High-Quality Instructional Materials Rubric

English Language Arts

(Grades 6-8)

January 2026

Ohio Department of Education & Workforce

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English Language Arts Grades 6-8

PROGRAM NAME: _____ **REVIEWER NAME:** _____ **DATE:** _____

English Language Arts Grades 6-8 Rubric Overview

Ohio Governor Mike DeWine's ReadOhio initiative is an exciting statewide effort to encourage improved literacy skills for all ages that includes the implementation of curriculum aligned with the science of reading in Ohio's schools. Under Ohio Revised Code 3313.6028, the Department of Education and Workforce established a list of high-quality core curriculum and instructional materials in English language arts (ELA) aligned with the science of reading and strategies for effective literacy instruction for prekindergarten through grade 5. Beginning not later than the 2024-2025 school year, each school district, STEM school, and community school must use core curriculum and instructional materials in English language arts for prekindergarten through grade 5 only from the list of High-Quality Core Curriculum and Instructional Materials in English Language Arts established by the Department.

The Department encourages the use of high-quality instructional materials in English language arts that allow for coherence and consistency in grades 6 and up.

A critical question schools should be asking is, "Which high-quality instructional materials should we implement?" Outlined in Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement, the plan, study, launch, implement model provides a systematic structure to selecting materials. This rubric can be used to assist schools and districts in the plan and study phases of implementation, in evaluating core curriculum and instructional materials for grades 6-8 to ensure that their students have consistent and continued access to high-quality instructional materials beyond elementary school. This rubric, aligned with the K-2 and 3-5 core comprehensive rubrics, allows schools and districts to review materials at the local level using high-quality rubrics to check for the same components the Department checks for in reviews of K-5 materials: instructional design, advanced word study, text complexity and vocabulary, knowledge building and writing, and usability.

Districts may use this evaluation rubric to determine how well instructional materials align with the science of reading and strategies for effective literacy instruction and Ohio's Learning Standards for English Language Arts. Selecting instructional materials is an important school/district decision, and conducting a thorough review of instructional materials at the local level is essential for meeting the needs of students within a school or district.

Pursuant to ORC 3301.079 (B) (3) and 3313.60, it is the responsibility of Ohio's local boards of education to vet and approve curriculum and educational materials for use in the public schools within their district. Districts and schools should use their professional expertise to determine the suitability of any resources for use in their districts, schools or classrooms.

The evaluation rubric outlines five sections for consideration when evaluating materials: Instructional Design, Advanced Word Study, Text Complexity and Vocabulary, Knowledge Building and Writing, and Vocabulary. Within each section, criterion and related indicators are provided. Each indicator is evaluated as Does Not Meet Expectations, Partially Meets Expectations, or Meets Expectations using a 0-1-2 scale score. The rubric also includes one non-negotiable

requirement that materials do not include the three-cueing approach or model of teaching students to read based on meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues. This non-negotiable requirement is evaluated on a Meets/Does Not Meet Criteria.

- *Criterion:* Criterion refers to a compilation of indicators within a specific focus area in English language arts that discern markers of high-quality instructional materials. The scoring of each criterion is determined by the total indicators.
- *Indicators:* Indicators denote the high-quality components of instructional materials that align with the science of reading and strategies for effective literacy instruction, and Ohio's Learning Standards for English Language Arts.
- *Scoring*: Scores are given to indicators within each criterion to determine how well materials meet expectations. Each indicator is evaluated as Not Meeting Expectations, Partially Meeting Expectations, or Meeting Expectations using a 0-1-2 scale score. Scores should be assigned using the following guidelines:
  - 0 points (Does Not Meet Expectations): A score of 0 should be assigned when materials do not show evidence of meeting the indicator.
  - 1 point (Partially Meets Expectations): A score of 1 should be assigned when materials demonstrate partial evidence of meeting the indicator. For example, the materials may demonstrate evidence of only a portion of the indicator or the materials may demonstrate evidence of meeting the indicator in one grade level, but not all grade levels assessed.
  - 2 points (Meets Expectations): A score of 2 should be assigned when materials demonstrate full evidence or exceed full evidence of meeting the indicator.

Scoring Summary

Use this table to record scores as you complete the rubric. The rubric is designed to allow reviewers to determine a threshold for quality for each of the five Sections. Programs must meet the non-negotiable requirement and receive a rating of Meets Expectations within each of the five Sections to receive an overall rating of Meets Expectations.

