Zaner-Bloser The Superkids Reading Program

Foundational Research Paper

RESEARCH-BASED DESIGN OF *THE SUPERKIDS READING PROGRAM*

The Superkids Reading Program is a comprehensive English language arts curriculum grounded in scientifically based reading research that helps young learners develop foundational literacy skills and language comprehension, fostering positive experiences with reading and writing that build community, curiosity, and confidence.

ZB Zaner-Bloser

ABOUT LXD RESEARCH

Learning Experience Design (LXD) Research is an independent evaluation and research firm within Charles River Media focusing on educational programs. LXD Research specializes in research communication, efficacy study validation, and the design and execution of ESSA-aligned research studies. Visit www.LXDResearch.com for more information about Dr. Rachel Schecter, Dr. Sofia Jimenez, and Krystina Raymond, the principal researchers for this project.

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How Can This Foundational Research Paper Be Used?

The Superkids Reading Program © 2026 is a comprehensive English language arts curriculum for kindergarten–grade 2 grounded in scientifically based reading research. This paper answers the question "How was research used to revise this program?" by narratively describing the program's theory of action and explaining the innovative strategies, pedagogical approaches, and empirical evidence that inform the updated and expanded components of *Superkids*. The program components and intended outcomes are framed in a logic model required as part of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). While the details of what is required for each federal funding program are slightly different (U.S. Department of Education, 2023), the information in this document should satisfy the requirements for "demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes; and includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention" (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). Each section of this paper elaborates on how *Superkids* enhances students' reading and writing skills.

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Key Points

- *Superkids* offers a **comprehensive curriculum** that is integrated across the language arts, solidifies foundational literacy skills, and builds knowledge to grow students' confidence as readers and writers.
- *Superkids* employs **systematic and explicit instruction** in word work, reading, and writing that builds literacy skills progressively, reinforcing and expanding students' existing knowledge.
- *Superkids* features **high-quality, interactive, and engaging materials and texts** designed to capture students' interest, foster a passion for reading and writing, and leverage research-based resources, including fiction, nonfiction, decodable texts, authentic read-aloud texts, teacher guides, physical classroom manipulatives, and digital resources.
- *Superkids* utilizes **differentiated learning strategies** that address diverse learning needs by allowing teachers to tailor instruction, including materials specifically designed for multilingual learners.

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The Importance of a High-Quality Early Literacy Core Curriculum

A high-quality early literacy curriculum—grounded in scientifically based reading research—is crucial for children's educational development and future success. A comprehensive body of research on how children learn to read emphasizes scientifically based practices. Two theoretical frameworks rooted in the science of reading inform high-quality reading assessments and instruction: the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Hoover & Gough, 1990) and Scarborough's Reading Rope (Scarborough, 2001). The Simple View of Reading posits that reading comprehension (RC) results from two essential components, word recognition (WR) and language comprehension (LC), and is captured in the following equation:

$$WR \times LC = RC$$

Word reading precursors and oral language skills in early kindergarten were found to predict reading comprehension outcomes at the end of grade 3, with both direct and mediated relationships highlighting the importance of these early factors in forecasting later reading difficulties (Catts et al., 2015). Scarborough's Reading Rope provides a detailed visualization of the subcomponents within word recognition and linguistic comprehension (Scarborough, 2001). Implementing a curriculum that adheres to these principles profoundly impacts literacy outcomes, academic achievement, and lifelong learning (Catts et al., 2005; Dreyer & Katz, 1992; Hoover & Gough, 1990).

The benefits of implementing a high-quality early literacy curriculum extend beyond individual literacy skills. Research shows that early reading proficiency is a strong predictor of later academic success (La Paro & Pianta, 2000). Children who read well in the early grades are more likely to excel in other subjects, including math and science, since reading is the gateway to learning (Slavin et al., 2009). Conversely, low reading proficiency can create a cascade of difficulties, negatively impacting academic performance, motivation, and self-esteem (Boyes et al., 2020). A high-quality early literacy curriculum can have significant positive effects on children's literacy skills and substantially impact their overall educational trajectory (Dickinson & McCabe, 2001).

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Early literacy development is closely linked to long-term cognitive growth (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2008), including critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and creativity (Murray & Egan, 2014). Reading is also associated with social-emotional growth as it allows children to explore different perspectives, understand diverse cultures, and develop empathy (Batini et al., 2021). Furthermore, when teachers use explicit and systematic high-quality early literacy materials grounded in rigorous scientific research, schools create equitable opportunities for all students to succeed, which can help close achievement gaps.

To effectively illustrate how *Superkids* achieves its literacy goals, we present a logic model that maps the program's key components to its intended outcomes. This model, aligned with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements, demonstrates how research-based practices translate into measurable student success.

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Logic Model for *The Superkids Reading Program*

Problem Statement and Product Goal

Early literacy skills are crucial for future educational and career success. Yet, many early elementary students struggle, with only 32 percent reading at grade level by grade 4 (NCES, 2024). Low reading proficiency can create a cascade of difficulties, negatively impacting academic performance, motivation, and self-esteem. Given the complexity of learning to read, the overall low proficiency rates, and the challenge of closing learning gaps once children fall behind, teachers need an evidence-based curriculum that effectively teaches the skills and knowledge children need in the early grades to become proficient readers. Teachers also need instructional materials that keep children engaged and fuel their desire to learn. *The Superkids Reading Program* is a comprehensive language arts program grounded in scientifically based reading research, which supports the development of foundational literacy skills and language comprehension while building a love of reading and learning.

Resources

What resources are available?

- research-based core ELA curriculum for kindergarten–grade 2 students
- expert-developed learning content integrated across the language arts
- 180 lessons in 18 units, with 1 Teacher's Guide for each unit
- developmentally appropriate scope and sequence that increases in complexity over time
- relatable characters that engage students and help them feel represented
- student-facing skills books for practice and reinforcement of word work, reading, and writing skills
- varied text types, including fiction, nonfiction, decodable text, and authentic read-aloud text
- built-in spiral review of concepts and distributed practice that lead to mastery
- formal and informal assessments, including culminating tasks
- explicit instruction in
  - word work skills (i.e., phonological and phonemic awareness, word reading, spelling, handwriting, and grammar)
  - reading (i.e., fluency, vocabulary, comprehension skills and strategies, and knowledge building)
  - writing (writing fluency, sentence structure, text types, and the writing process)

Strategies and Activities

What are the strategies and activities?

Students

- complete daily lessons that progress in complexity and build on each other.
- engage in word work instruction for 30 minutes, reading instruction for 40–70 minutes, and writing instruction for 20–30 minutes each day.
- learn in whole-group and small-group settings.
- engage in guided and independent practice.
- access more difficult reading material as decoding and fluency increases.
- receive materials and instruction with more support, on-level support, or more challenge depending on their needs.
- engage with six Big Topics (e.g., "Arts and Entertainment," "Mind and Body") throughout the year that build cumulative knowledge.
- participate in conversations with peers to build speaking and listening skills.
- discuss real-life challenges and conflicts and how to resolve them.

Teachers

- allocate daily dedicated time for reading and writing instruction.
- provide systematic and explicit instruction that gradually releases responsibility to scaffold independence.
- utilize training materials to support student learning.

Outputs

What are the initial products of these activities?

Students

- increase word work skills (i.e., phonological awareness, word reading, spelling, and grammar skills).
- apply word reading skills to increasingly complex texts and build fluency.
- build background knowledge on various topics.
- read text closely and use comprehension skills and strategies to answer text-dependent questions.
- increase their volume of reading and read increasingly complex texts with greater comprehension.
- build their receptive and expressive vocabularies as they encounter new words in texts and orally.
- become more fluent in handwriting and spelling skills, thus increasing writing fluency.
- increase understanding and use of the writing process to write longer and more detailed narrative, expository, and opinion compositions.
- express enjoyment of reading and writing.
- exhibit increased engagement and motivation for reading, writing, and learning new skills.
- discuss real-life challenges and how to resolve them.

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Resources	Strategies and Activities	Outputs
• materials for differentiating instruction, including materials specifically designed for multilingual learners • Lasting Lessons that help teach social and emotional skills • physical classroom manipulatives • online portal with access to digital resources for teachers, students, and families	• evaluate learner needs using formal and informal assessments. • differentiate instruction based on assessment data to provide children with varying levels of support. • integrate reading, writing, speaking, and listening instruction so they inform and reinforce each other.	Teachers • can identify the skills students have mastered and those they've yet to learn. • save planning time by following *Superkids* lesson plans with fidelity.

Short-Term and Intermediate Outcomes

- Students develop and deepen their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills.
- Students reach grade-level proficiency in reading and writing.
- Students build confidence and interest in reading and writing independently.
- Students transfer reading and writing skills to other subject areas.
- Students acquire a solid foundation in literacy skills.
- Students are better able to address challenges and cope with conflicts as they arise.
- As they develop strong social and emotional skills, children can more effectively connect to others and their community as a whole.
- Students see themselves and others reflected in the texts they read and as a result build a better understanding of self and those in their community.
- Teachers become more confident and effective in their reading and writing instruction for all students.
- Teachers are better able to assess students' needs and differentiate their instruction because they have the resources to do so.

Long-Term Outcomes and Impacts

- Students become confident and proficient readers and writers.
- Students' self-esteem, self-efficacy, and confidence increase, leading to more general success in school.
- Students' strong foundation in literacy skills helps them academically across subjects.
- Tier 1 instruction is improved, helping to minimize a wait-to-fail model for children at risk for reading difficulty.
- Fewer children experience severe consequences of reading difficulty or literacy failure.
- Schools close the learning gap across different socioeconomic groups.
- Students' motivation and love of learning increases.
- Students become part of a learning community that values inclusivity and social and emotional well-being.
- Teachers grow as educators and become more knowledgeable and confident with early literacy instruction.

Assumptions

- Teachers will be open to changing their approach to early literacy instruction.
- Teachers will attend implementation training and learn how to utilize the program with fidelity.
- Teachers will have a two-hour daily literacy block and be able to implement all program features.

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Goals of *The Superkids Reading Program*

INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH

The Superkids Reading Program is designed to achieve specific outcomes through research-validated instructional practices. These practices include an engaging learning environment, systematic and explicit instruction, structured literacy approaches, integrated language arts instruction, knowledge building through content-rich texts, and data-driven differentiation. When implemented effectively alongside high-quality content, these evidence-based practices lead to immediate gains in student achievement and long-lasting impacts on academic success. The program's outcomes can be understood in terms of short-term results that are observable during the academic year and long-term benefits that extend throughout students' educational journeys.

SHORT- AND LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

Superkids provides students with a solid foundation in literacy, enabling them to develop and deepen their reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. The program empowers students to reach grade-level proficiency in reading and writing, building confidence and fostering independent learning. This allows students to transfer literacy skills to other subject areas. Furthermore, *Superkids* nurtures social and emotional development, equipping students to address challenges and connect effectively within their community. The program's texts reflect diverse experiences, enhancing self-understanding and broadening world knowledge. *Superkids* also supports teachers by providing resources that enhance their confidence and effectiveness in reading and writing instruction. This enables teachers to better assess student needs and differentiate instruction, ensuring success for all learners.

Superkids utilizes systematic instruction and engaging learning experiences to cultivate confidence and enjoyment in reading and writing. By building foundational literacy skills alongside relatable characters, students develop positive associations with literacy that extend beyond early schooling. This foundation fosters confident and proficient readers and writers, enhancing self-esteem, self-efficacy, and confidence, leading to broader academic success. Strong literacy skills support student achievement across all subjects. Furthermore, *Superkids* strengthens Tier 1 instruction, minimizing the wait-to-fail model for at-risk children and reducing the severe consequences of reading difficulty. This contributes to closing learning gaps across socioeconomic groups. The program increases student motivation and love of learning, fostering an inclusive learning community that values social and emotional well-being. Teachers also grow as educators, becoming more knowledgeable and confident in early literacy instruction.

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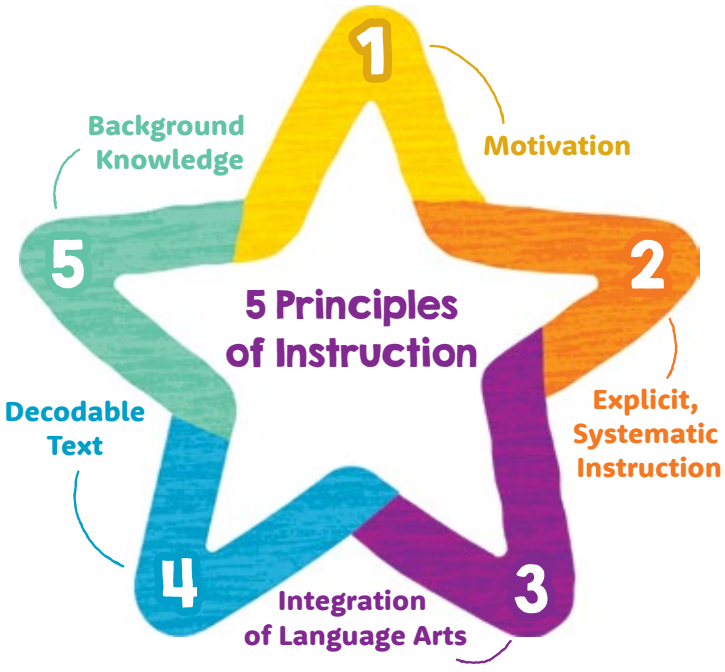
How Does *The Superkids Reading Program* Help Students Learn?

