



From My Casa to Yours

Evaluating the Possibility of Applying the Montessori
Language Curriculum to the Ontario Elementary
Context

Katherine Carroll

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ABSTRACT

Tampereen ammattikorkeakoulu
Tampere University of Applied Sciences
Masters in Business Administration
Educational Leadership

KATHERINE CARROLL:

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The Ontario Human Rights Commission's inquiry into how reading (an essential human right) is taught in Ontario schools revealed that Ontario's public education system is "failing students...by not using evidence-based approaches to teach them to read." This thesis aimed to address this failure by proposing Montessori language curriculum as a viable alternative to the current (ineffective) practices. The validity of both the new Ontario language curriculum and the Montessori language curriculum were assessed through the use of The Reading League's Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines (CEG) and their associated workbook.

The Ontario language curriculum was found to be lacking, particularly in terms of its lack of clarity, and guidance with regards to practical implementation. The Montessori language curriculum on the other hand was found to meet or surpass the Ontario Human Rights Commission's recommendations, and in a way that can tangibly be understood and implemented.

In light of these findings, Ontario school boards should seriously consider adopting Montessori language curriculum, in whole or in part, to address the systemic reading crisis. All educational stakeholders have a role to play in safeguarding children's right to read.

Key words: montessori, literacy, science of reading, elementary

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GLOSSARY

AMI	Association Montessori Internationale
AMS	American Montessori Society
CEG	Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines
OHRC	Ontario Human Rights Commission
SoR	Science of Reading
TAMK	Tampere University of Applied Sciences
cr	credit

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Early education sets the foundation for life, playing a ubiquitous and determining role in each student's future, to and through, adulthood. Literacy is among the most fundamental building blocks in this foundation; “[n]o skill is more important in the first few years of school than learning to read.” (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2022, 6). Indeed, in Canada, the belief in the veracity of this claim is such that, in 2012, the Supreme Court of Canada released the decision that learning to read is a basic essential human right (Moore v. British Columbia (Education), 2012 SCC 61, [2012] 3 S.C.R. 360).

Theoretically, it is the education system's responsibility to uphold this right, and to teach every student to read. Unfortunately, this is not the reality. Many students, around the globe, are failing to learn this fundamental skill, to devastating effect – both in terms of their further education and in later life. A state of affairs that is all the more upsetting in light of decades of research pointing to the most effective approaches to teaching foundational word-reading skills. In fact, in many cases, there has been a flagrant disregard of the science of reading – the collective, comprehensive and converging evidence on best practices in literacy instruction – through the use of approaches and strategies that are known, and indeed have been known for years, to fail students, especially those that are most vulnerable.

Minority and marginalised students – such as those with word-reading or other disabilities, and/or those from racialized, Indigenous or lower-income backgrounds – experience disproportionately higher rates of reading difficulties in the face of such approaches...further demarcating learning to read as a human rights issue (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2022). For that very reason, in 2019, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) launched an inquiry focusing on the right to read. This inquiry culminated in a 558 page report: *Right to Read: Public inquiry into human rights issues affecting students with reading disabilities* (hereafter referred to as the report) which was made public in late February, 2022.

In response to the report's scathing indictment of the Ontario education system, as well as, its 150-odd recommendations, Ontario has begun overhauling its approach to literacy in schools, beginning with a revised language curriculum document, *The Ontario Curriculum Grades 1–8 Language 2023*, and a complete shift in how literacy is taught in the classroom. Moving from a strategy based largely on literate adults' intuitive understanding of how reading works to evidence-based approaches grounded in decades of systematic scientific investigation. For teachers, those at the front lines of this shift, such an endeavour seems daunting, if not impossible. However, that need not be the case.

Over 100 years ago, Dr. Maria Montessori formulated a language curriculum through scientific exploration and observation. Prima facie, her methods appear logical and in-line with the current scientific understanding of how children learn to read (i.e., the science of reading). Thus, Dr. Montessori's language curriculum has the potential to serve as a tool to guide and support teachers through the transition to, and formulation of, evidence-based language instruction.

1.2 Thesis objectives, purpose and questions

This thesis aims to evaluate the Montessori language curriculum, through the lens of the report's recommendations – and the resulting changes to the Ontario language curriculum – and in light of the most up-to-date science of reading, as determined by The Reading League's Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines (CEG, 2023). This will result in a holistic assessment of the efficacy, and feasibility, of addressing the gaps in current literacy teaching practice, through the use of – portions and/or the entirety of – the Montessori language curriculum.

Practically speaking, this will provide educators with a potentially invaluable toolbox for addressing a systemic reading crisis, and school boards, and/or school leadership, with insight into how to support their educators through this tumultuous time.

This thesis endeavours to address the following questions:

- How does the Montessori language curriculum present a viable solution to the systemic literacy crisis?
- How does the Montessori language curriculum score on a tool formulated to assess a curriculum's adherence to the science of reading (e.g., The Reading League's Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines, 2023)?
- Which materials and/or lessons meet the new expectations in the Ontario language curriculum
 - And, by extension, are in line with:
 - the OHRC's recommendations (outlined in the report)
 - and the science of reading

1.3 Structure of thesis

This thesis will begin by outlining the way in which literacy has been taught the world over, and more specifically Ontario, Canada, for the past century, emphasising how the predominant pedagogy significantly differs from the established science of reading. This will be followed by an overview of the current evidence-based best practices for literacy instruction. Once a clear picture of appropriate literacy instruction has been created, the thesis will go on to review the state of early literacy education in Ontario, as outlined by the report. This will include a summary of the recommendations set out by the OHRC, as a result of the inquiry, and the consequent changes to the Ontario language curriculum.

The Montessori language curriculum will then be studied as a potential tool for Ontario elementary teachers to create and/or supplement their evidenced-based language instruction. An overview of the defining features of the Montessori language curriculum will be provided, including an exploration of a series of specific Montessori language lessons and materials in order to illustrate its systematic nature. These, and numerous other lessons and materials will then be assessed in terms of their ability to meet the recommendations set out in the report, as well as, their capacity to address the new 2023 Ontario language curriculum expectations that resulted from those same recommendations.

The thesis will close with a discussion of the implications of the findings with regards to the efficacy and feasibility of applying the Montessori language curriculum to the Ontario elementary context, as well as, recommendations in terms of how teachers can best be supported in its implementation.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

"The most fundamental responsibility of schools is teaching students to read...[it] affects all other academic achievement and is associated with social, emotional, economic, and physical health." (Moats, 2020, 4). Thus, it is widely agreed upon that it is of the utmost importance that reading be taught properly. The disagreement lies in what constitutes "proper" instruction.

2.1 History of Teaching Literacy - The Reading Wars

For over a century literacy instruction has been involved in a high-stakes battle, dubbed "The Reading Wars", between supporters of two opposing, and (ostensibly) entirely incompatible, methodologies. The first, often referred to as "Whole Word" instruction, is characterised by a top-down/ whole-to-parts method of instruction. Learners are directed to rote-memorise whole words, typically called "sight words", solely on the basis of their visual characteristics. The second method of instruction, on the other hand, is a bottom-up/ parts-to-whole approach to learning, generally referred to as "Phonics" instruction. This label is something of a misnomer as there exists a large number of phonics varieties – analogy, analytic, onset-rime, etc. Proponents of the Phonics method prescribe to a specific genre, synthetic phonics, in which instruction begins with phonemes (the smallest unit of sound in a language that has an impact on meaning) which are then combined and blended to build whole words (Parker, 2021).

Over the decades, support for each of the methodologies has waxed and waned. The pendulum swinging completely in one direction, with pedagogues chasing after it, scrambling to create new curricula and materials, and shift the landscape of reading instruction, only for it to swing back the other way. What follows is an overview of some of the most popular methods of reading instruction that have pervaded classrooms for the past 50-plus years. (See Table 1 for an overview of the history of reading instruction.)

TABLE 1. Brief History of Reading Instruction. A short summary of the most popular methods of reading instruction over the past several decades adapted and updated, with permission, from Adrienne Gear, Reading Power Gear, Ltd.

	Approach	Texts	Benefits	Limitations
Whole Word 1960s-1970s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students learn 30-50 sight words and read books consisting mostly of these words Phonics workbooks SRA kits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repetitive text Intentional sequence of simple sight words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students feel confident when they can read words they recognize and know Students feel less overwhelmed by difficulty as they know every word Builds vocabulary and sight words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With so few words, initially, the texts sound contrived and unnatural Prevents simple decoding and application of phonics skills Students memorise words rather than sound them out Early readers do not represent diverse characters
Whole Language 1980s-1990s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immersing students in “real” literature and engage in text through personal connections Phonics is embedded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authentic literature shared through class read-alouds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exposure to “real reading”, language, and stories Focus on reading for meaning Promotes purpose, motivation to read Increases vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Readers may have difficulty decoding unfamiliar words Simplification of language is limited Little to no emphasis or support with phonics skills
Balanced Literacy 1990's-2000s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A “balance” between authentic literature AND explicit instruction MSV cueing system Small group and whole class instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authentic literature Levelled texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment for learning helps target instruction Small group instruction to target skills Levelled texts help students read independently and confidently Promotes fluency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited phonics instruction Cueing system prompted “guessing” unknown words rather than segmenting Patterned, repetitive texts
Science of Reading 2000s on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are taught through a Levelled systematic phonics program AS WELL AS Phonological awareness, Phonics, Vocabulary, Fluency, Comprehension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decodable books Authentic literature texts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on decoding - structured, foundational phonics instruction for all students Students learn to recognize and manipulate sounds Reading proficiency for diverse range of skills and levels Decodable texts for practising new skills and sounds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited words in early decodable texts sound contrived Limited emphasis on other aspects of holistic reading program (i.e., vocabulary, knowledge building, comprehension) Some may limit students from reading books they cannot accurately decode Can be boring for students who already know phonics

2.1.1 Whole Word and Whole Language Instruction (top-down)

The mid 1960's to 1970's in North America were characterised by the "Whole Word" approach, consisting of the "Look/Say" method and repetitive readers like Dick and Jane, or Janet and John. First, students were shown a series of flashcards, each with a single target word accompanied, when possible, with a picture. The teacher would say the target word and have students repeat it, with the goal of having the students memorise the word based on its contour. Once 30-50 sight words were memorised in this manner – through the "Look/Say" method – they were given readers, whose main purpose was to drill those same sight words (Gear, 2021).

By the mid 70s, the artificial nature, and marked lack of diversity, in these basal readers came into question. It was theorised that students would be more engaged and better able to learn when reading "real" stories. As such, Kenneth Goodman and Frank Smith developed the "Whole Language" approach (e.g., Goodman, 1967). Students were exposed to "real" literature and asked to make use of personal connections and experiences to make meaning out of the "authentic" texts. Teachers generally read the stories aloud, enabling the students to truly focus on comprehension and meaning-making.

The Whole Language approach also placed an emphasis on writing during the early reading stages. Again, with the predominant focus being placed on "real-life" and/or personal connections. Students were encouraged to write, using invented spelling (i.e., spelling based on current level of understanding and/or best judgments; Lutz, 1986), from their own lived experience.

Unfortunately, this method did away entirely with phonics and the systematic and explicit teaching of the code and sound-symbol correspondence. When faced with an unfamiliar word students would be encouraged to simply ask a friend, or make a guess based on context. The fundamental thought being that learning to read should be akin to learning to speak, both easy and natural. Students would "discover" the necessary sound-symbol relationships when immersed in a text-rich environment and given sufficient opportunity for self-expression.

By the 90s, after over a decade void of explicit instruction, it became abundantly clear – based on abysmal literacy rates – that learning to read is neither easy nor natural, requiring more than mere immersion. Enter the “Balanced Literacy” approach (Eunice Kennedy Shriver & National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, NIH, DHHS, 2000).

2.1.2 Balanced Literacy (a mixed approach...but mostly top-down)

While maintaining an emphasis on meaningful and authentic reading experiences, the Balanced Literacy approach (ostensibly) incorporated explicit, targeted instruction in phonics and phonemic awareness – the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate phonemes. Of particular note was the introduction of “levelled text” systems and reading assessment tools which allowed teachers to determine a student’s reading level and enabled students to progress through increasingly complex texts as their skills developed. These texts continued to focus on “real” topics with the addition of an emphasis on high-frequency words and syntactic patterns (i.e., words and patterns that occur frequently in the English language). Additionally, this approach focused on providing students with increased variety in their reading experience – shared, partner, guided, independent, etc. – further enriching the literacy environment.

Of further note, in this method, when faced with an unfamiliar word, students were taught a “cueing system” known as “MSV” (meaning, structure, visual) to formulate informed guesses. Students were encouraged to draw on 1) meaning – context clues, background knowledge, pictures, etc., 2) structure – syntax and language patterns, and 3) visual – graphophonic/ sound-letter relation cues to deduce unfamiliar words. Simply put, when faced with the unknown students were instructed to make a guess while asking themselves: Does it make sense? (meaning); Does it sound right? (structure); Does it look right? (visual). Placing “sounding-it-out” as the last of the available strategies.

