

various subgroups, including English language learners, special education, gifted and talented					
Suggest how to adapt materials for students with differing levels of achievement	X				
Suggest enrichment and skill reinforcement activities for extended learning	X				
Include suggestions for a variety of assessment approaches such as portfolios, journals, projects, and informal and formal tests	X				
V. Student Assessment Materials					
Are free of inappropriate or derogatory material	X				
Assessments occur throughout the unit, not just at the end	X				
Incorporate multiple forms of assessment, such as oral presentations, written reports, teacher observations, performance assessments, quizzes, and pre- and post-tests	X				
Students are provided opportunities to self-assess and reflect in their progress	X				
VI. Program Development and Implementation					
Have field test data showing positive effects on student learning	X				
Chapter layout is consistent and chapters are arranged logically	X				
Offer training and long-term follow-up for teachers	X				
VII. Representation of all Groups					
Pronouns, descriptors and illustrations of both sexes are used equally	X				
Is sensitive to all members of the protected classes; i.e., race, color, sexual orientation, color, national origin, religion, disability, sex, gender identity, age, etc.	X				
Subject matter covers a spectrum of accomplishments and contributions by all genders, races and physical conditions		X			
Nouns, adjectives, terms and illustrations are non-stereotypical and non-prejudicial	X				

Please provide other resources used to help guide you in the selection of the recommended textbook (i.e., polling of teachers from other districts, contacts with sales representatives, etc.).

- researched highly-rated literacy comprehension programs through DESE Curate and Ed Reports
- consulted with neighboring districts & conducted site visits/classroom observations
- held Teacher Interest Meetings to determine top 2 resources to pilot
- created two pilot groups for EL and Wit & Wisdom, consisting of 36 general education teachers and special educators
- scheduled monthly & quarterly meetings with both pilot groups to provide ongoing support and professional development
- conducted in district classroom observations of both pilot programs
- facilitated teacher visits to observe each pilot program
- conducted several meetings with sales representatives to explore pricing and professional development options
- surveyed students in grades K-6
- made EL and Wit & Wisdom pilot materials available to the community for viewing at the Central Administration Office
- held Teacher-led Pilot Presentations with District Leadership and both pilot groups
- surveyed pilot teachers in grades K-6

OPEN UP RESOURCES EL EDUCATION, 2017

PUBLICATION DATE: OCTOBER 2019

CURATE for K-2 Literacy holistically evaluates foundational skills for reading, within the domain of Standards Alignment. Currently, CURATE does not evaluate all of the components of foundational skills instruction. Educators are encouraged to more closely examine this strand when considering instructional materials for K-2 Literacy, using a tool such as the [EdReports Foundation Skills Review Tool](#) or the [Student Achievement Partners Foundational Skills Guidance Document](#). Both resources make clear the criteria for evidence-based foundational reading instruction.



EL Education Language Arts is a print and digital resource for grades K-5. Please see the [Open Up Resources website](#) and the publisher-provided information later in this report for product specifications. Grades reviewed: K-2

"It is high interest to kids. They see purpose in what they are doing." - Massachusetts educator

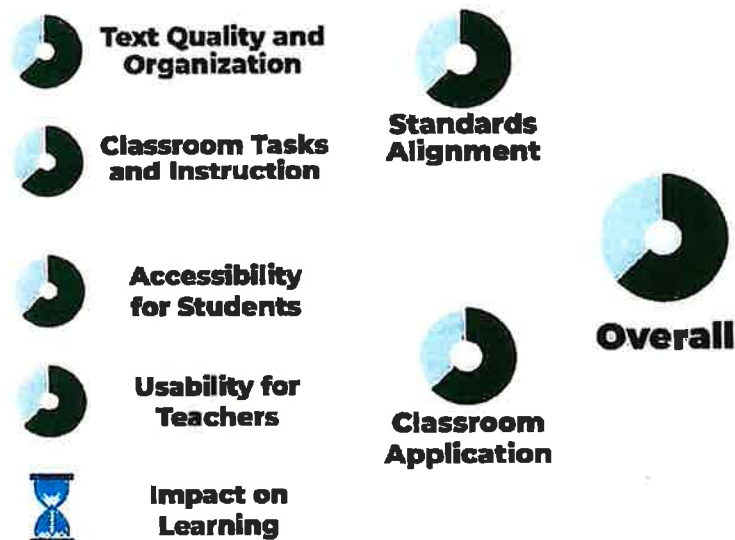
CURATE





Open Up Resources

EL Education, 2017

English Language Arts and Literacy, Grades 3-5

Publication Date: October 2019



-  **Meets Expectations** - Most or all evidence indicates high quality, little to none indicates low quality. Materials may not be perfect, but Massachusetts teachers and students would be well served and strongly supported by them
-  **Partially Meets Expectations** - Some evidence indicates high quality, while some indicates low quality. Teachers in Massachusetts would benefit from having these materials but need to supplement or adapt them substantively to serve their students well
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-  **No Rating** - Evidence is insufficient to generate a rating

CURATE

Overall

The Bottom Line

Accessibility may be a challenge in some cases, but texts, tasks, and teacher supports are strong.

Standards Alignment

Text Quality and Organization

Strengths

- High-quality texts focus on high-interest topics. For example, grade 2 texts include *Off to Class: Incredible and Unusual Schools Around the World* by Susan Hughes and *Fossils Tell of Long Ago* by Allki (EdReports).
- Of survey respondents, 100% said texts feature various types of complexity (e.g., formats, media, sentence structures, language use, levels of meaning) and 90% said texts represent a variety of genres.
- For all three grade levels K-2, EdReports awards materials full points for the indicator "Texts are organized around a topic/topics to build students' knowledge and vocabulary which will over time support and help grow students' ability to comprehend complex texts independently and proficiently."

Challenges

A book list revealed that over 75% of texts in grades K-2 have white authors.

The Bottom Line

Texts are of high quality and appropriate complexity, and they are well organized. Teachers may want to provide additional texts by authors of color.



Classroom Tasks and Instruction

Strengths

- Materials encourage frequent peer-to-peer and teacher-student discussions. In kindergarten, strategies that support discussion include Think-Pair-Share, Back-to-Back, Face-to-Face, and Pinky Partners (EdReports).
- Students engage with a range of text-based tasks, questions, and assignments. For example, grade 2 students read *Stone Girl, Bone Girl* by Laurence Anholt. After reading, they retell the story to their peers and write a response from the perspective of one of the characters.
- A Reading Foundations Skills Block provides explicit instruction on how to read, write, and analyze words. The block includes about 15 minutes of whole-group instruction and 45 minutes of differentiated, small-group instruction.
- Writing is varied and "scaffolded, so students move from drawing, to labeling, to writing. There is a balance of short writing pieces and longer writing pieces that are worked on over the span of a unit" (EdReports).

Challenges

- Opportunities for authentic application of the language standards are somewhat limited, and most grammar lessons are teacher-driven. For example, in a grade 2 lesson, "The teacher defines the word past (having to do with an earlier time; former). The teacher reminds students that a verb tells an action. The teacher explains that a past-tense verb tells an action that happened earlier, or in the past and that sometimes verbs 'do not play fair,' so they are called irregular...The teacher uses an Irregular Past-tense Verbs anchor chart. The students identify irregular past-tense verbs from the poem and list them on the chart" (EdReports).
- Though materials provide guidance for independent reading, including response sheets that students use to demonstrate comprehension (EdReports), survey respondents reported that insufficient time is allocated to independent reading, and only 40% said materials support a range and volume of both in-class and independent reading. EdReports also noted that "the instructions for Grade 1 independent reading are not explicit, teachers will need to plan for independent reading."

The Bottom Line

Texts are central to instruction, and standards for foundational skills, writing, and speaking and listening are well supported. Teachers may want to provide supplemental opportunities for Independent reading and for application of the language standards in various contexts.

Classroom Application

Accessibility for Students

Strengths

- “Students are provided with small group differentiation based on their needs. For students below level, small group differentiated instruction occurs on a daily basis. For students at or above grade level, small group differentiated instruction occurs once or twice a week” (EdReports). Each lesson also includes recommendations for how to provide different students with different levels of support.
- Materials follow the principles of Universal Design for Learning. Each module has a “Meeting Students’ Needs” section with suggestions for providing students with various means of accessing and demonstrating learning. A grade 2 example reads, “For ELLs and students who may need additional support with organizing their thinking for written expression: (Oral Processing) Invite students to orally share the stages of a plant with a partner before drawing and writing, using the pattern from the book.”
- Each lesson includes a section on supporting English learners and students from various cultures. A grade 1 example reads, “Be aware that the examples of tools during this lesson might be culturally specific. To activate all students’ prior knowledge of tools, emphasize that although the class will learn about only a few tools, there are many types of tools all over the world, and everyone uses tools.”

Challenges

- Supports for more advanced students are insufficient. While each unit includes ways to extend the unit beyond the school day, such as by asking students to “track the sun’s movement by tracing shadows with chalk outside in the same location each day,” these strategies do not provide adequate rigor to qualify as extension tasks (EdReports).
- Only 20% of survey respondents said materials help them provide appropriate accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities, and only 30% said they help differentiate instruction effectively for students below grade level. One commented that “students are only able to benefit from such curriculum if they are within ‘striking distance’ of accessing the content. Many students need much more scaffolds to be able to access this curriculum.”

- Guidance on accessibility is sometimes quite general rather than tailored to the lesson at hand. An example from grade 1 reads, “This lesson introduces students to writing and drawing routines. Consider alternative writing tools (examples: pencil grips, slant boards) and scaffolds (examples: dictation, writing prompts) that will support all students in becoming successful writers.” One survey respondent commented, “The suggested supports listed in each lesson provide some basic ideas for supporting ELL and other learners, but some further options for modification would be well received.”

The Bottom Line

Despite Universal Design for Learning and consistent guidance on making lessons accessible to diverse learners, teachers will need to provide additional supports for many students.

Usability for Teachers

Strengths

- Each module begins with “four Ts”—topic, task, targets, and text—clearly summarizing its plan and purpose for teachers (EdReports).
- Structures are consistent across units and lessons. “Each Unit contains A Key Understanding, A Focus Question, Supporting Language and Engagement, and a Culminating Task. Each Lesson includes an Opening (5 Minutes), Work Time (45 Minutes), Closing and Assessment (5 Minutes)” (EdReports).
- Your Curriculum Companion provides detailed, educative guidance for teachers: for example, research-based information on why text complexity matters and how to evaluate it. Materials also explain connections to students’ prior and future learning.
- Materials include a range of robust assessments, including formative assessments, daily checks for understanding, and performance tasks. Of survey respondents, 80% said the assessments help them measure student progress and adjust instruction effectively.
- Checklists help teachers set clear expectations. The Assessment Guide for each module explains when to use specific checklists, such as the Speaking & Listening Checklist or the Informative/Explanatory Writing Checklist.

Challenges

- Though EdReports found pacing reasonable, only 10% of survey respondents agreed. The requirement of three instructional hours each day was cited as a challenge.
- Though grouping suggestions are provided, only 30% of survey respondents said they help group students purposefully.

The Bottom Line

Supports for teachers are generally strong. Schools will need to ensure that teachers have the full three hours a day required to implement materials.



Impact on Learning

The Bottom Line

A DESE-commissioned policy brief found in 2018 that “research has yet to catch up to recent developments in curriculum materials.” As with many comprehensive curriculum products currently in use, high-quality studies of student learning impacts are not yet available for EL Education Language Arts. This is a promising and important area for further study.



Looking for more information? Read the [full EdReports review](#) or find a [Massachusetts district](#) using this product.



What the Publisher Says...

We asked publishers for information on diversity of representation in their materials, professional learning opportunities for Massachusetts educators, and product specifications and technological requirements. We also gave each publisher the opportunity to respond in writing to their product's CURATE report. See what Open Up Resources had to say about EL Education Language Arts

Diverse Representation

Describe how you ensure that students of diverse races, ethnicities, nationalities, socioeconomic classes, family experiences, linguistic backgrounds, abilities, cultures, religions, genders, gender identities, sexual orientations, and other identities see themselves fully reflected and respected in your curriculum. For example, describe any bias or inclusivity review procedures you have in place and provide evidence of their efficacy. If your response to prompt 1 or 2 contains information responsive to this prompt as well, please indicate that.

The EL Education ELA Curriculum for grades K-5 provides supplemental options for remediation and acceleration. Our approach to supporting all students' learning needs is based on the principles of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, which is all about providing equal opportunities for all students to learn. Because there are many areas in which we know that learners will naturally vary, we can design curriculum to account for this variability.

Opportunities for differentiation, including remediation and acceleration, follow the three broad principles of UDL, which are aligned with three networks in the brain that guide learning:

- Principle 1: Provide Multiple Means of Representation;
- Principle 2: Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression; and
- Principle 3: Provide Multiple Means of Engagement.

Professional Learning

Describe any professional learning opportunities (materials or experiences, publisher-provided or otherwise) available for Massachusetts educators that are designed to support high-quality implementation of your curriculum.

Open Up Resources, in conjunction with professional development providers, EL Education, Teaching Lab, and Better Lesson, are ready to partner with Massachusetts Public Schools to build a quality professional development plan for teachers, reading coaches, and school & district leaders to launch the K-5 ELA EL Education Curriculum.

Professional development sessions fall along a continuum of services, meeting teachers where they are in the development of their professional practice. We will work closely with the brilliant teams from EL Education, Teaching Lab and Better Lesson to ensure each professional learning engagement is uniquely designed to meet the needs of your schools and districts. As former ELA teachers and school leaders, Open Up Resources has field specialists poised to partner with the districts and individual schools in order to ensure the most appropriate and proactive approach is taken. As a team, Open Up Resources, EL Education, Teaching Lab, and Better Lesson look forward to engaging with the district and building-level leadership on developing a customized model of professional development based on culture and proficiency.

Examples of available professional learning opportunities include, but are not limited to:

Print Resource - Your Curriculum Companion

Your Curriculum Companion, a printed resource offered through Open Up Resources, explores the foundations of the curriculum, including the principles and research. It was built on and the instructional practices that make it unique. This book is designed to help you "look under the hood" at practices embedded throughout the curriculum so that you can sharpen your instruction, support students to be leaders of their own learning, and make well-informed changes to best meet your students' needs.

Online Professional Learning Courses, hosted by EL Education

EL Education offers a wealth of free and fee-based online courses for all leaders and teachers implementing the EL Education curriculum. These video resources are designed to offer training, guidance, and support for implementation of the EL Education K-5 Language Arts Curriculum. Each of the 4 courses, 3 for teachers and 1 for leaders, is designed for self-paced independent study and includes prompts for use in teaching teams and professional learning communities (PLCs). Users are granted access for one academic year and are encouraged to utilize the resources and tools included in each course at critical stages of their curriculum implementation.

BetterLesson Professional Learning

Better Lesson Coaches offer customized and personalized teacher and leader training and will work with schools and districts on-site and/or virtually. BetterLesson Coaching combines their learn-by-doing methodology with the right coaching frequency to create real change. Coaches collaborate with educators to ensure a focus on a manageable set of outcomes during a program regardless of duration. For more information on available learning opportunities, please visit betterlesson.com

Teaching Lab Professional Learning

Teaching Lab is a nonprofit organization with a mission to fundamentally shift the paradigm of teacher professional learning to achieve educational equity. Teaching Lab envisions a world where teachers and students thrive together in communities that enable life-long learning and meaningful lives. Research suggests that effective professional learning incorporates three critical components:

1. Core academic content embedded in exceptional instructional materials and aligned to research-based practices (what we call "head"); Teacher-led communities that build both social capital and buy-in (what we call "Heart"); and Structured and repeated cycles of learning in the classroom (what we call "Habits").

