

The **ALIGNED** Decodables

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TOP 6 REASONS (and the RESEARCH to back it) why school districts across the country choose **ALIGNED** Decodables

1. THE ALIGNMENT

Decodables are most valuable when they line up directly with what the students are learning, known as 'lesson-to-text match' (LTTM)" (Pugh, Kearns, & Heibert, 2023; Spear-Swerling, 2019; Cheatham & Allor, 2011; Adams, 2009; Armbruster et al, 2001; Roit, 2008; National Reading Panel, 2000). Through a system that **ALIGNED** has created, their books are aligned by decodability percentage lesson by lesson, sound by sound, word by word to 22 of the top ELA/Phonics programs on the market, with more on the way! This directly follows the Structured Literacy and Science of Reading approach. Literacy directors, curriculum directors, reading specialists, and teachers love that this work has already been done for them! The alignment charts provided on the website guide which week or lesson to introduce each book, based on the scope and sequence of the curriculum you are using.

"The sequential nature of Structured Literacy means that teachers require students to practice only what they have been explicitly taught. Again, before teachers expect students to practice decoding specific phonics word patterns (e.g., short-vowel words with consonant digraphs) in reading text, or to recognize specific irregular words in text, they directly teach those skills in isolation first. SL approaches also build in cumulative practice and ongoing review of previously learned skills, so that students retain these skills and develop automaticity" (Louise Spear-Swerling, 2019, p. 1).

*"The 3-cueing approach to support early word recognition **ignores** 40 years of overwhelming evidence that orthographic evidence involves the formation of letter sound connections to bond spelling, pronunciation, and meaning of specific words in memory" (Erhi, 2014).
"Moreover, relying on alternative cueing systems impedes the building of automatic word-recognition skill that is the hallmark of skill word reading (Stanovich, 1990, 1991)".
(Petscher et al. 2020)*

2. THE LAYOUT AND HOW IT PREVENTS CUEING

The focus of early reading practice should be centered on the letters in the words, and not on anything that may give children a "cue" as to what the word could be (Lonigan, et al., 2018; Ehri, 2013; Stanovich, K.E., 2000). The **ALIGNED** Decodables are not rebranded "guided readers" or "leveled books".

A key way that the **ALIGNED** Decodables stand apart from other decodables is that our books are formatted so that the text is alone on the page. The text is found on the right-hand side and must be read without the aid of a picture cue. The student then turns the page to view the corresponding picture to confirm the meaning of what they just read. This "flashcard" approach has seen impressive results with students using the **ALIGNED** Decodables. This sentence-then-picture approach also builds engagement and entertainment. The reader reads the sentence and uses those words to build a picture in their mind of what they read. Sometimes the idea that they visualize in their mind matches that picture (engagement), but sometimes they turn the page and the picture shows an unexpected alternative to what they are thinking (entertainment).

3. THE CONTENT (Comprehension and Vocabulary)

Decodables are most valuable to practice newly developing phonics skills. However, the argument has been made that there is more to reading than just decoding, and that traditional decodables alone may not be enough. Three papers that reviewed a multitude of studies state that students need content/vocabulary rich, authentic texts to build the other valuable skills needed for reading (Cheatham & Allor, 2012; Birch, et al., 2022, Pugh, Kearns & Hiebert, 2023). This comes from the fact that some decodables do not provide texts that are “semantically rich and address meaningful and interesting topics” (Pugh, Kearns & Hiebert, 2023). **ALIGNED** Decodables stand out from the rest, in that they were specifically written to bridge this gap!

Comprehension study is easily achieved with stories that highlight characters’ feelings, story sequence, problems/solutions, and much more. Diverse and rich vocabulary is spread throughout the books. By focusing on letter sounds, common words have been substituted by more uncommon, yet more specific, words. For example, the skunk didn’t “run”, he “dashed” or “darted”. The girl didn’t “lay” in the sun, she “basked” in it. Through fun and interesting stories, a robust collection of non-fiction books, and tons of variety, **ALIGNED** Decodables are designed to provide the “real”, authentic books children want to read! There are comprehension questions at the end of each book, with one specifically written to be used as a possible discussion starter or writing prompt. Additionally, specific vocabulary and comprehension suggestions can be found on the “Diversity and Content Map” found at Decodables.com.

