increasing knowledge of the basic rules of spelling including irregularly spelled words.

1.4 **Presenting information and expressing self clearly**

The clarity of children's communication improves steadily from prekindergarten to third grade as children learn to pronounce more words correctly, speak at an understandable pace, and communicate in complete sentences when appropriate to the situation. By the end of kindergarten, children should be able to communicate clearly enough to be understood by most people and only mispronounce a few words that are new or unusual. By the end of first grade, children should be able to tell stories and describe people, places, things, and events with increasingly descriptive details. In the second and third grade, children should be able to recount a story or report on a topic with facts and relevant details. Also during these grades, children should be able to identify the main ideas and supporting details from a text read aloud or other information presented orally.

FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS PROGRESSIONS

2.1 **Understanding the rules of how print is organized**

One of the first steps to reading is understanding that print carries a message and can represent spoken language. Once children have made this crucial connection (generally by the end of prekindergarten), they begin to learn the rules of printed language. For example, a preschooler may pretend to "read" a book to a stuffed animal and move their finger from left-to-right and top-to-bottom across the page as they say words. A kindergartener should show knowledge that words consist of letters, letters make sounds, and printed words are separated by spaces. A child in first grade will show more sophisticated understanding of the rules of print, recognizing features of a sentence like the capitalization of the first word and ending punctuation.

2.2 **Noticing and manipulating the sounds of language**

In order to sound out words to read or spell, children must have an awareness of the individual sounds in words (also called phonemes). Before children can do this, they begin by developing awareness of larger pieces of language and eventually learn to attend to smaller and smaller units. First, children learn to identify and manipulate individual spoken words. This includes both words in sentences (e.g., /The/ /lazy/ /ladybug/ /took/ /a/ /nap/) and more challenging tasks with compound words, which are words created when words are joined together to form a new word (e.g., *ladybug* or *cowboy*). Then, they work at the level of syllables, which are defined as pronounceable units of speech that contain one vowel sound (e.g., *la–zy*). Finally, children learn to manipulate phonemes, which are the smallest units of sound in a language (e.g., /n/ /a/ /p/ in the word *nap*). As children move along this progression, they are also learning how to manipulate these units of language in different ways. Blending is easiest (e.g., "What word do you get when you put together *ta – ble*?"), followed by segmenting (e.g., dividing the word pencil into the syllables *pen* and *cil*). Deleting (e.g., *mice* without /m/ is *ice*) and substituting (e.g., changing the *pan* in *pancake* to *cup* to make *cupcake*) are even more complex tasks.

By the end of prekindergarten, children should listen to and imitate rhymes (e.g., *Sheep in jeep on a hill that's steep…*) and alliteration (e.g., *Princess Prunella and the Purple Peanut*). By the end of kindergarten, children should be able to produce rhyming words, decide whether two words rhyme, and begin to blend, segment and delete parts of compound words as discussed above. By the end of first grade, children should be able to blend and segment phonemes (sounds) in spoken one-syllable words. During first through third grade, children are learning to delete and substitute phonemes in spoken words.

2.3 Connecting letters with sounds and recognizing familiar words and parts of words

Reading is the act of connecting printed characters with spoken words. Children begin this process in prekindergarten and kindergarten by learning to identify letters and learning to associate letters with sounds (e.g., B says "*buh*"). By the end of kindergarten, children should be able to produce the sound for most letters. Beginning in prekindergarten, children are also learning to recognize familiar words such as their own name, names of peers, or words associated with other clues such as the word stop on a stop sign. In kindergarten and first grade, children are reading high-frequency words (e.g., *the, of, to, you, she, my, is, are, do, does*) and utilizing common letter patterns and sounds (e.g., *sh, th, ck;* "vowel teams" such as *ea, ow, ai;* final –e for long vowel sounds). Children in second and third grade are recognizing more words and are using vowel patterns, syllable patterns, and word parts (e.g., prefixes such as *un-, re-, dis-,* and in-) to recognize words.

2.4 Reading smoothly and accurately

In order for children to understand what they are reading, the process of reading must become relatively fluent and automatic such that children can remember and process what they just read. As children gain more practice sounding out words and build a bigger bank of words that they can recognize automatically, they can read with more purpose and understanding. Kindergarteners are building a concept of "word in text" (i.e., the ability of a reader to match spoken words to written words while reading) and first graders are building their bank of known words. By the end of third grade, children should be able to read grade-level texts with accuracy, at the appropriate rate and expression with repeated readings. In addition, during the first

through third grade period, children gain the ability to use context (illustrations or other words in the text) to confirm or self-correct their recognition of words and understanding, going back to reread as necessary.

COMPREHENSION PROGRESSIONS

3.1 Determining key ideas and details

As children's listening and reading comprehension skills grow during prekindergarten through first grade, they can retell stories and discuss texts with increasing focus on details such as the setting, major events, main characters, and story problems and resolutions. In second and third grade, as their

social–emotional and language skills develop, children should be able to describe characters' traits, motivations, actions, and feelings with increasing detail. Children also show increasing awareness of perspective. A first grader should be able to identify who is telling a story; a second grader can speak in different voices for different characters when reading aloud; a third grader can distinguish their own point of view from those of the narrator, characters, or author. Finally, in the early elementary grades, children should be able to identify a central message in a story or main topic in an informational text, with increasing ability to explain how it is supported by key details in the text.

3.2 Using features of books and other texts to learn and gain information

Across all types of text, children are learning how to use books and other texts as tools to gain information. Children in prekindergarten and kindergarten are showing increasing knowledge of book features such as the author, illustrator, front cover, and title page. As children are exposed to more texts in second and third grade, they can talk about more specific parts such as a chapter, paragraph, scene (in a play), or stanza (in a poem). During these later grades children are also learning to use text features including headings, tables of contents, glossaries, icons, and eventually electronic search tools (e.g., key words, hyperlinks) to locate key facts or information in a text. Children also use illustrations as a way to gain information about a text. A preschooler may pretend to "read" to a peer or doll by telling a story using the pictures in a book as clues to what they should say for each page. By first grade, most children can distinguish between information provided by illustrations and those provided by text and children in second and third grade can explain how illustrations and other visuals (e.g., maps, diagrams) can contribute to a text (e.g., create a mood, show steps in a procedure).

3.3 Making connections within and across texts

Children's ability to make connections to ideas in a text improves over time. A preschooler should be able to relate an event in a story to a personal experience or another book they have read, especially with prompting and support from an adult. Kindergarteners and first graders make more nuanced connections, describing relationships between individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text with prompting and support. As children progress through second and third grade, they are able to make even more sophisticated connections between historical events, scientific ideas, or procedural steps, with increasing use of language referring to sequence and causality. During kindergarten and first grade, children learn to identify similarities and differences between texts (e.g., style of illustrations, descriptions, experiences of characters). Second and third graders are able to compare and contrast texts in an increasingly sophisticated manner, for example comparing two versions of the same story (e.g., *Cinderella*) from different authors or cultures or comparing themes and characters in stories by the same author.

WRITING PROGRESSIONS

4.1 Expressing opinions, presenting information, and telling stories through writing

When children realize that writing carries meaning, they begin to use print to express themselves. During prekindergarten and kindergarten, children rely on a combination of drawing, dictating words to adults to write, and writing (whether this be letters or scribbles) to represent words and ideas. As their abilities develop, children increasingly use writing to express opinions, supply information about a topic, and tell stories. Children's writing grows in sophistication during

the early elementary years as they learn to introduce the topic they are writing about, supply reasons and facts to develop points, use linking words or phrases (e.g., *because, and, also, for example, then, next*), and provide a sense of closure to their writing. Children's narrative skills also improve over time. In prekindergarten and kindergarten, children can communicate about single events or several loosely linked events in the order in which they occurred. In early elementary school, children work on writing increasingly complex narratives with events in the right order and details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings. By the end of third grade, children are more able to use dialogue and descriptions to develop experiences, characters, and events.

4.2 Exploring different ways to write and edit

Children in prekindergarten show interest in practicing letters that are meaningful to them to try and begin to communicate in writing (though developmentally most "writing" is through drawings or producing letter-like forms) and explore various writing tools (e.g., pencils, markers, chalk). Kindergarteners work toward mastering the mechanics of writing (e.g., forming letters cor-

rectly, producing strings of letters or letter-like forms to form words). As children get older, they also begin to explore digital forms of writing with adult guidance and support. From kindergarten on, children learn to strengthen their writing through revising and editing, often by peer collaboration. By the end of third grade, children are able to write for different purposes and audiences and can write over an extended period, for example spending time on research and planning and then writing, or working on a story for several days at a time.

> Conclusion

These progressions are intended to help afterschool practitioners better grasp what children typically know, understand, and are able to do at different ages. (See Appendix B for the easily accessible detailed progressions.) With this knowledge, practitioners are able to effectively develop age-appropriate learning goals for children, and use developmentally appropriate learning activities to support each child's reading development.

Section II:
Key Characteristics of Effective Literacy Programs

> Characteristics of Effective Practices

Research has identified several features of afterschool programs that are effective in producing positive outcomes. One team of researchers coined the acronym "**SAFE**" to describe a set of criteria that define effective practices—*sequenced, active, focused,* and *explicit.*[14] Although each element is important, it is the combination of all four that affects positive change. Each characteristic of an effective program design is described in more detail below:

Sequenced. Learning to read is a complex process in which each new skill builds on previously acquired skills and lays the foundation for future skills. As such, literacy instruction is most effective when skills are broken down into smaller steps and mastered sequentially. For example, although the goal of phonological awareness is for children to be able to distinguish and manipulate individual phonemes (sounds) in language (e.g., *cat* is made up of the sounds /c/ /a/ /t/), they first learn how to break down larger units of language, like compound words (e.g., *starfish* is made up of the smaller words *star* and *fish*) and then syllables (e.g., *water* is made up of the syllables *wa-* and *–ter*). Providing sequenced learning opportunities requires practitio-

ners to understand the trajectory of children's reading development, sequence learning activities to meet children where they are developmentally, and link learning steps to build on each other. Established curricula typically present activities in an intentional order to support sequential skill development.

Active. Children learn best when they are engaged and involved in the learning process, which has multiple implications for literacy instruction. After receiving basic instruction, children should have ample opportunities to actively practice new skills—preferably through hands-on activities—and receive feedback on their performance. Furthermore, children are more engaged in their learning when activities integrate student choice and interests and have real-world applications. For example, a young child learning letter names may enjoy a scavenger hunt looking for specific letters on toy traffic signs. Older children may be engaged in practicing reading during a cooking project or writing about an area of interest such as dinosaurs, trains, or super heroes.