Teaching Lab integrates these research-based components by creating "Labs" in school systems. A Lab is a group of teachers of the same subject working with students in the same or similar grade levels within a network of schools. Labs are led by two or more Lab Leaders, who are experienced local teachers and instructional coaches who support their colleagues' development and take on responsibility for professional learning over time. Labs center their work on curriculum-specific professional learning content modules created by Teaching Lab and vetted by experts. Content Modules support repeated cycles of learning that align with student-facing materials to drive teacher professional learning. Cycles last four to six weeks to allow for teachers to apply and evaluate new learning. Labs complete two to four Cycles each school year.

Product Specifications

Describe what a school or district needs to implement your curriculum successfully, including instructional hours and technological infrastructure. Provide basic information about what products are associated with the curriculum (e.g., what texts a typical purchase includes, what tools are openly available online).

EL Education's K-2 Language Arts + Lab curriculum engages primary learners in content-based lessons and deep studies of compelling topics that build literacy skills as they learn, while honoring students' needs for movement, stories, and imagination. The Modules and Labs are two hours of literacy instruction per day.

To implement successfully, each classroom will need:

- Teacher Materials, available in digital or print
- Student Workbooks, available in digital or print
- Required Tradebooks, available through Open Up Resources, kitted by grade and module
- Literacy Lab Materials Kit, available through Open Up Resources

The K-2 Reading Foundations Skills Block focuses on the building blocks of spoken and written language: the ability to break words apart and blend them back together, common spelling patterns, and word decoding skills. During the Reading Foundations Skills block, students engage with explicit and systematic phonemic awareness and phonics instruction to learn decoding that will enhance fluency. In addition, students develop automaticity around reading, internalizing predictably patterned words in context as well as smoothly and accurately reading basic sentence patterns and texts. The Skills Block curriculum is an additional hour of literacy per day.

To implement successfully, each classroom will need:

- Teacher Materials, available in digital format or print
- Student Decodable Readers, available in digital format or print

The EL Education 3-5 Language Arts curriculum honors students' growing capacity to read complex texts, write with depth, and explore pressing issues in the world around them. Students build literacy skills through complex text analysis, and an additional literacy block accelerates their achievement. The Grade 3-5 Additional Language and Literacy Block (ALL Block) complements and supports the Module lessons. The ALL Block includes three units, parallel to the three units of the Module. In addition, the ALL Block reinforces and offers opportunities to practice the components covered in the Module lessons, and activities are differentiated based on student need. The 3-5 Modules and ALL Block are two hours of literacy per day.

To implement successfully, each classroom will need:

- Teacher Materials, available in digital format or print
- Student Workbooks, available in digital format or print
- Required Tradebooks, available through Open Up Resources, kitted by module

Open Up Resources fully supports the Implementation of EL Education K-5 ELA curriculum in school districts, from PD to printed curricula, kitted with trade books and laboratory materials. EL Education K-5 English Language Arts Curriculum is an Open Educational Resources (OER) and free to download and use with a CC-BY license [here](#). In addition to teacher and student materials, schools and districts should consider their plan for professional learning - one of the most important components of a successful implementation.

OPEN UP RESOURCES EL EDUCATION, 2017

PUBLICATION DATE: OCTOBER 2019



EL Education Language Arts is a print and digital resource for grades K-5. Please see the [Open Up Resources website](#) and the publisher-provided information later in this report for product specifications. Grades reviewed: 3-5

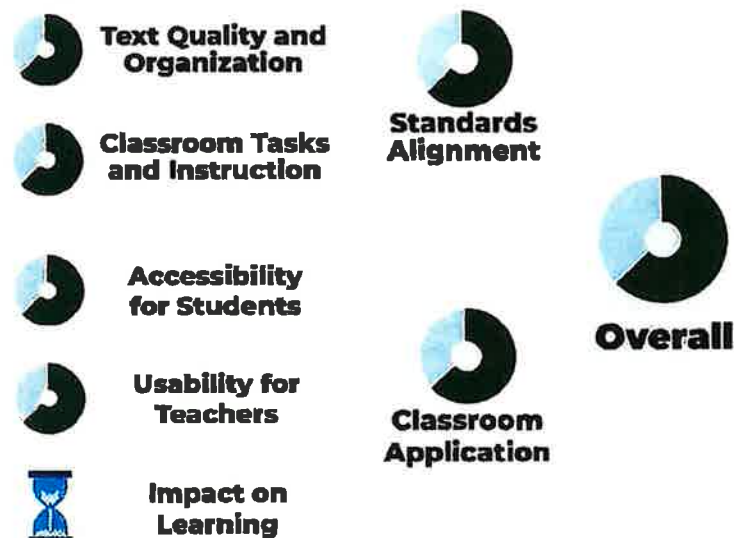
"Provides plentiful materials and gives students access to a diverse range of texts that are engaging and informative." - Massachusetts educator

Open Up Resources

EL Education, 2017

English Language Arts and Literacy, Grades 3-5

Publication Date: October 2019



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- No Rating** - Evidence is insufficient to generate rating

Overall

The Bottom Line

Materials ask students to engage critically with high-quality texts. Concerns include pacing and supports for students working below grade level.

Standards Alignment

Text Quality and Organization

Strengths

- Many texts use text features (e.g., visual elements) to make complex language accessible. For example, *Everything You Need to Know about Frogs and Other Slippery Creatures* uses "captioned photographs, diagrams, key words, and phrases printed in bold and italics" to make challenging and worthwhile content accessible to grade 3 students (EdReports).
- Each grade level features a balance of informational and literary texts, including poetry (EdReports). All survey respondents said materials include texts with various types of complexity (e.g., formats, media, sentence structures, language use, levels of meaning).
- As 80% of survey respondents agreed, texts portray a range of cultures and perspectives. In grade 5 readings include *Esperanza Rising*, about a girl who moves from her family's ranch in Mexico to a farm camp in California, and *Eight Days: A Story of Haiti*, about a boy trapped in his house following an earthquake in Haiti (EdReports).
- In many modules, coherent sets and sequences of texts help students build knowledge systematically. For example, in one grade 5 module students explore the concept of human rights by reading a series of literary and informational texts on the topic.

Challenges

- Some genres are missing each year: drama in grade 3, myths in grade 4, and both drama and myths in grade 5 (EdReports). Massachusetts standards expect analysis of allusions to mythology in grade 4 (RL.4.4) and knowledge of a variety of genres at grade 5 (W.5.3.f).
- Some texts used to portray contemporary society are out of date. For example, *A Life Like Mine* in grade 5 "contain[s] less relevant social studies information for students today. The photos are also out-of-date and not representative of current society" (EdReports).

- Some modules are not organized to support knowledge-building. For example, "Exploring Literary Classics," in grade 3 uses *Peter Pan* as the core text but does not advance student knowledge on a central topic (EdReports).

The Bottom Line

Despite some inconsistencies, texts are generally of high quality and organized to build knowledge systematically. Teachers will need to provide supplemental access to some genres, particularly myths and drama, in order to meet Massachusetts standards.



Classroom Tasks and Instruction

Strengths

- Each module references specific speaking and listening standards and has students engage in text-based discussions, collaborative discussions, presentations, think-pair-share, and multiple other forms of structured conversations (EdReports).
- As 90% of survey respondents agreed, most questions, tasks, and assignments are text-based and require literary or other textual analysis. For example, a grade 4 lesson asks students, "What external structure do both the millipede and the armadillo use to survive? Underline evidence from the text to support your answer" (EdReports).
- Materials ask students to apply understanding of grammar, structure, and vocabulary by examining language in context. For example, grade 3 students are given a sentence from *Peter Pan* and "use their knowledge of root words and affixes to determine the meaning of the word 'unpleasant'" (Louisiana DOE).
- Writing is structured and abundant. For example, grade 3 students learn "the format and purpose of a 'Painted Essay' ... [which] guides students to code each section of their essay a different color to understand each part, the purpose of each part, and how the different parts connect" (EdReports). Students also "develop writing stamina by writing frequently and for various purposes" (EdReports).
- Students read independently during the daily, hourlong Additional Literacy and Language (ALL) Block, and they engage in a variety of other reading activities (e.g., close reading, choral reading, fluency practice) throughout core lessons and ALL Blocks.

Challenges

- Some modules' culminating tasks do not ask students to demonstrate knowledge of texts or topics. For instance, in a grade 3 module, the culminating task is to create a bookmark displaying reading strategies, which "does not demonstrate students building knowledge of a topic" (EdReports).
- Reading foundational standards are addressed inconsistently. For example, "a systematic sequence of teaching decoding of Latin suffixes, multisyllable words, and irregularly spelled words is not present in the materials" (EdReports).

- Though independent reading is built into the ALL Block, both time and student choice are limited. For example, grade 5 students have a total of 20 minutes to both read and complete additional tasks, and students choose what to read only every other week; during alternating weeks, texts are informational and relate to the theme of the lesson (EdReports). Accordingly, fewer than half of survey respondents said materials provide students with a range and volume of both in-class and independent reading.

The Bottom Line

Speaking, listening, writing, and language standards are well addressed, but teachers will want to provide supplemental supports for independent reading and foundational reading skills.

Classroom Application

Accessibility for Students

Strengths

- Each lesson includes a Universal Design for Learning section with suggestions for how to make information more accessible. For example, one in grade 5 suggests that teachers "use a color-coding system to help students make connections between the model paragraphs and the... anchor chart" (EdReports).
- Universal Design for Learning sections also provide guidance on multiple means of representation, action, and expression. For example, one in grade 5 advises "offering choice in how students display their depiction of the rainforest."
- As 80% of survey respondents agreed, materials offer opportunities to help English learners develop their English. The Teacher Guide includes instructions for supporting ELs (e.g., "allow students an additional 30 seconds to review pages 18-19 before turning to their partners"), and regular Language Dives provide students "strategies to analyze, understand, and use the language" (EdReports).
- As 90% of survey respondents agreed, materials encourage students to consider and value multiple perspectives. In a grade 4 module on the American Revolution, for example, students "consider both the Loyalist and Patriot sides and decide which they would have supported if they lived during colonial times" (Louisiana DOE).

Challenges

- Of the survey items related to accessibility, respondents were least likely to agree with "materials help me provide appropriate accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities" and "materials help me differentiate instruction effectively for students working below grade level." EdReports concluded that teachers will need to seek out their own texts to help students reading below grade level practice fluency.
- For students working above grade level, "materials do not supply, on a regular basis, extensions and/or more advanced opportunities." There are no specific suggestions for how to "compact the curriculum" to allow students working above grade level to access additional content (EdReports).

The Bottom Line

Universal Design and Language Dives help make content accessible to diverse learners, but teachers will need to supplement and adapt substantively to well-serve students working below and above grade level.

Usability for Teachers

Strengths

- Materials support classroom structures and routines. Within each two-hour block, one hour follows a set structure (opening, work time, closing, assessment), and the second hour includes three 20-minute rotations. Provided grouping strategies include think-pair-share, back-to-back and face-to-face, and pinky partners (EdReports).
- Your Curriculum Companion describes the research underlying the materials so that teachers can "sharpen [their] instruction...and make well-informed changes to best meet [their] students' needs." For example, a grade 3 text analysis for Rain School explains that the text is moderately complex because "the events at the beginning and end of the story are surprising and difficult to predict" (EdReports). Accordingly, 90% of survey respondents said materials help build teachers' knowledge.
- Materials provide formative assessments, mid-unit and end-of-unit assessments, and daily opportunities to check on student progress. Each module also includes performance tasks; in one for grade 4, students "read their poem aloud and rehearse their presentations with the visuals" while "teacher assessment includes rotating throughout students to assess their presentations to peers" (EdReports).
- Your Curriculum Companion provides samples of student work and explains how to assess them using the rubric in the Teacher Guide. Accordingly, 80% of survey respondents said materials help them set clear expectations for student work.

Challenges

- Only 10% of survey respondents said pacing is reasonable. Comments included "Lessons are jam-packed and often need to be spread over two periods," "provides too much content for each lesson," and "extremely time consuming to read and implement."
- Materials do not offer resources to help build teachers' understanding of foundational skill development; instead, they direct teachers to use materials from the K-2 curriculum for that purpose. Opportunities to assess fluency are insufficient "since fluency is not a consistent focus every week."
- Opportunities are missed to provide teachers with oral reading fluency assessment materials such as running records or miscue analysis to drive individualized fluency instruction" (EdReports).

The Bottom Line

Supports for teachers are clear and plentiful with some exceptions; pacing is a challenge.



Impact on Learning

The Bottom Line

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EL Education offers a wealth of free and fee-based online courses for all leaders and teachers implementing the EL Education curriculum. These video resources are designed to offer training, guidance, and support for implementation of the EL Education K-5 Language Arts Curriculum. Each of the 4 courses, 3 for teachers and 1 for leaders, is designed for self-paced independent study and includes prompts for use in teaching teams and professional learning communities (PLCs). Users are granted access for one academic year and are encouraged to utilize the resources and tools included in each course at critical stages of their curriculum implementation.

BetterLesson Professional Learning

Better Lesson Coaches offer customized and personalized teacher and leader training and will work with schools and districts on-site and/or virtually. BetterLesson Coaching combines their learn-by-doing methodology with the right coaching frequency to create real change. Coaches collaborate with educators to ensure a focus on a manageable set of outcomes during a program regardless of duration. For more information on available learning opportunities, please visit betterlesson.com.

Teaching Lab Professional Learning

Teaching Lab is a nonprofit organization with a mission to fundamentally shift the paradigm of teacher professional learning to achieve educational equity. Teaching Lab envisions a world where teachers and students thrive together in communities that enable life-long learning and meaningful lives. Research suggests that effective professional learning incorporates three critical components:

1. Core academic content embedded in exceptional instructional materials and aligned to research-based practices (what we call "head"); Teacher-led communities that build both social capital and buy-in (what we call "Heart"); and Structured and repeated cycles of learning in the classroom (what we call "Habits).

Teaching Lab integrates these research-based components by creating "Labs" in school systems. A Lab is a group of teachers of the same subject working with students in the same or similar grade levels within a network of schools. Labs are led by two or more Lab Leaders, who are experienced local teachers and instructional coaches who support their colleagues' development and take on responsibility for professional learning over time. Labs center their work on curriculum-specific professional learning Content Modules created by Teaching Lab and vetted by experts. Content Modules support repeated Cycles of learning that align with student-facing materials to drive teacher professional learning. Cycles last four to six weeks to allow for teachers to apply and evaluate new learning. Labs complete two to four Cycles each school year.

Product Specifications

Describe what a school or district needs to implement your curriculum successfully, including instructional hours and technological infrastructure. Provide basic information about what products are associated with the curriculum (e.g., what texts a typical purchase includes, what tools are openly available online).

EL Education's K-2 Language Arts + Lab curriculum engages primary learners in content-based lessons and deep studies of compelling topics that build literacy skills as they learn, while honoring students' needs for movement, stories, and imagination. The Modules and Labs are two hours of literacy instruction per day.

To implement successfully, each classroom will need:

- Teacher Materials, available in digital or print
- Student Workbooks, available in digital or print
- Required Tradebooks, available through Open Up Resources, kitted by grade and module
- Literacy Lab Materials Kit, available through Open Up Resources

The K-2 Reading Foundations Skills Block focuses on the building blocks of spoken and written language: the ability to break words apart and blend them back together, common spelling patterns, and word decoding skills. During the Reading Foundations Skills block, students engage with explicit and systematic phonemic awareness and phonics instruction to learn decoding that will enhance fluency. In addition, students develop automaticity around reading, internalizing predictably patterned words in context as well as smoothly and accurately reading basic sentence patterns and texts. The Skills Block curriculum is an additional hour of literacy per day.

