Scholastic Ready4Reading: A Literature Review on Foundational Research

ESSA Tier IV Evidence Portfolio

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Introduction

This evidence portfolio summarizes the foundational research literature that serves as the empirical basis for the Ready4Reading Program. Produced by Scholastic Education, Reading4Reading is a supplemental phonics curriculum aimed at enhancing literacy outcomes for students in grades K–3. The program's approach to phonics teaching aims to sequentially and systematically help children acquire the foundational reading skills they need to "learn to read and read to learn." Developed in conjunction with a variety of notable experts in early literacy development, including Wiley Blevins, Dr. Anne Cunningham, Dr. Tanji Reed Marshall, and Linda Gutlohn, the program incorporates components, including phonics lessons and activities, reading activities centered on "short read" decodables, and "Read to Know" decodable text sets. Using a modular approach, the program ultimately works to blend print and digital resources that allow for the curriculum to be flexibly implemented alongside core reading programs across whole groups as well as small groups and learning centers.[1]

In the context of these overarching features, this evidence portfolio seeks to summarize the research that forms the foundation of the Ready4Reading theory of action and documents the research support for the primary components embedded within this program. This research was conducted by Johns Hopkins University's Center for Research and Reform in Education in consultation with Scholastic Education senior leadership and involved reviewing the extant scholarship related to the program's core components as well as reviewing the program's core instructional materials. In specific, program components and foundational research were reviewed for purposes of documenting the program's inclusion in the Tier IV evidence category under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

This document is organized as follows. First, we provide an overview of Ready4Reading's central features and outline a logic model that depicts the relationships between Ready4Reading program components and its intended instructional outcomes. In the following sections, we then summarize the contemporary research literature related to the instructional components and pedagogical strategies employed by Ready4Reading. Here, we discuss the literature examining the impact of systematic, explicit phonics instruction; integrated early literacy instruction that blends phonics teaching with other foundational literacy skills; student engagement in reading; and research on key strategies for differentiation and formative assessment in early literacy. To accompany these sections, we provide detailed overviews of Ready4Reading program components, as well as an appendix offering examples of program artifacts and documentation of the program's instructional design and research alignment. Conclusions and recommendations for future research directions are then provided at the close of this document.

[1] Program information pulled from: https://www.scholastic.com/content/educators/en/learn/ready-for-reading.html

Program Overview and Theory of Action

As an overarching theory of action, Ready4Reading seeks to improve literacy outcomes for burgeoning readers in grades K–3 by serving as a comprehensive instructional resource for phonics teaching in adopting schools. The program features a research-based phonics teaching system (Wiley Blevins) that is delivered through whole-class lessons and targeted activities for small-group instruction, and features a robust library of decodable short texts and content-facing "Read to Know" text sets aimed at simultaneously developing students' decoding skills and academic content knowledge. The program provides for a minimum of 60 minutes of program instructional material each week for the duration of the school year. A detailed overview of the program's features, components, and scope and sequence is provided in subsequent sections and the appendix of this evidence portfolio. In brief, these main program features are described below:

- **Wiley Blevins's Teaching Phonics Program.** Wiley Blevins's Phonics lessons serve as the main point of whole-class instruction through Ready4Reading. These lessons are explicitly designed to provide research-based, systematic, whole-class comprehensive phonics instruction to students in grades kindergarten through third. Instruction offers a variety of evidence-based strategies to aid teachers in teaching essential phonics skills and to help young learners become confident and successful readers. Lesson cards provide teachers with research-based instruction in the alphabetic principle, phonics, word study, and morphology. Each lesson includes a brief phonemic awareness activity, a connected passage to contextualize learning, and activities for teacher-led small-group instruction, including interactive digital activities and activity book pages (available digitally and in print). Program components include:

    - 68 Digital & Print Lessons – Including 27 Alphabetic, 27 Phonics, and 14 Word Study Lessons
    - 309 Digital Teaching Activities – Including 107 Alphabetic, 160 Phonics, and 42 Wordy Study Activities
    - 50 Assessments – Including 41 Quick Checks (weekly assessments), 7 Benchmark assessments, and two comprehensive (placement/summative) assessments
    - 408 Practice Materials, including:
        - 270 Blackline Masters Workbook Pages
        - 68 Printable Learning Centers
        - 70 Printable Extension Activities
    - Multimedia, including:
        - 44 Articulation Videos
        - 28 Alphabet Chants
        - 1 Alphabet Song
        - "Little Red Bag" Manipulatives Kit, which includes metal trays, magnetic letter tiles, sound cubes, Elkonin boxes, and flash cards

- **Short Reads Decodables.** Short Reads Decodables offer short, compelling decodable texts for teacher-led, small group instruction. These two-sided Student Cards are designed to incrementally target individual sound-spellings and help young readers practice and solidify the discrete phonics elements they are learning. The informational and fiction texts

incorporated in the program are aimed to reflect a broad range of text types and genres. Key program components include:

- 90 Student Cards (6 copies of each title)
- 9 Teacher's Guides with 90 title-specific lessons (print and digital)
- Digital decodable Student Cards and activities
- Digital teacher and student resources
- Downloadable Student Cards
- A Downloadable Oral Reading Rubric for assessment
- Downloadable Word Study Lessons
- Downloadable Spelling Lists for encoding practice

- **Read to Know Text Sets.** The program's Read to Know text sets offer decodable texts that aim to build children's academic content knowledge as they practice and apply decoding skills and position them to "read to learn." Aligned to the program's "Watch & Learn" videos, which aim to feature high-interest topics, pique children's curiosity, and build background knowledge, the text sets feature informational and fiction texts with controlled decodable text aligned to an aggregation of Ready4Reading's systematic phonics scope and sequence. Read to Know text sets can be implemented in small groups and independently, depending on student mastery. Components include:

  - 18 text sets of three decodable books each
  - 6 Review Books
  - 19 Watch & Learn Videos (English and Spanish)
  - 1 Teacher's Guide with lessons for each text set and Review Book (print and digital)
  - Digital decodable books and activities
  - Digital teacher and student-teacher resources
  - Downloadable decodable take-home books
  - Downloadable Oral Reading Rubric for Assessment
  - Downloadable Respond & Write resources
  - Downloadable Spelling Lists for encoding practice

In addition to these primary components, Ready4Reading offers a variety of instructional supports, student practice materials, multimedia, and tools for differentiation, along with formative assessment tools for student progress monitoring, and robust teacher professional development and support. Across the program's instructional offerings and student-facing materials, the aim is for teachers to utilize these tools to provide for a data-informed learning experience that is adapted to students' individual needs.

Ultimately, Ready4Reading intends for each of these program components to work cohesively and, in combination, serve as a comprehensive point of foundational reading instruction for adopting classrooms. As a byproduct of schools implementing the program and leveraging these features with fidelity, Scholastic Education aims for the program to serve as an efficient and effective way of enhancing and accelerating the literacy development of students. Figure 1, on the next page, presents a logic model for how Ready4Reading theoretically facilitates these intended impacts:

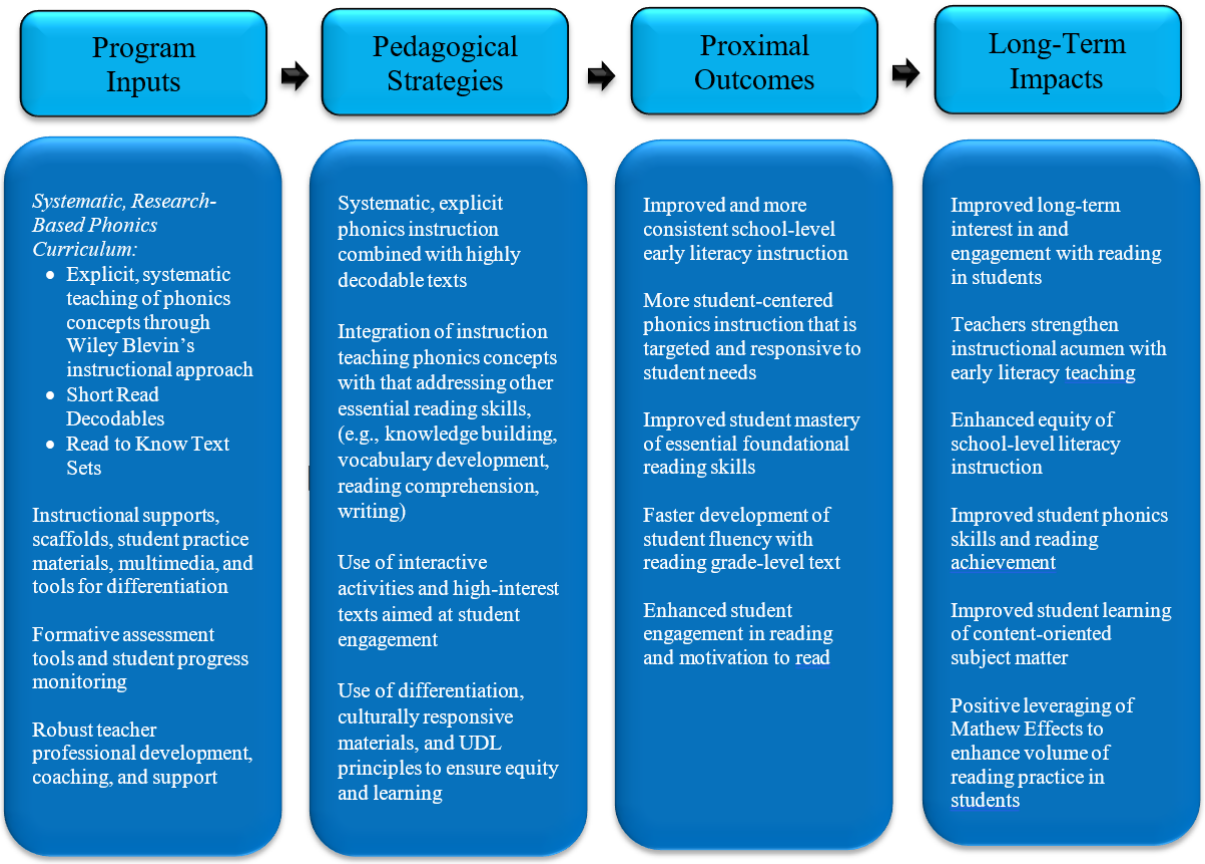

Figure 1. Ready4Reading Logic Model

In reviewing the intended outcomes and instructional objectives within Ready4Reading's programming and situating these facets within the broader research literature on early literacy development, the JHU CRRE research team created the logic model shown in Figure 1. This model serves as an illustration of the relationships between Ready4Reading's program components and these intended outcomes and can be thought of as a form of conceptual road map outlining how the program may function to enhance student learning in reading. The program's primary inputs and activities, including its systematic research-based phonics curriculum, instructional resources, assessment regimen, and teacher professional development options, work in tandem with the unique pedagogical strategies and techniques the program incorporates. These include the program's use of explicit phonics instruction combined with highly decodable texts, integration of instructional techniques aimed at teaching phonics concepts with those addressing other foundational literacy skills, use of high-interest texts and activities, and incorporation of UDL-based principles and instructional features aimed at differentiation. When implemented with fidelity, these program inputs and pedagogical strategies serve to facilitate proximal outcomes for students. These short-term outcomes are those that schools can, in theory, experience relatively quickly as they utilize the Ready4Reading program. These potential outcomes include:

- Improved and more consistent school-level early literacy instruction across grades K–3

- More student-centered phonics instruction that is targeted and responsive to student needs
- Improved student mastery of essential foundational reading skills including alphabetic knowledge, phonemic awareness, phonics skills, decoding skills, high-frequency words, and fluency
- Faster development of student fluency with reading grade-level text
- Enhanced student engagement in reading

In turn, as schools use the program over a sustained period of time, the accumulated benefits derived from these proximal outcomes may then lead to longer-term impacts. Among others, these may include:

- Improved long-term interest in and engagement with reading in students
- Positive leveraging of Mathew Effects that may enhance the volume of reading practice students engage in (i.e., if students are more interested in reading and experience earlier success, they may be positioned to read longer and more often)
- Teachers strengthening their instructional acumen with early literacy instruction overall (including their instructional skills related to teaching phonics, oral language, vocabulary, and reading comprehension)
- Enhanced equity of school-level literacy instruction
- Improved student phonics skills and reading achievement
- Improved student learning of content-oriented subject matter by better positioning students to successfully "read to learn" in school

As Ready4Reading continues its development and engages in summative forms of evaluation exploring its efficacy, this model can serve as a guide for examining proximal, intermediate, and long-term outcomes. In the following sections, we examine the underlying research connecting these program inputs with these intended impacts.

Literature Review: Foundational Research Underlying Ready4Reading

Building on this theory of action, the following section summarizes the foundational research that serves as the empirical basis for the Ready4Reading program. Broadly, this section seeks to provide an overview of the research germane to the primary instructional components of Ready4Reading as well as its overarching pedagogical approach. Organized around Ready4Reading's five primary instructional goals, these sections first summarize the research specific to these areas, and then are followed by an accompanying section that describes the specific program components within Ready4Reading that correspond with this research ("Ready4Reading Research Alignment")[2]. Conclusions and recommendations for future research directions are provided at the close of these sections.

Systematic, Explicit Phonics Instruction

As a key area of emphasis, Ready4Reading seeks to combine systematic, explicit phonics instruction with highly decodable texts to help students master essential foundational reading skills. Through high-level instructional routines that emphasize a four-part gradual release model (teach, practice, apply, and prove), the program aims to develop these foundational skills while simultaneously developing comprehension. As it relates to these areas, research demonstrates clear support for a combined approach of this type (Stahl, 2011; Slavin, 2009; Blevins, 2017; NICHD, 2000; Suggate, 2016; Torgerson, Brooks, Gascoine, & Higgins, 2018).

Put simply, *systematic, explicit, phonics-based instruction* represents one of the most thoroughly and rigorously studied methods for enhancing the literacy development of young readers (Stahl, 2011; Blevins, 2017; NICHD, 2000; Stahl, Duffy-Hester, & Stahl, 1998; Suggate, 2016; Torgerson, Brooks, Gascoine, & Higgins, 2018). Developing children's abilities with regard to recognizing the sounds within words (phonemic awareness), and then taking these letter sounds and forming them into words (phonics), ultimately forms the basis of students being able to efficiently decode and build fluency as burgeoning readers (Blevins, 2017; Slavin, 2009). While much discussion has proliferated across the field of literacy science with regard to whether "whole-language" or "phonics-based" approaches are more effective at developing young readers, empirical evidence consistently points to the essential role that explicit phonics teaching plays in developing students' foundational literacy skills (Ehri et al., 2001; Allington, 2011; Hunter, 2012; Schwanenflugel & Knapp, 2015; Slavin, 2009; Stahl, 2011). A bevy of research points to the ways that an early systematic emphasis on teaching children to decode words leads to better reading development and achievement than a more haphazard approach or one that comes later (Stahl, 2011; Adams, 1990; Chall, 1989; 1996), in part because of the pivotal role that the ability to decode words plays in helping children become independent word learners who can develop as readers without teacher assistance (Share, 1995; Stahl, 2011). Indeed, data indicate that students who are taught systematic and explicit phonics are better able to decode, spell, and comprehend printed text compared to students who receive instruction that is either incidental or implicit (Blevins,

[2] Narrative text describing Ready4Reading program components and instructional materials was provided by Scholastic Education and has been reviewed and adapted by the JHU CRRE research team for purposes of presenting this information as part of this evidence portfolio.