The Superkids Reading Program effectively supports reading development through five key principles drawn from decades of reading research. First, the program motivates young learners through engaging characters, stories, and activities that make learning to read both meaningful and enjoyable. Second, explicit and systematic instruction ensures students receive clear, carefully sequenced teaching in essential reading skills. Third, the integration of language arts connects reading, writing, speaking, and listening, reinforcing skills across multiple contexts through multimodal activities. Fourth, decodable texts allow students to successfully apply their developing reading skills while building confidence and fluency. Finally, background knowledge development through content-rich texts enhances comprehension and creates deeper understanding across subject areas.



The following sections examine how each principle is grounded in research and implemented within the *Superkids* curriculum to support student success. Each principle builds upon and reinforces the others, creating a comprehensive approach to literacy instruction that aligns with the science of reading while engaging young learners.

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MOTIVATION

Why Does Motivation in Learning Matter?

Motivation plays a pivotal role in early literacy development, significantly impacting students' skill acquisition (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Toste et al., 2020). Since children with high intrinsic motivation spend considerably more time reading than their less motivated peers (Locher et al., 2019), supporting that intrinsic motivation early on is vital.

Early positive experiences with reading shape a child's self-concept as a reader and influence their overall attitude toward literacy (Walgermo et al., 2018). Motivated young students are more likely to view themselves as capable readers, confidently approach reading tasks, and develop a lifelong love of reading and learning (Poskiparta et al., 2003). Motivation is crucial beyond immediate skill development, influencing long-term academic success and helping struggling readers overcome challenges. Motivation becomes especially critical for students who struggle with early reading skills in maintaining engagement in reading activities and persevering through difficulties (Poskiparta et al., 2003). Moreover, experiencing success with reading further fuels children's desire to engage with reading and learning (Toste et al., 2020; Wooten et al., 2018).

Ultimately, early reading motivation sets the stage for future academic success: Motivated readers engage in extensive reading across subjects, develop larger vocabularies, and perform better academically in all areas (Vaknin-Nusbaum & Tuckwiller, 2023). Incorporating motivational elements, such as authenticity, collaboration, choice, and appropriate challenge, into early literacy instruction enables educators to create more engaging and effective literacy experiences for young learners in kindergarten–grade 2, fostering a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

How Does *The Superkids Reading Program* Motivate Students to Learn?

- *Superkids* relatable characters motivate young learners through universal interests and experiences with which students can connect.
- The authentic, high-quality fiction and nonfiction texts in *Superkids* engage students in interesting and relevant topics that enable them to learn more about their world.
- *Superkids* curriculum positions students for success by developing the skills and strategies needed to foster autonomous motivation, instill a growth mindset, and empower students with confidence and self-efficacy.
- The multimodal and interactive literacy materials in *Superkids* encourage participation, fostering positive engagement and independence.

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Deep Dive

***Superkids* relatable characters motivate young learners through universal interests and experiences with which students can connect.** Children who relate to characters engage more deeply with fiction texts and spend more time reading (McGeown et al., 2015). *Superkids* introduces a diverse group of characters who grow with children from kindergarten through grade 2, fostering an ongoing connection that promotes sustained interest in reading. Since these characters grow alongside them, they experience the world similarly. For example, in various stories the Superkids work together to create a clubhouse, participate in their first sleepover, and navigate feelings of being upset with a friend. As students relate to these experiences, they become emotionally invested in the characters' stories. The excitement of following the adventures of the Superkids makes reading an anticipated activity (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This sense of anticipation encourages children to immerse themselves in the texts, motivating them toward a lifelong love of reading.

The Superkids Characters

Superkids utilizes the mirrors and windows framework to foster engagement and empathy (Bishop, 1990; Kucirkova et al., 2017). When students read stories that reflect their own experiences and interests, texts become relevant, strengthening the emotional connection to the content (Bishop, 1990; Gay, 2018; Priniski et al., 2018). *Superkids* ensures the characters are relatable by incorporating interests and experiences that align with those of the students. For example, Sal's passion for sports resonates with children with similar interests. Lily's experience of being scared at a sleepover and overcoming her fear helps children who have had similar experiences relate to the character and know they are not alone. Research validates that creating personal connections like these deepens engagement and enhances learning outcomes (Bishop, 1990; Kucirkova et al., 2014; Kucirkova et al., 2017).

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Reading about characters with different interests from many cultural backgrounds allows students to peek into the lives of others, encouraging empathy and building knowledge (Cartledge et al., 2016). Eventually all the *Superkids* characters become familiar, growing and experiencing the world alongside the students. Well-known and recognizable characters enhance engagement and facilitate information retention among young learners (Danovitch & Mills, 2014; Lauricella et al., 2011). *Superkids* reinforces this principle by incorporating recurring characters, which sustain students' interest and contribute to long-term learning effectiveness (Nolan, 2016). Students can choose books featuring characters they enjoy while visual aids such as character posters in the classroom reinforce familiarity and keep students immersed in the world of the Superkids as they progress through the curriculum (Cartledge et al., 2016; Kucirkova et al., 2014).

The authentic, high-quality fiction and nonfiction texts in *Superkids* engage students in interesting and relevant topics that enable them to learn more about their world. These literacy materials connect reading to authentic experiences and spark curiosity across a wide range of topics. This approach strengthens literacy skills while also fostering a deeper desire to learn (McGeown et al., 2015).

Superkids includes both fiction and nonfiction read-aloud books for the whole class to engage in. Reading a story as a whole classroom can introduce more sophisticated language and guide children through more complex storylines than the texts a young reader can access independently. The practice of read-alouds is useful in creating meaning collaboratively and fostering engagement (Helbig & Piazza, 2020) and can be especially useful for multilingual learners (Cole et al., 2017). By creating a compelling and relatable narrative experience, *Superkids* nurtures a love of fiction and nonfiction, ensuring that students remain motivated to continue their learning journey.

Examples of Grade 1 Read-Aloud Books

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Superkids nonfiction texts engage students through two complementary formats. Informational magazines and books connect reading to authentic content through articles about science, social studies, and the arts, helping students build real-world knowledge and vocabulary. Additionally, interactive digital read-aloud tools designed for whole-class instruction incorporate videos, animation, and touch-screen features to make complex informational texts accessible while building background knowledge (Young & Moss, 2006). Together, these nonfiction resources enhance domain knowledge and prepare students for the expository texts they'll encounter throughout their education, leading to improved literacy outcomes (Young & Moss, 2006).

Grade 1 Super-Duper Magazines and Super Smart Read-Alouds offer complex informational text.

***Superkids* curriculum positions students for success by developing the skills and strategies needed to foster autonomous motivation, instill a growth mindset, and empower students with confidence and self-efficacy.** Students with positive attitudes toward reading tend to achieve higher levels of reading success (Petscher, 2010). These children are motivated to read more and derive genuine enjoyment from the process. They set mastery-oriented goals, focusing on skill development rather than seeking external rewards or avoiding failure (Baker & Wigfield, 1999). Their approach to reading is characterized by strong self-regulation and perseverance. Because *Superkids* helps children build the decoding and comprehension skills they need to be successful, they experience positive early reading experiences and develop a deep understanding that reading is a skill they can master (Andersen & Nielsen, 2016). These experiences are characterized by joy and success rather than frustration. As they encounter and overcome reading challenges, they learn to view obstacles as opportunities for growth (Sisk et al., 2018). This perspective encourages them to put in additional effort, engage with more complex texts, and continuously improve their reading abilities.

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A growth mindset in reading empowers and motivates children. It reinforces their belief in their ability to decode and comprehend challenging material. Students' confidence grows with each successful reading experience (Tock et al., 2021). Children develop a strong sense of self-efficacy, which further motivates them to engage with increasingly difficult texts and view reading as an exciting journey of personal growth. *Superkids* prioritizes early success, motivating students to engage deeply with reading, viewing it as a rewarding and enjoyable process (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

The multimodal and interactive literacy materials in *Superkids* encourage participation, fostering positive engagement and independence. Research indicates that active, multimodal learning experiences significantly enhance literacy development (Schmitt & Weinberger, 2019). *Superkids* integrates research-based practices through multifaceted core lessons. Students begin by refining phoneme articulation with video models and then solidify phonemic awareness and phonics skills using illustrated skills books and manipulative letter and picture cards. Collaborative conversations about vocabulary and texts further enhance understanding. Peer discussion and oral rehearsal are consistently woven into reading comprehension and writing instruction, exemplified by turn-and-talk activities that reinforce knowledge and skills. In kindergarten, two-minute movement activities combine physical movement and play to solidify learning. These interactive, hands-on approaches are particularly effective for developing readers (Pullen & Lane, 2016).

As students advance through grades 1 and 2, engagement transitions to sophisticated, content-focused participation. This includes structured academic discussions about texts, collaborative research projects on program themes called "Big Topics," and the creation of diverse presentation formats such as books, posters, and magazines. Writing progresses from simple responses to complex research and peer review tasks. Digital resources provide adaptive, interactive practice, ensuring students remain actively engaged while mastering essential literacy skills across grade levels.

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EXPLICIT AND SYSTEMATIC INSTRUCTION

Why Does Explicit and Systematic Instruction Matter?

Explicit and systematic instruction is an evidence-based teaching approach that supports effective learning by providing clear, structured lessons organized around a logical scope and sequence (Archer & Hughes, 2010). An explicit approach focuses on straightforward communication and well-defined goals, reducing cognitive overload for students. It actively engages students through a range of responses and timely, targeted feedback, which helps strengthen long-term retention (Hughes et al., 2017). A systematic approach ensures that content is organized into a logical sequential order, where skills and concepts build on one another. With explicit instruction, complex concepts are broken down into smaller manageable parts, making them more accessible and allowing students to connect new material with what they've already learned (Austin et al., 2023). This method also includes clear procedures and routines that gradually shift responsibility from teacher to student, offering opportunities for guided and independent practice. As responsibility shifts from teacher to student, educators can adjust their support based on individual student needs, ensuring higher success rates (Austin et al., 2023). Explicit, systematic instruction helps students gain new skills and link them to prior knowledge while providing teachers with a structured framework to guide the progression of instruction.

Explicit and systematic instruction plays an essential role in early literacy development, serving as the foundation of effective reading and writing instruction (Spear-Swerling, 2019). Research consistently demonstrates that students benefit most from instruction that clearly presents skills and concepts in a carefully planned sequence. This approach is particularly vital for students who may be at risk for reading difficulties (Ehri et al., 2001; Gersten et al., 2009). Studies show the effectiveness of explicit, systematic approaches across multiple literacy domains, from phonics to comprehension strategies to writing instruction (Buckingham et al., 2019; Shanahan et al., 2010).

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How Does *The Superkids Reading Program* Utilize Explicit and Systematic Instruction?

- The units of instruction in *Superkids* are structured in a logical sequence that builds students' foundational literacy skills and strategies progressively.
- *Superkids* lessons offer teachers a framework for direct instruction, incorporating clear explanations and demonstrations of skills and strategies.
- The program's instructional approach utilizes a gradual release of responsibility, allowing students to gain independence as teacher support is gradually and systematically reduced.
- *Superkids* integrated assessments and differentiated instruction promote data-driven decisions that enable teachers to monitor progress and provide targeted support.

Deep Dive

The units of instruction in *Superkids* are structured in a logical sequence that builds students' foundational literacy skills and strategies progressively. The carefully sequenced instruction ensures concepts progress from simple to more complex. Spiraled review of previously taught skills and built-in distributed practice enhance long-term retention and allow students to build on prior knowledge and master each skill before advancing (Rosenshine, 2012). Research indicates this progressive approach is particularly effective for foundational literacy skills, such as word recognition (Ehri, 2020) and phonological awareness (Brady, 2020). The reinforcement of information through cumulative and spiraled instruction is also crucial for minimizing learning gaps, especially for students who experience learning difficulties (Carnine, 2006). The *Superkids* scope and sequence carefully structures this progression across all literacy domains, including word work, reading, and writing.

Foundational literacy skills are taught systematically in the Word Work strand. In kindergarten–grade 2, students hone phonological and phonemic awareness skills from broad units of sound to individual phonemes and learn ways to manipulate them. Similarly, phonics instruction aligns to a research-based progression of phonics development (e.g., Ehri, 2014; Ehri et al., 2001). For example, instruction begins in kindergarten with the simplest phonetic elements, such as single, predictable consonants and short vowels. It then progresses incrementally as more complex phonetic patterns are introduced, such as digraphs, blends, long vowel patterns, and syllable types. Once children have mastered these skills, more

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advanced morphological and orthographic patterns are introduced. This sequential, systematic order of phonics instruction ensures that each new skill builds on previously mastered concepts and supports development toward decoding proficiency (Ehri et al., 2014). (See the word work skills covered in the Scope and Sequence charts for kindergarten–grade 2 here: media.zaner-bloser.com/reading/superkids-reading-program/pdfs/Superkids-Scope-and-Sequence-ZBHCR0028.pdf)

Instruction targeting connected-text reading is also organized systematically in that it is aligned to the word work concepts children are learning. *Superkids* decodable texts gradually increase in complexity as students build their word work knowledge and decoding skills. Comprehension skills and strategies are built systematically as well. Across the year, they are spirally reviewed with more nuanced and complex application of skills and strategies developed over time. For example, at the beginning of the year, children may learn to identify the main character. A few units later they may be asked to describe the character's traits. Later still, they may analyze the character's feelings and motivations and how they change throughout the story. Within a unit, comprehension skills and strategies are practiced systematically with review and reinforcement built in.

Superkids systematic, sequential writing instruction is designed to promote children's growth in written expression as they progress through the program. The approach gradually builds handwriting; grammar, usage, and mechanics; and composition skills. In kindergarten, students move through a logical progression of handwriting strokes and letter-writing practice that aligns with letter-sound instruction. Across the grades, grammar skills build from basic to more advanced concepts. Beginning with simple sentence construction, writing tasks gradually develop into complex compositions across narrative, expository, and opinion genres. Teachers provide modeling and support to build confidence and mastery.