To implement successfully, each classroom will need:

- Teacher Materials, available in digital format or print
- Student Decodable Readers, available in digital format or print

The EL Education 3-5 Language Arts curriculum honors students' growing capacity to read complex texts, write with depth, and explore pressing issues in the world around them. Students build literacy skills through complex text analysis, and an additional literacy block accelerates their achievement. The Grade 3-5 Additional Language and Literacy Block (ALL Block) complements and supports the Module lessons. The ALL Block includes three units, parallel to the three units of the Module. In addition, the ALL Block reinforces and offers opportunities to practice the components covered in the Module lessons, and activities are differentiated based on student need. The 3-5 Modules and ALL Block are two hours of literacy per day.

To Implement successfully, each classroom will need:

- Teacher Materials, available in digital format or print
- Student Workbooks, available in digital format or print
- Required Tradebooks, available through Open Up Resources, kitted by module

Open Up Resources fully supports the implementation of EL Education K-5 ELA curriculum in school districts, from PD to printed curricula, kitted with trade books and laboratory materials. EL Education K-5 English Language Arts Curriculum is an Open Educational Resources (OER) and free to download and use with a CC-BY license [here](#). In addition to teacher and student materials, schools and districts should consider their plan for professional learning - one of the most important components of a successful implementation.

Open Up Resources

EL EDUCATION, 2019

PUBLICATION DATE: 2019



Open Up Resources is a digital and print resource for grades 6-8. Please see the [EL Education](#) website and the publisher-provided information later in this report for product specifications. Grades reviewed: 6-8

Open Up Resources

EL Education, 2019
English Language Arts and Literacy, Grades 6-8
Publication Date: 2019


Meets Expectations - Most or all evidence indicates high quality; little to none indicates low quality. Materials may not be perfect, but Massachusetts teachers and students would be well served and strongly supported by them.



Partially Meets Expectations - Some evidence indicates high quality, while some indicates low quality. Teachers in Massachusetts would benefit from having these materials but need to supplement or adapt them substantively to serve their students well.



Does Not Meet Expectations - Little to no evidence indicates high quality; most or all evidence indicates low quality. Materials would not substantively help Massachusetts teachers and students meet the state's expectations for teaching and learning.



No Rating - Evidence is insufficient to generate rating.

Overall

The Bottom Line

EL Education materials include rigorous reading selections and rich teacher resources that align with all Massachusetts ELA standards. Lessons are clearly structured and sequenced with consistent use of academic language and rubrics. Pacing is ambitious and teachers will likely need to adapt materials to cover all major content in one academic year.



Standards Alignment

Text Quality and Organization

Strengths

- Every grade level contains four modules that feature texts of varying genres and text complexity, such as articles, mythology, poetry, memoirs, and drama. For example, in Grade 8, Module 1, students read *Summer of the Mariposas* by Guadalupe Garcia McCall, which features complex structure and layers of meaning. In Grade 8, Module 2, students read *The Omnivore's Dilemma* by Michael Pollan, which exposes them to complex, scientific language (EdReports, 1A).
- Materials sequence texts in a way that supports students in building knowledge around a particular topic. For example, in Grade 7, Module 1, students read texts and complete tasks to build their understanding of the Lost Children of Sudan "Who are the Lost Children of Sudan?" and "What are the habits of character the Lost Children use to survive?" are the guiding questions.

Challenges

- Materials recommend that students read text excerpts rather than full chapters if pacing is an issue. Excerpts tend to lack the complexity of full works (EdReports, 2H).
- Texts do not adequately represent diverse cultures and perspectives, focusing on the adversity that marginalized groups face rather than their excellence. For example, Grade 6, Module 3 exposes students to the adversity faced by Native Americans in boarding schools. Materials lack companion texts to expose students to the richness of Native American cultures. Additionally, teachers will need to supplement materials to provide students with a nuanced understanding of key themes. For example, in Grade 8, Module 3, materials cover genocide solely through learning about the Holocaust. Teachers will need to supplement materials to help students understand that genocide continues to be perpetuated across the globe as they have been in the past. Lastly, there are some perspectives lacking, such as diverse family structures and LGBTQ perspectives.

The Bottom Line

Materials are well-aligned to Massachusetts ELA/Literacy Curriculum Framework. They feature texts of varying genres and text complexity. Most texts span the range of grade-level complexity and are relevant and engaging for students. However, teachers may still have to supplement texts in order to highlight a range of perspectives and make connections from historical texts and experiences to the current day.



Classroom Tasks and Instruction

Strengths

- Grammar, usage, and vocabulary lessons are embedded in each module. All lessons begin with a vocabulary preview and provide check points to assess students' understanding of new vocabulary using sample sentences from the reading selection. Furthermore, guiding questions and structured notes embed deep discussion practices throughout each unit. The Grade 7 Teacher Edition and Your Curriculum Companion "provide protocols for speaking and listening and to encourage full engagement including 'drama or role play', 'sketching', and 'Equity Sticks' which includes communicating ideas." Materials support teachers in establishing norms for academic discussions among students, although instructions for teachers to model academic vocabulary and syntax are not always explicit (EdReports, 1G).
- Most tasks require students to engage directly with texts. Tasks center on reading, comprehending, interpreting, and analyzing the written word. For example, in Grade 8, Module 4, Unit 3, Lesson 2, students read the article *"Psychological Effects of Camp"* and write a paragraph arguing that the "internment of people based on the group they belong to has long-lasting harmful effects." They are instructed to include specific evidence from the article (EdReports, 1F).
- Materials include authentic tasks to help students correctly use and apply language standards and vocabulary (EdReports, 1L). Authentic tasks address the function of language and require students to correctly use and apply language standards. Conventions are mostly covered in the writing rubrics as part of the holistic writing process. For example, in Grade 7, Module 3, Unit 2, Lesson 11, students proofread two paragraphs and look for transitional phrases.
- Materials include opportunities for students to complete a wide range of writing for a variety of purposes and offer students multiple means of producing and distributing writing. Materials also engage students in the editing process. Grade 6 process pieces are heavily scaffolded with lesson plans, models, exemplars, and protocols that support student writing. After each process piece, students complete an on-demand parallel writing piece with fewer scaffolds to assess understanding. Student materials include scaffolds such as note-catchers, checklists, and reflection guides to help students monitor their progress toward grade-level standards.

Challenges

- While the rigor and range of the texts is abundant, materials do not adequately support students' independent reading. There is a range of in-class reading, but independent reading takes place mostly from homework, and little guidance is provided for teachers to manage the volume of independent reading and foster a love of reading in students. For example, in Grade 8, Module 3, the Teacher Edition states the following homework expectation, "Students read for at least 20 minutes in their independent research reading text. Then they select a prompt and write a response in their independent reading journal." Additionally, guidance for teachers on how to determine if students are enjoying the book and how to assist students with identifying books of choice is ambiguous. The guidance for teachers states that they should "simply ask the student about their (independent reading) book" and judge whether "it sounds like they are getting something out of the book."
- Despite extensive scaffolds throughout the materials, students make few choices about the organizational tools that work for them, and the writing tasks at the end of the year are similarly scaffolded as those at the beginning (EdReports, 2E).

The Bottom Line

Materials embed cognitively demanding, text-based tasks that build skills systematically and consistently across units and grade levels. They engage students in a wide range of authentic writing. Teachers will need to supplement materials to support students' independent reading.

Classroom Application

Accessibility for Students

Strengths

- Materials provide support and resources for differentiation based on Universal Design for Learning. Scaffolding and assignments point back to the text in the student workbook, which contains entrance tickets, note catchers, and writing assessments. Teaching Notes provide helpful information on ways to adapt the lessons, including ways technology and multimedia may be used to scaffold lessons (EdReports, 3A). In addition, there are robust supports for students in need of an additional challenge. These include content extensions, such as requiring students to perform additional research, and literacy skill extensions that provide additional practice at a higher level of cognitive demand.
- Tasks and assignments are designed to allow students to demonstrate learning in various ways. For example, Grade 7, Module 2, Unit 1, Lessons 6-7 ask students to share their learning through writing and drawing. The materials provide a sentence frame summarization scaffold to support students in this work.
- Materials allow teachers to differentiate the language demands for ELs while maintaining cognitive demand. Accommodations are provided for students while taking assessments so they are able to demonstrate their knowledge and skills without changing the content of the assessment (EdReports, 3L). For example, the Teacher Edition includes pointers for Grade 8, Unit 3, Module 1 such as: prioritize lessons for classes with many ELs, how to use and modify the format of language dives and mini language dives, notes on diversity and inclusion, conversation cues, and notes on strategic grouping.

Challenges

- Though materials include suggested modifications and scaffolds, many of these suggestions are general. They describe supports for generalized groups of students with terms like "mobility issues," and "some students"

- Materials do not provide adequate guidance for students and teachers reading texts that may cause distress for reasons such as graphic descriptions and content that might challenge students' deeply held beliefs. For example, in Grade 8, Module 2, Unit 1, Lesson 5, some students and their families may find the topics in *The Omnivore's Dilemma* upsetting, a text by Michael Pollan that explores how people respond to the question, "What should we eat?" by following different food production systems from a food's origin to the dinner table. Guidance in the Teacher Edition for Grade 6, Module 2, Unit 1 recommends allowing students to skip hunting related sections of the text, in *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind*, as "these are not crucial to understanding the central idea of the text." There are descriptions of hunting present in the text (e.g., pp. 40-43). Although generally not graphic, this may be upsetting to some students who are particularly sensitive to animal related issues. Overall, teachers may need to make adjustments to allow time for students to process or respond to these topics during individual, small group, or full class discussion, and to reach out to families as needed.

The Bottom Line

Materials are accessible for a wide range of students and enable them to access content and demonstrate learning through a variety of strategies, materials, and tasks. However, many of the suggestions provided in the materials for students working below grade level are general, lacking the specificity needed to tailor instruction based upon students' specific areas of challenge. Materials do not provide adequate guidance for students and teachers reading texts that may cause them distress. Some texts and lessons that involve historical and cultural trauma need more social-emotional teacher guidance than what is provided.



Usability for Teachers

Strengths

- In both the student and teacher materials, there are clear purposes set forth for all instructional activities. The Teacher Edition highlights standards alignment, daily learning targets, and ongoing assessment for each lesson. For example, the daily learning target for Grade 8, Module 2, Unit 2, Lessons 10-11 states, "I can plan a concluding statement to an informative essay that follows form and supports the information presented. I can draft an informative essay using the Painted Essay structure. I can give kind, helpful, and specific feedback to my partner." Students use these daily targets as reflections later in the year, discussing how they have grown as learners.
- Routines are established and used consistently across lessons. Materials provide teachers with guidance on grouping strategies, student-created classroom norms, and opportunities for students to reflect on their learning. Routines include a read-think-talk-write cycle, protocols to support student writing, and a range of exemplars (EdReports, 3J).
- Grouping strategies are integrated across lessons. For example, in Grade 6, Module 4, Unit 3, Lesson 2, students work in pairs on the Collaborative Argument Evidence Note-Catcher to prepare to write a group essay on *Hidden Figures* (EdReports, 3P).
- Rubrics and exemplars are used consistently to set expectations. For example, in Grade 8, Module 2, Unit 3, Lesson 4, a writing anchor chart is provided for the characteristics of argument and a model essay is included to set high expectations for student work.

Challenges

- Pacing does not allow flexibility for a normal school year interruptions, slowing down to reteach, or any other unforeseen circumstances. For example, Grade 6 materials provide 36 weeks of instruction. There are four modules, consisting of 3 units each, designed to last 8 to 9 weeks, and each lesson is designed for a 45-minute instructional day (EdReports, 2H). While resources are provided in *Your Curriculum Companion* to help teachers evaluate what to cut, teachers will need to spend significant planning time to determine what is feasible to complete within a year.

- Although there are numerous informal assessments, suggestions for how to proceed with data findings are sometimes unclear. Materials lack resources to guide teachers toward next steps for supporting student needs, addressing learning gaps, and adjusting instruction (EdReports, 33).
- Most explicit coaching in the Teacher Edition focuses on classroom routines and exercises. Novice teachers, in particular, would benefit from using a Student Edition to learn definitions for figurative language, grammar points, or other content gaps they may have. Furthermore, teachers may want their own version of the student workbook with exemplar responses such as, "students may say..." to support efficiency with grading and student feedback.

The Bottom Line

The purpose of each lesson is clear and includes an abundance of resources to support teachers with lesson implementation, offering a range of routines and grouping strategies to support classroom instruction. However, pacing is ambitious and teachers may struggle to complete all content within one academic year.



Impact on Learning

The Bottom Line

A [DESE-commissioned policy brief](#) found in 2018 that "research has yet to catch up to recent developments in curriculum materials." As with many comprehensive curriculum products currently in use, high-quality studies of student learning impacts are not yet available for *Open Up Resources EL Education Grades 6-8 ELA*. This is a promising and important area for further study.



Looking for more information? Read the [full EdReports review](#) or find a [Massachusetts district](#) using this product.



What the Publisher Says....

We asked publishers for information on product specifications and technological requirements, professional learning opportunities for Massachusetts educators, and diversity of representation in their materials. See what EL had to say about EL Education 6-8.

Diverse Representation

Describe how you ensure that students of diverse races, ethnicities, nationalities, socioeconomic classes, family experiences, linguistic backgrounds, abilities, cultures, religions, genders, gender identities, sexual orientations, and other identities see themselves fully reflected and respected in your curriculum. For example, describe any bias or inclusivity review procedures you have in place and provide evidence of their efficacy.

In our curricula, we place a premium on not only the presence of complex texts but the diversity of texts as well. Culturally responsive practices and instructional protocols ensure that books are used as mirrors and windows, giving students the opportunity to see themselves in the characters represented AND learn about the perspective of others through diverse texts. This is important for engagement and fostering intrinsic motivation. In our curriculum, all students can be successful with grade-level texts given the right support. The module topics reflect the intentional attention we gave to offering a rigorous and engaging culturally responsive curriculum for students in grades 6-8:

	Module 1	Module 2	Module 3	Module 4
Grade 6	Greek Mythology	Critical Problems and Design Solutions	American Indian Boarding Schools	Remarkable Accomplishments In Space Science
Grade 7	The Lost Children of Sudan	Epidemics	The Harlem Renaissance	Plastic Pollution
Grade 8	Folklore of Latin America	Food Choices	Voices of the Holocaust	Lessons from Japanese American Internment

Professional Learning

Describe any professional learning opportunities (materials or experiences, publisher-provided or otherwise) available for Massachusetts educators that are designed to support high-quality implementation of your curriculum.

Professional learning is a critical element in the effective implementation of any curriculum. Open Up Resources partners with multiple professional development providers to ensure that each professional learning engagement meets the needs of districts. Open Up Resources sustainable implementation support for EL Education 6-8 Language Arts offerings begin with a design consultation intended to align services to your vision and desired outcomes. During the consultation, a plan is developed. The plan includes a launch, administrator and leader support, and continuous learning.

Administrator launch sessions engage administrators, leaders, and professional learning partners in developing tools and systems to monitor, support, and lead curriculum implementation. Teacher launch sessions are designed for teachers and support staff to develop an understanding of the principles and research of EL Education 6-8 Language Arts. In addition, teachers will explore the structures and key features of the curriculum and plan for sustainable implementation.

Continuous learning provides the guidance and support necessary for sustainable implementation. Administrators are offered opportunities to support implementation throughout the year by engaging in classroom walks with a professional learning provider to celebrate success, identify problems of practices and develop targeted professional learning. Teachers are offered the support required for sustainable implementation by engaging in targeted professional learning through coaching, virtual or onsite workshops, and/or professional learning community support. Teachers take a deep dive into the curriculum and build the capacity to prepare for instruction and make student-centered decisions during implementation.

Open Up Resources works diligently to provide access to quality professional learning to all of our partner districts. In addition to traditional professional development and our online communities, we also offer our annual conference and consulting service.

