Appeal of Findings Spring 2024 Instructional Materials Review of Phonemic Awareness for All Learners, Reading For All Learners and Fluency Builders.

Below are our responses to the red flag items in the SOR Checklist identified in the review. We appreciate the opportunity to provide clarification regarding the SOR Checklist Red Flag items. Below we have listed the flag items followed by clarification.

Submitted materials referenced below can be located online at https://iseesam.com/rims/ This is the same URL and materials referenced in the original submission.

A note regarding the format of Phonemic Awareness for All Learners. This program in print form uses a spiral bound book designed to be held horizontally with the binding on top. Learners sit on one side of the book and the instructor sits on the opposite side. As the pages are turned the learners see the lesson materials and the instructor see the explicit instruction model script. For the sake of the electronic submission, we combined the lesson materials and corresponding lesson script onto individual pages in the submitted pdf. To provide the files used in print production would be confusing and make connecting the lesson materials and associated teaching script difficult.

Phonological Awareness
2. Instruction is focused on letters only without explicitly instructing on and practicing blending, segmenting, and manipulating the phonemes that letters represent.

Phonemic Awareness for All Learners includes explicit instruction and student practice with the following items:
   a) Discriminating between correctly and incorrectly blended phonemes and sounds – See pages 15-19 of the Phonemic Awareness Presentation Book downloadable pdf.
   b) Saying and sustaining (manipulating) phoneme and letter sounds – See page 26 of the Phonemic Awareness Presentation Book downloadable pdf.
   c) Blending phonemes and letter sounds – See pages 27-28 of the Phonemic Awareness Presentation Book downloadable pdf.
   d) Segmenting phonemes (deletions, additions and replacements) See pages 29-31 of the Phonemic Awareness Presentation Book downloadable pdf.

3. Phoneme awareness is not emphasized as a foundational reading skill.

Phoneme awareness is emphasized as a foundational reading skill in the following ways:
   a) The program Phonemic Awareness for All Learners incrementally introduces students to phonemes as the foundation of reading. The program provides explicit instruction and practice in saying, discriminating, blending, segmenting and pronouncing words based upon the sounds made by written letters.
   b) In the Teacher's Guide for Reading For All Learners page 4 identifies key skill related to phonemic awareness. The manual indicates students will be ready to begin Reading For All Learners once they have those skills.

c) Instructors are encouraged to be fluent in their pronunciation of phonemes and sound combinations. See the Reading for All Learners Teachers Guide page 14 for the practice activity provided for instructors.

d) New and previously introduced phonemes and practice with them are a part of almost all lessons found in Reading For All Learners. See most lessons from Set 1 through Set 6 (at which point all phonemes and sound combinations have been introduced). Also see the Reading for All Learners Teacher's Guide pages 15-18 for a sample lesson and the recommended explicit instruction and student practice with the Sound Practice section of lessons.

Phonics

1. Instruction encourages students to memorize whole words (except for high-frequency, non-decodable words), guess at words in context, or use picture clues rather than decoding the word first (three-cueing system).

Nowhere in any of the submitted materials is memorizing words, guessing at words or using pictures to identify words suggested as a strategy for reading words. Consistently the submitted materials encourage identifying the sounds that make up words and using those sounds to read words. You can see this emphasis throughout both the program student materials and the Teacher's Manuals. For example see pages 21-26 of the Reading For All Learners Teacher's Guide for instructional guidance on the introduction of new regular and irregular words.

2. Phonics instruction takes place in short (or optional) "mini-lessons" or "word work" sessions.

Phonics instruction is an integral part of every lesson in Reading For All Learners. Reading For All Learners provides systematic and deliberate practice in creating and reinforcing letter-sound correspondences. Every lesson in Reading For All Learners begins with an explicit phonics practice session that includes practicing individual sounds (through Set 6) and continues with explicit practice in words that include the sounds just practiced. Then the words and sounds practiced are used in connected text reading practice. Nowhere in the instructional materials or manuals is it suggested that parts of these lessons are optional. These lesson elements can be found throughout the Reading For All Learners series in every book in the 141 book series. For samples of the individual lesson components and the associated instructional guidance see the following pages of the Reading For All Learners Teacher's Guide:

Pgs 15-16 – Previously Introduced Sound Practice
Pgs 17-18 – Newly Introduced Sound Practice
Pgs 19-20 – Previously Introduced Word Practice
Pgs 23-24 – Newly Introduced Word Practice
Pgs 39-40 – Connected Text (story) Reading

6. High-frequency words with regularly spelled sound-symbol correspondences are taught as whole-word units, often as stand-alone "sight words" to be memorized.

