



For Immediate Release
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First Reviews of Foundational Skills Curriculum Reveal Gaps in Quality

Durham, NC — EdReports.org, a nonprofit that provides free reviews of K-12 instructional materials, announced the results of its [first round of reviews of foundational skills programs](#) for English Language Arts. Its findings reveal that none of the five programs reviewed fully meet expectations for alignment to college- and career-ready standards.

“Through our work with educators across the country and market research, we know that many school districts supplement ELA instruction with a foundational skills program,” said Liisa Potts, EdReports.org’s Director of ELA Reviews. “Independent analyses of these programs has largely been absent, leaving teachers without reliable information on the quality of their curriculum. These reports serve to fill this information gap. Our mission is to ensure educators have the evidence they need to select materials that reflect a research-based progression to support students as they grow into increasingly sophisticated readers.”

Potts added, “The foundational skills review tool is designed with the belief that all students should have strong, research-based curriculum instruction. This approach allows teachers to better identify students who are struggling and need additional support.”

The EdReports review process looks for foundational skills called for by college- and career-ready standards, including whether or not the skills apply research-based practices and are presented systematically with explicit instruction.

Content Review Teams, comprised of early learning and literacy experts from across the country, analyzed programs over the course of several months. Hundreds of hours were spent on each program identifying evidence and scores for alignment to standards and



research-based practices, implementation, support materials, and assessment. The EdReports [rubric and review methodology](#) is free and publicly available on its website.

Across the five foundational skills programs, review teams found the following:

Partially Met Expectations for Alignment to College- and Career-Ready Standards:

- The Fountas & Pinnell Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study System (Heinemann)
- Puzzle Piece Phonics (Corwin Literacy)
- Wilson Foundations (Wilson Language Training)

Did Not Meet Expectations for Alignment to College- and Career-Ready Standards:

- Express Readers Foundational Reading Program (Express Readers)
- Jolly Phonics (Jolly Learning)

“We have always reviewed for the presence of foundational skills in our K-5 ELA materials, but many districts choose to use a stand-alone foundational skills program either because their comprehensive program lacks strong, cohesive foundational skills instruction or is missing appropriate supports for teachers,” said Eric Hirsch, EdReports.org’s Executive Director. “The need for these reviews align with the latest National Assessment of Educational Progress report revealing a drop in elementary- and middle-school reading scores as well as [our research findings](#) that show only 15 percent of ELA materials regularly used in classrooms are aligned to college and career-ready standards.”

EdReports.org will continue to review additional foundational skills print and digital instructional materials and will release the results on a rolling basis. Titles under review can be found at www.edreports.org/reports/upcoming-reviews.

For more information on the results and review process, visit: www.edreports.org.

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