Off and Running

Ohio's early implementation of its Science of Reading reforms

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THOMAS B. FORDHAM INSTITUTE
ADVANCING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Contents

Glossary

DEW refers to the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, formerly known as the Ohio Department of Education (ODE). This state agency implements most of Ohio's K12 education laws.

Phonics refers to an instructional approach that involves teaching children to match sounds of spoken English with individual letters or groups of letters.[1]

Science of Reading refers to a body of research-based evidence that tells us how students learn to read, including phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics and word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, content knowledge development, and comprehension.[2] Ohio law contains a formal definition of the Science of Reading (see Appendix A.)

Three-cueing refers to an instructional approach that encourages students to rely on "cues"—e.g., a picture or the position of a word in a sentence—to read words. Three-cueing is not considered a scientifically based method of reading instruction and is often embedded in "balanced literacy" and "whole language" literacy programs.[3]

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[1] National Literacy Trust, "What is phonics?" (webpage, last accessed May 21, 2024): https://literacytrust.org.uk/information/what-is-literacy/what-phonics/.

[2] TNTP, "What is the science of reading, and why does it matter?" (blog, October 3, 2023): https://tntp.org/blog/what-is-the-science-of-reading-and-why-does-it-matter/.

[3] ExcelinEd, "Why the three-cueing systems model doesn't teach children to read" (2024): https://excelined.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/ExcelinEd_FactSheet_ThreeCueingDoesNotTeachChildrenToRead.pdf.

Executive summary

In January 2023, Governor Mike DeWine opened his annual state of the state address by proclaiming the "moral imperative" of providing a good education to all Ohio students. Then he turned to specifics about how to fulfill that obligation. After noting the large proportion of children struggling to read proficiently—two in five third graders—he declared a statewide goal of improving elementary-school literacy instruction:

> Today, I am calling for a renewed focus on literacy—and on the way we teach reading in the state of Ohio. ... Not all literacy curriculums are created equal, and sadly, many Ohio students do not have access to the most effective reading curriculum. In our budget, we are making sure that all Ohio children have access to curriculum that is aligned with the evidence-based approaches of the Science of Reading.[4]

True to his word, Governor DeWine shortly thereafter introduced sweeping literacy reforms via his budget plan (House Bill 33). These provisions, which lawmakers would approve that summer, require Ohio public schools to follow the Science of Reading starting in 2024–25. This approach to reading instruction emphasizes phonics to help students "decode" words, as well as knowledge- and vocabulary-rich content to help them comprehend what they're reading. The bill also prohibits use of "three-cueing," a widely used but discredited technique that prompts children to guess at words rather than sounding them out. Recognizing that extra resources were needed to transition schools successfully to the Science of Reading, lawmakers budgeted $169 million for better instructional materials, professional development, and literacy coaching.

To prepare schools for the transition, the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (DEW) recently laid the groundwork for classroom-level implementation of scientifically based reading programs. This report focuses on three important steps the agency has taken since passage of HB 33 in July 2023:[5] (1) vetting and approving a list of high-quality instructional materials from which schools may choose; (2) collecting, via statewide survey, information about the English language arts (ELA) curricula used by Ohio schools prior to the recent reforms; and (3) allocating state funds to subsidize the purchase of new curricula and materials.

We offer four key takeaways based on analyses of these activities:

1. **Ohio has wisely kept notoriously weak ELA curricula off of its state-approved list.** DEW has curated an approved list of core elementary (grades K–5) curricula that includes highly respected programs such as *Core Knowledge Language Arts*, *EL Education*, and *Wit & Wisdom*, while excluding less effective curricula that promote three-cueing, such as Fountas & Pinnell's *Classroom* and Lucy Calkins' *Units of Study*. In total, DEW approved fifteen core ELA curricula for use starting next school year (the full list of approved programs, as of May 24, 2024, appears on page 9).

2. **Just one-third of Ohio districts have been using core ELA elementary curricula fully aligned to new state requirements.** Based on results from its statewide survey of curricula used in 2022–23, DEW grouped districts and charter schools into three categories: *aligned*, *partially aligned*, or *not aligned* to the state-approved materials list. The figure below indicates that districts statewide were evenly split among the three categories. Urban districts were more likely to have aligned curricula (42 percent), while suburban districts and charters were least likely (23 and 28 percent, respectively).

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4 Governor Mike DeWine, "2023 State of the State Address" (January 31, 2023): https://governor.ohio.gov/media/news-and-media/governor-dewines-2023-state-of-the-state-address-01312023.

5 Teacher professional development, literacy coaching, and teacher-preparation reform are also crucial elements of the overall literacy reform package and will be reviewed in future analyses.

Figure ES-1: Districts and charters' alignment (2022–23) to the state's approved curricula list for 2024–25
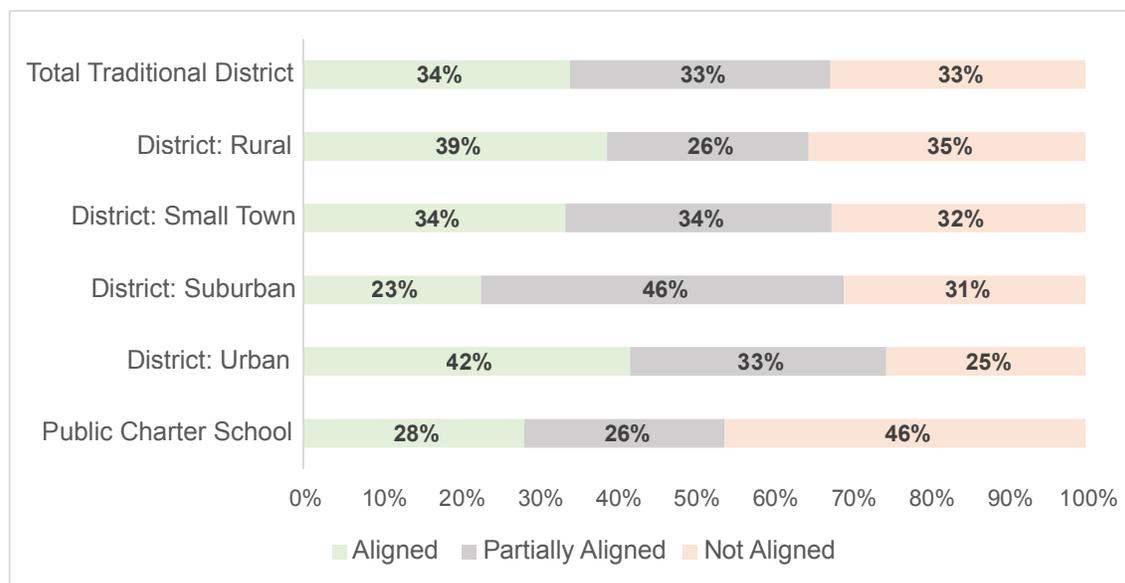
Source: Ohio DEW, table titled "HQIM Subsidy Allocation Spreadsheet April 2024." **Note**: DEW's groupings are based on the ELA materials that districts and charters reported using in 2022–23 (pre-reform). The categories are as follows: *aligned*—used a state-approved core ELA curriculum; *partially aligned*—used a state-approved supplemental program (but not core); *not aligned*—did not use a state-approved core or supplemental program. For more on "core" and "supplemental" programs, see page 8 of the report; for more about the district typologies (e.g. rural or urban), see page 12.

Moving forward, schools with aligned ELA curricula may continue to use their existing programs, but those with partially or nonaligned programs will need to implement new ones. As discussed on page 10, schools needing to adopt new curricula should consider those containing both solid foundational skills—e.g., phonics—and strong knowledge-building elements.

3. **More than half of Ohio's lowest-performing districts, based on third-grade reading proficiency, will be undertaking curriculum changes.** When focusing on the lowest ten percent of districts as gauged by their students' reading proficiency in third grade (*n*=60), the survey found that thirty-four used nonaligned or partially aligned curricula in 2022–23. Of those districts, thirteen reported using either a district-developed program or only a supplemental program, while another twenty-one used non-approved core curricula.

4. **Districts and charter schools that previously used nonaligned curricula received more state financial support for new materials**. Based on survey findings, DEW allocated most of the state's $64 million set aside for instructional materials to districts needing to make more extensive curricula changes. Districts reporting use of nonaligned curricula in 2022–23 received on average $121 per PK–5 student[6] to purchase new materials, while those using partially aligned curricula received $101 per PK–5 student. Districts previously using approved materials—and thus not required to make substantial updates—received $37 per PK–5 student.