Reading for All Learners guides learners to use the "Say it the slow way, then say it the fast way" strategy for every word. This strategy is also called sounding out a word. The goal is for students to first identify the individual sounds and then blend the sounds together into a word. Nowhere in the instructional materials or teacher's manuals is memorization of any words suggested or implied as an appropriate strategy for word attack. See the Reading For All Learners Teacher's Guide pages 21-26 for examples of the instructional guidance provided for teachers related to word attack.

9. Early texts are predominately predictable and leveled texts without sufficient time and attention to decodable texts.

Reading For All Learners uses carefully controlled connected text passages to provide students the opportunity to decode words in connected text. Through Set 5 100% of the words used in connected text practice are first introduced in the phonics practice sections. Following Set 5 95%+ of connected text is first introduced in the phonics sections. It is inaccurate to describe the connected text passages as predicable text. In fact the Reading League recently reviewed Reading For All Learners and added the program to their list of recommended sources for decodable text. See - https://www.thereadingleague.org/decodable-text-sources/ see the link listed for "I See Sam".

11. Advanced word study (Grades 2-5), no instruction in multisyllabic word decoding strategies and/or morphology to support word recognition is evident.

Beginning in Set 4 Reading for All Learners includes 80 explicit morphology lessons. Among the topics in these lessons are decoding strategies for multisyllabic words. For a complete listing of the morphology lesson topics and their locations in the series see the Morphology Lesson List found with the RIMS submission at https://iseesam.com/rims/. For examples of these lessons and the associated instructional guidance see the Reading For All Learners Teacher's Guide pages 30-38.

Fluency
1. Fluency instruction focuses primarily on independent student silent reading.

Nowhere in the Reading For All Learners program student materials or instructional manuals is silent reading suggested or advised.

3. Word-level automaticity is not provided, or fluency is viewed only as connected text-reading fluency.

Reading For All Learners was designed to help build word-level automaticity. The relationship between the phonics lessons and the connected text stories is intended to help students develop automaticity at the single word level by providing many opportunities for practice. Most words are practiced in the sound and word section of lessons for several lessons. See pages 19-20 of the Reading For All Learners Teacher's Guide for an example lesson and the instructional guidance related to word practice. For example, in Set 1 Book 1 three new regular words are introduced. These same words are practiced in the sound and word section of Set 1 Books 2, 3 and 4 as well. Additionally, the connected text passages offer additional practice opportunities of these words. In the sound and word practice sections, newly introduced words are practiced in at least 4 lessons. Irregular words are practiced in at least 6 lessons.

Vocabulary
3. Tier 2 words are not taught explicitly, and students are not given opportunities to use them in their speech, see them in print, and use them in writing.

Tier 2 words are addressed in The Fluency Builders Lesson plan for each chapter in three of eight recommended lesson plan steps described for each of the 54 chapters. Especially steps 1 and 7 provides the teacher the opportunity to select and guide students in the practice of Tier 2 words. These steps described on pages 4-5 of the Fluency Builders Teacher's Guide are:
   1) Step 1. Review of Vocabulary from the Previous Chapter (approximately 2 minutes). The instructor reviews the 10 most difficult words from the previous chapter. See Step 7 of this Lesson Plan for more information. Any very difficult words should be added to the Step 7 list for further review.
   2) Step 2. Overview and Vocabulary Check for the Chapter (approximately 5 minutes). Students read the chapter and prepare their own written list of words they cannot pronounce, decode, or understand. The instructor discusses and explains these words. Students demonstrate their understanding of difficult words by using the word in a sentence in another context. Building on the discussion of the vocabulary, the teacher asks questions to elicit the main ideas of the chapter and generate a summary of the actions, major characters, or concepts. This discussion should serve as a brief, introductory overview of the chapter.
   3) Step 7. Prepare a Vocabulary Review List for the Chapter (approximately 3 minutes). The teacher and group should prepare a list of the chapter's most difficult words to decode and understand. This should be a 10-word list based on difficult words encountered in the lesson. Each student should be required to review this list of 10 words as a homework assignment and be prepared to read and use each word in a sentence to demonstrate understanding. This review will be done as Step 1 of the next lesson on the next chapter.