Non-Negotiable Requirement	Met/Not Met		
Three Cueing Approach: Materials do not include the three-cueing approach or model of teaching students to read based on meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues.			
Section Criterion Score Rating (Circle One)			
1: Instructional Design	Research Alignment	/8	Meets: 6-8 Does Not Meet: 0-5
	Explicit Instruction	/6	Meets: 5-6 Does Not Meet: 0-4
	Sequential Instruction	/6	Meets: 5-6 Does Not Meet: 0-3
	Systematic and Cumulative Instruction	/14	Meets: 11-14 Does Not Meet: 0-10
	Section 1 Subtotal	**/34**	**Meets: 27-34 Does Not Meet 0-26**
2: Advanced Word Study	Advanced Word Study	/10	Meets: 8-10 Does Not Meet: 0-7
	Text Reading and Fluency	/6	Meets: 4-6 Does Not Meet: 0-3
	Section 2 Subtotal	**/16**	**Meets: 12-16 Does Not Meet: 0-11**
3: Text Complexity and Vocabulary	Text Complexity	/12	Meets: 9-12 Does Not Meet: 0-8
	Alignment to the Standards with Questions Grounded in Evidence	/10	Meets: 8-10 Does Not Meet: 0-7

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	Vocabulary	/22	Meets: 17-22 Does Not Meet: 0-16
	Section 3 Subtotal	**/44**	**Meets: 34-44** **Does Not Meet: 0-33**
4: Knowledge Building and Writing	Knowledge Building	/8	Meets: 6-8 Does Not Meet: 0-5
	Writing	/16	Meets: 12-16 Does Not Meet: 0-11
	Section 4 Subtotal	**/24**	**Meets: 18-24** **Does Not Meet: 0-17**
5: Usability	Implementation Supports	/10	Meets: 8-10 Does Not Meet: 0-7
	Assessment System	/6	Meets: 4-6 Does Not Meet: 0-3
	Student Supports	/10	Meets: 8-10 Does Not Meet: 0-7
	Section 5 Subtotal	**/26**	**Meets: 20-26** **Does Not Meet: 0-25**
Overall Rating (Circle One)		**Comments**	
Meets Expectations *Materials meet the non-negotiable requirement and meet expectations for all 5 Sections.* **Does Not Meet Expectations:** *Materials meet expectations for less than 5 Sections.*			

Non-Negotiable Requirement

The non-negotiable requirement will be evaluated as Met or Not Met. If any portion of materials includes instructional methods or practices that rely on the three-cueing approach as a model of teaching students to read based on meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues, materials will not be considered to meet criteria for this non-negotiable requirement. Reviewers should document all evidence of not meeting this non-negotiable requirement, if applicable.

Non-Negotiable Requirement	Met/Not Met	Evidence
Three Cueing Approach: Materials do not include the three-cueing approach or model of teaching students to read based on meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues.		

Section 1: Instructional Design

Section 1 evaluates the materials' inclusion of an intentional design for instruction, aligned to reading science and the principles of effective literacy instruction.

Criterion 1: Research Alignment *Materials reflect current and converging research in reading and related fields.*		
Indicator	**Score**	**Evidence**
1.1.a. The program includes evidence of being based on conceptual research and theoretical models, citing relevant research articles and websites.		
1.1.b. There is a clear focus on teaching and learning advanced phonics and word study (including morphological awareness and analysis), fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension aligned to grade level standards.		
1.1.c. The program reflects the understanding that reading is a language-based skill and learning to read depends on mapping sounds to print, rather than emphasizing visual memory, guessing, the shape of the word, or the use of context clues to decode words.		
1.1.d. Materials provide explanations of the instructional approaches of the program and identification of the research-based strategies, including any relevant efficacy research.		

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	Research Alignment Total Score	_____

Criterion 2: Explicit Instruction
Students are directly taught the new skill before they are asked to apply it.

Indicator	Score	Evidence
1.2.a. Lessons use instructional routines and/or scripts that provide suggested teacher language, include a step-by-step sequence, procedures, and consistent academic language and vocabulary linked to grade-level outcomes and content standards.		
1.2.b. Materials include consistent routines that include language for the teacher to introduce, define, or explain new skills through demonstration and modeling before students are asked to apply new skills.		
1.2.c. Materials include multiple opportunities for students to practice new skills with teacher guidance for immediate corrective feedback within daily lessons.		
Explicit Instruction Total Score	_____	

Criterion 3: Sequential Instruction
There is a detailed timeline, including a scope and sequence for teaching skills.