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***Superkids* lessons offer teachers a framework for explicit instruction, incorporating clear explanations and demonstrations of skills and strategies.** Research emphasizes the importance of clear, consistent instruction in early literacy development (Austin et al., 2023). Well-designed instructional routines help students focus on new learning rather than procedural details, while consistent language ensures clear communication of concepts. This predictability is especially beneficial for developing readers and multilingual learners (Cole et al., 2017).

120 minutes of instruction per day

Week 1			
Lesson	**Word Work** 30 min.	**Reading** 60–70 min.	**Writing** 20–30 min.
1	• Daily Warm-Up • Word Work Skills Book: New Skill and Spelling List	• Decoding and Fluency: Short Reader Story • Vocabulary: Words to Know Introduction • Listening Comprehension and Knowledge Building: Read-Aloud Book	• Explain and Model • Guided Practice and/or Independent Writing • Sharing
2	• Daily Warm-Up • Word Work Skills Book: Skill Practice and Memory Words	• Shared Reading: Main Reader Story • Guided Practice: Main Reader Story • Lasting Lesson	• Explain and Model • Guided Practice and/or Independent Writing • Sharing
3	• Daily Warm-Up • Word Work Skills Book: Skill Practice and Memory Words	• Close Reading: Main Reader Story • Differentiated Instruction: Flexible Options	• Explain and Model • Guided Practice and/or Independent Writing • Sharing
4	• Daily Warm-Up • Word Work Skill Book: Skill Practice and New Grammar	• Connecting Ideas: Read-Aloud Book • Differentiated Reading: Decodable Library Books	• Explain and Model • Guided Practice and/or Independent Writing • Sharing
5	• Daily Warm-Up • Spelling Test • Word Work Skills Book: Puzzle or Fun Page	• Vocabulary Skill • Differentiated Instruction: Flexible Options • Weekly Reading Wrap-Up	• Explain and Model • Guided Practice and/or Independent Writing • Sharing

Grade 1 Unit Organization Chart, Week 1

Each *Superkids* unit has ten lessons and is organized in the same way. Lessons themselves are structured similarly, and Teacher's Guides equip teachers with well-defined lesson plans that are easy to follow. This provides instructors with a framework for how to organize the teaching into steps, introduce new concepts, and scaffold learning. The routines and "teacher talk" embedded into the lessons promote consistency and provide feedback that supports students as they develop skills and build independence over time. The structured nature of the lessons ensures children hear consistent language and engage in similar activities for each skill introduced, creating a predictable learning environment.

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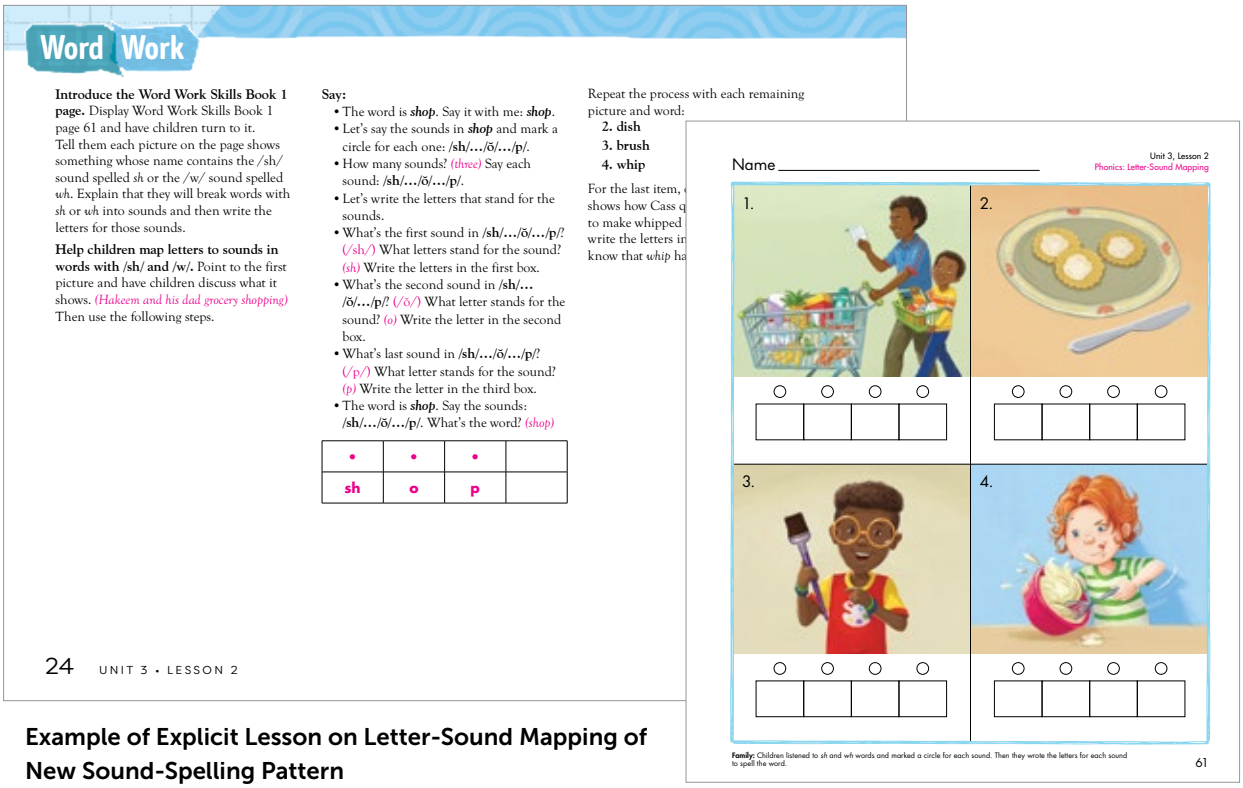

Word Work

Introduce the Word Work Skills Book 1 page. Display Word Work Skills Book 1 page 61 and have children turn to it. Tell them each picture on the page shows something whose name contains the /sh/ sound spelled *sh* or the /w/ sound spelled *wh*. Explain that they will break words with *sh* or *wh* into sounds and then write the letters for those sounds.

Help children map letters to sounds in words with /sh/ and /w/. Point to the first picture and have children discuss what it shows. *(Hakeem and his dad grocery shopping)* Then use the following steps.

Say:

- The word is ***shop***. Say it with me: ***shop***.
- Let's say the sounds in ***shop*** and mark a circle for each one: **/sh/…/ŏ/…/p/**.
- How many sounds? *(three)* Say each sound: **/sh/…/ŏ/…/p/**.
- Let's write the letters that stand for the sounds.
- What's the first sound in **/sh/…/ŏ/…/p/**? */sh/* What letters stand for the sound? *(sh)* Write the letters in the first box.
- What's the second sound in **/sh/… /ŏ/…/p/**? */ŏ/* What letter stands for the sound? *(o)* Write the letter in the second box.
- What's last sound in **/sh/…/ŏ/…/p/**? */p/* What letter stands for the sound? *(p)* Write the letter in the third box.
- The word is ***shop***. Say the sounds: **/sh/…/ŏ/…/p/**. What's the word? *(shop)*

•	•	•	
sh	o	p	

Repeat the process with each remaining picture and word:

2. dish
3. brush
4. whip

For the last item, shows how Cass q to make whipped write the letters ir know that *whip* ha

24 UNIT 3 • LESSON 2

Name _____

Unit 3, Lesson 2
Phonics: Letter-Sound Mapping

1. 2. 3. 4.

Family: Children listened to *sh* and *wh* words and marked a circle for each sound. Then they wrote the letters for each sound to spell the word.

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Example of Explicit Lesson on Letter-Sound Mapping of New Sound-Spelling Pattern

Additionally, *Superkids* includes semiscripted lessons with precise language for introducing skills, ensuring that students receive clear, unambiguous explanations that are characteristic of explicit approaches (Archer & Hughes, 2010). This consistent teacher talk enhances learning via explicit, purposeful language that guides students through each lesson (Austin et al., 2023). Lessons also incorporate corrective feedback, enabling teachers to promptly address misunderstandings and help students master skills before moving on to more complex material.

Lessons also feature scripted turn-and-talk and teacher think-aloud procedures. By modeling their thinking processes, teachers make their cognitive strategies visible and accessible for students. These consistent procedures and predictable structures help both teachers and students focus on content rather than process, ensuring key skills receive adequate attention and practice. By reducing cognitive load, this structure allows students to focus on new learning (Rosenshine, 2012).

The instructional approach in the program utilizes a gradual release of responsibility, allowing students to gain independence as teacher support is gradually and systematically reduced. Research confirms that the gradual release of the responsibility model provides an effective framework for literacy instruction (Fisher & Frey, 2021; Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). The model emphasizes a structured progression from

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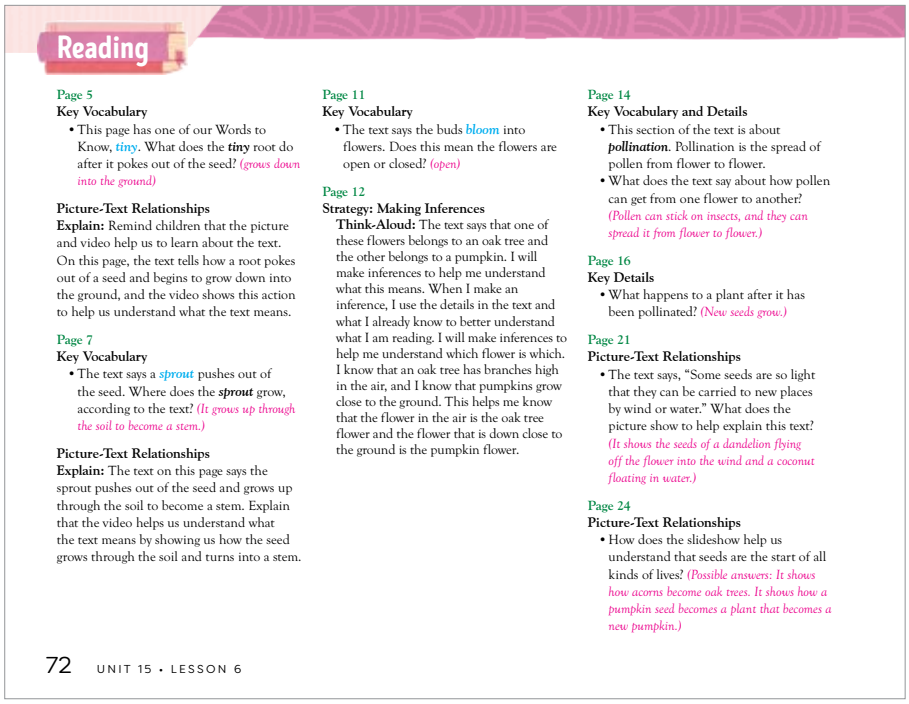

Reading

Page 5
Key Vocabulary
- This page has one of our Words to Know, *tiny*. What does the ***tiny*** root do after it pokes out of the seed? *(grows down into the ground)*

Picture-Text Relationships
Explain: Remind children that the picture and video help us to learn about the text. On this page, the text tells how a root pokes out of a seed and begins to grow down into the ground, and the video shows this action to help us understand what the text means.

Page 7
Key Vocabulary
- The text says a *sprout* pushes out of the seed. Where does the ***sprout*** grow, according to the text? *(It grows up through the soil to become a stem.)*

Picture-Text Relationships
Explain: The text on this page says the sprout pushes out of the seed and grows up through the soil to become a stem. Explain that the video helps us understand what the text means by showing us how the seed grows through the soil and turns into a stem.

Page 11
Key Vocabulary
- The text says the buds *bloom* into flowers. Does this mean the flowers are open or closed? *(open)*

Page 12
Strategy: Making Inferences
Think-Aloud: The text says that one of these flowers belongs to an oak tree and the other belongs to a pumpkin. I will make inferences to help me understand what this means. When I make an inference, I use the details in the text and what I already know to better understand what I am reading. I will make inferences to help me understand which flower is which. I know that an oak tree has branches high in the air, and I know that pumpkins grow close to the ground. This helps me know that the flower in the air is the oak tree flower and the flower that is down close to the ground is the pumpkin flower.

Page 14
Key Vocabulary and Details
- This section of the text is about ***pollination***. Pollination is the spread of pollen from flower to flower.
- What does the text say about how pollen can get from one flower to another? *(Pollen can stick on insects, and they can spread it from flower to flower.)*

Page 16
Key Details
- What happens to a plant after it has been pollinated? *(New seeds grow.)*

Page 21
Picture-Text Relationships
- The text says, "Some seeds are so light that they can be carried to new places by wind or water." What does the picture show to help explain this text? *(It shows the seeds of a dandelion flying off the flower into the wind and a coconut floating in water.)*

Page 24
Picture-Text Relationships
- How does the slideshow help us understand that seeds are the start of all kinds of lives? *(Possible answers: It shows how acorns become oak trees. It shows how a pumpkin seed becomes a plant that becomes a new pumpkin.)*

72 UNIT 15 • LESSON 6

Think-alouds provide language that helps teachers model cognitive processes and comprehension strategies.

teacher-led instruction to student independence. This approach is particularly crucial for foundational skills, where studies show students benefit from explicit modeling followed by guided practice in phonological awareness and phonics (Brady, 2020; Gonzalez-Frey & Ehri, 2020). Similar benefits are seen in comprehension instruction (Catts, 2021) and writing development (Graham et al., 2012).

