



# High-Quality Science-Based Literacy Programs List for K-5

Updated June 2025

## Purpose and Definitions

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education’s (OSSE’s) [Comprehensive Literacy Plan](#) (CLP) seeks to move the District toward a reality in which all learners receive the effective literacy instruction and evidence-based interventions they need in order to become successful readers. The CLP’s guiding principles for literacy begin with inclusive literacy instruction, with the aim of ensuring that all learners have access to equitable, culturally and linguistically responsive, high-quality literacy curriculum that’s based on contemporary research on how students learn to read and write. In alignment with the vision for literacy, DC Law [23-191 Addressing Dyslexia and Other Reading Difficulties Amendment Act of 2020](#) outlines that “each LEA shall adopt a science-based reading program.” The purpose of this document is to provide local education agencies (LEAs) guidance in the process of adopting high-quality science-based literacy programs.

**High-Quality Science-Based Literacy Programs:** Science-based literacy programs effectively integrate instructional content and practices that are in direct alignment with established research on how to teach students how to read and write. These programs are sequential, comprehensive, and aligned with [Common Core State Standards](#) for English Language Arts.

- **Structured literacy** is a science-based instructional model that focuses on building the foundational literacy skills of phonemic awareness, letter-sound correspondences, syllables, morphology, syntax, and semantics using an approach that is explicit, systematic, and cumulative.<sup>1</sup>

- Structured literacy programs have been shown to be effective in teaching all students how to read and write.<sup>2</sup> This includes students learning English as a second language, as well as students at-risk for reading difficulties.<sup>3</sup>

**Core Literacy Programming** is literacy programming that is used to help guide both initial and differentiated instruction in the regular classroom. These programs support instruction across the essential skills of reading and writing (e.g., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, morphology, comprehension). These programs contain teachers’ manuals with explicit lesson plans and provide reading and practice materials for students.

**Supplemental Programming:** Supplemental programs are added when a core program doesn’t provide sufficient content, instructional guidance, or practice to meet student needs.

**Importance of High-Quality, Science-Based Core Literacy Programming:** Core instruction, also referred to as Tier 1 instruction, is provided to all students. An estimated 80 percent of students will respond to Tier 1 instruction alone,<sup>4</sup> greatly reducing the percentage of students who require the support of preventative, small-group interventions (Tier 2) and intensive, individualized interventions (Tier 3). These programs ensure that students consistently receive sequential, cumulative, and explicit instruction and opportunities to practice rigorous, grade-appropriate assignments. Research shows that access to rigorous materials can increase achievement for

Black and Latino students<sup>5</sup> and that English learners (ELs) acquire knowledge and vocabulary faster when using grade-level content with support.<sup>6</sup> High-quality, science-based core literacy programs can have “a potentially transformative impact if aggregated across an entire class, grade, or school.”<sup>7</sup>

## Adopting and Implementing Science-Based Literacy Programs

In support of LEA adoption and implementation of science-based literacy programs, OSSE has posted the following resources on the [Dyslexia Legislation landing page](#):

- **The High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) Rubric:** a tool for evaluating whether a program meets the requirements of a high-quality science-based literacy program.
- **The HQIM rubric for K-5 Science-Based Literacy Programs Guidance Document:** is a document designed to provide DC local education agencies (LEAs) with guidance to support their adoption of high-quality science-based literacy programs.

If an LEA has adopted or is currently implementing a core literacy program(s) **included** on the Science-Based Literacy Programs List:

- LEAs will confirm core literacy programs when submitting compliance documents every year in October.

If an LEA has adopted or is currently implementing a core literacy program(s) **not included** on the Science-Based Literacy Programs List:

- LEAs will use the HQIM rubric to analyze and evaluate literacy programs for alignment to the essential components of literacy instruction.
- LEAs will submit completed rubrics with evidence to OSSE for review and approval. LEAs will submit rubrics in October of every year consistent with the requirements of [DC Law 23-191](#).

These resources were developed in collaboration with national and local partners and by integrating the inputs of various states’ best practices toward the adoption of high-quality, science-based literacy programs.

The literacy programs identified below were reviewed by OSSE and meet the criteria of “science-based reading programs” outlined in [DC Law 23-191](#).

## Science-Based Core Literacy Programs List for K-5: Core Programs\*

| PROGRAM NAME  | PROVIDER                                  | PUBLISHING DATE | VENDOR SUMMARY   |
|---|---|-----------------|--|
| <a href="#">CKLA</a><br>(K-5)   | Amplify Education                         | 2017, 2022      | Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) is a comprehensive English Language Arts curriculum for students in preschool through grade 6. The curriculum focuses on teaching skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. CKLA also builds students' knowledge and vocabulary in literature, history, geography, and science.   |
| <a href="#">Open Court</a><br>(K-5)   | McGraw Hill                               | 2023            | Open Court English Language Arts curriculum is based upon the findings from learning theory and cognitive science, also known as the science of reading. The curriculum is based upon a progression of skill instruction within three strands of instruction: Foundational Skills, Reading and Responding, and Language Arts. All three instructional strands are supported at point of use with differentiated resources for English learners and students at all ability levels. |
| EL Education<br><a href="#">Open Up Resources</a><br><br><a href="#">Imagine Learning</a> | Open Up Resources<br><br>Imagine Learning | 2022            | The EL Education Language Arts curriculum is a comprehensive, standards-based core literacy program that engages teachers and students through compelling, real-world content. The program uses a structured phonics approach. The Unlock Phonics program can be added to meet word study requirements for grade 3-5   |
| <a href="#">The Superkids Reading Program</a><br>(K-2 only)                               | Zaner Bloser                              | 2020            | The Superkids Reading Program is a comprehensive English language arts curriculum for grades K–2 using evidence-based literacy practices. This science of reading program follows a unique systematic and explicit instructional path through engaging, and increasingly complex text.   |

