Detailed Description of the Orange Public Schools Science-Based Literacy Curriculum Model
Submission: February 2023

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Submission Affirmation

This Orange Public Schools waiver request is submitted with the purpose of affirming that its curriculum model is indeed scientifically and evidence-based and that it focuses on all components of an effective and comprehensive reading program. In addition, the methodologies cited by research as being effective for each component are strategically layered into the Orange Curriculum. Our district is committed to the spirit of legislation which supports efforts to ensure that all teachers rely on the science of reading (SOR) to teach all students *how* to read!

Guiding Questions

Responses to all guiding questions included on page 4 of the CSDE document entitled, Guidance Regarding the 2022 Application Requesting a Waiver of Connecticut Approved K-3 Reading Curriculum Model or program (Waiver) have been provided. Our Leadership Team has documented responses on behalf of The Orange Board of Education in the context of the literacy components outlined in our Table of Contents.

Background Information

Preparations to begin to meet legislative requirements regarding reading instruction commenced six years ago after a careful review of results from the 2015/16 Reading Foundations K-3 Teacher Knowledge Survey (TKS). The review identified areas for teacher growth regarding the teaching of reading which, in turn, led to the development of broader district plans to ameliorate student reading gaps through an Early Reading Success (ERS) Initiative supported by Title 1 & 2 Funds. The ERS initiative included developing staff, vetting evidence-based resources, and vetting learning methods (related to instruction and assessment) aligned to the science of reading (SOR). Specific bold moves aligned to ERS included:

1. Hiring and Training A Leadership Team of members who believe in SOR and consist of a:
    a. Superintendent who supports the science of reading at the highest level and who holds his team accountable for: transforming district literacy systems; curricula; shifts in instructional practices based on the science of *how* children learn to read; and professional learning opportunities that are ongoing, goal-oriented, collaborative, and context-embeded in order to make data-informed decisions that ameliorate reading achievement gaps for all groups.
    b. Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Personnel with specific training and experience regarding the implementation of effective, explicit, systematic, and comprehensive scientifically-based reading instruction methods. The Director's experiences, references, and connections to science-based research are documented in her **Curriculum Vitae** and attest to her abilities to support the Superintendent's district literacy goals.
    c. Director of Business and Operations with an educational background in the science of reading who is well versed in the resources needed to financially support schools with ERS implementation.

d. Director of Special Services who supports the tight alignment and coordinated services between and among tiers of instruction (1,2,3 and special education) and systematically ensures that members of the special education team continue to strengthen their knowledge regarding resources and instructional strategies to apply SOR to practice.
e. Principals who are instructional leaders responsible for facilitating, coaching, and supervising the implementation of practices that support SOR at their respective schools.
f. Reading consultants who coach teachers, reading aides, and paraprofessionals on science-based techniques in context, job-embedded settings.

2. Committing to One Scope and Sequence
    a. Updated and revised science-based resources such as an **Interactive Scope and Sequence of Foundational Skills** (see all tabs at the bottom of this document) are now explicit, systematic, differentiated, and layered with embedded links of science-based teaching methods and specific foundational and anchor resources, so all can access and use them. This scope and sequence:
        i. unveils the structure of the English language in a kind and fair way to novices.
        ii. includes feature sheets that outline conditions of success for every decodable story for teachers, interventionists, reading aides, and parents (all hands on deck–coordinated services and tight alignment between tiers 1,2,3 and special education).
        iii. provides model lessons and techniques for all instructional tasks (digital resources are available upon request).
        iv. is provided through differentiated small group instruction, paced according to student awareness and the necessary exposures to language features (which are student based and dependent on the student responses to instruction/intervention). Code is not taught the whole group but in small differentiated groups.
        v. respects the identity of Orange teachers, students, and their families.
        vi. represents the district's attempts to
            1. avoid challenges with purchased programs, such as
                a. costly end-of-life obstacles with technology no longer supported by a publisher–forcing a district to purchase new materials every 4-5 years. This has made it difficult for districts like ours to meet their fiduciary responsibility to their taxpayers

b. misleading and/or incorrect information that has not caught up to new findings in the field. As a result, there are errors and misconceptions. We understand there is no such thing as a perfect program. These misconceptions confuse teachers, however, and negatively impact student reading acquisition. For example:
    1. One of the approved programs refers to a concept of word book with a carrier phrase as a decodable reader.
    2. In almost all approved programs, assessments confuse levels of phoneme awareness with phoneme awareness *tasks*, which are not appropriate for novices who are not yet readers.