2017; Castles et al., 2018; Duke & Mesmer; Ehri et al., 2001; Ehri, 2005; Foorman et al., 2016; NICHD, 2000; Stahl, 2011).

In practice, what does such an approach to phonics instruction entail? The hallmark of systematic phonics instruction is that it directly teaches sound-spelling correspondences in a clearly defined scope and sequence that builds upon prior learning and moves from straightforward to more complex tasks (NICHD, 2000). Explicit phonics instruction teaches sound-spelling correspondence directly. It involves:

1. Establishing a clear lesson purpose and goals
2. Segmenting tasks into small chunks
3. Providing explicit instruction that employs modeling and "think alouds" that draws students' attention to essential text features
4. Utilizing guided practice and scaffolding
5. Providing opportunities for students to receive feedback and adapt their learning accordingly (Archer & Hughes, 2011; Hughes et al., 2017; Piasta & Hudson, 2023).

Through these high-level explicit teaching practices, teachers gradually release greater and greater independence to students as they engage in the learning activities at hand. Among various benefits, research particularly points to how this instructional model may be especially effective at reducing cognitive load and the resulting stress this can place on learners' working memory (Clark et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2016).

Within the context of this overarching approach, research shows that effective phonics instruction should explicitly and systematically address the following (Castles et al., 2018; Ehri, 2021; Ehri, 2022; Foorman et al., 2016; Hudson et al., 2012; NICHD, 2000):

- **Phonological Awareness.** Research shows that the ability to identify and manipulate different sounds within words (i.e., syllables, onsets/rimes, and phonemes) is predictive of word recognition, reading, and spelling performance (Hogan et al., 2005; Gillon, 2018; Mues et al., 2022).

- **Phonemic Awareness.** Phonemic awareness refers to "the ability to notice, think about, and manipulate the individual phonemes in spoken words" (Foorman et al., 2016, p. 41) and is one of the strongest predictors of later reading outcomes (Carovalas, 2019; Clayton et al., 2020; Erbeli et al., 2018; NICHD, 2000; NELP, 2008). Orthographic mapping is impossible without the ability to discriminate and manipulate phonemes (Lindsey, 2022). While the ability to 1) recognize a word that starts with a specific sound, 2) isolate a phoneme within a word, 3) sort words based on similar phonemes, 4) blend phonemes to form words, 5) segment words into phonemes, and 6) delete phonemes from words—all contribute to reading. Achievement, blending and segmenting have been shown to be most critical to decoding, spelling, and reading (Brown et al., 2021; Ehri, 2014; NICHD, 2000; Schuehle & Boudreau, 2008). Literacy experts recommend teaching students to detect sounds in words by monitoring mouth positions as they say sounds and using mirrors (Boyer & Ehri, 2010). Data also support having students "play with sounds" through activities involving pictures, letter tiles, rhyming, and music as a

means of developing students' awareness of the sounds in language (Ehri, 2022; Foorman et al., 2016; Eccles et al., 2020).

- **Alphabet Knowledge.** The alphabetic principle refers to the insight that printed letters represent spoken sounds in words. This principle provides the foundation, and impetus, for learning grapheme–phoneme correspondences. During explicit alphabet instruction, the teacher shows a letter to students and provides the corresponding name and sound simultaneously. This approach has been shown to be highly impactful for letter-sound learning (Piasta et al., 2010; Roberts et al., 2018), particularly when teachers utilize fast pacing with introducing letters (e.g., three letters per week; see Vadasy & Sanders, 2021). Certain letter sounds are more difficult than others (e.g., *h, y*) and may require additional instructional intensity (Piasta, 2016). One promising strategy is using embedded mnemonics (Ehri et al., 1984; Ehri, 2022; Roberts & Sadler, 2019; Shmidman & Ehri, 2010). In this approach, the teacher embeds the letter shapes into a picture that also reflects the letter sound (e.g., an *f* embedded into a *flower*). Activities emphasizing hard-to-learn letters, such as those from the middle of the alphabet (*l, m, n, o, p*) and visually or phonologically similar letters (e.g., *b, d,* and *c, k*), as well as those with mismatched sounds and names also appear to be particularly beneficial (Jones et al., 2012).

- **Sound-Spelling Knowledge.** Research shows that after letter-sound pairs have been introduced, effective phonics instruction should use explicit routines to teach students how to read words systematically from left to right by blending, chunking, and sounding out letter sounds (Foorman et al., 2016; Lindsey, 2022). Instruction should "teach the highest utility sound-spelling correspondences, from the alphabet to the most common single-syllable CVC words, to more sophisticated common patterns, covering all 44 phonemes. That will allow children to access more complex patterns and give them a base to learn new words as they encounter them in reading" (Lindsey, 2022, p.103).

- **Spelling.** Research suggests explicitly teaching spelling reinforces orthographic mapping (Ehri, 2021; Ouelette et al., 2017). More specifically, Weiser Mathes's synthesis of research on this topic suggests that (2011) effective sound-spelling instruction focuses on encoding or "explicitly teaching beginning readers and spellers to write words according to their phoneme-grapheme correspondences, to build words using manipulatives … and to learn to manipulate phoneme-grapheme relationships to make new words" (p. 171).

- **Decoding.** Decoding involves "transforming graphemes into phonemes and blending them to form pronunciation of words" (Ehri, 2022, p. 1). Experts agree that students must learn explicit strategies to decode words (Mesmer & Kambach, 2022). Research suggests a learning advantage for teaching students to pronounce phonemes corresponding to letters with no pauses (e.g., decoding the word *sand* as *ssssaaaannnd*) rather than pausing between phonemes (e.g., /s/- pause- /ă/- pause- /n/- pause- /d/)—before blending (Gonzalez-Frey & Ehri, 2022). The vowel flexing strategy is another evidence-based decoding technique that teaches students to try pronunciations and match them to the sentence's meaning (Steacy et al., 2016; Mesmer & Kambach, 2022).

- **Morphological Awareness.** Morphological awareness is the ability to think about and manipulate morphemes, which are the smallest unit of language with meaning (Goodwin & Ahn, 2013). Research demonstrates that awareness of both free morphemes (independent root words) and bound morphemes (word elements that cannot stand alone, such as prefixes, suffixes, and endings that indicate possessives, plurals, and verb tenses) predicts decoding, word reading, and comprehension skills (Apel, 2014; Apel et al., 2021; Castle et al., 2018; Duncan, 2018; Goodwin et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2022; Levesque et al., 2020). This is because knowledge of morphemes enables individuals to more efficiently decode larger chunks of orthographic elements and better understand the meaning of words (Apel, 2014; Apel et al., 2021; Goodwin & Ahn, 2013; Levesque et al., 2020).

- **Orthographic mapping.** Orthographic mapping is the process of connecting a word's orthographic information (spelling) to its pronunciation (phonology) and semantic information (meaning). Research shows that mastery of these skills helps students read more fluently by better storing words in memory (Ehri, 2005; 2014, 2020; Kilpatrick, 2015). When readers encounter an unfamiliar word, they decode it by converting graphemes (letters or groups of letters) and then blending them to form pronunciations of words. After doing this a few times, the spelling is retained in memory, connected to its pronunciation and meaning. The next time they see the word, they recognize it immediately, as seeing the spelling activates a lexical match in memory. This process is essential for students as they free up their working memory to focus on the meaning and comprehension of what they are reading rather than working hard to decode each word they encounter. It enables readers to read words by sight (Ehri, 2014; Ehri, 2020).

- **High-Frequency Words.** The What Works Clearinghouse recommends teaching high-frequency words with regular and irregular sound spellings "so that students can recognize them efficiently" (Foorman et al., 2016, p. 28). Word recognition occurs in developmental stages, based on knowledge of the alphabetic principle, sound-symbol correspondences, and the size of the child's sight-word vocabulary (Combs, 2012).

- **Reading Practice**. Research suggests that children need to apply knowledge of taught grapheme–phoneme correspondences and orthographic patterns to decode, spell, and read effectively (Mesmer, 2005; Savage et al., 2018; Weiser & Mathes, 2011). Controlled or decodable texts allow beginning readers to rely more on decoding (Adams, 1994; Juel & Roper-Schneider, 1985), apply phonics skills, and improve their alphabetic knowledge, word identification, phonemic awareness, spelling proficiency, comprehension, and reading fluency (Beverly et al., 2009; Buckingham, 2020; Cheatham & Allor, 2012; Hiebert & Fisher, 2007; Mesmer, 2008; Mesmer et al., 2012; Stahl, 2011). Once students become automatic in recognizing the majority of words in a text, however, research suggests they should move on to progressively more challenging texts that provide new vocabulary and address more complex ideas (Adams, 2009; Harmon & Wood, 2018). Texts on the same topic are likely to share vocabulary, and the familiarity with terms that students have acquired from more straightforward texts will enable them to read increasingly challenging texts (Allor et al., 2022; Conradi Smith et al., 2022). Much research points to the variety of learning benefits that can result from such instructional programming, particularly that which organizes readings around

topically connected texts that can simultaneously address a variety of cross-curricular content (Allor et al., 2022; Conradi et al., 2022; Blevins, 2019).

Taken in combination, the research discussed throughout this section points clearly to the value of not only phonics-based instruction as it relates to establishing students' foundational literacy skills, but also the specific ways that teachers can best optimize this pedagogy—one that Ready4Reading seeks to emphasize. In the following section, key Ready4Reading components, features, and instructional resources aimed at addressing these specific areas are discussed in greater detail.

Ready4Reading Research Alignment: Systematic, Explicit Reading Instruction

In the context of this research base, Ready4Reading aims to combine systematic, explicit phonics instruction with highly decodable texts in an effort to help students master essential foundational reading skills. The program is designed to intentionally follow a clearly defined, systematic scope and sequence that progresses from simple letter-sound relationships to blending and applying more complex aggregated (chunked) sound spellings to provide students with opportunities to practice and apply their decoding skills. Instruction begins by addressing alphabet knowledge and teaches consonant and short vowels, consonant blends, and digraphs. The program then progresses to long vowels and complex vowels. Word study is integrated throughout, beginning just as students blend CVC words, starting with simple inflectional endings and going through the scope and sequence to inflectional endings with base changes, syllabication, and morphemes.

The program employs an explicit, four-part instructional framework: teach, practice, apply, and prove. All lessons aim to:

- **Establish a clear lesson purpose:** Each Ready4Reading lesson outlines a specific outcome, target, or focus of the lesson. In Wiley Blevins's Teaching Phonics, the focus of each lesson is written on the front cover and at the top of each lesson card. Short Reads Decodables display the "Phonics Focus," which targets the sound-spelling for the task. In Read to Know Text Sets, the Phonics Focus and Other Targets of each decodable is written on the back cover of each book.

- **Segment complex tasks into smaller segments:** Ready4Reading is designed to prioritize high-leverage phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing skills. Skills and concepts are introduced through routines that provide step-by-step directions for exploring new ideas and applying knowledge.

- **Draw students' attention to essential content features through modeling and examples:** Each instructional activity in Ready4Reading begins with teacher modeling with the aim of helping students understand the skill and recognize what mastery looks like. For example, teachers will model each phonemic awareness activity, model blending a target word, or engage in a modeled fluent read of a text before guiding students to repeat the activity. They draw students' attention to essential features of word structure, including phonology, morphology, and orthography. Teachers guide students in activities such as interrupted reading

(e.g., breaking the text into small chunks, examining each piece thoroughly before moving on to the next), echo reading (e.g., when the teacher reads aloud a text line by line or sentence by sentence, modeling appropriate fluency—while students "echo" the reading back in return), choral reading (e.g., reading aloud in unison with a whole class or group of students), questions, and prompts. They then apply phonics knowledge to read and make meaning from decodable texts.

- **Offer opportunities for practice and review with varying levels of scaffolded support:** Throughout Ready4Reading lessons, students have regular opportunities to practice new skills, starting with a high level of support and transitioning to less support as they become more experienced and demonstrate increased competence. Spiraled review is built into the program with the goal of helping prevent learning loss. Further, the Read to Know Text Sets include Review Books after every three text sets read, and Short Reads Decodables include Review Cards after every four cards read. The review materials and books offer a consolidated review of prior phonics skills that can be used as a formative assessment to measure children's progress at regular intervals.

- **Include frequent checks for understanding and the ability to receive feedback and respond:** Ready4Reading includes daily, weekly, and cumulative checks for understanding. Students are asked to answer code-focused questions with oral, written, or action responses. During face-to-face instruction, teachers are guided to provide feedback that reinforces correct performance and helps students adjust as needed.

Ready4Reading offers color-coded lesson cards that aim to provide explicit code-focused instruction in word recognition:

- **Phonological Awareness**: Ready4Reading aims to recognize that phonological awareness instruction cues children to attend to the sound structures of words. Students learn that syllables (units of pronunciation) can be divided into onsets (beginning sounds of words that proceed the vowel; /c/ in *cat*) and rimes (the part of the word after the beginning sound—vowel and consonant; /at/in *cat*). The program teaches students that a syllable is a word part with a vowel sound, so if a word has more than one vowel sound, it has more than one syllable. One strategy the program uses to teach syllables is to have students notice when their chin falls when saying a multisyllabic word. The program also intends to strategically engage students in interactive games to sort words by their number of syllables and provides oral blending activities with onsets and rimes. These activities also include opportunities to substitute onsets or rimes to make new words.

- **Phonemic Awareness:** Ready4Reading provides instruction that aims to teach students that words are comprised of phonemes and to associate these phonemes with letters. Throughout the program, students practice hearing, identifying sounds, and putting them together to make words. Wiley Blevins's Teaching Phonics emphasizes phonemic awareness skills, such as blending, segmenting, and manipulating sounds. In addition, Short Reads Decodables teaches phonemic awareness skills such as phoneme identification and distinguishing between phonemes—for example, teachers say the word *tap* and then ask children to identify each sound in the word. What is the beginning sound? (/t/) What is the middle sound? (/a/) What is

the ending sound? (/p/). Similarly, other lessons ask students to listen to three CVC—consonant-vowel-consonant—words, two of which have the same beginning sounds—*sat sit mat* (response: *mat* has a different beginning sound). Students are also asked to use three CVC words, two of which have the same ending sounds. Children must name the word that ends with a different sound than the other two—*tap sat map* (response: *sat* has a different ending sound). Students are then asked to *blend and combine* three- sounds words to say a word (e.g., students sound out /r/ /a/ /n/ and then say *ran*). Finally, they *segment* each phoneme in a word (e.g., tell me each sound in *yam*— the response is /y/ /a/ /m/) and *manipulate* phonemes (e.g., tell me what word *sun* becomes if you change the /s/ to /f/—response: *sun* becomes *fun*). Because working with beginning sounds is easier than ending sounds, initial instruction focuses on continuous sounds at the beginning of words and incorporates more difficult ones over time.

- **Alphabet Knowledge:** The program's instruction begins by teaching students the name, sound, shape, and formation of the 26 alphabet letters and their most common sounds to encourage students to build and read words as they become available. Students in Ready4Reading are expected to learn letter names and sounds through visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile activities. These include the alphabet song, chants, articulation cards and videos, mirrors, sound boxes, letter-sound flash cards, alphabet cards, picture-sound sort activities, magnetic tiles, and alphabet books.