Research highlights the importance of explicit teacher modeling in the earliest stage of this progression, where the teacher demonstrates the skill or concept, provides clear explanations, and thinks aloud so students can observe the teacher's approach to the task (Vaughn & Fletcher, 2021). Guided practice is also important for students as teacher feedback and explicit guidance is crucial when first learning a new skill (Clark et al., 2012). Eventually students gain independence and can practice the new skill on their own. *Superkids* implements this through an "I do, We do, You do" approach:

- **Modeling (I do):** The teacher demonstrates tasks with clear, explicit language and verbalizes their thinking as they approach the task.
- **Guided practice (We do):** The teacher and students work together, applying demonstrated skills.
- **Independent practice (You do):** Students showcase their level of mastery and the teacher observes and provides feedback.

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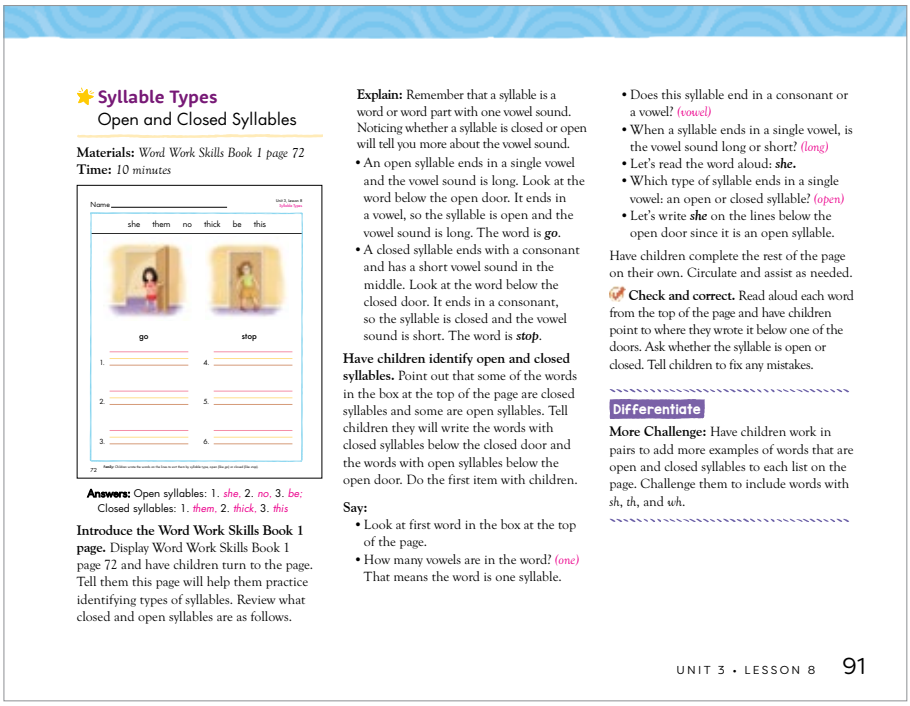

Syllable Types
Open and Closed Syllables

Materials: *Word Work Skills Book 1 page 72*
Time: *10 minutes*

Name _____ Unit 3, Lesson 8 Syllable Types

she them no thick be this

go stop

1. 4.
2. 5.
3. 6.

72

Answers: Open syllables: 1. *she*, 2. *no*, 3. *be;* Closed syllables: 1. *them*, 2. *thick*, 3. *this*

Introduce the Word Work Skills Book 1 page. Display Word Work Skills Book 1 page 72 and have children turn to the page. Tell them this page will help them practice identifying types of syllables. Review what closed and open syllables are as follows.

Explain: Remember that a syllable is a word or word part with one vowel sound. Noticing whether a syllable is closed or open will tell you more about the vowel sound.

- An open syllable ends in a single vowel and the vowel sound is long. Look at the word below the open door. It ends in a vowel, so the syllable is open and the vowel sound is long. The word is ***go***.
- A closed syllable ends with a consonant and has a short vowel sound in the middle. Look at the word below the closed door. It ends in a consonant, so the syllable is closed and the vowel sound is short. The word is ***stop***.

Have children identify open and closed syllables. Point out that some of the words in the box at the top of the page are closed syllables and some are open syllables. Tell children they will write the words with closed syllables below the closed door and the words with open syllables below the open door. Do the first item with children.

Say:

- Look at first word in the box at the top of the page.
- How many vowels are in the word? *(one)* That means the word is one syllable.
- Does this syllable end in a consonant or a vowel? *(vowel)*
- When a syllable ends in a single vowel, is the vowel sound long or short? *(long)*
- Let's read the word aloud: ***she.***
- Which type of syllable ends in a single vowel: an open or closed syllable? *(open)*
- Let's write ***she*** on the lines below the open door since it is an open syllable.

Have children complete the rest of the page on their own. Circulate and assist as needed.

Check and correct. Read aloud each word from the top of the page and have children point to where they wrote it below one of the doors. Ask whether the syllable is open or closed. Tell children to fix any mistakes.

Differentiate

More Challenge: Have children work in pairs to add more examples of words that are open and closed syllables to each list on the page. Challenge them to include words with *sh*, *th*, and *wh*.

UNIT 3 • LESSON 8 91

In this grade 1 Word Work lesson, the teacher explains open and closed syllables, guides students in a word sorting activity, and then has children sort words independently.

***Superkids* integrated assessments and differentiated instruction promote data-driven decisions that enable teachers to monitor progress and provide targeted support.** Research demonstrates that effective literacy instruction requires ongoing assessment to guide instructional decisions (Rupley et al., 2009). Regular progress monitoring allows early identification of needs and instructional adjustments. Studies show this data-driven approach, combined with targeted differentiation, significantly impacts achievement (Connor 2019; Tomlinson, 2014).

Superkids combines both formal and informal assessment tools to help teachers track student progress and make informed decisions about grouping students and differentiating instruction. Formal assessments, such as benchmark tests and unit progress tests, offer quantitative data at specific points in time, while informal assessments like observations and classwork provide ongoing qualitative insights.

Assessments serve both summative and formative purposes, with unit progress tests and benchmark tests evaluating students' mastery of skills taught in the program. Quarterly Big Topic projects serve as culminating tasks and can help teachers assess the knowledge children have built around these common and relevant themes. Daily informal assessments and the unit progress tests also provide formative data that helps teachers make instructional decisions and group students effectively.

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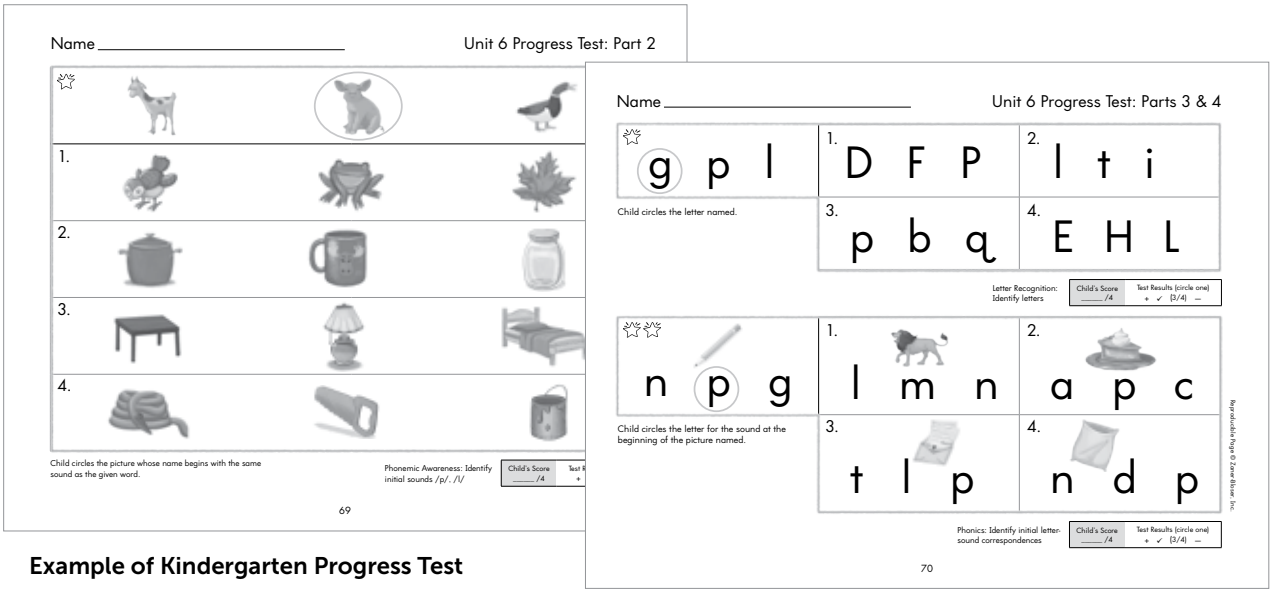
Performance on these tasks helps identify areas where students need more support or challenge, allowing teachers to tailor instruction to meet specific needs.


Name _____ Unit 6 Progress Test: Part 2

1. 2. 3. 4.

Child circles the picture whose name begins with the same sound as the given word.

Phonemic Awareness: Identify initial sounds /p/, /l/ | Child's Score _____ /4

69

Name _____ Unit 6 Progress Test: Parts 3 & 4

g p l | 1. D F P | 2. l t i

Child circles the letter named.

3. p b q | 4. E H L

Letter Recognition: Identify letters | Child's Score _____ /4 | Test Results (circle one) + ✓ (3/4) –

n p g | 1. l m n | 2. a p c

Child circles the letter for the sound at the beginning of the picture named.

3. t l p | 4. n d p

Phonics: Identify initial letter-sound correspondences | Child's Score _____ /4 | Test Results (circle one) + ✓ (3/4) –

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Example of Kindergarten Progress Test

Once formal and informal assessment data is collected and analyzed, *Superkids* provides several options for differentiating instruction. Within the Teacher's Guides, lessons include point-of-use tips that teachers can use to provide more support or more challenge during whole group instruction. In addition, tips for supporting multilingual learners help teachers meet the unique strengths and needs of this population. Small-group lessons are also included and provide additional materials and activities in word work, decoding and fluency practice, and comprehension. Small-group lessons give teachers choices for targeted instruction that addresses the specific needs of the children within the group. Teachers can also utilize the corresponding Differentiated Instruction and Multilingual Learner Teacher's Guides for more assessments and differentiated lessons. Rather than introducing separate content, both guides enhance the core curriculum by providing specific strategies and modifications that maintain instructional rigor while meeting individual student needs (Santamaria, 2009).

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INTEGRATION OF LANGUAGE ARTS

Why Does the Integration of Language Arts Instruction Matter?

Reading is most effectively taught when integrated with all the language arts: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Research demonstrates that these processes are interconnected and mutually reinforcing (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000). Oral and written language development support each other, and integrated literacy instruction enhances learning for all students and particularly benefits multilingual learners (Cole et al., 2017). Instruction that combines speaking, listening, reading, and writing strengthens overall literacy skills (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000; Graham et al., 2018). For example, encoding and decoding skills reinforce one another, and classroom instruction focused on oral language improves reading comprehension (Goldfeld et al., 2022; Graham & Santangelo, 2014; Spencer & Petersen, 2018).

Integrating the content of literacy instruction enhances content learning as well. When topics students read and write about are thematically related, they can explore subjects in greater depth and build knowledge more effectively. Having background knowledge about a topic helps students add and connect new information more readily (Willingham, 2006). This integration facilitates opportunities for cross-domain learning as students engage with content across subject areas. In addition, when learning is spiraled over time and topics are revisited year to year, students build patterns of knowledge, or schema, that they can apply to new learning. When children are familiar with these schemas, new but related content becomes easier to grasp (Kim et al., 2024). Research also shows that integrated literacy and content-area instruction improves vocabulary development and reading comprehension in elementary students (Cabell & Hwang, 2020; Hwang & Cabell, 2021).

Integration also elevates the purpose of reading by making it meaningful and relevant. When phonics instruction aligns with authentic reading and writing experiences, students can apply their decoding skills to real-world contexts. This relevance increases task value and engagement (Wigfield & Eccles, 2002) as students see reading as a tool for both communication and learning new information. The nature of integrated instruction promotes collaboration, peer learning, and discussion. Studies have shown that cooperative literacy activities like these have a positive effect on academic achievement while also fostering a sense of classroom community and supporting social-emotional development (Puzio & Colby, 2013; Wentzel & Watkins, 2002/2019).

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How Does *The Superkids Reading Program* Integrate Language Arts Instruction?

- *Superkids* integrates instruction across reading, writing, speaking, and listening, ensuring skills learned in one area transfer to and reinforce learning in others.
- The instruction in *Superkids* integrates and connects content across domains, fostering skill alignment while building depth of knowledge.
- *Superkids* builds a classroom learning community through integrated speaking and listening activities that promote collaboration, discussion, and peer learning.

Deep Dive

***Superkids* integrates instruction across reading, writing, speaking, and listening, ensuring skills learned in one area transfer to and reinforce learning in others.** When children learn a new sound-spelling pattern or spelling rule, they benefit from an integrated approach where they "hear it, see it, say it, and write it." As a result, they develop phonemic and phonetic awareness, practice proper letter formation, and apply decoding and encoding rules to both single words and connected text. Engaging with patterns in meaningful contexts like these helps students read and write more fluently. For instance, when studying the inflectional ending *-ed* in words such as *kicked, smelled,* and *trusted*, students learn how to spell it (phonics), how it modifies the meaning of a word (morphology), and how it is pronounced differently in each word (phonology). They also practice decoding and encoding words that contain suffix *-ed* and apply it in their reading and writing of connected text. This comprehensive approach aligns with studies showing the effectiveness of explicit connections between reading and writing (Graham et al., 2018).

Research confirms that when children learn patterns and rules for reading and spelling words, this knowledge should be immediately applied to authentic reading and writing tasks (Ehri, 2022). In *Superkids*, everything children learn in Word Work is systematically incorporated into their reading and writing activities. For example, after learning a new phonics pattern, students encounter it in decodable texts to read and are held accountable for using it correctly in their writing. This aligned instruction helps students recognize connections between phonics, word analysis, grammar, decoding, encoding, and meaning from the outset, which are key relationships supported by research on orthographic mapping and proficient reading (Ehri, 2022).