HIVE is our annual professional learning event. Pathways are designed for educators new to the curriculum and those who have been using it for multiple years. You will find pathways for coaches and administrators.

Open Up Resources has also formed national Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to help support curriculum implementation and to provide ongoing teacher support through the use of social media platforms, Twitter, and Facebook. You can review information regarding our social media communities here. The online community provides a place for teachers to connect with thousands of peers that are implementing curriculum with integrity.

Through the social communities, your teachers will be able to seek advice from teachers using the curriculum, but more importantly, community coaches. Open Up Resources works with leaders in our social community to develop coaches that are available to assist your teachers as they implement the curriculum. Teachers are able to ask their questions when they are at the forefront of their minds. They do not need to wait for a PLC meeting or PD day.

Product Specifications

Describe what a school or district needs to implement your curriculum successfully, including instructional hours and technological infrastructure. Provide basic information about what products are associated with the curriculum (e.g., what texts a typical purchase includes, what tools are openly available online).

EL Education 6–8 Language Arts curriculum engages learners in content-based lessons and deep studies of compelling topics that build literacy skills.

To implement successfully, each classroom will need:

- Teacher Materials, available in digital or print
- Student Workbooks, available in digital or print
- Required Tradebooks, available through Open Up Resources, kitted by grade and module

Response to Report

Note: For accurate information about the CURATE process, please see our [CURATE page](#). To see how publishers submit their products for our consideration, please see our [call for submissions](#).

None provided.

**DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
TEWKSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING TEXTBOOKS**

The purpose of this checklist is to provide a guide to the considerations and concerns in evaluating textbooks. It serves the purpose of directing the attention of teachers, administrators and the School Committee to the essential features that a textbook should possess.

Rating Scale:

After each point has been carefully studied, record your judgment in the space provided using the following scale:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Cannot Judge
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Textbooks Reviewed:

- A. **Wit & Wisdom - Great Minds Publishing**
- B. **EL Education - Open Up Resources**
- C. _____
- D. _____

Criteria for Evaluating Instructional Materials and Programs - Wit & Wisdom

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	CANNOT JUDGE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
I. Contents					
Reflect the learning standards in the <i>DESE MA Curriculum Frameworks</i>	X				
II. Features					
Contain illustrations of contemporary figures that reflect the diversity of our society	X				
Illustrations are well constructed and clear	X				
Include a master source of materials and resources	X				
Provide student texts, online materials, or printed material and accompanying teacher manuals				X	
Provide coherent units that is accurate and build conceptual understanding	X				
Essential vocabulary is clearly identified for students	X				
Illustrations support student understanding of content standards	X				
Do the materials have historical reference, address current issues, and equally represent all cultural groups		X			
Current issues are presented in a way that engages students and promotes social responsibility	X				
III. Learning Activities					
Involve students in active learning and inquiry		X			
Clarify appropriate use of instructional technology		X			
Show how instructional technology can help students visualize complex concepts, analyze and refine information, and communicate solutions				X	
Provide multiple ways for students to explore concepts and communicate ideas and solutions	X				
Are developmentally appropriate and provide for different abilities and learning paces	X				
Encourage discussion and reflection	X				
IV. Teacher Support Materials					
Provide a clear conceptual framework for the concepts and skills taught	X				
Offer ideas for involving parents and community, and keeping them informed about the programs		X			
Give suggestions for a variety of pedagogical strategies, such as open-ended questioning, direct instruction, practice, discussion, and cooperative learning	X				
Reference resource materials, such as appropriate videos, file clips, reference books, software, video laser discs, long-distance learning, CD-ROMs, and electronic bulletin boards		X			
Suggests ways to differentiate instruction: specific strategies are provided to adapt or modify instruction for	X				

various subgroups, including English language learners, special education, gifted and talented					
Suggest how to adapt materials for students with differing levels of achievement	X				
Suggest enrichment and skill reinforcement activities for extended learning	X				
Include suggestions for a variety of assessment approaches such as portfolios, journals, projects, and informal and formal tests	X				
V. Student Assessment Materials					
Are free of inappropriate or derogatory material	X				
Assessments occur throughout the unit, not just at the end	X				
Incorporate multiple forms of assessment, such as oral presentations, written reports, teacher observations, performance assessments, quizzes, and pre- and post-tests	X				
Students are provided opportunities to self-assess and reflect in their progress	X				
VI. Program Development and Implementation					
Have field test data showing positive effects on student learning	X				
Chapter layout is consistent and chapters are arranged logically	X				
Offer training and long-term follow-up for teachers	X				
VII. Representation of all Groups					
Pronouns, descriptors and illustrations of both sexes are used equally	X				
Is sensitive to all members of the protected classes; i.e., race, color, sexual orientation, color, national origin, religion, disability, sex, gender identity, age, etc.	X				
Subject matter covers a spectrum of accomplishments and contributions by all genders, races and physical conditions		X			
Nouns, adjectives, terms and illustrations are non-stereotypical and non-prejudicial	X				

Please provide other resources used to help guide you in the selection of the recommended textbook (i.e., polling of teachers from other districts, contacts with sales representatives, etc.).

- researched highly-rated literacy comprehension programs through DESE Curate and Ed Reports
- consulted with neighboring districts & conducted site visits/classroom observations
- held Teacher Interest Meetings to determine top 2 resources to pilot
- created two pilot groups for EL and Wit & Wisdom, consisting of 36 general education teachers and special educators
- scheduled monthly & quarterly meetings with both pilot groups to provide ongoing support and professional development
- conducted in district classroom observations of both pilot programs
- facilitated teacher visits to observe each pilot program
- conducted several meetings with sales representatives to explore pricing and professional development options
- surveyed students in grades K-6
- made EL and Wit & Wisdom pilot materials available to the community for viewing at the Central Administration Office
- held Teacher-led Pilot Presentations with District Leadership and both pilot groups
- surveyed pilot teachers in grades K-6

WIT & WISDOM

GREAT MINDS, 2016

PUBLICATION DATE: OCTOBER 2019

CURATE for K-2 Literacy holistically evaluates foundational skills for reading, within the domain of Standards Alignment. Currently, CURATE does not evaluate all of the components of foundational skills instruction. Educators are encouraged to more closely examine this strand when considering instructional materials for K-2 Literacy, using a tool such as the [EdReports Foundation Skills Review Tool](#) or the [Student Achievement Partners Foundational Skills Guidance Document](#). Both resources make clear the criteria for evidence-based foundational reading instruction.



Wit & Wisdom is a print and digital resource for grades K-8 designed to support all aspects of ELA/literacy instruction except foundational skills. Please see the [Great Minds website](#) and the publisher-provided information later in this report for product specifications. Grades reviewed: K-2

"I am fundamentally 'shook' - in the best way possible - by how Wit and Wisdom develops a passion for reading, rather than a formula." - Massachusetts educator

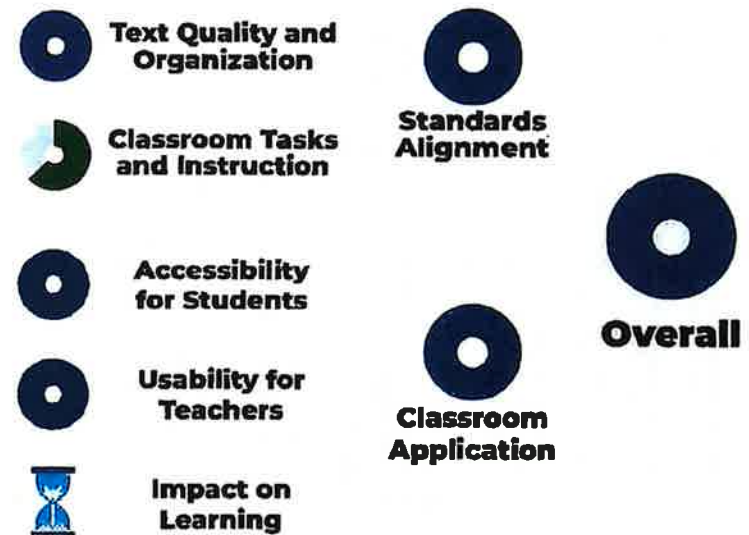
CURATE





Wit & Wisdom

Great Minds, 2016

English Language Arts and Literacy, Grades K-2

Publication Date: October 2019



-  **Meets Expectations** - Most or all evidence indicates high quality; little to none indicates low quality. Materials may not be perfect, but Massachusetts teachers and students would be well served and strongly supported by them.
-  **Partially Meets Expectations** - Some evidence indicates high quality, while some indicates low quality. Teachers in Massachusetts would benefit from having these materials but need to supplement or adapt them substantially to serve their students well.
-  **Does Not Meet Expectations** - Little to no evidence indicates high quality; most or all evidence indicates low quality. Materials would not substantively help Massachusetts teachers and students meet the state's expectations for teaching and learning.
-  **No Rating** - Evidence is insufficient to generate rating.

CURATE

Overall

The Bottom Line

High-quality texts are accompanied by clear guidance on classroom tasks and structures. Supplementation to address the standards for reading foundational skills is necessary.



Standards Alignment

Text Quality and Organization

Strengths

- Texts are of appropriate complexity, and many are by award-winning authors. For example, kindergarten students read *Africa*, *Antarctica*, *Asia*, *Australia*, *Europe*, *South America* by Rebecca Hirsch and *My Five Senses* by Alike. Survey respondents praised the "language-rich books" and "use of authentic texts for instruction."
- Texts represent a variety of genres appropriate for each grade level: for example, picture books, folktales, articles, poems, and songs in kindergarten and realistic fiction, historical fiction, fantasy, and fables in grade 1 (EdReports).
- Texts are organized into coherent sets by topic. For example, grade 2 students engage with at least five high-quality texts on each topic when they study the four seasons, the American West, and civil rights heroes.
- Texts represent a variety of cultures and perspectives. For example, kindergarten students read "Cinderella" stories from around the world, including a West Indian story featuring French Creole words, and a grade 2 unit on civil rights heroes includes an illustrated picture book of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech (EdReports). As one survey respondent put it, "Diversity is written into the text choices."

Challenges

None identified.

The Bottom Line

Texts are of high quality and appropriate complexity; they are well organized and represent a range of cultures and perspectives.



Classroom Tasks and Instruction

Strengths

- Materials provide frequent opportunities for students to engage in structured, evidence-based discussions. For example, in a grade 1 lesson, "the teacher displays the Speaking and Listening Anchor Chart and students Think-Pair-Share about the question, 'What did you notice about Adelita?' and use the anchor chart to guide their conversation" (EdReports).
- Text-dependent questions are numerous. Examples in grade 2 include "How did the Mendez family respond to injustice?" and "What was life like for pioneers in the early American West?" (EdReports).
- Materials provide opportunities for students to apply language skills both in and out of context. For example, grade 1 students "practice replacing nouns with pronouns in the sentence 'But the prince loved nature best'" (EdReports).
- Materials include explicit instruction in writing skills and strategies. For example, during a grade 2 unit on civil rights heroes, students learn to write narrative paragraphs. In one lesson, they write an "exploded moment" narrative from the point of view of Ruby Bridges as she walks into her school. Materials instruct students to use time (temporal) words, to expand sentences with adjectives and adverbs, and to use detail to describe thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Challenges

- Materials are not designed to address foundational standards; the publisher recommends using them in conjunction with a high-quality phonics program. As one survey respondent noted, "there is no explicit phonics program to marry the work we're doing with text, which would also be something we'd love."
- Only 45% of survey respondents said materials ask students to write in authentic forms for audiences other than the teacher; several relevant comments included "the writing component needs review and editing."
- Materials do not support teachers in building independent reading into daily lesson plans, and there is no accountability system provided to monitor students' independent reading (EdReports):

The Bottom Line

Materials address directly and comprehensively the standards for language, writing, speaking and listening, and reading—with the important exceptions of reading foundational skills and independent reading.

Classroom Application

Accessibility for Students

Strengths

- Varied supports help all students, including those working below grade level, access material. For example, each lesson's Content Framing Question provides an entry point into the text. Teacher materials also include scaffolding recommendations; for one grade 1 lesson, "Stop periodically during the Read Aloud so students can identify one or two key details at a time."
- Materials provide students with a range of opportunities to demonstrate learning. For example, kindergarten students participate in Socratic Seminars to discuss the question, "How did the children in My Five Senses use their senses to learn about the world?" They also create a book to show how their own five senses help them learn about the world (EdReports).
- Supports helping English learners access grade level texts include sentence frames, explicit vocabulary instruction, and partner work that allows students to discuss text-dependent questions with their peers (EdReports).
- Extension activities in every module support students in need of additional challenges. For example, a grade 2 extension states, "Prompt students who are ready for an extra challenge to write two sentences describing the connections between events: one sentence using before and one using after."
- Nearly 90% of survey respondents reported that materials represent and value diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and identities.

Challenges

Several survey respondents expressed doubts about materials' "developmental appropriateness" for kindergarten students in particular.

The Bottom Line

Materials ask much of students but provide robust supports for a range of learners.

Usability for Teachers

Strengths

- Materials advance student learning with clear purpose: "throughout the program, students are asked a variety of coherently sequenced questions and tasks. The questions help students engage with and analyze the complex texts that they hear" (EdReports).
- Materials support teachers with recommended grouping strategies and other structures such as Socratic seminars, chalk talks, fish bowls, and echo reading. Lessons clearly state whether students should complete each task in a whole group, in a small group, in pairs, or individually.
- Materials for each grade include four modules, each designed to be completed in 90-minute daily blocks over the course of a nine-week grading period, and a "Module 0" introduces routines and structures (EdReports). More than half of survey respondents said pacing is flexible, accommodating their classes' needs.
- Adult-level explanations help teachers understand the rationale for the instructional design. For example, the Implementation Guide explains that "the recurring familiar structure of the Content Stages helps students internalize daily goals and develop transferable habits, as well as ensures that students understand texts and build knowledge with a growing level of independence."
- A range of high-quality assessments includes daily checks for understanding, focusing question tasks, new-read assessments, Socratic seminars, and end-of-module tasks. One end-of-module task has kindergarten students "use knowledge of various text types to sort each module text into one of the following categories: informational text or storybook."
- Materials include resources designed to help teachers set clear expectations. For example, writing skills are organized into five Craft Features--Structure, Development, Style, Conventions, and Process--and rubrics and checklists allow teachers to monitor each feature.

Challenges

Survey respondents' perceptions of pacing were mixed, ranging from "I usually get through everything in a lesson" to "[there is] too much packed into one lesson."

The Bottom Line

Materials support teachers strongly, though pacing may be a challenge for some.



Impact on Learning

The Bottom Line

A DESE-commissioned policy brief found in 2018 that “research has yet to catch up to recent developments in curriculum materials.” As with many comprehensive curriculum products currently in use, high-quality studies of student learning impacts are not yet available for Wit & Wisdom. This is a promising and important area for further study.



Looking for more information? Read the [full EdReports review](#) or find a [Massachusetts district](#) using this product.



What the Publisher Says....

We asked publishers for information on diversity of representation in their materials, professional learning opportunities for Massachusetts educators, and product specifications and technological requirements. We also gave each publisher the opportunity to respond in writing to their product's CURATE report. See what Great Minds had to say about Wit & Wisdom.

Diverse Representation

Describe how you ensure that students of diverse races, ethnicities, nationalities, socioeconomic classes, family experiences, linguistic backgrounds, abilities, cultures, religions, genders, gender identities, sexual orientations, and other identities see themselves fully reflected and respected in your curriculum. For example, describe any bias or inclusivity review procedures you have in place and provide evidence of their efficacy. If your response to prompt 1 or 2 contains information responsive to this prompt as well, please indicate that.

Wit & Wisdom's core texts were selected for their complexity, richness of knowledge, and craft as well as the diversity of perspectives they represent in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, and geography.