  The first introduction of *ABC*s is in alphabetical order. When learning to blend words, letters are introduced based on frequency and utility (*m, s, t,* short-*a, p, c, n, d, r,* short-*i, h, b, l, f o,* j, *x, k, e, g, v, w, u, y, q,* and *z*). Instruction uses mnemonics, pictures, and words when introducing letter-sound relationships. Lessons stress the differences and key features of letters that may look similar. Instruction also engages students in letter-writing practice, where they say a letter's sound each time they write it to reinforce the letter-sound connection. Students have multiple opportunities to practice letter identification to foster mastery and automaticity.

  All alphabet lessons follow a three-step instructional routine that employs a gradual release model:

  - **Step 1: Develop Phonemic Awareness and Letter-Sound Correspondence:** Students are first tasked with identifying the target sound in spoken words. For example, in the "Alphabet: *Mm*" lesson in Wiley Blevins's Teaching Phonics, students are asked to say /m/ whenever they hear the words *mop, man, mess, mix,* and *monkey*. In order to prepare children to produce the sound, teachers use articulation guides and mirrors to point out how the /m/ sound is made (lips together). Children put their hands on their throats and watch their mouths as they form the /m/ sound. Then students engage in oral blending, beginning with onset and rime then sound by sound. For example, students say /j/ /a/ /m/ and then the word *(jam).* Finally, they segment whole words (*mat, meat, mean, time, team,* and *steam)* into their sounds. For support, students use program scaffolds such as Sound Boxes and Counters.

    Teachers then explicitly teach the letter name and its primary sound using a mnemonic (e.g., stating that *Mm* stands for /m/ and showing a picture of a muffin). The teacher then

uses the letter-sound flash card to show the letter in different positions in a word. They then sing a "silly chant" about the letter: /mmmmmmm/ [Extend the sound, rubbing your belly to indicate you like the food.] That muffin smells yummy! /m/ /m/ /m/ is spelled *Mm*. Teachers then use digital or print "Handwriting Practice" activities to help students connect their knowledge of the letter sound to their production of its printed form. Children write the uppercase and lowercase forms of the letter (using directionality lines) while saying its sound.

- **Step 2: Sort by Letter Sound and Introduce High-Frequency Words.** Using the digital or print "Picture-Sound Sort: *Mm*" activity, children sort pictures with names that begin and end with /m/. (Answers: Beginning—*man, map, mask, mirror, mitten, monkey, moon, mop, mouse*; Ending—*broom, drum, game*). Teachers then introduce students to the lesson's high-frequency words (*this, my*), using a *Read/Spell/Write/Extend* routine.

    - *Read:* The teacher writes a high-frequency word in a context sentence, underlines it, and reads it aloud (e.g., "This milk is warm"). Students repeat and then segment the word orally. For example, the teacher may say, "tell me the sounds you hear in the word *this*" (/th/ /i/ /s/). The teacher models as needed and then guides children to repeat. Teachers have students hold up one finger for each sound. Then, if the word has an irregular sound-spelling pattern, the teacher highlights the spelling that children need to remember. For example, the teacher may say "the first sound in *this* is /th/. It is the same first sound in the word *the*. We spell the /th/ sound with two letters: *th*. This is the part of the word we need to remember. Underline, highlight, or draw a heart above this part of the word that must be remembered: 'by heart.'"

    - *Spell:* The teacher will then spell a word for students, and the students will say it back to the teacher. The teacher and students will then chorally spell a new word together.

    - *Write:* The teacher then has students write the word as they say aloud each letter's name.

    - *Extend:* To show that they understand the word's meaning, students copy and complete a sentence frame that uses the word.

    - **Step 3: Connect to Reading/Spelling, and Fluency.** Finally, teachers share the digital or print Storybook associated with the target letter. Teachers pre-teach any necessary vocabulary or high-frequency words in the book. To reinforce print concepts, teachers preview the book's title and track the print on the page with their finger as they read aloud. During reading, students are directed to reinforce the letter name and sound being studied. They then use the lesson planner in the Program Guide to guide children through a second book reading and invite students to reread the book during their free time and at home.

- **Phonics Knowledge:** Ready4Reading instruction is designed to explicitly teach students to focus on each word's letters, sounds, pronunciation, and orthography to access meaning. After

learning the letter-sound connection of the letters of the alphabet, the program then teaches students about the relationship between sounds and spelling patterns. Students are expected to learn that there is a predictable relationship between sounds and their symbols by studying the spelling patterns of consonant blends (*s*-Blends, *l*-Blends, and *r*-Blends) and reviewing consonants and short vowels (single-syllable words with open long vowels, double final consonants, and final consonant blends) in spoken and print words.

The program includes instruction where students study diagraphs and trigraphs -- consonant letters that together make a new sound (e.g., *sh, th, ch, -tch, wh, -ng,* and *ph*) — which is aimed at teaching students that pairs or groups of letters sometimes represent a single sound. Instruction is also provided where students explore how two vowel letters can work together to make a single sound (e.g., long vowels with final *e, ai, ay, ee, ea, ie, ie, igh, oa, ow, ew, ue, y, ey, eigh)*. The program also includes instruction on a variety of additional complex vowel patterns including instruction on *r*-controlled vowels, such as *ar, or, ore, er, ir, ur*, *air, ear, and are,* as well as complex and variant vowels, such as *oo, al, au, aw*, and diphthongs, such as *oi, oy, ou*, and *ow.*

Each Ready4Reading phonics lesson employs a routine aimed at reinforcing sound-spelling relationships. Lessons start with a phonemic awareness warm-up using words with the target sound. The teacher then provides sound-spelling instruction using example words that include each of the spelling patterns that represent the target sound (or, in the case of blends, sounds). Students encode each new spelling pattern by writing it as they say each sound. Students also blend words with the target sound spelling(s), learn new High-Frequency Words, build words, sort words, spell words, and apply their knew phonics knowledge to the reading of texts.

- **Morphology/Word Study Knowledge:** Ready4Reading is also designed to teach students the meaning of words based on word parts. Students are taught how to identify compound words, syllable types, root words, and affixes, and to apply their understanding of each word part to their understanding of the entire word. Word study lessons in Wiley Blevins's Teaching Phonics follow a gradual release model:
    - Step 1— Develop Phonological Awareness and Introduce Sound Spelling
    - Step 2— Model Blending
    - Step 3— High-Frequency Words and Word Building
    - Step 4— Word Spelling
    - Step 5— Connect to Reading and Build Fluency
- **High-Frequency Word Recognition:** Ready4Reading is constructed to teach high-frequency words selected from the Dolch and Fry word list:
    - In Wiley Blevins's lessons, students practice identifying and decoding high-frequency words using a Read/Spell/Write/Extend routine.
    - Short Reads Decodables include high-frequency words students will encounter in reading texts. Students are encouraged to practice reading the words with partners during small-group instruction.

- The program's Read to Know Text Sets are designed to pre-teach the high-frequency words students will encounter using a three-step routine. First, a teacher displays the word and has students say it aloud. Next, the teacher uses the word in a sentence and discusses the word and its meaning. Finally, the teacher identifies known and unknown parts of the word.

Across the program's three primary components—Wiley Blevins's Teaching Phonics Lessons, Scholastic Short Reads Decodables, and Scholastic Read to Know Sets—decodable, informational, and fictional texts with photographs and illustrations are incorporated to help guide students to apply their decoding skills and prepare them to bridge to authentic grade-level reading. The program's decodable readers are designed to control word choice so that students can decode most of the words using skills they have been directly taught, according to how far they have moved through the progression of targeted elements in the program's scope and sequence. The decodable texts are intended to present high-interest topics that pique students' curiosity and interest—with the characters, communities, and experiences featured being relevant to diverse students' lives.

Integration of Phonics Instruction with Teaching Essential Literacy Skills

Within the broader context of this explicit teaching model, Ready4Reading works to integrate phonics knowledge with other essential literacy skills, such as oral language, knowledge building, and vocabulary, so that students "learn to read and read to learn." As it relates to these areas, research demonstrates a high degree of support for an explicitly integrated approach to early literacy development that builds foundational literacy skills and comprehension skills *concurrently* (Slavin, 2009; Guthrie, 2008; Fairbanks et al., 2014; Metsala et al., 2021; Owens, 2020; Blevins, 2019). Put simply, the ultimate goal of developing foundational literacy skills related to phonemic awareness, phonics, and oral language development, is to position students so that they can effectively comprehend text, and thus leverage reading as a means of learning content and writing as a form of communication (Deshler et al., 2007; Slavin, 2009; Lesnick et al., 2010). Pedagogical approaches that seek to integrate instruction across these domains can serve a valuable function in elevating students' development in each. By simultaneously learning to read *and* reading to learn, research suggests that students are able to more quickly develop the skills associated with reading fluency, as well as those associated with vocabulary development and reading comprehension.

Research in literacy science points to the ways in which the many domains of literacy, whether it be phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, speaking, or writing, are strongly interrelated. Oral language skills, for instance, such as those related to phonology, semantics, word knowledge, morphology, and syntax have been shown to be particularly critical in predicting children's word reading ability and general reading comprehension skills (Fairbanks et al., 2014; Catts et al., 2005; Lepola et al., 2016; Lervag et al., 2018; Metsala et al., 2021; Roth et al., 2022; Snowling & Hume, 2012; Owens, 2020). By knowing the rules of speech sounds and syllables, as well as the rules governing grammar, word combinations, and vocabulary application (Owens, 2020), students are better positioned to derive accurate meaning out of text. Likewise, the development of "fluency" with reading, or the speed in which a student can decode and read at an appropriate pace, is also strongly predictive of the quality of their comprehension of a given text (Slavin, 2009). The greater a student's fluency level, the less cognitive demand they experience with decoding and word recognition, thus freeing up

working memory to focus on comprehension, rather than the mechanics of reading itself. Not surprisingly, a lack of reading fluency has been found to greatly impede a reader's comprehension of text as well as their enjoyment of reading as a whole (Slavin, 2009).

Fortunately, a variety of research points to the ways that these foundational skills can be elevated simultaneously, as well as in service of improved comprehension and vocabulary development. Perhaps most notably, research demonstrates a high degree of support for integrating phonics instruction with *knowledge-building*, *vocabulary*, *comprehension*, and *writing* lessons (Slavin, 2009; Guthrie, 2008; Fairbanks et al., 2014; Metsala et al., 2021; Owens, 2020; Blevins, 2019). Key strategies for addressing each of these areas are discussed below:

- **Knowledge-Building.** Research points to the importance of knowledge-building while teaching students to read (Cabell & Huang, 2020). Content knowledge (i.e., students' prior knowledge of the social and natural world) predicts reading comprehension because it helps students connect ideas across sentences and make inferences (Adams, 2009; Cabell & Hwang, 2020; Recht & Lesley, 1988; Torgesen et al., 2007). Content knowledge, however, is most useful when organized into schema, contextualized, and transferred to other contexts (National Research Council, 2000). Moreover, research shows that knowledge builds knowledge—that is, the more one knows about a topic, the more one can read and understand about the topic (Adams, 2009). Both narrative and informational texts can contribute to knowledge-building in students (Biber & Conrad, 2019; Heath et al., 2017) and a variety of key strategies can be employed by teachers to address this development. Teachers can integrate knowledge-building activities into their literacy instruction by thematically organizing units of study around content-area concepts, using a set of texts that gradually build content knowledge on a given subject, teaching relationships among words and concepts, and engaging students in content-based discussion and writing activities constructed to develop content knowledge and language acquisition (Cervetti et al., 2016; Hoffman et al., 2021).

- **Vocabulary.** A student's vocabulary consists of the words for which they know the meanings and thus predicts whether they can comprehend, draw meaning from, and make connections with text (Metsala et al., 2021; Slavin, 2009; August et al., 2020; Wagner & Meros, 2010; Stanovich, 1986). Unsurprisingly, vocabulary is positively and strongly correlated with reading comprehension, literacy development, and other academic, social, and vocational outcomes (Dollinger et al., 2008; Gertner et al., 1994; Rohde & Thompson, 2007). Effective vocabulary instruction:

    - Prioritizes academic words with high utility across subject domains (Beck et al., 2013)

    - Teaches word meanings in context, ideally with pictures and/or actions to demonstrate meanings (Beck et al., 2002; Blachowicz & Fisher, 2006; Graves et al., 2011; Hiebert & Reutzel, 2010; Wright & Cervetti, 2017; Graves, 2016; Slavin, 2009; NICHD, 2000; Graves, 2016)

    - Engages students in activities where they focus on the critical attributes of new words as well as activities where students explore examples, non-examples, and synonyms (Archer & Hughes, 2011)

- Teaches students to analyze the morphological structure of words and engage in semantic mapping and feature analysis (Archer & Hughes, 2011; Graves, 2016)

- Teaches words in conceptually linked groups and taxonomies (Hadley et al., 2018)

- Encourages students to read widely and provides them with ample opportunities to read across various subjects and to discuss what they have read with others (Scott et al., 2008; Slavin, 2009; Rasinski & Zutell, 2010)

Instruction that addresses students' word-level comprehension and vocabulary (Perfetti, 1994; Fairbanks et al., 2014); students' abilities to process, store, and integrate syntactic and semantic information on a sentence level (Fairbanks et al., 2014); and that which helps students make inferences and monitor their overall comprehension on a whole-text level (Cain et al., 2004; Fairbanks et al., 2014) all serve essential functions in developing students' comprehension abilities as well.

- **Comprehension.** Research demonstrates that students improve their reading comprehension skills by having many books to read, by reading often and widely across genres, and by discussing the things they read with classmates, parents, and others (Duke & Carlisle, 2011; Slavin, 2009). Repeated reading practice in which students are provided opportunities and scaffolds that allow them to make predictions, summarize themes and main ideas, make inferences, generate questions, and use context clues to decipher unknown words and difficult content plays an essential role as it pertains to literacy development (Gambrell et al., 2007; Guthrie, 2008; Slavin, 2009). Explicit, integrated teaching of these skills, while being paired alongside these robust opportunities for active reading practice, has been shown to optimize students' development across these areas (Block & Duffy, 2008; Gersten et al., 2006; Slavin, 2009).

- **Writing.** Writing and reading have a close and reciprocal relationship (Ahmed et al., 2014; Graham & Perin, 2011), and multiple meta-analyses have shown how writing about texts improves students' word reading, reading comprehension, and reading fluency skills (Graham & Hebert, 2011). Teaching students how to spell words provides a "schemata about specific connections between letters and sounds" and "teaching students how to construct more complex sentences by combining smaller, less complex ones should result in greater skill in understanding such units in reading" (Graham & Hebert, 2011, p. 712).