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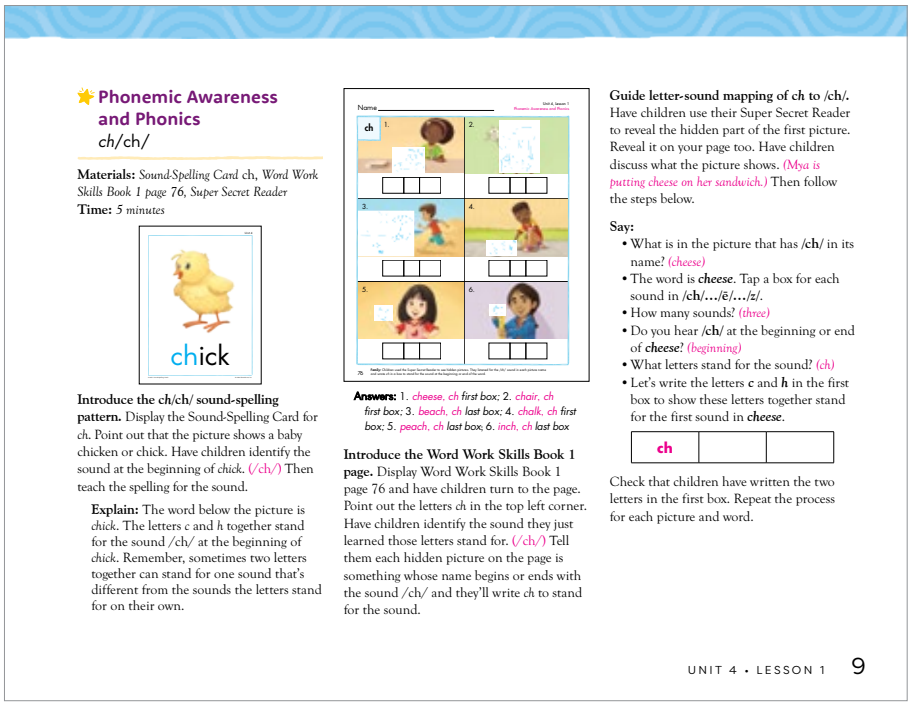


Phonemic Awareness and Phonics

ch/ch/

Materials: *Sound-Spelling Card* ch, *Word Work Skills Book 1 page* 76, *Super Secret Reader*
Time: *5 minutes*

Introduce the ch/ch/ sound-spelling pattern. Display the Sound-Spelling Card for *ch*. Point out that the picture shows a baby chicken or chick. Have children identify the sound at the beginning of *chick*. (/ch/) Then teach the spelling for the sound.

Explain: The word below the picture is *chick*. The letters *c* and *h* together stand for the sound /ch/ at the beginning of *chick*. Remember, sometimes two letters together can stand for one sound that's different from the sounds the letters stand for on their own.

Answers: 1. *cheese, ch first box;* 2. *chair, ch first box;* 3. *beach, ch last box;* 4. *chalk, ch first box;* 5. *peach, ch last box;* 6. *inch, ch last box*

Introduce the Word Work Skills Book 1 page. Display Word Work Skills Book 1 page 76 and have children turn to the page. Point out the letters *ch* in the top left corner. Have children identify the sound they just learned those letters stand for. (/ch/) Tell them each hidden picture on the page is something whose name begins or ends with the sound /ch/ and they'll write *ch* to stand for the sound.

Guide letter-sound mapping of ch to /ch/. Have children use their Super Secret Reader to reveal the hidden part of the first picture. Reveal it on your page too. Have children discuss what the picture shows. *(Mya is putting cheese on her sandwich.)* Then follow the steps below.

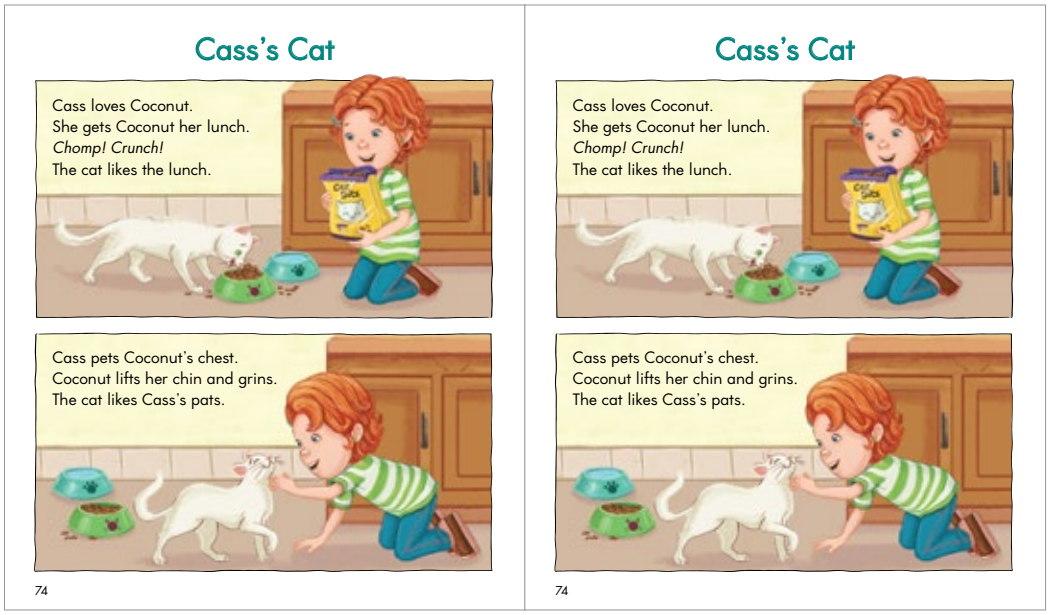
Say:

- What is in the picture that has **/ch/** in its name? *(cheese)*
- The word is ***cheese***. Tap a box for each sound in **/ch/…/ē/…/z/**.
- How many sounds? *(three)*
- Do you hear **/ch/** at the beginning or end of ***cheese***? *(beginning)*
- What letters stand for the sound? *(ch)*
- Let's write the letters **c** and **h** in the first box to show these letters together stand for the first sound in ***cheese***.

ch		

Check that children have written the two letters in the first box. Repeat the process for each picture and word.

UNIT 4 • LESSON 1 9



Immediately after learning a new sound-spelling pattern, *Superkids* students apply that pattern to encoding and decoding tasks and connected text reading.

Superkids implements multimodal instructional approaches that research shows benefit all learners (Schmitt & Weinberger, 2019). When students learn new skills, they have multiple opportunities to engage with the content through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic activities. For instance, during phonics instruction in kindergarten or grade 1, students might watch a phoneme articulation video to hear the new sound and learn how to pronounce it. Then they will see the letter associated with it and learn its formation. They will also manipulate letter cards, play interactive word work games,

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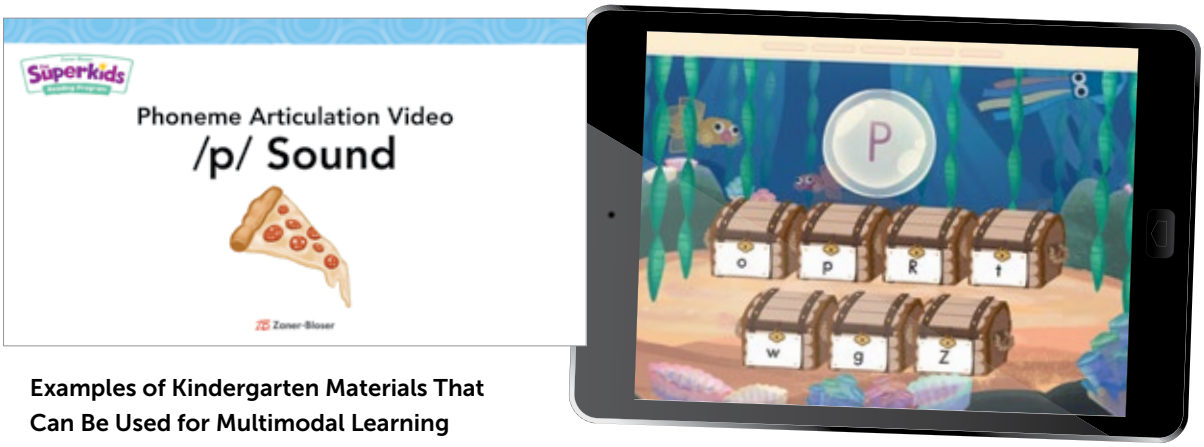
engage with illustrated skills books that include the new sound-spelling pattern in the words students read, and participate in collaborative discussions about what they've read. This integration of modalities is especially advantageous for developing readers and multilingual learners as it offers repeated exposures to important concepts and various pathways to reinforce learning (Cole et al., 2017; Pullen & Lane, 2016).



Examples of Kindergarten Materials That Can Be Used for Multimodal Learning

The instruction in *Superkids* integrates and connects content across domains, fostering skill alignment while building depth of knowledge. Content is integrated and aligned through common and relevant themes called Big Topics that help build cumulative knowledge in science, social studies, and the arts. This approach is supported by research on knowledge building and comprehension (Willingham, 2006). All texts that students listen to, read, discuss, and write about connect to these topics and help them answer essential questions that are included in the program. For instance, during a unit on "Tools and Technology," students might listen to a digital read-aloud about simple machines, read informational text about new inventions, engage in discussions about how technology helps people, and write about a tool they've researched. Every text children read and every conversation they have helps them answer the essential questions and gain key understandings about the Big Topic. Studies show this type of integrated literacy and content-area instruction improves vocabulary development and reading comprehension (Cabell & Hwang, 2020; Hwang & Cabell, 2021).

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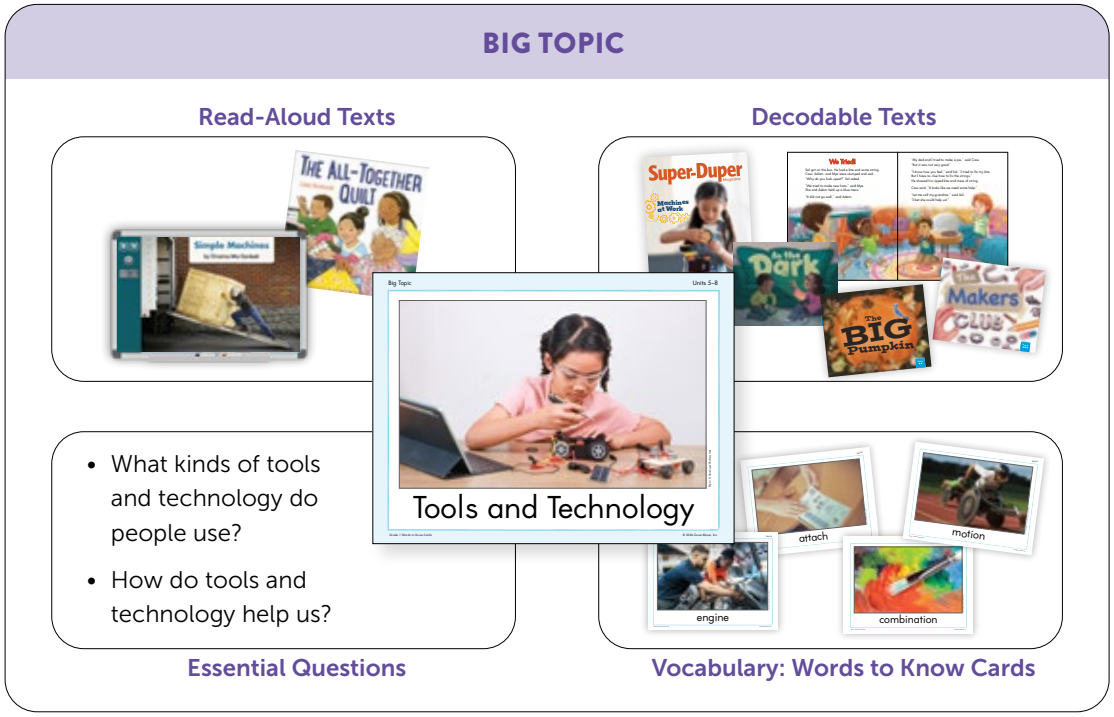

Grade 1 Big Topic: Tools and Technology

As students progress through the grade levels, instructional integration continues to be sophisticated and meaningful. In kindergarten–grade 2, students engage in research projects tied to Big Topics, create various presentation formats, and participate in peer review of writing. These activities align with research showing the benefits of integrating reading and writing instruction for building comprehension and composition skills (Graham et al., 2018). In all grade levels, speaking and listening skills are integrated into daily instruction through turn-and-talk activities, structured academic discussions, and collaborative learning. Research indicates that these practices enhance both literacy achievement and language development (Hayes-Jacobs, 2014).