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[6] Though not the focus of this report, the state will also require district- or charter-operated preschools to use state-approved reading curricula; this is why the amounts are reported on a PK–5 enrollment basis.

To its credit, Ohio is moving full speed ahead in implementing its literacy reforms. To keep the push going, the report offers five policy recommendations. In brief, they are as follows (more detail starts at page 17):

- **Maintain a high bar for inclusion on the state-approved ELA materials list.** As the curriculum landscape continues to evolve, DEW should maintain a strong gatekeeping role by approving high-quality programs and keeping weak ones off the list.
- **Continue state investments that support the Science of Reading.** The previous state budget set aside generous sums to support the immediate needs of schools transitioning to the Science of Reading. Implementation will continue into the next biennium (FYs 2026 and 2027) and lawmakers should continue to allocate funds to sustain these efforts.
- **Increase transparency about which ELA curricula districts and individual schools are using.** Parents and communities should have easy access to information about the curricula used by their local schools. To this end, DEW should create a user-friendly dashboard that displays each district and school's ELA curricula (core, supplemental, and intervention).
- **Push especially hard for rigorous implementation in low-performing schools.** Struggling readers stand to benefit greatly from these reforms, but that promise won't be realized if implementation is poor. To ensure the strongest possible alignment of instruction to the Science of Reading in low-performing schools, lawmakers should require DEW to comprehensively review their literacy programs on an annual or biennial basis.
- **Evaluate the impacts of the literacy-reform effort.** The legislature should require studies that gauge which specific curricula and programs are most effective. Results would help support school leaders as they continue to make decisions about which materials to put into teachers' hands, and how best to support their work in the classroom.

Under the leadership of the DeWine administration, Ohio's literacy reforms are off and running. Now the long-term work of classroom implementation begins. If state and local leaders stay patient and resolute—keep their eye on the ball—more students will become skilled readers, will progress through the upper grades without falling behind, and will leave high school ready for their next steps.

Ohio's ambitious literacy-reform efforts

Ohio policymakers have long understood the critical role of literacy in helping students reach their full potential. Within the past two decades, they have enacted policies aimed at lifting reading standards and increasing proficiency. For example, under former governor John Kasich, Ohio enacted the Third Grade Reading Guarantee in 2012. This legislation requires schools to annually screen students in grades K–3 for reading deficiencies and develop improvement plans for those identified as off track. Lawmakers also included a mandatory retention policy to ensure that students who fell short of a state-defined target on a third-grade reading assessment received extra time and supports.

The Guarantee has pushed Ohio schools to prioritize early intervention, and data suggest that the policy moved the achievement needle.[7] Regrettably, one component of the guarantee, the retention provision, was weakened via the most recent state budget bill (House Bill 33, enacted in July 2023).[8] Yet in that very same legislation, lawmakers gave literacy a significant boost by enacting provisions that push for more effective reading curricula and instruction. Those are issues that the Guarantee had not fully addressed but have become ripe for change,

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[7] Ani Ruhil, Lisa Neilson, Caroline Barto, and Josh Hawley, *Initial Results from the Third Grade Reading Guarantee Analysis*, Ohio Education Research Center/Ohio Excels (June 2023): https://www.ohioexcels.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Full-Report-Third-Grade-Reading-Guarantee-Analysis-6-12-2023.pdf.

[8] Documents and analysis related to House Bill 33 of the 135th General Assembly are available at: https://www.lsc.ohio.gov/budget/135/main-operating-budget/as-enacted. For more about the Third Grade Reading Guarantee in its current form, see Aaron Churchill, "Ohio lawmakers gut the third grade reading guarantee. What now?" Thomas B. Fordham Institute (blog, July 11, 2023): https://fordhaminstitute.org/ohio/commentary/ohio-lawmakers-gut-third-grade-reading-guarantee-what-now and Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, "Third Grade Reading Guarantee," (webpage, last accessed May 21, 2024): https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Literacy/Third-Grade-Reading-Guarantee

as literacy experts and advocates, often parents themselves, have pressed harder for scientifically based reading practices in elementary schools. They have rightly pointed to decades of research demonstrating the superiority of phonics-based instruction and the critical role of background knowledge for reading comprehension,[9] while also raising concerns about the continuing use of ineffective methods such as three-cueing.[10]

Ohio's latest initiative aims to move schools toward the Science of Reading in three ways:

High-quality instructional materials: HB 33 requires DEW to establish a list of core ELA curricula and intervention programs that are "aligned with the Science of Reading and strategies for effective literacy instruction." It further stipulates that all public schools must use materials from the state-approved list starting in 2024–25. With limited exceptions, these materials cannot include three-cueing to teach children to read.[11] DEW was also tasked with fielding a baseline survey of schools' pre-HB 33 ELA curricula and collecting annual information about ELA curricula in future years.

Professional development (PD): To support effective implementation of new curricula, HB 33 requires educators to complete a PD course in the Science of Reading unless they've already completed similar training. Upon course completion, stipends of $400 or $1,200 are provided to teachers, depending on which grade and subject they teach. The course must be completed by June 30, 2025. HB 33 also calls for literacy coaches that support educators serving in the state's lowest-performing schools as gauged by students' reading proficiency. Roughly 100 coaches will be deployed to provide more intensive, hands-on PD for teachers in those schools.

Teacher preparation: State lawmakers also took steps to ensure that colleges of education adequately prepare prospective teachers in the Science of Reading. Per HB 33, the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) must implement an audit process that reviews preparation programs' alignment to the Science of Reading. ODHE will begin these audits in January 2025. The bill also requires the chancellor of ODHE to revoke program approval if a review uncovers inadequate alignment to the Science of Reading and the deficiencies are not addressed within one year.

As shown in table 1, Ohio lawmakers set aside substantial funds to support these efforts. In total, the state will spend $169 million in FYs 2024 and 2025 to support the initiative, with the largest portion going toward teachers' PD stipends ($86 million) and subsidies to purchase new curricula and materials ($64 million). Another $18 million will support literacy coaches, and $1 million is allotted to help teacher-preparation programs transition to the Science of Reading (of which $150,000 supports the ODHE audits).

Table 1: State funding set aside for literacy reforms, combined amounts for FY24 and FY25

Reform area	State appropriation
High-quality instructional materials	$64 million
Professional development	$86 million
Literacy coaches	$18 million
Teacher preparation	$1 million
Total spending on literacy reforms	**$169 million**

Source: Ohio Legislative Service Commission, *Analysis of Enacted Budget for the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (DEW)* and *the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE)*.

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[9] National Reading Panel, *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction* (April 2000): https://www.nichd.nih.gov/publications/pubs/nrp/smallbook and Anne Castles, Kathleen Rastle, and Kate Nation, "Ending the Reading Wars: Reading Acquisition from Novice to Expert," *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* vol. 19, no. 1 (June 2018): https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1529100618772271.

[10] Emily Hanford, "Sold a Story," APM Reports: https://features.apmreports.org/sold-a-story/ and Sarah Mervosh, "'Kids Can't Read': The Revolt That Is Taking On the Education Establishment," *New York Times* (April 24, 2023): https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/16/us/science-of-reading-literacy-parents.html.

[11] Three-cueing may be allowed if it appears in a special-education student's IEP, or if DEW approves a school's request to use three-cueing with a particular student (provided he or she is not on a reading improvement plan).

While all elements of the literacy-reform package are crucial, this report focuses on the early implementation of the high-quality curricula requirement. Within the past year, DEW has completed key actions in this area, including the creation of an approved instructional materials list, release of its pre-reform curricula survey results, and the allocation of funds for instructional materials. DEW released the initial list of approved core ELA curricula and survey results on March 1, 2024. I cover the state-approved list first, as it helps interpret the survey findings. The allocation of materials funds is covered last, as it occurred several weeks later.

Identifying high-quality instructional materials

As discussed above, state lawmakers tasked DEW with creating a catalog of high-quality instructional materials that are aligned with the Science of Reading from which schools must select. Starting in 2024–25, all public schools must use "core" ELA curricula—programs designed for use in general education settings—in grades K–5 from this state-approved list. To meet this requirement, schools must use either a **core comprehensive program** or a **coherent set of core and supplemental programs**.[12] The box provides definitions that distinguish core comprehensive curricula from the hybrid—core plus supplement—option.