4. Students are not exposed to Tier 3 words knowledge and domain specific words in expository texts.

Tier 3 words are used throughout the connected text passages of the Fluency Builder program. For example the domain specific topics used the passages include Geography, History, Cultures, Science and Mathematics. See the last page of the Fluency Builders Teacher's Guide for a more detailed description of the content area concepts and topics used the 54 lessons of the Fluency Builders. Student understanding of the meaning of these words and the opportunities for practice and study of Tier 3 words is addressed in the same manner as the above flag item.

5. Explicit instruction in morphology is not apparent.

Reading for All Learners includes 80 explicit morphology lessons. For a complete listing of the morphology lesson topics and their locations in the series see the Morphology Lesson List found with the RIMS submission at https://iseesam.com/rims/. For examples of these lessons and the associated instructional guidance see the Reading For All Learners Teacher's Guide pages 30-38. In terms of using these lessons to enhance word vocabulary see the bottom of page 36 of the Reading For All Learners Teacher's Guide for the instructional guidance related to morphology and word understanding.

Comprehension

1. In early grades, the instructional framework is primarily a workshop approach, emphasizing student choice and implicit, incidental, or embedded learning.

Reading For All Learners program is a sequential, systematic and explicit reading instruction program. The instructional guidance for teachers indicates teachers should teach with the program sequentially – i.e. Set 1 Book 1 then Set 1 Book 2 and so on. See page 5 of the Reading For All Learners Teachers Guide and note the statement "For maximum effectiveness the books must be taught in sequence."

Embedded into the program are learner checks called "Looking Backs" which test student knowledge of recently introduced sounds and words and provide reteaching guidance if mastery is not achieved. While incidental learning could occur with Reading For All Learners the program is built on an instructional sequence and includes frequent checks to ensure students have acquired recently taught skills. See pages 41-42 of the Reading For All Learners Teacher's Manual for information about the embedded mastery checks called Looking Backs.

3. Comprehension activities focus mainly on assessing whether students understand content (the product of comprehension) instead of supporting the process of comprehending texts.

In Reading For All Learners, comprehension of connected text is emphasized beginning with the first of the 141 books. Embedded on approximately 50% of the pages containing connected text reading practice are story discussion questions. See the Reading For All Learners Teacher's Guide page 40 for the instructional guidance on using the embedded discussion questions and what to do if comprehension errors occur. Deeper instructional guidance on comprehension strategies can be found in the online supplemental downloads section of iseesam.com. Specifically the guidance on comprehension strategies is here - https://iseesam.com/content/Comprehension%20Strategies.pdf

The embedded discussion questions evolve as learners reading skills develop. The early discussion questions are primarily literal questions. In Set 1 82% of the discussion questions are literal. By Set 8 only 16% of the questions are literal and 67% are inferential. See the Scope and Sequence summary on page 3 of the Reading For All Learners Teacher's Guide for a detailed breakdown showing the gradual evolution of the discussion questions.

In the Fluency Builder program 3 of the 8 Model Lesson Plan steps involve comprehension skill building. Following the reading of a connected text passage students are asked to:
  a) Build their own questions about the text and present their question to their group
  b) The teacher should generate their own questions targeting topics such as what is the main idea, motives and sequence of events. Teachers are also asked to guide students through summarizing.
  c) Finally, students are encouraged to read portions of the lesson text with appropriate expression.
See pages 4-5 of the Fluency Builder Teacher's Guide for more detail about the Model Lesson Plan.

The Fluency Builders program includes comprehension assessments for each connected text passage for teachers who wish to measure comprehension. See the downloadable masters for the Fluency Builders here - https://iseesam.com/content/FB%20Blackline%20Masters.pdf

8. Advanced (Grades 2-5): For students who are automatic with codes, texts for reading are primarily leveled texts that do not feature a variety of diverse, complex, knowledge-building text sets to develop background knowledge in a variety of subject areas.