Indicator	Score	Evidence
1.3. a. The scope and sequence for a skill within a grade shows a clear progression from basic to advanced (i.e., easier to harder) and is appropriate for the grade for which the program is designed.		
1.3.b. Advanced skills are introduced after students have been taught prerequisite skills.		
1.3.c. The scope and sequence at each grade level articulates when skills are taught across grades.		
Sequential Instruction Total Score	_____	

Criterion 4: Systematic and Cumulative Instruction

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A structured lesson plan format is used to teach, review, integrate, and link skills using the gradual release of responsibility model.		
Indicator	**Score**	**Evidence**
1.4.a. Materials include clear and consistent lesson plan formats to teach advanced phonics and word study (including morphological awareness and analysis), fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing.		
1.4.b. Materials include a daily schedule of activities and lessons, including suggestions for the length of lessons and units.		
1.4.c. Materials include independent or group practice after teacher-led instruction on essential skills.		
1.4.d. Materials include directions for how to implement lessons (e.g., what materials to use, which target skills to focus on, script or wording for how to teach, examples to use in instruction, specific content to use in instruction such as word lists or book lists).		
1.4.e. Critical grade-level content and high-priority skills are cumulatively reviewed to support mastery and the integration of knowledge, strategy, and skills.		
1.4.f. The same routines, terminology, and procedures are used within lesson plans across skill areas and over time, including across the grade level and program.		
1.4.g. There are clear connections between advanced word study skills and higher-order skills. Skills are integrated across areas (e.g., advanced phonics and morphology; vocabulary and comprehension; fluency and comprehension).		
Systematic and Cumulative Instruction Total Score	_____	

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Section 2: Advanced Word Study

Section 2 evaluates the materials' alignment to research-based practices and the Ohio Learning Standards in English Language Arts for advanced word study, including morphology.

Criterion 1: Advanced Word Study (6-8) *Materials emphasize explicit, systematic instruction of research-based and/or evidence-based advanced word study, including morphology.*		
Indicator	**Score**	**Evidence**
2.1.a. Materials include a detailed scope and sequence of morphemes that support advanced decoding skills by teaching free and bound morphemes, building from morphemically simple (free) to more complex (bound).		
2.1.b. Materials include explicit and systematic word analysis routines that emphasize the integration of etymology and morphology to increase word analysis skills.		
2.1.c. Materials include instruction in how to read multisyllabic words using prefixes, suffixes, and morphological word parts to assist in word recognition.		
2.1.d. Materials include opportunities for students to practice and apply grade-level morphological analysis and word recognition skills.		
2.1.e. Materials include guidance on using assessment data to determine differentiated, flexible groups based on student needs, including suggestions for independent student practice activities to use when the teacher is engaged in small group instruction and specific protocols for how students performing below standard on these assessments will be supported, so all students can work toward mastery in advanced word study.		
Advanced Word Study (6-8) Total Score	_____	

Criterion 2: Text Reading and Fluency *Materials provide systematic and explicit instruction and practice in oral reading fluency.*		
Indicator	**Score**	**Evidence**

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Indicator	Score	Evidence
2.2.a. Materials include lessons with frequent opportunities to practice oral reading through connected texts that students can accurately decode, including multisyllabic and academic words found in literature and content-area texts.		
2.2.b. Materials include texts or excerpts for teachers to read aloud to model fluent reading, building vocabulary and background knowledge and exposing students to more complex texts than students could read on their own.		
2.2.c. Materials include frequent opportunities for students to practice and achieve reading fluency in order to read with purpose and understanding across a range of grade-level texts. Opportunities include repeated reading and partner reading, with each reading designed to help students read accurately and with appropriate expression.		
Text Reading and Fluency Total Score	_____	

Section 3: Text Complexity and Vocabulary

Section 3 evaluates the materials for high-quality texts, with appropriate grade-level text complexity, that are the central focus of lessons, supported by tasks and questions grounded in evidence and explicit instruction in vocabulary aligned to the Ohio Learning Standards in English Language Arts.

Criterion 1: Text Complexity		
Texts are worthy of students' time and attention: texts are of quality and are rigorous, meeting the text complexity criteria for each grade. Materials support students advancing towards independent reading.		
Indicator	**Score**	**Evidence**
3.1.a. Anchor texts are of high quality, are content rich, and consider a range of student interests.		
3.1.b. Materials reflect the distribution of text types and genres required by the standards at each grade level.		
3.1.c. Core or anchor texts have the appropriate level of complexity for the grade according to documented quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis, and relationship to their associated student task. Documentation should also include a rationale for educational purpose and placement in the grade level.		