To develop state-approved lists of ELA curricula (both core and supplemental), DEW implemented a vetting process that took advantage of the widely used curricula ratings published by EdReports. Since 2015, this national, independent nonprofit has evaluated hundreds of ELA curricula to determine if they align with high-quality academic standards.[13] For each program, EdReports provides an "alignment" rating along three tiers:[14] Meets, Partially Meets, and Does Not Meet. These ratings, though sometimes debated by literacy experts,[15] often serve as an initial screening tool for states and local districts,[16] and DEW leveraged this system to approve, or not, both core and supplemental foundational skills curricula in the following way.[17]

Curricula terminology

Elementary ELA curricula are typically categorized as: (1) core comprehensive; (2) core, no foundational skills; or (3) supplemental foundational skills.

Core comprehensive curricula cover all grade-level ELA standards.

Core, no foundational skills curricula cover most grade-level ELA standards such as comprehension and speaking and listening, but do not include foundational skills such as phonics and print concepts.

Supplemental foundational skills programs are designed to complement a core ELA curriculum that does not adequately cover foundational skills.

For more detailed definitions, see Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, *High-Quality Instructional Materials in English Language Arts: PreK-Grade 5 Core Curriculum and Instructional Materials Approved List* (p. 5-6) and Jamilah Hicks, "How to Select a High-Quality K – 5 ELA Curriculum," EdReports (blog), September 9, 2023.

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12 Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, *Guidance for High-Quality Instructional Materials and Core Curriculum in English Language Arts and Reading Intervention Materials Requirements* (February 2024): https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/English-Language-Art/Resources-for-English-Language-Arts/High-Quality-Instructional-Materials-in-English-La/HQIM-Core-Curriculum-Reading-Intervention-Materials-Guidance.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US.

13 As of 2021, EdReports had reviewed 186 core elementary ELA curricula and thirty foundational skills supplemental programs. See EdReports, *Data Snapshot: K-12 English Language Arts Instructional Materials* (March 2023): https://www.edreports.org/resources/article/data-snapshot-k-12-english-language-arts-materials.

14 For core ELA programs that achieve a Meets "alignment" rating, EdReports also includes a "usability" rating. DEW, however, relied strictly on the "alignment" ratings to develop its approved materials list. For more about its ratings and review process, see EdReports, "Our Process" (webpage, last accessed May 21, 2024): https://edreports.org/process#intro.

15 Natalie Wexler, "Literacy experts say some EdReports ratings are misleading," *Forbes* (blog, February 22, 2024): https://www.forbes.com/sites/nataliewexler/2024/02/22/literacy-experts-say-some-edreports-ratings-are-misleading/?sh=6c1813bc4128 and Karen Vaites, "Ohio offers an object lesson on issues in the curriculum space," (blog, March 25, 2024): https://eduvaites.org/2024/03/25/ohio-offers-an-object-lesson-on-issues-in-the-curriculum-space/.

16 Jocelyn Pickford and Kate Poteet, "States take many paths to advance high-quality curriculum and align professional learning," National Association of State Boards of Education (January 2024): https://www.nasbe.org/states-take-many-paths-to-advance-high-quality-curriculum-and-align-professional-learning/.

17 Provided it receives a satisfactory review from by another state, a curriculum not rated by EdReports could apply for DEW approval as well. Description of the review process and rubric is available at Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, *High-Quality Instructional Materials in English Language Arts: PreK-Grade 5 Core Curriculum and Instructional Materials Approved List: Vendor Guidance and Request for Applications (2023-24)*: https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/English-Language-Art/Resources-for-English-Language-Arts/High-Quality-Instructional-Materials-in-English-La/Kindergarten-Grade-5-English-Language-Arts-Foundational-Skills-Review-Rubric.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US.

- Top-rated **Meets** curricula received a streamlined review, in which the publisher attested in writing to DEW that the program aligns to the Science of Reading.[18] Curricula approved through this pathway include *Core Knowledge Language Arts* (grades K–5) and *Wit & Wisdom* (grades 3–5).
- Curricula receiving a **Partially Meets** rating underwent a more extensive review in which DEW examined materials and assessed their alignment with the Science of Reading. Programs approved through this process include *Bookworms* (K–5) and *Open Court* (K–5).
- Poorly rated **Does Not Meet** curricula were not eligible for approval. This prohibited Fountas & Pinnell's *Classroom* and Lucy Calkins' *Units of Study* curricula from approval, along with several others.

This process yielded Ohio's list of approved ELA curricula for grades K–5. The top part of Table 2 displays fifteen approved core comprehensive curricula, while the bottom panel shows two additional grades K–2 curricula in the category of "core, no foundational skills" that were state-approved but must be paired with a supplemental program to meet the statutory requirements.

Table 2: State-approved core ELA curricula, grades K–5

Publisher	Curriculum	Grades approved
Core comprehensive		
Amplify	***Core Knowledge Language Arts (2022)***	**K–5**
American Reading Company	***ARC Core (2017)***	**K–5**
Benchmark Education Company	*Benchmark Advance (2022)*	K–5
Center for the Collaborative Classroom	*Being a Reader (2021/2023)*	K–5
Fishtank Learning	***Fishtank Plus ELA (2021)***	**3–5**
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt	*Into Reading (2020)*	K–5
Imagine Learning	*Imagine Learning EL Education 1st Ed. (2019)*	K–5
Savvas Learning	*MyView Literacy (2025)*	K–5
McGraw-Hill	*Open Court (2016/2018, 2023)*	K–5
Open Up Resources	***Bookworms, 1st Ed. (2022)***	**K–5**
Open Up Resources	***Our EL Education (2017)***	**K–5**
Great Minds	***Wit & Wisdom (2016, 2023)***	**3–5**
McGraw-Hill	*Wonders (2020, 2023)*	K–5
The APPLE Group	*Connections: OG in 3D (2007)*	K–2
Zaner-Bloser	*Superkids Reading Program (2017)*	2
*Core, no foundational skills**		
Fishtank Learning	***Fishtank Plus ELA (2021)***	**K-2**
Great Minds	***Wit & Wisdom (2016, 2023)***	**K-2**

Source: Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, "Approved List of Core Curriculum and Instructional Materials" (webpage, last accessed May 24, 2024). **Note**: (*) Districts implementing one of these programs must pair it with a state-approved supplemental foundational skills program (that list appears in Appendix B). **Bold**: Curricula presented in bold have been identified by the Knowledge Matters Campaign as having particularly strong knowledge-building elements (see sidebar below).

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[18] If a core, no-foundational-skills curricula had a Meets rating, it was automatically approved by DEW. There were two such programs that met this criterion (*Wit & Wisdom*, grades K-2, and *Fishtank ELA*, grades K-2).

The vetting process removed ineffective and outdated curricula—a significant step forward in a state where many schools have used inferior programs, as detailed in the next section of this report. Yet even within the state-approved curriculum list, there likely remains some variation in quality. Going beyond Ohio's state-approved (and EdReports-driven) list are several ELA curricula that the Knowledge Matters Campaign identifies as having especially strong vocabulary- and knowledge-building elements that support reading comprehension (see the importance of knowledge-building in the sidebar below). Those programs are in bold in Table 2. Meanwhile, though meeting Ohio's baseline requirements, some literacy experts have questioned whether several of the non-bolded curricula—sometimes called "basal readers"—are too light on knowledge-building.[19] Nevertheless, despite ongoing discussion about what precisely constitutes a high-quality curriculum, DEW has given its stamp of approval to a relatively small number of core ELA programs, especially in light of the dozens of curricula options available.

Knowledge-rich curricula and reading comprehension

So far, phonics has dominated the discussions about the Science of Reading, perhaps because of its strong contrast with three-cueing (and the "balanced literacy" and "whole language" programs that promote it). Yet scholars have also long recognized the need to go beyond phonics to help students become proficient readers. In 2001, the National Reading Panel made vocabulary and comprehension two of its five "pillars" of effective reading (along with phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency). Similarly, the "Scarborough Rope" model of literacy instruction emphasizes both word recognition *and* language comprehension skills, which are driven by vocabulary and background knowledge.[20] E.D. Hirsch, a prominent literacy scholar, has stressed the importance of vocabulary and background knowledge for reading comprehension.[21] A recent "gold standard" experimental study of the *Core Knowledge Language Arts* curriculum, which was developed under Hirsch's leadership, demonstrated remarkable learning gains for students attending schools using the program.[22]

Launched in 2015, the Knowledge Matters Campaign, a national nonprofit group, has spearheaded an organized push for knowledge-rich literacy curricula. Guided by an impressive group of scholars, it has identified eight ELA curricula as having exemplary, content-rich material. In grades K–5, these programs include *ARC Core*, *Bookworms*, *Core Knowledge Language Arts*, *EL Education*, *Fishtank ELA*, and *Wit & Wisdom*, programs that are all bolded in Table 2 above.[23] To distinguish these curricula from other state-approved programs, the analyses that follow in the next section of this report also highlight those recommended by the Knowledge Matters Campaign.

