



Guidance for Making Pacing Decisions for Tier 1 Foundational Skills Instruction

This resource provides guidance for adjusting a curriculum's scope and sequence for Tier 1 Foundational Skills instruction for the 2020-2021 school year. It reflects a prioritization of current-year foundational skills content as well as how to attend to unfinished learning from the prior year. Careful pacing decisions are needed to ensure instruction follows the systematic continuum of foundational skills that all students need to become successful readers. Leaders can use this guidance to make adjustments to their curriculum scope and sequence and academic schedule.

Why a Scope and Sequence for Foundational Skills Matters

Why is a systematic, explicit approach to foundational skills instruction so important, particularly during the 2020-2021 school year? A settled body of research points to the fact that systematic, explicit foundational skills instruction is critical to early childhood instruction because most students depend on it to learn to read and write in English. Students need explicit instruction beginning with phonological awareness, following a clear sequence of phonics patterns, providing direct instruction with adequate student practice, and making use of weekly assessment and targeted supports to develop their skills as a reader (Adams, 2011; Castles et al., 2018; Lesnick et al., 2010; Liben & Paige, 2017; National Reading Panel, 2000; No Child Left Behind, 2002). Failing to teach systematically, assess and adjust instruction accordingly, and provide explicit instruction on skills not taught due to COVID-19 school closure, could result in unfinished learning that is critical to fluent reading and writing.

Steps to Guide the Development of Pacing Guides

Step 1: Inventory Instructional Days and Daily Instructional Time

What are the number of instructional days available?

- Start by identifying the days available for instruction in SY 2020–21 as well as the amount of daily instructional time that will be devoted to foundational skills instruction.
- Teams should plan to use state testing days for instruction. After missing at least eight weeks of in-school instruction in school year 2019–20, there is an urgent need to minimize the loss of instructional days. Lessons on testing days can be shortened since schedules will need to be adjusted.

How much time will be provided for foundational skills instruction each day? Is this time in alignment with curriculum suggestions?

- Instructional Time for Tier 1 Foundational Skills Instruction- a minimum of 45-60 minutes per day and should include:
 - Explicit teaching/ modeling of new content.
 - Opportunities for student practice of targeted skill.
 - Reinforcement/practice opportunities as needed for skills students are still working to master.



- Time devoted to reinforce taught skills and support students in decoding and fluency development through small groups and individual support.
- 10-20 minutes dedicated to reading decodable text and/or fluency practice as grade appropriate (can be a part of small group/individual support time).
- Additional time may be needed to address unfinished learning due to COVID-19.

Are there enough instructional days/time available to ensure all foundational skills lessons critical to grade-level progression are taught?

- Ensure that there are enough days and instructional time allocated within the pacing calendar to cover all foundational skills critical to grade-level progression so as to not interrupt or interfere with student progression through the skills.
 - Example: all sound/spelling patterns, high frequency words, necessary language standard work such as letter and sentence formation, introduction to parts of speech, etc.

If the answer is no, is there a place where lessons could be combined, condensed or omitted if data supports that students are ready to move on?

- If there are not enough days to teach the necessary grade-level foundational skills, modification to the amount of time and days dedicated to foundational skills instruction will need to be prioritized. For example:
 - If data supports that students have mastered a sound/spelling pattern and the curriculum provides two review lessons for the skill, the work of the lessons could be condensed into fewer days to ensure all skills are taught.
 - This is not a decision that should be made unless data undeniably shows that students do not need additional support or practice with the newly learned skill. Teachers will need to analyze and share data findings to support this type of pacing decision.
 - Or, is there another instructional area/task that could be condensed to allow for more time/days to devote to foundational skill instruction? Examples:
 - Does the curriculum dedicate time to some form of enrichment? Could this time be repurposed for foundational skills instruction and the enrichment tasks be optional at home learning opportunities?
 - Is there additional time in the daily schedule that could be utilized for 1-2 additional foundational skills lessons per week?
 - Could lessons within the read aloud component of the curriculum be condensed or omitted to make additional time for foundational skills instruction?
 - Determine the number of additional days needed for additional foundational skills instruction and find read aloud lessons that could be condensed or omitted over the course of the unit(s).



Step 2: Assessment

What are the assessments included with the curriculum, and when does the curriculum suggest giving the assessments?

What assessment guidance does the curriculum provide to inform next steps in instruction (whole group, small group, individual students)? How will this information be used to ensure unfinished learning is addressed in Tier 1 instruction?

- Most curricula offer not only screeners and regular formative assessments, but specific guidance on how to use the data to guide next steps in instructional planning. Prioritize understanding and using those resources. If your curriculum does not provide assessment materials and/or guidance on how to use the data collected, see the resources below:
 - Visit www.coreknowledge.org to access the Core Knowledge Assessment and Remediation Guide for each grade.
 - SAP Assessment Protocol: [Here](#) you will find a guide from Student Achievement Partners that explains how to form weekly assessments and collect data to drive instruction.

When will assessments be administered to determine what unfinished learning in Foundational Skills instruction will still need attention in addition to instruction and practice of new content (near or at the end of initial unit of study)?

How will the assessments and assessment guidance be used to determine the best method for addressing unfinished learning (whole group, small group, individual students)?

Will the pacing guide be reviewed and adjusted based on periodic assessment data?