Focused. In order to fully support children's literacy development, sufficient time, attention, and resources must be invested toward instruction and skill

development. Although providing children with a language- and print-rich environment is important, programs must also designate time that is primarily for literacy skill development. For example, a program may offer children ample opportunities to engage with literacy materials during free choice time (e.g., having a writing center, having printed labels throughout the learning space, offering many book choices), but it is also essential that there be some structured, adult-led activities specifically focused on literacy. For example, programs may build in time for shared read-alouds, book discussions, peer-reading time, games that focus on letter knowledge or phonological awareness, or other activities that build reading skills.

Explicit. Literacy development is best supported when programs develop well-defined, specific learning objectives. Ideally, these objectives are aligned with the curriculum and standards (e.g., state early learning and K-12 standards, Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework) used by the school(s) or program(s) children attend during the regular school day and school year. Effective programs also monitor children's progress in relation to these specific learning objectives and adjust instruction accordingly to meet each child's current developmental level and support their growth to meet the next learning goal. For example, a program may have a goal of supporting the reading fluency of their early readers. Practitioners may have children read aloud to them and then may offer books at different reading levels appropriate to each child's observed abilities.

> Effective Learning Formats

Within any learning environment, children show a wide range of skill levels and therefore have different learning goals to move to the next stage of development. This is particularly true in afterschool programs given that children may span a range of ages. Individualized instruction that offers different levels of support to accommodate developmental differences is a hallmark of good teaching at any grade level. Individualizing instruction allows children to engage in activities based on their current progress with a given skill, speed of learning, interests, and mode of learning that suits them best. Children gain new knowledge and skills faster during individualized instruction, which ultimately allows all children to be successful in moving toward their own unique learning goals. When we "teach to the middle" with one-size-fits all lessons, this does not happen. Although the thought of individualizing instruction for large groups of children can be daunting, the sections below provide three key strategies for practitioners to use—*small groups, tiered activities,* and *formative assessment.*

Small Groups

Some of the most effective literacy instruction happens in small groups (two to four children). Small groups provide many benefits. Children can be flexibly grouped according to their current abilities, with opportunities to engage in a variety of modes of learning. Practitioners can more easily observe children's progress and can provide individual interactions that are suited to each child's level. For these reasons, small group instruction is generally more effective than whole group literacy activities or activities such as silent reading in which children do not have opportunities to receive feedback and support from practitioners.

It is important to note that children's placements in small groups should be flexible rather than permanent. Ideally, practitioners are constantly reevaluating children's progress and moving them to the appropriate group and children may be grouped with different children for different activities. Indeed, there are several ways that practitioners may structure groups. Children may be grouped based on their:

- **Progress with a given skill:** How much do they know? What are they trying to master?

- **Speed of learning:** Do they understand instructions and gain new skills quickly? Or do they need more time to process new ideas and language and formulate responses?

- **Individual interests:** Are they interested in art, sports, books, science? What grabs their interest?

- **Optimal structure:** In what kind of grouping do they learn best? With a specific friend or peer to support them? In a cooperative group?

To support children's participation, small group activities should be brief and engaging (at maximum about 10 to 20 minutes), should encourage frequent turn-taking for children, and may involve some physical activities (e.g., jumping once for each syllable while segmenting words).

Practitioners might choose to implement small group activities in several ways. For example, each practitioner can have a different activity "station" and rotate children through the stations. Or a practitioner may keep the same group of children but offer a series of different activities. Alternatively, one teacher can pull one group at a time from some larger activity (e.g., free choice time). Practitioners can also take advantage of down time, free choice time, and the beginning or end of the program day when there may be fewer children.

Tiered Activities

Tiered activities are altered activities to adapt to children's needs and provide the best learning context. They are often planned ahead of time, but can also be created in the moment. Tiered activities do not mean a different lesson plan for every student, or that a lesson is watered down for some students. Rather, a practitioner provides several options to accommodate children's different interests, learning styles, and strengths. Practitioners can also use student choice in tiered activities, announcing the options and allowing children to go with the group or method of learning they choose. To create groups that accommodate children at different levels, teachers need to plan multiple levels of instruction for a given skill or class time. In a tiered activity, a teacher begins by introducing a new concept to the group. Then, the lesson can be tiered by adjusting one or more of the following:

Content *(what children learn)*. Think about where each child is in the process of learning a concept, or their interests. For example, during journal activities,

some children may learn how to write the first letter of their name, whereas others may be practicing writing their full name, or writing a sentence.
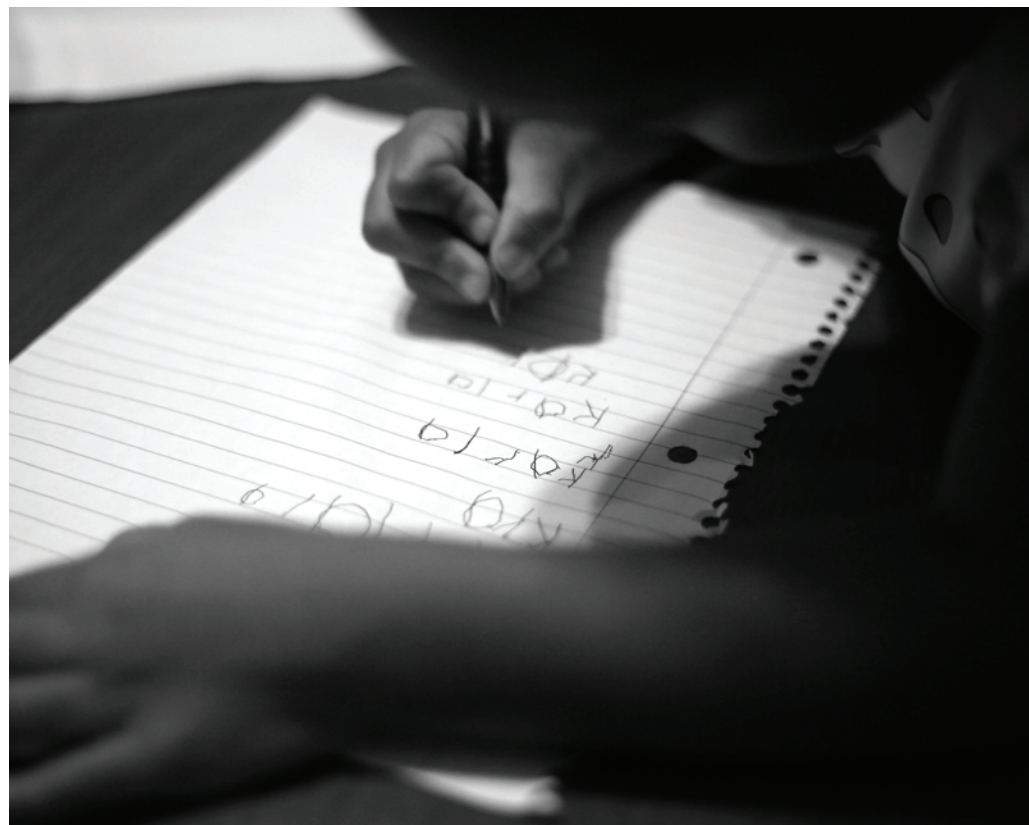
Process *(the activity in which children are engaged)*. Think about what level of support, challenge, and complexity each child needs. Shift the level of teacher and peer support, make an activity more hands-on, use centers, or vary the amount of time required to complete a task. For example, children who are English-language learners may need to have pictures of new words available to help them in an activity.

Product *(the projects children create to show knowledge of a skill)*. Think about the learning styles of each child, and about how complex their level of knowledge will be. For example, some children may enjoy drawing a picture to demonstrate their comprehension of a story whereas others might like to reenact the story as a brief skit.

Learning environment (the way that the environment supports their learning). Think about each child's individual environmental needs. For example, some children who are easily distracted can work in a separated, quiet area, whereas others can learn well in groups. Children who are more physically active may enjoy doing a writing activity on an easel rather than sitting at a table.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is the process of gathering information about children's current abilities and using this information to design future instructional opportunities that will help move the child toward the next step in development. Rather than being a separate activity, gathering assessment data happens during daily activities in which practitioners are making observations about what children know and can do. Methods of collecting data for formative assessment may include observation notes, checklists, samples of children's work, or assessment tools embedded within a curriculum. Based on the information that practitioners collect, they are better able to make intentional choices in their teaching and appropriately plan activities that are tailored to each child's current developmental level and instructional needs. Meaningful assessment data helps practitioners identify children who are struggling with particular skills, groups of children who might benefit from similar instructional activities, areas in which the whole group might benefit from additional support, and children who are ready for more advanced activities.

> Types of Instructional Practices

Many instructional practices can be incorporated into afterschool programs to support literacy development and supplement the use of a formal curriculum. Several of these teaching strategies are discussed below.