Schools' prereform curricula, and financial support for change

Ohio has not historically required schools to report their curricula publicly, so there's not been much information about which programs schools have been using. Seeking a systemwide picture of existing literacy curricula, state lawmakers in HB 33 directed DEW to gather information via a statewide survey. In September 2023, DEW fielded the survey, which garnered near-universal response rates (99 percent of districts and charters). Schools were asked about the core ELA curricula (grades K–5) and intervention programs (grades K–12) that they

[19] Kate Walsh, "Basal Readers: The lost opportunity to build the knowledge that propels comprehension," *American Educator* (Spring 2003): https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/Basal_readers.pdf.

[20] National Reading Panel, *Teaching Children to Read* (2000) and International Dyslexia Association, "Scarborough's Reading Rope: A Groundbreaking Infographic," (blog, April 2018): https://dyslexiaida.org/scarboroughs-reading-rope-a-groundbreaking-infographic/.

[21] E. D. Hirsch, "The Case for Bringing Content into the Language Arts Block and for a Knowledge-Rich Curriculum Core for all Children," *American Educator* (Spring 2006): https://www.aft.org/ae/spring2006/hirsch.

[22] David Grissmer, et. al., "How Building Knowledge Boosts Literacy and Leraning," *Education Next* (blog, March 13, 2024): https://www.educationnext.org/how-building-knowledge-boosts-literacy-and-learning/.

[23] Knowledge Matters Campaign, "Explore Curricula," (webpage, last accessed May 21, 2024): https://knowledgematterscampaign.org/explore-curricula/.

used in 2022–23, just prior to enactment of the state's literacy reforms. The department released results in spring 2024.[24]

Table 3 displays the most commonly used core ELA elementary programs among traditional school districts. We see a wide range of curricula in use as well as variation in their quality, as indicated by whether DEW has since approved the program and whether the Knowledge Matters Campaign has recommended it. The survey also revealed widespread use of ineffective and nonapproved curricula such as *Classroom* and *Units of Study* (they were the fourth and sixth most frequently cited programs). Other nonapproved curricula such as the 2017 edition of *Reading Wonders*[25] and *Journeys* were also common. At the bottom of the table, we see that another forty-nine districts reported use of only a district-developed program. (Under the new legislation, they will need to adopt an approved curriculum.)

More positively, we find signs that some districts have been using high-quality programs. The most-used core ELA program was the state-approved 2020 edition of *Reading Wonders*. The most common programs that are both state-approved *and* Knowledge Matters-recommended were *Core Knowledge Language Arts* and *Wit & Wisdom*. Districts using approved curricula in 2022–23 will be able to continue their use of these programs.

How to read the tables

This section displays results from DEW's statewide survey of core ELA curricula used in 2022–23. To aid interpretation, the following color coding is used: ***Dark green*** indicates that the curriculum is on both DEW's approved materials list *and* Knowledge Matters' list of recommended curricula; ***light green*** indicates that the curriculum is only on DEW's approved list; ***no shading*** indicates that the curriculum is on neither list.

Table 3: Most frequently used core ELA curricula (grades K-5) in 2022–23, Ohio districts (n=604)

Publisher and ELA curricula	*N* of districts reporting use
McGraw-Hill, *Reading Wonders (2020)*	70
McGraw-Hill, *Reading Wonders (2017)*	65
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, *Journeys*	59
Heinemann, Fountas & Pinnell's *Classroom*	55
Amplify, *Core Knowledge Language Arts*	53
Heinemann, Lucy Calkins' *Units of Study*	50
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, *Into Reading*	29
Great Minds, *Wit & Wisdom*	26
Savvas, *MyView Literacy*	20
Savvas, *ReadyGEN*	19
Savvas, *Reading Street*	16
McGraw-Hill, *Open Court*	15
American Reading Company, *ARC Core*	13
Zaner-Bloser, *Superkids*	13
McGraw-Hill, *Treasures*	10
Center for Collaborative Classroom, *Collaborative Literacy*	9
Benchmark Education, *Benchmark Advance*	8
Imagine Learning, *EL Education*	8
District-developed only	49

Source: Author's analysis of DEW survey question regarding districts' core (aka, "tier 1") ELA curricula for grades K–5. **Notes**: This table includes any core curricula that were reported by five or more districts; it excludes supplemental or intervention materials that districts reported in response to the "Tier 1" survey question. Districts could report use of multiple core curricula, and many did so. The vast majority of districts reported curricula at the district level, not for individual schools.

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[24] Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, *Use of High-quality Literacy Instructional and Intervention Materials in Ohio's Elementary Schools: Results from a Statewide Survey* (February 2024): https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/English-Language-Art/Resources-for-English-Language-Arts/High-Quality-Instructional-Materials-in-English-La/SOR-PD-Survey-Results-Report.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US. The Excel file (titled "Full Survey Results Spreadsheet") from which I conduct analyses of survey results is available at this link: https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/English-Language-Art/Resources-for-English-Language-Arts/High-Quality-Instructional-Materials-in-English-La.

[25] *Wonders* was one of only a few curricula for which DEW reported a particular publication year.

Table 4 displays patterns by district typology, a way of grouping schools based on their geographic characteristics. It shows that urban districts were more likely to have implemented state-approved programs prior to the legislative reforms. Suburban districts, on the other hand, were more likely to cite use of nonapproved curricula, notably *Units of Study* and *Classroom*. Rural and small-town districts reported significant use of *Reading Wonders* (2017 and 2020 editions), which helps explain their appearance atop the statewide list in Table 3, as more districts are represented in those typologies.

Table 4: Most frequently used core ELA curricula (grades K−5) in 2022−23, Ohio districts by typology

Publisher and core ELA curricula	N districts reporting use
Urban (n=55)	
Amplify, *Core Knowledge Language Arts*	7
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, *Into Reading*	5
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, *Journeys*	5
Great Minds, *Wit & Wisdom*	5
McGraw-Hill, *Reading Wonders (2017)*	4
McGraw-Hill, *Reading Wonders (2020)*	4
Suburban (n=123)	
Heinemann, Lucy Calkins' *Units of Study*	25
Heinemann, Fountas & Pinnell's *Classroom*	14
Great Minds, *Wit & Wisdom*	10
McGraw-Hill, *Reading Wonders* (2017)	9
Amplify, *Core Knowledge Language Arts*	6
Small Town (n=197)	
McGraw-Hill, *Reading Wonders* (2017)	29
Amplify, *Core Knowledge Language Arts*	24
McGraw-Hill, *Reading Wonders* (2020)	24
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, *Journeys*	22
Heinemann, Fountas & Pinnell's *Classroom*	21
Rural (n=229)	
McGraw-Hill, *Reading Wonders* (2020)	37
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, *Journeys*	26
McGraw-Hill, *Reading Wonders* (2017)	23
Heinemann, Fountas & Pinnell's *Classroom*	16
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, *Into Reading*	16

Note: This table displays the five most frequently reported core ELA curricula by DEW's district typologies.

The next table displays public charter schools' most commonly used curricula. We again see a range of programs in use, with some less-frequently cited curricula among districts being more common among charters (e.g., *Imagine It!* and *Reading Mastery*). Two state-approved programs, *Into Reading* and *Core Knowledge Language Arts*, were the two most widely used by charters in 2022−23.

