

Publisher Response: Grades K-2

Since Bookworms is about the power of research and literature together to enhance achievement, knowing its story will help you to understand this review.

Bookworms began as the work of two university reading researchers: Mike McKenna and Sharon Walpole. It was available for free on a simple website. You can still see it there (bookwormsreading.org). Amazing things happened with those first materials. Many schools used them, and some made dramatic improvements to achievement. EdReports reviewers did a painstaking review of that initial curriculum. You can see it here, with Comprehensive Reading Solutions as “publisher.”

Sharon and Mike had never seen the EdReports rubric. They were only influenced by the standards and by the existing research. That review identified (correctly) the absence of a full writing curriculum and of culminating tasks. Partnership with Open Up Resources allowed Walpole to design those. She and colleagues at the University of Delaware went point by point through the review and used the reviewers’ comments at each grade level to enhance the original materials; Open Up provided the design expertise to enhance usability.

We are proud of what we built together. Here is a short list of the additions and enhancements in Bookworms K-5 Reading and Writing (2018):

- Daily identification of standards
- Kindergarten dialogic reading lessons to enhance language development
- Handwriting instruction and practice coordinated with phonics instruction
- Research units consistent with standards
- A genre-based writing strategy curriculum moving from sentence-level composition to fully-processed pieces
- Participatory grammar instruction
- Alignment of interactive read-alouds in sequences that complement shared reading to build knowledge
- Varied, high quality culminating tasks included at each grade level and evident across a year’s worth of material (see 1h below), each engaging students in reading, writing, listening, and speaking

Bookworms may be hard to understand compared with other curricula because it is entirely different. It is aggressively paced. The magic of Bookworms is that its skin looks simple. The instruction is precise. A very small number of instructional routines are used repetitively to ensure that teachers can maximize productive student time actually reading and writing. A full tier-two intervention is included, along with chances to accelerate achievement. What makes this simple skin work is the very complex skeleton that holds it together.

Scores on this Ed Reports review are nearly identical to the scores of the initial team. The curriculum, though, is entirely revised. The revision directly addressed the items in the initial review and, we believe, made the curriculum even stronger. Below we provide evidence for this strength, organized by indicator, so readers can judge for themselves.

Indicator 1h

Bookworms is not organized in units – it is organized in grade levels. We provide two extensive culminating tasks to demonstrate grade-level standards at the end of each year. Those tasks are set up from the start of the year, with shorter culminating tasks that occur throughout the year (see list below). Reading in Bookworms informs writing, and both are sequenced to build deep text structure knowledge. At the end of kindergarten, children spend over 11 hours, across two weeks, producing culminating tasks in narrative and opinion structures. In first grade, they spend 15 hours across two weeks. In grade 2, they spend over 22 hours, across four weeks, linking reading, writing, listening and speaking as they work on these two extensive culminating tasks.

Each grade level includes shorter culminating tasks across the year:

Grade K

- Opinion writing: Week 29
- Narrative writing: Week 33
- Descriptive/Informative: Week 34
- Book review and commercial: Week 35
- Narrative: Week 36

Grade 1

- Descriptive writing: Week 9
- Informative writing: Week 16
- Personal narrative: Week 22
- Descriptive book: Week 24
- How To Book: Week 27
- Opinion writing: Week 32
- Book review and commercial: Week 34
- Narrative: Week 35

Grade 2

- Descriptive Book: Week 6
- Research writing: Weeks 8-9
- Brochure about Native Americans: Week 14
- Opinion Writing: Week 24
- Comparison of two folktales: Week 32
- Book Review and Advertisement: Week 35
- Narrative: Week 36

The coherent sequences of text-based questions and tasks can be found in the ELA lesson plans for the units above. You will see that many extend attention to texts from Shared Reading. The sequences of text-based questions and tasks build knowledge and skills demonstrated in culminating tasks. Teachers confirm (and build) student readiness with each set of questions and text-based tasks.

The sequences of high-quality text-based questions, activities, and tasks are arranged so that ideas develop from one lesson to the next, supporting students in synthesizing their learning for each culminating task.