***Superkids* builds a classroom learning community through integrated speaking and listening activities that promote collaboration, discussion, and peer learning.** Research shows that cooperative literacy activities significantly improve both achievement and engagement (Puzio & Colby, 2013). In daily lessons, students engage in structured turn-and-talk routines and peer discussions about texts. These activities help students process new information and practice oral language skills. Studies show that this type of classroom discourse enhances literacy learning and social development (Nystrand, 2006). Multilingual learners benefit from additional opportunities for language practice, which help strengthen their vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension skills. These opportunities also promote a stronger

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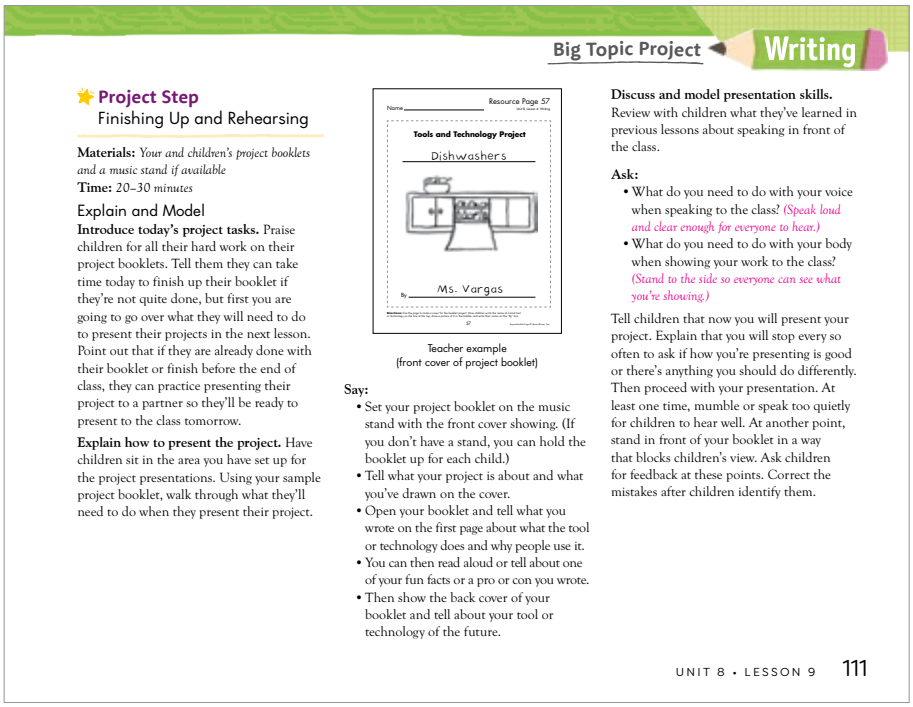

Big Topic Project Writing

Project Step
Finishing Up and Rehearsing

Materials: *Your and children's project booklets and a music stand if available*
Time: 20–30 *minutes*

Explain and Model

Introduce today's project tasks. Praise children for all their hard work on their project booklets. Tell them they can take time today to finish up their booklet if they're not quite done, but first you are going to go over what they will need to do to present their projects in the next lesson. Point out that if they are already done with their booklet or finish before the end of class, they can practice presenting their project to a partner so they'll be ready to present to the class tomorrow.

Explain how to present the project. Have children sit in the area you have set up for the project presentations. Using your sample project booklet, walk through what they'll need to do when they present their project.

Name _____ Resource Page 57

Tools and Technology Project

Dishwashers

By Ms. Vargas

Teacher example
(front cover of project booklet)

Say:
- Set your project booklet on the music stand with the front cover showing. (If you don't have a stand, you can hold the booklet up for each child.)
- Tell what your project is about and what you've drawn on the cover.
- Open your booklet and tell what you wrote on the first page about what the tool or technology does and why people use it.
- You can then read aloud or tell about one of your fun facts or a pro or con you wrote.
- Then show the back cover of your booklet and tell about your tool or technology of the future.

Discuss and model presentation skills. Review with children what they've learned in previous lessons about speaking in front of the class.

Ask:
- What do you need to do with your voice when speaking to the class? *(Speak loud and clear enough for everyone to hear.)*
- What do you need to do with your body when showing your work to the class? *(Stand to the side so everyone can see what you're showing.)*

Tell children that now you will present your project. Explain that you will stop every so often to ask if how you're presenting is good or there's anything you should do differently. Then proceed with your presentation. At least one time, mumble or speak too quietly for children to hear well. At another point, stand in front of your booklet in a way that blocks children's view. Ask children for feedback at these points. Correct the mistakes after children identify them.

UNIT 8 • LESSON 9 111

For Big Topic projects, *Superkids* students read, write, and speak about what they've learned. This culminating task helps children consolidate their learning and show what they know using multiple modalities.

classroom community by encouraging meaningful interactions and collaboration, allowing students to engage more deeply with their peers (Cole et al., 2017).

Superkids collaborative learning approach goes beyond basic discussion to include purposeful peer interactions centered on reading, writing, and word work. Students collaborate on research projects related to Big Topics, provide peer feedback on writing, and participate in group presentations. These activities align with research indicating that meaningful collaboration on literacy tasks enhances both academic skills and classroom relationships (Hayes-Jacob, 2014). When students consistently engage in collaborative literacy activities, they strengthen their communication skills while fostering the social connections that support engagement and persistence (Wentzel & Watkins, 2002/2019).

The integration of social-emotional learning within literacy instruction also helps create a supportive classroom environment where all students feel confident participating. Stories featuring the Superkids characters provide opportunities for students to discuss important life skills while building literacy. Discussion prompts in Lasting Lessons encourage students to share personal connections to texts and practice perspective taking through character analysis. Discussions around topics like conflict resolution, helping others, and showing empathy give children problem-solving tools and help them develop social skills. Research indicates that

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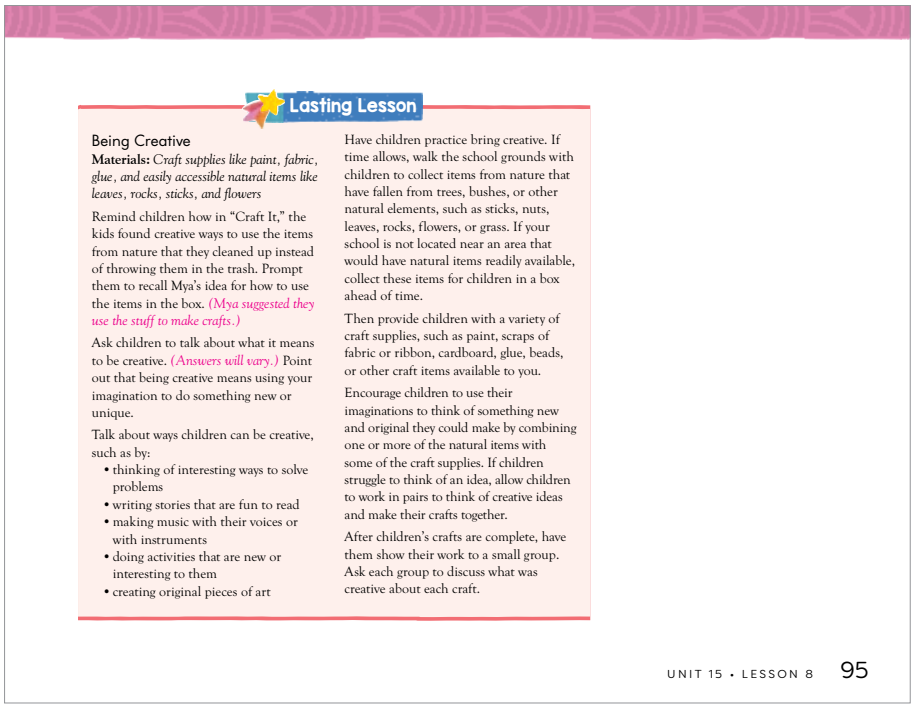

Lasting Lesson

Being Creative

Materials: *Craft supplies like paint, fabric, glue, and easily accessible natural items like leaves, rocks, sticks, and flowers*

Remind children how in "Craft It," the kids found creative ways to use the items from nature that they cleaned up instead of throwing them in the trash. Prompt them to recall Mya's idea for how to use the items in the box. *(Mya suggested they use the stuff to make crafts.)*

Ask children to talk about what it means to be creative. *(Answers will vary.)* Point out that being creative means using your imagination to do something new or unique.

Talk about ways children can be creative, such as by:

- thinking of interesting ways to solve problems
- writing stories that are fun to read
- making music with their voices or with instruments
- doing activities that are new or interesting to them
- creating original pieces of art

Have children practice bring creative. If time allows, walk the school grounds with children to collect items from nature that have fallen from trees, bushes, or other natural elements, such as sticks, nuts, leaves, rocks, flowers, or grass. If your school is not located near an area that would have natural items readily available, collect these items for children in a box ahead of time.

Then provide children with a variety of craft supplies, such as paint, scraps of fabric or ribbon, cardboard, glue, beads, or other craft items available to you.

Encourage children to use their imaginations to think of something new and original they could make by combining one or more of the natural items with some of the craft supplies. If children struggle to think of an idea, allow children to work in pairs to think of creative ideas and make their crafts together.

After children's crafts are complete, have them show their work to a small group. Ask each group to discuss what was creative about each craft.

UNIT 15 • LESSON 8 95

Lasting Lessons provide an opportunity for children to discuss social-emotional topics and solve problems together.

this type of integrated approach to social-emotional and academic learning leads to improved outcomes in both areas (Batini et al., 2021). By embedding opportunities for meaningful discussion and collaboration throughout literacy instruction, *Superkids* helps teachers create classroom communities where students support each other's learning while developing essential communication skills.

DECODABLE TEXTS

Why Do Decodable Texts Matter?

Decodable texts serve a critical role in early literacy development when used as part of a comprehensive reading program (Foorman et al., 1998; Odo, 2024). Decodable text is often defined as phonetically controlled text where most words contain only regular sound-spelling patterns that can be easily sounded out by beginning readers (Mesmer, 2000). However, research has shown that decodable texts are most effective when the majority of words align with the sound-spelling patterns that have been explicitly taught to children (Cheatham & Allor, 2012). These types of decodable text allow children to effectively apply their developing phonics knowledge systematically while reading. This alignment between taught skills and reading materials is fundamental for developing strong word reading abilities in beginning readers (Cheatham & Allor, 2012).

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When children practice decoding connected text that is aligned with their phonics instruction, they develop more reliable word-reading strategies (Odo, 2024). Research indicates that students reading highly decodable texts apply letter-sound knowledge more effectively than when reading less-controlled texts (Mesmer & Griffith, 2005). This approach encourages students to rely on decoding strategies instead of unreliable picture cues or contextual guessing (Foorman et al., 1998). Structured practice with taught patterns helps strengthen cognitive processes that are necessary for efficient word recognition and fosters automaticity, aiding in the development of orthographic mapping (Rayner et al., 2001). Regular engagement with decodable texts further enhances a beginning reader's ability to make connections between phonemes and graphemes, apply decoding principles, and develop a reliable strategy for recognizing unfamiliar words, ultimately leading to instant word recognition (Mesmer & Griffith, 2005).

Evidence indicates that decodable texts are most effective when thoughtfully integrated within a broader approach to reading instruction (Odo, 2024). Research supports using decodable texts alongside other types of reading materials, including authentic literature and informational texts, to enhance vocabulary development and reading comprehension (Pugh et al., 2001; Ward et al., 2019). Additionally, studies emphasize that the quality of decodable texts matters and the texts should provide meaningful content while maintaining phonetic control (Price-Mohr & Price, 2020). This is particularly important as students transition from learning to read to reading to learn, requiring texts that both reinforce decoding skills and build knowledge (Wang et al., 2019).

How Does *The Superkids Reading Program* Utilize Decodable Texts?

- The decodable texts in *Superkids* maintain a careful lesson-to-text match that enables students to successfully apply taught phonics skills while reading connected text.
- *Superkids* decodable texts systematically build in complexity throughout kindergarten and grade 1, enabling children to tackle authentic, uncontrolled text by grade 2.
- The *Superkids Reading Program* provides uniquely complex, high-quality decodable texts across multiple genres that align with the program's Big Topics.

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Deep Dive

The decodable texts in *Superkids* maintain a careful lesson-to-text match that enables students to successfully apply taught phonics skills while reading connected text. When emerging readers attempt to read texts that are not decodable and contain many unknown sound-spelling patterns, they often resort to ineffective word-reading strategies, such as guessing based on picture or context clues. These poor strategies can become habitual if practiced early on. In *Superkids*, decodable texts are carefully matched to the phonics skills taught in each lesson so students can immediately apply their phonics knowledge while reading connected text. By ensuring that texts match instruction, *Superkids* fosters reliable strategies for tackling unfamiliar words and helps students connect phonics knowledge to authentic reading tasks. This process builds the decoding habit, in which students consistently apply phonics knowledge when encountering new words (Mesmer, 2000).

Each grade level provides various decodable texts in multiple genres. Students read realistic fiction stories about the Superkids in the Skills Books (kindergarten) and the Readers (grades 1–2). They read fiction and nonfiction text using the Decodable Library Books (kindergarten–grade 1), and they read complex informational decodable text in their Super-Duper Magazines (grade 1). All decodable texts are available in print and digital forms, which can be accessed at school or at home.

The vast majority of the words in these texts contain only the sound-spelling patterns that have been explicitly taught to children during word work instruction. The decodable texts also include high-frequency "Memory Words" that students have learned and practiced in lessons. Memory Words contain irregular or untaught sound-spelling patterns, but children are taught to decode and encode the parts of the words they know and memorize the parts they don't. This encourages students to use their knowledge of phonetic patterns rather than memorizing a whole word. Finally, *Superkids* decodable texts include "Story Words," which are words that are not yet decodable. These words are introduced before reading the text to familiarize students with them, but students are not expected to decode them and are not held accountable for reading them correctly. Decodability in *Superkids* texts is calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{(Decodable Words + Memory Words)}}{\text{(Total Number of Words)}} = \%\ \text{Decodability}$$

***Superkids* Decodability Formula**

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All texts children read themselves in kindergarten and grade 1 are at least 85 percent decodable. This alignment of word work instruction and text enables children to confidently apply phonics knowledge in meaningful contexts rather than relying on guessing or picture cues. Research indicates that this careful matching between instruction and reading materials helps beginning readers establish effective decoding strategies that they will carry with them as they grow as readers (Cheatham & Allor, 2012).