Table 5: Most frequently used core ELA curricula (grades K-5) in 2022–23, Ohio public charter elementary schools (n=222)

Publisher and core ELA curricula	N of charters reporting use
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, *Into Reading*	19
Amplify, *Core Knowledge Language Arts*	18
Savvas, *Reading Street*	14
Center for Collaborative Classroom, *Collaborative Literacy*	11
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, *Journeys*	11
McGraw-Hill, *Imagine It!*	11
Heinemann, Fountas & Pinnell's *Classroom*	9
Imagine Learning, *EL Education*	8
McGraw-Hill, *Reading Mastery*	8
McGraw-Hill, *Reading Wonders (2020)*	8

While all students will gain from the use of more effective ELA curricula, those struggling to read stand to benefit most. Table 6 displays the specific programs used by the districts with the lowest third-grade ELA proficiency rates in 2022–23. (The "Ohio Eight" urban districts are in bold.) Thirty of these sixty districts reported use of a state-approved core ELA curricula and eleven of them reported the use of a program that's also recommended by the Knowledge Matters Campaign. The other half used non-approved published curricula, district-developed curricula, or did not report a core ELA curriculum on the survey.[26] As discussed in Appendix C, low-performing districts using a state-approved curriculum seem to slightly outperform those using nonapproved curricula on the state's value-added growth measure. But for reasons discussed in that section, this conclusion is tentative, and further research is needed to rigorously evaluate the impacts of curricula decisions, both statewide and in struggling schools.

Table 6: Core ELA curricula (grades K–5) used in 2022–23 among the lowest 10 percent of Ohio districts in third-grade reading proficiency

District	County	Percent proficient in 3rd grade ELA	Core curricula	Core curricula
Lockland	Hamilton	15.4%	*Superkids*	*Engage NY*
North College Hill	Hamilton	24.5%	*MyView Literacy*	*Journeys*
Windham	Portage	25.6%	None reported	
Middletown	Butler	29.1%	*Into Reading*	*Into Literature*
Mt Healthy	Hamilton	29.6%	*Wit & Wisdom*	
Garfield Heights	Cuyahoga	29.8%	*Reach for Reading*	
New Miami	Butler	30.0%	*ELA Guidebooks*	
Lorain	Lorain	30.7%	*Wonders (2017)*	
Winton Woods	Hamilton	31.4%	*ReadyGEN*	
Youngstown	**Mahoning**	**31.5%**	**None reported**	
Cleveland*	**Cuyahoga**	**32.0%**	***EL Education***	***Into Reading***
Campbell	Mahoning	32.1%	*Classroom*	
Willard	Huron	32.5%	*Wonders (2017)*	
Springfield	Clark	33.2%	*Wit & Wisdom*	

[26] The districts marked as "none reported" reported only supplemental or intervention materials in the survey question about core ELA curricula.

District	County	Percent proficient in 3rd grade ELA	Core curricula	Core curricula
Mount Gilead	Morrow	33.3%	*CKLA*	
North Central	Williams	33.3%	*Wonders (no date)*	
Dayton	**Montgomery**	**33.6%**	***MyView Literacy***	
Columbus	**Franklin**	**34.5%**	***Into Reading***	
Canton	**Stark**	**35.1%**	***Journeys***	
Western	Pike	35.4%	*Wonders (2020)*	
Northridge	Montgomery	35.8%	*CKLA*	
Toledo	**Lucas**	**36.0%**	***CKLA***	***MyView Literacy***
Lima	Allen	36.2%	*Open Court*	*Wonders (no date)*
Euclid	Cuyahoga	36.8%	*CKLA*	
Mansfield	Richland	36.9%	*Into Reading*	*Wonders (2020)*
Trotwood-Madison	Montgomery	38.0%	*Wonders (2023)*	
New Boston	Scioto	38.2%	*Wonders (2020)*	
Clay	Scioto	39.1%	District-developed	
Finneytown	Hamilton	39.6%	District-developed	
Maple Heights	Cuyahoga	40.4%	*Units of Study*	
Painesville	Lake	40.5%	None reported	
Whitehall	Franklin	40.6%	None Reported	
Fostoria	Seneca	41.2%	*Wonders*	
Rolling Hills	Guernsey	41.5%	None reported	
Marion	Marion	41.6%	*CKLA*	
Bedford	Cuyahoga	42.4%	*Wonders*	
Akron	**Summit**	**42.8%**	**None reported**	
Chillicothe	Ross	42.9%	*Classroom*	
Bloomfield-Mespo	Trumbull	42.9%	*Journeys*	
East Cleveland	Cuyahoga	43.9%	*Journeys*	
Sandusky	Erie	44.3%	*Reading Street*	
Southern	Meigs	44.6%	*Into Reading*	
Trimble	Athens	44.7%	*Wonders (2020)*	
Kenton	Hardin	45.3%	*Wonders (2017)*	
Portsmouth	Scioto	45.7%	*Wonders (2020)*	
Elyria	Lorain	45.8%	*CKLA*	
Zanesville	Muskingum	46.1%	*Classroom*	
Bowling Green	Wood	47.3%	None reported	
Cincinnati	**Hamilton**	**47.5%**	***EL Education***	***Wit & Wisdom***
Crestline	Crawford	47.8%	None reported	
Washington	Lucas	47.9%	None reported	
South-Western	Franklin	48.2%	*Units of Study*	
East Liverpool	Columbiana	48.3%	None reported	

District	County	Percent proficient in 3rd grade ELA	Core curricula	Core curricula
Warren	Trumbull	48.5%	*Wonders (2020)*	
Hamilton	Butler	48.7%	*EL Education*	
Warrensville Heights	Cuyahoga	48.8%	*Wonders (2020)*	*Wonders (2017)*
Coshocton	Coshocton	48.8%	*Into Reading*	
Groveport Madison	Franklin	48.9%	*Open Court*	
Huntington	Ross	49.4%	*Wonders (2017)*	
Fairport Harbor	Lake	50.0%	None reported	
Liberty	Trumbull	50.0%	None reported	

Notes: This list includes districts in the lowest 10 percent of districts statewide as gauged by their students' third-grade ELA proficiency in 2022–23; the Ohio Eight big-city districts appear in bold. *CKLA = Core Knowledge Language Arts. Wonders* (no date) indicates a district "wrote in" the program in response to the survey item but did not provide a publication year. (*) Cleveland is the only district on this table that reported more than two core ELA curricula. It was one of just a few districts that reported school-level curricula; *EL Education* was used in the majority of its buildings.

Survey results confirm both the heavy lift the state is undertaking to transition schools away from weaker curricula and the wisdom of investing significant dollars to support new ELA programs. As noted earlier, one of the largest funding elements for the initiative is $64 million to subsidize the purchase of instructional materials. For the purposes of allocating funds to districts and charter schools, DEW divided them into three categories based on their survey responses about which programs they used in 2022–23. The categories are as follows:

- **Aligned:** Reported use of a state-approved *core ELA curricula*.[27]
- **Partially aligned:** Reported use of only a state-approved *supplemental foundational skills program*.
- **Not aligned:** Did not report use of a state-approved core or supplemental program.

Figure 1 shows the breakdown of districts and charters by these three categories. Statewide, districts were split evenly among the three categories, with urban districts—perhaps sensing a greater urgency to upgrade curricula—being more likely to be in the aligned category (39 percent), while suburban districts and charters were less likely to be aligned (23 and 28 percent, respectively). Table 7 displays the corresponding number of districts and charters in each of the categories.

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[27] This could either be a core comprehensive or a combination of state-approved core, no foundational skills curricula *and* state-approved supplemental foundational skills curricula.

**Figure 1: District and charters' alignment (2022–23) to the state's approved curricula list for 2024–25**
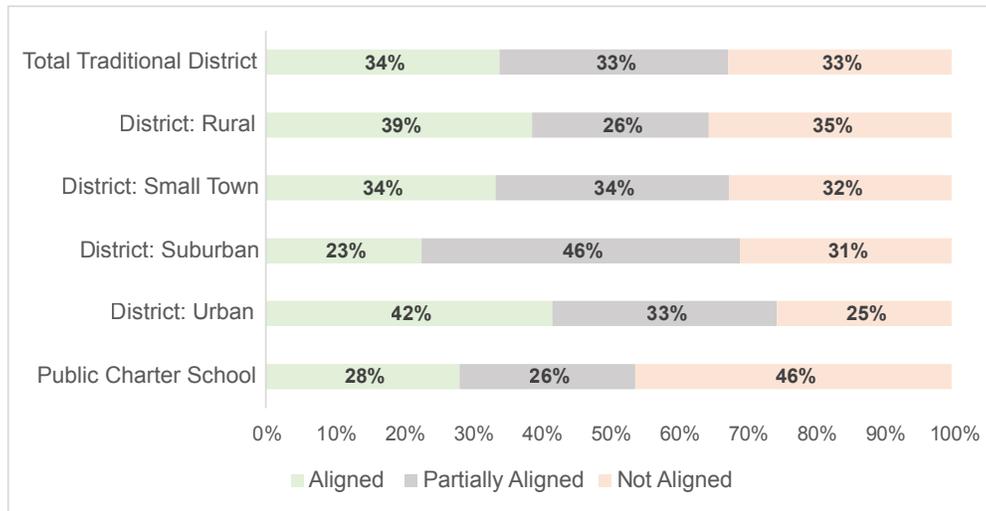
Table 7: Number of districts and charters by their alignment (2022–23) to the state's approved curricula list for 2024–25

	Aligned: Number of districts/charters	**Partially aligned**: Number of districts/charters	**Not aligned**: Number of districts/charters
Total traditional district	**206**	**201**	**198**
District: Rural	89	59	81
District: Small town	66	67	64
District: Suburban	28	57	38
District: Urban	23	18	14
Public charter school*	**65**	**59**	**106**

Source: Ohio DEW, table titled "HQIM Subsidy Allocation Spreadsheet April 2024." **Note**: (*) This count includes one independent STEM school that serves elementary grades.