3. Differentiating Instruction
    a. An **instructional platform** that supports differentiated comprehensive literacy instruction (oral language, vocabulary, comprehension & word attack skills-phoneme awareness, phonics instruction, and fluency).
4. Providing Ongoing Training:
    a. Ongoing and on-site context-embedded professional learning in the area of SOR because building teacher and administrative capacity is illiteracy's best defense.
    b. Weekly opportunities for planning, practice, reflection, and facilitated discussions with grade-level peers and district reading consultants (as documented in individual school-based schedules that are available from principals upon request) in addition to district-wide English Language Arts (ELA) sessions as documented in the **Orange Public Schools Professional Learning Calendar**.
    - Opportunities for teacher training with respect to progress monitoring of student growth:
        - Tracking student progress with CSDE-approved **assessments** and district-created **progress monitoring booklets** that align to specific features from decodable stories and, as a result, are *more sensitive* to student growth (especially for children who are not meeting benchmarks with universal screens). Performance on these tools demonstrates the distance from where a student is performing on pre-requisite skills and benchmark goals. This information provides a window into understanding the rate of

learning so that calculations regarding the time needed to ameliorate or close a gap can be estimated more confidently. In summary, student progress is used to

- Inform and provide differentiated and targeted science-based instruction to either ameliorate reading achievement gaps or accelerate through the continuum of skills
- Decide the amount of time needed for instruction based on a calculated rate of learning
- Accurately and reliably measure student growth through an ever-evolving SRBI (scientifically research-based-instruction) process

As a result of extensive professional learning, our staff is becoming increasingly effective in providing, facilitating, and supervising differentiated and targeted reading instruction to more and more children (even those with greater challenges) because of several and frequent staff exposures to high-quality professional learning experiences regarding all the critical components of an effective and comprehensive literacy program. Context-embedded professional learning regarding evidence-based methods with vetted resources to implement a science-based curriculum model is making a difference. While we continue to face challenges, we continue to learn how to address these challenges.

Theoretical Frameworks

How is the curriculum model or program **evidence-based and scientifically based**? The Orange Public Schools curriculum deliberately aligns itself to three models from the SOR: **The Simple View of Reading** (SVR), **Scarborough's Groundbreaking Reading Rope Infographic,** and **Four Processing Systems That Support Word Recognition**. These models illustrate research findings regarding what scientists learned a long time ago about reading and *how* it is acquired.

Our curriculum does not rely on a three-cueing system, originally developed by Marie Clay and the Reading Recovery method to teach reading; nor the Fountas and Pinnell Leveling System, which adheres to Clay's work; nor the Calkins & Teachers College *Reading* Workshop Units of Study. When used in combination with early stages of reading development, these methods confuse students. Reasons for not relying on these resources are clearly explained in the body of reading research on how we as a species learn to read and, most recently, in communications such as the Sold a Story podcast by Emily Hanford, The Purple Challenge, and Tim Shannahan's Response to

Hanford's Publication, all of which help practitioners to understand why we teach students how to read with specific science-based practices.

How does the curriculum model **support direct, explicit instruction in all areas of reading**?

Demonstrations of how direct and explicit instruction of phoneme awareness, phonics, and fluency are supported by our curriculum model are included in the foundational skills section of this document. Sound, word, and morpheme aspects of oral language are also addressed in these areas. Explanations of vocabulary, sentence and discourse levels of oral language and reading comprehension instruction are documented in the language comprehension section of this document.

Foundational Skills Sections

How does the curriculum model **allow for high-quality, daily differentiation of foundational skills**, so all students can master them?

Foundational skills instruction is provided through small group instruction. It is differentiated by student awareness of the skills identified in the Orange Scope and Sequence or the prerequisite skills before starting the Orange sequence.

Prerequisite Skills

Prerequisite skills are aligned to criteria that must be met before any Orange student starts the decodable sequence. These include Oral Language Development; Concept of Word; Beginning Levels of Phoneme Awareness; Letter Knowledge; and the Alphabetic Principle. For clarity, specific descriptions of each include

- Oral Language Development
    - Students must speak in more than three-word utterances before starting to decode stories in the Orange Scope and Sequence (especially important to note for English learners (ELs) and Multilingual Learners (MLs);
- Concept of Word
    - Students must be aware of the acoustic bundles that represent words–knowing where words begin and end orally within a continuous speech stream when speaking and/or listening, and also recognizing where words begin and end in print (from the spaces between words);
- *Beginning* Level of Phoneme Awareness (PA)--which includes 3 specific levels. See beginning phoneme awareness development level column in the **Brady, Russo, Kurto, Levels of Phoneme Awareness Document).**