***Superkids* decodable texts systematically build in complexity throughout kindergarten and grade 1, enabling children to tackle authentic, uncontrolled text by grade 2.** As students master more advanced phonics patterns and word structures, the texts naturally grow in complexity. Starting with simple decodable stories in kindergarten, texts gradually incorporate more sophisticated phonics patterns, words with inflectional endings, and multisyllabic words while continuing to provide practice with previously learned skills. This progression can be seen in the decodable text examples below.

Kindergarten decodable texts only include the letters and sounds children have already been taught.

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By grade 1, texts grow in complexity as children learn new sound-spelling patterns.

By grade 2, children are ready to tackle uncontrolled texts like Super Magazine.

This controlled progression aligns with research showing that beginning readers benefit from texts that carefully introduce new patterns while providing continued practice with familiar ones (Mesmer, 2000). By grade 2, students have developed sufficient word recognition skills through this systematic approach to successfully engage with authentic, uncontrolled texts. Research supports this gradual release from highly controlled to authentic text as beneficial for developing readers (Pugh et al., 2001).

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***The Superkids Reading Program* provides uniquely complex, high-quality decodable texts across multiple genres that align with the program's Big Topics.** This attention to both decodability and quality aligns with research showing decodable texts are most effective when they provide meaningful content while maintaining phonetic control (Price-Mohr & Price, 2020). By integrating decodable texts with the program's broader knowledge-building goals, *Superkids* enables students to develop strong word-reading skills while engaging with meaningful content and authentic reading experiences. *Superkids* approach of using decodable texts alongside authentic text supports both decoding skills and comprehension development (Odo, 2024).

Historically, decodable texts have been criticized for having overly simplified and boring content and unnatural or stilted language, and for lacking complex, academic vocabulary. These concerns are valid and highlight the importance of text complexity and quality. *Superkids* decodable texts are unique in that they are appropriately complex for their grade level and highly engaging. All *Superkids* decodable texts have been carefully written to align with suggested grade-level Lexile® ranges.

In addition, *Superkids* texts such as Reader stories, Super-Duper Magazines, and Decodable Library Books demonstrate that decodable texts can be phonetically controlled, highly engaging, and help students build knowledge on important and relevant topics. For example, Super-Duper Magazines (grade 1) include short- and long-form decodable articles related to the Big Topics that avoid the common pitfalls of decodable text, such as dull content and stilted language. Text complexity and content align with grade-level expectations and interests. To support success with content-specific vocabulary, Story Words and key vocabulary are reviewed before reading using word lists at the beginning of each magazine. The magazines' Lexile levels are carefully controlled to match grade-level expectations for different points in the school year.

Similarly, Decodable Library Books (kindergarten–grade 1) offer differentiated reading practice through three carefully crafted text collections, each containing varying levels of scaffolds to support children at different reading stages. While the text complexity of all three libraries falls within appropriate grade-level Lexile ranges, these books allow all readers to access the texts by providing appropriate supports and challenges for children who need them. The texts maintain strict decodability while providing engaging narratives and informational content aligned with *Superkids* Big Topics. By incorporating both fiction and nonfiction texts,

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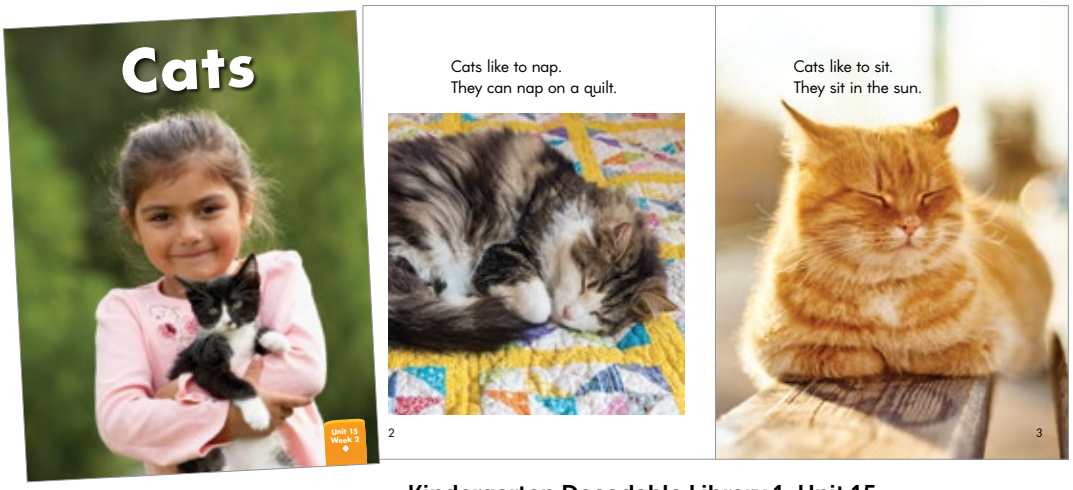
Superkids helps students apply their phonics skills across diverse genres, promoting both word recognition and content knowledge development. This integration of high-quality decodable texts and varied reading materials fosters a comprehensive literacy experience (Price-Mohr & Price, 2020).



Kindergarten Decodable Library 1, Unit 15

Kindergarten Decodable Library 2, Unit 15

Kindergarten Decodable Library 3, Unit 15

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BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE

Why Does Background Knowledge Matter?

Background knowledge plays a foundational role in reading comprehension. The more readers know about a topic, the better equipped they are to understand, analyze, and retain information from texts on that subject (Willingham, 2006). Research demonstrates that background knowledge serves as a critical scaffold for comprehension, enabling readers to make meaningful connections and inferences (Lutz et al., 2006). Failure to activate relevant background knowledge can impair reading comprehension, particularly when making inferences that rely on prior knowledge. However, teaching students to use background knowledge for gap-filling inferences can significantly improve inference-making skills and lead to a sustained transfer effect on reading comprehension (Elbro & Buch-Iversen, 2013). Building this knowledge base must begin *early* in reading instruction, *not after* children have mastered basic skills, as it forms an essential foundation for both immediate understanding and future learning (Cervetti & Wright, 2020).

The relationship between background knowledge and reading comprehension is well established. For young learners it is especially important to integrate literacy instruction with content learning as studies show that by doing so both vocabulary development and comprehension improve (Cabell & Hwang, 2020; Hwang & Cabell, 2021). Furthermore, research indicates that systematically building knowledge through thematically related texts enhances students' ability to acquire and retain new vocabulary and concepts (Cervetti et al., 2016).

Developing both breadth and depth of knowledge is crucial. While broad knowledge across domains provides students with varied context for understanding texts, deep knowledge within specific areas allows for more sophisticated comprehension and analysis (Binder et al., 2017). Schema theory further illuminates this process, explaining that readers utilize existing mental frameworks to interpret new information (Brown, 2015). Consequently, effective reading instruction necessitates activating and building relevant schemas to enhance comprehension (Anderson & Pearson, 1984).

Research shows that reading comprehension relies on simultaneous development of word recognition and language comprehension skills (Scarborough, 2001). By interweaving these strands from the start, educators can support students in cultivating both the technical word reading skills and knowledge base needed for reading and understanding increasingly complex texts.

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How Does *The Superkids Reading Program* Build Background Knowledge?

- *Superkids* builds background knowledge through a comprehensive approach that integrates content-area learning with literacy instruction.
- Students build knowledge and engage in complex reading comprehension tasks in *Superkids* as early as kindergarten.
- *Superkids* explicitly teaches academic vocabulary and vocabulary skills to facilitate further language comprehension and assist in building background knowledge.

Deep Dive

***Superkids* builds background knowledge through a comprehensive approach that integrates content-area learning with literacy instruction.** The *Superkids* Big Topics are at the core of this approach. The Big Topics are comprehensive, relevant themes around which students build knowledge via reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities. Research shows that when literacy instruction and content-area learning are aligned like this, vocabulary development and reading comprehension improve (Cervetti & Wright, 2020; Hwang & Cabell, 2021). Additionally, exposing students to thematically related texts in a structured manner strengthens their ability to learn and retain new vocabulary and concepts (Cervetti et al., 2016). *Superkids* leverages this by organizing literacy instruction around coherent themes that build knowledge across multiple modalities. By engaging students in a variety of language and literacy experiences related to each Big Topic, the program supports deep learning and fosters connections between new information and prior knowledge (Willingham, 2006).

The program features six Big Topics per grade level. Instruction in each Big Topic spans multiple weeks, allowing for deep exploration of key concepts. *Superkids* ensures intentional topic alignment across grade levels, with themes from one grade-level leading into related topics at the next grade level. For example, "Nature and Us" at the end of kindergarten prepares students for the "Animals and Us" Big Topic in grade 1, while the "Mind and Body" Big Topic in grade 1 sets the stage for "Health and Well-Being" at the beginning of grade 2. This progression allows for deeper and more complex connections as students build upon and apply their growing background knowledge.

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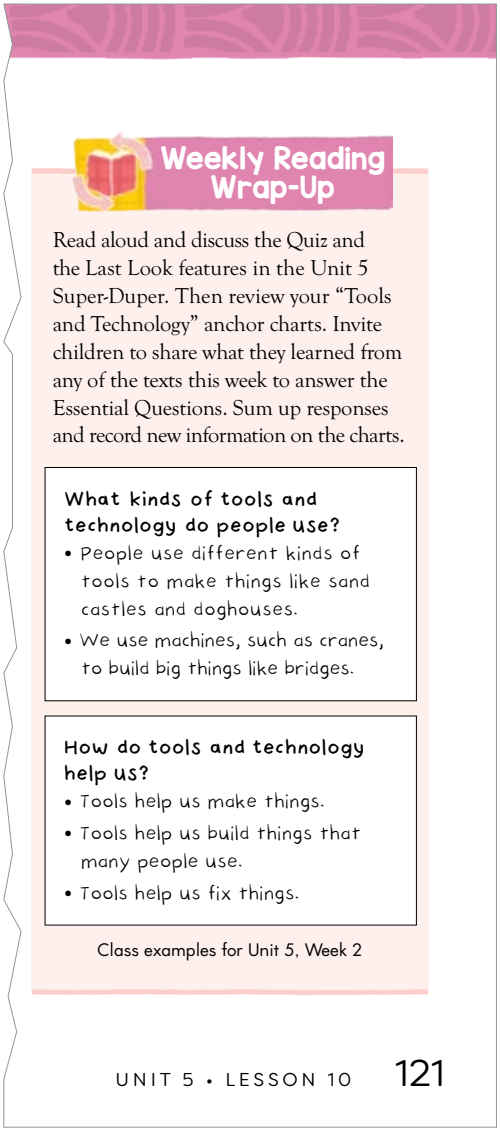
	Warm-Up Unit	Units 1–4	Units 5–8	Units 9–12	Units 13–16	Unit 17
Grade K	Making New Friends	Favorite Things	Learning About Our World	Community and Us	Nature and Us	Looking Back and Looking Ahead
Grade 1	Friends Old and New	Animals and Us	Tools and Technology	Arts and Entertainment	Mind and Body	Looking Back and Looking Ahead
Grade 2	Friends Old and New	Health and Well-Being	Living Things and the Natural World	Customs and Celebrations	Innovation and Exploration	Looking Back and Looking Ahead

***Superkids* Big Topics**

Each Big Topic includes essential questions that guide instruction as well as key understandings that outline the core content knowledge students will develop. All texts students read and listen to connect with the Big Topics and help answer the essential questions. For example, in the grade 1 "Tools and Technology" Big Topic, students read fiction and nonfiction texts about various tools and inventions. These texts include decodable text that children read themselves and text that is read aloud.

In addition to reading texts, students engage in speaking and listening tasks related to the Big Topic. The program provides turn-and-talk and think-pair-share routines that facilitate in-depth discussions about the texts students read. Teachers use Big Topic anchor charts to record what children learned from the texts to answer the essential questions during text discussions. These anchor charts are reviewed at the end of each week during the Weekly Reading Wrap-Up.



During the Weekly Reading Wrap-Up, children explore key understandings through speaking and listening tasks.

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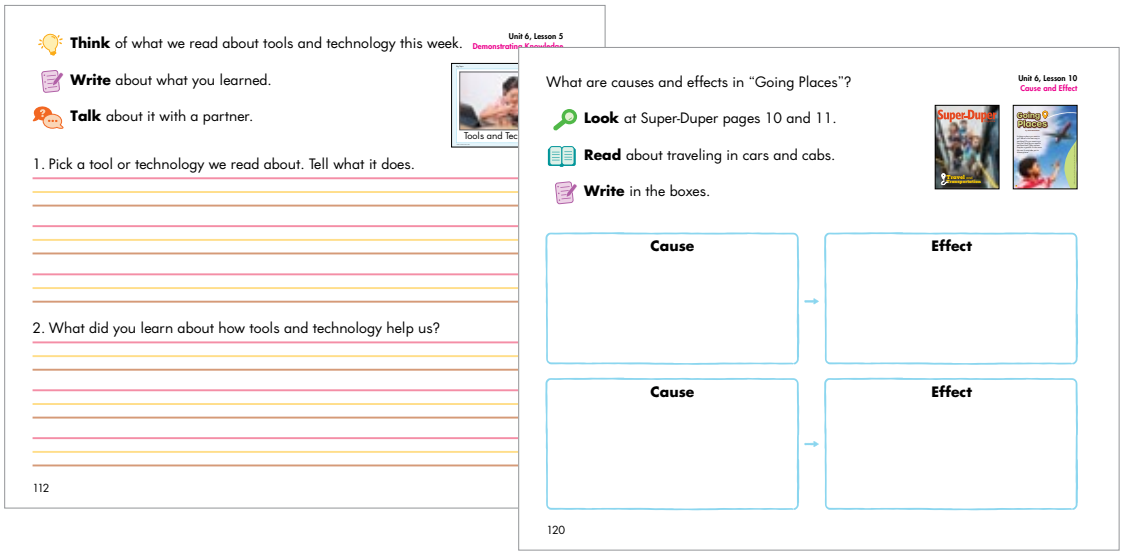
Superkids writing tasks also facilitate the synthesis of information and help deepen content knowledge of the Big Topics. For example, grade 1 and 2 students write about what they've read in the Reading Skills Book.