Read Alouds

Read alouds are a powerful tool to build children's interest in reading, expose them to new concepts, expand their background knowledge, model fluent and expressive reading, and develop their comprehension and critical thinking skills. Read alouds are particularly well-suited to afterschool settings because of their flexible nature. This activity can be conducted in a variety of settings such as small groups, one-on-one, or in a "buddy reading" format for older children where students take turns reading to each other. Although read alouds can also be done in large groups, research suggests that they are more effective when done with fewer children at a time to maximize interactions during reading. When engaging in read alouds, it is important for practitioners to go beyond simply reading the text and engage children in thinking and conversation about the book. Practitioners might pause during reading to define vocabulary words, ask children to express opinions or make predictions, encourage children to make connections to their own lives or other books, and to summarize or reconstruct events that happen in stories.[15]

Book Clubs

Participating in book club discussions helps students engage with what they are reading by asking questions, expressing opinions, connecting ideas in stories to their own lives, and exploring and accepting perspectives that are different than their own. Letting students suggest books that will be the topic of discussion promotes a sense of ownership and increases their incentive to read. Encouraging students to write down questions, reflections, or favorite quotes as they read will help them process what they are reading, develop their ideas more fully, and better prepare them for speaking in a group setting. Small groups organized by reading level or interest area are ideal for book clubs. Practitioners can lead the first "club meeting," talking about shared agreements (e.g.,

listening to others and respecting others' opinions) and using pre-developed questions to model a discussion. In future meetings, students might take turns in various roles such as a discussion leader who facilitates the meeting; a recorder who keeps a list of new vocabulary, key questions, and discussion points; and a reporter who summarizes the discussion at the end of the meeting. Rotating roles will give all students practice reading, writing, speaking, and listening.[16]

Story and Literature Dramatizations

During story and literature dramatizations, students act out a poem, story, fairy tale, song, or play. Students may take on the roles themselves, or use puppets or stuffed animals. By acting out a story, children gain a greater understanding of the characters and plot, and repeated readings of a script can build reading fluency. Practitioners can ask students for suggestions or talk to their teachers to find ways to connect to the school-day curriculum. Practitioners may adapt a script from a story or have older students help write the script as the group reviews the story, plot, and characters. When roles are assigned (either by staff or by student choice), practitioners can ask students to think about their roles and why their character might act a certain way or how they might be feeling at different points in the story.[17]

Writing

Through writing, children develop ideas, make sense of their own experiences, learn to communicate with others, and begin to see themselves as authors. A variety of activities can be offered, such as journal writing, reporting program news in a newspaper, communicating with pen pals, conducting interviews, and developing stories. Afterschool programs are an ideal setting for children of different levels and abilities to engage in writing activities. Very young children may only imitate the act of writing, for example, making

scribbles on a sheet of paper to represent a menu in their pretend restaurant. For these children to gain practice creating and developing written work, practitioners may ask children to dictate to them as they record what the child says and then read it back to them. For beginning writers, practitioners can encourage students to sound out words even if they are unsure of the correct spellings. More advanced children may be invited to read drafts of their writing and have peers offer suggestions in a writer's workshop. Programs can celebrate students' written work by displaying it and sharing it with families.[18]

Phonological Awareness Activities

Phonological awareness—the ability to detect and manipulate units of spoken language (e.g., words, syllables, phonemes)—is a critical foundation for later reading skills like sounding out words. Phonological awareness deals exclusively with the *sounds* of language (a rule of thumb for distinguishing phonological awareness from phonics is that phonological awareness activities can be done in the dark—no need to see letters!). Given this, few materials are needed to engage in phonological awareness activities and many can be done informally (for example during transitions while children are waiting in line or for snack). Phonological awareness activities vary greatly in scope. For example, practitioners may engage children in a rhyme game in which they say three words and challenge children to identify the word that does not rhyme with the others. Practitioners also might ask children to practice manipulating parts of words (e.g., "What word do you get when you put together *sea—horse*?" or "What is *pencil* without *–cil*?"). Children may also enjoy playing a version of "I spy" in which they take turns finding things in the environment that start with certain sounds (e.g., "I spy something that starts with "*ch*"). Although phonological awareness is all about the sounds of language, some children may benefit from some visual cues to help with

the memory demands involved (e.g., having pictures of a sun and a flower to make the word *sunflower*; having blocks or other manipulatives to touch while counting syllables in words).

Supporting Higher Levels of Interest and Motivation in Reading

The frequency and volume of children's reading affects their reading ability in a circular manner—the more children read, the better at it they become, which makes it a more motivating and pleasurable activity. Conversely, children who struggle to read are less likely to engage in this frustrating activity, which means they engage in less practice developing reading skills, which in turn results in lower reading ability than that of their peers. Providing children opportunities to engage in leisure reading is something at which afterschool programs generally excel. Programs can foster a love for reading by offering time and a carefully curated book selection. For some children, it is helpful to promote choice through a limited selection. Research suggests that some reluctant readers express a desire to choose their own reading material but often feel overwhelmed by total freedom. One experiment placed about 30 books in a box labeled "Good Books" and found that students who identified as "non-readers" were more likely to feel comfortable selecting a book when their selection was narrowed.[19] Another strategy is to help children explore different genres of books to find what sparks their interests. Children are particularly motivated to read by topics of interest to them such as cooking, dinosaurs, construction vehicles, or insects. Engaging in discussions about books can also build motivation. Many children who are avid readers describe reading like having a movie play in their head.[20] Adults can help children visualize stories by describing or drawing what a particular character or scene looked like.

Family Support and Literacy Events

Families are one of the most important factors in children's literacy development. By engaging parents as partners, afterschool programs can build a strong foundation for children's learning that will follow children well beyond their time in the program. Afterschool programs may choose to host family literacy events where parents and caregivers are invited to visit and participate in activities. Activities may include presentations on topics such as supporting literacy at home or how parents can help children with homework, student presentations or plays, family reading nights, or exhibits of student work. Afterschool practitioners may lead family literacy events, or they may partner with local experts or community organizations. In order to increase participation, programs may consider inviting parents to engage in the planning process, offering food, and providing child care for parent-only events like workshops.[21]

> Literacy Materials in the Learning Environment

Easily Decodable and Predictable Texts

It is important to have a wide range of books in an afterschool program. More complex picture books and even chapter books may be appropriate for more advanced readers in the program and are also important for read aloud experiences so that children are exposed to rich language and texts. However, for beginning readers it is important to have texts that they are able to be successful in reading. This includes text that is easy to decode (sound out) with phonics patterns that children have been taught. For example, a child in the early stages of reading who has learned short vowel sounds could decode simple words like *cat, red,* and *dig*, but would not be able to sound out words like *boy* or *tea*. It is important that each child have opportunities to read books at their level. In addition, early readers can benefit from exposure

to predictable texts. These books contain repetitive phrases that appear in the story over and over again. Examples of this kind of text include, *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin, Jr., *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss, and *Click, Clack, Moo, Cows that Type* by Doreen Cronin. Within this type of book, children can use the text and illustrations to anticipate words, phrases, and events.[22]

Leveled Readers

Leveled readers are books that are organized from relatively simple texts for beginning readers to progressively more complex texts for more advanced readers. Factors that determine the complexity of the text include *length and layout* (e.g., number of pages, words and lines per page, font size), *vocabulary and structure* (e.g., complexity of words and plot, reliance on illustrations to help tell story), and *content and theme* (e.g., familiarity of topics to children, fiction versus nonfiction). Leveled books are often labeled numerically, alphabetically, or by grade level to help practitioners pair children with books that best match their current reading abilities and help children select progressively more complex texts as their literacy skills develop. This also allows practitioners to have children of different reading abilities read books about the same subject, so that children can engage in discussions with each other while still reading at an appropriate level for them individually. There are many commercially available leveled book collections, though some programs choose to develop their own systems. Websites such as Scholastic's Book Wizard are particularly helpful resources allowing practitioners to search for books by different leveling systems, genres, authors, and other criteria. The "BookAlike" feature also allows one to enter a favorite book and see results of books that have similar content and are at a similar reading level.[23]

Audiobooks

Children's listening comprehension develops before their reading comprehension, meaning that it is important to expose children to audiobooks that are above their reading level. This process will build their vocabulary and background knowledge, support critical thinking skills, and engage children with great literature. Although ideally accomplished through read alouds, with opportunities for adult interaction who can define vocabulary words and have conversations about the book with children, audiobooks are another way to supplement children's exposure to rich texts. Additionally, many audiobooks are read by the author or have commentary by the author following the book.

This is an excellent way for students to connect with authors and understand more about their writing process. Audiobooks are readily available from many school and public libraries in cassette, CD, and .mp3 formats, and depending on the number of headsets available in a program, can be good individual or small group listening activities. There are many online reviews of audiobooks for programs to consult including from the School Library Journal and the annual Notable Children's Recordings list from the Association for Library Service to Children.[24]
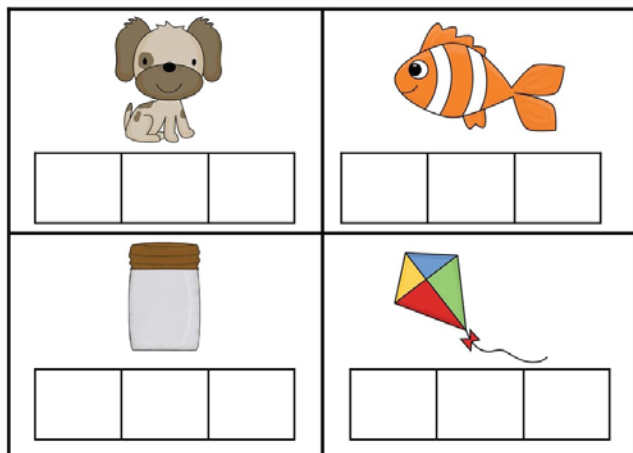
Word Wall

A word wall is an organized collection of high frequency words, commonly misspelled words, words related to a theme of study, and/or names. Although words are often organized according to the beginning letter, it may be more helpful to organize words by their initial *sound* (e.g., if a student knows that the word *circle* begins with an /s/ sound, they would look toward other words that also start with this sound, such as *see* and *said*). This collection of words should be written in large letters using a variety of background colors and placed on a wall, bulletin board, or other highly visible display surface in a classroom. Word walls help students see patterns and relationships in words, which supports their phonics and spelling skills. Word walls are meant to be interactive classroom tools; thus, practitioners should work with students to determine which words should be included. The wall should be added to and referred to frequently. Word walls can also be used with younger children to help them learn the alphabet, letter sounds, the first letter in their names and the names of classmates, and even some basic sight words.[25]

Elkonin Blocks or Boxes

Elkonin blocks or boxes help phonological awareness development by providing visual and physical supports as children learn to discern and manipulate units of spoken language (e.g., words, syllables, phonemes). Blocks (e.g., unifix cubes, wooden blocks) may be used as visual reminders of parts of words as children practice blending, segmenting, and deleting. For example, a practitioner may tap one block and say "note" and tap another block and say "book" and ask the child to put the blocks together and say the word they make *(notebook)*. Or a teacher may put three blocks together and tap each one as she says the syllables in the word *computer* and ask the child to take the blocks apart and say what part of the word each block represents (*com-,*

pu-, and *-ter*). Instead of blocks, a practitioner might draw squares on a piece of paper and have children move tokens (e.g., poker chips, unifix cubes) into each box for each phoneme (sound) in the word. This helps children count the number of phonemes in each word (which is not always the number of letters).