When selecting texts, our teacher-writers used a review rubric which includes the following fields:

- Audience Engagement, including the text's inclusivity
- Knowledge Building, including the cultural knowledge conveyed by the text
- Challenges, including potential cultural insensitivity or bias

This process allowed us to ensure that texts are free of bias and that a variety of voices present themselves and their experiences from authentic perspectives (instead of students reading about other groups from the perspective of a single majority group).

Module texts serve as mirrors and windows into students' lives and the lives and experiences of people from different backgrounds, parts of the world, and periods of history. Students see themselves mirrored in the texts and see through windows to a range of perspectives and experiences.

For example, Grade 1 Module 1 includes texts from a variety of cultural perspectives about books, libraries, and reading.

Grade/Module	Texts	Genre
Grade 1 Module 1: <i>A World of Books</i>	<i>Tomás and the Library Lady</i> , Pat Mora and Raul Colón	Literary
	<i>Waiting for the Biblioburro</i> , Monica Brown and John Parra	Literary
	<i>That Book Woman</i> , Heather Henson and David Small	Literary
	<i>My Librarian Is a Camel</i> , Margriet Ruurs	Informational

Grade 5 Module 4 includes texts about athletes—including African American baseball players, Muslim women, and child refugees—who have succeeded despite persecution and hardship.

Grade/Module	Texts	Genre
Grade 5 Module 4: <i>Breaking Barriers</i>	<i>We Are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball</i> , Kadir Nelson	Informational
	"Nelson Mandela Speech that Changed the World"	Informational (video)
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Students who study *Wit & Wisdom* texts learn about the variety and beauty of human experience across time and space. Each module's Essential Question homes in on that experience by prompting students to think about enduring aspects of the human condition:

- How do books change lives around the world?
- How can sports influence individuals and societies?

In grappling with these questions that can never be ultimately settled, students engage in the complexities of crucial ideas.

Professional Learning

Describe any professional learning opportunities (materials or experiences, publisher-provided or otherwise) available for Massachusetts educators that are designed to support high-quality implementation of your curriculum.

Wit & Wisdom offers in-person and self-study professional development (PD) to support educators' implementation of the curriculum. Just as Wit & Wisdom was written by teacher-writers, professional development sessions are designed and facilitated by educators with extensive experience with Wit & Wisdom.

Wit & Wisdom is constantly expanding and improving the slate of PD offerings. Our website is updated to include descriptions of our offerings as they become available.

In-Person Sessions

Year 1	
Session	Summary
Launch Wit & Wisdom (6-hour session)	Introduces teachers, coaches, and school leaders to the curriculum's learning design
Writing in Wit & Wisdom (6-hour session)	Introduces teachers, coaches, and school leaders to Wit & Wisdom's approach to teaching opinion/argument, informative/explanatory, and narrative writing types
Preparation and Customization of a Wit & Wisdom Lesson (6-hour session)	Empowers educators to implement the curriculum with integrity by thoughtfully preparing lessons and strategically customizing them to meet students' needs

Year 1-Year 2+	
Session	Summary
A Strength-Based Site Visit (6-hour session)	Provides educators with opportunities to participate in guided observations that empower teachers and leaders to identify collective strengths and develop site-specific implementation strategies

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Session	Summary
A Strength-Based Site Visit (6-hour session)	Provides educators with opportunities to participate in guided observations that empower teachers and leaders to identify collective strengths and develop site-specific implementation strategies

Year 2+	
Session	Summary
Levers for Student Achievement: Fluency (3 hour session)	Deepens educators' understanding of fluency, its impact on student reading success, and how best to teach it

Self-Study Resource

Year 1+	
Session	Summary
Moving Forward with Wit & Wisdom	Guides educators to a deeper understanding of the curriculum and provides tools for strategic preparation and teaching

Product Specifications

Describe what a school or district needs to implement your curriculum successfully, including instructional hours and technological infrastructure. Provide basic information about what products are associated with the curriculum (e.g., what texts a typical purchase includes, what tools are openly available online).

Each *Wit & Wisdom* lesson is 90 minutes long. *Wit & Wisdom* Modules 1–4 include approximately 150 lessons, allowing schools to accommodate mandates such as school-wide events or standardized tests. Schools can tailor the curriculum to specific opportunities, resources, and needs, leaving a measure of flexible time between or within modules. For recommendations on scheduling and mapping a year of *Wit & Wisdom*, see pages 37–43 of the Implementation Guide on the review site.

The following lists outline the key components of *Wit & Wisdom*.

Print Materials

- Print Teacher Editions (TE) include all modules (four for each grade) in spiral-bound books. Each Teacher Edition contains a Module Overview, complete lesson plans, and appendices.
- Print Student Editions (SE) include all modules (four for each grade) in bound consumable workbooks. Each Student Edition contains handouts and graphic organizers for use in class and at home. Interior pages are perforated for easy removal.
- Print Student Assessments include a year's worth of assessments for 30 students in a collated, easy-to-distribute packet.
- Core Texts are the trade books for each module, available for purchase from our partner [Mackin](#). For a complete list of core texts, see the text list on our [review site](#); note that this list also contains supplementary texts, module art texts, and Volume of Reading texts that do not require purchase.

Digital Resources

- Digital Teacher Editions include all modules of *Wit & Wisdom* (four for each grade) in a digitized, teacher-friendly format housed in an online platform. A streamlined, interactive interface makes it simple to access and navigate, using hyperlinks to jump to lessons, student handouts, assessments, online supplementary texts, module art texts, and more. Users can search, bookmark, and annotate lessons. They can also search for key words and look up vocabulary terms. The Digital Teacher Edition is powered by the InKling platform, which is hosted on Amazon Web Services and features anytime, anywhere access for teachers using current web browsers (latest versions of Chrome, Edge, Firefox, Safari and IE 11+).

Online Teacher Support

A selection of free digitized resources and tools is available online through a user's dashboard on our website at [GreatMinds.org](#), which is hosted on Amazon Web Services and features anytime, anywhere access for teachers using current web browsers. Many of these tools are included in the *Wit & Wisdom* Teacher Resource Pack, which includes the following:

- **Implementation Guide:** This comprehensive how-to guide for teaching *Wit & Wisdom* contains information on the curriculum's design and research base, a glossary, explanations of the learning design, and resources to support implementation.
- **Moving Forward with Wit & Wisdom:** This self-study resource guides teachers through a deeper study of the curriculum and provides protocols for preparing to teach modules and lessons.
- **Module 0:** This short introductory module is designed to be taught at the beginning of the school year. Module 0 introduces students to the routines and expectations of *Wit & Wisdom* and helps teachers build classroom culture.
- **Parent Tip Sheets:** For each module, teachers can share with families overviews of the content and questions students will examine in the classroom. Tip Sheets also include ideas for caregivers and families to extend learning at home and in the community.

Response to Report

Foundational Skills:

Wit & Wisdom is designed to be taught with a systematic, research-based foundational reading program.

K-2 classrooms should implement:

- *Wit & Wisdom* for core English language arts
- A systematic, research-based phonics program, such as Wilson Language Training's Foundations®, for teaching foundational skills
- *Geodes™* to promote reading independence in Grades K–2 (*Geodes™* is a series of knowledge-building, readable books, aligned to *Wit & Wisdom* module topics and to Foundations® phonemic scope and sequence.)

Writing:

Wit & Wisdom students gain practice with the three main writing types: informative/explanatory, opinion/argument, and narrative. Instruction in each type includes analysis of strong models and explicit instruction in specific skills. Teachers directly instruct students in a specific writing skill over a course of lessons by using four Craft Stages—Examine, Experiment, Execute, and Excel—that gradually lead students to mastery and Independence. Students begin by examining exemplars of the skill. Then they practice the skill in low-risk assignments and ultimately demonstrate mastery in a formal assessment. A series of Craft Questions guide students through these stages of instruction. *Wit & Wisdom*'s writing instruction is fundamentally different from the workshop model with which many teachers are familiar.

Volume of Reading:

Volume of Reading (Appendix D) is not included within the ninety-minute lesson. Teachers can add this to the school day based upon their needs.

(See *Implementation Guide*, pages 37-40, for sample schedules.) Based on the Content Framing Questions, a set of Volume of Reading Reflection Questions appear in each Student Edition.

WIT & WISDOM

GREAT MINDS, 2016

PUBLICATION DATE: OCTOBER 2019



Wit & Wisdom is a print and digital resource for grades K-8 designed to support all aspects of ELA/literacy instruction except foundational skills. Please see the [Great Minds website](https://www.greatminds.org/witwisdom) and the publisher-provided information later in this report for product specifications. Grades reviewed: 3-5

"Where have you been all my life? This is teaching! This is learning! This is thinking!"
Massachusetts educator

Wit & Wisdom

Great Minds, 2016

English Language Arts and Literacy, Grades 3-5

Publication Date: October 2019



- Meets Expectations** - Most or all evidence indicates high quality, little to none indicates low quality. Materials may not be perfect, but Massachusetts teachers and students would be well served and strongly supported by them.
- Partially Meets Expectations** - Some evidence indicates high quality, while some indicates low quality. Teachers in Massachusetts would benefit from having these materials but need to supplement or adapt them substantively to serve their students well.
- Does Not Meet Expectations** - Little to no evidence indicates high quality, most or all evidence indicates low quality. Materials would not substantively help Massachusetts teachers and students meet the state's expectations for teaching and learning.
- No Rating** - Evidence is insufficient to generate rating.

Overall

The Bottom Line

High-quality texts are accompanied by clear guidance on classroom tasks and structures. Supplementation to address the standards for reading foundational skills is necessary.



Standards Alignment

Text Quality and Organization

Strengths

- Texts are of high quality and appropriate complexity. Students read a number of award-winning books in their entirety, including *Walk Two Moons* (grade 4) and *The River Between Us* (grade 5).
- Texts represent varying genres and types of complexity: "there is a wide array of Informational and literary text integrated throughout every module no matter the topic or theme," and supplemental texts include fables, biographies, speeches, and plays (EdReports).
- As nearly 80% of survey respondents agreed, texts represent a variety of cultures and perspectives. For example, a grade 3 module called "A New Home" includes a variety of texts on immigrant experiences, and a grade 5 module on "Breaking Barriers" includes texts on African-American baseball players and female Muslim athletes.
- Coherent sets and sequences of texts help students build knowledge systematically (though not necessarily in ways aligned to Massachusetts standards for content areas like science and technology/engineering). Modules' Focusing Questions (e.g., "What are myths, and why do people create them?") highlight key understandings students should gain from core texts, and "supplementary texts help to build knowledge while integrating skills" like speaking and listening. (EdReports).

Challenges

Grade 4 texts, especially in the Extreme Settings and American Revolution modules, represent diverse cultures and perspectives less consistently than texts for other grades.

The Bottom Line

Texts build students' knowledge systematically, are well balanced, and are of high quality. Grade 4 teachers may want to supplement with texts representing a wider variety of cultures and perspectives.



Classroom Tasks and Instruction

Strengths

- Modules offer "ample opportunity to hold evidence-based discussions with Think-Pair-Share, Socratic Seminars, Jigsaw discussions," and more (EdReports). Students also learn speaking and listening skills, as in a grade 3 small-group activity that instructs students to cue the speaker during the discussion.
- Most lessons "require some independent readings of text followed by text-specific questions and tasks," and "questions draw the reader back into the text and support students' literacy growth" (EdReports). For example, a grade 4 lesson asks students "to explain why they created each [character] match, anchoring their reason in evidence from the text or Knowledge Journal."
- Vocabulary is frequently used to dive deeply into language topics such as (in grade 5) multiple meanings, connotation, and morphology (EdReports). For example, in a grade 5 lesson students explore the meaning of a target vocabulary word (values) by comparing it with similar words (e.g., beliefs, laws, ideas).
- Each module includes "instruction, review, and/or practice in the foundational skills of prefixes, suffixes, vocabulary, and fluency" (EdReports). For instance, a grade 5 lesson is on using morphology to determine word meaning and relationships, focusing on the prefixes sub- and sus-.
- Writing is frequent and structured. In every grade 4 module, for example, "Students write both 'on demand' and 'over extended periods,'" including by taking notes, completing graphic organizers, and writing short answers and longer essays. One lesson has students write a descriptive paragraph of a rainy or sunny day using four of their five senses (EdReports).

Challenges

- As the publisher explains, materials "were designed with the understanding that most schools have already adopted a foundational skills curriculum. The lessons accordingly do not explicitly teach foundational skills other than fluency, which is explicitly and comprehensively addressed."
- Writing was an area of concern for survey respondents. Fewer than half said materials ask students to write in authentic forms for audiences other than the teacher, and several comments indicated a need for greater consistency in the use of graphic organizers and terms such as "main idea" and "topic sentence."

- Independent reading is not strongly supported: while an appendix to each module "contains a curated Volume of Reading text list" that offers "students choices at varying levels of complexity," there is no time built into module lessons for this reading (EdReports).

The Bottom Line

Student tasks and supports for classroom instruction are comprehensive and of high quality. Materials are not designed to support foundational skills other than fluency, and teachers may also want to provide supplemental opportunities for independent reading and authentic writing.

Classroom Application

Accessibility for Students

Strengths

- Lessons offer strategies for meeting the needs of a range of learners, including deliberate sequencing, predictable structures, reading scaffolds, and multiple forms of content (e.g., visual art, video, audio). For example, a grade 5 writing lesson offers the suggestion, "For those students who you anticipate will struggle with translating main ideas and details into a written summary, consider providing cloze sentences to support students in organizing their writing." The Implementation Guide also offers extensive guidance for supporting struggling readers and English learners.
- Materials regularly include extension activities for students working above grade level. One asks students to "perform a scavenger hunt through the text to locate vocabulary words that are also character traits" (EdReports).
- Every lesson "has a deep dive in either vocabulary or style as well as conventions," providing explicit and applied practice in English language development (EdReports). Teachers can also support academic vocabulary development with Word Walls and Vocabulary Journals.
- As nearly 90% of survey respondents agreed, materials represent and value diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and identities. For example, in one grade 5 module, students engage with a variety of Native American texts.

Challenges

Of the survey items related to accessibility, respondents were least likely to agree with "materials help me provide appropriate accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities."

The Bottom Line

Materials strongly support instruction for a wide range of students. Teachers will need to focus most on students with disabilities when adapting and supplementing.

Usability for Teachers

Strengths

- Lessons and tasks advance student learning with clear purpose. Each module includes an Essential Question and Focusing Questions, and "each of the daily lessons work toward answering the Focusing Questions, while building the skills and knowledge needed to complete the End-of-Module Task" (EdReports).
- All lessons offer "opportunities to work through more than one type of grouping," and many suggested routines are included: fishbowl, gallery walk, graphic organizers, jigsaw, partner reading, quick write, reader's theater, and more (EdReports). For example, a grade 4 lesson on myths asks students to work in pairs to complete a graphic organizer and read a text, then move into small groups to generate evidence that answers a focusing question.
- Pacing is reasonable and flexible: lessons are designed for 90-minute blocks, with 35-36 lessons in each of four modules per grade, "allow[ing] for unexpected or special school events which may interfere with traditional pacing" (EdReports).
- Materials include guidance and resources designed to build teachers' understanding: for example, the Implementation Guide explains that "framing each lesson with familiar questions helps students build the habits of mind they need to become independent close readers."
- Informal and formal assessments help teachers measure learning and adjust instruction. For example, one grade 4 lesson suggests that teachers "collect Response Journals for formative assessment." Materials provide teachers with suggested next steps for students who struggle with the assessments (EdReports). Students also evaluate their understanding using checklists throughout each module (Louisiana DOE).
- "Answer Keys, Rubrics, and Sample Responses as well as rubrics for all writing" tasks are provided (EdReports). Lessons also include "success criteria" to look for in student work; a grade 5 example reads "identifies main characters; setting, including where and when it takes place; and the central problem in the story."