- Time considerations should be made to administer a brief diagnostic screener at the beginning of the school year (and/or at the end of the initial skill unit) and at periodic checkpoints throughout the school year.
 - Prioritize letter inventory, phonological awareness, and grade-level appropriate sound and spelling patterns for each student.
- Time should also be devoted to collecting formative data during daily lessons (checklists, sampling dictation responses, monitoring of student work), responding to data, and adjusting instruction accordingly. Ensure frequent opportunities to formatively assess:
 - Students' phonological awareness, connecting to phonics as appropriate.
 - Students' ability to decode (read) and encode (spell) new words based on grade-level appropriate phonics instruction (sound/spelling patterns and high frequency words).
- Data gathered should always inform next steps in foundational skills instruction- both time devoted to instruction and the strategic approach to teaching content.



Step 3: Addressing Unfinished Learning

What units/lessons/modules were not taught as a result of school closure?

Which foundational and language skills not addressed in the spring are covered in the first unit of this year's materials? Which are not?

Which of the sound/spelling patterns, high frequency words, and language skills not covered in the spring do students need to learn in order to continue learning grade-level subject matter?

- Example: The sound/spelling patterns “ai” and “ay” were never explicitly taught to students and are not addressed in the first unit. This skill will need to be introduced to students to ensure students can move towards solidifying the alphabetic code with no instructional gaps. How can we ensure that students get this instruction? Will grade-level teachers need to pull a lesson from the previous grade level to teach this skill?

What skills not critical to reading progression could be introduced to students in another unit of study?
(See plural noun example in guidance above)

What if any adjustments need to be made to the time allocated to the first unit and/or unit content and materials to ensure the skills not covered as a result of school closure are addressed?

- Identify where in the 2019–20 pacing guide students left off before distance learning began. List the identified standards, and lessons including sound and spelling patterns, high frequency words, and language skills that have not been previously introduced to students. Even if identified content was available during distance learning, there may be gaps due to lack of access, trauma associated with the crisis, and other contributing factors that disproportionately impact priority groups of students. Ensure that all skills critical to grade-level progression not introduced prior to school closure are either:
 - Included in the initial unit of study to ensure students are prepared to begin grade-level work.
 - Incorporated into a grade-level lesson where an introduction to the skill would fall naturally.
 - Example: Plural nouns were not introduced to students in the initial unit of study. However, unit 2 addresses plural nouns in lesson 3. The decision could be made to incorporate an introductory lesson to plural nouns at this time in addition to the grade-level lesson.

How will we ensure that unfinished learning needs are continuously addressed both in whole and small group instruction as needed over the course of the school year? How will assessment be used to drive decision making?

What, if any additional time will need to be devoted to Foundational Skill instruction to ensure students receive adequate support and practice opportunities as needed?

- Once the initial unit of study is complete, time should be provided for teachers to administer an assessment to inform next steps in instruction. A plan should be designed to ensure that unfinished



learning is addressed during whole group and small group instruction as needed. This should occur in two ways:

- Upon completion of the initial unit, allow for issues related to unfinished learning in whole group instruction to arise naturally when dealing with new content. Daily re-engagement and review of prior skills in the context of grade-level assignments will add up over time, resulting in more functional learning than if we resort to watered down instruction. Concentrate time expenditure in whole group instruction on needs that actually come up during grade-level work. Just-in-time support provides equitable access to grade-level tasks by allowing students to persevere through productive struggle.
- Unfinished learning should be strategically addressed in small group instruction. Direct and fluid attention to skills not yet mastered (driven by assessment data) in Tier 1, 2, and 3 instruction will have a significant impact on student progress and will play a critical role in ensuring all students move forward on the pathway to fluent reading and writing with few or no instructional gaps. Ample time and planning should be devoted to this instructional component. This may mean that additional instructional time is needed.

Step 4: Making Appropriate Adjustments to the Curriculum to Maximize Learning

Are there lessons or tasks within the curriculum not dedicated to critical standard work and grade-level content? These are lessons and tasks that could be considered for omission to maximize time.

- In grades K-3, learning to read—the foundational standards and the sequence of skills they point to—reign supreme (RF.1, RF.2, RF.3, and RF.4).

College and Career Readiness Standards	
RF 1	Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print.
RF 2	Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).
RF 3	Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.
RF 4	Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.

- Additionally, grade specific Language standard work such as letter formation, sentence formation, and introduction to parts of speech are of utmost importance as well.
- Daily lessons and tasks targeting Foundational and Language standards should not be omitted unless data supports that students have mastered the skills.

How does this information impact decisions in Step 1?



Step 5: Creating the Pacing Guide Considering Implications for Future Learning

How will modules/units/lessons be paced for in-school learning to ensure all skills critical to the grade level are addressed?

Does the pacing work for both in-person and distance learning? If the answer is no, what revisions to time allocation will need to be made to ensure all students receive skill instruction critical to grade-level progression?

- Reflect on considerations for steps 2-4. Revisit step 1 and create the pacing guide through the lens of each of those considerations.
- After finishing the pacing guide, take note of adjustments that will impact learning in SY 2021–22. The COVID-19 crisis has created a learning gap, and experience tells us it will be very difficult to completely close that gap in a single school year. It is important to look ahead to ensure that the decisions made in SY 2020–21 do not create more gaps or harm students, with an emphasis on priority groups of students.

Additional Considerations

Professional Development

- Support teachers in understanding the progression of foundational skills across grades and the previous grade-level content that they will be expected to teach.
 - To help teachers address the challenge of understanding multiple grade-levels' standards and skills, encourage collaboration across grades.
 - Helpful resources include the [Addressing Unfinished Learning After COVID-19 School Closures](#) and the [2020-2021 Priority Instructional Content in ELA/Literacy and Mathematics](#).
 - Professional development should prioritize addressing the disproportionate impact on priority groups of students.
- Regular assessment and instructional response to assessment data will play a critical role in ensuring all students are moving towards fluent reading. Prioritize training leaders and teachers on understanding and using assessment resources.

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