- **Fluency.** As discussed, reading fluency, or the speed at which a student can decode and read at an appropriate pace, is also strongly predictive of the quality of their comprehension of a given text (Slavin, 2009). Providing robust, consistent, and ongoing opportunities for students to read—independently or in small groups —is central to developing students' reading skills (Stahl, 2011; Rasinski, 1990; Samuels et al., 1992; Kim & Webb, 2022). Such activity can include reading stories and fiction (Fleisher et al., 1979; Rasinski, 1990; Samuels et al., 1992; Stahl, 2011), reading content-oriented non-fiction (Blevins, 2019; Slavin, 2009; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Biber & Conrad, 2019), repeated reading of the same story or set of books (Herman, 1985; Samuels et al., 1992; Stahl et al., 1997; Stahl, 2011), or activities in the context

of applying phonics or oral language lessons to reading books containing the concepts being taught (Stahl, 2011; Cheatham & Allor, 2012; Buckingham, 2020).

As with the other comprehension-building practices discussed throughout this section, when incorporated as part of instructional programming that seeks to weave these pedagogical features within a broader, well-integrated approach to literacy development, students are well-positioned to learn to read *and* read to learn simultaneously.

Ready4Reading Research Alignment: Phonics and Essential Literacy Skills

In the context of this research, Ready4Reading aims to integrate phonics knowledge with other essential reading skills, such as knowledge building, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing. The mechanisms in which Ready4Reading's instructional design facilitates these aims are summarized as follows:

- **Knowledge-Building:** Ready4Reading provides varied and frequent opportunities for students to engage with multiple text types, genres, and videos with the goal of building the content knowledge needed to successfully read texts across a variety of content-oriented subject areas, such as social studies, science, fine arts, and mathematics. It is intended to support prior knowledge activation. Each Ready4Reading lesson begins with students completing a brief activity that reviews the critical alphabet knowledge, phonemic awareness, and sound-spelling skills needed to understand the phonics lesson and read a decodable text.

  Using Short Reads Decodables, students read short decodable texts of varied genres along with informational texts, helping them solidify automatic word recognition. The program's Read to Know Text Sets contain 18 sets of three topic-aligned decodable books (two informational text and one fiction text) that provide students an opportunity to learn about content-oriented topics through multiple pathways. Topics covered in these texts are aimed to be engaging for students and include those related to English language arts, science (e.g., animals and plants, earth and space, health and safety, physical science and engineering), and social studies (geography, history, communities, and economics), among others. Each text set is organized around a topic. These topics can be categorized, allowing students to create schemas that allow them to connect newly learned content with concepts and content they already know.

  The program also provides students opportunities to activate prior knowledge through viewing Ready4Reading "Watch and Learn" videos. Intended to introduce the content knowledge and vocabulary needed to comprehend the passages in the decodable text sets, the 3–4-minute Watch and Learn videos present real-world footage related to science, social studies, or English language arts. The videos cover exciting topics that aim to motivate students by sparking their curiosity.

  Ready4Reading materials also suggest ways to help students make connections across topics and texts as well as ways to put their developing knowledge to use in new contexts. Once students finish reading texts, the program includes resources to help them explore each book's content further. The inside back cover of Read to Know Text Sets includes information for families that they can use to engage children in discussion and further exploration of the book's

content. For informational texts, these "Extra! Extra!" features include explanations and facts aimed at deepening children's knowledge. For fiction texts, "Extra! Extra!" offers ideas for exploring literary elements.

- **Vocabulary:** Ready4Reading aims to build academic vocabulary and content-specific knowledge throughout lessons and multiple reads of program texts. The program is intended to capitalize on rich, interactive multimedia using different modalities (audio, music, and pictures) to teach students vocabulary. Students receive repeated word exposure across the program's three modules and within decodable texts. The program features vocabulary routines, visuals, student-friendly definitions, modeling strategies, and teacher-led discussions to help students grasp word meanings. Other vocabulary-oriented strategies include:

    - In Wiley Blevins's Teaching Phonics, teachers are provided resources to help frontload Tier 2 academic vocabulary before students read a decodable text. The teacher then uses a Define-Example-Ask routine to help build students' vocabulary.

    - In Read to Know Text Sets, teachers are directed to guide students to understand word meanings and build familiarity with their spellings before they read the texts. As part of these procedures, teachers display a word from the "Watch & Learn video," say it aloud, and then have children repeat it, before defining and discussing the word. Teachers are also given resources to provide students with tips for reading and recognizing the word and refer to images from the related video.

    - Read to Know Text Sets call attention to "challenge words" or words that are necessary for the text but are not yet decodable according to the program scope and sequence, so that educators can provide extra support for students as appropriate.

Program lessons are also designed to teach students to use morphology (roots, prefixes, suffixes) and other word analysis skills to uncover word meaning and improve reading comprehension. Here, students are provided the opportunity to learn the meaning of common prefixes (e.g., *pre*-), suffixes (e.g., -*ful, -s, -ed, -ing, -ly*, and -*ion*), and roots (*graph, photo, tele, auto*). Morphology lessons first occur in isolation, then, students are provided opportunities to apply their knowledge with decodable texts. Accordingly, the vocabulary incorporated in Ready4Reading texts becomes gradually more complex as students progress through the program.

- **Writing:** The Ready4Reading program design integrates writing opportunities throughout each phonics and decodable text lesson. For example, when students engage in phonemic awareness activities, they do not just manipulate sounds orally; they encode each letter-sound relationship while practicing letter formation.

  Dictation practice is intended to offer students an engaging way to build critical writing and spelling skills with teacher guidance and corrective feedback. For example, students write from dictation after reading a Short Reads Decodable card. The teacher dictates a series of words, phrases, or sentences from the content known and studied by students, and the teacher and students collaboratively write and correct mistakes.

The program also uses writing to help students explore and draw connections from the content being taught. In the Wiley Blevins's Teaching Phonics lessons, students are asked to write their retelling of a text after they finish reading a decodable passage. Students are directed to write a story extension, a new story with the same characters, or to simply summarize what they learned from the text. The program provides sentence starters for additional support. Short Read Decodables also work to assess student text comprehension through informative/explanatory, narrative, and opinion writing options. Read to Know Text Sets also include downloadable Respond and Write resources.

- **Comprehension:** Ready4Reading is designed with a structured close reading process to teach essential comprehension skills. In Wiley Blevins's Teaching Phonics and Read to Know Text Sets, before students begin reading texts, teachers guide students in pre-teaching vocabulary. Wiley Blevins's Teaching Phonics, Short Read Decodables, and Read to Know Text Sets encourage teachers to engage students in active reading strategies as they read each passage twice together. The strategies used during this process include the following:

    - Whisper-reading: Students read a passage, each reading at their own pace. If students finish reading the assigned section of the text before the teacher calls time, they are expected to return to the beginning of the given section and reread it.

    - Echo-reading: The teacher reads a phrase/sentence/paragraph/section of a text aloud, and students repeat what the teacher reads with the same expression. Students also take turns reading to a partner. The teacher provides corrective feedback to students as they read.

    - Choral-reading: The entire group (whole class or small group) reads a text aloud together simultaneously. Teachers provide corrective feedback as they listen to students read.

    In Wiley Blevins's Teaching Phonics, Short Read Decodables, and Read to Know Text Sets, after students read a passage, children answer evidence-based questions designed to address general understandings of the text, genre, vocabulary/words in context, text features, and text structure. More complex questions necessitating higher-order thinking are also provided. These include questions about characters, setting, conflict, plot, and theme in narrative texts as well as questions that address expository texts—such as those involving comparing and contrasting, problem and solution, sequence of events, cause and effect, author's purpose, and main idea.

Focus on Engagement with Reading

Within the program's overarching framework, Ready4Reading aims to place significant emphasis on building students' engagement with reading, and on making learning accessible, practical, and motivating. A bevy of research shows, quite clearly, a strong and obvious link between the amount and frequency of reading that students do with the rate in which they develop as readers (Cain & Oakhill, 2011; Duff, Tomblin, & Catts, 2015; Stanovich, 1986; 2000; Borman et al., 2007; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Blevins, 2019). Research shows that by creating the

instructional conditions for reading to be an accessible, enjoyable, engaging, and meaningful experience, teachers better position students to read more often, more widely, and more consistently (Blevins, 2019; Slavin, 2009; Duff, Tomblin, & Catts, 2015; Stanovich, 1986; 2000). As such, developing students' *motivation and engagement* with reading is a crucial aspect of literacy development that requires attention from teachers. *Reading motivation* refers to "an individual's personal goals, values, and beliefs about the topics, processes, and outcomes of reading," while *reading engagement* "refers to an individual's actual involvement in reading, as reflected in behavior, affect, or cognition" (Barber & Klauda, 2020, p. 28). Experts agree that positive motivation produces increased reading engagement—which in turn promotes reading success and positions students to be more interested in reading overall (Afferblach & Harrison, 2017). Several systematic reviews of empirical evidence have found a strong correlation between motivation and the frequency at which students read (Bates et al., 2016; Blevins, 2019; Borman et al., 2007; Cain & Oakhill, 2011; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Duff et al., 2015; Stanovich, 1986; 2000; Schiefele et al., 2016), as well as a strong relationship between reading motivation, engagement, and literacy skills from preschool through high school (Guthrie et al., 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2002; Toste et al., 2020).

The reasons for this are not surprising — students who are interested in a task or activities tend to engage longer, demonstrate greater effort and self-regulation, and generally exhibit greater learning outcomes than those experiencing less engagement (Harackiewicz et al., 2008; Renninger & Hidi, 2002; Reilly, Laurenzano, & Morrison, 2021). Moreover, one of the more widely studied phenomena related to children's literacy development is the "Matthew Effect" (Duff, Tomblin, & Catts, 2015; Stanovich, 1986; 2000)—a widely observed phenomena in which children who experience success and enjoyment with reading tend to read more often and more widely, and thus performance differences between good and poor readers tend to increase over time (Cain & Oakhill, 2011; Litwin & Pepin, 2020; Stanovich, 1986; Walberg & Tsai, 1983). Put simply, students who read more often tend to become better readers than those who read less, and when children enjoy reading, they tend to do it more frequently (Litwin & Pepin, 2020).

In light of these trends, making sure that reading is accessible to students and also an engaging and enjoyable experience during the early years of school is a concern of significant consequence for early elementary educators (Slavin, 2009; Blevins, 2019; Borman et al., 2007; Fairbanks et al., 2014). Fortunately, research in education psychology points to a variety of factors that can improve students' reading motivation, including 1) strengthening student autonomy over choices related to a task; 2) fostering a sense of competence for completing a learning task; 3) encouraging tasks that are perceived as interesting; and 4) promoting relatedness or opportunities to make connections with other students (Brand et al., 2021; Deci & Ryan, 2008; 1985; Gambrell, 2011; McRae & Guthrie, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000; 2017).

Techniques such as these, when situated as part of instructional programming that balances explicit targeted instruction of literacy skills with authentic opportunities to engage in independent reading (Blevins, 2019), appear to yield large dividends in terms of students' engagement with reading as well as their propensity to read frequently. As discussed in the section that follows, Ready4Reading seeks to explicitly address these aims through a variety of key program components and procedures.

Ready4Reading Research Alignment: Building Student Engagement

In the context of this research base, Ready4Reading is designed to motivate and engage learners through interactive activities and high-interest texts. As outlined by the program's developers, Ready4Reading is constructed to motivate students to "learn to read, read to learn, and love to read." The program aims to promote student autonomy through its gradual release model of "teach, practice, apply, and prove." This framework strategically transfers the responsibility of the learning process from the teacher to the students until students can carry out the task independently. For example, in Wiley Blevins's Teaching Phonics lessons, teachers explicitly teach and model phonics and word strategies with the aim of clearly demonstrating to students how to decode and read words fluently. The program's Short Read Decodables are then used to provide students an outlet to apply their decoding skills while building foundational literacy. The Read to Know Text Sets offer more complex decodable texts that act as a bridge to natural language texts. In this stage, students receive additional guided instruction and practice reading in small groups to solidify nascent skills. In Read to Know Text Sets, students engage in independent reading practice and then complete the program's L2M assessments and SoapBox activities to demonstrate their learning. Throughout these program activities, instructional supports are provided to students in the form of interactive scaffolds, graphic organizers, sensory scaffolds, and other features including videos, audio narration, multimedia supports, and manipulatives.

Other program features are aimed at providing immediate feedback to students and encouraging students' perseverance. Here, online activities using SoapBox Lab's speech recognition technology allow students to record their voices while reading. When a student misreads a word, the Soapbox avatar offers feedback that aims to promote "sticktoitiveness" as well as growth mindset.

The program's decodable texts are explicitly designed with the intention of being engaging and relatable for students. Short Reads Decodables and Read to Know Text Sets include a diverse array of fiction genres aimed at appealing to young learners including realistic fiction, humorous fiction, fantasy, science fiction, historical fiction, folktales, and mystery. Similarly, the program's informational texts are also explicitly intended to foster engagement. These texts include fact book pages, science journals, guidebook pages, question-and-answer book pages, magazine articles, newspaper articles, and how-to articles. Across these materials, passages cover topics such as animals (including cats, birds, rabbits, insects, and pets), science (biology, shadows, animal classification, and astronomy), personal relationships (friendship, confidence, and family), health (food, cooking, and water), civic information (voting and landmarks), multicultural literature (folklore and stories), careers, sports, art, technology, and math.

Activities aimed at promoting active forms of learning are also embedded in the program. These are described below:

- ***Digital Interactive Resources*** are provided that are designed for use with interactive whiteboards and tablets. These aim to provide hands-on learning opportunities in whole-group and small-group instruction. These activities include:
  - "Picture-Sound Sorts" where students sort pictures according to whether a picture's name begins or ends with a particular sound.

- "Sort It" activities where students sort words into boxes with the same spelling pattern.
- "Spell It" activities where students look at an image on a digital Ferris wheel, say what the picture is, and then take turns selecting the letters that spell the picture's name.
- "Blend Words" activities where students use a visual tool to string together letter sounds to read a word.
- "Build Words" activities where students add letters to make words using different spelling patterns.
- "Concentration" activities where students take turns flipping over two cards to try to match a picture with its word.

- ***Customizable Board Games*** are available for students to engage in sound-spelling activities aimed at consolidating phonics skills.

- ***Elkonin Sound Boxes and Counter Sound Boxes.*** These materials are intended to support phonemic identification in words as well as phoneme manipulation (e.g., adding, subtracting, and substituting sounds).

- ***Magnetic Letter Tiles and Trays*** are provided and allow students to build words. These are color-coded to help reinforce letters 'roles within a word (vowels are red, and consonants are black) and are broken into two sets. Simple words can be built with Set 1: Consonants and Vowels, while more complex words can be built with Set 2: Blends, Digraphs, and Vowel Teams.

- ***Connecting Sound Cubes*** are provided to support phonological awareness and can be used by students to build words sound-by-sound.

- ***Letter-sounds flash cards*** are provided and used during Alphabet and Phonics Lessons to support helping students build connections between a sound and its printed letters (i.e., letter-sound correspondence).

- ***Uppercase and Lowercase Alphabet Cards*** are provided that contain a print letter and a representative image corresponding to the letter's sound.

- ***Mirrors*** are provided for students who need additional support during articulation practice.

- ***Articulation Cards and Videos*** are provided which can be used to support students in pronouncing each of the 44 sounds of English. Each card shows the mouth position for a particular sound and is accompanied by a QR code that links to an articulation video. Teachers are also provided with directions on how to model and describe to students the movements required to produce a sound.

- ***Skill-based Activity Books*** are provided where students play games and complete activities to practice the skills being taught.