This approach has dominated the elementary school system for the past ten years. Recently, however, the tides have changed, in a significant way. The reasons for this change will be further discussed, with a specific focus on literacy education in Ontario, in later sections. Over the past few decades

experts in the field of reading have conducted research on how children learn to read, including investigation into the neuroscience – the cognitive processes and parts of the brain – involved in reading. This body of research is termed the “science of reading” (SoR).

2.1.3 Science of Reading (bottom-up)

SoR can be most easily understood via the combination of two popular literacy acquisition models: The Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) and Scarborough’s Reading Rope (Scarborough, 2001).

The Simple View of Reading, developed by Philip B. Gough and William E. Tunmer in the 1980s, and later empirically validated by over 150 scientific studies (The Reading League, 2023a); identifies two key areas of proficiency for reading comprehension: word recognition and language comprehension. Referring to the ability to identify letters or letter combinations and connect them to the speech sounds that they represent (i.e., decoding); and the ability to extract meaning from words, sentences and texts via listening, respectively. According to Gough and William’s view, these skills work in tandem to produce reading comprehension (see Figure 1). This view is notable as it recognizes that word recognition (bottom-up) and language comprehension (top-down) processes work together, not in isolation. In fact, it highlights that both are necessary but neither is sufficient for true reading proficiency...making the reading wars rather moot.



FIGURE 1. The Simple View of Reading. Reading Comprehension is the product of decoding and language comprehension skills, taken, with permission, from Science of Reading: Defining Guide (The Reading League [TRL], 2022).

Scarborough's Reading Rope (Scarborough, 2001; see Figure 2) extends the Simple View of Reading by identifying a series of sub skills for each of the areas of proficiency. The sub skills of language comprehension – background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning and literacy knowledge – foster strategic reading, while those of word recognition – phonological awareness, decoding and sight recognition – foster automatic reading. These sub-skills, like strands in a rope, weave together and become stronger as the reader's skill level increases. Conversely, weakness in a single strand impacts the integrity of the entire rope.

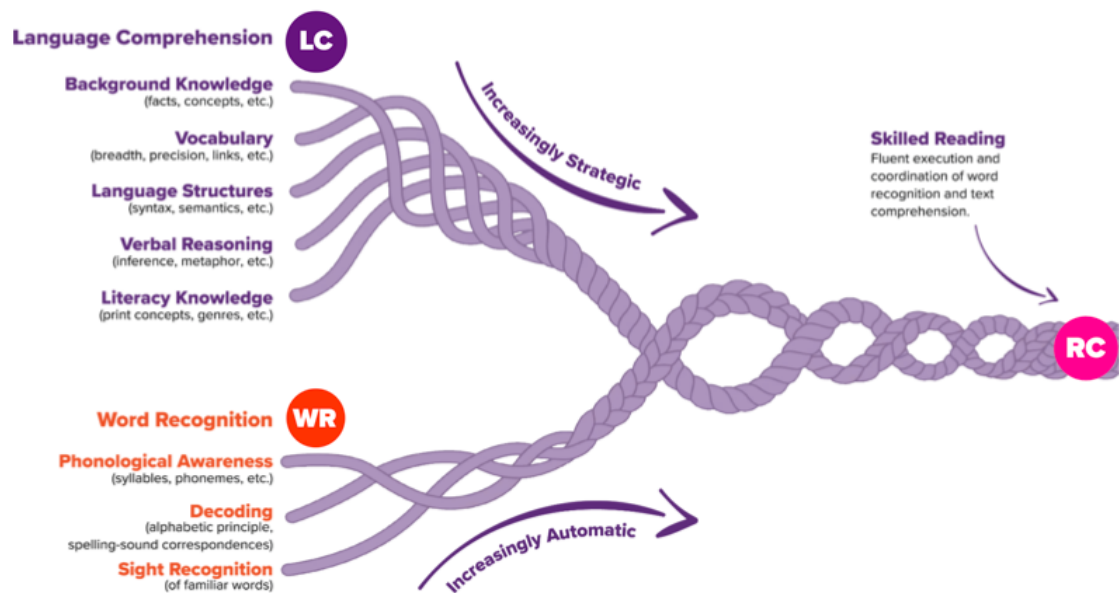


FIGURE 2. Scarborough's Reading Rope, incorporating the Simple View of Reading. Word recognition and language comprehension are composed of a series of sub-skills whose interaction build-up or breakdown a reader's overall reading proficiency. Adapted, with permission, from Science of Reading: Defining Guide (The Reading League [TRL], 2022).

This model further emphasises that word recognition skills and language comprehension skills are foundational and that explicit, systematic instruction in a variety of domains – phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, literacy knowledge, etc. – is essential for many, and beneficial for all, in terms of improving overall reading proficiency.

Taken together, these models, along with decades of other multidisciplinary research, reveal that the key to literacy instruction is direct, explicit, systematic instruction in foundational word-recognition and language comprehension skills. Unfortunately, as reading researcher Mark Seidenberg, in *Language at the Speed of Sight*, states “there is a profound disconnect between the science of reading and educational practice. Very little of what we’ve learned about reading as scientists has had any impact on what happens in schools because the cultures of science and education are so different.” (p11).

2.2 The Report

The veracity of this statement has never been more apparent than it is today. Many students, around the globe, are failing to learn to read due, in large part, to a flagrant disregard of the science of reading through the use of approaches and strategies that are known, and indeed have been known for years, to be ineffective. In the Ontario context specifically, the report revealed an “urgent need” (p. 387) to improve literacy related achievement outcomes; especially for students with special education needs, learning disabilities, students from low-income backgrounds, boys, multilingual students, Black and other racialized students, and Indigenous students (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2022).

The OHRC collected both quantitative and qualitative data in the course of their inquiry. The main source of quantitative data being the Education Quality and Accountability Office’s provincewide standardised tests (colloquially referred to as the EQAO) which occur in grades 3 and 6, and the Grade 10 Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, which is also administered by the Education Quality and Accountability Office. Qualitative data came from a variety of accounts of lived experiences. Both sources revealed troubling levels of reading difficulty. Based on EQAO test scores, in 2018–2019, 26% of all grade 3 students, and 53% of those with special education needs, were not meeting the provincial standard. For those in grade 6, scores were only slightly improved with 19% of all students and 47% of students with special education needs falling below provincial standard. These findings are all the more worrisome when one takes into consideration the fact that the majority of students with special education needs make use of accommodations, such as, assistive

technology, having someone read the questions aloud, or having a scribe to write their answers, etc.; as such, it is unclear whether or not even those that did meet the provincial standard are able to read or write unassisted. Moreover, the qualitative data suggests that it is likely that the EQAO data grossly under-represents the magnitude of the issue. Students, parents, teachers and other professionals were all able to provide numerous examples of students struggling, failing to read, falling years behind in reading level, in some cases, entering high school reading at a primary/ grade 1-3 level, and various other instances of the system failing its students (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2022).

In light of such abysmal findings, the report made over 150 recommendations regarding literacy instruction going forward. Of particular interest for the purposes of this thesis, are those revolving around curriculum and instruction, specifically recommendations 27-58. The first several of which make clear the importance of removing all reference to cueing systems, balanced literacy, levelled readers, and various other assessment tools and instructional models that have not been scientifically validated or, in some cases, have been found to be detrimental. In broad strokes, the reports other 30-odd curriculum-related recommendations suggest that early reading instruction must focus on the 1) the direct, explicit and systematic teaching of skills that will lead to efficient word reading, such as phonemic awareness skills and grapheme-phoneme correspondence; 2) how to use this knowledge when both decoding and encoding language, as well as, 3) the explicit instruction of skills that will lead to in-depth language comprehension. This includes, but is not limited to, effective instruction in vocabulary, text structures (genres), and reading comprehension strategies, as well as, the construction and development of a knowledge base in a variety of domains in order to support reading comprehension. In other words, according to the report, a complete reading program is one that 1) aligns with the SoR in that it includes evidence-based instruction in both word recognition and language comprehension and 2) is void of any reference to assessment tools and instructional models that have not been scientifically validated.

It is worth noting that, although the SoR highlights the importance of both word recognition and language comprehension, the report places a stronger

emphasis on the former, as robust language comprehension cannot result in good reading comprehension without strong word-reading skills – poorly developed word-reading skills have a bottleneck effect for comprehension. Whereas, increased automaticity in word recognition allows for more focus and attention to be devoted to meaning-making, a distinction that is indicative of word recognition being the more foundational of the two areas of proficiency. The wisdom of this emphasis may come into question in the coming years – perhaps setting up the pendulum for another swing – however, that is outside the purview of this thesis.

2.3 The Ontario Curriculum

In light of the report’s recommendations, the Ontario Ministry of Education revised the Language Curriculum Grades 1 to 8 in the summer of 2023. The Kindergarten Program is still in the revision process and is set to be released “sometime” in 2025. This curriculum includes four new areas of learning – 1) foundational knowledge and skills; 2) transferable skills; 3) digital media literacy; and 4) applications, connections and contributions (Ontario, 2023a); the first of which will be the focus of this thesis. As the name suggests, Foundations of Language, strand B in the Ontario language curriculum, outlines the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn within each grade with regards to the foundations of language. In the early years, grades 1-3, the emphasis is placed on the SoR-aligned instruction of word reading and spelling – skills related to word recognition like blending phonemes, segmenting words, and learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (Ontario, 2023b). In later years, grades 4-8, the focus transitions to the learning and application of morphological, orthographic, and vocabulary knowledge; and fluency – more language comprehension-related skills (Ontario, 2023b). Strand B is broken down into 3 overall expectations – Oral and Non-Verbal Communication (B1), Language Foundations for Reading and Writing (B2), and Language Conventions for Reading and Writing (B3) – and has two associated learning continua outlining the progression of knowledge and skills within language foundations. The first of the continua follows B2, Foundations for Reading and Writing, across grades 1-4; while the second outlines B3, Language Conventions for Reading and Writing, across grades 1-9. In other words, the first summarises the mandatory

learning for students in grades 1-4 with regards to phonemic awareness; alphabetic knowledge; phonics (grapheme-phoneme correspondence); word-level reading and spelling (using phonics knowledge, using orthographic knowledge and using morphological knowledge); vocabulary; and reading fluency (accuracy, rate, and prosody). While the latter outlines the progression of learning with regards to syntax and sentence structure; grammar; and capitalization and punctuation (Ontario, 2023b). As the first continuum, Foundations for Reading and Writing, outlines the more foundational skills, those that must be well established before those outlined in the Language Conventions for Reading and Writing can be considered, it will be at the centre of this thesis.

Upon a cursory glance, the new curriculum expectations appear to directly reflect the recommendations laid out in the report, there is an emphasis on the explicit and systematic instruction of both word recognition and language comprehension skills. The *what* of what teachers are meant to be focusing on – phonemic awareness, grapheme-phoneme correspondence, etc. – seems readily apparent...The question becomes: *how?* and *why?* There is a glaring lack of guidance in terms of clear, concise, evidence-based methods of implementation. The Montessori language curriculum may provide a practical answer, a working example that educators might emulate.

2.4 The Montessori Language Curriculum

Before delving into Montessori, it is important to note that only the Montessori language curriculum is being considered, not the underlying approach or philosophy – notwithstanding the fact that, at times, it can be difficult to parse the two. Though the Montessori approach has been touted for its significant and widespread positive outcomes – Angeline Stoll Lillard has written an entire book outlining the scientifically-backed virtues of the approach (2017) – for the purposes of this thesis, the Montessori language curriculum, separate and apart from the Montessori approach, was selected for two reasons: 1) its clear, comprehensive and systematic nature, and 2) its *appearance of being* in alignment with the SoR.

The most common, though somewhat misguided, argument against the Montessori approach – curricula included – is its highly structured nature. The Montessori language curriculum is composed of a series of lessons outlined in an “album”, something akin to a guide or user manual, surrounding the use of “materials” or educational objects that have been designed to attract, and maintain, students’ interest, as well as, teach important concepts via repeated use. The materials are presented, and lessons given, in a very specific, hierarchical sequence. They are organised in such a way that important concepts are broken down into small steps that can be learned separately before being combined to produce competency in the targeted skill. These lessons can be divided into three key stages: the Preparatory Stage, the Symbolic Stage, and the Reading and Writing Stage (Zoll et al., 2023). Though there is some variation dependent on training, as there are two schools of Montessori education: Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), founded by Dr. Maria Montessori herself; and the American Montessori Society (AMS) developed by Nancy McCormick Rambusch in 1960; the lessons generally follow the ensuing progression:

Preparatory Stage

In the preparatory stage children develop their phonemic awareness through songs, games and various other activities that involve hearing, distinguishing and reproducing language sounds. Once this groundwork has been laid, students make use of a variety of tactile materials (e.g., *sandpaper letters*, see Figure 3) that support students ability to associate sounds and symbols. At the same time, students make use of various materials (e.g., *metal insets*, see Figure 4) that develop their fine motor skills, preparing their wrist and hand for the precise movements required for writing.



