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## Summary of Changes

The updated Language Arts K–2 courses reflect a purposeful shift to **Science of Reading** aligned literacy instruction. While the unit themes, anchor texts, and comprehension goals remain familiar, the instructional approach has been strengthened to better support student reading development.

This update prioritizes explicit, systematic foundational skills instruction to ensure all students build strong decoding skills that support long-term reading success.

## What Teachers Might Notice First

Before diving into the details, here are the most immediate differences you may notice when you begin investigating your course:

- **Lessons begin with sound and letter work before reading.**  
Students spend more time segmenting, blending, and practicing letter sounds before they read connected text.
- **The same decodable text appears multiple times.**  
Texts like Sam are reused across days so students can reread with increasing accuracy and confidence.
- **Reading sounds slower and more deliberate at first.**  
Students are encouraged to sound out words rather than guess from pictures or memory.
- **Letter instruction is more physical and hands on.**  
Expect air writing, arm movements, mouth modeling, and tracing as part of daily lessons.
- **High frequency words are explained, not memorized.**  
Students learn why some words are “heart words” and how they connect to phonics instruction.
- **Repetition is intentional and expected.**  
Skills repeat on purpose to strengthen mastery, not because students are “behind.” Progress looks different but is more meaningful. Early growth shows up in sound accuracy and decoding ability before fluency and speed.
- **Assessments are focused on teachers seeing skills.** Students will submit more teacher graded items to allow teachers to see Speaking/Listening skills, Writing skills, Segmenting skills, and Reading Fluency skills.
- **Reduction in Learning Goals in course.**  
For grade K, our original course had 668 Learning Goals for students to work

through with similar topics such as letter names, sounds, and writing divided between multiple Units. Our new course has 265 Learning Goals to work through, with similar activities connected to help students master and practice the skills through repeated activities.

## Foundational Skills Are Now Explicit, Systematic, and Daily

### What's changed:

Foundational reading skills—phonological awareness, phonics, and decoding are now taught explicitly and systematically every day.

In the updated content, students:

- practice segmenting and blending sounds daily
- learn letter–sound correspondences in a clear sequence
- use consistent routines (tapping, moving dots, body movements)
- review previously taught sounds intentionally

**What this means for teachers:** Instruction may feel more focused and slower at first, but this structure is designed to build automatic, transferable reading skills rather than short term strategies.

## Decodable Texts for Reading Practice

### What's changed:

Decodable texts (such as Sam) are now the primary reading materials for students during literacy instruction. These texts are aligned directly to the letter sounds students have been taught.

Key shifts teachers will notice:

- students reread the same text multiple times
- texts match taught phonics patterns exactly
- reading focuses on decoding, not memorization

**What this means for teachers:** Repetition is a strength. Students may read fewer texts, but they read them more accurately and with increasing confidence.

## Letter Instruction Is Deeper and Multisensory

### What's changed:

Letter lessons now include:

- explicit sound articulation (mouth modeling)
- multisensory practice (movement, air writing, tracing)
- handwriting instruction connected to phonics
- fewer letters at a time, taught more deeply

**What this means for teachers:** Movement, oral practice, and handwriting are essential parts of reading instruction, not add-ons.

## Phonological & Phonemic Awareness: Narrowed and Strengthened

### What changed:

- Instruction now focuses on the two most critical skills:
  - phoneme blending
  - phoneme segmentation

### How it works

- students blend and segment words
- uses Elkonin boxes and manipulatives

### What teachers will notice

- short, focused routines
- more meaningful practice tied directly to reading success

## High Frequency Words Are Taught as “Sight and Heart Words”

### What's changed:

High-frequency words are taught with a clear explanation of:

- which parts can be sounded out

- which parts must be remembered “by heart”
- how these words support fluency, not guessing

**What this means for teachers:** Students continue to apply phonics knowledge while learning that some words don’t fully follow spelling patterns.

## Writing Is Short, Frequent, and Purposeful

### What’s changed:

Rather than longer or more formal writing tasks, the updated unit includes brief, meaningful writing opportunities tied to reading and phonics instruction.

Examples include:

- writing letters and high frequency words
- labeling drawings
- writing one simple sentence (with support)
- responding to reading through drawing and dictation
- the sentence writing expectations grows over time.

**What this means for teachers:** Writing is used as a tool for reinforcing reading skills, not as a separate subject area.

## Grammar Is Introduced Through Meaningful Use, Not Memorization

### What’s changed:

Grammar instruction focuses on how language works in real sentences, rather than asking students to memorize rules.

These skills are presented through:

- shared reading
- sentence examples from texts
- writing prompts connected to reading
- interactive grammar activities with support

**What this means for teachers:** Grammar is taught as something students notice and try, not something they must master immediately.

## Grammar Instruction Is Closely Tied to Writing Tasks

### What's changed:

Grammar skills are practiced within daily writing, rather than as disconnected exercises.

For example, students:

- write about favorite toys or foods using adjectives
- practice starting sentences with uppercase letters
- use punctuation to end a sentence
- apply grammar skills during journaling and response writing

**What this means for teachers:** Writing becomes the practice space for grammar, not a test of grammar knowledge.

## Developmental Writing Stages Are Explicitly Recognized

### What's changed:

The updated course explicitly acknowledges that students move through stages of writing development, including:

- scribbling and directional scribble
- mock letters and strings of letters
- labeling pictures with beginning sounds
- early phonetic words and phrases
- simple sentences with emerging conventions

Grammar expectations are matched to these stages.

**What this means for teachers:** Variation in student writing is expected. Grammar instruction is adjusted to meet students where they are, rather than pushing uniform outcomes.