For example, a teacher might slowly pronounce the word sheep, stretching out each sound, and then draw three boxes on a piece of paper. The child would say the word and place a token in each of the boxes for the sounds /sh/ /ee/ and /p/.[26]

> Conclusion

The strategies outlined in this section represent doable and achievable modifications to afterschool programs to better support children's literacy development. However, as noted in the Introduction to this guide, other foundational programmatic elements need to be in place such as professional development and technical assistance to support afterschool practitioners in their implementation of these recommendations. Many of the curricula and programs outlined in the next section also offer additional guidance and supports (e.g., teacher resources, targeted professional development) around best practices in instructional strategies and designing the learning environment.

AFTERSCHOOL KIDZLIT

Program Description	AfterSchool KidzLit is a reading enrichment program designed specifically for use in out-of-school settings. It increases young people's motivation to read and builds their literacy skills. At the same time, it develops core values of helpfulness, fairness, personal responsibility, and respect for others. Leaders use a five-part process in which children hear engaging books read aloud—or they read them independently—and make connections to their own lives. They express their feelings and grapple with big ideas through discussion, drama, art, movement, and writing.
Target Literacy Areas	☑ Language ☐ Foundational Skills ☑ Comprehension ☑ Writing
Website	https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/afterschool-kidzlit
Target Grades	K–8
Developer and Year	Center for the Collaborative Classroom 2000
Cost	AfterSchool KidzLit Grades K–3 Package: $1,750 AfterSchool KidzLit Grades K–5 Package: $3,450 AfterSchool KidzLit Grades K–8 Package: $3,850
Evidence Base	Internal and independent evaluations have been conducted. Two evaluations used a simple pre-/post-test design and one study used a pre-/post-test design with a control group.
Impact	Studies have found improvements in writing and listening skills, comfort in talking in groups, attitude toward reading, vocabulary development, reading efficacy, and social attitudes.
Staff Training & Qualifications	No formal teaching experience is needed to implement KidzLit. Online courses, in-person workshops, and on-site support kits are available.
Implementation Considerations	*Strengths* • Students are actively involved and engaged with the learning process. • Curriculum/program helps build other cognitive and social–emotional skills. • Materials are varied and are simultaneously accessible for many learners and a variety of learning styles. *Challenges* • Materials are difficult to track and store due to volume or size of resources. • The latest version of the curriculum is dated. • Evaluation research used weaker design methodology (i.e., not randomized controlled trial), is dated, or was done on a different version of the curriculum than is currently available.

BENCHMARK READER'S THEATER SCRIPTS AND FLUENCY SKILLS SET

Program Description	The goals of the program are to build oral fluency and expression, develop silent reading and tracking skills, improve listening skills, grow confidence and self-esteem, and learn academic vocabulary and content. The program uses fiction and content-related scripts, providing a fun way for students to engage with reading and improve their skills. Students also absorb and retain content knowledge, as they accurately portray the characters in the scripts. Content in the scripts links to many other content areas, including science, math, social studies, and a range of literary genres: nursery rhymes and songs, tall tales, folktales, myths and legends, fairy tales, and fables. The scripts are multi-leveled, allowing students with varying reading levels to work collaboratively while reading parts from the same script. Curriculum is available in many formats, including individual scripts and complete programs.
Target Literacy Areas	☑ Language ☑ Foundational Skills ☑ Comprehension ☐ Writing
Website	www.benchmarkeducation.com/administrators/curriculum-and-instruction/resource-types/readers-theater
Target Grades	PreK–Grade 9 and above
Developer and Year	Benchmark Education Company 2005
Cost	Nursery Rhymes & Songs (K–2): $615 to $4,420 Folktales, Myths, & Legends (1–6): $455 to $1,830 My First Reader's Theater (PreK–1): $419 to $4,295 Content-Area Concepts (1–6): $385 to $2,965 Word Plays (1–6): $165 to $1,625 Individual titles can also be purchased in sets of 6 or 12.
Evidence Base	Two independent evaluations have been conducted of the Benchmark Literacy comprehensive program, of which Reader's Theater is a component. These evaluations compared state reading test results of specific schools before the *Benchmark Literacy* program was implemented, and after implementation. Studies were conducted with students in Grade 3 and above.
Impact	Studies found an increase in the percent of students scoring at proficient or advanced levels from the years prior to implementation.
Staff Training & Qualifications	Formal teaching experience is not required. Professional development is available, but not required.
Implementation Considerations	*Strengths* • Students are actively involved and engaged with the learning process. • Curriculum/program meets the needs of diverse learners. • Curriculum/program helps build other cognitive and social–emotional skills. • Materials are well-organized and easy to use. *Challenges* • Curriculum/program focuses on a limited sub-set of reading skills. • Evaluation research used weaker design methodology (i.e., not randomized controlled trial), is dated, or was done on a different version of the curriculum than is currently available.

CATCHING READERS (FORMERLY EARLY INTERVENTION IN READING)

Program Description	The program is designed to provide extra instruction to groups of students at risk of failing to learn to read. The program uses picture books to stress instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, and contextual analysis, along with repeated reading and writing.
Target Literacy Areas	☑ Language ☑ Foundational Skills ☑ Comprehension ☑ Writing
Website	www.earlyinterventioninreading.com www.heinemann.com
Target Grades	K–4/5
Developer and Year	Dr. Barbara Taylor, Heinemann 1990/2010
Cost	The cost of the book/DVD for each grade level is $25.50
Evidence Base	For the original intervention (Early Intervention in Reading; EIR®), one study met What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) evidence standards. This study examined effects on alphabetics and comprehension. No studies that meet WWC evidence standards with or without reservations examined the effectiveness of EIR® in the fluency or general reading achievement domains. To date, no research has been conducted on the republished Catching Readers series.
Impact	Based on the one study of EIR, the WWC considers the extent of evidence for EIR® to be small for alphabetics and comprehension.
Staff Training & Qualifications	For the original EIR® program that was evaluated, teachers were trained for nine months using workshops and an Internet-based professional development program. For the current version, *Catching Readers,* internet and consulting services support professional learning communities.
Implementation Considerations	*Strengths* • Materials are varied and are simultaneously accessible for many learners and a variety of learning styles. *Challenges* • Materials are difficult to track and store due to volume or size of resources.

DAISYQUEST

Program Description	DaisyQuest is a software bundle that offers computer-assisted instruction in phonological awareness, targeting children aged 3 to 7 years. The instructional activities, framed in a fairy tale involving a search for a friendly dragon named Daisy, teach children how to recognize words that rhyme; words that have the same beginning, middle, and ending sounds; and words that can be formed from a series of phonemes presented separately, as well as how to count the number of sounds in words.
Target Literacy Areas	☐ Language ☑ Foundational Skills ☐ Comprehension ☐ Writing
Website	https://www.facebook.com/AdventureLearningSoftware
Target Grades	PreK–2
Developer and Year	Adventure Learning Software 1992
Cost	$2.99 for one app license
Evidence Base	Four studies met the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) evidence standards. The studies included students ranging in age from 5 to 7 years, attending schools in different communities and states. A more recent study examined pre- and post-test scores on an early reading measure.
Impact	DaisyQuest was found to have positive effects on alphabetics skills (specifically on phonological awareness and phonics measures).
Staff Training & Qualifications	None; the software is self-contained and teachers may send students to the computer to practice these skills, without any need to implement additional curricular materials.
Implementation Considerations	*Strengths* • Students are actively involved and engaged with the learning process. • Curriculum/program meets the needs of diverse learners. *Challenges* • Curriculum/program does not have in-person component for staff to scaffold children's learning and evaluate progress. • Curriculum/program focuses on a limited sub-set of reading skills. • The latest version of the curriculum is dated.

FAST FORWORD

Program Description	Fast ForWord® is a computer-based reading program intended to help students develop and strengthen the cognitive skills necessary for successful reading and learning. The program, which is designed to be used 30–100 minutes a day, 5 days a week, for 4–16 weeks, includes three series. The Fast ForWord® Language2 series and the Fast ForWord® Literacy3 series aim to build cognitive skills such as memory, attention, processing, and sequencing. They also strive to build language and reading skills, including listening accuracy, phonological awareness, and knowledge of language structures. The Fast ForWord® to Reading4 series (also known as the Fast ForWord® Reading series) aims to increase processing efficiency and further improve reading skills such as sound–letter associations, phonological awareness, word recognition, knowledge of English language conventions, vocabulary, and comprehension. The program is designed to adapt the nature and difficulty of the content based on individual student's responses.
Target Literacy Areas	☑ Language ☑ Foundational Skills ☑ Comprehension ☐ Writing
Website	www.scilearn.com/products/fast-forword
Target Grades	K and beyond
Developer and Year	Scientific Learning 1997
Cost	Available upon request. Options include: • Per-student or unlimited use site licensing • Annual subscription or perpetual licensing • Volume and multi-year discounting
Evidence Base	The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) identified nine studies of Fast ForWord® that meet WWC evidence standards (seven studies meet standards without reservations and two studies meet WWC evidence standards with reservations).
Impact	Fast ForWord® was found to have positive effects on alphabetics, no discernible effects on reading fluency, and mixed effects on comprehension for beginning readers.
Staff Training & Qualifications	None specified; resources available on website for working with struggling readers, Special Education students, and English Language Learners.
Implementation Considerations	*Strengths* • Curriculum/program meets the needs of diverse learners. • Curriculum/program helps build other cognitive and social–emotional skills. • Curriculum/program supports individualized instruction to give each student a unique learning experience tailored to his or her own skill level and pace. *Challenges* • Curriculum/program does not have in-person component for staff to scaffold children's learning and evaluate progress. • The latest version of the curriculum is dated.

LEXIA READING CORE5

Program Description	Lexia Reading Core5 supports educators in providing differentiated literacy instruction for students of all abilities in grades pre-K–5. Lexia's research-proven program provides explicit, systematic, personalized learning in the six areas of reading instruction, targeting skill gaps as they emerge, and providing teachers with the data and student-specific resources they need for individual or small-group instruction. Lexia Reading is a computerized reading program that provides phonics instruction and gives students independent practice in basic reading skills. Lexia Reading is designed to supplement regular classroom instruction.
Target Literacy Areas	☑ Language ☑ Foundational Skills ☑ Comprehension ☐ Writing
Website	www.lexialearning.com/products/core5
Target Grades	PreK–5
Developer and Year	Lexia Learning 2013
Cost	$8,500 per year (school subscription with unlimited access)
Evidence Base	Two studies of Lexia Reading meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) evidence standards and one study meets WWC evidence standards with reservations. Since the WWC review, several other studies have been conducted by internal and external evaluators, though most used a pre- and post-study design with matched samples.
Impact	The three studies included in the WWC review found effects for alphabetics, fluency, comprehension, and general reading achievement for K and Grade 1 students. The studies conducted after the WWC review (with students K–5) showed greater progress toward grade-level reading for students in Lexia Core5 schools than for students in schools not using Lexia. Studies also showed equivalent benefits for English-language learners as a matched sample of non-English-language learners.
Staff Training & Qualifications	None specified; website includes guidance on teaching strategies and collaborative activity ideas.
Implementation Considerations	*Strengths* • Materials are varied and are simultaneously accessible for many learners and a variety of learning styles. • Meets the needs of diverse learners. • Curriculum/program supports individualized instruction to give each student a unique learning experience tailored to his or her own skill level and pace. *Challenges* • Curriculum/program does not have in-person component for staff to scaffold children's learning and evaluate progress. • Evaluation research used weaker design methodology (i.e., not randomized controlled trial), is dated, or was done on a different version of the curriculum than is currently available.