        - Level 1= Awareness of the Initial Phoneme (PA)
        - Level 2=Awareness of the Final Phoneme (PA)
        - Level 3= Awareness of the Medial Vowel (PA)
    - Students must be able to engage in tasks that demonstrate their ability to process three sounds in a one syllable word without blends before engaging with the first decodable story. Students will continue to develop advanced levels of phoneme awareness (Levels 4 & 5) but in the context of the decodable series. See tasks aligned to these levels on the Brady, Russo, Kurto link above.
- Letter Knowledge
    - Letter *name* and letter *sound* knowledge of the letters in words of the first decodables in the Orange Sequence (m,s,t, a,c,p) must be secured before starting the series. This bootstraps the *alphabetic principle* and increases letter sound knowledge in the context of subsequent stories that are cumulative (meaning that what is introduced in a story is then "fair game" in subsequent stories) in order to generalize and practice concepts in novel and connected text;
    - The letter names only (not sounds) of the HFWs of the first two decodable stories in the Orange Sequence (me, to, come)-these are learned through symbol imagery techniques learned from Lindamood Bell (LMB)
- Alphabetic Principle
    - Understanding that a letter or groups of letters stand for sounds in spoken words. Students who duly learn all letter names and sounds but who do not understand the alphabetic principle will struggle with word recognition. In Orange, we prefer to teach the alphabetic principle before all letter name and sound knowledge is complete to make the word attack process in reading meaningful for student buy-in. Students learn letters and their sounds in context (once bootstrapped) as they move through the sequence.

To achieve mastery for all students, instruction is provided through coordinated tiered services coupled with varying degrees of independent and/or facilitated practice opportunities during a reading block (when not with the teacher). Tier 1 small group instruction (is provided by the classroom teacher to all students), and if needed, Tiers 2, 3, and special education instruction are provided by trained reading practitioners for additional time needed to ameliorate student gaps.

I. Phoneme Awareness

How does the curriculum model support **direct, explicit instruction of *phoneme awareness (PA)***?

Phoneme awareness (PA) assessment and explicit instruction start in Kindergarten. This instruction is differentiated, provided through small group instruction, monitored, and aligned to levels of PA that require student instruction based on the Brady PA Assessment (embedded in this sample **Beginning Assessments Document**). We have learned that assessing PA with this assessment provides instructors with quick, accurate information regarding each student's zone of proximal PA development. As a result, it informs where to begin PA instruction. PA is developed until **advanced levels** are achieved. Students who achieve beginning levels of PA are bootstrapped and ready to begin the "learning how to read" continuum/path. Advanced levels of PA are developed in the context of the scope and sequence. Important to note is that PA is taught to automaticity and is revisited to anchor increasingly difficult and/or new code patterns prior to phonics lessons with new features.

The following tasks/games support PA instruction and development in the Orange Curriculum Model.

What's My Word? (which addresses an important part of blending sounds in spoken words.

Say-It-And Move-It addresses isolating and pronouncing the initial, medial vowel, and final sounds (phonemes) in three-phoneme (consonant-vowel-consonant, or CVC) words at the beginning levels and then segmenting with complex blends. This high-leverage and vetted technique was used in Benita A. Blachman's investigations of reading intervention and patterns of brain activation in young readers and was widely cited in the National Reading Panel Report (2000) that helped to establish an evidence-based model for early reading intervention.

The feature sheet of every single decodable story in our continuum provides an example of how to play these games. See one sample **here**. These feature sheets increase in complexity as students move through the sequence.

Note: Several practitioners and programs (including those on the CSDE list of approved programs) confuse ***levels*** of phoneme awareness with phoneme awareness ***tasks***. In addition, much of the Kindergarten year is spent on rhyming instruction (part of *phonological sensitivity*), which is not a precursor to the actual ***development*** of PA and

one reason why tasks such as those in curricula aligned to the Heggerty program or those like it, for example, may not represent best instructional choices, especially for students who are already behind. Focusing on phonological sensitivity lengthens the time it takes to close an achievement gap. Download the IDA Conference Session entitled: Focus on Phoneme Awareness in Kindergarten: Why and How, then listen to Dr. Susan Brady explain how faulty but understandable assumptions regarding rhyming as a precursor to PA development were reasoned during the **17:27-19:04** segment of the presentation.

How does the curriculum model support frequent **opportunities for students to practice phoneme awareness**?

Once students meet prerequisite skills (development of beginning phoneme awareness through tasks that develop initial, then final, then medial sounds of one-syllable words without blends), PA tasks can be created to align with the oral parts of *word work* aligned to code instruction (phonics) from decodable lessons. PA tasks are available until students develop full phoneme awareness. Opportunities to play *What's My Word?* and Say-It-And Move-It prior to the phonics part of a lesson, with any word that poses a challenge in decodable text, for example, are always available. When phonics is linked to PA, challenging words identified from a "cold read" of a decodable story (the first time the story is seen and before students engage in their small group instruction), conditions for effective instruction and student achievement are increased. In other words, this practice, embedded in the curriculum model, guarantees to identify conditions for student success regarding the achievement of full phoneme awareness, despite possible and varying degrees of **dyslexia** and/or varying degrees of word recognition challenges. Opportunities to engage in error handling *during word work* provide relevant and timely feedback regarding the processing and articulatory misconceptions with specific sounds in words on a daily basis and as needed. Daily descriptive feedback resolves PA challenges and supports PA development in context while simultaneously developing meaning–oral language at the sound, word, and morpheme levels.

II. Phonics

How does the curriculum model support **direct, explicit instruction of *phonics***?