## Comprehension Instruction Remains Strong—and More Intentional

### What stayed the same:

- anchor text (such as Kim and Carrots) is still central
- students practice predicting, identifying characters, events, and setting
- lessons follow a before-during-after reading structure

### What's different:

- foundational skills and comprehension are more clearly separated
- students often listen to texts before they are ready to decode them
- comprehension is supported through discussion and rereading

**What this means for teachers:** Students are still building meaning from rich texts, even as they develop decoding skills.

## Learning Coach Guidance Is More Supportive and Instructional

### What's changed:

Learning Coach guidance now:

- explains why activities matter
- provides clear scaffolds when students struggle
- encourages flexible pacing and repetition

**What this means for teachers:** Teachers can confidently reassure families that repetition, rereading, and slow progress early on are expected and beneficial.

## Assessment Focuses on Skill Development, Not Speed

### What's changed:

Assessments emphasize:

- letter-sound knowledge
- blending and segmenting accuracy

- true decoding (including nonsense words)
- writing
- growth over time

**What this means for teachers:** Assessment results should be used as instructional feedback, not a signal to move faster. This will mean more teacher-graded items within quick checks and more portfolio items in the course.

## Grade Level Progression (K–2)

### Kindergarten

- strong emphasis on phoneme segmentation and blending
- alphabet arcs, nonsense words, and early decodables

### Grade 1

- introduction to reading longer words
- early syllable awareness begins

### Grade 2

- explicit syllable types (open, closed, vowel teams)
- focus on reading multisyllabic words accurately

### What teachers will notice:

- skills build logically year to year
- no sudden jumps or gaps

## Instructional Activities

The following outlines the new activities you will see in the updated literacy instruction and how it compares to the original curriculum.

| Instructional Area          | Original Curriculum                                                   | New Curriculum                                                                  |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Overall Instructional Focus | Language comprehension often came <b>before</b> phonics and decoding. | Word recognition first, then language comprehension—especially critical in K–2. |

| Instructional Area                       | Original Curriculum                                                               | New Curriculum                                                                                                       |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Phonics Sequence</b>                  | Letters introduced in large groups or all at once (e.g., A–Z across early units). | Explicit, sequential phonics using high utility letters first (e.g., m, a, s, t). Letters introduced– gradually.     |
| <b>Letter Introduction Pace</b>          | Multiple letters introduced within a single lesson or unit.                       | One letter on Day 1, one on Day 3, allowing mastery and repeated practice.                                           |
| <b>High Frequency– Words</b>             | Taught largely as <b>memorization (“sight words”)</b> , often with pictures.      | Taught through decoding whenever possible; irregular words clearly identified and taught differently.                |
| <b>Use of Pictures &amp; Cueing</b>      | Students encouraged to use pictures or context to guess words.                    | No cueing strategies. Students rely on phonics and decoding only. Pictures leveraged when students are not decoding. |
| <b>Phonological / Phonemic Awareness</b> | Broad focus (e.g., rhyming, onset/rime) with limited transfer to reading.         | Focused on phoneme blending and segmentation, the two highest impact– skills.                                        |
| <b>Daily Phonemic Practice</b>           | Inconsistent practice; not always tied to reading instruction.                    | Consistent practice in Days 1 and 3. Students blend and segment three words using manipulatives (Elkonin boxes).     |
| <b>Decodable Texts</b>                   | Inconsistent; often mixed with non-decodable or leveled texts.                    | Daily decodable texts aligned strictly to taught phonics patterns.                                                   |
| <b>Fluency Instruction</b>               | Limited structure; often relied on leveled readers.                               | 5 day structured fluency routine using the same decodable text all week.                                             |

| Instructional Area            | Original Curriculum                                          | New Curriculum                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Fluency Routine</b>        | Not clearly defined or cumulative.                           | <p>Five Day Fluency Routine on Practice</p> <p>Day 1: Listen &amp; repeat</p> <p>Day 2: Choral read</p> <p>Day 3: Partner read</p> <p>Day 4: Phrasing &amp; prosody</p> <p>Day 5: Reader's theater</p>                          |
| <b>Writing Instruction</b>    | Writing sometimes disconnected from phonics instruction.     | Writing is directly tied to phonics and grammar: say the sound, write the letter, feel the movement.                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Journal Writing</b>        | Limited scaffolding; fewer models.                           | Sentence stems, decodable sentences, and embedded grammar instruction that directly relates to the Decodable students are reading with letter sounds.                                                                           |
| <b>Grammar Instruction</b>    | Often taught in isolation.                                   | Grammar taught in application, immediately connected to student writing.                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Cumulative Review</b>      | Review depended heavily on teacher pacing.                   | Built-in cumulative review of sounds, letters, and skills throughout lessons.                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Assessments/ Check-ins</b> | Learning Coaches used rubrics and scored multiple behaviors. | <p>Simplified quick checks using student recordings; faster instructional decisions.</p> <p>Teachers will see an increase in teacher graded items on quick checks to support hearing students' segment and reading fluency.</p> |

| Instructional Area           | Original Curriculum                           | New Curriculum                                                                                 |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Kindergarten Outcomes</b> | Slower move to real reading and blending.     | Earlier blending, decoding, and confidence with real words.                                    |
| <b>Grade 1 Progression</b>   | Limited support for reading longer words.     | Earlier introduction to multisyllabic word reading.                                            |
| <b>Grade 2 Progression</b>   | Syllable types taught late or inconsistently. | Explicit syllable type instruction (open, closed, vowel teams) to support longer word reading. |

## Big Picture Takeaway for Teachers

This updated course is designed to help students:

- learn how reading skills develop and build
- build strong decoding habits early
- gain confidence through success with text
- develop skills that transfer across all future reading

The approach may feel different but it is intentionally designed to support all learners in becoming confident, capable readers.