Challenges

Of the survey items related to usability, respondents were least likely to agree with "materials help me group students purposefully," "rubrics, exemplars, or other resources ... help me set clear and high expectations," and "pacing is reasonable, neither too fast nor too slow."

The Bottom Line

Supports for teachers are in general robust.



Impact on Learning

The Bottom Line

A DESE-commissioned policy brief found in 2018 that "research has yet to catch up to recent developments in curriculum materials." As with many comprehensive curriculum products currently in use, high-quality studies of student learning impacts are not yet available for Wit & Wisdom. This is a promising and important area for further study.



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For example, Grade 1 Module 1 includes texts from a variety of cultural perspectives about books, libraries, and reading.

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Year 2+	
Session	Summary
Levers for Student Achievement: Fluency (3-hour session)	Deepens educators' understanding of fluency, its impact on student reading success, and how best to teach it

Self-Study Resource

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Online Teacher Support

A selection of free digitized resources and tools is available online through a user's dashboard on our website at [GreatMinds.org](https://www.greatminds.org), which is hosted on Amazon Web Services and features anytime, anywhere access for teachers using current web browsers. Many of these tools are included in the *Wit & Wisdom* Teacher Resource Pack, which includes the following:

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- **Module 0:** This short introductory module is designed to be taught at the beginning of the school year. Module 0 introduces students to the routines and expectations of *Wit & Wisdom* and helps teachers build classroom culture.
- **Parent Tip Sheets:** For each module, teachers can share with families overviews of the content and questions students will examine in the classroom. Tip Sheets also include ideas for caregivers and families to extend learning at home and in the community.

Response to Report

Foundational Skills:

Wit & Wisdom should be taught alongside a systematic, research-based foundational skills program. Grades 3-5 of *Wit & Wisdom* supports Massachusetts' Reading Standards for Foundational Skills through:

- Explicit instruction in morphology to support accuracy in reading
- Explicit Fluency Instruction designed to support students in
 - ♦ Reading grade-level text with purpose and understanding;
 - ♦ Reading grade-level prose and poetry orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression on successive readings;
 - ♦ Using context to confirm/self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

Writing:

Wit & Wisdom students practice the three main writing types: informative/explanatory, opinion/argument, and narrative. Students learn a specific writing skill over a course of lessons using four Craft Stages—Examine, Experiment, Execute, and Excel—that gradually lead to mastery and independence. Students examine strong models of the skill, practice the skill in low-risk assignments, then demonstrate mastery in a formal assessment. A series of Craft Questions guide students through these stages of instruction. *Wit & Wisdom*'s writing instruction is fundamentally different from the workshop model with which many teachers are familiar.

Volume of Reading:

Volume of Reading (Appendix D) is not included within the ninety-minute lesson. Teachers can add this to the school day based upon their needs. (See Implementation Guide, pages 37-40, for sample schedules.) Based on the Content Framing Questions, a set of Volume of Reading Reflection Questions appear in each Student Edition.

Accessibility for Students:

For students with reading disabilities:

- Student-facing materials are in NIMAS;
- Some Core texts are available in E-book and audio book formats;
- Core texts are in Bookshare.

WIT & WISDOM

GREAT MINDS, 2016

PUBLICATION DATE: AUGUST 2020



Wit & Wisdom is a print and digital resource for grades K-8 designed to support all aspects of ELA/literacy instruction except foundational skills. Please see the [Great Minds website](#) and the publisher-provided information later in this report for product specifications. Grades reviewed: 6-8

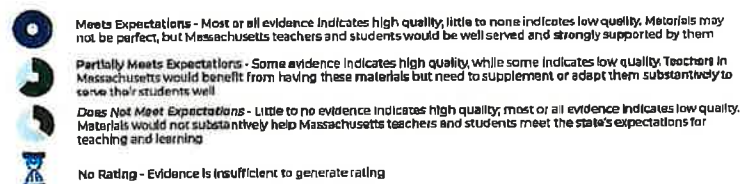
"The structure, texts, and rigor are great." - Massachusetts educator

Wit & Wisdom

Great Minds, 2016

English Language Arts and Literacy, Grades 6-8

Publication Date: August 2020



Overall

The Bottom Line

Materials are closely aligned with Massachusetts ELA/Literacy Curriculum Framework. They build knowledge and support high achievement sequentially within and across the four modules at each grade level while promoting diverse voices and cultural identity as a source of strength. Teachers will need to supplement materials to support students with disabilities, English learners, and others reading above or below grade level. Overall, Massachusetts educators would be well-served by these materials.



Standards Alignment

Text Quality and Organization

Strengths

- Texts exhibit grade-appropriate complexity, are worthy of students' attention, and include a wide range of high-interest topics (EdReports, IC). For example, Grade 7, Module 2 centers on *Code Talker: A Novel About the Navajo Marines of World War Two* (Bruchac), and *Farewell to Manzanar* (Houston and Houston).
- Texts represent a range of genres and types of complexity. The appendix provided for each module lists both quantitative and qualitative measures of complexity for each text. Grade 8, Module 1 focuses on storytelling and includes *The Crossover* (Alexander) as a core text along with poetry (in print and video performances), newspaper articles, literary nonfiction, websites, music, and paintings.
- Across all grade levels, materials include texts that represent various cultures and perspectives. A publisher-provided text selection rubric includes the criteria used to select unbiased texts that are representative of multiple perspectives. For example, Grade 7, Module 3 contains poems by Langston Hughes, Maya Angelou, Emily Dickinson, and Martin Niemöller ("First They Came for the Communists") as well as speeches by Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malala Yousafzai.
- Texts are sequenced in a coherent manner to allow students to build knowledge systematically. For example, Grade 8, Module 2 incorporates *All Quiet on the Western Front* along with informational articles and images to explore World War I. This module focuses on the question, "How did conditions on the front affect soldiers?" Each module in grades 6-8 builds rigor, and assessments require increasing complexity of student thinking (EdReports, ID).

Challenges

None identified.

The Bottom Line

Materials support students in building knowledge and skills systematically through appropriately challenging texts representing diverse voices and genres.



Classroom Tasks and Instruction

Strengths

- Learning goals for daily lessons within each module at all three grade levels address speaking and listening standards. Each module offers multiple opportunities for discussion in a range of formats and provides scaffolds for academic conversations (EdReports, 1J). For example, Grade 8, Module 1 focuses on storytelling and includes a fluent reading activity, multiple read-alouds, viewing and analysis of poetic performances, and discussions of the impact of performance styles.
- Most questions require students to draw evidence from texts. For example, Grade 6, Module 4, Lesson 2 asks students, "What do you notice and wonder about Antarctica based on the author's description?" and focuses on the use of the word "stranded" in context. Grade 7, Module 2 includes the essential question, "Why is the organization of informational texts important?"
- Materials are well-aligned to grade-level language standards. Materials for grades 6 through 8 include explicit and increasingly sophisticated grammar instruction both in and out of context (EdReports, 1N). The Grade 8 modules address indicative and interrogative verbs as well as simple, compound complex sentences, and include vocabulary journals using the Frayer model in each unit.
- Materials include a wide range of authentic writing opportunities, coupled with explicit instruction to support students in developing writing skills. Grade 6 includes explicit instruction on topic sentences, evidence and elaboration, hooks, and thesis statements. This culminates in students producing mini-essays with two body paragraphs. Across all grade levels, authentic writing tasks include informative writing, narrative, argumentative writing, research, and multimedia presentations.
- Materials at all three grade levels support students in engaging in independent reading and include text-dependent questions and annotation assignments (EdReports). Materials include supplemental texts lists for each module that can be used individually or in small groups. The publisher also provides a parent tip sheet that focuses on independent reading.

Challenges

While each module includes two or more opportunities for Socratic seminars, several lessons in grade 8 do not incorporate substantial discussion opportunities.

The Bottom Line

Materials include a strong focus on speaking and listening standards and a diversity of rigorous reading and writing tasks, supported by explicit grammar and vocabulary instruction.

Classroom Application

Accessibility for Students

Strengths

- Materials include various supports to help students access content. Teacher note boxes make some suggestions about scaffolding and extending content. For example, in Grade 6, Module 4, Lesson 3, these boxes suggest how to chunk reading and respond to incorrect answers. The Teacher Resource Pack includes sentence starters and challenging word lists to support students working below grade level (EdReports, 3C).
- Some lessons provide for varied means for students to demonstrate learning. In Grade 8, Module 2 assessments include an explanatory essay and paragraph, a letter from the point of view other than that of the main character of the text under study, Socratic seminars, and multiple choice questions. Other assessments throughout the three grade levels include sentence frames (grade 6), a collaborative identity poem (grade 7), and the option for students to complete a graphic organizer or participate in a discussion if they have difficulty completing a writing task (grade 8).
- Materials provide a range of supports for English Learners. This includes explicit vocabulary and grammar instruction, oral practice, and text-dependent questions that focus on key phrases (EdReports, 3P). The Implementation Guide for teachers includes general strategies for working with ELs. Each unit includes multiple “vocabulary deep dives,” opportunities for think-pair-share, varied Lexile resources, and assistance for students in developing standard English conventions. Skills are taught in the context of reading, writing, speaking, and listening with an emphasis on how authors use language conventions for a specific effect.
- Materials represent and value diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and identities. Grade 7, Module 1 presents a variety of text types and perspectives on the Middle Ages, including an examination of poachers’ perspectives and role in the social hierarchy, leading students to explore how social order affects experience. Similarly, the central text in grade 7, Module 2 examines not only the actions of Navajo code breakers during World War II, but also the ways that the Navajo identity helped provide strength, leading to the understanding that cultural identity is a source of pride.

Challenges

- Materials offer limited resources to support teachers in meeting the diverse needs of students with disabilities and those working above or below grade level. The suggestions in the teacher note boxes are often general—for example, suggesting that students reread challenging portions of text. One Massachusetts educator with experience using Wit & Wisdom noted that he must significantly modify every text and activity for his students. Further, compatibility with adaptive technology is limited (EdReports, 3U). Handouts and lessons can only be downloaded in PDF format and cannot be edited.
- In some areas, students have limited options to demonstrate their learning. Virtually all of the major summative assessments are extended writing tasks. Formative assessments are more varied but the majority of them require extended writing. For example, in Grade 6, Module 4, Lesson 3, students are directed to write plot summaries in their response journals, with no option to list or draw.

The Bottom Line

Materials go beyond including diverse voices to presenting diversity as a source of pride and strength. While materials include some suggestions to help teachers scaffold materials for struggling learners and extend materials for those who need additional challenge, the guidance provided in the teacher materials is insufficient. Teachers will need to supplement in order to adequately support students with disabilities and struggling learners to access high-level content and skills.

Usability for Teachers

Strengths

- Lessons and tasks advance student learning with clear purpose. The essential question for Grade 6, Module 1 is "How can enduring tremendous hardship contribute to personal transformation?" Lessons 1 - 5 each have targeted related questions, such as "What makes Bud (in Bud, Not Buddy) a survivor?" The progression of thinking tasks in each module is "wonder," "organize," "reveal" "distill," and "know." At each grade level, there is a clear rationale for text selections (EdReports, 3A).
- Materials support teachers with instructional routines and grouping strategies. Module 0 in grades 6 - 8 guides teachers and students in building instructional routines such as gallery walks and think-pair-share, while providing an introduction to various question types. The materials also provide a variety of recommended grouping strategies.
- Pacing is reasonable and the curriculum can be implemented effectively within a typical school year. The publisher states that schools need to dedicate between 75 and 90 minutes per day to the program, for a minimum of 139 school days. The program's extensive use of learning routines promotes efficiency in rigorous daily lessons.
- Materials include informal and formal assessments that help teachers measure learning and adjust instruction. The materials offer assessment opportunities that genuinely measure student progress (EdReports, 3K). Checks for Understanding (CFUs) occur at least once per lesson and take the form of writing, graphic organizers, informal checks such as fist-to-five, and exit tickets. Materials also include response rubrics and tracking forms.
- Each module includes rubrics, answer keys, and exemplars to set clear and high expectations for students. The materials also include recommended scripts for students and suggestions for differentiation (EdReports, 3M). Massachusetts educators with experience using the materials cited the rubrics and exemplars as an area of strength.
- Materials include guidance and resources designed specifically to build teachers' subject matter knowledge. The Teacher Edition in grade 8 offers full adult-level explanations and examples of advanced literary concepts, multiple charts, and descriptions of lessons and standards (EdReports). The Implementation Guide outlines a four-part preparation process before launching each unit, while the publisher describes the User Guide as a "self-study professional development resource."

Challenges

Lesson pacing is challenging. For example, in Grade 6, Module 2, the introduction to The Odyssey asks students to share ideas in a welcome activity, add "translation" to their vocabulary journals, and discuss multiple uses of the word. The Teacher Edition allocates 5 minutes for this section of the lesson. Teachers with an ELA block shorter than 90 minute may be challenged to implement the curriculum as designed (EdReports, 3B).

The Bottom Line

Materials facilitate both teacher and student learning through the use of rubrics, checklists, exemplars, and adult-level explanations of key skills and concepts in the Teacher Edition. The pacing is ambitious but content for each grade level can reasonably be completed in one school year, provided that schedules can accommodate the 90 minute block for which the program is designed.



Impact on Learning

The Bottom Line

A DESE-commissioned policy brief found in 2018 that "research has yet to catch up to recent developments in curriculum materials." As with many comprehensive curriculum products currently in use, high-quality studies of student learning impacts are not yet available for Wit & Wisdom. This is a promising and important area for further study.



Looking for more information? Read the [full EdReports review](#) or find a [Massachusetts district](#) using this product.



What the Publisher Says....

We asked publishers for information on product specifications and technological requirements, professional learning opportunities for Massachusetts educators, and diversity of representation in their materials. See what Great Minds had to say about Wit & Wisdom.

Diverse Representation

Describe how you ensure that students of diverse races, ethnicities, nationalities, socioeconomic classes, family experiences, linguistic backgrounds, abilities, cultures, religions, genders, gender identities, sexual orientations, and other identities see themselves fully reflected and respected in your curriculum. For example, describe any bias or Inclusivity review procedures you have in place and provide evidence of their efficacy.

Wit & Wisdom is designed to foster a classroom culture of knowledge-building and active student engagement. The curriculum centers on the study of rich and engaging texts, curated to build student knowledge of important ideas in literature, history, science, and the arts. Wit & Wisdom texts are culturally relevant and unbiased, representing people of varied ethnic groups, genders, ages, abilities, cultures, and religions.

In Wit & Wisdom all students share their perspectives when they notice and wonder about diverse topics and texts. Texts serve as mirrors and windows; students see themselves reflected in the program's texts, content, and ideas (mirrors) and gain insight into the experiences of others (windows), allowing them to reflect on and question ideas of their own culture while also gaining an appreciation of others. Through narrative and informational texts, the curriculum represents the diverse nature of society, now and throughout history, including the everyday stories of different people from the United States and around the world. Students consider the voices of a broad range of participants, considering diverse perspectives and learning to always consider multiple sides of every story.

When selecting texts, our teacher-writers used a review rubric which included the following fields:

- Audience Engagement, including the text's inclusivity;
- Knowledge Building, including the cultural knowledge conveyed by the text;
- Challenges, including potential cultural insensitivity or bias.

This process allowed us to ensure that texts are free of bias and that a variety of voices present themselves and their experiences from authentic perspectives (instead of students reading about other groups from the perspective of a single majority group).

Alongside core texts, each module includes **supplementary texts** which provide specific background or context for a topic, additional disciplinary knowledge, or a different perspective. Supplementary texts also provide the chance for students to encounter a wide range of text genres and types, including video clips, audio recordings, multimedia digital content, maps, poems, and speeches. When all students read, discuss, and write about the same texts aligned with a topic, they develop a sense of community that deepens through a shared purpose and pursuit of knowledge. Through this context of mirrors and windows, students develop social awareness and empathy and a sense of personal values by considering the challenges of characters with problems that may be similar to or different from their own.