LITART LEARN

Program Description	LitART LEARN is an integrated thematic literacy curriculum designed specifically for after school. The goals of the program are to build oral language, fluency, thinking skills, reading comprehension, creativity, phonics knowledge, vocabulary, grammar, knowledge of literacy elements, goal setting skills, and support students' social and emotional development. The daily schedule includes many short, energizing activities, including interactive games, word games, and riddles. Each year of LitART LEARN is divided into eight cross-curricular themes (one per month). Curriculum materials are available as series correlating with grade level. Each series consists of 8 thematic literacy notebooks, step-by-step activity plans for over 200 activities, 16 picture books, and three novels.
Target Literacy Areas	☑ Language ☑ Foundational Skills ☑ Comprehension ☑ Writing
Website	www.litart.com/elementary/learn-literacy/
Target Grades	1–6
Developer and Year	LitART 2008
Cost	Request quote from developer
Evidence Base	Pre-/post-studies have been done in elementary school settings. Although the publisher also states that evaluations have been conducted specifically in afterschool programs, no specific information about these studies were available.
Impact	Results showed significant gains over the course of a school year in reading comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, oral language, and enjoyment of reading for students using LitART as contrast to those who did not use LitART.
Staff Training & Qualifications	LitART LEARN was designed to be used by paraprofessionals and has been successfully delivered by college students and professional educators. Formal teaching experience is not required to implement LitART LEARN. Training is available, although not required. Training opportunities include The LitART 100 Training Institute, onsite follow-up training sessions, program observations, coaching, classroom demonstrations, and webinars.
Implementation Considerations	*Strengths* • Materials are varied and are simultaneously accessible for many learners and a variety of learning styles. • Students are actively involved and engaged with the learning process. • Materials are well-organized and easy to use. *Challenges* • Materials are difficult to track and store due to volume or size of resources. • Evaluation research used weaker design methodology (i.e., not randomized controlled trial), is dated, or was done on a different version of the curriculum than is currently available.

PEER ASSISTED LEARNING STRATEGIES (PALS) READING

Program Description	Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) is a peer-tutoring programs that supplements the primary reading curriculum. Students in PALS classrooms work in pairs on reading activities intended to improve reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. Students in the pairs—who alternately take on the role of tutor and tutee—read aloud, listen to their partner read, and provide feedback during various structured activities. Teachers train students to use the following learning strategies: passage reading with partners, paragraph "shrinking" (or describing the main idea), and prediction relay (predicting what is likely to happen next in the passage). PALS includes separate versions for kindergarten and grade 1. Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies also includes versions for grades 2–3 (which are part of a larger set produced for grades 2–6).
Target Literacy Areas	☑ Language ☑ Foundational Skills ☑ Comprehension ☐ Writing
Website	www.kc.vanderbilt.edu/pals/reading.html
Target Grades	K–6
Developer and Year	Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Research on Human Development 1997; Kindergarten Manual revised 2016
Cost	PALS Kindergarten Reading Manual/Student Materials: $40 PALS First Grade Reading Manual/Student Materials: $40 PALS Grade 2–6 Reading Manual/Student Materials: $44 (also available in Spanish) PALS Grade 2–6 DVD: $15
Evidence Base	Two studies of PALS (in K and Grade 1) meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) evidence standards, and one study meets WWC evidence standards with reservations.
Impact	PALS was found to have potentially positive effects on alphabetics, no discernible effects on fluency, and mixed effects on comprehension for beginning readers.
Staff Training & Qualifications	Qualifications are not specified. Training is available but not required. For an onsite one-day teacher-training workshop, the presenter's fee is estimated at $1,000 to 1,500 plus travel expenses.
Implementation Considerations	*Strengths* • Students are actively involved and engaged with the learning process. • Curriculum/program meets the needs of diverse learners. • Curriculum/program helps build other cognitive and social–emotional skills. *Challenges* • The latest version of the curriculum is dated.

PROJECT READ

Program Description	Project Read is a school-based program that can be easily adapted for after school. It is a language arts program that involves immediate integration of expressive language, spoken language, and text. Struggling readers and writers are given time to practice their skills at their own pace. There are opportunities for extending activities, guided practice, and integrating knowledge before students work independently. There are several components to both the reading comprehension and writing parts of the program, including Story Boards, paragraph writing, sentence structure, etc.
Target Literacy Areas	☑ Language ☑ Foundational Skills ☑ Comprehension ☑ Writing
Website	www.projectread.com
Target Grades	PreK–Adult
Developer and Year	Language Circle Enterprises 1973–2015
Cost	Phonics Instructional Kits (PreK–3): $782–$1,692 Reading Comprehension Instructional Kits (K–Adult): $296–$312 Written Expression Instructional Kit (K–Adult): $547 Handwriting Instructional Kits: $123–$172
Evidence Base	A three-year study was conducted in the 1970s (Grades 1–3), but did not use a control group or matched sample. A second study in 1986–87 used a control group (Grades 1–3). In 2002, a descriptive study was published examining pre- and post-test scores of 11 students.
Impact	Positive results were found in the areas of word study skills, word reading, reading comprehension, total reading, writing vocabulary, and sentence dictation. However, some studies found positive effects for only some grades.
Staff Training & Qualifications	Training is required for those without a background in literacy and reading instruction. There are several training options, including on-site and DVD-based training. Costs for trainings vary.
Implementation Considerations	*Strengths* • Curriculum/program meets the needs of diverse learners. • Materials are well-organized and easy to use. • Curriculum/program helps build other cognitive and social–emotional skills. • Materials are varied and are simultaneously accessible for many learners and a variety of learning styles. *Challenges* • Curriculum/program has limited material for varying reading capabilities. • Evaluation research used weaker design methodology (i.e., not randomized controlled trial), is dated, or was done on a different version of the curriculum than is currently available.

RAVE-O (RETRIEVAL, AUTOMATICITY, VOCABULARY, ENGAGEMENT WITH LANGUAGE, ORTHOGRAPHY)

Program Description	RAVE-O (Retrieval, Automaticity, Vocabulary, Engagement with Language, Orthography) is a research-based fluency program that was created as a pull-out program for use with students one-on-one and in small groups. The program works systematically and simultaneously at the word level, text level, and with multiple linguistic components. Each week students learn a small number of carefully selected core words that then serve as a pivot for learning multiple aspects of linguistic knowledge. The more the child knows about a word, the faster he or she will read and understand the word. RAVE-O materials include stories, introductory word cards and image cards, dice, sliders, spelling pattern cards, script for teachers, speed wizard computer program, and word webs.
Target Literacy Areas	☑ Language ☑ Foundational Skills ☑ Comprehension ☐ Writing
Website	www.voyagersopris.com/curriculum/subject/literacy/rave-o/overview
Target Grades	2–4
Developer and Year	Voyager Sopris Learning 2006
Cost	RAVE-O Small Group Intervention Kit: $948.95
Evidence Base	RAVE-O has been rigorously tested over the last 10 years in gold standard, randomized treatment control studies. RAVE-O has been studied in a variety of contexts: school-based intervention, summer school, and after school.
Impact	Students participating in RAVE-O outperform comparison groups in the areas of vocabulary, semantics, and comprehension.
Staff Training & Qualifications	RAVE-O is best implemented by elementary school teachers with knowledge of how reading is taught. In-person training options include initial training, training of trainers, and ongoing support and coaching. Online training is also available.
Implementation Considerations	*Strengths* • Materials are varied and are simultaneously accessible for many learners and a variety of learning styles. • Students are actively involved and engaged with the learning process. *Challenges* • Materials are difficult to track and store due to volume or size or materials. • Can be difficult for students who attend sporadically or enter during the middle of the year to keep up.

READ NATURALLY

Program Description	Read Naturally® is an elementary and middle school supplemental reading program designed to improve reading fluency using a combination of books, audiotapes, and computer software. The program has three main strategies: repeated reading of text for developing oral reading fluency, teacher modeling of story reading, and systematic monitoring of student progress by teachers and the students themselves. Students work at a reading level appropriate for their achievement level, progress through the program at their own rate, and, for the most part, work on an independent basis. Read Naturally® can be used in a variety of settings, including classrooms, resource rooms, or computer or reading labs. Although the program was not originally developed for English language learners, additional materials for these students are currently available. There are three products: Read Naturally® Live (cloud-based online program); Read Naturally® Encore (printed materials and audio CDs); and Read Naturally® GATE (teacher-led small-group instruction).
Target Literacy Areas	☑ Language ☑ Foundational Skills ☑ Comprehension ☐ Writing
Website	www.readnaturally.com
Target Grades	1–8
Developer and Year	Read Naturally, Inc. 2011 (Read Naturally® Live)
Cost	Read Naturally® Live: ranges from $15.38 per "seat" for 130+ seats to $149 per seat for 1–5 seats* Read Naturally® Encore: $129 per level Read Naturally® GATE: $149 per level *Prices are increasing January 2017
Evidence Base	At least 11 studies have been conducted with a treatment group and a control group. In 2013, the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) found five studies that met WWC criteria.
Impact	Read Naturally® was found to have potentially positive effects on general reading achievement, mixed effects on reading fluency, and no discernible effects on alphabetics and comprehension for beginning readers.
Staff Training & Qualifications	Read Naturally® seminars and hands-on trainings are available in select cities. No teacher qualifications are specified.
Implementation Considerations	*Strengths* • Meets the needs of diverse learners. • Curriculum/program supports individualized instruction to give each student a unique learning experience tailored to his or her own skill level and pace. • Materials are varied and are simultaneously accessible for many learners and a variety of learning styles. *Challenges* • Curriculum/program does not have in-person component for staff to scaffold children's learning and evaluate progress.

