




STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools
Charter School Directors
Regional Educational Service Center Directors
Boards of Education

FROM: Melissa K. Wlodarczyk Hickey, Director of the Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success, CSDE 

DATE: March 13, 2023

SUBJECT: Evidence-based, Scientifically based, Culturally Responsive Literacy Curriculum Models, Programs, and Professional Learning

As legislated, per Connecticut General Statute (C.G.S) Section (Sec.) 10-14hh and Sec. 14ii, the CSDE, in consultation with the Reading Leadership Implementation Council, reviewed and approved reading curricula models and programs for use by local and regional boards of education for students in Kindergarten to Grade three (K–3), inclusive, that are evidence-based, scientifically based and focused on competency in the following research-based areas of reading:

- oral language;
- phonemic awareness;
- phonics;
- fluency;
- vocabulary;
- rapid automatic name or letter name fluency; and
- reading comprehension.

As required, the CSDE developed the PreK–3 Reading Connecticut Review Process to Evaluate Curricula and Programs (Reading CORE). The Reading CORE rubric located in the [Reading CORE District and Publisher Proposal Template](#) was designed, in consultation with the Reading Leadership Implementation Council, to review reading curriculum models and programs for use by local and regional boards of education for students in PreK–3, inclusive, that are evidence-based, scientifically based, and aligned to the aforementioned areas of reading.

The Connecticut Reading CORE Reviewers analyzed each submission utilizing the [Reading CORE District and Publisher Proposal Template](#). Then, the process included the review and inclusion of other credible, research-focused, evidence-based, scientifically based, and comprehensive reviews of materials such as those by CURriculum RATings for TEachers (CURATE)-Center for Instructional Support (mass.edu), Reading|Evidence For ESSA, and Reports Center (edreports.org).

The Reading CORE District and Publisher Proposal Template purposively included the provision of evidence that the materials submitted for review include texts representing various cultures and perspectives as well as include questions and tasks that promote cultural affirmation and value diverse identities, backgrounds, and perspectives. While reviewing materials submitted by districts and publishers, Connecticut Reading CORE Reviewers found some evidence indicating high-quality related to

the texts representing various cultures and perspectives. This means that while some evidence indicates high quality, there were also insufficiencies, which reviewers determined would require supplementation by districts. This supplementation process should include high-quality professional learning that provides educators with the tools necessary to address inclusiveness and culturally responsive representation.

C.G.S Sec. 10-14hh and Sec. 14ii, have opened doors to essential evidence-based and equity-based literacy conversations specifically around the provision of culturally responsive, evidence-based, scientifically based literacy practices, strategies, and structures so that all students are reading at or above grade level by the end of Grade 3. Under this premise, the CSDE encourages local and regional boards of education to provide professional learning on culturally responsive, evidence-based, scientifically based literacy instruction and review their local individual literacy student data, curricula, instructional practices, and materials to ensure that each student is performing at grade level and their materials align with the scientific elements utilized during the CSDE's CORE Review Process and found on the [Reading CORE District and Publisher Proposal Template](#).

Strengthening culturally responsive, evidence-based, scientifically based, knowledge, skills, and mindsets of educators is a key equity lever that can result in increased student literacy outcomes. It is imperative that local and regional boards of education design and implement a professional learning system grounded in the [Connecticut Standards for Professional Learning](#) and support educators in choosing and utilizing coherent, culturally responsive, evidence-based, scientifically based literacy curriculum models, programs, practices, strategies, and structures.

To encourage publishers to support and promote comprehensive culturally responsive instruction in alignment with the [Connecticut State Board of Education Position Statement on Culturally Responsive Education](#) (adopted February 3, 2021), the CSDE is sharing the position statement and feedback from the Connecticut Reading CORE Reviewers with the publishing companies on the Connecticut “**meets expectations**” list.

If you have questions, please contact Dr. Melissa K. Wlodarczyk Hickey, Director of the Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success at Melissa.Hickey@ct.gov.

cc: Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Commissioner of Education
Irene Parisi, Chief Academic Officer