Phonics elements highlighted in decodable stories are identified on summary feature sheets. These sheets identify conditions for success with stories and provide teachers, students, and their parents, with the word attack features for lessons. These elements

are also designed to link to foundational PA games (referenced above) and to support our goal of teaching students to understand how print (code) maps onto speech (PA) **orthographic mapping**. Providing plenty of practice with orthographic mapping leads to efficient and accurate word reading on "sight." Students who engage with tasks that develop symbol imagery solidify their receptive word recognition skills (decoding/reading) and expressive word production skills (encoding/spelling).

Symbol Imagery
Symbol Imagery is taught through "Picturing" tasks/games (techniques learned from Lindamood Bell (LMB)) and layered into *our* series instead of purchasing a whole LMB Program with a different sequence (which would confuse students). These games address imagery methodology or visualization of symbols–writing graphemes for phonemes using a **sound/spelling map**. "Gems," or items representing sounds, are used to model direct, explicit phonics instruction. Students may also "table" and/or air write as modeled in the **video** (go to 1:16 of the video for this particular routine (What's My Word? & Say-It-and-Move-It are demonstrated prior to the table writing). **Symbol Imagery with High-Frequency Words (HFW)** sample is also included.

How does the curriculum model support frequent **opportunities for students to practice specific *phonics*** features?

Phonics skills are not only taught explicitly but *systematically and cumulatively* with increasing difficulty and in a specific sequence (new skills practiced and applied in the connected text that provides additional opportunities to revisit, solidify, and continue to practice previously taught features in a novel and new decodable story). See code lesson specifics on the left side of this Kindergarten **sample**. Instructional routines stay the same–the features change and increase in complexity.

III. Fluency

How does the curriculum model support **direct, explicit instruction of *fluency***?

Once students are *accurate* with words in isolation and *after* they have had an opportunity to apply new learning in novel connected text with scaffolded support such as error handling (descriptive feedback in the form of positive reinforcement with accurate word parts and questioning to accuracy the incorrect parts) teachers/Interventionists engage in scientifically-based instructional practices regarding fluency. These include

1. Modeling reading at an appropriate rate and with prosody.

2. Students “catch” the instructor and read with her/him during a choral read.
3. Engaging in repeated readings (rereading for different purposes that check aspects of vocabulary, background information, and comprehension—-text-dependent questions). All fluency instruction incorporates comprehension to avoid word calling.
4. Collecting, after repeated readings, a “hot score” (not speed reading) and comparing it to a student’s “cold” score of a story.
5. Graphing scores (Video Game Principle to increase student engagement) and awareness of growth associated with perseverance and practice (habit of mind related to learning) to increase confidence.

How does the curriculum model support frequent **opportunities for students to practice *fluency***?

6. Opportunities for repeated reading sessions are available with all stories that are not fluently read (accurately, automatically, and with prosody) by students for different grade levels. Fluency is listed as a lesson component section within a list of instructional practices. Depending on student responses to instruction, the teacher/interventionist may add additional fluency practice as needed with stories:
    a. For K-2: decodable stories
    b. For 3-5:
        i. decodable stories as needed
        ii. Grade level text
        iii. Read Naturally passages
        iv. DIBELS Progress Monitoring Passages

Language Comprehension Section

The development of language comprehension includes the development of

- Oral Language (at the sentence and discourse levels)
- Background Knowledge (facts, concepts, story grammar . . .)
- Vocabulary Knowledge (at the word level–breadth, precision, links to other words)
- Language Structures (syntax, verb tenses, noun systems, complex clause formations, semantics . . .)
- Verbal Reasoning (inferencing)
- Literacy Knowledge (print concepts, genres, story grammar)

In the sections below we will share how our literacy curricula specifically and explicitly develop oral language and reading comprehension.

I. Oral Language

How does the curriculum model support **direct, explicit instruction of *oral language development***?

The curriculum model provides opportunities to develop **discourse** (beyond the sentence level) on a continuum of skills which develop from conversational and *contextualized* oral language skills to *decontextualized* and literate oral language skills. The curriculum model relies on the direct and explicit teaching of macrostructure (story grammar), and microstructure (the actual words used to communicate):

- Story grammar, or story elements (macrostructure) for conversations and/or literature include **stages of narrative development:**
    - Stage 1: The Descriptive Sequence
    - Stage 2: The Action Sequence
    - Stage 3: The Reactive Sequence
    - Stage 4: The Abbreviated Episode
    - Stage 5: The Complete Episode
    - Stage 6: The Complex Episode
    - Stage 7: The Interactive Episode
- Microstructure, the actual words used to cohesively and expressively retell and/or summarize (in speaking) the elements of narratives (at students' stages of narrative development) and/or information texts from listening and/or reading.
- **information text structures** and how they are related/connected to narrative structures:
    - Descriptive
    - List
    - Sequence
    - Compare and Contrast
    - Cause and Effect
    - Problem/Solution

Instruction is explicitly provided via discussions during and after:

- Read-alouds (receptively listening to):
    - complex text

    - text that represents cultural diversity (children, families from different cultures represented through positive lenses)
- Stories from small group code lessons. See a Kindergarten **sample**

Teaching story grammar with icons (See **Slides** from a Professional Learning Session):

- makes the abstract concrete (explicit)
- builds background knowledge regarding linguistic supports to access content from rigorous listening and speaking standards

How does the curriculum model support frequent **opportunities for students to practice *oral language development*?**

Retell opportunities with feedback are available for all stories read in small groups- **A sample of oral language opportunities**. Oral language development is part of our day-to-day lesson/ instruction checklist.