- ***SoapBox Labs' Speech Recognition Technology*** is incorporated in the program that allows students to record their voices reading words and sentences. The program's artificial intelligence-based speech engine is built to recognize children's voices and diagnose reading accuracy. SoapBox listens to students practicing reading and provides detailed assessment and feedback reports to teachers.

Formative Assessment to Facilitate Data-Driven Instruction

Next, Ready4Reading is designed to incorporate continuous assessments that provide educators with targeted data and actionable insights that can serve to optimize literacy instruction. Formative assessment—the ongoing assessment process to inform instruction—can have a highly positive impact on student reading achievement (Kingston & Nash, 2011; Xuan et al., 2022). Research indicates that formative assessment is most effective for schools when assessment data is used to set learning goals for students, continuously monitor and diagnose student performance relative to these learning goals, and ultimately, help teachers make instructional decisions in response to students' learning progress (National Research Council, 2000; Yan & Ming Chiu, 2023). Broadly, research suggests that the more teachers leverage data from assessments to not only inform their instruction, but to better individualize and differentiate instruction for students, the greater impact it has on students' literacy learning (Conner et al., 2009).

Ready4Reading Research Alignment: Formative Assessment

As it relates to this research, Ready4Reading is created with the intent of incorporating continuous assessments that are designed to provide educators with targeted data and actionable insights needed to optimize literacy instruction. The assessment tools provided through Ready4Reading are described below.

- **Placement and Progress assessments:** Ready4Reading incorporates use of Letters2Meaning (L2M)—a normed, computer adaptive assessment that tests students' letter identification, letter-sound identification, word reading, spelling, and basic comprehension skills. This 10-minute assessment requires students to identify letters by name and by sound, select letters to build words, and select words to generate sentences. L2M employs an adaptive scoring algorithm to produce a single grade equivalent score (G.E.) based on a student's response to questions. The G.E. represents how well a student is reading compared to a representative sample of students from across the United States (norms for Letters2Meaning are calculated using data from the Woodcock-Johnson III Tests of Achievement and the NWEA MAP Reading assessment). Specifically, the G.E. score represents a student's reading ability as a given grade and month combination; for example, a student with a G.E. Score of 2.3 is reading at the level of a 2nd grader during the third month of school. The assessment is administered through the program five times per year (every 6–8 weeks) and provides a metric for grouping students as well as a way for teachers to monitor student learning progress.

- **Formative assessments:** The program incorporates SoapBox Child-Specific Voice Technology, an AI-based speech engine built to accurately recognize children's voices and

diagnose reading fluency and accuracy. Students utilize SoapBox Technology during the program's Word Warm-Up activities, as well as when reading in the program's digital versions of Short Reads Decodables and Read to Know Text Sets. During these activities, students read target words and sentences from decodable texts, listen to their recordings, and receive real-time feedback about how accurately they read and pronounced words. When they struggle, they receive assistance via model pronunciations. SoapBox then provides data to teachers identifying how well students are decoding targeted sound-spellings.

As an additional form of formative assessment, every fifth Short Read Decodable Student Card and every fourth Read to Know Text Set reviews the targeted sound spellings that were practiced in the previous section. Texts can be used as assessments to measure children's progress at regular intervals. A downloadable Oral Reading Rubric is available to structure the formative assessment and record results and takeaways.

- **Embedded Assessments:** Ready4Reading includes a series of assessments woven into the program's instructional sequence which aim to help teachers monitor student learning progress, determine student groupings, identify needs for intervention, and identify placement and exit criteria. For example:
    - **Wiley Blevins's lessons** include 41 weekly quick checks designed to assess students' knowledge of critical sound-spelling patterns.
    - **Read to Know Text Sets:** Teaching materials for Read to Know Text Sets include activities that can be used to evaluate children's readiness for a text and assess their success with the reading.
        - **Readiness Checks** provide lists of words representing the phonics focus of the given text set. Teachers can listen to students read words aloud to help gauge readiness and identify possible needs for additional support.
        - **Respond and Write Resources** are book-specific writing prompts and game-like activities that are aimed at providing assessable records of each child's comprehension and phonics skills.
        - **Oral Reading Rubric.** The program's Oral Reading Rubric is provided to teachers with the aim of tracking each student's phonics and comprehension progress as they read aloud a decodable text.

Across these assessment materials, Ready4Reading generates reports for teachers that aim to provide detailed and actionable overviews of students' progress toward mastering phonics and reading skills. Data reports include the following:

- **Ready4Reading Snapshot:** On the landing page of the Scholastic Teacher Dashboard, teachers are provided a "Snapshot" that summarizes students' weekly activity in the program. This report summarizes the number of digital Short Reads Decodables and Read

to Know Text Sets that were read during the week, and provides graphs and other data visualization tools that display students' proficiency levels and progress in the program. This dashboard also tracks other program usage statistics, including the number of Word Warm-Ups Completed, the total number of Read & Records Completed, and the total number of digital cards read from Short Read Decodables and Read to Know Text Sets.

Ready4Reading Explore: On the landing page of the Scholastic Teacher Dashboard, teachers are provided additional "Snapshots" showing student activity in Ready4Reading digital materials.

- **Student Performance—Oral Reading Accuracy & Fluency:** This data tool tracks students' performance on recent Word Warm-Up and Read & Record activities and aims to track the percentage of decodable words a student reads correctly during these activities for purposes of progress monitoring.

- **Student Performance—Phonics Activities:** This data tool summarizes student performance with reading exemplars of specific phonics targets in texts from Read to Know Text Sets and cards from Short Reads Decodables.

- **Student Growth:** The Letters2Meaning (L2M) assessment tests a student's letter identification, letter-sound identification, word reading, spelling, and comprehension skills.

Equity-Focused Instruction

Lastly, Ready4Reading is designed to provide equity-focused, differentiated support and culturally relevant materials to ensure students have multiple ways of achieving reading mastery. Particularly as it relates to matters of instructional equity, perhaps one of the most consistent findings from education research is that instructional strategies aimed at improving equity and inclusivity are *beneficial for all learners*—not only students from marginalized groups (Marino, 2009; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2007; Basham, Marino, Hunt, & Han, 2020; Reilly, 2022). Indeed, because students in today's classroom have vastly different academic, cultural, and linguistic profiles and backgrounds (NCES, 2023), research clearly points to the importance of instruction that tailors lesson content, processes, and learning activities to equitably meet each student's unique needs (Rappolt-Schlichtmann et al., 2012; Rose et al., 2005; Tomlinson et al., 2003; Hollie, 2018; Hammond, 2014; Puzzio, 2020; Stembridge, 2015; Vagle, 2016).

Research on student-centered pedagogical approaches that address these areas, such as differentiated instruction (Tomlinson et al., 2003) and Universal Design for Learning (Rappolt-Schlichtmann, Daley, & Rose, 2012; Rose, Meyer, & Hitchcock, 2005) is both plentiful and supportive (Tomlinson et al., 2003; Rappolt-Schlichtmann, Daley, & Rose, 2012; Rose, Meyer, & Hitchcock, 2005). Research examining differentiated forms of instructional scaffolds and supports is also quite supportive. Providing scaffolds to students, including graphic organizers, process charts, glossaries, visual aids, and sensory supports (e.g., manipulatives) has been shown to improve learning outcomes for students across a variety of subject areas and age ranges (Archer

& Hughes, 2011; CAST, 2018; Clark & Graves, 2005; Gottlieb, 2013; Marino, 2009; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2007; Basham, Marino, Hunt, & Han, 2020).

Regarding literacy achievement, research is particularly promising as it relates to Universal Design for Learning (Meyer & Rose, 1998; 2005; Rose & Meyer, 2002). In this pedagogical framework, the design of the learning environment is explicitly developed from the outset to provide scaffolds that:

1) Provide multiple means of representing the content being taught
2) Provide multiple strategies aimed at building engagement
3) Provide multiple pathways in which students can express what they learned (Rappolt-Schlichtmann, Daley, & Rose, 2012; Rose, Meyer, & Hitchcock, 2005; Blevins, 2019).

Through this framework students are positioned to take ownership of their learning, set metacognitive goals, and monitor their learning progress, and are thought to be better able to transfer their learning to novel contexts (Bransford et al., 2000; Rappolt-Schlichtmann et al., 2012; Rose et al., 2005).

Finally, literacy instruction that is responsive to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds has been found to be highly efficacious in accelerating both the literacy development and overall academic development of students (Hollie, 2018; Hammond, 2014; Stembridge, 2015; Sleeter, 2011). This instructional approach involves providing students ample and robust opportunities to read texts where they can identify with the characters and settings presented (Cartledge et al., 2016), feel affirmed in the perspectives discussed (Vehabovic, 2021), and advance their understanding of different histories, places, and cultures, particularly those of historically marginalized groups (Conradi et al., 2022; Flores et al., 2019). An increasing number of studies have also highlighted the importance of instructional supports and practices focused on English Learners or non-English speaking students. Research suggests that 1) highlighting cross-linguistic connections that leverage a students' home language, 2) clarifying potentially unfamiliar elements of English, and 3) helping multilingual learners notice the similarities and differences between their home language and English can serve to significantly bolster literacy outcomes (Galloway & Lesaux, 2023; Beeman & Urow, 2013).

Taken in combination, these strategies create a compelling picture of the ways that strategies aimed at providing differentiated, equity-focused literacy instruction can serve to benefit young learners. The specific components and features of the Ready4Reading program that aim to align with these methods are discussed in the section that follows.

Ready4Reading Research Alignment: Equity-Focused Instruction

In the context of this research, Ready4Reading is designed with the intention of illuminating equity by providing differentiated, culturally relevant materials to ensure students have multiple pathways of achieving reading mastery.

As an overarching instructional approach, Ready4Reading aims to provide students with multiple pathways for learning. Throughout each program lesson, concepts are presented through

multiple modalities (e.g., direct instruction, text, audio, visual representations, and multimedia) and students are provided differentiated formats and multiple mechanisms through which they demonstrate their learning (e.g., vocal response, audio recordings, multiple-choice assessments, drag-and-drop games, and interactive manipulatives). Program texts are designed to reflect diverse characters, cultures, and student interests, and are designed to be culturally responsive for students.

The program's instructional design also incorporates features aimed at enhancing student autonomy. The program's "teach, practice, apply, and prove" model provides a sequenced framework for students to gradually develop independence with completing learning tasks. Through this gradual release model, teachers first explicitly model phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension strategies aloud, demonstrating their thought processes to students. Next, teachers cue and prompt students in discussion with the aim of helping students build connections between what is being taught with what they already know. Students are then provided practice opportunities and opportunities to discuss new concepts in small groups. In the final stage, students independently practice their new reading skills using the program's Short Read Decodables and Read to Know Text Sets.

The program materials and texts are aimed at fostering student curiosity in content-connected texts. As outlined, topics covered in these texts are aimed to be engaging for students and include those related to English language arts, science (e.g., animals and plants, earth and space, health and safety, physical science and engineering), and social studies (geography, history, communities, and economics), among others. Likewise, Short Read Decodables and Read to Know Text Sets include a diverse array of fiction genres aimed at appealing to young learners, including realistic fiction, humorous fiction, fantasy, science fiction, historical fiction, folktale, and mystery.

In addition to these features, Ready4Reading teacher materials provide explicit suggestions for differentiating instruction aimed at supporting students performing below grade level. These include the following:

- In alphabet lessons, students are guided to count the number of letters in high-frequency words, and then build these words using magnetic letter tiles. For students below grade level expectations, the program also encourages students to listen to an audio reading of the story before the whole group lesson. Program materials also guide teachers on how to conduct an echo-read and discuss key ideas and vocabulary. Printable learning activities are also available in the program's "Teacher Hub" to extend learning and provide additional challenges for students.

- In phonics lessons, program materials offer suggestions on modifying activities by having students address an abbreviated strategic subset of words to help manage cognitive load. Here, teachers are provided recommendations on selecting certain high-utility words and building differentiated instruction accordingly.

- In word study lessons, program materials provide suggestions for modifying an inflectional ending lesson by focusing on words with one ending pronunciation at a time. For instance, teachers are provided guidance to begin with regular verbs that end with /t/ or /d/, to elicit the /ed/ ending sound, before moving to other verbs eliciting similar ending sounds.

- Read to Know Text Sets offer strategic language support to help build comprehension of text. The corresponding teacher's guide offers explicit supports, with one set of supports (between 3–5 tips) per text set (three texts). The goal of these supports is to guide teachers with identifying challenging areas and addressing potentially unfamiliar elements of English. The focus over these materials is on background knowledge-building skills with unfamiliar elements of English, such as homophones, metaphors, idioms, and implicit objects.

- The program's teacher's guides also provide language support and instructional material targeting phonics skills in the decodable scope and sequence. Each module offers support in strategic locations relevant to each module's goals and target skills.

In addition to these scaffolds, the program's *digital* lessons provide further scaffolds for teachers and students:

- Articulation videos, digital activities, Watch and Learn videos, Short Reads Decodable cards, Read to Know Text Sets, and interactive stories are provided digitally to provide students with opportunities to practice and apply phonics, vocabulary, writing, and comprehension skills.

- Highlighter tools are available for students in the digital storybooks, Short Reads, and Read to Know Text Sets.

- Audio functions embedded within the digital Short Reads Decodables and Read to Know Text Sets allow for students to be provided a modeled fluent reading of the texts.

- The program's "Watch and Learn" videos have features that allow students to pause, rewind, and repeat videos. Students may choose English or Spanish narration. Students can also speed up or slow down the audio during the videos. Videos feature real-world footage with closed captions.

- As outlined, the "Soapbox" technology embedded within the program allows students to record their voices while reading. The system accurately recognizes students' voices and diagnoses reading fluency and disfluencies.

Lastly, program materials also present literacy and language development strategies to help differentiate instruction for multilingual learners. These embedded strategies include the following:

- **Provide multisensory experiences.** Program materials are structured to encourage teachers of multilingual learners to use multimodal tasks that pair teaching letter sounds and words with gestures, natural objects, and pictures—as well as employ music and body language to help teach words and concepts.

- **Preview activities in small groups.** Program materials include suggestions for teachers related to introducing letter sounds, words, short reads, and activities in small groups before students are expected to study them with the rest of the class.

- **Conduct three rounds of reading.** For purposes of helping students process the content in each short read, the program guides multilingual learners through two rounds of reading. In subsequent reads, students (1) identify the overall content of the read, (2) define its purpose, and (3) gather critical information. This process is aimed at allowing multilingual learners to participate more fully in other classroom activities, such as Before Reading and After Reading tasks.

- **Group students of different English language proficiencies or shared home languages.** Ready4Reading is designed to encourage providing opportunities for students to engage in small-group work with students who share a home language.

- **Differentiate phonics instruction.** The program includes strategies aimed at helping students separate confusing letters in writing (such as *b*-*d*, *m*-*n*, *u*-*v*) and confusing sounds in speech (such as /a/, /e/, and /b/, /p/).

- **Provide targeted scaffolds and support.** All modules identify ways to support multilingual learners as well as students who may benefit from specific scaffolds.