FIGURE 3. Sandpaper Letters. Depiction of a Montessori material used to support sound-symbol correspondence.



FIGURE 4. Metal Insets. Depiction of a Montessori material used to support the development of fine-motor skills, a precursor to writing.

Symbolic Stage

In the second stage, the symbolic stage, students begin to use the *moveable alphabet* – a set of (generally wooden) letters – to compose words, and later sentences, even before their hands are capable of manipulating a pencil (see Figure 5). Students begin with short phonetic words (e.g., cat), working towards longer phonetic words (e.g., laptop) and later, in the reading and writing stage, words with digraphs (e.g., ship, hand, boy, etc.).



FIGURE 5. Moveable Alphabet. Depiction of a Montessori material used to support the development of word composition skills.

The Reading and Writing Stage

In the third and final stage, the focus moves towards mastery. Students complete word studies, investigating phonograms and digraphs, and improve their reading fluency. They also learn grammar and sentence analysis, deepening both their comprehension and writing skills. Moreover, students continually work on their composition skills, generally in connection to their learning in science and social studies.

With regards to their alignment, both the Montessori language curriculum and the SoR are rooted in scientific research. Dr. Maria Montessori herself espoused that reform in education, and society, must be built on the foundation of scientific study (Montessori, 2004). Her method was developed on the basis of her own research and scientific observation of children. Her “...system was developed by trial and error over her lifetime, with children in places as diverse as Rome, India, Spain, the Netherlands, and the United States” (Lillard, 2017, 16). Additionally, both approaches place a heavy emphasis on the importance of explicit instruction with immediate corrective feedback. Many of the Montessori materials contain a self-correcting feature – referred to as the *control of error* – that provides students with immediate feedback above and beyond that provided by the teacher. Moreover, both advocate for repetitive practice until a level of automaticity has been achieved. Furthermore, it is clear that both the Montessori approach and the SoR espouse a highly structured

and systematic scope and sequence – intentionally progressing from the most basic to more challenging and the concrete to the increasingly abstract – as well as, the use of precise step-by-step procedures and routines.

Prima Facie, without going into the minutia of the Montessori materials and associated lessons, their significant overlaps with the SoR and comprehensive and systematic nature warrant a more in depth exploration of the Montessori language curriculum's viability as a model of an evidence-based method of reading instruction implementation.

3 METHODS

This investigation will take the form of a document analysis – a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents (Bowen, 2009). In order to evaluate both the Montessori language curriculum and Ontario language curriculum in terms of their viability as a vehicle for evidence-based reading instruction, both curricula will be analysed and compared with regards to their alignment with the SoR and, by extension, the report’s recommendations. Specifically, The Reading League’s CEG, through the use of their *Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines: Reviewer Workbook* (hereafter referred to as the workbook; The Reading League, 2023b) will be utilised to assess both the updated Ontario language curriculum, with a specific focus on B2. Language Foundations for Reading and Writing grades 1-4; and the Montessori language curriculum, as outlined by AMS-aligned albums. Albums aligned with the AMS Montessori training, specifically Dr. Jutras’ *Verbal and Graphic Language Album* (n.d.) and the North American Montessori Center’s *Language Arts Manual* (2016), will be utilised for this purpose as they are both readily available and particularly familiar to the author, given that they were the basis of her own Montessori training. A small excerpt from the workbook can be seen in Figures 6 and 7. The workbook will require some alteration in order to accommodate the comparative aspect of the analysis, as such, Figure 6 depicts unaltered extracts from the workbook while Figure 7 provides an example of how the same section of the workbook will be altered in order to assess and compare the two curricula.

Section 1: Components to Support Word Recognition
1A: Word Recognition Non-Negotiables

Red Flag Statements: Word Recognition Non Negotiables		To what extent is this red flag statement true? 1 - Red Flag statement is False 2 - Red Flag statement is minimally true, evidence is minimal or briefly mentioned 3 - Red Flag statement is mostly true. If applicable, evidence is in multiple places throughout the curriculum. 4 - Red Flag statement is always true, pervasive, and/or integral to curriculum	Evidence from curricular materials 1) Note the specific location (if applicable) Is this from the teacher's manual? Student materials? Ancillary materials (e.g., student texts, workbooks, specific additional materials)? Please note the specific grade, section, lesson, and/or page number. 2) Justify your response by describing the practices that signal the presence of the red flag.
1.1	Three cueing-systems are taught as strategies for decoding in early grades (i.e., directing students to use picture cues, context cues, or attend to the first letter of a word as a cue).	Not Yet Ass... ▾	
Notes and questions for group discussion:			

OPTIONAL Observations: Aligned Practices for Word Recognition Non-Negotiables		
If reviewing for aligned practices, provide location, description, notes, and evidence of alignment for each component:		
1.4	Explicit instruction of phonemic awareness, phonics, and spelling	

FIGURE 6. An excerpt from the Reading Leagues' Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines: Reviewer Workbook (The Reading League, 2023b).

Section 1: Components to Support Word Recognition
1A: Word Recognition Non-Negotiables

Red Flag Statements: Word Recognition Non Negotiables		To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials	To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials
			Ontario 1-8 Language Curriculum		Montessori Language Curriculum
1.1	Three cueing-systems are taught as strategies for decoding in early grades (i.e., directing students to use picture cues, context cues, or attend to the first letter of a word as a cue).	Not Y... ▾		Not Y... ▾	
Notes and questions for group discussion:					

OPTIONAL Observations: Aligned Practices for Word Recognition Non-Negotiables		Ontario 1-8 Language Curriculum	Montessori Language Curriculum
If reviewing for aligned practices, provide location, description, notes, and evidence of alignment for each component:			
1.4	Explicit instruction of phonemic awareness, phonics, and spelling		

FIGURE 7. An adaptation of the Reading Leagues' Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines: Reviewer Workbook (The Reading League, 2023b) altered in order to assess and compare the Ontario language curriculum and the Montessori language curriculum.

In educational research, a document analysis can be used to evaluate the content and effectiveness of educational materials such as curricula, textbooks and syllabi. Such analysis 1) aids researchers' understanding of how educational documents represent and address specific topics or concepts; 2) allows for the identification of gaps or deficiencies (as well as areas of strength), serving to highlight areas for improvements; and 3) provides insights into the alignment between the stated objectives of educational documents and the actual content being taught. Moreover, it presents an efficient, unobtrusive and

non-reactive means through which to assess the quagmire that is daily life in a classroom (Montessori or otherwise; Bowen, 2009; Klages et al., 2023).

The Reading League’s CEG and associated workbook was selected primarily because it not only assesses curricula in terms of their alignment with the SoR (see Table 2 for the Components of the CEG), it also highlights “red flags”, or non-evidence-based practices included in the instructional materials that could unintentionally be preventing students from developing skilled literacy. A feature which closely mirrors the report’s recommendations. Recall that, according to the report, a complete reading program is one that 1) aligns with the SoR in that it includes evidence-based instruction in both word recognition and language comprehension and 2) is void of any reference to assessment tools and instructional models that have not been scientifically validated. Additionally, the workbook is both a freely available and dynamic document, meaning that 1) it can be used by stakeholders at all levels in education and 2) it strives to be reflective of the most recent reading research. Of further note, Matt Burn’s as of yet unpublished work reveals that the CEG has adequate interrater reliability.

TABLE 2. Components of The Reading League Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines (adapted from Burns, unpublished).

Section	Components in the Section
Word Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word Recognition Non-Negotiables • Phonological and Phonemic Awareness • Phonics and Phonic Decoding • Fluency
Language and Reading Comprehension (LRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LRC Non-Negotiables • Background Knowledge • Vocabulary • Language Structures • Verbal Reasoning • Literacy Knowledge
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handwriting • Spelling • Composition
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment Non-Negotiables • Assessment Practices

According to the workbook (The Reading League, 2023b), the process for reviewing a curriculum is as follows (a summary can be found in Figure 8):

Review Protocol

Process	Resource
1. Determine which section of the CEGs you will be reviewing and for what grades. Read through the red flags you will be searching for.	The Reading League's Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines
2. Locate evidence of red flags within the curriculum (e.g., scope and sequence, individual lessons, ancillary materials) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review the scope and sequences for evidence of components b. Thoroughly examine modules/units and individual lessons c. Review ancillary Tier I curriculum materials for evidence (e.g., assessment documents) 	Curriculum Materials
3. As you review each component, determine the extent to which the corresponding red flag statement is true, then select the appropriate rating in the drop down menu for that component as outlined below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 - Red Flag statement is False • 2 - Red Flag statement is minimally true, evidence is minimal or briefly mentioned • 3 - Red Flag statement is mostly true. If applicable, evidence is in multiple places throughout the curriculum • 4 - Red Flag statement is always true, pervasive, and/or integral to curriculum 	Reviewer Workbook
4. Use the notes section of each component as needed or directed to by your team lead. Examples of helpful notes to capture would be keywords that describe a practice listed within the CEGs, specific examples, and precise locations of evidence.	Reviewer Workbook
5. Determine if you will be looking for optional aligned components and if so, take notes in those sections.	Reviewer Workbook

FIGURE 8. Reviewer protocol, taken from the Reading Leagues' Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines: Reviewer Workbook (The Reading League, 2023b).

Firstly, determine which sections of the CEG will be reviewed, for which grades, and which of the possible red flags will be the focus. For the purposes of this thesis, all sections and corresponding red flags will be reviewed, to assess the mandatory learning outcomes with regards to B2 (grades 1-4) in the Ontario language curriculum and both the Casa and Lower Elementary Montessori language curricula (loosely analogous to Kindergarten to Grade 3). Then, assess the scope and sequence, individual lessons, and ancillary materials, utilising the rating scale (1 - False, 2- Minimally true, 3- Mostly true, 4 - Always true), which can be found in the drop-down menu in the "To what extent is this

red flag statement true?” column, to determine the veracity of the red flag statements. To provide more insight and clarity, a note section is available to document examples, key words, etc. Furthermore, as can be seen in Figures 6 and 7, in addition to the red flags, the workbook contains an optional section allowing for a more in depth look at SoR aligned components of the curriculum – or, in this case, curricula – under study. This section will also be included in the analysis. Finally, analyse the data by reflecting on the red flags that have been identified and, based on the extent of their presence or absence, consider whether or not the curricula meet one’s needs – based on the criteria of the given education context. In this case, the criteria are alignment with the SoR and the OHRC’s recommendations, as outlined in the report. For the purposes of this thesis, the analysis will also consider whether any gaps or short-comings found with regards to the Ontario language curriculum can be addressed through supplementation via the Montessori language curriculum.

The completed workbook can be found in Appendix 1, and a reflection upon, and discussion of, the analysis will be outlined in the following Discussion section.

4 DISCUSSION

The following section will begin by outlining the results of the document analysis. After which, the interpretation of the results will be elucidated, enumerating the areas in which the Ontario language curriculum may be lacking and highlighting the ways in which the Montessori language curriculum could be used to bridge these gaps. Addressing, in the process, the research questions: How does the Montessori language curriculum present a viable solution to the systemic literacy crisis? and Which materials and/or lessons meet the new expectations in the Ontario language curriculum and, by extension, are in line with the OHRC's recommendations – outlined in the report – and the SoR? Having already addressed the question of: How does the Montessori language curriculum score on a tool formulated to assess a curriculum's adherence to the SoR? Finally, in light of the results and their interpretation, and with regards to the efficacy and viability of using the Montessori curriculum in the Ontario elementary context, this thesis will end with a series of recommendations for Ontario literacy education going forward.

4.1 Results

Analysis of the new Ontario language curriculum revealed somewhat concerning results. Though none of the red flags were deemed to be pervasive (level 4) or evident throughout the curriculum (level 3), a number were found to be minimally true (level 2), leaving room for potentially detrimental educational practices. In general, the designation of a level 2 was determined based not on the explicit presence of, or reference to, any out-dated or flawed practices, but rather due to a lack of clarity. For example, item 1.17 (see Figure 9) makes reference to the keywords utilised when introducing letter/sound correspondences. In layman's terms, does the teacher use "apple" or "art" to teach that "a" makes the /a/ sound. The first is more appropriate as it better reflects the /a/ sound whereas, in the latter, the "a" is affected by the "r" that follows, making it a poor representation of the "a" - /a/ correspondence. One would assume that teachers would select appropriate keywords, those aligned with the pure phoneme being taught, however there can be no certainty that this is the case. Unlike in the Montessori curriculum, see Figure 10, teachers are

provided with limited to no training, there is no guidance in terms of what keywords should be used (let alone what a “pure phoneme” is) and no monitoring with regards to which keywords are eventually selected. As such, it is difficult to assess and impossible to completely deny the veracity of this, or many of the other, red flag statements.