What students learn in one lesson, arc of lessons, module, and grade level prepares them for the next lesson, arc of lessons, module, or grade level. Whether reading about a medieval servant girl, a contemporary middle-school basketball player, or the teenager who refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery bus, students who study *Wit & Wisdom* texts learn about the variety and beauty of human experience across time and space. (To see a listing of *Wit & Wisdom*'s core texts, please visit this [link](#).)

Professional Learning

Describe any professional learning opportunities (materials or experiences, publisher-provided or otherwise) available for Massachusetts educators that are designed to support high-quality implementation of your curriculum.

Wit & Wisdom's implementation support and professional development helps educators deeply understand the curriculum and guides them to strategically prepare for and implement it. Educators develop their understanding of the content of *Wit & Wisdom's* high-quality texts and curriculum modules, actively building their capacity by engaging them in closely reading complex text; preparing lessons; differentiating instruction; analyzing goals, assessments and student work; and adjusting instruction. This ensures that educators can plan and improve instruction strategically and collaboratively, always keeping student achievement at the forefront of their efforts.

An Implementation Support Team guides districts/schools in selecting a professional development plan best suited to their specific needs. The facilitation team for in-person sessions consists of *Wit & Wisdom* writers, Fellows, or current implementers with deep content expertise. The combination of deep content knowledge and field experience uniquely positions *Wit & Wisdom* facilitators to best support strong implementation.

Summary of Offerings

1. Embedded Professional Development (in-curriculum resources)

Each *Wit & Wisdom* Teacher Edition offers lesson-specific professional development support, including teacher notes, suggestions for differentiation, and the teacher-facing **Prepare and Analyze** sections at the beginning and end of each lesson.

2. Self-Study (online resources)

- The **Wit & Wisdom** Implementation Guide is a comprehensive resource that explains what the curriculum is, why it works, and how to implement it. It provides information to help users understand the curriculum's approach and learn key strategies for preparation and implementation.
- **Moving Forward with Wit & Wisdom** provides resources to deepen educators' understanding of the curriculum and to help them strategically prepare to teach it. It helps Wit & Wisdom educators:
 - ♦ examine the roles of goal-setting and reflection in successful implementation;
 - ♦ expand understanding of Wit & Wisdom's approach to teaching complex texts;

- ♦ use the Implementation Guide to strengthen understanding and implementation skills;
- ♦ learn and apply module and lesson preparation tools; and
- ♦ use supplemental resources like Module Zero and Question Sets effectively.

3. In-Person Professional Development (in-person session + take-home resources)

Wit & Wisdom offers a sequence of in-person professional development sessions designed to deepen educators' understanding of the curriculum and ability to implement it. Full descriptions of these sessions can be found [here](#).

These sessions share the following characteristics:

- **Experiential knowledge-building**—Educators build knowledge through an intentional process of active, hands-on learning followed by a debriefing examination of what they learned and why.
- **Collegial engagement**—Educators participate in collaborative inquiry and problem-solving.
- **Reinforcement of the joyful rigor of engaging with complex texts**—Educators engage in productive struggle to deepen their knowledge of the content of *Wit & Wisdom* texts and curriculum and how to teach them to students.
- **Amplification of specific components of the curriculum**—Educators build understanding of the what and why of *Wit & Wisdom* through deep examinations of organizing principles and key components.
- **Focus on inquiry**—Educators develop their understanding of the curriculum by exploring compelling questions that prompt curiosity and engagement, asking and addressing questions as they assess their ongoing implementation goals, challenges, and successes.
- **Delivery of practical methods and strategies**—Educators acquire new knowledge that they can immediately apply in their practice.

Product Specifications

Describe what a school or district needs to implement your curriculum successfully, including instructional hours and technological infrastructure. Provide basic information about what products are associated with the curriculum (e.g., what texts a typical purchase includes, what tools are openly available online).

Wit & Wisdom Modules Zero–4 include approximately 150 lessons, allowing schools to accommodate mandates such as school-wide events or standardized tests. Schools can tailor the curriculum to specific opportunities, resources, and needs, leaving a measure of flexible time between or within modules. For recommendations on scheduling and mapping a year of *Wit & Wisdom*, see pages 37–43 of the Implementation Guide.

Each *Wit & Wisdom* lesson is designed for 90 minutes, representing the time needed for successful implementation of the program, including close reading of complex texts, working toward in-depth mastery of the MA Standards, and building knowledge of a range of topics. Every *Wit & Wisdom* lesson follows a consistent, repeatable structure of 75 minutes dedicated to the core lesson with its structure of **Welcome—Launch—Learn—Land—Wrap** and a 15-minute **Deep Dive** focused on vocabulary or style and conventions germane to the core lesson.

Wit & Wisdom Complete Product Solution

Print Materials

- **Print Teacher Editions (TE):** Include all modules of *Wit & Wisdom* (four for each grade), in reusable spiral-bound books. Each Teacher Edition contains a Module Overview, complete lesson plans, and appendices. Thorough instructional guidance for every component of each lesson, including sample student work and anticipated student responses, helps teachers prepare to implement and teach *Wit & Wisdom*.
- **Print Student Editions (SE):** Include all modules of *Wit & Wisdom* (four for each grade), in bound consumable workbooks. Each Student Edition contains handouts and graphic organizers for use in class and at home. Interior pages are perforated for easy removal.
- **Print Student Assessments:** Include a year's worth of assessments for 30 students in a collated, easy-to-distribute packet.
- **Core Texts:** Trade books for each module available in complete grade-level class sets.
- **Volume of Reading:** Include lists of optional, supplemental texts to support and enhance students' learning. Texts compliment the module's topic and represent a range of Lexile levels.

Digital Resources

- Digital Teacher Editions: Include all modules of *Wit & Wisdom* (four for each grade) in a digitized teacher-friendly format housed in an online platform. A streamlined, interactive interface makes it simple to access and navigate, using hyperlinks to jump to lessons, student handouts, assessments, online supplementary texts, module art texts, and more. Users can display and print charts, student handouts, and assessments. They can also search for key words and look up vocabulary terms.

In addition to the educative lessons, the *Wit & Wisdom* team is committed to supporting educators through each stage of implementation. A selection of free resources and tools is available online through a user's dashboard on our [website](#).

Schools can use these resources for embedded professional development and to build a collective understanding of *Wit & Wisdom*.

Wit & Wisdom digital curricular and instructional materials are web-based and compatible with all modern internet browsers without additional system hardware or software.

Response to Report

Note: For accurate information about the CURATE process, please see our [CURATE page](#). To see how publishers submit their products for our consideration, please see our [call for submissions](#).

At Great Minds, we believe that all students must have the opportunity to learn from grade-level, complex curriculum and texts and be allowed to productively struggle—seeking to solve problems and find answers for themselves. Wit & Wisdom's instructional design purposefully supports all students' learning.

A repeated framework Content Framing Questions scaffolds the learning in each lesson, while research based instructional routines engage all students in meaningful collaboration and discussion. Through gradual release, Craft Stages explicitly teach students the crafts writing and speaking. Embedded tools such as Notice and Wonder Charts, Boxes and Bullets, and Evidence Organizers support striving students in clarifying their thinking.

Core and supplementary texts, fine art, video, and audio recordings are sequenced to build background knowledge and vocabulary, engaging all students in rich content delivered in multiple modes. Targeted academic language development, including a focus on morphology and multiple, explicit speaking opportunities, help English language learners develop their vocabulary. Text-dependent questions focus all students on key terms, phrases, and passages for rereading and repeated exploration.

Lesson level learning goals and Checks for Understanding provide daily insight into students' understandings. Educators may then adjust instruction and assessment to support students in fulfilling the learning goals to the best of their ability. For example, educators may adjust the number of sentences/paragraphs a student would need to submit for an assessment, provide sentence frames, or have students orally perform their written work. For students who may need additional challenge, teachers can expand assessment rubrics by adding additional performance criteria.

OPEN UP RESOURCES EL EDUCATION, 2017

PUBLICATION DATE: OCTOBER 2019

CURATE for K-2 Literacy holistically evaluates foundational skills for reading, within the domain of Standards Alignment. Currently, CURATE does not evaluate all of the components of foundational skills instruction. Educators are encouraged to more closely examine this strand when considering instructional materials for K-2 Literacy, using a tool such as the [EdReports Foundation Skills Review Tool](#) or the [Student Achievement Partners Foundational Skills Guidance Document](#). Both resources make clear the criteria for evidence-based foundational reading instruction.



EL Education Language Arts is a print and digital resource for grades K-5. Please see the [Open Up Resources website](#) and the publisher-provided information later in this report for product specifications. Grades reviewed: K-2

"It is high interest to kids. They see purpose in what they are doing." - Massachusetts educator

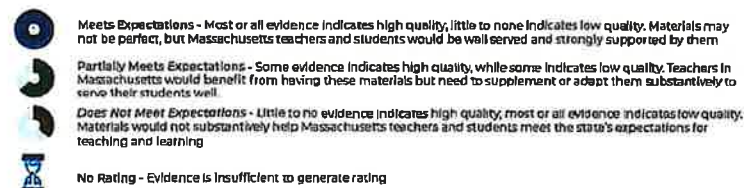
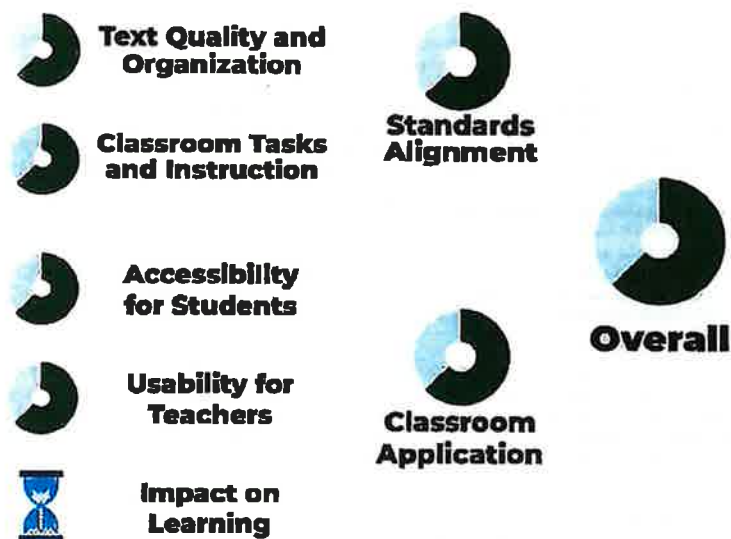
CURATE

Open Up Resources

EL Education, 2017

English Language Arts and Literacy, Grades 3-5

Publication Date: October 2019



CURATE

Overall

The Bottom Line

Accessibility may be a challenge in some cases, but texts, tasks, and teacher supports are strong.

Standards Alignment

Text Quality and Organization

Strengths

- High-quality texts focus on high-interest topics. For example, grade 2 texts include *Off to Class: Incredible and Unusual Schools Around the World* by Susan Hughes and *Fossils Tell of Long Ago* by Aliki (EdReports).
- Of survey respondents, 100% said texts feature various types of complexity (e.g., formats, media, sentence structures, language use, levels of meaning) and 90% said texts represent a variety of genres.
- For all three grade levels K-2, EdReports awards materials full points for the indicator "Texts are organized around a topic/topics to build students' knowledge and vocabulary which will over time support and help grow students' ability to comprehend complex texts independently and proficiently."

Challenges

A book list revealed that over 75% of texts in grades K-2 have white authors.

The Bottom Line

Texts are of high quality and appropriate complexity, and they are well organized. Teachers may want to provide additional texts by authors of color.



Classroom Tasks and Instruction

Strengths

- Materials encourage frequent peer-to-peer and teacher-student discussions. In kindergarten, strategies that support discussion include Think-Pair-Share, Back-to-Back, Face-to-Face, and Pinky Partners (EdReports).
- Students engage with a range of text-based tasks, questions, and assignments. For example, grade 2 students read *Stone Girl, Bone Girl* by Laurence Anholt. After reading, they retell the story to their peers and write a response from the perspective of one of the characters.
- A Reading Foundations Skills Block provides explicit instruction on how to read, write, and analyze words. The block includes about 15 minutes of whole-group instruction and 45 minutes of differentiated, small-group instruction.
- Writing is varied and "scaffolded, so students move from drawing, to labeling, to writing. There is a balance of short writing pieces and longer writing pieces that are worked on over the span of a unit" (EdReports).

Challenges

- Opportunities for authentic application of the language standards are somewhat limited, and most grammar lessons are teacher-driven. For example, in a grade 2 lesson, "The teacher defines the word past (having to do with an earlier time; former). The teacher reminds students that a verb tells an action. The teacher explains that a past-tense verb tells an action that happened earlier, or in the past and that sometimes verbs 'do not play fair,' so they are called irregular. The teacher uses an Irregular Past-tense Verbs anchor chart. The students identify irregular past-tense verbs from the poem and list them on the chart" (EdReports).
- Though materials provide guidance for independent reading, including response sheets that students use to demonstrate comprehension (EdReports), survey respondents reported that insufficient time is allocated to independent reading, and only 40% said materials support a range and volume of both in-class and independent reading. EdReports also noted that "the instructions for Grade 1 independent reading are not explicit, teachers will need to plan for independent reading."

The Bottom Line

Texts are central to instruction, and standards for foundational skills, writing, and speaking and listening are well supported. Teachers may want to provide supplemental opportunities for independent reading and for application of the language standards in various contexts.

Classroom Application

Accessibility for Students

Strengths

- "Students are provided with small group differentiation based on their needs. For students below level, small group differentiated instruction occurs on a daily basis. For students at or above grade level, small group differentiated instruction occurs once or twice a week" (EdReports). Each lesson also includes recommendations for how to provide different students with different levels of support.
- Materials follow the principles of Universal Design for Learning. Each module has a "Meeting Students' Needs" section with suggestions for providing students with various means of accessing and demonstrating learning. A grade 2 example reads, "For ELLs and students who may need additional support with organizing their thinking for written expression: (Oral Processing) Invite students to orally share the stages of a plant with a partner before drawing and writing, using the pattern from the book"
- Each lesson includes a section on supporting English learners and students from various cultures. A grade 1 example reads, "Be aware that the examples of tools during this lesson might be culturally specific. To activate all students' prior knowledge of tools, emphasize that although the class will learn about only a few tools, there are many types of tools all over the world, and everyone uses tools."

Challenges

- Supports for more advanced students are insufficient. While each unit includes ways to extend the unit beyond the school day, such as by asking students to "track the sun's movement by tracing shadows with chalk outside in the same location each day," these strategies do not provide adequate rigor to qualify as extension tasks (EdReports).
- Only 20% of survey respondents said materials help them provide appropriate accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities, and only 30% said they help differentiate instruction effectively for students below grade level. One commented that "students are only able to benefit from such curriculum if they are within 'striking distance' of accessing the content. Many students need much more scaffolds to be able to access this curriculum."

- Guidance on accessibility is sometimes quite general rather than tailored to the lesson at hand. An example from grade 1 reads, "This lesson introduces students to writing and drawing routines. Consider alternative writing tools (examples: pencil grips, slant boards) and scaffolds (examples: dictation, writing prompts) that will support all students in becoming successful writers." One survey respondent commented, "The suggested supports listed in each lesson provide some basic ideas for supporting ELL and other learners, but some further options for modification would be well received."

The Bottom Line

Despite Universal Design for Learning and consistent guidance on making lessons accessible to diverse learners, teachers will need to provide additional supports for many students.