How does the curriculum model provide for structured discussions that address grade-level speaking and listening standards?

As noted in the curriculum mapping section of this document, all standards were unpacked into content and skills. As a result, agreed-upon rules from comprehension and collaboration standards were also unpacked and are currently supported in the curriculum model with student awareness of pragmatics, and tools from Mindwings, in addition to district-developed protocols per grade level. The particular strategies included in the resource Six-Second Stories (Facilitating Relationships) from Mindwings are also available for those students who cannot converse and/or cannot engage in conversations with multiple exchanges.

Presentation of knowledge and ideas, or expressing clearly, describing, retelling . . . while using coherent sentences, speaking clearly and at an understandable pace, are all supported by explicit instruction with Mindwings tools and methodologies as well as plenty of opportunities for oral rehearsals with peers during whole group and small group instruction.

II. Reading Comprehension

How does the curriculum model support **direct, explicit instruction of *reading comprehension***?

The curriculum model supports direct, explicit reading comprehension instruction by establishing purposes for reading, modeling how an expert reader makes meaning, and relying on close reading techniques. The close reading strategy is used in conjunction with Mindwing story grammar methodologies, tools (graphic organizers, manipulatives), and increasingly complex literary and information texts in the context of a gradual release model. The **critical thinking triangle** is a tool that especially supports explicit inference instruction. Methodologies learned from LMB regarding concept imagery, and the internalization of structure words are also layered in as needed.

In addition, direct comprehension instruction is related to aspects of qualitative text complexity for each grade level, linked to stages of narrative development, identified and explained in the oral language section of this document. This instruction also relies on explicit vocabulary teaching methodologies proposed by Beck and McKeown and supported by Shanahan. These are available upon request but briefly provide multiple exposures to word learning in meaningful and engaging contexts with read-alouds, anchor texts, and selections chosen for small reading groups. Lessons incorporate student-friendly definitions shared at the moment a pre-selected tier 2 word is encountered with students in a read-aloud, for example, followed up by snapshots that encompass the essence of word meanings, scenarios, and charting of the number of times selected words are heard in different contexts in and out of school.

How does the curriculum model support frequent **opportunities for students to practice *reading comprehension***?

The curriculum model provides several opportunities for students to apply what they are learning to new texts. These opportunities are provided during and after every read-aloud (collaboratively), during the retell parts of lessons (K-3 and summaries 4-5) provided through differentiated small group instruction and during book club discussions.

How does the curriculum model provide for varied means of accessing content?

The curriculum model provides several opportunities to engage with tasks that provide five basic access points to comprehend text on a regular basis. These access points intentionally build bridges between readers and text (Frey and Fisher). They include

1. Modeling how an expert reader makes meaning
2. Providing close reading and scaffolded instruction to guide students through complex text
3. Creating opportunities for collaborative conversations/discourse with peers to refine understanding
4. Moving students forward through independent reading of increasingly complex texts
5. Using formative assessments to know what students know and have yet to know in order to support students effectively and at their zones of proximal development (Vygotsky)

How does the curriculum provide opportunities to demonstrate learning to meet the diverse needs of all students working above or below grade level?

All students are exposed to grade-level complex text. Just-right scaffolded instruction, however, is provided in varying degrees and is related to students' abilities to transfer the cognitive and meta-cognitive responsibilities of comprehending. The three interrelated aspects of determining text complexity: quantitative complexity (readability of text selections); qualitative complexity (concepts, background knowledge, knowledge demands, dialogue, language conventionality . . .); consideration of the individual students; and the tasks selected for instruction; as noted in the CCS are all used to meet student needs.

Digital resources such as Learning Ally, Newsela, and others, provide grade-level and above-grade-level access to students working below grade level and even higher levels of text complexity to those already able to access more complex text. Resources like Newsela also provide MLs/ELs who know how to read in their native languages but whose English level proficiencies are at lower levels opportunities to access grade-level content in L1 and read English translations at different lexile levels.

Also, as shared earlier, students' awareness and demonstration of PA, code, and fluency skills dictate the stories on the continuum of foundational skills to be selected as starting points for instruction. As noted in our data, 7% of all kindergarten students were aware of the Alphabetic Principle, as demonstrated on their NWF (WRC), so they were tested on features aligned to decodables and started their instruction further along on

the continuum, some in the typical first-grade decodables, even though they are kindergarteners.