1.17	Key words for letter/sound correspondences are not aligned with the pure phoneme being taught (e.g., earth for /ě/, ant for /ǎ/, orange for /ǒ/).	2 ▾	Nothing explicit to the contrary/ not monitored	1 ▾	Built in to Montessori materials key word chart in album
Notes and questions for group discussion: Some of the suggested resources are clear about the keywords used however there is no way to monitor what teachers are using and/or if they are using the resources properly					

FIGURE 9. Item 1.17 from Section 1C: Phonics and Phonic Decoding in the workbook.

KEY WORD PHONETIC ALPHABET

a apple	n nest
b bat	o octopus
c cup	p pig
d dog	q Queen
e elephant	r rabbit
f fish	s sock
g goat	t table
h house	u umbrella
i Indian	v valentine
j jam	w Wednesday
k kite	x box "ks"
l leaf	y yarn
m mitten	z zipper

FIGURE 10: Key Word Phonetic Alphabet taken from Dr. Jutras' *Verbal and Graphic Language Album* (n.d.). Evidence that the key words for letter/sound correspondences are aligned with the pure phoneme being taught.

The same cannot be said for the Montessori language curriculum. The vast majority of the red flag statements were found to be false (level 1). In the rare cases when the designation of a level 2 was determined, it was done so on the basis of the absence of a lesson addressing the specific concept or skill. Item 5.10, for example, speaks to the use of nonsense words to assess decoding skills. As only real words are present in “out of the box” Montessori materials, that is, a teacher would have to take it upon him or herself to include nonsense words, it is not possible to deny 5.10 outright. That being said, the structured nature of the Montessori philosophy and, by extension, the Montessori materials, makes it such that any “missing” lessons can easily be created based on the prescribed formula.

4.2 Interpretation

In light of the opacity of the Ontario language curriculum, these results can most practically be interpreted in terms of how the Ontario language curriculum complies with the letter and spirit of the report. With regards to the letter – the verbatim recommendations – the Ontario language curriculum narrowly meets the report’s definition of a complete reading program – one that 1) aligns with the SoR in that it includes evidence-based instruction in both word recognition and language comprehension and 2) is void of any reference to assessment tools and instructional models that have not been scientifically validated. The Ontario language curriculum has removed explicit reference to out-dated, non-evidenced-based practices and replaced them with the appropriate SoR terminology. Buzz words such as systematic, explicit, and direct teaching abound. According to Reich (2024), SoR terminology more than doubled from the 2006 curriculum. That being said, at times, the wording is less clear-cut than the report’s recommendations would suggest, further decreasing the curriculum’s perspicuity. For example, the Ontario language curriculum still promotes *guided and differentiated instruction*, and suggests that teachers utilise a *combination of instructional methods*. This is in stark contrast to the report’s recommendation to employ whole-classroom systematic phonics through direct instruction. Additionally, with complete disregard to the report’s recommendation, the Ontario language curriculum fails to provide a centralised or standardised assessment tool for learning – a flaw that is abundantly clear in

Section 5: Components to Support Assessment of the workbook. As a consequence, there is no way to assure consistency nor measure any potential effects going forward.

With that said, it is with regards to the spirit – the core intention – of the report that things truly begin to break down. The Ontario language curriculum, as it stands, is not a serviceable vehicle for ensuring literacy for all. In keeping with the curricula of the past, this latest iteration continues to be confusing and convoluted, with broad goals and little direction on how to accomplish them. There is no specific program supplied, and any guidance provided in *Effective Early Reading Instruction: A Guide for Teachers* (Ontario, 2022) is likely insufficient for teachers who lack knowledge or training in SoR, and/or experience in the construction of an evidenced-based systematic phonics program. Moreover, the Ontario language curriculum does not prescribe any approved textbooks. In fact, the Trillium list of Ministry-approved textbooks (Ontario, 2023c) has only been revised to the extent that it indicates that currently-approved textbooks may not be used after either Aug. 31, 2024 or Aug. 31, 2025. Furthermore, the Ontario language curriculum does not provide any teaching materials, nor supply any on-going assessment tools to assist with its implementation. In other words, the Ontario language curriculum has glaring gaps with regards to materials, resources, assessments and training. As such, individual boards are left to supply training and purchase resources, without an approved list – or even a timeline for when an approved list might be forthcoming – and no tool with which to evaluate the daunting number of options available, a task that has been labelled both intimidating and arduous (Klages et al., 2023). Realistically, this also means that individual teachers are left to do their best to interpret the new expectations, creating materials and/or purchasing them out of pocket, leading to a complete lack of consistency in terms of how literacy education is being implemented – the exact opposite of the report’s intentions (not to mention the stress this might cause and the potential for teacher burnout).

4.3 The Montessori Language Curriculum

Though it is unlikely that any one of the innumerable literacy curricula options available will be the panacea for all that ails the Ontario language curriculum, the Montessori language curriculum may provide a solution. Or, at the very least, a time-tested and SoR-aligned stop-gap while teachers, boards, and the Ministry as a whole, fumble to address the literacy crisis. In clear contrast to the Ontario language curriculum, the Montessori language curriculum is a bountiful resource, replete with materials and on-going assessments, that complies with both the letter and spirit of the report. What follows is a brief outline of a series of Montessori lessons. The lessons are merely categorised and listed as an in-depth description of the multitude of lessons and materials contained within the Montessori language curriculum is beyond the scope of this thesis. The aim, rather, is to illustrate how the Montessori language curriculum can be used in the elementary classroom in order to 1) meet the expectations described in the Ontario language curriculum, and in doing so, 2) address the recommendations of the report, in a way that 3) can tangibly be understood and implemented. The lessons are organised in terms of the sections of the CEG that they address – word recognition, language and reading comprehension, writing and assessment.

4.3.1 Word Recognition

The CEG is based, in part, on the combination of the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) and Scarborough's Reading Rope (Scarborough, 2001). As one may recall, The Simple View of Reading identifies two key areas of proficiency which work in tandem to produce reading comprehension. The first area, word recognition, refers to the ability to identify letters or letter combinations and connect them to the speech sounds that they represent. According to Scarborough (2001), this skill can be broken down into three sub skills – phonological awareness, decoding, and sight recognition (or fluency, as in the CEG) – each of which can be taught through the use of the lessons outlined below and summarised in Table 3.

Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness refers to the appreciation of the sound structure of one's language, be it at the word-, syllable-, or individual phoneme-level. In the Montessori language curriculum, lessons aimed at building students' phonological awareness skills are part of the preparatory phase, they focus on listening, and do not use any printed language materials. These lessons include: *sound cylinders*, *rhyming pictures*, *Montessori bells* and the *I spy game* in addition to various songs and games designed to enhance students' sound discrimination skills.

Decoding

Once a solid understanding of the sound system is in place, the symbols of the writing system come into play. This marks the transition from the preparatory stage to the symbolic stage. Decoding refers to the ability to recognize that a letter, or combination of letters, represents a sound. The Montessori language curriculum includes a variety of lessons aimed at addressing the development of decoding skills (e.g., *object boxes*; *pink, blue and green reading and writing materials*, etc.) including those described earlier to introduce the Montessori language curriculum (i.e., *sandpaper letters* and *moveable alphabet*).

Sight Recognition (Fluency)

It is through repetition and spaced practice of these decoding lessons and materials that students attain sight recognition and move to the third and final stage, the reading and writing Stage. In other words, via a process that is inherent to the Montessori language curriculum and thoroughly aligned with the SoR, students build and strengthen their ability to instantly recognize and accurately read words, culminating in true fluency – the ability to read text, accurately, quickly, and with expression.

4.3.2 Language Comprehension

The second variable in the reading comprehension equation is language comprehension, or the ability to extract meaning from words, sentences and texts. Whereas word recognition is what allows an individual to crack the language code, language comprehension enables the written word to come to

life...the difference between learning to read and reading to learn. Language comprehension can be separated into the subskills of: background knowledge, vocabulary, language structure, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge (Scarborough, 2001); each of which will be addressed in turn.

Background Knowledge

Knowledge of the world is what enables an individual to situate new learning in their mind, linking it to prior knowledge, experience and understanding. When reading, there is an interplay between lived experience and the written word. Background knowledge allows for more efficient processing and memory retrieval (and therefore less cognitive load) and increased engagement...In other words, it makes reading easier and more enjoyable (Zoll et al., 2023). Montessori clearly understood the importance of knowledge breadth as evidenced by numerous and diverse *nomenclature cards* and *cultural lessons* – including the five *Great Lessons* – that enable students to build both knowledge and vocabulary in a variety of domains (e.g., geography, history, botany, zoology, music, art, etc.) and in a manner that progresses from concrete to abstract.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is inextricably linked to background knowledge. Lessons designed to build students' knowledge simultaneously provide opportunities to offer appropriate terminology and/or subject-specific vocabulary. Montessori materials such as *classification cards* and *three-part cards* take advantage of these opportunities by providing more depth to the breadth of knowledge described above. Additionally, the lessons associated with the *word study* in the Montessori classroom increase students' vocabulary through the introduction of compound words, synonyms, antonyms, homophones, etc.

Language Structure

It is not enough to have knowledge of the world, in order to read proficiently, students must have an understanding of the grammatical patterns of the language – the language structure. In addition to the *word study* materials described above, the Montessori language curriculum includes numerous

grammar study and *sentence analysis* lessons and materials that introduce grammatical concepts beginning at a very young age.

Verbal Reasoning

Stepping away for a moment, from the granularity of language structure, much of reading involves understanding that which is not explicitly written on the page. True comprehension requires the reader to make inferences, understand abstract concepts, and comprehend the purpose of the text they are reading. In other words, reading comprehension requires verbal reasoning skills. Though many of the materials outlined above will go some way to enhance students' verbal reasoning skills, other materials, like *Who am I? stories* and *sequencing cards*, as well as, the graphic organisers and teacher questions utilised in Montessori classrooms, will target their development more specifically.

Literacy Knowledge

The final strand in Scarborough's Reading Rope (2001) is literacy knowledge, this refers to the reader's understanding of how print is used in day-to-day life – conventions, styles, genres, etc. Opportunities to build students' literacy knowledge can be found throughout the Montessori language curriculum, starting with the youngest of learners. For a start, Montessori's *grace and courtesy* lessons teach students how to hold a book, turn its pages, and return it to its proper place. Moreover, many of the most basic conventions – like moving from left to right and top to bottom, and putting small spaces between letters and bigger spaces between words – are introduced early-on using the *moveable alphabet*. As in most classrooms, whole-group read-alouds also offer ample opportunities to highlight other concepts like noting the title, author, illustrator, font choice, etc.

4.3.3 Writing

In addition to word recognition and language comprehension, the CEG evaluates curricula in terms of how they address writing and its associated sub skills of handwriting, spelling and composition. Above and beyond the plethora of materials and lessons outlined in the previous sections, the Montessori language curriculum also includes lessons specific to these sub skills.

Handwriting

In the Montessori language curriculum, students begin preparing the hand long before they compose their first word. Handwriting skills are developed first through *sensorial materials* like the *knobbed cylinders* and later with lessons like *drawing letters in the sand*. Eventually, students pick up a piece of chalk and begin forming letters, then words, first on blank chalkboards and then on a series of lined boards where the line-spacing incrementally decreases. Later students move to notebooks where they record their learning from all subject areas. As with the chalkboards, student notebooks begin with large line spacing which gradually decreases over time. Once students begin writing in notebooks, writing becomes an important part of most learning, both within and outside of language arts.

It may also be worth mentioning that cursive writing – which was removed from the Ontario language curriculum and has now been added back – is generally what is taught in Montessori schools. Montessori felt that cursive writing was more inline with children’s natural movement. Her astute observation has been supported by research, time and again, as students who first learn to write in cursive tend to have stronger reading and writing abilities than those who are taught to print (e.g., Semerarol et al., 2019).

Spelling

Spelling, of course, goes hand-in-glove with writing, however, as mentioned previously, in the Montessori language curriculum, students begin composing words (and sentences) long before they ever pick up a pencil. Much of the lessons and materials associated with enhancing students’ word recognition skills – like the *object boxes* and *moveable alphabet* – simultaneously build and reinforce students’ understanding of the conventions of spelling.

Composition

Early introduction is something of a theme in the Montessori language curriculum as composition skills are likewise taught before a pencil is present. Using materials like the *small moveable alphabet*, students begin composing sentences, and later paragraphs (which can be transcribed into their notebooks) preventing a lack of fine motor dexterity from impeding their creativity. A second

theme in the Montessori philosophy as a whole is variety, as composition takes on countless forms dependent on the subject area being studied - scientific investigation, historical report, personal narrative, etc.

4.3.4 Assessment

With regards to the final section of the CEG, assessment, in the Montessori language curriculum, assessment is completed in an ongoing manner that is incorporated into the daily workings of the classroom. Many of the materials contain a self-correcting feature and graduation from one activity to the next in the hierarchical sequence provides the educators with a clear picture of the students' current level – in addition to where they have come from and where they are headed. Furthermore, there is nothing within the Montessori language curriculum that would preclude the use of external screeners, assessment nor other forms of progress monitoring.

TABLE 3. Montessori and the Reading League's Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines. Montessori lessons and materials organised in terms of the section of the Reading League's CEG that they address.