Indicator 2a

Bookworms texts were selected to build reading confidence and competence and specifically reordered to address this indicator. We build knowledge through our interactive read alouds, alternating narratives more complex than those the students are reading with sets of science and social studies information books that build knowledge of grade-appropriate topics.

We have added tables to explicitly address this indicator, which identify the social studies and science topics connected through texts throughout the year. All are grade-level appropriate and provide support for concepts that will be developed deeply in science and social studies.

Grade K

Week 12-14: American History
Week 22-23: Key Historical Figures
Week 26-38: Life Cycles
Week 29-30: Earth Science
Week 34: Plants

Grade 1

Week 8: Seasons
Week 10: Historical Roots of Thanksgiving
Week 12-13: Key Historical Figures
Week 21: US Symbols and Traditions
Week 23-24: Scientific Principles
Week 26-27: Plant Life Cycle

Grade 2

Week 4-6: Physical and life Science
Week 8-9: Life Processes
Week 12-16: Native American culture and history
Week 18: Economics
Week 19-24: Historical figures and the Civil Rights Movement
Week 31: Earth/Space Systems
Week 33: American Symbols
Week 34: Life processes and the economics topic of resources

Indicator 2c

The highly structured and scripted lesson plans in Bookworms provide explicit guidance for teachers in supporting students' literacy skills. The design of reading and writing instruction is clear and repetitive. Academic language is built into the lesson script, which includes many key words mentioned in the standards. Guidance is also found in the Teacher Manual (Initial Planning, Instructional Routines for Shared Reading, ELA, and Differentiated Instruction, Evaluating Student Progress).

The daily text-based responses are more challenging over time. Each is an individual comprehension check; the content has not been addressed within the collaborative discussion. In addition, the tasks are labeled by their standards-based writing type. The tasks require analysis of text-based information and provision of evidence/reasons. Over the course of a whole year, integrating knowledge and ideas moves from being directly taught to embedded in student work in culminating tasks (see list in 1h above).

In ELA, teachers engage students in discussion during listening. They also model text-based responses, allowing students to learn how to answer these inferential, text-based questions in the text structures of narrative, description, and opinion. This modeling informs the work that students do in written responses to Shared Reading.

In Shared Reading, an inferential discussion follows every day's reading. Nearly all of the questions guiding that discussion are inferential, requiring students to make inferences from across areas in the text or from the text to relevant prior knowledge. The questions are sequenced within each discussion so that the discussion itself produces a coherent oral review of that day's content. As the texts are carefully sequenced to be harder over time, the discussion questions are inherently more challenging as the text difficulty increases.

Indicator 2d

Leading up to the final two extensive culminating tasks which we identified, students engage in shorter tasks requiring paired and small-group collaboration and discussion. We did not title these activities as "culminating tasks", but readers can see how they were built to enable mastery of reading, writing, speaking, and listening, and provide students the opportunity to demonstrate comprehension and knowledge of a topic or topics.

Refer to Indicator 1h above for the complete list of grade level culminating tasks. You will find five culminating tasks for grade K, eight culminating tasks for grade 1, and seven culminating tasks for grade 2.

Indicator 2g

The research projects in Bookworms leverage students' content knowledge even though the research skills K-2 students are able to employ independently are restricted by their literacy development. The sequence we provide is designed to develop skills and abilities to use topic-subtopic and sequence of event structures to store and demonstrate knowledge. This knowledge-building comes through the words and illustrations in information books and the rich discussion and vocabulary instruction that accompanies them. Students and teachers work together on short responses for every interactive read aloud. Long research projects are identified below:

Grade K

W6D4-5: Animals that live in shells

W7D4-5: Magnets

W10D4-5: Bees

W32D3-5: Harriett Tubman

Grade 1

W9D2-5: Seasons

W16D3-5: Needs and wants (economics)

W24-W25: Popcorn (how-to)

W27: How to grow a garden

Grade 2

W6-W7: Frogs

W8-W9: Butterflies

W14-W15: Native Americans

We hope that this information adds value for readers.