Based on this grouping methodology, DEW then steered more dollars to nonaligned schools. Table 8 shows that nonaligned districts and charter schools received just under half of the total allocation—$31 million of the $64 million set aside—while those deemed partially aligned and aligned received $23 and $10 million, respectively. On a per-pupil basis (grades PK–5), these sums amount to $121, $100, and $37 for nonaligned, partially aligned, and aligned districts and charters, respectively. Dollars must be used to purchase state-approved instructional materials,[28] whether core ELA curricula, supplemental materials, or intervention programs.

Table 8: Funding allocations to districts and charter schools for instructional materials, by alignment category

Alignment category	Total subsidy amount for instructional materials	Per-pupil (PK–5) subsidy for instructional materials
Not aligned	$30.5 million	$121
Partially aligned	$23.3 million	$100
Aligned	$9.6 million	$37

Note: A small sum ($0.5 million) was distributed to joint vocational districts, charter schools, and STEM schools that do not serve students in grades K–5. They received funds to support the purchase of intervention materials in the upper grades.

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[28] A district or charter school may apply these funds to a previous purchase of state-approved curricula, provided it occurred after July 1, 2023.

Conclusion and recommendations

With literacy reforms solidly on the books and implementation off the ground, Ohio is moving smartly toward more effective reading instruction. But to achieve the intended results of the initiative—higher reading proficiency statewide—Ohio policymakers will need to keep the pedal to the floor, while also exercising patience and resolve when the going gets tough. They must keep in mind that transitioning hundreds of schools to new curricula and instructional practices won't happen overnight. As literacy expert Robert Pondiscio has noted, learning to read "is the long game," requiring time and persistence from both teachers and students.[29] To maintain a strong and sustained push toward better literacy instruction, we conclude with five recommendations for Ohio leaders:

1. **Maintain a high bar for inclusion on the state-approved ELA materials list.** Publishers will inevitably update existing curricula and bring new programs to market. Some will be high-quality and adhere to the Science of Reading, while others will not be as strong. As the curriculum landscape evolves, DEW should maintain a strong gatekeeping role and approve only high-quality materials. In future review cycles, the agency should take into account any new evidence about the effectiveness of specific programs as well as developments in third-party curricula reviews, including at EdReports.[30]

2. **Continue state investments that support the Science of Reading.** Implementation that yields results for students will require time, commitment, and resources. To their credit, lawmakers made a significant down payment on these literacy reforms in the previous biennial budget. The next General Assembly should follow their lead and preserve set-asides for literacy in the upcoming state budget. While the precise uses of dollars should evolve to match the changing needs of schools, additional investments in professional development, literacy coaching, and high-quality materials can help solidify and sustain implementation.[31]

3. **Increase transparency about which ELA curricula districts and individual schools are using.** In addition to the baseline survey of curricula described in this report, state lawmakers directed DEW to collect annual information about ELA curricula moving forward. Yet they did not explicitly require the agency to report this information publicly. In the coming years, DEW should make this information available to the public in a user-friendly format. Akin to Colorado's "curriculum transparency dashboard,"[32] Ohio should create a centralized site that displays core, supplemental, and intervention programs used by each school. Information at an individual building level is important for parents seeking to understand their local schools' curricula (which could vary within a larger district).

4. **Push especially hard for rigorous implementation in low-performing schools.** To ensure that struggling readers receive the best possible instruction, state leaders should press for rigorous implementation of high-quality core instruction and interventions in the lowest-performing schools. In addition to maintaining extra support for teachers via literacy coaches, DEW should also begin to conduct, with the support of literacy experts, on-site reviews of the literacy programs in low-performing elementary schools.[33] These more in-depth reviews would go beyond basic compliance checks and also gauge the quality of implementation, provide feedback and suggestions for improvement, and identify additional supports that may be needed.

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29 Robert Pondiscio, "Getting reading right," *Commentary* (November 2023): https://www.commentary.org/articles/robert-pondiscio/teaching-reading-right/.

30 EdReports recently indicated possible changes in its review process; see Linda Jacobson, "Critics Call 'Consumer Reports' of School Curriculum Slow to Adapt to Science of Reading," *The 74* (May 14, 2024): https://www.the74million.org/article/critics-call-consumer-reports-of-school-curriculum-slow-to-adapt-to-science-of-reading/.

31 For more about how lawmakers could support the literacy initiative in the next budget, see Aaron Churchill, "Education priorities for Ohio's next biennial budget, part 1: Sustained investment for literacy reform," Thomas B. Fordham Institute (blog, April 17, 2024): https://fordhaminstitute.org/ohio/commentary/education-priorities-ohios-next-biennial-budget-part-1-sustained-investment.

32 Colorado Department of Education, "Literacy Curriculum Transparency Dashboard," (website, last accessed May 21, 2024): https://www.cde.state.co.us/code/literacycurriculumtransparency-dashboard.

33 Such schools could be those that have been assigned a literacy coach (they serve in the lowest-performing schools in statewide proficiency in ELA), or elementary schools that are formally identified for "comprehensive support and improvement" under federal law.

5. **Evaluate the impacts of the literacy-reform effort.** As implementation moves forward, research will be critical to identify strengths and weaknesses. State policymakers should commission studies that examine success of the reform package as a whole as well as various aspects of it, such as which specific state-approved curricula are most effective and what types of teacher PD provide the biggest boost. Analyses like these would support school leaders as they continue to make decisions about which materials to put into teachers' hands and how best to support instruction. They would also help guide state leaders as they steer the initiative forward.

Literacy is job number one for Ohio's elementary schools. State leaders are right to insist that all classroom teachers have the curricula, materials, and training needed to do the job right. A wealth of evidence demonstrates that programs aligned with the Science of Reading are most effective at helping children become strong readers—the more so when those programs are also rich in knowledge. With strong implementation in the years ahead, Ohio will have more proficient readers in schools today and a more literate citizenry tomorrow.

Appendices

Appendix A: Ohio's definition of the Science of Reading (ORC 3313.6028)

(A)(1) As used in Title XXXIII of the Revised Code, "science of reading" means an interdisciplinary body of scientific evidence that:

> (a) Informs how students learn to read and write proficiently;

> (b) Explains why some students have difficulty with reading and writing;

> (c) Indicates that all students benefit from explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and writing to become effective readers;

> (d) Does not rely on any model of teaching students to read based on meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues, including a three-cueing approach.

Appendix B: Supplemental foundational skills curricula

Supplemental programs intend to address weaknesses or an absence in a core ELA curriculum's coverage of foundational skills. To meet the state's new curricula requirements, schools must use a state-approved supplemental foundational skills program if they select a state-approved core, no foundational skills curricula. There are just two core, no-foundational-skills curricula approved—*Wit & Wisdom* (K–2) and *Fishtank ELA* (K–2)—so this approach is likely to be less common than selecting a single, comprehensive core curricula. Yet even in that case, schools may choose to purchase supplements that address a weak element in a comprehensive curriculum, and some supplemental programs may also be used in an intervention setting.[34] Using the vetting process described in the main report (see page 8), DEW has approved seventeen supplemental foundational skills curricula (Table A–1).