	Subskill	Definition	Associated Lessons
Word Recognition	Phonological Awareness	the appreciation of the sound structure of one's language be it at the word-, syllable-, or individual phoneme-level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sound cylinders ● Montessori Bells ● Rhyming Pictures ● I Spy ● Songs and games
	Decoding	the ability to recognize that a letter, or combination of letters, represents a sound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sandpaper letters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Initial sounds ○ Digraphs ● Moveable alphabet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Object Boxes ○ Pink, Blue and Green Boxes (object, pictures, words) ● Pink, Blue and Green command cards ● Pink, Blue and Green sentences ● Pink, Blue and Green booklets
	Sight Recognition/ Fluency	the ability to instantly recognize and accurately read words; leads to fluency (e.g., the ability to read a text accurately, quickly, and with expression)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Repeated exposure to activities in the decoding section (especially green materials) result in improved sight recognition
Language Comprehension	Background Knowledge	a specific subset of knowledge needed to comprehend a particular situation, lesson, or text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nomenclature cards ● Cultural Lessons
	Vocabulary	the sum of words used or understood by a person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Classification cards ● Three-part cards ● Word Study Lessons
	Language Structure	the grammatical patterns of a language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Word Study Lessons ● Grammar Study lessons ● Environment cards ● Action cards ● Introduction to Adverbs ● The Farm
	Verbal Reasoning	the ability to understand information not explicitly stated in the text (i.e., make inferences), abstract concepts, or the purpose of the text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Who am I? ● Sequencing
	Literacy Knowledge	the understanding of how print is used day-to-day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Moveable alphabet (large and small) ● Grace and courtesy ● Read-alouds
Writing	Handwriting	the ability to proficiency produce the written symbols of a language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sensorial materials ● Metal insets ● Chalkboards ● Notebooks

	Spelling	the ability form words using the proper/conventional method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Moveable alphabet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Object Boxes ○ Pink, Blue and Green Boxes (object, pictures, words)
	Composition	the ability to create pieces of written work that follow the rules and conventions of the specific genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Small moveable alphabet ● Notebooks
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● completed in an ongoing manner ● incorporated into the daily workings of the classroom ● many of the materials contain a self-correcting feature ● graduation from one activity to the next in the hierarchical sequence provides a clear picture of the students' current level (in addition to where they have come from and where they are headed) 		

4.4 Conclusions and Recommendations going forward

What follows in a culminating assessment of the findings of this thesis along with a series of recommendations for Ontario literacy education going forward.

The Ontario language curriculum has been completely changed in an attempt to meet the recommendations outlined in the report and align itself with the SoR. In the face of such significant change, educators require “sufficient time, dedicated resources, and sustained professional learning opportunities” (Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, 2023) to ensure its proper implementation. The Ontario language curriculum leaves much to be desired in both regards. Not only does it fail to truly meet the recommendations of the report – particularly with regards to the spirit of those recommendations – there is also a striking lack of guidance in terms of clear, concise, evidence-based methods of implementation, and glaring gaps with regards to materials, resources, assessments and training. It is clear that further changes to the Ontario language curriculum must be made, as it is of the utmost importance that teachers – and indeed all stakeholders – understand the *what*, the *how*, and the *why* of whatever it is that is taught.

What

That is, there must be a clear understanding of what it is that teachers have to do and what is expected of them. In light of this, the first recommendation to come out of this thesis is for the Ontario Ministry of Education to either transform the curriculum into, or provide teachers with, a user-friendly manual that focuses on what teachers are meant to teach, rather than on what students are expected to learn (e.g., Reich, 2024). It is true that “[c]urriculum documents aren’t recipes. You don’t simply download them and follow the instructions, using a list of prescribed ingredients. Curriculum is complex.” (Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, 2023). However it need not be indecipherable. A consequent, and equally important, recommendation is that the Ministry provide, or fund, extensive training. This *what* of teaching should be communicated clearly in teacher training for pre-service teachers, and as part of professional development for those who are already in-service.

How

With regards to the *how*, teachers must be trained in the day-to-day realities of when and how they are expected to impart the required knowledge and understanding, such that students learn to read in a manner that is supported by the most relevant and up-to-date science. This training should include making clear the distinction between the aspects of instruction that are nonnegotiable, those that would ideally be present, and those that, given the nature of a modern-day classroom, may never make the transition from research lab to reality. A distinction that is inextricably linked to the *why*.

Why

It is imperative that teachers understand the *why* of what and how they are teaching. Training should include an overview of the SoR, outlining the evidence-based research in a clear, logical and accurate manner.

Understanding the underlying reasoning of the *what* and the *how* is what will enable teachers to have the adaptability, flexibility and confidence to use their professional judgement – and boundless creativity and passion – to bring their teaching to life and navigate the complexities of elementary education, while protecting the basic essential human right of each of their students – the right to read.

Arming teachers with the knowledge of the *what*, the *how* and the *why* is vital, but it takes time. This thesis aimed to assess the efficacy, and feasibility, of the Montessori language curriculum stepping into the breach. Based on the findings outlined above, it is clear that the Montessori language curriculum is entirely aligned with the report and the SoR. Moreover, the curriculum is abundantly clear in terms of when and how it should be implemented. Montessori albums are quite comprehensive – to say nothing of the existing abundance of supplementary guidebooks, instructional videos, and the like – and there is a high level of consistency from lesson to lesson. In other words, the *what*, the *how*, and even the *why* are entirely transparent in the Montessori curriculum. Furthermore, it has the potential to provide school boards, schools, and perhaps most importantly, teachers – those in the trenches – with a ready-made set of materials, resources and assessments, all of which they are woefully lacking. This would also ensure that all students have access to the same standard of literacy education. As such, another recommendation to come out of this thesis is for the Ontario Ministry of Education to adopt, in whole or in part, the Montessori language curriculum as a stop-gap and a means of making the Ontario language curriculum 1) in line with the report and the SoR, and 2) tangible for those who are tasked with carrying it out while the required changes are made.

Note that the Montessori language curriculum is recommended as a stop-gap rather than an outright solution. A balance should be struck between providing teachers with the tools they need, and being so prescriptive as to impede their professional judgement, “...the bedrock of professional practice and teachers’ standing within the community” (Wharton, 2022) – a simple view of *teaching* reading, if you will (see Figure 11).

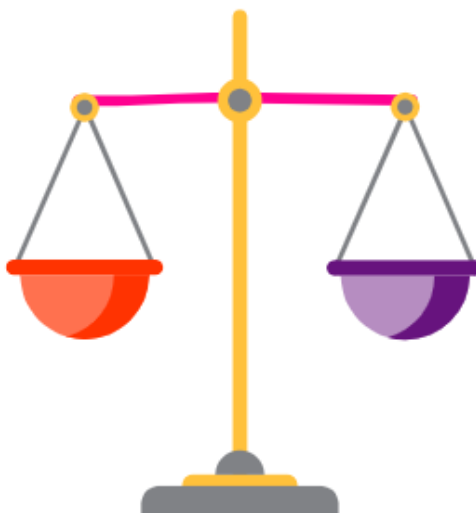


FIGURE 11: Simple View of *Teaching* Reading. A twist on Gough and Tunmer (1986)'s Simple View of Reading outlining the essential components for reading instruction – clear guidance in terms of the what, the how and the why and ample freedom to employ professional judgement.

As it stands, the Ontario language curriculum provides little to no guidance for school boards, administrators, teachers, and the myriad of other educational stakeholders, all but guaranteeing confusion and an utter lack of consistency from classroom to classroom, let alone school to school. The Montessori language curriculum, on the other hand, consists of a series of time-tested materials and lessons that progress in a very specific order. One, particularly one who is not trained in Montessori philosophy, might argue that the Montessori language curriculum moves beyond guidance into the realm of dictatorship. Though Montessorians would disagree with this assertion, the reality is, a teacher faced with step-by-step instructions, with the perception that there is little room for personal discretion, is likely to feel confined or constrained. Neither option – left completely rudderless nor provided with a single unalterable route – is sustainable. Thus, this thesis proposes that the Ontario Ministry of Education rethink its approach to curriculum writing and implementation. That they formulate a curriculum document that is clear, comprehensible and, most importantly, usable. Additionally, it is proposed that the Ministry provide stakeholders with the time required to learn this new, and hopefully vastly improved, curriculum, as well as, the support and guidance needed to inform their lesson planning and instructional practice. While this much needed revision takes place, it is suggested that school boards, schools and all others involved in students' literacy education, avail themselves of the potentially invaluable toolbox for addressing the systemic reading crisis that is

the Montessori language curriculum. Perhaps, certain Montessori lessons and materials will remain indefinitely...at the discretion of the teacher.

Admittedly, this is not a catholicon. The Montessori language curriculum is simply being offered up as a SoR- and report-aligned guide to support teachers through the transition to, and formulation of, evidence-based language instruction; a tool for them to create and/or supplement their evidenced-based language instruction. The number of available literacy curricula options is overwhelming, to put it mildly. This thesis aimed to reduce said sense of being overwhelmed by vetting one of the plethora of options. The Montessori language curriculum may not be the *best* curriculum, this thesis did not endeavour to make all of the required evaluations and comparisons. However, it is a curriculum that has persisted; one that has stood steadfast as the pendulum has swung and the reading wars have waged. One that meets the Ontario language curriculum expectations and the recommendations of the report. One that is aligned with the SoR. One that teachers can actually *use*.

Ultimately, the decision lies in the hands of the Ministry of education. This author simply asks that the Ministry remember that all educational stakeholders have a role to play in safeguarding children's right to read.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Analysis Using the Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines: Reviewer Workbook adapted from The Reading League (2023)

Section 1: Components to Support Word Recognition

1A: Word Recognition Non-Negotiables

Red Flag Statements: Word Recognition Non Negotiables		To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials	To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials
1.1	Three cueing-systems are taught as strategies for decoding in early grades (i.e., directing students to use picture cues, context cues, or attend to the first letter of a word as a cue).	2 -	Ontario 1-8 Language Curriculum Cues are used to support decoding in early stages In later years, cues are used to support the acquisition of novel words/ grow vocabulary	1 -	Montessori Language Curriculum No evidence of cue use
Notes and questions for group discussion: After years of cueing it is possible that some teachers are still using these strategies and/or misunderstanding the appropriate use of context clues					
1.2	Guidance to memorize any whole words, including high frequency words, by sight without attending to the sound/symbol correspondences	2 -	Memorize irregular grapheme-phoneme correspondences (Grade 1: B2.4, B2.5, B2.6; Grades 2–3: B2.1, B2.2, B2.3; Grade 4: B2.1)	1 -	Students only encode and decode patterns they have been explicitly taught
Notes and questions for group discussion: The Ontario language curriculum document states that students read only words with the grapheme-phoneme correspondences that have been explicitly taught, however, anecdotally, many educators teach students “heart” words (words that they cannot sound out and thus need to learn “by heart”					
1.3	Supporting materials do not provide a systematic scope and sequence nor opportunities for practice and review of elements taught	2 -	The Ontario Trillium List (a list of approved textbooks; Ontario, 2023c) currently contains a list of books that are “Not to be used in classrooms	1 -	There is a very clear scope and sequence with practice and repetition built in

	(e.g., phonics, decoding, encoding).		as textbooks after August 31, 2025” or are “subject to re-evaluation in order to ensure that it continues to align with the expectations of the Ontario curriculum” There are a number of suggested supporting materials coming from the various school boards...they vary in their systematicity, clarity, useability, etc.		
Notes and questions for group discussion: It is unclear what resources teachers should be using and how they are to be used in the classroom					

OPTIONAL Observations: Aligned Practices for Word Recognition Non-Negotiables If reviewing for aligned practices, provide location, description, notes, and evidence of alignment for each component:		Ontario 1-8 Language Curriculum	Montessori Language Curriculum
1.4	Explicit instruction of phonemic awareness, phonics, and spelling	Present (Grade 1: B2.4, B2.5, B2.6; Grades 2–3: B2.1, B2.2, B2.3; Grade 4: B2.1)	Present songs and games, sandpaper letters, moveable alphabet, etc.
1.5	Systematic scope and sequence of skills building from simple to complex.	Present (Language Foundations Continuum for Reading and Writing,)	Present
1.6	Curriculum and support materials that provide opportunities for practice and interleaving of elements taught (e.g., phonics, decoding, encoding).	unclear...support materials?	Present moveable alphabet boxes - relationship between encoding and decoding lessons