Indicator	Score	Evidence
3.1.d. Materials provide specific guidance on how teachers can provide scaffolds and materials for differentiation as texts become more complex.		
3.1.e. Materials provide opportunities for students to engage in a range and volume of reading, including a variety of text types and genres, to support appropriate levels of complexity for the grade level by the end of the school year.		
3.1.f. Materials are available for teachers to read aloud to students, exposing students to text more complex than students could read independently. This is for the purpose of building vocabulary and background knowledge, as well as modeling fluency for students.		
Text Complexity Total Score	_____	

Criterion 2: Alignment to the Standards with Questions Grounded in Evidence		
Materials provide opportunities for rich and rigorous text-based discussions and writing about texts to build strong literacy skills.		
Indicator	**Score**	**Evidence**
3.2.a. Materials provide varied approaches to learning tasks over time and in how students are expected to demonstrate their learning with opportunities for students to monitor their learning while providing supporting text evidence (e.g. share thinking, ask questions, research & investigate, problem solve, present, write, discuss, self-reflect, evaluate other's ideas, monitor own progress, implement feedback, etc.).		
3.2.b. Materials provide frequent opportunities for responses that are text-specific and/or text-dependent, requiring students to use the text (whether read or read-aloud) to respond to and make text-to-self and text-to-text connections and comparisons.		
3.2.c. Materials support students' listening and speaking about what they are read aloud or reading and researching, including shared research projects and text-based discussions and presentations, with relevant follow-up questions and text evidence.		
3.2.d. Materials include structured protocols and teacher guidance that frequently allow students to engage in evidence-based discussions about the texts they are reading.		

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3.2.e. Materials include frequent opportunities for text-based writing to support careful analyses, well-defended claims, and clear information.		

Alignment to the Standards with Questions Grounded in Evidence Total Score _____	

Criterion 3: Vocabulary
Key academic vocabulary instruction is cohesively taught in and across texts.

Indicator	Score	Evidence
3.3.a. Materials include a cohesive, year-long plan (e.g., a detailed scope and sequence) for students to interact with (e.g., learn, practice, and apply) and build key academic vocabulary in and across texts.		
3.3.b. Materials prioritize teaching high-utility words that frequently occur in conversations, as well as words, including content-area words, that must be learned in order to fully comprehend a text and across contexts, with guidance on how to revisit and apply learned words.		
3.3.c. Materials guide teachers to explicitly model using student-friendly definitions, provide multiple examples and non-examples, and engage students in multiple opportunities to learn, practice, and apply learned vocabulary with immediate corrective feedback.		
3.3.d. Materials provide opportunities for students to apply and transfer new words within spoken and/or written sentences.		
3.3.e. Materials provide guidance for engaging students with vocabulary practice and application in deeper levels (e.g., associating new words with known words, categorizing words, shades of meaning, etc.).		
3.3.f. Materials provide cumulative review and practice of previously learned words, and these words are repeated multiple times in a variety of contexts.		
3.3.g. Materials expose students to a rich vocabulary by including texts read by students and texts to be read aloud from a variety of genres and topics.		

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3.3.h. Materials support explicit and systematic instruction in morphemic analysis to bolster the development of word meaning through knowledge of root words, prefixes, and suffixes.		
3.3.i. Materials include lessons emphasizing figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.		
3.3.j. Materials provide activities that elicit high levels of student response and engagement, as well as use of vocabulary within both oral and written student responses.		
3.3.k. Materials include guidance on how to support data-driven, differentiated vocabulary instruction.		
Vocabulary Total Score _____		

Section 4: Knowledge Building and Writing

Section 4 evaluates how materials build knowledge and understanding through integrated reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language, aligned to the Ohio Learning Standards for English Language Arts.

Criterion 1: Knowledge Building *Materials build knowledge and understanding through integrated reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language.*		
Indicator	**Score**	**Evidence**
4.1.a. Texts are organized around a cohesive topic(s) to build students' ability to read and comprehend complex texts independently and proficiently in order to build knowledge.		
4.1.b. Materials support students in developing their ability to comprehend complex ideas within and across texts through opportunities to analyze and evaluate texts.		
4.1.c. Materials require students to analyze the integration of knowledge and ideas within individual texts as well as across multiple texts using coherently sequenced, high-quality text-specific and/or text-dependent questions and tasks.		

Indicator	Score	Evidence
4.1.d. Culminating tasks require students to demonstrate their knowledge of a unit's topic(s) through integrated literacy skills (e.g., a combination of reading, writing, speaking, and listening).		
Knowledge Building Total Score _____		

Criterion 2: Writing
Writing is cohesively and intentionally taught across the year.