- **Leverage Home Language.** The program provides materials that are aimed at providing strategic language support in Spanish, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Hmong. Additional language supports in these areas are discussed below:

    - Wiley Blevins's Teaching Phonics offers multilingual learner scaffolds at the lesson level, with one or more language supports per target skill. Lessons guide sound transfers and spelling matches for select languages in sidebars called "Language Supports." The program also provides unique support on linguistic variations for students speaking through different dialects in the "Linguistic Variations" section in the sidebars.

    - The program's Short Read Decodables are designed to provide explicit recommendations to support multilingual learners, with one set of supports (4–8 tips) per group of 10 student cards. These recommendations guide teachers on how to help students compare the linguistic features of English to their home languages. These supports aim to build students' skills and confidence in sounding out letters and words in short texts. The materials provide additional supports for challenge areas (e.g., long vowels) as well as "confidence boosters" (e.g., continuous consonants and cognates) to encourage language transfers for select, high-need target skills. The guides also provide support for building background knowledge with unfamiliar elements of English, such as homophones, metaphors, and idioms.

Conclusion

In light of these findings, Scholastic Ready4Reading appears well-aligned with contemporary research in literacy science and demonstrates clear potential to enhance the development of students' foundational reading skills with regard to phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, and fluency. The program's comprehensive instructional offerings for early literacy, along with its systematic, research-based approach to phonics appear to position students to efficiently and thoroughly develop the fundamental skills needed to be successful readers while simultaneously developing their engagement and interest in reading. As importantly, the instructional materials and resources made available to Ready4Reading users, as well as the overarching design and structure of the program's pedagogical framework, incorporate a variety of prominent instructional features that appear well-supported in contemporary research on best teaching practices for early literacy development.

As discussed throughout this evidence portfolio, the research literature related to the program's core components—explicit phonics teaching that leverages decodable texts, integration of phonics instruction with instruction on other foundational literacy concepts, and use of high-interest texts, interactive activities, culturally responsive materials, and differentiated scaffolds—is quite supportive and is suggestive of the potential benefits this overarching approach may yield. Importantly, program components across each of these areas appear embedded with key instructional strategies aligned with research-based best practices. Rooted in an overarching pedagogical framework that emphasizes systematic, explicit phonics instruction that is connected to decodable texts and content-facing reading materials, Ready4Reading lessons appear well-designed to bolster students' mastery of foundational literacy skills and well-positioned to potentially enhance the speed in which they develop fluency with grade-level texts (Blevins, 2017; Castles et al., 2018; Ehri et al., 2001; Ehri, 2005; Foorman et al., 2016; NICHD, 2000; Stahl, 2011). By designing instructional activities and lessons so that phonics-based teaching is *integrated with* instruction in other essential literacy areas, such as oral language, knowledge building, vocabulary, and reading comprehension—research suggests that students will be positioned to learn to read while simultaneously *reading to learn* (Slavin, 2009; Guthrie, 2008; Fairbanks et al., 2014; Metsala et al., 2021; Owens, 2020; Blevins, 2019). Program components and instructional strategies aimed explicitly at fostering student interest in and engagement with reading (Brandt et al., 2021; Slavin, 2009; Blevins, 2019; Borman et al., 2007; Fairbanks et al., 2014), including the incorporation of decodable texts and text sets aimed explicitly at student interests (Brandt et al., 2021; Guthrie et al., 2012; Deci & Ryan, 2017; Hollie, 2018), appear well-positioned to enhance learning outcomes as well. The incorporation of resources aimed at providing differentiated instruction, including the program's multimedia components, interactive features, and student-centered practice materials, also appear to be well-grounded in instructional best-practices research, particularly as it relates to enhancing student engagement (Tomlinson et al., 2003; Rappolt-Schlichtmann, Daley, & Rose, 2012; Rose, Meyer, & Hitchcock, 2005). As importantly, program features aimed at promoting inclusion and enhancing equity, including those related to Universal Design for Learning and culturally responsive pedagogy (Rappolt-Schlichtmann, Daley, & Rose, 2012; Rose, Meyer, & Hitchcock, 2005; Hollie, 2018; Hammond, 2014; Stembridge, 2015), as well as those aimed at providing opportunities for formative assessment and feedback, serve to potentially provide for a data-informed and highly personalized learning experience for students.

In the context of this research base, Ready4Reading appears well-positioned to positively influence early literacy instruction in the primary grades and potentially enhance reading outcomes for students. Given the breadth of foundational research supporting the program's overarching approach and methods, we conclude that Ready4Reading aligns closely with research-based best-practices in literacy science and indeed meets the qualifications for the ESSA Tier IV evidence category for schools seeking a comprehensive phonics solution. As Scholastic Education continues its research and development efforts, evaluation research that examines schools,' teachers' and students' experiences with the program, as well as its quantitative impact on explicitly fostering improved literacy development, is warranted to further examine this promising approach.

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Appendix A: Ready4Reading—Component Examples

Program Activity Example #1
Ready4Reading Phonics Lesson Example: Digraph -ch

Each Ready4Reading phonics lesson employs a routine aimed at reinforcing sound-spelling relationships. Lessons start with a phonemic awareness warm-up, review recently learned spellings, provide sound-spelling instruction, engage students in word reading and spelling, and show students how to use these skills in real reading and writing contexts. For example, a lesson on the digraph -*ch* typically takes 20 minutes:

- *Step 1: Develop Phonological Awareness/Introduce Sound-Spelling*: Students begin by watching an articulation video to learn how to make the /ch/ sound. They then engage in an activity where they say the digraph *ch/tch* sound every time they hear a word with the /ch/ sound (e.g., *such, much, ditch, match*). Then students blend (e.g**.,** /ch/ /o/ /p/ *chop*; /ch/ /i/ /n/ *chin*; /ch/ /e/ /s/ *chess***;** /f/ /e/ /ch/ *fetch;* /b/ /e/ /n/ /ch/ *bench*; /k/ /r/ /u/ /n/ /ch/ *crunch*). Moreover, segment words with /ch/ (e.g., students say the following words and then orally segment the words by sound: *hat, chat, cat, catch, chin, inch*). For support, students use Sound Boxes and Counters to stretch the sounds in the word and then move one counter into a box for each sound. They also tap the sounds as they say them.

  Teachers introduce the sound-spelling by writing *chess* and *itch* on the board. They underline *ch* and *tch* and tell children that when the letters *c* and *h* or *t, c*, and *h* appear together in a word, it is called *digraph ch/tch*. There are two letters in the digraph *ch* but only one sound: /ch/. In digraph *tch*, there are three letters but only one sound: /ch/. Teachers blend each word aloud as they run their fingers under the digraph *ch/tch* and each letter. They then ask students to say what *ch* and *tch* stand for. They show students the Letter Sounds Flash Card for /ch/ and point out the letter sound at different word positions. Children write the letters *ch* and *tch* several times as they say /ch/.

- *Step 2: Model Blending/Blend Words:* Teachers model blending by writing the words *hop, chop, hip, chip, much, lunch,* and *catch* on a board. Using the digital or print "Blend Words: Digraphs *ch, tch*" activity, teachers model how to blend a word with a digraph; for example, *cat* and *chat*. The teacher points to each word, asks children to blend the sounds quietly, and then says "all together" as children chorally read each word. Teachers provide corrective feedback as needed.

- *Step 3: Build Words:* After students practice blending sounds in words, they use the Magnetic Letter Tiles and trays to build the following words in sequence: *chop, chip, chin, check, such, much, lunch, bunch, witch, pitch, match, patch*.

- *Step 4: Sort Words/Spell Words:* After students build words using Magnetic Letter Tiles and trays, students learn that the *tch* spelling only appears at the end of a word or syllable, never at the beginning. They also learn that *ch* and *tch* are always preceded by a short vowel—not a consonant or long vowel. They complete the "Sound-Spelling Word Sort: Digraphs *ch, tch*" activity and work with partners to sort the words by their sound-spellings. Students engage in

an activity where they look at a picture of a chin, chop, check, watch, and lunch and practice spelling the letter sounds in words (e.g., *ch-i-n, ch-o-p, ch-e-ck, w-a-tch, l-u-n-ch*). Teachers then dictate, and students spell words as the teachers say: *chip, chest, inch, rich,* and *sketch*. Students are then expected to spell a complete sentence that a teacher dictates: *Chad had lunch with Tom.* The teacher corrects students' answers.

- *Step 5: Connect to Reading /Build Fluency:* Teachers read the "Interactive Story: Lunch" text with students. Then students independently complete questions and prompts about the meaning of the text. Children reread the story multiple times and complete the "Quick Check: Digraphs *ch, tch*" activity to build additional fluency building and formative assessment. Teachers give students two minutes to underline each word's *ch* or *tch* digraph in a text. They then practice reading the words independently to prepare for a one-minute speed drill.

Program Activity Example #2
Morphology/Word Study Lesson —Five-Step Gradual Release Model

As outlined, Ready4Reading is designed to teach students to decode words based on associated word meanings and by learning how to identify word parts, such as affixes, prefixes, suffixes, and root words. Instruction focuses on plurals, contractions, inflectional ending *-ed*, inflectional ending *-ing*, inflectional endings with spelling changes, prefixes, suffixes, final-*e* syllables, vowel-team syllables, final syllables, open and closed syllables (V/CV, VC/V), *r*-controlled syllables, consonant + *le* syllables, and compound words.

Word study lessons follow a five-step gradual release model:

- *Step 1: Develop Phonological Awareness and Introduce Sound-Spelling:* Lessons are designed to activate prior knowledge by engaging students in one of four phonological awareness routines: 1) adding initial and final sounds (for plurals, inflectional endings *-ed* and *-ing*, suffixes); 2) deleting initial and final sounds (for contractions, compound words; 3) substituting initial, final, and medial sounds (for inflectional endings with spelling changes, prefixes); and 4) blending and segmenting syllables (for all syllable lessons). The program is also intended to teach sound-spelling by defining rules and generalizations and then showing how those rules can be applied to decoding. For example, a lesson on word parts defines a suffix as a letter or group of letters added to the end of a base word that changes the meaning of the base word and explains standard rules and generalizations. Students learn they may need to 1) double the consonant when adding a suffix (e.g., in the CVC word *run*, the final consonant is doubled as in *runner*, *running*); 2) change words that end in *-y* to *i* before adding the suffix (e.g., *lonely* becomes *loneliness*); 3) remove *e* in words that end in *e* before adding a suffix (except *-s*).

- *Step 2: Model Blending:* In a suffix lesson, teachers model how to blend suffixes and determine meaning by writing the words *classes, chains, smiled, melted, fainting, teacher, collector, definition, national, hairy, louder, brightest, playful, harmless*, and *greatness* on the board. Teachers underline the suffix in each word and model blending the words using the two main word parts—base word and suffix.

- *Step 3: Build Words:* Students then write to transfer the sound-spelling and discuss what different suffixes mean (e.g., the suffix *ly* implies "a characteristic of"). Then children chorally blend words with suffixes using the digital or print "Blend Words: Suffixes" activity. They also use the Magnetic Letter Tiles and Trays to build words such as: *sad, run, walk, fly, bike,* and *quick.* Then children add suffixes, such as *-s, -ed, -ing, -er, -est,* and *-ly*. Students discuss with a partner how the new words are made, needed spelling changes, and how adding the suffix changed the word's meaning.

- *Step 4: Spell Words:* On a separate sheet of paper, students spell the following words as the teacher dictates each one: *teach, teacher, add, addition, itch, itchy, big, biggest*. For children who need more support, teachers guide them to segment the syllables in the word orally. Teachers use the Sound Boxes and Counters.

- *Step 5: Connect to Reading:* On a separate sheet of paper, children are tasked with spelling words as teachers dictate each one: *teach, teacher, add, addition, itch, itchy, big, biggest*. Students apply their phonics knowledge by reading the digital or print "Interactive Story: Too Many Adjectives and Adverbs." Students are given a list of words and then have two minutes to underline the suffix in each word. Then have them practice reading the words independently to prepare for the one-minute speed drill.

Program Activity Example #3
Segmenting Complex Tasks into Smaller Segments

Ready4Reading aims to prioritize the most high-leverage phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing skills that empower students to learn to read and read to learn. Skills and concepts are introduced through routines that provide step-by-step directions for exploring new ideas and applying knowledge. For example, in the Short Read lesson on single-syllable words with open long vowels, students review the sounds made by the short vowels *a, e, i, o,* and *u* and ask children to read and say the short vowel sound in the following words (*can, Max, back, tap, tan, pet, bed, web, ten, deck, big, dig, fit, hi, is, in, dog, lot, not, mom, lock, fun, mud, run, sun, nut).* Next, teachers point out that vowels that say their names are called *long vowels* (*a* can say /ā/; *e* can say /ē/; *i* can say /ī/; *o* can say /ō/; and *u* can say /ū/). The teacher then models how to use the /ē/ sound and asks students to say and identify the four words in a list with long-*e* sound (*be, so, he,* go, *me, we, no, a, I, Bo, I'm, Jo*). Then, students practice identifying the high-frequency word *she*. Finally, students apply this phonics knowledge to a decodable text that describes the interests of a few children and how these interests could lead to careers as entomologists, civil engineers, or chefs.

Program Activity Example #4
Practice and Review with Varying Levels of Scaffolding

As discussed, throughout Ready4Reading lessons, students have extensive opportunities to practice new skills, starting with a high level of support and transitioning to less support as they become more experienced and demonstrate increased competence. Spiraled and curriculum review is built into the program to prevent learning loss. For example, in Wiley Blevins Teaching Phonics, students review prior phonics knowledge after every five days of instruction. In addition, every

fifth Short Reads Decodables card reviews the targeted sound-spellings practiced in the previous four cards. The program also includes Power-Up! Cards that offer texts based on an aggregation of phonics elements. The cards may be used to review Short Reads Student Decodable Cards 31–60 before moving on to Short Reads Decodable Student Cards 61–80. Alternatively, they may be reviewed after specific cards, as noted in lessons.

Program Activity Example #5
Sight Word Recognition through use of High-Frequency Words

In the program's Wiley Blevins component, students practice identifying and decoding high-frequency words using a Read/Spell/Write/Extend routine. For example, in a lesson that teaches students the words *would, gave, found,* and *think,* students first read and write the word in a context sentence (e.g., *Would you like some water?*). Students then orally segment the word (They say the sounds they hear in the word *would* (/w/ /o—o/ /d/). The teacher then highlights the irregular spelling that children need to remember. For example, the teacher says: *The middle sound in* would *is* /o—o/. In this word, *we spell* /o—o/ *with* oul. Underline, highlight, or draw a heart above the part of the word that has to be remembered "by heart." Students then compare the spelling patterns in *would, could,* and *should.* After students read the word, they chorally spell the word. Children then write each word as they say aloud each letter's name. Students extend their understanding by completing the sentence *I would like to* _____.

Program Activity Example #6
Methods for Activating Prior Knowledge in Students

As outlined, Ready4Reading also activates prior knowledge by having students view Watch & Learn videos. Designed to introduce the content knowledge and vocabulary needed to comprehend the passages in the decodable text sets, the three-to-four-minute Watch & Learn videos present real-world footage related to science, social studies, or English language arts. The videos cover exciting topics that motivate students by sparking their curiosity. For example, in Text Set 7, students learn about the physical characteristics of animals and humans. Before watching the video, teachers set the purpose for reading and ask students three guiding questions: *What are some bones in your body? Why do you think bones are important? And do animals have bones?* Then children watch an engaging video about bones and learn what a skeleton, spine, vertebrae, vertebrate, and invertebrate are through examples and non-examples. The teacher may pause the video occasionally to guide thinking and discussion. From the video, students understand that while vertebrates such as humans or snakes have a backbone, slugs and crabs are invertebrates because they do not have a backbone. Students then learn why adults have 206 bones and babies have 300. After viewing, the teacher restates the purpose of the video and invites student responses. Finally, the teacher reviews content words from the video and lets students know they will see the vocabulary in the text.