1B: Phonological and Phoneme Awareness

<u>Red Flag statements: Phonological and Phoneme Awareness</u>		<u>To what extent is this red flag statement true?</u>	<u>Evidence from curricular materials</u>	<u>To what extent is this red flag statement true?</u>	<u>Evidence from curricular materials</u>
			Ontario 1-8 Language Curriculum		Montessori Language Curriculum
1.7	Instruction only attends to larger units of phonological awareness (syllables, rhyme, onset-rime) without moving to the phoneme level (e.g., blends such as /t/ /r/ are kept intact rather than having students notice their individual sounds).	1 ▾	Begins at the phoneme level (B2.1)	1 ▾	Begins at the phoneme level sandpaper letters
Notes and questions for group discussion: This aspect is strongly emphasised in both curriculums. Once again, the implementation seems to be the crux of the matter.					
1.8	Instruction is focused on letters only without explicit instruction and practice with the phonemes that letters represent.	1 ▾	Letter names are still the focus of some instruction and assessments (B2.2) Phonemes taught (B2.1)	1 ▾	Students learn the letter sounds long before learning the letter names
Notes and questions for group discussion: There remains a strong emphasis on letter names however there is explicit instruction and practice of grapheme-phoneme correspondence					
1.9	Phoneme awareness is not taught as a foundational reading skill.	1 ▾	Phoneme awareness is a focus of the new curriculum (B2.1)	1 ▾	Learning begins with songs and games to build phoneme awareness
Notes and questions for group discussion:					
1.10	Phonological and phoneme awareness are not assessed and monitored.	2 ▾	*see Section 5 - Assessment	1 ▾	On-going assessment
Notes and questions for group discussion: There is a lack of clarity in terms of when and how these skills should be assessed					

OPTIONAL Observations: Aligned Practices for Phonological and Phoneme Awareness			
If reviewing for aligned practices, provide location, description, notes, and evidence of alignment for each component:			
1.11	Instruction includes larger units of phonological awareness (syllable, rhyme, onset-rime) in Pre-K and beginning of K (Note: instruction should progress to the phoneme level as soon as possible).	Present (Kindergarten/ Grade 1: B2.1)	Present word study
1.12	Phoneme awareness is taught directly, explicitly, and systematically.	Present (Kindergarten/ Grade 1: B2.1)	Present
1.13	Instruction includes conversations about the way sounds are made in the mouth (i.e., how the articulatory gestures of air flow, tongue and lip placement, vocal cord voicing are happening)	Present (Kindergarten/ Grade 1: B2.1)	unclear * no specific lesson or materials
1.14	Instructional focus on attuning students to all phonemes in words (e.g., first, final, medial, phonemes in blends).	Present (Kindergarten/ Grade 1: B2.1)	Present moveable alphabet

1C: Phonics and Phonic Decoding

Note: Decoding and Encoding are reciprocal processes and should be taught as such. This section includes similar components to the spelling components in Section 4. Reviewing these sections together may take less time than reviewing them separately.

Red Flag statements: Phonics and Phonic Decoding		To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials	To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials
1.15	Letter-sound correspondences are taught opportunistically or implicitly during text reading	1 -	Ontario 1-8 Language Curriculum Such opportunities are used to reinforce explicit teaching	1 -	Montessori Language Curriculum Such opportunities are used to reinforce explicit teaching
Notes and questions for group discussion: Though not necessarily explicitly directed via the curriculum, most teachers will use read-alouds as an opportunity to reinforce concepts explicitly taught in language lessons					
1.16	Instruction is typically “one and done;” phonics skills are introduced but with very little or short-term review.	1 -	The curriculum states that there should be spiral learning	1 -	Repetition and practice are built in
Notes and questions for group discussion: It seems to be a running theme that the Ontario language curriculum complies with the report (and SoR) in words but provides no clear instruction with regards to implementation					
1.17	Key words for letter/sound correspondences are not aligned with the pure phoneme being taught (e.g., earth for /ě/, ant for /ă/, orange for /ō/).	2 -	Nothing explicit to the contrary/ not monitored	1 -	Built in to Montessori materials key word chart in album
Notes and questions for group discussion: Some of the suggested resources are clear about the keywords used however there is no way to monitor what teachers are using and/or if they are using the resources properly					

1.18	Phonics instruction takes place in short (or optional) “mini-lessons” or “word work” sessions.	2 ▾	Nothing explicit to the contrary/ not monitored	1 ▾	Built-in to several lessons/ materials moveable alphabet
Notes and questions for group discussion: Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place					
1.19	The initial instructional sequence introduces many (or all) consonants before a vowel is introduced, short vowels are all taught in rapid succession and/or all sounds for one letter are taught all at once.	2 ▾	Nothing explicit to the contrary/ not monitored	1 ▾	Generally letters/sounds are taught in an order that allows students to word build as soon as possible
Notes and questions for group discussion: Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place					
1.20	Blending is not explicitly taught nor practiced.	1 ▾	Blending is explicitly taught (Kindergarten/ Grade 1: B2.1)	1 ▾	Blending is taught and practised moveable alphabet
Notes and questions for group discussion: As with the skills outlined above, there is a lack of guidance in terms of <i>how</i> this learning is meant to take place					
1.21	Instruction encourages students to memorize whole words, read using the first letter only as a clue, guess at words in context using a “what would make sense?” strategy, or use picture clues rather than phonic decoding.	1 ▾	Decoding always comes first though some cueing strategies may persist	1 ▾	No evidence of cue use
Notes and questions for group discussion: Anecdotally, many educators teach students “heart” words (words that they cannot sound out and thus need to learn “by heart and/or instruct students to guess/ look at the picture/ etc.					
1.22	Words with known sound-symbol correspondences, including high frequency words, are taught as whole-word units, often as stand-alone “sight words” to be memorized.	1 ▾	Words with known sound-symbol correspondence are taught through decoding (Grade 1: B2.4, B2.5, B2.6; Grades 2–3: B2.1, B2.2, B2.3; Grade 4: B2.1)	1 ▾	No sight words Puzzle words are those with digraphs...taught with green materials

Notes and questions for group discussion: Anecdotally, many educators teach students “heart” words (words that they cannot sound out and thus need to learn “by heart and/or instruct students to guess/ look at the picture/ etc.					
1.23	Few opportunities for word-level decoding practice are provided.	1 ▾	<i>Should</i> be plenty of opportunity	1 ▾	Many (cross-curricular) opportunities
Notes and questions for group discussion: Once again, this is not monitored					
1.24	Early texts are predominantly predictable and/or leveled texts which include phonic elements that have not been taught; decodable texts are not used or emphasized.	2 ▾	No required texts	1 ▾	Only decodable texts are used
Notes and questions for group discussion: There is no clear direction in terms of resources/materials/texts to use and no monitoring of choices (beyond the Trillium list) making this rather difficult to assess					
1.25	Advanced word study (Grades 2-5) Instruction in phonics ends once single syllable phonics patterns (e.g., CVC, CVCe) are taught.	1 ▾	Learning continues (Grade 1: B2.4, B2.5, B2.6; Grades 2–3: B2.1, B2.2, B2.3; Grade 4: B2.1)	1 ▾	Learning continues word study grammar boxes sentence analysis
Notes and questions for group discussion: Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place					
1.26	Advanced word study (Grades 2-5) No instruction in multisyllabic word decoding strategies and/or using morphology to support word recognition is evident.	1 ▾	Morphology explicitly taught (Grade 1: B2.4, B2.5, B2.6; Grades 2–3: B2.1, B2.2, B2.3; Grade 4: B2.1)	1 ▾	Morphology explicitly taught word study grammar boxes sentence analysis
Notes and questions for group discussion: Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place					

OPTIONAL Observations: Aligned Practices for Phonics and Phonic Decoding			
If reviewing for aligned practices, provide location, description, notes, and evidence of alignment for each component:			
1.27	Letter-sound correspondences are taught to automaticity in an explicit manner.	Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place	Present sandpaper letters
1.28	Phonics instruction includes cumulative review including application in reading and writing.	Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place	Present object boxes
1.29	Phonics instruction is systematic and sequential, building from simple letter-sound correspondences to complex phonic patterns (i.e., instruction begins with short vowels and consonants).	Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place	Present pink- green progression
1.30	Segmenting and blending are taught explicitly and practiced regularly, in both decoding and encoding.	Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place	Present moveable alphabet
1.31	Explicit instruction directs students' attention to the structure of the word; the emphasis is on phonic decoding.	Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place	Present
1.32	Irregular high-frequency words are taught by drawing attention to both regular and irregular sounds once sound-spellings have been taught.	Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place	Present green materials
1.33	Opportunities to practice decoding regular and irregular words in isolation are provided	Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place	Present cards, sentence strips, booklets, etc.
1.34	Instruction includes spaced practice and interleaving of skills taught (e.g., practicing old and new phonics patterns in one activity, practicing a learned	Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place	Present

	phonics pattern in reading <i>and</i> spelling).		
1.35	Phonics skills are practiced by applying letter-sound knowledge in decodable texts that match the phonics elements taught, securing phonic decoding.	Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place	Present
1.36	Advanced Word Study (Grades 2 and above): Instruction begins with basic letter-sound correspondences followed by increasingly more complex patterns such as syllable types, morphemes, and etymological influences (i.e., word origins).	Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place	Present word study grammar boxes
1.37	Advanced Word Study (Grades 2 and above): Includes more advanced phonics skills (e.g., second sounds of c/g, digraphs, variant vowels).	Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place	Present green materials
1.38	For Multilingual Learners, once they decode the word accurately, supports (e.g., descriptions, pictures, or gestures) are used to teach or confirm the meaning of the decoded word(s).	Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place	Present control of error
1.39	For Multilingual Learners, attention is paid to positive transfer of letters and sounds from their home language in addition to explicit attention to those not Present in their home language.	Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place	Present

1D: Fluency

Red Flag statements: Fluency		To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials	To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials
			Ontario 1-8 Language Curriculum		Montessori Language Curriculum
1.40	Fluency instruction focuses primarily on student silent reading.	1 -	Reading aloud (Grade 1: B2.8; Grades 2–3: B2.5; Grade 4: B2.3)	1 -	Reading begins out loud and progresses to silent reading (whisper box)
Notes and questions for group discussion:					
1.41	Rate is emphasized over accuracy; priority is given to the student's ability to read words quickly.	2 -	Assessment is not standardized, some of the <i>suggested</i> assessments are timed	1 -	Focus is on accuracy waiting for the child is key
Notes and questions for group discussion: Some evidence of this based on assessment tools used					
1.42	Word-level fluency practice to automaticity is not provided, or fluency is viewed only as text-reading fluency.	1 -	Focus on word-level fluency (Grade 1: B2.8; Grades 2–3: B2.5; Grade 4: B2.3)	1 -	Focus on word-level fluency moveable alphabet work
Notes and questions for group discussion:					
1.43	Fluency is practiced only in narrative text or with repeated readings of patterned text.	2 -	Unclear Lack of guidance in terms of when/how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place	1 -	Lots of opportunity for fluency practice
Notes and questions for group discussion: It is difficult to say how fluency is practiced or assessed					

1.44	Fluency assessment allows acceptance of incorrectly decoded words if they are close in meaning to the target word (e.g., assessment based upon the cueing systems, M/S/V).	2 ▾	Assessment is not standardized	1 ▾	Only the appropriate word is acceptable
Notes and questions for group discussion:					

OPTIONAL Observations: Aligned Practices for Fluency			
If reviewing for aligned practices, provide location, description, notes, and evidence of alignment for each component:			
1.45	Letter names and associated sounds are given sufficient opportunities for practice with feedback to ensure accuracy and automaticity.	Ostensibly	Present sandpaper letters
1.46	Instruction includes teacher-led modeling, oral reading by students, and immediate feedback.	Ostensibly	Present
1.47	Reading accuracy and automaticity are emphasized as the hallmarks of fluent reading.	present	Present
1.48	Word-level fluency practice is provided.	Ostensibly	Present moveable alphabet
1.49	Connected text fluency practice is provided encouraging students to read with prosody (e.g. decodable texts, poetry, readers' theater, paired reading)	Unclear	Present
1.50	For Multilingual Learners, additional support is included whenever possible to ensure students understand the meaning of words being read.	Not explicitly stated	Not explicitly stated

Section 2-4: Components to Support Language Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, & Writing

2-4 Non-Negotiables: Language Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, and Writing

<u>Red Flag statements: Language Comprehension Non Negotiables</u>		<u>To what extent is this red flag statement true?</u>	<u>Evidence from curricular materials</u>	<u>To what extent is this red flag statement true?</u>	<u>Evidence from curricular materials</u>
2-4.1	(LC, RC, W) In early grades, the instructional framework is primarily a workshop approach, emphasizing student choice and implicit, incidental, or embedded learning.	2 ▾	Ontario 1-8 Language Curriculum Explicit teaching is emphasised Play-based learning?	1 ▾	Montessori Language Curriculum Structured lessons
Notes and questions for group discussion: The kindergarten program is currently being written...it is unclear how this explicit teaching will match with play-based learning					
2-4.2	(LC, RC, W) Students are not exposed to rich vocabulary and complex syntax in reading and writing materials.	1 ▾	Unclear Complexity is <i>meant</i> to increase as the students progress	1 ▾	Students are constantly exposed to rich vocabulary and increasingly complex syntax nomenclature cards grammar work
Notes and questions for group discussion: It is difficult to know what kinds of vocabulary and language structures students are being exposed to					
2-4.3	(RC) Comprehension activities focus mainly on assessing whether students understand content (the product of comprehension) instead of supporting the process of comprehending texts.	2 ▾	Emphasis is meant to be placed on comprehension skills and strategies Assessment is not standardized	1 ▾	Content understanding and process are assessed
Notes and questions for group discussion:					

2-4.4	(RC, W) Writing is not taught or is taught separately from reading at all times.	2 ▾	Teachers are given the freedom to (or not to) interleave learning however they wish	1 ▾	Reading and writing lessons often lead into one another
Notes and questions for group discussion:					
2-4.5	(LC, RC) Questioning during read-alouds focuses mainly on lower-level questioning skills.	1 ▾		1 ▾	
Notes and questions for group discussion: In both cases, this is not monitored, as such, it is difficult to assess					

OPTIONAL Observations: Aligned Practices for Language Comprehension, Reading Comprehension, and Writing Non-Negotiables			
If reviewing for aligned practices, provide location, description, notes, and evidence of alignment for each component:			
2-4.6	(LC, RC, W) There is a clear and consistent instructional framework, featuring a comprehensive scope and sequence of elements of language comprehension, reading comprehension, and writing taught in an explicit system.	Unclear	Present
2-4.7	(LC, RC, W) Students are exposed to rich vocabulary and complex syntax in reading and writing materials and orally, including but not limited to read alouds, at language levels beyond students' reading levels.	Ostensibly	Present nomenclature and classification cards
2-4.8	(LC, RC, W) For Multilingual Learners, instruction in English language development (ELD) and acquisition is included to support reading comprehension and continued reading and writing development.	ELL support is mandated provincially	ELL support is mandated provincially

Section 2: Components to Support Language Comprehension

Note: This section may take longer to complete, so it is recommended to review after you are familiar with a curriculum's design. Elements of language comprehension may not be apparent from the lesson title, so be sure to read multiple complete lessons across grade levels to review this section.