SOUND PARTNERS

Program Description	Sound Partners is a phonics-based tutoring program that provides supplemental reading instruction to elementary school students grades K–3 with below average reading skills. Instruction emphasizes letter-sound correspondences, phoneme blending, decoding and encoding phonetically regular words, and reading irregular high-frequency words, with oral reading to practice applying phonics skills in text. The program consists of a set of scripted lessons in alphabetic and phonics skills and uses Bob Books® beginning reading series as one of the primary texts for oral reading practice. The tutoring can be provided as a pull-out or after-school program, as well as by parents who homeschool their children.
Target Literacy Areas	☑ Language ☑ Foundational Skills ☐ Comprehension ☐ Writing
Website	www.voyagersopris.com/curriculum/subject/literacy/sound-partners/overview
Target Grades	K–3
Developer and Year	Voyager Sopris Learning 2004
Cost	Kindergarten Master Set: $90.95 Grades 1 and 2 Master Set: $248.95
Evidence Base	Four studies of Sound Partners that fall within the scope of the Beginning Reading review protocol meet What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) evidence standards, and three studies meet WWC evidence standards with reservations.
Impact	Sound Partners was found to have positive effects on alphabetics, fluency, and comprehension and no discernible effects on general reading achievement on beginning readers.
Staff Training & Qualifications	The program is designed specifically for use by tutors with minimal training and experience. Professional development videos are available online.
Implementation Considerations	*Strengths* • Curriculum/program supports individualized instruction to give each student a unique learning experience tailored to his or her own skill level and pace. *Challenges* • Curriculum/program focuses on a limited sub-set of reading skills.

STEPPING STONES TO LITERACY

Program Description	Stepping Stones to Literacy (SSL) is a supplemental curriculum designed to promote listening, print conventions, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and serial processing/rapid naming (quickly naming familiar visual symbols and stimuli such as letters or colors). The program targets kindergarten and older preschool students considered to be underachieving readers, based on teacher's recommendations, assessments, and systematic screening.
Target Literacy Areas	☑ Language ☑ Foundational Skills ☐ Comprehension ☐ Writing
Website	www.voyagersopris.com/curriculum/subject/literacy/stepping-stones-to-literacy/overview
Target Grades	PreK and Intervention K–1
Developer and Year	Sopris Voyager Learning 2004
Cost	Stepping Stones to Literacy Set: $260.95
Evidence Base	Two studies of Stepping Stones to Literacy met the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) evidence standards.
Impact	Stepping Stones to Literacy was found to have positive effects on student outcomes in the alphabetics domain.
Staff Training & Qualifications	None specified
Implementation Considerations	*Strengths* • Curriculum/program meets the needs of diverse learners. *Challenges* • Curriculum/program has limited material for varying reading capabilities. • Curriculum/program focuses on a limited sub-set of reading skills.

TEEN TRENDSETTERS™

Program Description	Teen Trendsetters™ reading mentors is an intensive reading program for 1st, 2nd or 3rd graders (mentees) reading half a year or more behind their grade level. Students who enter the program sign a contract with their parents to read to them at least twice a week. Mentees are assigned a teen mentor who meets with them weekly, working together to improve reading. Mentees also receive a home library over the course of the school year. The program aligns to state standards for English Language Arts.
Target Literacy Areas	☑ Language ☐ Foundational Skills ☑ Comprehension ☐ Writing
Website	http://barbarabush.org/our-solutions/teen-trendsetters-reading-mentors/
Target Grades	Grades 1-3
Developer and Year	Barbara Bush Foundation 2002
Cost	Average per pupil cost of $333, includes curriculum, supplemental books, technical assistance, evaluation and data collection
Evidence Base	Evaluations using both quantitative and qualitative data are conducted annually by university-based evaluators.
Impact	A 5 year meta-analysis conducted in February 2017 by Dr. Craig Mason indicated that mentees routinely showed 18% to 31% more growth in their reading skills than one would expect for children their age. A control group study conducted in 2016 showed that participating mentees gained 61% more reading skills than eligible children who did not participate in the program.
Staff Training & Qualifications	Training for mentors and teacher/advisors provided as part of the per site cost.
Implementation Considerations	*Strengths:* • Materials are well-organized and easy to use. • Students are actively involved and engaged with the learning process. • Curriculum/program supports individualized instruction to give each student a unique learning experience tailored to his or her own skill level and pace. *Challenges:* • Curriculum/program has limited material for varying reading capabilities. • Preference from the Barbara Bush Foundation given to district or statewide start-up of programs.

WATERFORD EARLY LEARNING

Program Description	Waterford Early Learning is a software-based curriculum for students in Kindergarten through second grade. The curriculum is designed to promote reading, writing, and typing, incorporating literacy skills such as letter mastery, language stories, spelling, basic writing skills, reading and listening development, and comprehension strategies. It can be used as a supplement to the regular reading curriculum. Program materials include classroom lessons and take-home materials in addition to the Waterford software. Waterford Early Learning offers pretest placement and posttest assessments, in addition to ongoing assessments throughout the program.
Target Literacy Areas	☑ Language ☑ Foundational Skills ☑ Comprehension ☑ Writing
Website	www.waterford.org/waterford-early-learning
Target Grades	K–2
Developer and Year	Waterford 2004
Cost	Contact developer
Evidence Base	One study met the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) criteria with reservations. Several other studies have been done, some that use control groups, and some that compare intervention data with historical data at schools prior to the implementation of the curriculum.
Impact	The WWC reports potentially positive effects for alphabetics and no discernible effects for reading comprehension. Other studies report effects for general reading achievement, phonemic awareness, invented spelling, and word reading. Studies report particularly pronounced effects for children with the lowest baseline reading scores and English-language learners.
Staff Training & Qualifications	No qualifications specified. Many training options available including in-person (onsite customized consultation, coaching and modeling with a Waterford implementation specialist), virtual webinars, Waterford Training Hub (an online portal with in-depth training courses and quick-tip videos and guides available anytime, anywhere at a self-guided pace), comprehensive course offerings, and family workshops
Implementation Considerations	*Strengths* • Curriculum/program supports individualized instruction to give each student a unique learning experience tailored to his or her own skill level and pace. *Challenges* • Curriculum/program does not have in-person component for staff to scaffold children's learning and evaluate progress.

WILSON FUNDATIONS

Program Description	Wilson Fundations is a prevention and early intervention program that can easily be adapted for afterschool. It is a supplemental program that addresses basic skills including print knowledge, alphabet awareness, phonological and phonemic awareness skills, decoding, encoding, and vocabulary. Students can enter the program at various grade and ability levels. The program is multisensory and focuses on hands-on learning with active participation by students. Instructional materials include a CD-ROM for teacher training, a manual describing activities, and a specific daily curriculum. A Home Support Pack, available in both English and Spanish, is also a key component of the curriculum. It is related to the Wilson Reading System® (see next table).
Target Literacy Areas	☑ Language ☑ Foundational Skills ☑ Comprehension ☐ Writing
Website	www.wilsonlanguage.com/programs/fundations
Target Grades	K–3
Developer and Year	Wilson Language Training 2002; second edition 2012
Cost	Fundations Classroom Set Level K (Teacher's Kit + Materials for 20 students): $1,059 Fundations Classroom Set Level 1 (Teacher's Kit + Materials for 20 students): $1,325 Fundations Classroom Set Level 2 (Teacher's Kit + Materials for 20 students): $1,379 Fundations Classroom Set Level 3 (Teacher's Kit + Materials for 20 students): $1,339 Fundations Multilevel Kit K–2 (Teacher Materials): $949
Evidence Base	Since the publication of Fundations®, several impact and efficacy studies of thousands of kindergarten and first-grade students have been performed in schools across the United States.
Impact	Studies showed that students using the program achieve greater gains in foundational literacy skills compared to students using programs previously implemented by the schools. These results held with English language learners (ELL) as well.
Staff Training & Qualifications	Teaching experience is not required to implement Fundations, although the instructor should have some experience with the K-3 age group. Familiarity with explicit, multisensory language instruction and the materials are important factors for teachers' and non-teachers' success. Professional learning opportunities include workshops, training and implementation support from accredited partners, and Wilson events.
Implementation Considerations	*Strengths* • Materials are varied and are simultaneously accessible for many learners and a variety of learning styles. • Students are actively involved and engaged with the learning process. • Meets the needs of diverse learners. *Challenges* • Materials are difficult to track and store due to volume or size or materials. • Evaluation research used weaker design methodology (i.e., not randomized controlled trial), is dated, or was done on a different version of the curriculum than is currently available. • Can be difficult for students who attend sporadically or enter during the middle of the year to keep up.

ZOO-PHONICS MULTISENSORY LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM

Program Description	This school-based curriculum has been adapted for afterschool settings. Zoo-phonics takes a multi-modal approach (using eyes, ears, mouth and body) to teach children how to read, write and spell. The curriculum is targeted toward toddlers through the first grade but can be used as a remedial methodology for upper grades as well. Using animals drawn in the shape of the lowercase letters, Zoo-phonics turns a very abstract, symbolic process into a playful, concrete and memorable process. Curriculum materials include an easy-to-use CD-ROM, various games, mini books and readers, music, stories, art support (how to draw animals), vowel plush puppets, flash cars, and a video with body movements.
Target Literacy Areas	☑ Language ☑ Foundational Skills ☐ Comprehension ☐ Writing
Website	www.zoo-phonics.com
Target Grades	Toddler – Grade 1
Developer and Year	Zoo-phonics 1984
Cost	Preschool Zoo-per (includes Preschool Kit): $599.95 - $649.95 Kindergarten Zoo-per (includes Kindergarten Kit): $699.95 First Grade Zoo-per (includes First Grade Kit): $699.95 ELL Kit: $419.95
Evidence Base	Several studies have been done examining the effects of Zoo-phonics using pre-/post-designs with children toddler-aged through Grade 1.
Impact	Studies have found gains in skills such as alphabet knowledge, fluency, comprehension skills, and written language skills.
Staff Training & Qualifications	Zoo-phonics can be delivered by anyone. For example, in an afterschool setting, Zoo-phonics has been implemented by teacher's aides. Professional development is available in the form of workshops.
Implementation Considerations	*Strengths* • Curriculum/program meets the needs of diverse learners. • Materials are varied and are simultaneously accessible for many learners and a variety of learning styles. • Students are actively involved and engaged with the learning process. *Challenges* • Curriculum/program focuses on a limited sub-set of reading skills. • Evaluation research used weaker design methodology (i.e., not randomized controlled trial), is dated, or was done on a different version of the curriculum than is currently available. • The latest version of the curriculum is dated.