Table A–1: List of state-approved supplemental foundational skills curricula

Publisher	Curriculum	Grades approved
95 Percent Group	*95 Phonics Core Program (2023)*	K–2
Amplify	*Core Knowledge Language Arts K-2 Skills (2022)*	K–2
Benchmark Education Company	*Benchmark Phonics (2024)*	K–2
Really Great Reading	*Blast Foundations (2023)*	1
Literacy Resources	*Bridge to Reading (2022)*	K
Really Great Reading	*Countdown (2023)*	K
Wilson Language Training	*Fundations, 2nd Ed. (2020)*	K–2
Learning A-Z	*Foundations A–Z (2023)*	K–2
William H. Sadlier, Inc.	*From Phonics to Reading (2020)*	K–2
Institute for Multi-Sensory Education	*IMSE Comprehensive Orton-Gillingham Plus (2022)*	K–2
Letterland	*Letterland Kindergarten, 2nd edition (2023)*	K
Lexia Learning Systems	*Lexia Core5 Reading (2023)*	K–2
Really Great Reading	*HD Word (2023)*	2
Curriculum Associates	*Magnetic Reading Foundations (2023)*	K–2
Reading Horizons	*Reading Horizons Discovery (2023)*	K
Savvas Learning	*Savvas Essentials: Foundational Reading (2023)*	K–2
Ventris Learning	*UFLI Foundations (2022)*	K

Source: Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, "Approved List of Core Curricula and Instructional Materials" (webpage, last accessed May 24, 2024).

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[34] There is some overlap in the programs appearing Table A–1 with the list of state-approved interventions in Table A–4.

Appendix C: Exploring a link between curricula and student academic growth

Research has found that using a high-quality curriculum can boost student achievement, usually at no greater cost than selecting a poor one.[35] With data on districts' 2022–23 curricula available from the DEW survey, one can begin to explore whether those decisions correlate with academic results. The following offers a high-level look at the relationship between school districts' 2022–23 ELA curricula and their ELA-specific value-added results for that year.[36] For this analysis, I create an "unofficial" value-added rating that is based on the overall ELA value-added score reported by DEW, which includes value-added scores across grades 4–8 and one high school ELA assessment.[37] For this analysis, I rely on DEW's categorization of districts' alignment to the state-approved curricula list (see page 15 above): aligned, partially aligned, or not aligned.

At a statewide level, there is little indication that districts using aligned curricula performed markedly better than those using partially or nonaligned curricula. As Table A–2 indicates, 16 percent of fully aligned districts received 4- or 5-star value-added ELA ratings, while 28 percent of partially aligned districts achieved those marks. Meanwhile, 19 percent of nonaligned districts received 4- or 5-star ratings.

Table A–2: Value-added ratings (ELA) by curricula alignment category, 2022–23

Rating	Aligned	Partially aligned	Not aligned
5 stars	13 (6%)	20 (10%)	10 (5%)
4 stars	20 (10%)	36 (18%)	27 (14%)
3 stars	117 (57%)	106 (53%)	110 (56%)
2 stars	37 (18%)	22 (11%)	25 (13%)
1 star	19 (9%)	17 (8%)	26 (13%)
Average Value-Added Effect Size	0.003	0.015	0.005
Median Value-Added Effect Size	-0.005	0.010	0.000

Note: Ohio does not assign subject-specific ratings for value-added, so I convert districts' composite ELA effect sizes and index scores into a rating, based on the state's methodology for converting overall value-added results (i.e., in math, ELA, science, and social studies combined) into an overall value-added rating. The value-added "effect size" represents the amount of growth that is measured from year –to year. The average effect size for districts statewide in 2022–23 was 0.008 in ELA and the median was 0.000; effect sizes at the district level ranged from -0.53 to 0.38.

When focusing on the lowest 10 percent of districts in third-grade reading proficiency, we find a stronger indication that districts using aligned curricula may have outperformed those using partially aligned or nonaligned curricula. As Table A–3 indicates, 32 percent of aligned districts received 4- or 5-star ratings, whereas 22 and 25 percent of partially aligned and not aligned districts, respectively, achieved those marks in 2022–23. However, as recommended in the conclusion of this report, additional research and evaluation should be conducted to more rigorously identify the impacts of varying ELA curricula.

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[35] Cory Koedel and Morgan Polikoff, "Bang for just a few bucks: The impact of math textbooks in California," Brookings Institution (January 5, 2017): https://www.brookings.edu/articles/big-bang-for-just-a-few-bucks-the-impact-of-math-textbooks-in-california/.

[36] Gauging the impacts of curricula on student learning, separate from other factors that might influence student academic growth (e.g., teacher quality or school culture), is challenging, and more comprehensive research is certainly warranted. Studying the role of elementary schools' ELA curricula and student outcomes is especially difficult, as state assessments don't begin until third grade and thus a measure of student growth based on a statewide standardized test is not available until fourth grade.

[37] For more about Ohio's value-added growth measure, see Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, "Progress Component," (webpage, last accessed May 21, 2024): https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Data/Report-Card-Resources/Resources-and-Technical-Document/Progress-Component-Technical-Document. The ELA value-added data used for this analysis were pulled from Ohio Department of Education and Workforce's Excel file titled "District Value-Added 2022–2023" available at: https://reportcard.education.ohio.gov/download.

Table A–3: Value-added ratings (ELA) by curricula alignment category, lowest 10 percent of districts in third-grade reading proficiency, 2022–23

Rating	Aligned	Partially aligned	Not aligned
5 stars	1 (4%)	2 (11%)	0 (0%)
4 stars	7 (28%)	2 (11%)	4 (25%)
3 stars	11 (44%)	14 (78%)	8 (50%)
2 stars	4 (16%)	0 (0%)	2 (13%)
1 star	2 (8%)	0 (0%)	2 (13%)
Average Value-Added Effect Size	0.014	0.028	-0.005
Median Value-Added Effect Size	0.020	0.010	-0.005

Appendix D: Intervention programs

In the state budget bill, lawmakers required all districts and charter schools to implement "evidence-based" intervention programs by 2024–25 in grades K–12. In May 2024, DEW announced an initial list of thirty-six approved intervention programs.[38] Table A–4 displays this list.

Table A–4: List of state-approved ELA intervention programs

Publisher	Program name
95 Percent Group	*95 Literacy Intervention System (2024)*
95 Percent Group	*95 Phonemic Awareness Suite (2024)*
95 Percent Group	*95 Reading Achievement Program (2024)*
University of Cincinnati	*AC-SEL, Edition 1 (2024)*
American Reading Company	*ARC Accelerator Secondary Grades (2023)*
Benchmark Education Company	*Benchmark Phonics Intervention (2024)*
Really Great Reading	*Blast (2023)*
Institute of Multi-Sensory Education	*Comprehensive Orton-Gillingham Plus (2022)*
Really Great Reading Company	*Countdown (2023)*
Teach Town	*enCore k-12 (2020, 2022, 2023)*
Teacher Created Materials	*Focused Phonics, 1st Edition (2024)*
Wilson Language Training	*Fundations, 2nd Edition (2020)*
Curriculum Associates	*i-Ready Assessment and Personalized Instruction (2023)*
Wilson Language Training	*Just Words, 1st Edition (2009)*
Curriculum Associates	*Magnetic Reading Foundations (2023)*
Amplify	*mClass Intervention, Boost Reading (2022)*
Institute for Multi-Sensory Education	*Morphology Plus (2022)*
The APPLE Group	*OG in 3D, 9th Edition (2007)*
Brainspring	*Phonics First Level (2024)*
Curriculum Associates	*Phonics for Reading (2024)*
Reading Horizons	*Reading Horizons Discovery (2023)*

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[38] Additional intervention programs were still under review as of the time of this writing; see Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, "Approved List of Reading Interventions," (webpage, last accessed May 21, 2024): https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/ English-Language-Art/Resources-for-English-Language-Arts/High-Quality-Instructional-Materials-in-English-La/Approved-List-of-Evidence-Based-Reading-Interventi.