2B: Background Knowledge

<u>Red Flag statements: Language Comprehension Background Knowledge</u>		<u>To what extent is this red flag statement true?</u>	<u>Evidence from curricular materials</u>	<u>To what extent is this red flag statement true?</u>	<u>Evidence from curricular materials</u>
2.1	Read-aloud opportunities emphasize simple stories or narrative texts. Read-aloud text is not sufficiently complex and/or does not include knowledge-building expository texts (i.e., topics related to science, social studies, current events).	1 ▾	Ontario 1-8 Language Curriculum Curriculum states "variety" of texts	1 ▾	Montessori Language Curriculum Knowledge building texts are plentiful
Notes and questions for group discussion: Read alouds are up to the discretion of the educator					
2.2	Opportunities to bridge existing knowledge to new knowledge is not apparent in instruction.	1 ▾	Curriculum references consolidating previously learned concepts through systematic review	1 ▾	Knowledge is systematically built
Notes and questions for group discussion:					
2.3	Advanced (Grades 2-5): For students who are automatic with the code, texts for reading are primarily leveled texts that do not feature a variety of diverse, complex, knowledge-building text sets to develop background knowledge in a variety of subject areas.	1 ▾	Levelled readers have been eliminated	1 ▾	Students have a variety of texts to choose from
Notes and questions for group discussion: Text variety depends on the resources available in the specific school/ community					

OPTIONAL Observations: Aligned Practices for Background Knowledge			
If reviewing for aligned practices, provide location, description, notes, and evidence of alignment for each component:			
2.4	Read-aloud opportunities (for students who are still learning the code) and text reading opportunities (for students who are automatic with the code) feature a variety of diverse, complex texts, including narrative and expository texts above grade-level to develop background knowledge and vocabulary in a variety of subject areas.	Ostensibly	Ostensibly
2.5	Opportunities are provided to make connections between a new word or concept and other known words or concepts, relating ideas to experiences.	Ostensibly	Present word study cross-curricular connections
2.6	For Multilingual Learners, opportunities are identified for building background knowledge in a students' home language and/or by using visuals and clarification whenever possible.	Unclear	Part of the overall philosophy

2C: Vocabulary

Red Flag statements: Language Comprehension Vocabulary		To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials	To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials
2.7	Vocabulary worksheets and activities are used with little opportunity for deep understanding of vocabulary words.	1 ▾	Ontario 1-8 Language Curriculum “Looks like...” suggests more than worksheet (Grade 1: B2.7; Grades 2–3: B2.4; Grade 4: B2.2) Not monitored	1 ▾	Montessori Language Curriculum Vocabulary is not learned via worksheet nomenclature and classification cards
Notes and questions for group discussion: Educators have the freedom to teach vocabulary however they see fit					
2.8	Instruction includes memorization of isolated words and definitions out of context.	1 ▾	“Looks like...” suggest in-context learning (Grade 1: B2.7; Grades 2–3: B2.4; Grade 4: B2.2) Not monitored	1 ▾	Vocabulary learning is context-based nomenclature and classification cards
Notes and questions for group discussion: Educators have the freedom to teach vocabulary however they see fit					
2.9	Tier 2 words are not taught explicitly and practiced; students are not given opportunities to use them in their speech, see them in print, and use them in writing.	1 ▾	Tier 2 language is <i>meant</i> to be found in a variety of places	1 ▾	Vocabulary learning is context-based nomenclature cards linked to interest and other learning
Notes and questions for group discussion:					
2.10	Students are not exposed to and taught Tier 3 words.	1 ▾	Tier 3 words are taught in their specific content area	1 ▾	Tier 3 words are taught in their specific content area classification cards
Notes and questions for group discussion:					
2.11	Explicit instruction in morphology is not present and/or not taught according to a scope and sequence (i.e.,	1 ▾	Morphology is <i>meant</i> to be explicitly taught	1 ▾	Morphology is taught explicitly word study grammar boxes

	simple to complex) consistently throughout K-5 instruction.				
Notes and questions for group discussion:					

OPTIONAL Observations: Aligned Practices for Vocabulary			
If reviewing for aligned practices, provide location, description, notes, and evidence of alignment for each component:			
2.12	Instruction includes robust teacher-student and student-student conversations in order to support a clear understanding of vocabulary words.	Ostensibly	Part of the overall philosophy
2.13	Vocabulary words are taught deeply by using concept maps or other devices that help students understand multiple layers of the word. (Anderson & Freebody, 1981)	Unclear	Present Vocabulary is learned in context and/or with nomenclature cards
2.14	Explicit instruction in vocabulary for Tier 2 and 3 words is evident, as well as instruction in the context of texts (most Tier 1 words).	Unclear	Present nomenclature and classification cards
2.15	Tier 2 words are taught explicitly, and students are given opportunities to use them in their speech, see them in print, and use them in writing (when appropriate).	Ostensibly	Present nomenclature and classification cards notebooks
2.16	Explicit instruction in morphology is provided with numerous opportunities for students to read and write words with these morphemes	Unclear	Present word study grammar boxes
2.17	For Multilingual Learners, instruction in ELD is included to support continued vocabulary development.	Ostensibly	Where possible

2D: Language Structures

<u>Red Flag statements: Language Comprehension Language Structures</u>		<u>To what extent is this red flag statement true?</u>	<u>Evidence from curricular materials</u>	<u>To what extent is this red flag statement true?</u>	<u>Evidence from curricular materials</u>
2.18	Conventions of print, grammar, and syntax are taught implicitly or opportunistically with no evidence of consistent, explicit, simple to complex instruction across all grade levels.	1 ▾	Ontario 1-8 Language Curriculum Conventions of print , grammar and syntax are <i>meant</i> to be taught explicitly	1 ▾	Montessori Language Curriculum Conventions of print, grammar and syntax are taught explicitly
Notes and questions for group discussion: Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place					
2.19	Instruction does not include teacher modeling nor sufficient opportunities for discussion.	2 ▾	Not explicitly mentioned	1 ▾	Everything is modelled
Notes and questions for group discussion: Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place					
2.20	Students are asked to memorize parts of speech as a list without learning in context and through application.	2 ▾	Unclear Method of instruction was not explicitly mentioned	1 ▾	Parts of speech are taught explicitly and practiced frequently adverb cards, grammar boxes... the farm
Notes and questions for group discussion: Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place					

OPTIONAL Observations: Aligned Practices for Language Structures			
If reviewing for aligned practices, provide location, description, notes, and evidence of alignment for each component:			
2.21	There is a clear scope and sequence for teaching conventions of print, grammar, and syntax (sentence structure) in reading and writing.	Lack of clarity	Present
2.22	Instruction attends to sentence-level comprehension including simple, compound, and complex sentences, as well as cohesive devices within and among sentences.	Present	Present sentence analysis
2.23	Instruction includes sufficient time for discussion, including teacher modeling full ideas and complete sentences.	Unclear	Present
2.24	Highlighting the difference in complexity between conversational speaking and sentences found in expository texts.	Ostensibly	Present
2.25	For speakers of English language variations, an asset-based approach is used to engage in a contrastive analysis between home and school language including sentence structures, suffixes, and subject-verb agreement.	Ostensibly	Ostensibly

2E: Verbal Reasoning

Red Flag statements: Language Comprehension Verbal Reasoning		To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials	To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials
			Ontario 1-8 Language Curriculum		Montessori Language Curriculum
2.26	Inferencing strategies are not taught explicitly and may be based only on picture clues and not text (i.e., picture walking).	1 ▾	Inferencing skills are <i>meant</i> to be taught explicitly	1 ▾	No specific inference lesson *would follow the standard lesson structure
Notes and questions for group discussion:					
2.27	Students do not practice inference as a discrete skill.	1 ▾	Inferencing skills are <i>meant</i> to be taught discretely	1 ▾	No specific inference lesson *would follow the standard lesson structure
Notes and questions for group discussion:					

OPTIONAL Observations: Aligned Practices for Verbal Reasoning			
If reviewing for aligned practices, provide location, description, notes, and evidence of alignment for each component:			
2.28	Inferencing is explicitly taught within text, including opportunities for metacognition and use of appropriate and accurate background knowledge.	Inferencing skills are <i>meant</i> to be taught explicitly	No specific inference lesson *would follow the standard lesson structure
2.29	Students are instructed how to interpret inferential language (i.e., ideas beyond the immediate context of what they read) from a text and in conversation.	Ostensibly	No specific inference lesson *would follow the standard lesson structure
2.30	Students are instructed how narrative language is used to describe a series of events, both fictional and non-fictional.	Ostensibly	No specific inference lesson *would follow the standard lesson structure
2.32	Instruction includes queries to develop a student's ability to be metacognitive (i.e., to think about their thinking while they read).	Ostensibly	Present

2F: Literacy Knowledge

Red Flag statements: Language Comprehension Literacy Knowledge		To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials	To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials
2.33	Genre types and features are not explicitly taught.	1 ▾	Ontario 1-8 Language Curriculum	1 ▾	Montessori Language Curriculum
Notes and questions for group discussion:					
2.34	Genre-specific text structures and corresponding signal words are not explicitly taught and practiced.	1 ▾	Ontario 1-8 Language Curriculum	1 ▾	Montessori Language Curriculum
Notes and questions for group discussion:					

OPTIONAL Observations: Aligned Practices for Literacy Knowledge			
If reviewing for aligned practices, provide location, description, notes, and evidence of alignment for each component:			
2.35	Genre types and features are explicitly taught and used to support comprehension and/or build content knowledge.	Genre types and features are <i>meant</i> to be taught explicitly and practiced	*would follow the standard lesson structure
2.36	Explicit instruction of text types (e.g., cause and effect, problem/solution, sequence, time order, compare and contrast).	Genre types and features are <i>meant</i> to be taught explicitly and practiced	*would follow the standard lesson structure
2.37	Explicit instruction in signal words (aka connectives). For example, signal words for cause and effect texts include <i>for</i> , <i>because</i> , and <i>as a result</i> whereas signal words for problem and solution texts include <i>however</i> , <i>in contrast</i> , and <i>on the other hand</i> .	Genre types and features are <i>meant</i> to be taught explicitly and practiced	*would follow the standard lesson structure
2.38	Graphic organizers are provided to support student understanding of text and genre types.	Organizers are encouraged	Present

Section 3: Components to Support Reading Comprehension

<u>Red Flag statements: Reading Comprehension</u>		<u>To what extent is this red flag statement true?</u>	<u>Evidence from curricular materials</u>	<u>To what extent is this red flag statement true?</u>	<u>Evidence from curricular materials</u>
3.1	Students are asked to independently read texts they are unable to decode with accuracy in order to practice reading comprehension strategies (e.g., making inferences, predicting, summarizing, visualizing).	2 ▾	Ontario 1-8 Language Curriculum No required texts	1 ▾	Montessori Language Curriculum Students do not read text independently until they have learned to decode
Notes and questions for group discussion: Left up to the teacher to determine which texts the students read					
3.2	Students are asked to independently apply reading comprehension strategies primarily in short, disconnected readings at the expense of engaging in knowledge-building text sets.	2 ▾	Possible	1 ▾	Most of the required reading is linked to science and social studies
Notes and questions for group discussion: Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place... There is some encouragement to interleave subject matter but with the number of variations in terms of who is teaching (and therefore assessing) what it becomes quite complicated					
3.3	Emphasis on independent reading and book choice without engaging with complex texts.	2 ▾	Possible	1 ▾	Students do not read text independently until they have learned to decode
Notes and questions for group discussion: Left up to the teacher to determine which texts the students read, generally student are encouraged to select texts that are at their level and/or pose a little challenge					
3.4	Materials for comprehension instruction are predominantly predictable and/or leveled texts.	1 ▾	Levelled texts have been removed	1 ▾	Most of the required reading is linked to science and social studies
Notes and questions for group discussion:					

3.5	Students are not taught methods to monitor their comprehension while reading.	1 ▾		1 ▾	Self-correcting nature of materials necessitates self-monitoring
Notes and questions for group discussion:					

OPTIONAL Observations: Aligned Practices for Reading Comprehension			
If reviewing for aligned practices, provide location, description, notes, and evidence of alignment for each component:			
3.6	The foundation for reading comprehension is built through rich read-aloud experiences before children are able to read independently.	Ostensibly	Present
3.7	Comprehension strategies (e.g., making inferences, summarizing) are taught via gradual release of responsibility (i.e., I do, we do, you do) using appropriate instructional text that students can accurately decode.	Ostensibly	Present
3.8	Students are taught and practice comprehension-monitoring strategies.	Present	Present
3.9	Advanced (Grades 2-5) For students automatic with the code, materials for reading comprehension instruction include sufficiently complex literary and knowledge-building informational texts.	Ostensibly	Present

Section 4: Components to Support Writing

Note: These elements may or may not be included in a comprehensive Tier I curriculum. For this section, review all available instructional materials both within and outside of the core curriculum.