Reading Skills Book pages focus on building and demonstrating knowledge and comprehension skills.

Superkids composition writing also connects back to the Big Topic. For example, during the "Tools and Technology" Big Topic in grade 1, students learn how to ask questions, research the answers, and write facts about inventions. As they work through the writing process to plan, draft, edit, and publish their writing, they are building and reinforcing key knowledge about the tools and technology they are researching.

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Informative Writing

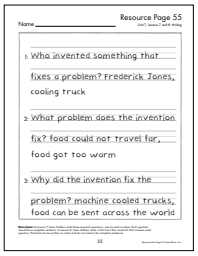
Writing Process
Writing Facts From Research

Materials: *Resource Page 55 with your and your children's research questions and notes; Resource Page 19: Draw and Write Paper; crayons; In advance of the lesson, make an illustration for your writing.*
Time: *20–30 minutes*

Explain and Model

Review the purpose of research and what facts are. Remind children that in the last lesson, they did research to find facts that answered their research questions. Review that a fact is true information about something that is real. Tell children that in this lesson, they will write a paragraph to share what they have learned from their research.

Explain that children will use the facts they recorded in the last lesson to help them write their paragraph about an invention. Then display Resource Page 55 with your research questions and notes from Lesson 8. Read the questions and notes aloud, pointing to the words as you read them. Remind children they also wrote facts that answered their research questions.


Name _____ Resource Page 55

1. Who invented something that fixes a problem? Frederick Jones, cooling truck
2. What problem does the invention fix? food could not travel far, food got too warm
3. Why did the invention fix the problem? machine cooled trucks, food can be sent across the world

Teacher example with notes from Lesson 8

Model writing a title and fact statements from research notes. Remind children that they can share what they have learned about inventions through their writing.

Say:
- When I did my research, I found many facts that helped me learn about an invention. I want to share what I learned with others, so I'll use the facts I found in my research to write a paragraph. I'll add a title to tell readers what the text is about.

A Cool Truck

Frederick Jones invented a cooling truck to fix a problem. Food could not travel far because it got too warm in trucks. Jones invented a machine that cooled trucks. His invention let people ship food across the world.

Teacher writing example

Model how to write a title and use the research notes to write fact statements.

Say:
- I'll write *A Cool Truck* as the title of my paragraph. It tells what my writing is about and I like how it sounds. I'll write the title at the top of the page.
- Next, I'll use my notes to write sentences that tell the facts I learned. I noted *Frederick Jones, cooling truck.* This fact tells who invented something that fixes a problem. I'll write this fact as a complete sentence: *Frederick Jones invented a cooling truck to fix a problem.*

Write the fact statement, saying each word as you write it. Point out the uppercase letter at the beginning of the sentence and the period at the end. Then model writing a fact statement using each of the remaining facts from your research.

Writing Informative

Review what illustrations are and how they show information. Remind children that the texts they used for their research had pictures of different inventions and their inventors. Tell children that when they finish writing their paragraphs, they will draw a picture to go with their writing. Their picture can show details of the inventor or the invention they are writing about.

Teacher example

Display your picture and point out details that you included.

Ask:
- What facts about an invention does my picture show? *(Frederick Jones and the cooling truck he invented)*

Tell children they will draw a picture to go with their paragraph. Explain that they can look at the pictures in the texts to help them draw their pictures.

Independent Writing

Have children discuss facts from their research with a partner. Explain that children's paragraphs should include at least three fact statements. Tell children that they can choose which facts they would like to share in their writing. Have children work with a partner and discuss what facts they want to include in their writing.

Have children write facts from research and draw a picture. Distribute Resource Page 19: Draw and Write Paper. Tell children to write the facts from their research as a paragraph on the lines at the bottom of the page. Explain that they should then draw a picture in the box that goes with their writing. As children write, circulate and provide support as needed.

Teaching Tip

As children write their fact statements, circulate and check that they are writing complete sentences. If you notice children need support translating their notes into sentences in their paragraph, take time to work with them individually. Model taking one of their notes and translating it into a full sentence.

Differentiate

More Support: If children need additional support writing their facts as complete sentences, provide sentence frames about the invention they researched that they can complete, such as *The ____ is an invention. It was invented by ____. It helped people because ____.*

More Challenge: Encourage strong writers to write a longer paragraph. Have them include additional facts from the Super-Duper or Super Smart texts or write a second paragraph on handwriting paper.

Multilingual Learner Support: Provide scaffolding for multilingual learners. If children need more support with the structure of their sentences, have children tell the information they want to write. Provide sentence frames that support the facts they want to include and help children write their fact statements.

Sharing

Have children share their facts. Invite a few children to share one of their fact statements with the class. Have them tell why they included that fact in their writing. If time permits, encourage children to tell if they have the same fact in their writing as the one that was read by another child and have children to compare their sentences.

Grade 1 Lesson on Writing Answers to Research Questions

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Additionally, during writing instruction in Units 4, 8, 12, and 16, students take part in Big Topic projects. Each project is a culminating task in which children demonstrate the knowledge they have gained over the course of the eight-week Big Topic. Projects require students to read, write, and speak about the Big Topic, and presentations include a variety of visual forms, such as illustrations, diagrams, and brochures. These projects allow children to reflect on and consolidate the knowledge they have built on the Big Topic.

Units	Big Topic	Big Topic Project
Units 1–4	Animals and Us	Children draw and write about an animal and contribute to a class nonfiction book.
Units 5–8	Tools and Technology	Children research, write, and draw about a tool or technology and compile their work into a booklet.
Units 9–12	Arts and Entertainment	Children write and illustrate their own informational book about a form of art or entertainment.
Units 13–16	Mind and Body	Children create individual mini magazines about the mind and body that resemble Super-Duper Magazines.

Grade 1 Big Topic Projects

Students build knowledge and engage in complex reading comprehension tasks in *Superkids* as early as kindergarten. Because all texts students listen to and read, including decodable texts, connect with the Big Topics and help answer the essential questions, the program integrates knowledge building via reading comprehension from the start. This approach reflects Scarborough's Reading Rope model (Scarborough, 2001), in which word recognition and language comprehension are intertwined to support reading comprehension from the earliest stages of literacy development. This ensures word recognition and comprehension abilities are not siloed and that students develop them simultaneously.

Read-aloud texts relate to the Big Topic and take two forms: fiction and nonfiction trade books and digital informational texts called Super Smarts. They are written above grade level and include content and vocabulary that children cannot yet access in their own reading. Read-alouds provide exposure to concepts beyond the reading comprehension abilities of most young learners and help build knowledge on topics these children could not otherwise attain.

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Kindergarten Read-Aloud Fiction and Nonfiction Texts from the "Nature and Us" Big Topic

Superkids decodable texts are also aligned with the Big Topics. As a result, children are able to apply comprehension skills and strategies to make new meaning from texts they are reading. Decodable texts come in several forms and vary by grade level.

Kindergarten Decodable Text from the "Nature and Us" Big Topic

By braiding together foundational skills and knowledge building from the beginning, *Superkids* aligns with research demonstrating the importance of developing both strands of the Reading Rope in tandem (Cabell & Hwang, 2020). This integrated approach helps students build a strong foundation for future reading success by fostering both the technical word reading skills and the background knowledge needed for comprehension.

***Superkids* explicitly teaches academic vocabulary and vocabulary skills to facilitate further language comprehension and assist in building background knowledge.** If children can decode but do not understand the meaning of the words they read, comprehension will be negatively impacted (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). Effective text comprehension relies heavily on vocabulary knowledge, with distinct instructional approaches needed for students with varying skill levels (Liebfreund & Conradi, 2016).

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Superkids systematically develops vocabulary knowledge in a myriad of ways. The program explicitly teaches high-utility academic vocabulary words via the Words to Know component. Words to Know are sourced from the complex read-aloud texts provided by the program. They are introduced during read-aloud lessons using the Words to Know Cards, which include an image that helps children visualize the word meaning, a child-friendly definition, and a context-rich sentence associated with the image. The words are then reviewed several times in the unit through discussion and oral and written activities.

Word to Know Card and Lesson from Kindergarten

Words to Know instruction aligns with research indicating that students benefit from explicit teaching of word meanings combined with opportunities to encounter and use new words in varied contexts (Beck et al., 2013). By providing multiple exposures to academic vocabulary across different language domains, the program helps students develop rich word knowledge that supports background knowledge and comprehension.

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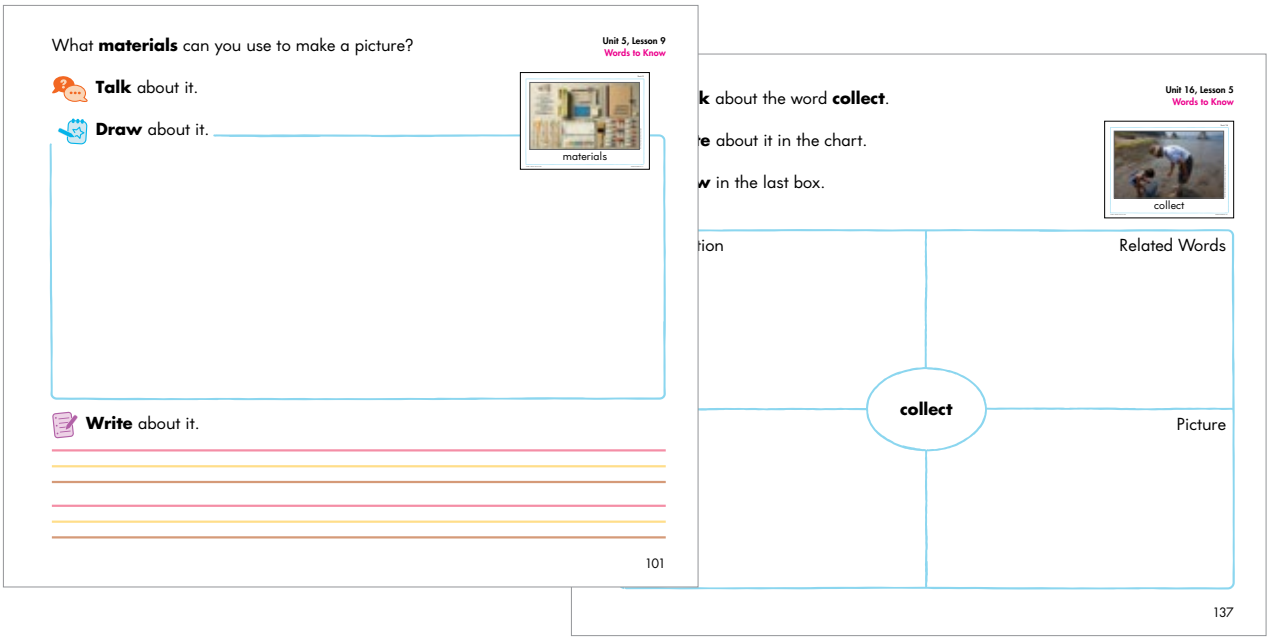

Examples of Words to Know Follow-Up Activities in the Grade 1 Reading Skills Book

In addition to the Words to Know, other key vocabulary words are taught in *Superkids*. These words can be found in the decodable texts children read and read-aloud texts. They generally include common yet sophisticated words that are often unfamiliar to students and help provide content knowledge or are essential to the understanding of the text.

To further advance vocabulary knowledge, children need strategies for understanding new word meanings (Stahl & Nagy, 2006). *Superkids* teaches various skills and strategies associated with word learning, such as recognizing synonyms and antonyms, using context clues, and understanding multiple-meaning words.

This comprehensive approach to vocabulary instruction supports research showing that both breadth and depth of word knowledge contribute to reading comprehension (Binder et al., 2017; Wright et al., 2022). By integrating vocabulary development with content-area learning, *Superkids* helps students build the language and conceptual understanding needed for successful comprehension.

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Conclusion

The Superkids Reading Program utilizes a comprehensive approach to literacy instruction. The program enhances reading and writing skills by focusing on motivating and engaging students, providing explicit and systematic instruction, integrating language arts, utilizing decodable texts, and building background knowledge. This approach ensures that students develop the foundational literacy and language comprehension skills they need to become lifelong readers and writers. *Superkids* fosters confidence and mastery through structured, high-quality evidence-based instructional practices that are informed by the latest literacy research. *Superkids* empowers educators to create meaningful and engaging learning experiences that support every student's growth in reading and writing.

Are You Ready to Improve Your Students' Reading and Writing?

Use these questions to reflect on your current practice, considering the research featured in this paper.

- What are the features of high-quality early literacy instruction?
- How do you motivate and engage your students during reading and writing activities?
- Is your instruction systematic, progressing from simple to complex in a logical sequence that is developmentally appropriate?
- Is your instruction explicit, providing clear explanations and demonstrations and gradually releasing responsibility to the students?
- Are you using assessments and data to differentiate instruction and target the specific needs of your students?
- Is your literacy curriculum integrated across reading, writing, speaking, and listening?
- Do you build classroom community through collaboration, discussion, and peer learning?
- Do you provide your students with decodable texts aligned with research-based foundational skill instruction to help build sustainable word reading skills?
- Is your decodable text complex and high quality? Is it available in multiple genres that also help build knowledge?
- Are your students provided with opportunities to build background knowledge on common, relevant topics that deepen their language comprehension and their understanding of the world around them?

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