Usability for Teachers

Strengths

- Each module begins with “four Ts”—topic, task, targets, and text—clearly summarizing its plan and purpose for teachers (EdReports).
- Structures are consistent across units and lessons. “Each Unit contains A Key Understanding, A Focus Question, Supporting Language and Engagement, and a Culminating Task. Each Lesson includes an Opening (5 Minutes), Work Time (45 Minutes), Closing and Assessment (5 Minutes)” (EdReports).
- Your Curriculum Companion provides detailed, educative guidance for teachers: for example, research-based information on why text complexity matters and how to evaluate it. Materials also explain connections to students’ prior and future learning.
- Materials include a range of robust assessments, including formative assessments, daily checks for understanding, and performance tasks. Of survey respondents, 80% said the assessments help them measure student progress and adjust instruction effectively.
- Checklists help teachers set clear expectations. The Assessment Guide for each module explains when to use specific checklists, such as the Speaking & Listening Checklist or the Informative/Explanatory Writing Checklist.

Challenges

- Though EdReports found pacing reasonable, only 10% of survey respondents agreed. The requirement of three instructional hours each day was cited as a challenge.
- Though grouping suggestions are provided, only 30% of survey respondents said they help group students purposefully.

The Bottom Line

Supports for teachers are generally strong. Schools will need to ensure that teachers have the full three hours a day required to implement materials.



Impact on Learning

The Bottom Line

A [DESE-commissioned policy brief](#) found in 2018 that “research has yet to catch up to recent developments in curriculum materials.” As with many comprehensive curriculum products currently in use, high-quality studies of student learning impacts are not yet available for EL Education Language Arts. This is a promising and important area for further study.



Looking for more information? Read the [full EdReports review](#) or find a [Massachusetts district](#) using this product.



What the Publisher Says....

We asked publishers for information on diversity of representation in their materials, professional learning opportunities for Massachusetts educators, and product specifications and technological requirements. We also gave each publisher the opportunity to respond in writing to their product's CURATE report. See what Open Up Resources had to say about EL Education Language Arts.

Diverse Representation

Describe how you ensure that students of diverse races, ethnicities, nationalities, socioeconomic classes, family experiences, linguistic backgrounds, abilities, cultures, religions, genders, gender identities, sexual orientations, and other identities see themselves fully reflected and respected in your curriculum. For example, describe any bias or inclusivity review procedures you have in place and provide evidence of their efficacy. If your response to prompt 1 or 2 contains information responsive to this prompt as well, please indicate that.

The EL Education ELA Curriculum for grades K-5 provides supplemental options for remediation and acceleration. Our approach to supporting all students' learning needs is based on the principles of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework, which is all about providing equal opportunities for all students to learn. Because there are many areas in which we know that learners will naturally vary, we can design curriculum to account for this variability.

Opportunities for differentiation, including remediation and acceleration, follow the three broad principles of UDL, which are aligned with three networks in the brain that guide learning:

- Principle 1: Provide Multiple Means of Representation;
- Principle 2: Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression; and
- Principle 3: Provide Multiple Means of Engagement.

Professional Learning

Describe any professional learning opportunities (materials or experiences, publisher-provided or otherwise) available for Massachusetts educators that are designed to support high-quality implementation of your curriculum.

Open Up Resources, in conjunction with professional development providers, EL Education, Teaching Lab, and Better Lesson, are ready to partner with Massachusetts Public Schools to build a quality professional development plan for teachers, reading coaches, and school & district leaders to launch the K-5 ELA EL Education Curriculum.

Professional development sessions fall along a continuum of services, meeting teachers where they are in the development of their professional practice. We will work closely with the brilliant teams from EL Education, Teaching Lab and Better Lesson to ensure each professional learning engagement is uniquely designed to meet the needs of your schools and districts. As former ELA teachers and school leaders, Open Up Resources has field specialists poised to partner with the districts and individual schools in order to ensure the most appropriate and proactive approach is taken. As a team, Open Up Resources, EL Education, Teaching Lab, and Better Lesson look forward to engaging with the district and building-level leadership on developing a customized model of professional development based on culture and proficiency.

Examples of available professional learning opportunities include, but are not limited to:

Print Resource - Your Curriculum Companion

Your Curriculum Companion, a printed resource offered through Open Up Resources, explores the foundations of the curriculum, including the principles and research it was built on and the instructional practices that make it unique. This book is designed to help you "look under the hood" at practices embedded throughout the curriculum so that you can sharpen your instruction, support students to be leaders of their own learning, and make well-informed changes to best meet your students' needs.

Online Professional Learning Courses, hosted by EL Education

EL Education offers a wealth of free and fee-based online courses for all leaders and teachers implementing the EL Education curriculum. These video resources are designed to offer training, guidance, and support for implementation of the EL Education K-5 Language Arts Curriculum. Each of the 4 courses, 3 for teachers and 1 for leaders, is designed for self-paced independent study and includes prompts for use in teaching teams and professional learning communities (PLCs). Users are granted access for one academic year and are encouraged to utilize the resources and tools included in each course at critical stages of their curriculum implementation.

BetterLesson Professional Learning

Better Lesson Coaches offer customized and personalized teacher and leader training and will work with schools and districts on-site and/or virtually. BetterLesson Coaching combines their learn-by-doing methodology with the right coaching frequency to create real change. Coaches collaborate with educators to ensure a focus on a manageable set of outcomes during a program regardless of duration. For more information on available learning opportunities, please visit betterlesson.com

Teaching Lab Professional Learning

Teaching Lab is a nonprofit organization with a mission to fundamentally shift the paradigm of teacher professional learning to achieve educational equity. Teaching Lab envisions a world where teachers and students thrive together in communities that enable life-long learning and meaningful lives. Research suggests that effective professional learning incorporates three critical components:

1. Core academic content embedded in exceptional instructional materials and aligned to research-based practices (what we call "head"); Teacher-led communities that build both social capital and buy-in (what we call "Heart"); and Structured and repeated cycles of learning in the classroom (what we call "Habits).

Teaching Lab integrates these research-based components by creating "Labs" in school systems. A Lab is a group of teachers of the same subject working with students in the same or similar grade levels within a network of schools. Labs are led by two or more Lab Leaders, who are experienced local teachers and instructional coaches who support their colleagues' development and take on responsibility for professional learning over time. Labs center their work on curriculum-specific professional learning Content Modules created by Teaching Lab and vetted by experts. Content Modules support repeated Cycles of learning that align with student-facing materials to drive teacher professional learning. Cycles last four to six weeks to allow for teachers to apply and evaluate new learning. Labs complete two to four Cycles each school year.

Product Specifications

Describe what a school or district needs to implement your curriculum successfully, including instructional hours and technological infrastructure. Provide basic information about what products are associated with the curriculum (e.g., what texts a typical purchase includes, what tools are openly available online).

EL Education's K-2 Language Arts + Lab curriculum engages primary learners in content-based lessons and deep studies of compelling topics that build literacy skills as they learn, while honoring students' needs for movement, stories, and imagination. The Modules and Labs are two hours of literacy instruction per day.

To implement successfully, each classroom will need:

- Teacher Materials, available in digital or print
- Student Workbooks, available in digital or print
- Required Tradebooks, available through Open Up Resources, kitted by grade and module
- Literacy Lab Materials Kit, available through Open Up Resources

The K-2 Reading Foundations Skills Block focuses on the building blocks of spoken and written language: the ability to break words apart and blend them back together, common spelling patterns, and word decoding skills. During the Reading Foundations Skills block, students engage with explicit and systematic phonemic awareness and phonics instruction to learn decoding that will enhance fluency. In addition, students develop automaticity around reading, internalizing predictably patterned words in context as well as smoothly and accurately reading basic sentence patterns and texts. The Skills Block curriculum is an additional hour of literacy per day.

To implement successfully, each classroom will need:

- Teacher Materials, available in digital format or print
- Student Decodable Readers, available in digital format or print

The EL Education 3-5 Language Arts curriculum honors students' growing capacity to read complex texts, write with depth, and explore pressing issues in the world around them. Students build literacy skills through complex text analysis, and an additional literacy block accelerates their achievement. The Grade 3-5 Additional Language and Literacy Block (ALL Block) complements and supports the Module lessons. The ALL Block includes three units, parallel to the three units of the Module. In addition, the ALL Block reinforces and offers opportunities to practice the components covered in the Module lessons, and activities are differentiated based on student need. The 3-5 Modules and ALL Block are two hours of literacy per day.

To implement successfully, each classroom will need:

- Teacher Materials, available in digital format or print
- Student Workbooks, available in digital format or print
- Required Tradebooks, available through Open Up Resources, kitted by module

Open Up Resources fully supports the implementation of EL Education K-5 ELA curriculum in school districts, from PD to printed curricula, kitted with trade books and laboratory materials. EL Education K-5 English Language Arts Curriculum is an Open Educational Resources (OER) and free to download and use with a CC-BY license [here](#). In addition to teacher and student materials, schools and districts should consider their plan for professional learning - one of the most important components of a successful implementation.

EL EDUCATION TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

EL Education Teacher Survey Results	
Highly recommend	64%
Recommend	28%
Recommend with some reservations	7%
Do not recommend	0%

Total Highly Recommended and Recommend	92%
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EL EDUCATION STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

EL Education Student Survey Results (based off the highest rating)	
How do you like the texts we have read together?	75.2% Great
How do you like the writing we have been doing in class?	64.6% Great
How do you like the activities we have been doing in reading class?	79.4% Great
Do you think we have been learning alot this year with the books we use?	84.6% Lots of Learning

WIT & WISDOM TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

Wit & Wisdom Education Teacher Survey Results	
Highly recommend	65%
Recommend	21%
Recommend with some reservations	13%
Do not recommend	0%

Total Highly Recommended and Recommend	86%
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WIT & WISDOM STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

Wit & Wisdom Student Survey Results (based off the highest rating)	
How do you like the texts we have read together?	63.1% Great
How do you like the writing we have been doing in class?	48.8% Great
How do you like the activities we have been doing in reading class?	58.9% Great
Do you think we have been learning alot this year with the books we use?	74.3% Lots of Learning

WIT & WISDOM 3 YEAR & 6 YEAR CONTRACT

GREAT MINDS

Wit and Wisdom 3 Year Contract - Great Minds		Wit and Wisdom 6 Year Contract - Great Minds	
WW Print Materials	\$188,494.00	WW Print Materials	\$286,768.00
WW Online/Print	\$9,315.00	WW Online/Print	\$7,757.00
Geodes Print	\$79,812.00	Geodes Print	\$79,812.00
WW Online	\$51,833.00	WW Online	\$103,666.00
Geodes PD	\$3,900.00	Geodes PD	\$3,900.00
Geodes Online	\$7,457.00	Geodes Online	\$18,643.00
WW PD	\$15,600.00	WW PD	\$15,600.00
TOTAL	\$366,901.00	TOTAL	\$516,146.00

EL EDUCATION: 3 YEAR & 6 YEAR CONTRACT

IMAGINE LEARNING

EL Education 3 Year Contract - Imagine Learning		EL Education 6 Year Contract - Imagine Learning	
Print/Digital (1 yr print/6 yr digital)		Print/Digital (1 yr print/6 yr digital)	
Trade Book (Req/Rec.)		Trade Book (Req/Rec.)	
K-2 Lab Kits		K-2 Lab Kits	
PD Plan (Better Lesson)		PD Plan (Better Lesson)	
Teacher Modules	\$19,624.00	Teacher Modules	\$19,624
TOTAL	\$436,284.00	TOTAL	\$507,537.00
Geodes Print, PD, Online	\$91,169	Geodes Print, PD, Online	\$102,355
TOTAL	\$527,453.00	TOTAL	\$629,516



Tewksbury Public Schools

139 Pleasant Street
Tewksbury, MA 01876

MEMORANDUM

To: Tewksbury School Committee

From: Brenda Theriault-Regan
Superintendent of Schools

Date: April 11, 2023

Re: 2024 School Committee Meeting Calendar

This is an informational item only. No vote is required.

The following is the draft of the 2024 School Committee meeting Calendar. This is informational only, no vote is required. The agenda item will be on the May 2023 agenda for consideration of the Committee.

School Committee - Draft 4-12-2023

TEWKSBURY SCHOOL COMMITTEE 2024 MEETING SCHEDULE

Meetings are held on Wednesday Evenings at 5:30 PM or as identified on the School Committee posted agenda.
Location: Tewksbury Memorial High School - 320 Pleasant Street, Tewksbury, MA 01876
Large Group instruction Room #1 (LGI-1) or as identified on the posted agenda
Agendas are posted on the district website, [Agendas & Minutes](#).

January 17, 2024	Regular Meeting/Budget Workshop	Budget Workshop / Regular Meeting
February 14, 2024	Regular Meeting	PUBLIC HEARING (BUDGET)
TBD	FinCom Meeting	at Town Hall – School Committee will attend.
March 13, 2024	Regular Meeting	PUBLIC HEARING (BUDGET)
April 10, 2024	PM – Reorganization Meeting PM – Regular Meeting	Reorganization Meeting will precede the Regular Meeting on April 12, 2024
TBD*	Annual Town Meeting	School Committee will attend Annual Town Meeting
TBD*	Special Town Meeting / Annual Town Meeting (Reconvened)	School Committee will attend Special Town Meeting and Annual Town Meeting (Reconvened)
May 15, 2024	Regular Meeting	
May 29, 2024	Regular Meeting	
June 12, 2024	Regular Meeting	
July 24, 2024 (or 17th)	Regular Meeting	
August 14, 2024	School Committee/Admin Retreat	3:00 PM – PM TMHS (LG1)
August 14, 2024	Regular Meeting	
September 18, 2024	Regular Meeting	
TBD*	Special Town Meeting	School Committee will attend Special Town Meeting
October 16, 2024	Regular Meeting	
November 13, 2024	Regular Meeting	
December 11, 2024	Regular Meeting	

TPS District Strategy

The Tewksbury Public Schools community believes that our educational program will encompass a current, research-based teaching, learning, and assessment approach that promotes consistent growth among our students and staff to achieve academic, social, and emotional success for all students.

*Date subject to vote by Select Board

New Business



Tewksbury Public Schools

MEMORANDUM

To: School Committee Members
From: Brenda Theriault-Regan
Superintendent of Schools
Date: April 12, 2023
Re: Last Day of School for the 2022-2023 School Year

This Requires a Roll Call Vote

The Tewksbury Public Schools 2022-2023 School Calendar included five snow days with an anticipated last day of school on June 23, 2023. During the 2022-2023 school year there was one (1) snow day on January 20, 2023. It is the recommendation of the Superintendent for the last day of school to be Friday, June 16, 2023.

June 16, 2023 is a half-day of school adhering to the early release schedule as follows:

Tewksbury Memorial High School	10:40 a.m.
John Wynn Middle School	10:50 a.m.
John Ryan Elementary School	11:25 a.m.
K-4 Elementary Schools	11:55 a.m.

This does require a Roll Call vote by the School Committee.

Tewksbury Public Schools

139 Pleasant Street
Tewksbury, MA 01876

MEMORANDUM

To: Tewksbury School Committee

From: Brenda Theriault-Regan
Superintendent of Schools

Date: April 12, 2023

Re: 2023-2024 School Choice Vote

This Requires a Roll Call Vote

The Inter-district School Choice Law (G.L. c.76, s.12B) requires all districts to accept incoming school choice students unless the School Committee votes not to participate. The School Committee is required to take an annual vote. The Superintendent is required to notify the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) of the action taken by the School Committee. This notification must be electronically submitted prior to June 1st.

I am recommending the School Committee vote not to participate in the School Choice Program. I am offering this recommendation in consideration of the following reasons:

- The continued work associated with the construction at the Center Elementary School.
- The uncertainty of continued operation of our schools.

Thank you for your consideration. This requires a Roll Call vote by the School Committee.