APPENDIX A:
Methods

Drawing from effective early literacy programs, the science of reading development, and the latest advances in implementation science, this overview and practice guide presents information to support early literacy instruction that can be used in afterschool programs. The rigorous process of reviewing the latest research and expert guidance in the field is outlined below for each section of the practice guide and overview.

Section I: Literacy Skill Development Progressions

The science of reading development has identified several key skills that are predictive of later reading success. Seminal reports such as *Developing Early Literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel* [27] and the *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read* [28] as well as the *Common Core Standards* have identified foundational early literacy skills such as:

> Language

> Foundational skills

> Literature and informational texts

> Writing

Great work has been done in the field to define developmental progressions outlining how these skills evolve from early childhood through the early elementary school years. Most states have early learning standards focused on the period of child development before age 5. The state of Arkansas recently completed a revision of their child development and early learning standards and this document represents the culmination of the latest advances in reading research for the early childhood period.[29] In addition, most states either use The Common Core State Standards or have state standards, which are a set of high-quality academic standards that outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade.[30] For the purposes of this document, progressions were creating by combining and adapting standards from the Language Development and Emergent Literacy domains of the Arkansas Child Development and Early Learning Standards and the English Language Arts standards from the Common Core.

Section II: Features of Effective Literacy Programs

Several sources were reviewed in identifying features of effective literacy programs including major meta-analyses of afterschool programs, the *Afterschool Training Toolkit* put forth by the National Center for Quality Afterschool, high-quality literacy curricula, and peer-reviewed journal articles. In addition, some of the interventions listed in the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) Literacy Database are general teaching strategies rather than published curricula (e.g., dialogic reading, phonological awareness training) and were also included in this section.

Section III: Overview of Evidence-Based Curricula and Programs

Curricula and programs were identified by using two primary databases: the Institute of Educational Sciences' WWC Literacy Database and *The Consumers Guide to Afterschool Literacy Resources,* an initiative of the Program in Education, Afterschool and Resiliency (PEAR) at Harvard University and the Southwest Education Development Laboratory's (SEDL) National Center for Quality Afterschool. The current overview sought to combine relevant curricula and programs from both sources into a single comprehensive list and draw on the strengths of each database. The WWC database, although not focused specifically on afterschool, has many programs that could be adapted to afterschool settings and provides authoritative information on the rigor of evaluations studies used to demonstrate particular programs' effectiveness. *The Consumers Guide to Afterschool Literacy Resources* was developed specifically for afterschool practitioners and has a greater emphasis on practical considerations for implementation and includes detailed reviews by content experts and expert practitioners. In addition to combining resources from these two databases into one source, the current guide provides a much-needed update to curricula information (e.g., updated editions,

prices) as the *Consumer's Guide* was released in 2007 and WWC reports range from 2006 to 2013.

Each curriculum/program listed in WWC and the *Consumer's Guide* was evaluated for the following inclusion criteria:

- Must be a supplemental reading program (as opposed to core curriculum) to be appropriate for afterschool settings
- Must take 30 minutes or less per day to implement
- Must be appropriate for more than one grade level to accommodate the diverse ages in afterschool programs
- Must be commercially available

One additional curriculum, the *Teen Trendsetters™* literacy program, was added as it also met the selection criteria. The resulting 17 curricula/programs are presented in Section III with relevant information that will guide programs' decisions in selecting a curriculum or program that meets the needs of their program. Information presented in the tables was adapted from the WWC, *Consumer's Guide*, and publishers' websites.

Each curriculum/program is presented in Section III in a table which includes:

- a description of the curriculum/program,
- a website where practitioners can access additional information,
- the target literacy areas addressed in the curriculum/program,
- target grades,
- the developer and year,
- cost,

- information about relevant research evaluations including a brief description of the types of studies done (evidence base) and results (impact),

- staff training and qualifications needed for implementation, and

- implementation considerations including strengths and challenges of the curriculum/program.

For the implementation considerations, a standardized set of criteria for strengths and challenges was developed by reviewing information from the WWC, *Consumer's Guide*, and publishers' websites. Challenges and strengths listed across these sources were compiled and synthesized into a manageable and relevant list. Each curriculum or program was then compared against this list and specific strengths and challenges were identified for each one. The set of implementation considerations included:

> **Strengths:**

- Curriculum/program meets the needs of diverse learners.

- Materials are well-organized and easy to use.

- Materials are varied and are simultaneously accessible for many learners and a variety of learning styles.

- Students are actively involved and engaged with the learning process.

- Curriculum/program helps build other cognitive and social–emotional skills.

- Curriculum/program supports individualized instruction to give each student a unique learning experience tailored to his or her own skill level and pace.

> **Challenges:**

- Curriculum/program does not have in-person component for staff to scaffold children's learning and evaluate progress.

- Materials are difficult to track and store due to volume or size of materials.

- Curriculum/program has limited material for varying reading capabilities.

- Curriculum/program focuses on a limited sub-set of reading skills.

- Evaluation research used weaker design methodology (i.e., not randomized controlled trial), is dated, or was conducted on a different version of the curriculum than is currently available.

- Can be difficult for students who attend sporadically or enter during the middle of the year to keep up.

- The latest version of the curriculum is dated.

APPENDIX B:
Detailed Progressions

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Appendix B provides more specific progressions presented in the figures below on the early literacy development for the five areas and subskills outlined in Section II. For each subskill strand, there is a progression of expectations for what children typically should know and be able to do at different ages. Each step in the progression is called an indicator, which outlines the knowledge or skill that one would expect to see in a child related to that subskill within a specific age range. For example, if the indicator, *"Recognize and name an increasing number of uppercase and lowercase letters correctly"* is found in the kindergarten age range, this skill is developing during that time and practitioners should be able to see the full mastery of this skill in most chil-

dren by the end of the age range. It is important to note that because typical child development and learning varies widely from child to child and some skills take some time to develop, many indicators span multiple age ranges. For example, when an indicator spans the Grade 1 and Grade 2 age ranges, this means the skills will be developing and observed for most children somewhere between ages 7 and 8. Sometimes indicators contain multiple steps of development such as the skill of perspective-taking: *"Show increasing awareness of perspective by identifying who is telling a story (Grade 1); speaking in different voices for different characters (Grade 2); and distinguishing their own point of view from those of the narrator, characters, or author (Grade 3)."*

LANGUAGE

1.1 Engaging in conversations with others

Prekindergarten	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Engage in social rules of conversation (e.g., listen quietly, take turns speaking, do not interrupt)		Follow agreed-upon rules for small- and large-group discussions (e.g., pay attention when others are talking, raise hand when wants to speak)		
Continue a conversation through multiple back-and-forth exchanges (e.g., ask and respond to questions)		Extend conversations by building on others' ideas, making connections to others' comments, and asking related, on-topic questions		
Ask questions when needs help or when does not understand something		Use questions to gather information, make connections to prior knowledge, and check for understanding		

LANGUAGE

1.2 Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

Prekindergarten	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3

Make real-world connections to new words (e.g., note places at home that are cozy; describe foods that are *spicy* or *juicy*)

Use new words and phrases learned through conversations, reading, and being read to

Use increasingly complex and varied vocabulary words to express needs and describe objects, relationships between objects, emotions, and actions

Use other words in a sentence to figure out the meaning of an unknown word

Sort words into categories (e.g., shapes, foods) to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent

Use categories and key attributes to define words (e.g., a *duck* is a bird that swims)

Use glossaries and beginning dictionaries (print and digital) to determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases

Demonstrate understanding of common pairs of opposites (e.g., *wet/dry; high/low*)

Distinguish differences between closely related words including verbs (e.g., *walk, march, strut, prance*; Kindergarten), adjectives (e.g., *thin, skinny, slender*; Grade 1), states of mind (e.g., *knew, believed, suspected, wondered*; Grade 3)

Use common word beginnings and endings (e.g., *-ed, -s, re-, un-, pre-, -ful, -less*) as clues to learning new words

Use a variety of word parts such as **prefixes**, **suffixes**, and **roots** as clues to learn new words

Recognize that some words have more than one meaning (e.g., *bark* of a tree; dogs *bark*)

Distinguish between **literal** and **nonliteral** meanings of words and phrases in context

Make word choices that are precise and reflect content knowledge (e.g., specific social studies, science, math terms)

Prefix: word part that is added to the beginning of a word to change its meaning (e.g., *un-, re-, dis-, mis-*)
Suffix: word part that is added to the end of a word to change its meaning (e.g., *-ly, -y, -less, -ful*)
Root: basic meaning of a word before a prefix or suffix is added (e.g., *connect [disconnect]; fear [fearless]; view [review]*)
Literal: the dictionary meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., the building was on *fire*)
Nonliteral: language that goes beyond the dictionary meaning (e.g., after the race her lungs were on *fire*)

LANGUAGE

1.3 Showing knowledge of the rules of spoken and written language

Prekindergarten	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Print an increasing number of upper- and lowercase letters; begin to separate strings of letters (or letter-like forms) with spaces				
	Show increasing knowledge of correct use of capitalization (K–Grade 3), end punctuation and commas (Grades 1–3), and apostrophes (Grades 2–3)			
Use frequently occurring **nouns**, **verbs**, and **prepositions**		Use frequently occurring **pronouns**, **conjunctions**, **adjectives**, and **adverbs**		
Show increasing ability to form regular plural **nouns** and match subject nouns and verbs in sentences (e.g., *He hops/We hop; The horse runs/The horses run*)			Form and use irregular plural **nouns** and irregular **verbs**	
Use early invented spelling (writes initial and/or final sounds to represent whole word; e.g., writes MK for milk)				Explain the function of nouns, **pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs,** and **conjunctions** in general and their functions in particular sentences
	Spell simple words by sounding them out, drawing on knowledge of sound-letter relations			
		Understand the basic rules of spelling (e.g., alternative spellings, silent consonants), recognize irregularly-spelled words, and generalize about spelling and exceptions to the rules		
			Consult reference materials including beginning dictionaries, as needed to check and correct spellings	
			Compare **formal** and **informal language**	
				Choose specific words and phrases for effect

Noun: person, place or thing; regular plural nouns are formed by adding –s or –es (e.g., dogs, wishes); irregular plural nouns do not follow this pattern (e.g., mice, fish, teeth)
Pronoun: word or phrase that may be substituted for a noun (e.g., I, you, she, it, everything, myself)
Verb: action word; regular verbs follow the pattern of adding –s for present tense, -ed for past tense, and will for future tense (e.g., jumps, jumped, will jump); irregular verbs do not follow this pattern (e.g., sit/sat; bring/brought; tell/told)
Preposition: word expressing a relationship between nouns or pronouns (e.g., to, from, in, out, on, off, for, of, by, with, during, beyond, toward)
Conjunction: word used to connect words, phrases, parts of sentences, or sentences (e.g., and, nor, but, or, yet, so)
Adjective: word describing a noun or pronoun (e.g., lovely, green, happy)
Adverb: word describing how or when an action takes place (e.g., late, yesterday, next, quietly, slowly, grumpily)
Formal language: more serious style of writing or speaking commonly used in research reports, business letters, and talking to people one does not know well
Informal language: used when speaking to friends and family or writing e-mails, notes, and letters to people one knows well.