Section 4A: Handwriting

Red Flag statements: Writing - Handwriting		To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials	To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials
4.1	There is no direct instruction in handwriting.	1 ▾	Ontario 1-8 Language Curriculum Direct instruction	1 ▾	Montessori Language Curriculum Direct instruction
Notes and questions for group discussion:					
4.2	Handwriting instruction predominantly features unlined paper or picture paper.	2 ▾	Not explicitly stated otherwise	1 ▾	Paper is always lined chalkboards notebooks
Notes and questions for group discussion: Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place					
4.3	Handwriting instruction is an isolated add-on.	2 ▾	Possible	1 ▾	Handwriting is taught in the context of a variety of lessons
Notes and questions for group discussion: Lack of guidance in terms of when/ how learning takes place, it is simply mandatory that it takes place					

OPTIONAL Observations: Aligned Practices for Handwriting			
If reviewing for aligned practices, provide location, description, notes, and evidence of alignment for each component:			
4.4	There is explicit instruction related to handwriting (e.g., letter formation, posture, grip), and there are opportunities for cumulative practice.	Present	Present knobbed cylinders, metal insets, etc.
4.5	Handwriting instruction features lined paper to guide letter formation.	Unclear	Present
4.6	Handwriting instruction is integrated into core reading and writing instruction and follows the sequence of letter learning.	Unclear	Present

Section 4B: Writing - Spelling

Red Flag statements: Writing - Spelling		To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials	To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials
4.7	No evidence of explicit spelling instruction; no spelling scope and sequence for spelling, or the spelling scope and sequence is not aligned with the phonics / decoding scope and sequence.	1 ▾	Ontario 1-8 Language Curriculum Curriculum states that spelling should be taught explicitly	1 ▾	Montessori Language Curriculum Instruction is explicit moveable alphabet
Notes and questions for group discussion:					
4.8	No evidence of phoneme segmentation and/or phoneme-grapheme mapping to support spelling instruction.	1 ▾	These skills are present	1 ▾	These skills are present sandpaper letters moveable alphabet
Notes and questions for group discussion:					
4.9	Patterns in decoding are not featured in encoding/spelling; spelling lists are based on content or frequency of word use and not connected to decoding/phonics lessons.	1 ▾	Encoding and decoding expectations are described in terms of two sides of the same coin	1 ▾	Encoding and decoding go hand in glove
Notes and questions for group discussion:					
4.10	Students practice spelling by memorization only (e.g.,	2 ▾	Nothing explicitly stated to the contrary	1 ▾	Spelling practice occurs in a variety of forms linked to all kinds of learning

	rainbow writing, repeated writing, pyramid writing).				
Notes and questions for group discussion: Anecdotally, memorising spelling lists still occurs					
4.10	Spelling patterns for each phoneme are taught all at once (e.g., all spellings of long /ā/) instead of a systematic progression to develop automaticity with individual grapheme/phonemes.	2 -	This is possible	1 -	
Notes and questions for group discussion: Progression depends on the program teachers are using					

OPTIONAL Observations: Aligned Practices for Spelling			
If reviewing for aligned practices, provide location, description, notes, and evidence of alignment for each component:			
4.12	There is a clear scope and sequence for explicit spelling instruction, closely aligned with the phonics scope and sequence.	Unclear	Present
4.13	Patterns taught for decoding are also practiced in encoding/spelling lessons.	Ostensibly	Present
4.14	Spelling patterns are taught one at a time and not all at once or in a non-systematic manner.	Ostensibly	Present
4.15	Extensive and recursive practice opportunities, not based on memorization, are provided to spell words both in isolation and in context.	Ostensibly	Present
4.16	(Grades 2-5 Advanced Word Study): Spelling instruction continues in grades 2 and above and includes explicit instruction in vowel teams, variant vowels, and how morphology influences spelling.	Ostensibly	Present

Section 4C: Writing - Composition

Red Flag statements: Writing - Composition		To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials	To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials
4.17	Writing prompts are provided with little time for modeling, planning, and brainstorming ideas.	2 -	Unclear	1 -	Montessori Language Curriculum Modelling is always present
Notes and questions for group discussion: This is up to the teacher's discretion					
4.18	Writing is primarily unstructured with few models or graphic organizers.	2 -	Unclear	1 -	Modelling is an important part of the Montessori approach
Notes and questions for group discussion: The use of models is encouraged					
4.19	Conventions, grammar, and sentence structure is not explicitly taught and practiced systematically (i.e., from simple to complex) with opportunities for practice to automaticity, instead it is taught implicitly or opportunistically.	1 -	Language Conventions Continuum for Reading and Writing, Grades 1–9, Overall Expectation B3	1 -	Grammar materials
Notes and questions for group discussion:					
4.20	Writing instruction is primarily narrative or unstructured choice.	1 -	The curriculum states a variety of writing	1 -	There are many opportunities for writing instruction
Notes and questions for group discussion:					
4.21	Students are not taught the writing process (i.e., planning, revising, editing)	1 -		1 -	
Notes and questions for group discussion:					

4.22	Writing is taught as a standalone and is not used to further reading comprehension.	2 ▾		1 ▾	Writing is integrated from the beginning
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Notes and questions for group discussion: Hard to say how well/unwell writing instruction is integrated with other learning

OPTIONAL Observations: Aligned Practices for Composition

If reviewing for aligned practices, provide location, description, notes, and evidence of alignment for each component:

4.23	Writing is taught explicitly through a gradual release of responsibility (i.e., I do, we do, you do) and includes sufficient time for modeling, planning, and brainstorming ideas orally before drafting.	Ostensibly	Present
4.24	Writing is structured; models and graphic organizers are provided frequently to support composition and promote executive functioning.	Ostensibly	Present
4.25	The writing process (i.e., planning, revising, editing) is explicitly taught and practiced.	Ostensibly	Present
4.26	Conventions of print, grammar, and syntax (i.e., sentence structure) are taught explicitly in the context of writing including sentence reduction and sentence combining.	Ostensibly	Present
4.27	Writing instruction includes a variety of text types (e.g., narrative, informational, persuasive).	Stated in the curriculum	Present

Section 5: Components to Support Assessment

Assessment Non-Negotiables

Note: Most assessment systems are not featured as part of curriculum packages. For this section, review any assessments included with curricular materials along with your school or Local Education Agency's (LEA) entire suite of assessments.

<u>Red Flag statements: Assessment</u>		<u>To what extent is this red flag statement true?</u>	<u>Evidence from curricular materials</u>	<u>To what extent is this red flag statement true?</u>	<u>Evidence from curricular materials</u>
5.1	Assessments measure comprehension only without additional assessment measures to determine what is leading to comprehension weaknesses (e.g., phonics, phoneme awareness, nonsense word fluency, decoding, encoding, fluency, vocabulary, listening comprehension).	2 ▾	Ontario 1-8 Language Curriculum Lots of variety and a lack of monitoring There is a list of ministry approved screening tools...some of them suffer from such weaknesses	1 ▾	Montessori Language Curriculum Each subskill has its own assessment
Notes and questions for group discussion: Assessment (including early screening; PPM 168; Ontario, 2023d) is mandatory however, teachers are free to use their professional judgement (PPM 155; Ontario, 2021) in terms of when (within certain guidelines) and how students are assessed					
5.2	Assessments include miscue analysis in which misread words that have the same meaning are marked as correct.	1 ▾	These kinds of assessments have been removed from the approved list	1 ▾	Only the correct word is acceptable

OPTIONAL Observations: Aligned Practices for Assessment Non-Negotiables			
If reviewing for aligned practices, provide location, description, notes, and evidence of alignment for each component:			
5.3	A school or LEA's suite of assessments provide multiple data points to understand students' word recognition and language comprehension abilities.	Unclear There is a lack of clear guidance and training Only 1 (/2) data points are required	Multiple and various data points
5.4	Assessment data is used to differentiate instruction across a Mutli-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) based on student progress.	Ostensibly	Ostensibly differentiation is aided by 3-year age grouping
5.5	Assessments are standardized, reliable, and valid for the intended purpose.	Not yet standardized	Present

Assessment

Red Flag statements: Assessment		To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials	To what extent is this red flag statement true?	Evidence from curricular materials
5.6	Assessments result in benchmarks according to a leveled text gradient.	1 -	Ontario 1-8 Language Curriculum Benchmarking has been removed	1 -	Montessori Language Curriculum No benchmarking
Notes and questions for group discussion: Much of the problematic assessments have been removed...there is a void in terms of how they can/should be replaced					
5.7	Foundational skills assessments are primarily running records or similar assessments that are based on whole language or cueing strategies (e.g., read the word by looking at the first letter, use picture support for decoding).	1 -	Running records have been removed	1 -	No running records
Notes and questions for group discussion:					
5.8	Phonics skills are not assessed.	2 -	Based on the curriculum documents, this skill <i>should</i> be assessed, but there is no guidance in terms of how	1 -	Assessed
Notes and questions for group discussion:					
5.9	Phoneme awareness is not assessed.	2 -	Based on the curriculum documents, this skill <i>should</i> be assessed, but there is no guidance in terms of how	1 -	Assessed
Notes and questions for group discussion:					
5.10	Decoding skills are assessed using real words only.	2 -	Unclear	2 -	Unclear... Only "real" words in <i>out of the box</i> materials

Notes and questions for group discussion:					
5.11	Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) assessments are not used.	2 ▾	Based on the curriculum documents, this skill <i>should</i> be assessed, but there is no guidance in terms of how	1 ▾	Oral fluency is continually assessed
Notes and questions for group discussion:					
5.12	Suite of assessments does not address aspects of language comprehension (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, listening comprehension).	2 ▾	No required suit of assessments	1 ▾	on-going assessment integrated in daily learning
Notes and questions for group discussion:					
5.13	Multilingual Learners are not assessed in their home language	Not Yet ... ▾	This is not in the purview of the classroom teacher	Not Yet ... ▾	This is not in the purview of the classroom teacher
Notes and questions for group discussion:					

OPTIONAL Observations: Aligned Practices for Assessment			
If reviewing for aligned practices, provide location, description, notes, and evidence of alignment for each component:			
5.14	Assessments include screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring to inform instruction and prevent future reading difficulties.	PPM 168 (Ontario, 2023d)	Ostensibly
5.15	Foundational skills assessments identify students' instructional needs.	Ostensibly	Present
5.16	Phonics skills are assessed using both real and nonsense words.	Unclear	Unclear
5.17	Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) assessments are used to assess fluency, usually first grade and beyond.	Unclear	Ostensibly
5.18	A systematic spelling survey/spelling inventory is used to analyze students' applications of phonemes, graphemes, and morphemes.	Unclear	Spelling is assessed through things like the object boxes
5.19	Phonological and phoneme awareness (PA) are assessed in K/1 and for older students who exhibit PA weaknesses as evidenced by appropriate assessment.	Depends of the screening used to comply with PPM 168 (Ontario, 2023d)	PA is assessed through object boxes and the like
5.20	Assessments address both word recognition and language comprehension (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, writing, listening comprehension).	Depends on the assessment used	Present
5.21	Trends in groups of student scores can be used to identify the overall effectiveness of the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).	Unclear	Present
5.22	Multilingual Learners are assessed in their home language when available.	This is not in the purview of the classroom teacher	This is not in the purview of the classroom teacher