Curriculum Mapping

How does the curriculum model comprehensively address Connecticut Core Standards for English Language Arts through both explicit instruction and authentic application?

Under the in-person, on-site guidance from Dr. Heidi Hayes Jacobs and Dr. Marie Alcock, all Orange teachers worked in grade-level teams to create curriculum maps. This process commenced with all grade-level teachers bundling all Connecticut Core **Standards** for English Language Arts (ELA) into our very own grade-level units of study. All standards were unpacked into content and skills (learning targets), converted to explicit student-facing *I can* statements, and available for all to view on our digital curriculum mapping platform: Rubicon Atlas. There was no "cherry-picking" of standards. Our curriculum addresses in

1. Stage 1: *All* standards bundled for different units (with unpacked content and skills, essential questions, unit vocabulary, and learning strategies)
2. Stage 2: Assessment evidence of
    a. curriculum (answering unit essential questions)
    b. standards (w/2.0, 3.0, 4.0 tasks/items)
    c. student engagement (from interactions with learning plans
3. Stage 3: Evidence-based instructional choices linked to the learning targets identified in stage one.

By the end of each year, our intended curriculum guarantees that all standards are taught and assessed. Since all teachers are involved in the curriculum mapping process instead of just a select few or a few authors of a purchased program, all Orange teachers know their grade-level standards and those for the grade levels prior to, or right after, in-depth with opportunities to become aware of vertical articulation and redundancy K-6.

This process provides Orange teachers with the knowledge to confidently cut practices and resources based on who is in front of them, unlike the challenges of a comprehensive purchased program where teachers could mistakenly use and read through all scripts of every resource, with every student, whether a student needs that resource or not. Scripts are helpful to start for novice teachers or teachers learning a new practice, but blindly following all directions without paying attention to "who" in front

of a teacher is problematic and often happens with purchased programs. For example, when teachers are asked to follow a program with fidelity, they engage in every task regardless of who is in front of them and, as a result, only expose students to the standards in approximately three units instead of 6-7, which creates new gaps because standards in units not "covered" are never taught. Rather than using a resource with fidelity, we aspire to use it with *integrity*.

What sets our process apart from other curriculum frameworks and what makes sense to us is that we pay attention to differences between the "intended" curriculum and the "operational" curriculum–or what *actually* happens with "who is in front of us" any given year. This was especially helpful during the COVID years since we were able to identify anticipated gaps by comparing what we meant to teach (our intended "cunning plan") with what we *actually* taught (due to COVID-related constraints such as absences, quarantines, safety protocols . . .) as documented on our *teacher maps* (operational curriculum) and what was actually learned by students (from unpacking student work). No other curriculum mapping process does this, and none of the recommended CSDE programs can currently do this. Teacher "Birds-Eye View Maps" (BEVs) support targeted day-by-day responsive unit lesson planning.

As a result, we can guarantee that all standards are taught (Stage 1 of Curriculum Map) and assessed (Stage 2 of Curriculum Map) at specific times of the year (in our scope and sequence), and revisited for those who need more time, as noted on performance regarding standards-based grading of unit targets.

In Orange, we rely on proficiency scales (to provide evidence of target attainment at 1.0, 2.0, 3.0, and 4.0 levels) for authentic standards-based grading instead of relying on the 100 pt. scale (which penalizes students for learning by averaging scores). In addition, we prioritize specific standards for reporting on legal documents, such as report cards. Our district emphasizes that report cards are not the only way to communicate progress with parents since these only report on a few standards and not the whole year's work. We prefer conferences, phone calls, sending home samples of day-to-day work, and face-to-face meetings (either in-person or virtually).

On a side note–several of the CSDE recommended programs provide items at 2.0 levels and 4.0 levels of performance. 3.0 items and/or tasks are rare in these programs, so this is especially problematic when deciding on whether a student meets minimum expectations for standards-especially for a legal document such as a report card. Of course, in Orange, we seek to include experiences that are above the minimum requirements of the standards for all students, but never penalize a student for not

demonstrating that performance, only holding accountable for performance at a 3.0 level.

It should also be noted that our teachers of multilingual learners (MLs)/ English Learners (ELs) integrated the Connecticut English Language Proficiency (CELP) standards into all units of our curriculum, so that all MLs/ELs would have the linguistic supports necessary to equitably *access* rigorous standards–regardless of their own English language proficiency levels.

Finally, simulations, in addition to authentic experiences based on relevant and meaningful student contexts are increasingly being layered into units. This is a work in progress.

How does the curriculum model include a wide range of authentic writing and explicit instruction in writing skills and strategies?

Process writing instruction is aligned to reading instruction and oral language development. Since the curriculum relies on exposure to a wide range of texts from several genres, students are exposed to quality writing on a daily basis.

Our curriculum model does rely on select writing resources from Calkins and Teachers College Writing Workshop, in combination with increasing district use of explicit Mindwings tools to support not only language comprehension, but written communication. We currently plan to incorporate Spivey's Writing Express focus to strengthen the academic language of student writing when teaching this expressive aspect of literacy.