## Supplemental Literacy Programs

Supplemental programs can be added when an LEA’s literacy programming does not provide sufficient lesson content, instructional guidance, or opportunities for student practice with their core program alone. LEAs that identify instructional gaps in their core literacy programming with OSSE’s HQIM rubric can adopt supplemental programs to meet the expectations of a high-quality instructional literacy program and the science-based literacy program requirement of [DC Law 23-191](#).

### Science-Based Literacy Programs: Supplemental Programs for Phonological Awareness and Phonics\*

| PROGRAM NAME                             | PROVIDER                   | GRADES AND EDITION   | VENDOR SUMMARY   |
|--|----------------------------|--|--|
| <a href="#">95% Phonics Core Program</a> | 95% Group                  | K-5 phonics<br>1 <sup>st</sup> Edition   | The 95% Phonics Core Program is classroom-ready, evidence-based phonics instruction for the literacy block. The program builds critical phonics skills through explicit instruction to develop strong readers in grades K-5.   |
| <a href="#">UFLI Foundations</a>         | Ventris Learning           | K-2 phonological awareness and phonics<br>1 <sup>st</sup> Edition                  | Foundations is an explicit and systematic phonics program that introduces students to foundational reading skills necessary for proficient reading. Foundations follows a scope and sequence designed to ensure that students systematically acquire each skill needed and learn to apply each skill with automaticity and confidence. |
| <a href="#">Foundations</a>              | Wilson                     | K-3 phonological & phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency<br>2 <sup>nd</sup> edition | Foundations utilizes a structured literacy approach grounded in the science of reading. The research-based approach and extensive materials allow K–3 teachers to confidently present a carefully structured reading, spelling, and handwriting curriculum using engaging, multisensory techniques.                                    |
| <a href="#">Reading Foundations Kit</a>  | Reading Horizons Discovery | K-3 phonological awareness and phonics<br>2023 edition                             | The Reading Horizons Foundations Kit is a comprehensive phonics-based reading curriculum designed for students in grades K–3. The Foundations Kit provides grade-specific teacher manuals and materials to develop students phonological and phonics skills.   |
| <a href="#">Really Great Reading</a>     | Really Great Reading       | K-3 phonological & phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency<br>2023 edition            | Really Great Reading incorporates research-based principles and practices to support students in developing strong foundational literacy skills with a focus on the word recognition strand of Scarborough's Reading Rope. This includes phonemic awareness, phonics, handwriting and fluency.   |

\*This list will be updated as additional supplemental literacy programs are reviewed by OSSE

# Science-Based Literacy Programs: Knowledge Building Programs

| PRODUCT TITLE                      | PROVIDER          | GRADES AND EDITION                                  | VENDOR SUMMARY  |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|---|---|
| <a href="#">Wit &amp; Wisdom</a>   | Great Minds       | K-5 comprehension, vocabulary, writing              | Wit & Wisdom focuses on daily reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar, and vocabulary study and draws on evidence from exceptional books. Throughout the curriculum, there are embedded scaffolds and supports for teachers to meet student needs and provide alternate pathways to learning.  |
| <a href="#">Arts &amp; Letters</a> | Great Minds       | K-5 comprehension, vocabulary, writing, 2-5 fluency | Arts & Letters offers a comprehensive approach to developing students' comprehension, critical thinking, and imagination. It builds essential skills and deepens understanding, enriching students' grasp of literature and analytical thinking. Students are prepared to more effectively read, write, and discuss the topics explored through arts and texts<br><b>Note:</b> fluency in Arts & Letters begins in grade 2. |
| <a href="#">Fishtank ELA</a>       | Fishtank Learning | K-5 comprehension, vocabulary, writing, fluency     | Fishtank centers on high-quality, rigorous texts to develop reading comprehension, vocabulary, writing, and fluency. Students engage with in a range of activities to deepen their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills.  |

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## Contact Information

Additional information about how OSSE is supporting literacy in DC can be found here: [Literacy DC | osse](#)

Additional information about the legislation and guidance from OSSE can be found on the Dyslexia DC webpage: [osse.dc.gov/page/Dyslexia](https://osse.dc.gov/page/Dyslexia)

For questions, contact Dustin Tamsen at [Dustin.Tamsen@dc.gov](mailto:Dustin.Tamsen@dc.gov).

### Endnotes

- 1 Cowen, 2016
- 2 Moats, 2019; Young, 2018
- 3 Baker et al., 2014; Gersten et al., 2009
- 4 Shapiro, 2014
- 5 Card & Giuliano, 2016.
- 6 Zwiers, 2008; Walqui & Heritage, 2012
- 7 StandardsWork: A Narrative Research Review," Center for Research and Reform in Education; Institute for Education Policy, Johns Hopkins University, January 2017