Indicator	Score	Evidence
4.2.a. Materials include a cohesive, year-long plan for students to achieve grade-level writing proficiency by the end of the school year.		
4.2.b. Materials include systematic and explicit writing instruction following a logical progression of transcription skills, progressing from simple to complex, as appropriate for the grade, including the following skills: • Capitalization • Punctuation • Spelling		
4.2.c. Materials include systematic and explicit writing instruction following a logical progression of text generation skills, progressing from simple to complex, as appropriate for the grade, including the following skills: • Grammar and syntax • Sentence-level composition • Paragraph-level composition • Multi-paragraph composition		
4.2.d. Materials provide sufficient time to teach the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, and editing) through modeling, feedback, and gradual release of responsibility (I do, we do, you do).		
4.2.e. Materials include a mix of on-demand and process writing (e.g., multiple drafts, revisions over time) and opportunities that are appropriately aligned in purpose, genre, and/or topic to the reading of that unit.		

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Indicator	Score	Evidence
4.2.f. Materials provide opportunities for students to learn, practice, and apply different text genres, modes, or types of writing that reflect the distribution required by the standards, and to demonstrate knowledge of content.		
4.2.g. Materials include frequent opportunities for students to practice evidence-based writing (by drawing from the texts and knowledge built throughout the unit), citing textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly and implicitly.		
4.2.h. Materials include a progression of focused research projects to encourage students to develop knowledge in a given area by analyzing different aspects of a topic using multiple texts and sources materials.		
Writing Total Score	_____	

Section 5: Usability

Section 5 evaluates how materials support teachers to fully utilize the curriculum, understand the skills and learning of their students, and support a range of learners.

Criterion 1: Usability *Materials support teachers to fully utilize the curriculum, understand the skills and learning of their students, and support a range of learners.*		
Indicator	**Score**	**Evidence**
5.1.a. Materials regularly and systematically balance time and resources required for following the suggested implementation, as well as information for alternative implementations that maintain alignment and intent of the standards.		
5.1.b. Materials provide teacher guidance with annotations and suggestions for how to implement the student materials and ancillary materials to support students' literacy development.		
5.1.c. Materials contain teacher-specific explanations, examples, and resources on concepts within and beyond the grade-level concepts to help teachers improve their knowledge and better their practice.		

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Indicator	Score	Evidence
5.1.d. Materials include a year-long scope and sequence with standards correlation information that explains the role of the standards in the context of the overall program.		
5.1.e. Materials provide strategies for increasing engagement of a student's parent, guardian, custodian, caregiver, or other household member around the program and suggestions for how they can help support student progress and achievement.		
Usability Total Score _____		

Criterion 2: Assessment System
The program includes a system of assessments identifying how materials provide tools, guidance, and support for teachers to collect, interpret, and act on data about student progress towards the standards.

Indicator	Score	Evidence
5.2.a. Assessment information is included in the materials to indicate which standards are assessed.		
5.2.b. Materials offer a system of various assessments, including formative and summative assessments, that do all of the following: **(a)** evaluate student progress and mastery of grade-level content standards, as defined in Ohio's learning standards for English language arts adopted in 2017; **(b)** throughout the duration of the course, program, or grade level, consistently evaluate student performance and mastery to determine students' learning; **(c)** provide guidance for teachers on interpreting student performance that includes suggestions for follow-up (supports and services for each student based on the assessment results).		
5.2.c. Assessments offer accommodations that allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills without changing the type of knowledge or skill that the assessment is intended to measure.		
Assessment System Total Score _____		

Criterion 3: Student Supports
The program includes materials designed for each student's regular and active participation in program content.

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Indicator	Score	Evidence
5.3.a. Materials provide strategies and supports for students who read, write, speak, and/or listen below grade level to work with grade-level content and to meet or exceed grade-level standards that will support their regular and active participation in learning English language arts and literacy.		
5.3.b. Materials regularly provide extensions to engage with literacy content and concepts at greater depth for students who read, write, speak, and/or listen above grade level.		
5.3.c. Materials provide strategies and supports for students who read, write, speak and/or listen in a language other than English to meet or exceed grade-level standards and to regularly participate in learning English language arts and literacy.		
5.3.d. Materials provide opportunities for teachers to use a variety of grouping strategies.		
5.3.e. Materials provide varied opportunities for students to monitor their own learning.		
Student Supports Total Score	_____	

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