How does the curriculum model represent various cultures, represent various diverse perspectives, promote cultural affirmations, model value diverse identities and diverse backgrounds?

The curriculum model pays special attention to interactions between readers and texts. With over 300,000 texts published yearly, our model curriculum relies on it's teachers (classroom and library media specialists), who know their students best, to work in grade-level teams to select texts that:

- Serve as mentor texts for modeling exemplary and quality writing
- Provide access to excellent illustrations
- Allow students to see themselves in selected texts:
    - Their religion

    - Ethnicity
    - Language
    - Culture
- Permit students to interact through the act of reading with people who have different experiences and beliefs
- Offer a balanced portrayal of gender identities and roles in terms of the depiction of the characters and what the characters do
- Interrupt gender, racial or ability stereotypes

While standards identify where consistency in the district's guaranteed and viable curriculum is required, instruction is the area where *flexibility* is necessary. As explained in the last section of this document–the curriculum mapping section, all teachers in this district were part of the curriculum mapping process. Orange teachers, who know their students and who are learning how to analyze text complexity, are best prepared to select texts for reading comprehension.

Professional Learning

All professional learning opportunities have an on-site component for practitioners to practice in context. We began our journey with:

Myths and Realities about Reading Acquisition (Through Multisensory Approaches):

- Language Comprehension
    - We embedded Concept Imagery Training and Oral Language Development here
- Word Attack
    - We embedded Foundational Skills Training and Symbol Imagery Development here

Curriculum Mapping

- We layered all learning in the organizational structure of Curriculum Maps

Habits of Mind

- We worked with Bena Kallick to layer habits of mind into our units
- We are in the process of creaing "process grading" for behaviors which are different from product standards-based grading

K-3 Assessments & Disaggregated Data

Orange Data Link

Also, see authentic sample data sheets that are used to inform instruction without student or teacher names.

- **Turkey Hill School** (THS)-Grades 1-6
- **The Peck Place School** (PPS)-Grades 1-6
- **Race Brook School (RBS)**- Grades 1-6
- **Mary L. Tracy School (MLT)**-Grades Pre-K to Kindergarten

Strategies the Orange Board of Education Shall Employ to Address Reading Gaps as Defined in C.G.S. Sec. 10-14u

According to the CSDE, “Achievement gaps shall mean the existence of a significant disparity in the academic performance of students among and between (A) racial groups, (B) ethnic groups, (C) socioeconomic groups, (D) genders, and (E) English language learners and students whose primary language is English.”

Tier one education that adheres to the principles of SOR is our FIRST line of defense in identifying and addressing all literacy gaps. In the early years, we do rely on robust tier 2, tier 3 and EL/ML coordinated services as part of general education to effectively close gaps with more learners–erring on the side of caution. When general education cannot close a gap, we can confidently say that we need the support of special education to provide the additional time needed to address clearly diagnosed areas of need. The amount of time required to close gaps is aligned to student challenges with word recognition (phoneme awareness, phonics, and fluency), language comprehension, (background knowledge, vocabulary, verbal reasoning, language structures, and literacy knowledge), or both word recognition and language comprehension.

Reading Comprehension (RC) is the product of word recognition and language comprehension.		**Word Recognnition**	
		Poor Word Recognition	**Proficient Word Recognition**
Language Comprehension Skills	**Poor Language Comprehension**	Poor Word Recognition And Poor Language Comprehension	Proficient Word Recognition And Poor Language Comprehension
	Proficient Language Comprehension	Poor Word Recognition And Proficient Language Comprehension	**Skilled Reading**

Because our instructional responses are aligned to performance on universal screens and responses to effective multisensory structured literacy instruction, we can confidently make decisions regarding instruction on a case by case basis, knowing that these students are not curricular casualties, but students who need more time to learn.

Our greatest challenge is our system's intent to provide *increased* explicit and systematic *differentiated* instruction of word recognition skills (aligned to zones of proximal development informed by evidence-based assessments and sensitive progress monitoring tools)--especially during the early grades when children are learning *how* to read. Language comprehension skills can be taught in larger groups and more easily differentiated within a larger group and not as difficult for us to address.

Our system currently consists of teams of trained specialists who work in coordination with trained classroom teachers, to support students in learning how to read, spell, comprehend, and retell. Even when tier 1 relies on the science of reading (SOR), which is characterized in our district, by 20 minute small group "hits" of tier 1 differentiated word recognition instruction during a 90 minute reading block of a class of approximately 20 students, the amount of time to learn how to orthographically map all English patterns and language features accurately and fluently in and out of text, cannot be addressed by one teacher spread across 3 years– especially when:

- students with similar needs account for more than 4 groups;
- when the students in those groups are aware of features on the lower end of a code sequence of skills continuum and have further distances to achieve to ameliorate gaps with expected performance on that continuum;
- when students in groups require varying degrees of instruction regarding duration and intensity (w/ PA, and/or Code and/or Fluency and/or all three).