LANGUAGE

1.4 Presenting information and expressing self clearly

Prekindergarten	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Communicate clearly enough to be understood by most people and will usually only mispronounce new and/or unusual words		Speak clearly, at an understandable pace, and communicate in complete sentences when appropriate to the situation		
Tell a story and describe people, places, things, and events with increasing detail and clarity of expression			Tell a story, recount an experience, and report on a topic with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details	
			Identify main ideas and supporting details from a text read aloud or other information presented orally	

FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

2.1 Understanding the rules of how print is organized

Prekindergarten	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Demonstrate understanding that print carries a message and can represent spoken language	Show knowledge that words are made of letters, letters make sounds, and printed words are separated by spaces	Recognize features of a sentence (e.g., first word, capitalization, ending punctuation)		
Show increasing ability to track print left-to-right, top-to-bottom, page-by-page				
Recognize and name an increasing number of uppercase and lowercase letters correctly				

FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

2.2 Noticing and manipulating the sounds of language

Prekindergarten	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Imitation and enjoyment of rhyme and **alliteration**				
Identify separate words in sentences				
Decide whether two words rhyme with increasing ability to produce rhyming words →				
Show awareness that some words begin with the same sound with increasing ability to isolate an initial sound →				
Blend, **segment**, and in Kindergarten **delete** parts of spoken compound words →				
Count, blend, segment, and in Kindergarten **delete syllables** in spoken words →				
	Blend and **segment onsets and rimes** of spoken single-syllable words			
	Blend and segment individual sounds (**phonemes**) in increasingly complex spoken one-syllable words →			
		Delete and substitute individual sounds from increasingly complex spoken words →		
		Distinguish long from short vowel sounds in spoken single-syllable words		

Alliteration: a series of words beginning with the same sound (e.g., *Phyllis Fox fixes faucets*)
Compound words: two words joined together to make a new word (e.g., *firefly, bookmark, toothbrush*)

FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

2.2 Noticing and manipulating the sounds of language (continued)

INCREASING TASK DIFFICULTY →

	Word/Compound Word	Syllable	Onset-Rime	Phoneme
Identifying	Claps once for each word in a song	Holds up two fingers when asked how many syllables are in **Milo**	Notices **Nina** and **Nathan** start with the same sound or that **cat** and **bat** end in the same way	Moves one block for each phoneme in the word **sheep** (three blocks: /sh/ /ee/ /p)
Blending	"What word do you get when you put together **rain…bow**?" (**rainbow**)	"What word do you get when you put together **ri…ver**?" (**river**)	"What word do you get when you put together **h…ope**?" (**hope**)	"What word do you get when you put together **/b/…/u/…/g/**?" (**bug**)*
Segmenting	"What smaller words are in **sunflower**?" (**sun** and **flower**)	"Say the word as you move a chip for each syllable: **im…por…tant**"	"Say the beginning or the word **bat**, then say the rest of the word (**b…at**)*	"Say the word slowly while you tap the sounds: **man**" (**/m/…/a/…/n/**) *
Deleting	"Say **cowboy.** Say it again, but don't say **boy.**" (**cow**)	"Say **pencil.** Say it again, but don't say **-cil**" (**pen**)	"Say **sit**. Say it again, but don't say **/s/**" (**it**)*	"Say **safe.** Say it again but don't say **/f/**" (**say**)*†
Substituting	"Change the **pan** in **pancake** to **cup**" (**cupcake**)	"Change the **pan** in **pancake** to **cup**" (**cupcake**)	"Change the **pan** in **pancake** to **cup**" (**cupcake**)	"Change the **/j/** in **cage** to **/n/**" (**cane**)"*†

(Left axis label: INCREASING TASK DIFFICULTY ↓)

*Simple words include one-syllable consonant-vowel-consonant patterns (e.g., *pig, sun, sad*). More complex words include words that have blends or groups of two or three letters that make one sound (e.g., *bl-, -ng, spl-*)

†It is easier to delete or substitute the beginning sound of a word (e.g., take away /b/ from *bait* to get *ate*) than it is the ending sound (e.g., take away /t/ from *bait* to get *bay*). It is most difficult to delete or substitute the middle sound (e.g., take away /n/ from *snail* to get *sail*; change the /a/ in *tan* to /i/ to get *tin*).

FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

2.3 Connecting letters with sounds and recognizing familiar words and parts of words

Prekindergarten	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Produce the correct sounds for an increasing number of letters				
Recognize familiar words (e.g., own name, names of peers, "stop" on stop sign)	Read common high-frequency words by sight (e.g., *the, of, to, you, she, my, is, are, do, does*)			
	Show increasing knowledge of common patterns for representing vowel sounds (e.g., final -e and common "vowel teams" such as *ea, _ow, ai_*) with increasing ability to distinguish long and short vowels when reading			
		Know sounds associated with common groups of letters (e.g., *sh, th, ck*) and in Grade 2 recognize that spellings may be associated with more than one sound pattern (e.g., *-ough* sounds different in *rough, dough, and though*)		
		Sound out regularly spelled one-and two-syllable words		Sound out multisyllable words
		Recognize and read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words		
			Read words with common **prefixes** and **suffixes**	

Prefix: word part that is added to the beginning of a word to change its meaning (e.g., *un-, re-, dis-, mis-*)
Suffix: word part that is added to the end of a word to change its meaning (e.g., *-ly, -y, -less, -ful*)

FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

2.4 Reading smoothly and accurately

Prekindergarten	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
	Read grade-level texts with purpose and understanding*			
		Read grade-level text orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings		
		Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary		

*emergent-reader level for Kindergarten

COMPREHENSION

3.1 Determining key ideas and details

Prekindergarten	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Retell familiar stories and discuss texts with increasing focus on key details (e.g., main topic, settings, major events, main characters, story problems, cause-and-effect relationships)			Describe characters' traits, motivations, actions, and feelings with increasing detail	
		Identify central message in a story or main topic of informational text, with increasing ability to explain how it is supported by key details in the text		
		Show increasing awareness of perspective by identifying who is telling a story (Grade 1); speaking in different voices for different characters (Grade 2); and distinguishing their own point of view from those of the narrator, characters, or author (Grade 3)		

COMPREHENSION

3.2 Using features of books and other texts to learn and gain information

Prekindergarten	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Show increasing knowledge of book features (e.g., author, illustrator, front cover, title page)		Know and use various text features (e.g., headings, tables of contents, glossaries, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in a text		
Pretend to read a book (e.g., to a doll) using illustrations as cues	Use illustrations to describe key ideas, characters, setting, or events and in Grade 1 distinguish between information provided by pictures and text		Explain how illustrations and other visuals (e.g., maps, diagrams) contribute to a text (e.g., create a mood, show steps in a procedure)	
			Refer to a specific part of a text (e.g., beginning of a story, chapter in a book, stanza in a poem, sentence or paragraph in a text) and make connections to other parts of the text	
				Use search tools (e.g., key words, hyperlinks) to efficiently locate information

COMPREHENSION

3.3 Making connections within and across texts

Prekindergarten	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Show interest in an increasing variety of types of texts (e.g., picture books, informational texts,* rhymes and poetry, illustrated biographies, folk and fairy tales)		Explain differences between books that tell stories and books that give information		
Connect texts to other books and own experiences, with prompting and support	Describe connections between individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text, with decreasing need for support and prompting		Describe connections between historical events, scientific ideas, or steps in a procedure, with increasing use of language referring to sequence and cause/effect	
	Identify similarities and differences between two texts (e.g., style of illustrations, descriptions, experiences of characters), with decreasing need for support and prompting		Compare and contrast texts (e.g., versions of the same story from different authors or cultures; key details from texts on the same topic; themes and characters in stories by the same author)	

Informational texts: non-fiction pieces that use both text and illustrations to convey meaning about the natural and social world, provide facts, and explain processes.

WRITING

4.1 Expressing opinions, presenting information, and telling stories through writing

Prekindergarten	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Understand that writing carries a message and uses scribbles, letter-like shapes, or letters to represent words or ideas				
Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to express opinions, supply information about a topic, and tell stories				
Narrate single events or several loosely linked events in the order in which they occurred		Tell increasingly complex narratives with properly sequenced events and details to describe actions, thoughts, and feelings		Use dialogue and descriptions to develop experiences, characters, and events
	Introduce the topic, book, or text they are writing about, supply facts about a topic, and state an opinion or preference about the topic or book			
		Supply reasons for opinions, use temporal words to signal order of events (e.g., *next, then, finally*), and provide some sense of closure in writing (e.g., concluding statement or section)		
			Use linking words or phrases (e.g., *because, and, also, since, for example*) and use facts and definitions to develop points in writing	
				Group related information together in writing and include illustrations when useful

WRITING

4.2 Exploring different ways to write and edit

Prekindergarten	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Write an increasing number of letters correctly and produce strings of letters and/or letter-like forms (may be in unconventional order)				
Explore different writing tools (e.g., pencils, markers, chalk)	With guidance and support, explore and use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers			
	With guidance and support, respond to questions and suggestions of peers and add details to strengthen writing as needed with increasing ability to revise, edit, and plan			
				Write over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (single sitting or a day or two)
				Write for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences

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