- ***Bones! Bones! Bones! (*Informational: Retelling):** This text retells critical details from the video. Students learn that a skeleton comprises all the bones of your body. They are taught that the spine has 33 bones and that your bones help you stand, bend, and move.

- ***Bones? No Bones? (*Informational: Expand Knowledge):** This text reviews information from the video and playfully expands on ideas about animals that do and do not have bones and spines. Students join Miss Page's class and try to figure out which animals have bones and which do not.

- ***Yikes! (*Realistic Fiction):** The passage presents a realistic story inspired by the video. A boy is racing on his bike when he crashes and breaks his leg. Students follow the boy as he visits the doctor and gets help from his friends.

Program Activity Example #7
Methods for Helping Students Make Connections Across Topics

Ready4Reading also suggests ways to help children make connections across topics and texts and put their growing knowledge to use in new ways. For example, after reading Text Set 7: Bones, teachers remind students that in Text Set 5: It's a Frog!, they learned how frogs develop, where frogs live, and how frogs survive. Teachers tell students that frogs (like people and snakes) are vertebrates because they have skeletons and spines. Educators then ask students how bones might help frogs move. The teacher guides a conversation about how bones help frogs leap, jump, and move fast to escape predators. The teacher also asks children to share ideas about how frogs' bodies change from tadpoles to frogs. The teacher lets them know that tadpoles do not have bones. Bones develop as tadpoles begin to change into froglets.

Program Activity Example #8
Resources for Exploring Content Further

Once students finish reading texts, Ready4Reading offers resources to help students explore the book's content further. For example, the Short Reads Decodables Teachers Guide documents compelling facts that can encourage students to read more about the text set's topic. For example:

- Card 14: Pop! Pop! Pop!
  - Popcorn can pop up to three feet in the air.
  - Americans eat about 17 billion quarts of popcorn yearly—enough to fill the Empire State Building 18 times.

- Card 15: Babs the Rabbit
  - Rabbits take about 18 naps a day. They can sleep with their eyes open.

- Card 20: Look at the Jets
  - At any moment, there can be around 5,000 airplanes in the sky.
  - Some airplanes are supersonic jets. They travel over 768 miles per hour.
  - The fastest jet aircraft in the world can travel up to 2,100 miles per hour.

Program Activity Example #9
Multilingual Learner Supports

As outlined, Ready4Reading provides language support in Spanish, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Hmong for students developing phonemic awareness and early phonics skills in Wiley Blevins (phoneme level) and Short Reads Decodables (select phonics skills). As students begin to apply decoding skills in Read and Know, support is offered exclusively in the language of instruction to improve comprehension.

- Wiley Blevins Teaching Phonics offers multilingual learner scaffolds at the lesson level, with one or more language supports per target skill. Lessons guide sound transfers and spelling matches for select languages in sidebars called "Language Supports." The program also provides unique support on linguistic variations for students speaking Chicano and African American English in the "Linguistic Variations" section in the sidebars.

- Short Reads Decodables provide explicit recommendations to support multilingual learners in the teacher guide, with one set of supports (four to eight tips) per group of 10 student cards. These recommendations typically guide teachers on how to help students compare the linguistic features of English to their home languages. The support aims to build students' skills and confidence in sounding out letters and words in short texts. The guidance provides support on challenge areas (e.g., long vowels) and "confidence boosters" (e.g., continuous consonants, cognates) to encourage language transfers for select, high-need target skills. The guide provides occasional support to build background knowledge with unfamiliar elements of English found in short texts, such as homophones, metaphors, and idioms. Examples of recommendations include:

    - The **letters *m*** and ***n*** have sound transfers in Spanish, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Hmong. The program guides multilingual learner students to sound out the letters and share sample target-sound words in their home languages.

    - The **letter *p*** has a spelling match in Spanish, Vietnamese, and Hmong. The letter *d* has a Spanish, Cantonese, and Hmong spelling match. Ready4Reading coaches students to trace out and build these letters using classroom materials so that they can see how these shapes are different.

    - In Spanish, the **letter *d*** sounds similar to the English digraph *th*. Tell Spanish-speaking students to say the word *dedo* and use its *d* sound to say *the* and *this.*

    - The **letter *v*** has a direct sound transfer and spelling match in Spanish, Vietnamese, and Hmong. It does not exist in Cantonese. Help Cantonese speakers learn this letter sound through play. Ask small groups of students to pretend to play the violin while singing /vvvv/ at different tones. Then, have them make a list of words in this set with the letter *v* and underline the *v*.

    - The **short-*u* sound** has an approximate sound transfer in Spanish and Cantonese. Spanish speakers might say *duck* like "dook," and Cantonese speakers might say *cub* like "cab." The program guides teachers to list words with the short-*u* sound that students can use to practice, such as *duck*, *cub*, *tug*, and *run*.

- The **letter *z*** has no sound transfer or spelling match in Spanish, Cantonese, or Hmong. The program provides additional opportunities for students to practice saying and writing words from this set with the letter *z*, such as *Zack*, *zig*, and *zag*. Help them identify proper nouns by noticing uppercase *Z*s at the beginning of names.

- Spanish-speaking students might add an "eh" to the beginning of words with **initial *s*-blends**, saying "esnow" for *snow* or "esnack" for *snack*. Model starting each word with the tongue between the teeth instead of an open mouth.

- Multilingual learners need explicit practice with **long vowel sounds**. Spanish does not have long vowels, and Cantonese has more long vowels than English. The program helps students notice when long vowel sounds transfer to their home languages through different spellings.

- The **long-*o*** and **long-*u*** sounds do not have a sound transfer or spelling match in Hmong.

- The **initial letter *h*** is a silent letter in languages of Latin origin. Ready4Reading helps students practice the initial /h/ sound in words like *he*, *hop*, and *how* by asking them to feel their throats when they speak.

- The **letter *l*** has a sound transfer in Spanish, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Hmong. Tell students to drag out the letter *l* in words from this set, such as *Lin*, *look*, and *lap*. Ask students to share words from their home language that use the same /l/ sound.

- The **short-*o*** sound has an approximate sound transfer in Spanish, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Hmong. Help students practice this sound by saying words like *hot*, *pot*, *not*, and *pop* with open mouths.

- The **/j/** sound in words like *job*, *Jim*, *Jane*, and *jet* are similar to the /ch/ sound in Spanish words like *chef* (chef). Ready4Reading guides Spanish-speaking students to familiarize themselves with the English /j/ sound by transferring the /ch/ sound from their home language. Teachers model how to approximate the English /j/ sound by voicing the /ch/ sound with full vocal cord vibrations.

- The **letter *x*** has no sound transfer or spelling match in Cantonese, Vietnamese, or Hmong. The program provides additional opportunities for students who speak these languages to pronounce and write words from this set with the letter *x*, such as *Max*, *fox*, and *sax*.

- The **letters *x* and *k*** can look similar. Ask students to trace out and build these letters using classroom materials. Help them see how the shapes are different.

- The **/wh/ digraph** has no sound transfer or spelling match in Spanish, Cantonese, Vietnamese, or Hmong. Help students practice this sound in words like *what*. Spanish speakers can use the Spanish /ju/ sound in words like *jugo* to approximate the /wh/ sound in English.

- Students who speak Chicano or African American English might drop the final letter in **final consonant blends**. For example, they might say "des" instead of "desk." Help them practice voicing final consonants.

- Words that **end in double *l*** might be confusing to Spanish-speaking students. In Spanish, the double makes a distinct sound unlike /l/. Help students practice the double *l* sound by extending the blend. Spanish speakers might switch or merge the **/ch/** and **/sh/ sounds**. For example, they might say "shat" instead of *chat* or "chip" instead of *ship*. Help them sort /sh/ and /ch/ words into columns.

- The **long-*a* vowel** has a direct sound transfer in Spanish and an approximate sound transfer in Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Hmong. The long-*a* spelling in English (*a, ai, ay*) does not match the spellings that produce the sound transfer in these languages. Teachers are guided to talk to students about the letters or combinations of letters from their home languages that approximate the long-*a* sound in English.

- Spanish speakers can borrow the sounds *ei* in Spanish language words like *seis* (six) and *reina* (queen) to approximate the **long-*a* sound** in English.

- The **long-*u* vowel** has a direct sound transfer in Spanish and an approximate sound transfer in Cantonese. The program guides teachers to talk to students about the letters or combinations of letters from their home languages that approximate the long-*u* sound in English.

- Spanish speakers can use the sound *llu* in Spanish words like *lluvia* (rain) to approximate the **long-*u* sound** in English. The program helps students practice this sound using words from this set, such as *cute*.

- The **long-*o* vowel** has a direct sound transfer in Spanish and an approximate sound transfer in Cantonese and Vietnamese. The long-*o* spelling in English (*o, oa, ow*) does not match the spellings that produce the sound transfer in these languages. The program guides teachers to speak with students about the letters or combinations of letters from their home languages that approximate the long-*o* sound in English.

- The concept of a **consonant letter used as a vowel** may be foreign to multilingual learners. Ready4Reading provides explicit opportunities for these students to notice when the letter *y* makes the long-*e* and long-*i* sounds. Ask students to sort words into columns every time they read a word from this set that ends in *y*. The "long-*e* sound" column can include words like *away, body,*

funny, *Henny*, *hungry*, *Penny*, and *story*. The "long-*i* sound" column can include words like *dry*, *fly*, *my*, *sky*, *try*, and *why*.

- In Spanish, the **letter *y*** makes the long-*e* sound when it is used as a conjunction word (i.e., *and*) in phrases like "*Marta y Juan*" (Martha and Juan). The program provides activities to help Spanish speakers notice this connection between English and Spanish to build confidence in their home language skills.

- **Homophones** can be confusing for multilingual learners if the meaning used in a text is not the most common meaning. Help multilingual learners identify and define homophones in texts from this set, such as *weak*/*week* (card #51) and *felt*/*felt* (card #60).

- Show Spanish-speaking students that the **/ow/ and /ou/ diphthongs** in *about*, *growl*, *now*, and *out* approximate the Spanish /au/ sound in words like *auto* (car). The program encourages students to practice this sound.

- The **letter *i*** is the hardest sound for Spanish speakers to get used to, so cover it early and often. The short-*i* vowel sounds slightly like the Spanish sound /i/ in *pin (*pin). The long-*i* vowel sounds like the Spanish sound /ai/ in *aire* (air). Help students practice these distinctions.

- The program acknowledges that **synonyms** might be difficult for multilingual learners to define. It helps students understand shades of meaning by comparing words like *sparkle*, *gleam*, and *shine* in card #63.

- The program recognizes that **words with three syllables** appear earlier in standard Spanish instruction than in English. The program provides resources to challenge Spanish-speaking students who may already be familiar with long words to notice three-syllable English-Spanish cognates, such as *animal*, *assistant*, *celebrate*, *decorate*, *fantastic*, and *trampoline*.

- The **closed prefix *dis-*** exists in Spanish but can be spelled *dis-* or *des-* depending on the word it modifies. Notice when Spanish speakers borrow from their home language to spell or pronounce English words with the *dis-* prefix, and model appropriate pronunciation as needed.

- The program reminds teachers that the **long-*i* and long-*e* sounds** are the hardest sounds for Spanish speakers to get used to. The long-*i* vowel *(i, ie, igh)* makes the /ai/ sound in Spanish words like *bailar* (to dance). The long-*e* vowel *(e, ea, ee)* makes the Spanish *i* vowel sound in words like *amigo* (friend). Help students practice these distinctions by sorting words from this set that make long-*i* and long-*e* sounds, such as *fine*, *mighty*, *shine*, and *flies* (long *i*), and *rethink*, *screen*, *cleaned*, and *gleam (*long *e)*.

- The **long-*oo* sound** in words like *food* has a direct sound transfer in Spanish and Hmong and an approximate sound transfer in Cantonese and Vietnamese.

- The **/ô/ vowel** in words like *caught* and *thought* has a direct sound transfer in Vietnamese and approximate sound transfer in Spanish, Cantonese, and Hmong. Provide additional opportunities for students to associate the *augh* and *ough* spellings with the /aw/ vowel sound. The /f/ sound produced by the ***ph* digraph** directly transfers sound in Spanish, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Hmong. Remind students that they already know the /f/ sound and provide additional opportunities to practice the new spelling.