Differences and weaknesses in the early grades (K-3 especially) make it difficult to provide this differentiated word recognition instruction without additional human capital. This system which can ameliorate gaps for all, preventatively qualifies, many more students for tier 2 and tier 3 instruction based on their performance with acquiring decoding and encoding skills in the early years, but we believe that this investment will provide benefits for all in the later years, especially since we are a species wired to speak, not read or write–hence our Early Reading Success Initiative. The language comprehension instruction does not currently require the human resources needed for differentiated word recognition instruction.

We have relied on ESSER funds to support human capital to support SOR. Regardless of racial, ethnic, socioeconimic and/or groups of learners whose primary language is not English, we are wrestling with the question: *What is the extent* of difficulty with word recognition that is required for the identification of dyslexia and special education services of Multilingual Learners (MLs) and non-MLs? The lack of specified performance criteria of the current dyslexia definition seriously undercuts the adequacy of the definition, essentially failing the necessary requirement to be able to categorize children with a particular learning difference such as dyslexia into those who do or do not have this particular learning difference (Brady 2019). We look forward to working with the Director of the Dyslexia Office since,

> *According to Brady (2019) "The inability to pinpoint criteria for dyslexia identification exists because of the well-documented finding that word-level reading skills fall on a continuum . . . . Consequently, the cutoff point for dyslexia is arbitrary, whether limited to a small portion of the lower end of the continuum or including a wider spectrum of students* [the 2022 CSDE Dyslexia definition does not pinpoint criteria for dyslexia identification either–rather identifies characteristics of dyslexia]. *Regardless of the cutoff choice, what is designated as dyslexia only differs in degree from less severe word-level reading difficulties. Hence many students who are assessed and found to be above the criterion are likely to be in need of the same kinds of increased explicit and systematic instruction that would benefit those who are below, presuming such remediation is available through their local educational system. Restricting access to intervention may satisfy the aim to limit school resources allocated for these purposes, but it is not the kind of equitable and adequate system one would want. The fact that word-level reading skills occur on a continuum means dyslexia, unlike other diseases such as mumps that one either has or does not have, is more like hypertension (i.e., high blood pressure)--a medically recognized condition that occurs on a blood pressure continuum. In this case,*

the high end of the blood pressure conntinuum is associated with certain medical problems; the occurrence of such health problems diminishes at less extreme levels of elevated blood pressure. The cut-off criterion for acute concerns about hypertension has shifted over the years as a result of new research results, but an important component of hypertension treatment is that blood pressure scores in a range below what is deemed as serious nonetheless are interpreted as indicators of risk and also qualify for treatment. In a similar fashion, rather than restricting reading intervention to the most impaired cases, it would be preferable to have a broad preventive framework and to target all students demonstrating weakness in word-level reading skills, with the duration and intensity of remedial instruction varying according to individual student need."

We have figured out so much, now we are down to calculating the time it takes to close particular gaps, case-by-case, for students who are currently receiving tiered support, special education, and/or English Language instruction from increasingly skilled providers. We are excited to now boost the SRBI process with after school services and transportation to all students with gaps, with funds from the ARP ESSER Innovative After School Grant.

A Note Regarding COVID Impact on Reading/Literacy Achievement and the Effects of ESSER Funds

The effects of interrupted instruction due to COVID is demonstrated in the real gaps of our current 1st, 2nd, and struggling 3-6th graders. The impacts of: wearing a mask during early reading instruction (covering articulatory properties of sounds . . .); needing to use instructional time to engage in several new hygiene for safety protocols; social distancing; student and teacher absences due to COVID related illness and quarantines . . . ; interruptions with our own professional learning; have all affected reading outcomes. As a result, securing human capital in the form of trained reading aides who *support,* not replace tier one instruction to ameliorate gaps, has been our greatest, but most costly investment. Our ESSER funds are helping us to provide additional eyeball-to-eyeball direct instruction from trained practitioners, during independent reading time, while the classroom teacher is supporting another small reading group with the same science-based resources, but in a different spot on the continuum (because the instruction is differentiated based on student needs). It is this additional student support that will help our students close their gaps along the continuum of skills that are aligned to our science-based curriculum. Time and people using science-based methodologies in coordinated efforts to teach students *how* to read is making a difference.

Ending Remarks

We have spent years of professional learning to build teacher capacity, to revise and edit an existing program, to purchase resources for specific literacy areas missing in that resource and to layer the best techniques from the leading researchers in their respective fields regarding those critical literacy components into our curriculum.

While we know that we have grown, we also recognize, from unpacking student work and observing student responses to instruction, that there is still work to do, but we are aware of this work and have designed a strategic path to address our challenges. As a result, we welcome CSDE support regarding methodologies and support systems in lieu of a program mandate.

We look forward to meeting with members responsible for evaluating our request, answering any questions, and working with members of our CSDE.

Your consideration is greatly appreciated