The Fluency Builders settings and storylines include topical knowledge in the following areas:
  a) diverse populations, languages, and cultures
  b) a range of historical and futuristic settings
  c) a range of geographical settings

     e) a range of inner-city and rural settings, and

     f) a range of scientific settings, including paleontology and space science settings.

The model lesson plan encourages teachers to help students comprehend and learn the associated topical vocabulary for these areas. See the Fluency Builders Teachers Guide pages 3-5 for details on the Model Lesson Plan

9. Inferencing is not taught explicitly and may be based only on pictures clues and not text (i.e., picture walking).

Guiding students to use the pictures for clues to comprehend connected text or identifying individual words is *not* suggested anywhere in the instructional guidance for Reading For All Learners. As students progress beyond the very early books most illustrations do not provide answers to the embedded connected text discussion questions. This is especially the case as the embedded questions evolve from literal questions to inferential and evaluative questions. More instructional guidance on introducing inferencing to students can be found here - https://iseesam.com/content/Comprehension%20Strategies.pdf

10. Reading and writing of genre types and use of specific text features are not explicitly taught.

The connected text reading practice in Reading For All Learners includes a variety of genre types. The passages include genres such as humor, mystery and science fiction. The first of several plays in the series is found in Lesson 2 of Book 7 in Set 5. The use of specific text features is more fully developed in the Fluency Builders program. Some examples in the Fluency Builder program include; Books 1 and 2 uses maps of New York, Egypt, Utah and Colorado including detailed insets relating to locations used in the connected text reading practice. Book 4 includes diagrams of a dam, the solar system and the Milky Way galaxy. Additional instructional guidance regarding the use of specific text features is available in the free downloads section of iseesam.com here: https://iseesam.com/content/Comprehension%20Strategies.pdf

11. Text structure and signal words are not explicitly taught and practiced in reading and writing.

Text structure and signal words are addressed after learners have completed the first three sets of Reading For All Learners. Prior to that the focus is on learning phonemes and decoding. Specific guidance on introducing both items and their use with Reading For All Learners and the Fluency Builders can be found here in the supplemental downloads on iseesam.com - https://iseesam.com/content/Comprehension%20Strategies.pdf

12. Comprehension strategy instruction is taught without equal emphasis on knowledge-building.

The Fluency Builders settings and storylines include topical knowledge in the following areas:
      a) diverse populations, languages, and cultures
      b) a range of historical and futuristic settings
      c) a range of geographical settings
      e) a range of inner-city and rural settings, and
      f) a range of scientific settings, including paleontology and space science settings.

The model lesson plan encourages teachers to help students comprehend and learn the associated topical vocabulary for these areas. See the Fluency Builders Teachers Guide pages 3-5 for details on the Model Lesson Plan.

13. Emphasis is on independent reading and unconstrained book choice without exposure to complex texts.

In the Reading For All Learners book choice is very much constrained. Page 5 of the Reading For All Learners Teachers Guide states "For maximum effectiveness <u>the books must be taught in sequence.</u>" Text complexity increases steadily from a preK/K level in Set 1 to a grade level of 3.6 at the end of Set 8. See the Reading for All Learners Teachers Guide page 3 for the program Scope and Sequence Summary for details on text complexity and grade level equivalents.

14. Emphasis is on independent reading and unconstrained book choice without exposure to complex texts.

While the reading level of connected text in Reading For All Learners is decodable it is not predictable. Page 2 of the Reading For All Learners Teacher's Guide states "Words that look very much alike are juxtaposed in the same book so that the learner cannot guess the word by using only the initial letter sound, e.g., "Mat, Mit, it" and "sit, Sis, is." Also, the Looking Back assessments ensure learners are not using the illustrations for cues. "

In the Fluency Builders the reading level of the connected text is controlled to be appropriate for the learner's reading abilities but is rich text using topical content including:
      a) diverse populations, languages, and cultures
      b) a range of historical and futuristic settings
      c) a range of geographical settings
      e) a range of inner-city and rural settings, and
      f) a range of scientific settings, including paleontology and space science settings.