Appendix B: Ready4Reading Artifact Library

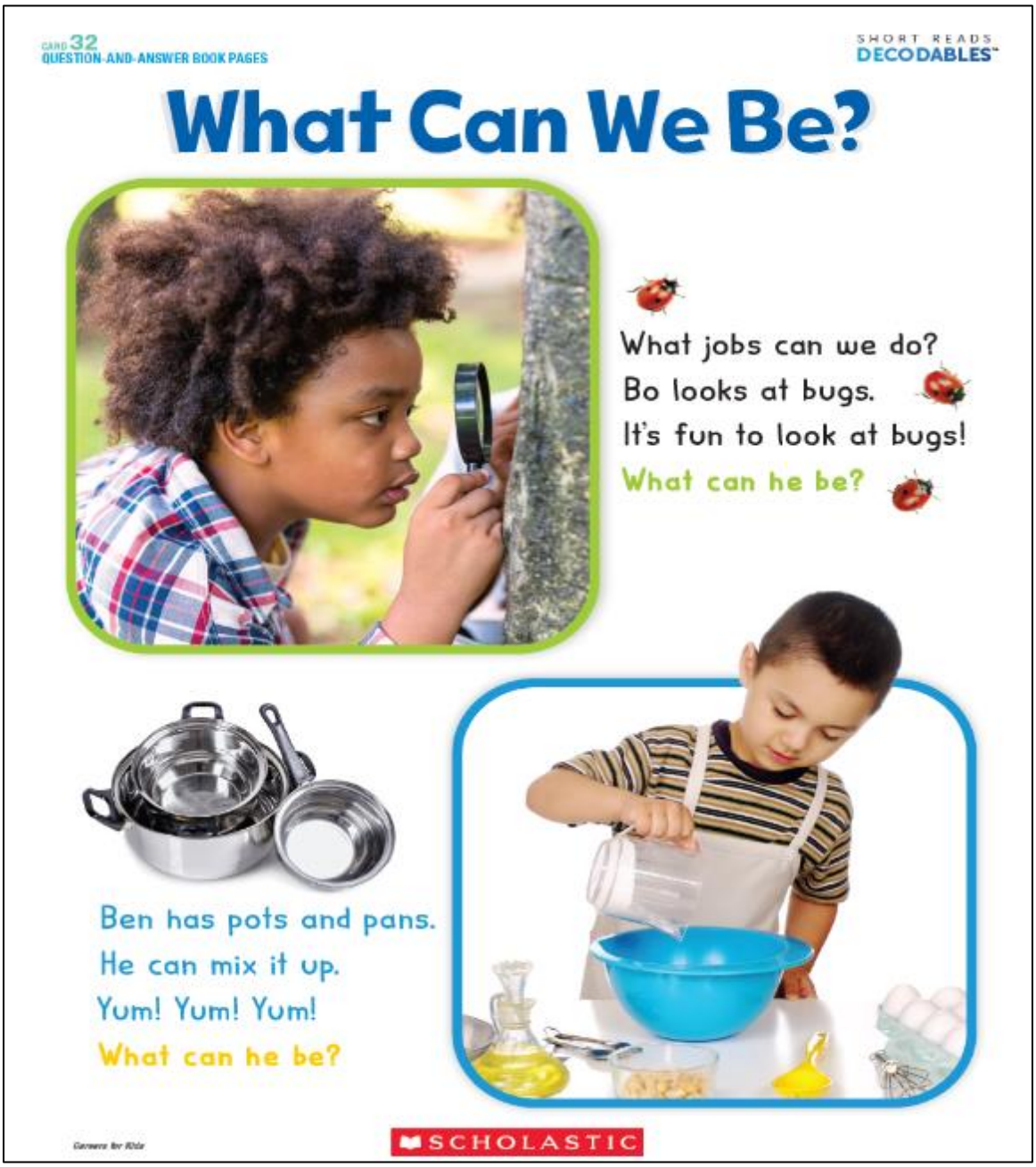

Figure A1. Question and Answer Book Pages—Short Reads Decodables

Figure A2. Question-and-Answer Book Pages—Short Reads Decodables

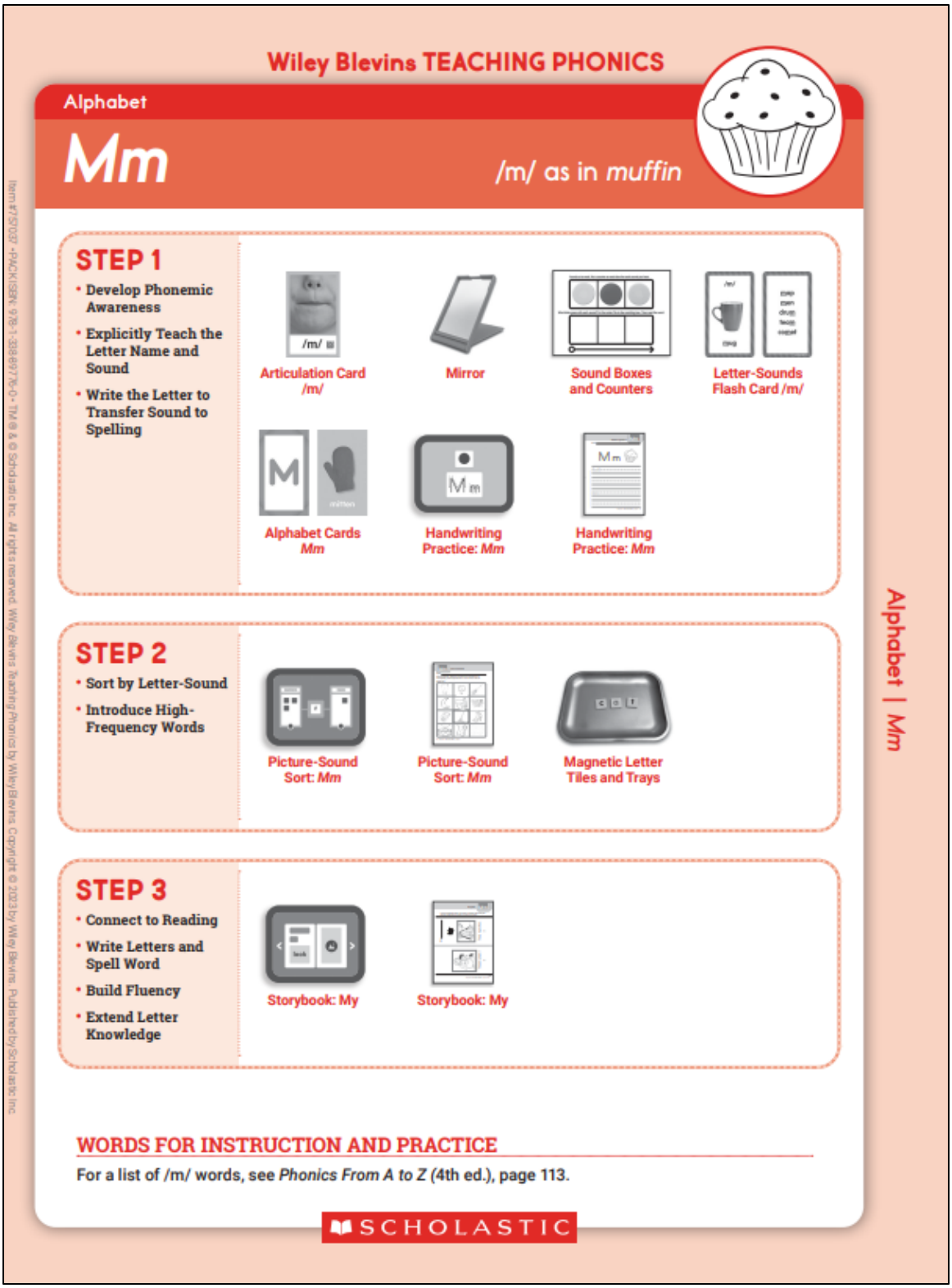

Figure A3. Wiley Blevins—Phonics Teaching Approach Example

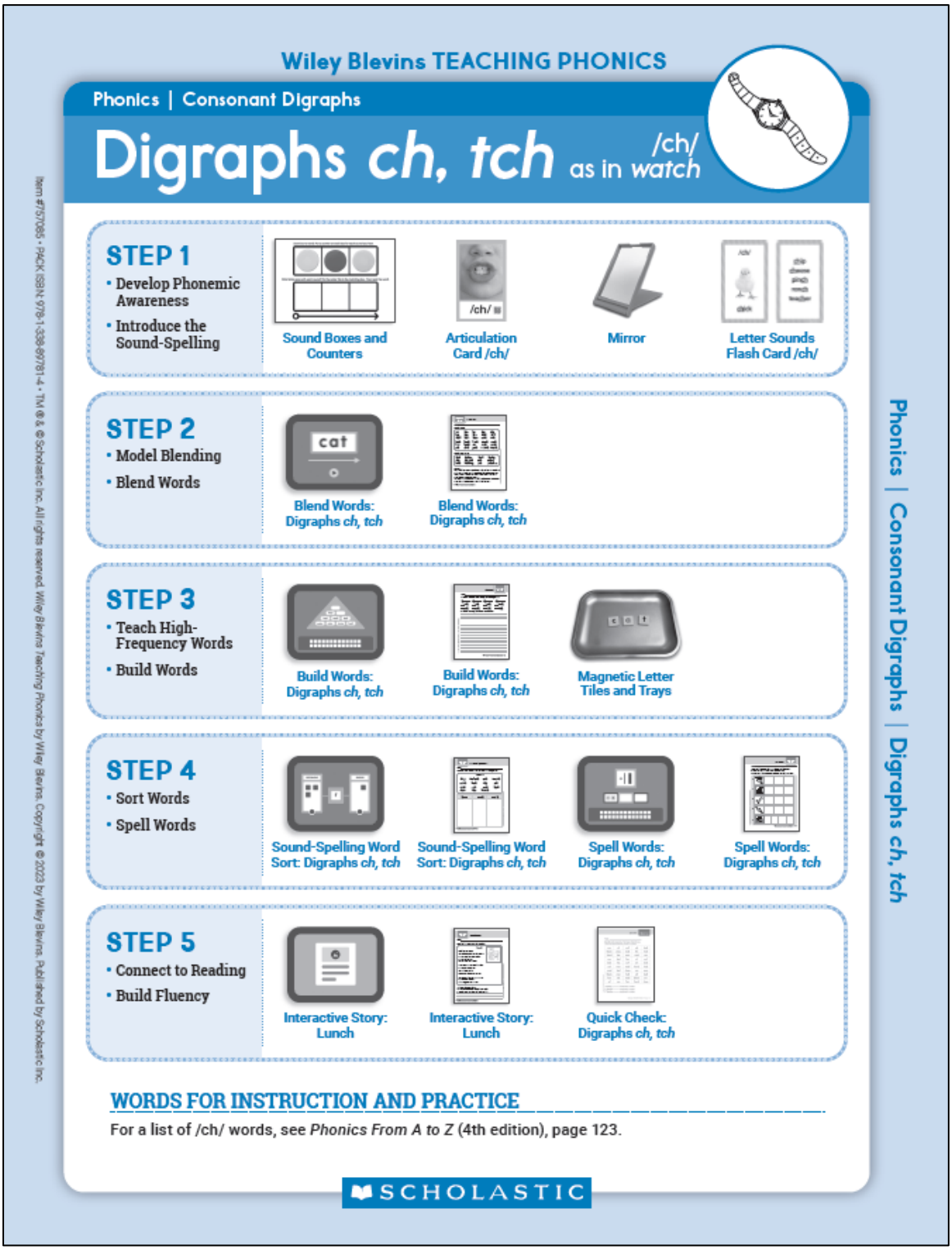

Figure A4. Wiley Blevins—Phonics Teaching Approach Example

Word	Definition	Tips for Reading and Recognizing Terms	Video Image or Reference
cub	a young animal, such as a lion or tiger	• *The word is* cub. *Now you say it*: cub. • *Let's blend the sounds we hear in* cub: /k/ /u/ /b/, *cub.* • Point to the word and have children echo-read it.	1:27
lion	a large, light brown wild cat	• *This word* is lion. *Now you say it*: lion. • Identify the beginning and ending sound-spellings children have learned: /l/ *l* and /n/ *n*. • Ask children to chorally read the word.	0:53
tiger	a large, striped wild cat	• *This word is* tiger. *Now you say it*: tiger. • Clap out the syllables together: *ti•ger.* • Point to the word and have children echo-read it.	1:03

Figure A5. Vocabulary Building Resource

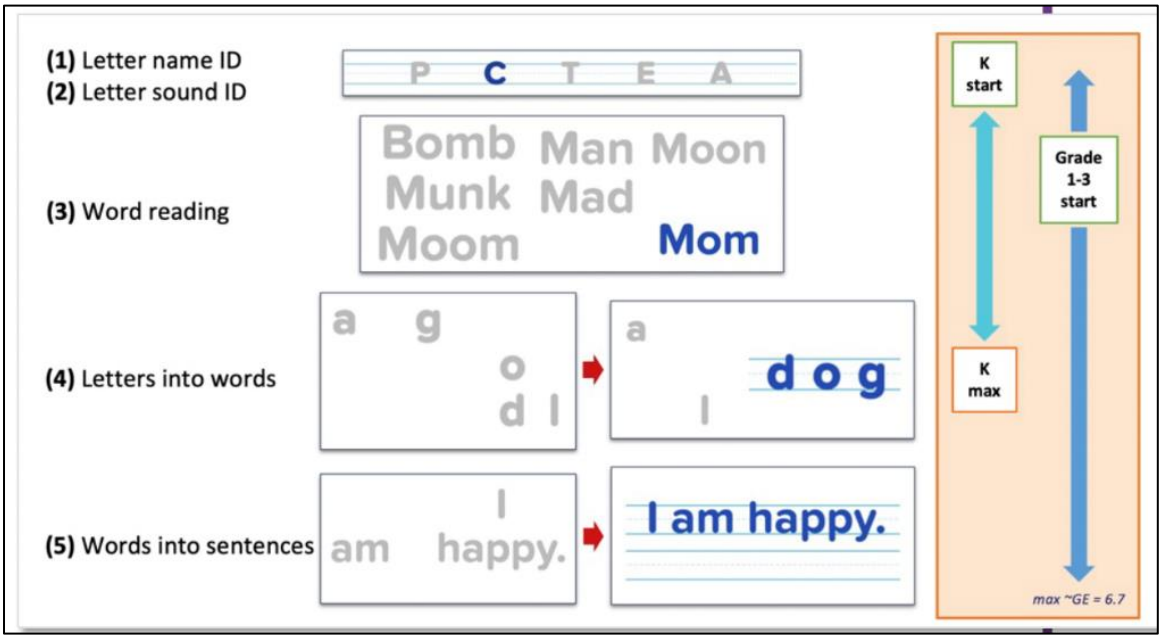

Figure A6. Places and Progress Assessments—Letters2Meaning Example

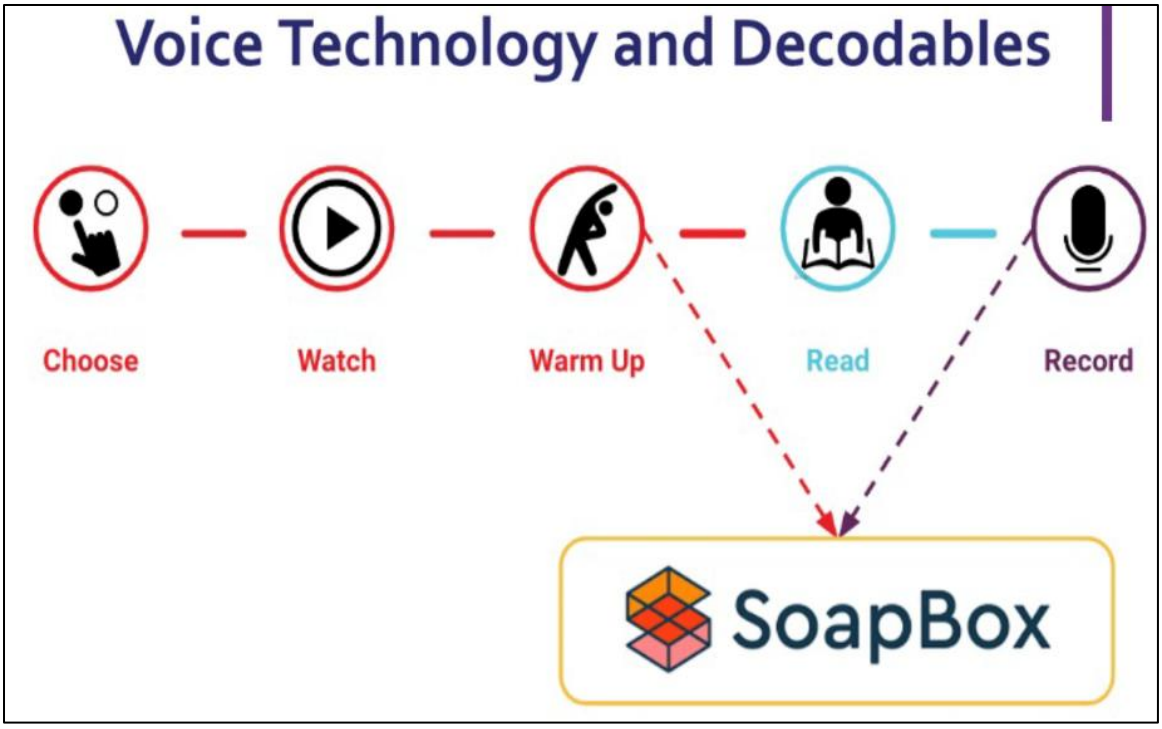

Figure A7. SoapBox Process