Reading Horizons	*Reading Horizons Elevate (2023)*
McGraw Hill	*Reading Mastery Signature Edition (2023)*
Reading Simplified	*Reading Simplified Academy (2023)*
Scholastic	*Ready4Reading, Edition 1 (2023)*
Center for the Collaborative Classroom	*SIPPS, 4th Edition (2020)*
Imagine Learning	*Sonday System 1, 12th Edition*
Imagine Learning	*Sonday System 2, 13th Edition*
Benchmark Education Company	*StartUp, BuildUp, SpiralUp Phonics (2024)*
Benchmark Education Company	*Steps to Advance Literacy Solutions (2024)*
Laprea Education	*Structure Literacy with EASE, 2nd Edition (2024)*
Brainspring	*Structures Level 1 (2024)*
Ventris Learning	*UFLI Foundations, 1st Edition (2022)*
Lindamood-Bell Learning Processes	*Visualizing and Verbalizing for Language Comprehension and Thinking, 2nd Edition (2007)*
Wilson Language Training	*Wilson Reading System, 4th Edition (2018, 2021)*
University of Kansas	*Xtreme Reading, 2nd Edition (2021)*

Through the statewide survey, we have information about which programs were most used by schools during 2022–23. Table A-5 displays the grades K–5 intervention programs that schools most frequently reported, five of which appear on the state-approved list (shaded in green). Table A-6 displays the intervention programs that the lowest 10 percent of Ohio districts in third-grade reading proficiency reported using during 2022–23.

Table A-5: Most frequently used reading intervention programs (grades K–5) reported by Ohio districts and charter schools, 2022–23

Program name	*N* districts and schools using program
Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum	423
Wilson Reading Systems	267
Fundations	237
i-Ready	158
RAZ Plus (Learning A-Z)	154
Core 5 Reading	106
Leveled Literacy Intervention	101
Read Naturally	54
95 Percent	46
The Sonday System (Winsor Learning)	41

Source: Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, *Use of high-quality literacy instructional and intervention materials in Ohio's elementary schools: Results from a statewide survey* (p. 13). **Notes**: This table displays the ten most frequently reported intervention programs (the extent that was reported in DEW's summary of the survey). Programs shaded in green appear on the state's current list of approved interventions. Many districts reported use of multiple programs. Aside from what is displayed in Table A-5, I did not conduct further analysis of the survey responses on interventions.

Table A-6: Intervention programs (grades K–5) reported by lowest 10 percent of districts in third-grade reading proficiency, 2022–23

District	County	Percent proficient in 3rd grade ELA	Program	Program	Program	Program	Program
Lockland	Hamilton	15.4%	Blast Foundations	Core5 Reading	Countdown	HD Word	PLL
North College Hill	Hamilton	24.5%	Heggerty PA	i-Ready	LLI	Sonday	Phonics for Reading
Windham	Portage	25.6%	i-Ready				
Middletown	Butler	29.1%	Heggerty PA	Orton-Gillingham			
Mt Healthy*	Hamilton	29.6%	Heggerty PA	i-Ready	Read Naturally	Rewards	Language Live
Garfield Heights	Cuyahoga	29.8%	Alphabetics Phonics	Blast Foundations	Fundations	HD Word	Heggerty PA
New Miami	Butler	30.0%	Blast Foundations	Countdown	HD Word	Heggerty PA	
Lorain	Lorain	30.7%	Fundations				
Winton Woods	Hamilton	31.4%	Heggerty PA	LLI	RAZ Plus	Recipe for Reading	Rewards
Youngstown*	Mahoning	31.5%	Blast Foundations	Countdown	HD Word	Heggerty PA	Phonics Boost
Cleveland	Cuyahoga	32.0%	Heggerty PA	RAZ Plus			
Campbell *	Mahoning	32.1%	Blast Foundations	Countdown	HD Word	Heggerty PA	i-Ready
Willard	Huron	32.5%	PLL		Heggerty PA		
Springfield	Clark	33.2%	Core5 Reading	Fundations			
Mount Gilead	Morrow	33.3%	Fundations	Fundations	i-Ready	mCLASS	
North Central	Williams	33.3%	Heggerty PA	Heggerty PA			
Dayton	Montgomery	33.6%	MindPlay Virtual	PLL			
Columbus	Franklin	34.5%	Fundations	Just Words	SPIRE		
Canton	Stark	35.1%	Heggerty PA	Read Naturally	Sonday		
Western	Pike	35.4%	Heggerty PA	Phonics for Reading	Rewards	WonderWorks	
Northridge	Montgomery	35.8%	Rewards				
Toledo	Lucas	36.0%	i-Ready				
Lima	Allen	36.2%	Hill Reading	i-Ready			
Euclid	Cuyahoga	36.8%	mCLASS	Phonics for Reading	SIPPS		
Mansfield	Richland	36.9%	Fundations	Heggerty PA	Just Words	WRS	
Trotwood-Madison	Montgomery	38.0%	Reading Horizons				
New Boston	Scioto	38.2%	Phonics for Reading	QuickReads	RAZ Plus	Read Naturally	

District	County	Percent proficient in 3rd grade ELA	Program	Program	Program	Program	Program	Program
Clay	Scioto	39.1%	i-Ready	Phonics for Reading				
Finneytown	Hamilton	39.6%	Heggerty PA					
Maple Heights	Cuyahoga	40.4%	i-Ready					
Painesville*	Lake	40.5%	Fundations	Heggerty PA	i-Ready	Phonics for Reading	Rewards	
Whitehall	Franklin	40.6%	No Response					
Fostoria	Seneca	41.2%	Fundations	Heggerty PA	LLI	WonderWorks		
Rolling Hills	Guernsey	41.5%	Orton-Gillingham					
Marion	Marion	41.6%	No response					
Bedford	Cuyahoga	42.4%	Fundations	Heggerty PA	Phonics for Reading	WonderWorks		
Akron*	Summit	42.8%	Heggerty PA	i-Ready	mCLASS	Phonics for Reading	Reading Horizons	
Chillicothe	Ross	42.9%	Heggerty PA					
Bloomfield-Mespo	Trumbull	42.9%	Blast Foundations	Core5 Reading	Heggerty PA			
East Cleveland	Cuyahoga	43.9%	Fundations	Heggerty PA	Just Words	WRS		
Sandusky	Erie	44.3%	Heggerty PA	RAZ Plus	Read Naturally	Step By Step		
Southern	Meigs	44.6%	Fundations	Heggerty PA				
Trimble	Athens	44.7%	Core5 Reading	Heggerty PA	Orton Gillingham			
Kenton	Hardin	45.3%	95 RAP	RAZ Plus	WonderWorks			
Portsmouth	Scioto	45.7%	Fundations	Heggerty PA	i-Ready			
Elyria	Lorain	45.8%	Fundations	Heggerty PA	Just Words	mCLASS	RAZ Plus	
Zanesville	Muskingum	46.1%	Fundations	Heggerty PA	LLI	Reading Recovery		
Bowling Green	Wood	47.3%	Elevate	Fundations	Heggerty PA	Just Words	WRS	
Cincinnati	Hamilton	47.5%	Amira	Fundations	Heggerty PA	i-Ready	Phonics for Reading	
Crestline	Crawford	47.8%	Fundations	Heggerty PA	Rewards			
Washington	Lucas	47.9%	Heggerty PA	RAZ Plus				
South-Western	Franklin	48.2%	i-Ready	LLI	Reading Recovery	SPIRE	Orton-Gillingham	
East Liverpool	Columbiana	48.3%	Fundations	Heggerty PA				
Warren*	Trumbull	48.5%	95 RAP	Blast Foundations	Countdown	HD Word	Heggerty PA	
Hamilton	Butler	48.7%	Heggerty PA	Phonics Boost	RAZ Plus			
Warrensville Heights*	Cuyahoga	48.8%	95 RAP	Fundations	Heggerty PA	Phonics for Reading	RAZ Plus	

District	County	Percent proficient in 3rd grade ELA	Program	Program	Program	Program	Program
Coshocton	Coshocton	48.8%	SIPPS		RAZ Plus		
Groveport Madison	Franklin	48.9%	Core5 Reading	i-Ready	RAZ Plus		
Huntington	Ross	49.4%	Fundations	Heggerty PA	Hill Reading		
Fairport Harbor	Lake	50.0%	Fundations				
Liberty	Trumbull	50.0%	HD Word	Heggerty PA	Rewards		

Notes: (*) Indicates that the district reported more than four intervention programs; a full listing of survey responses is available in DEW's Excel file titled "Full Survey Results Spreadsheet." Intervention programs are listed in alphabetical order, from left to right, and not by whether a particular program was used more frequently than another. This table does not include intervention or supplemental programs that some districts listed in the survey question regarding core ELA curricula (it only reflects answers specific to a survey question specific to K–5 interventions). For the purposes of presenting this table, I use the following abbreviations (other possible abbreviations, e.g., HD Word or RAZ Plus, are not mine): LLI = *Leveled Literacy Intervention*, PA = *Phonemic Awareness* PLL = *Phonics Lesson Library*, WRS = *Wilson Reading System.*

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