“Exclusive use of one type of book has a detrimental effect. Rather, carefully selected and varied reading materials leads to more positive outcomes and attitudes to reading” (Mesmer, 2005; Wood, 2005).



Screenshot of the Diversity and Content Map

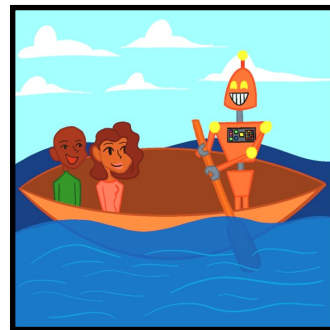
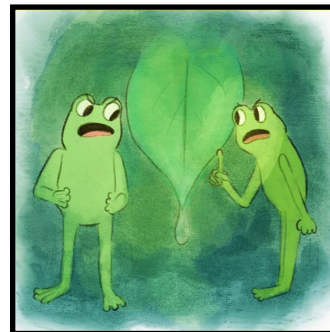
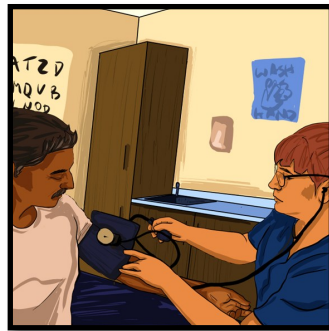
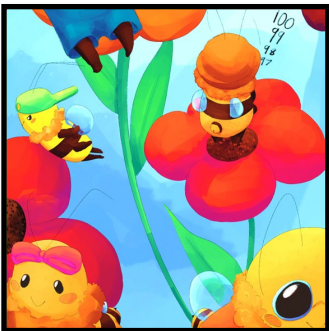
Aligned Title			Ethnicities/Genders	Recommended Vocabulary Words	Recommended Comprehension Focus	Phonics Focus
Fire Safety		NF	White Male	torch, smoke signals, char	Non-Fiction Details	Silent E
Luke the Ape		F	Animals	tame	Story Details	Silent E
Mike Saves the Day		F	White male, Latino Male and Female	mopes, cove	Problem/Solution, Character Feelings	Silent E
Nate's Bake Game		F	African Amer. Male and Asian Female		Story Sequence	Silent E
Raj's Gift		F	Middle Eastern Male and White Male		Problem/Solution, Surprise Ending	
Roses		NF	African American Female	décor, scent, florist	Non-Fiction Details	
The Best Pal Award		F	Animals	remarked, departs, enchanted	Character Feelings, Story Sequence	AR

5. THE ILLUSTRATIONS/IMAGES

The **ALIGNED** decodables are professionally illustrated. Children love the variety of illustrative styles. “Specific techniques and activities used to develop children’s letter-sound knowledge and its use in reading and writing should be as relevant and motivational as possible to engage children’s interest and attention to promote optimal learning” (National Reading Panel, 2001). The full-color books are designed to keep the children engaged and motivated through laughter and smiles.

Having taught in the classroom, I have seen my students tire of seeing books that all look the same, with similar or exact illustrative styles. This was especially true in my first grade classroom if there was a book that looked like what they had read in kindergarten. With the trade books I read in my classroom, I would ensure that the styles were constantly changing to keep the students engaged, and to suit personal opinions of what might be appealing to each student individually.

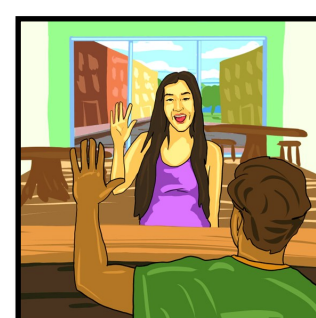
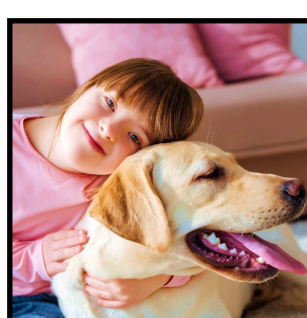
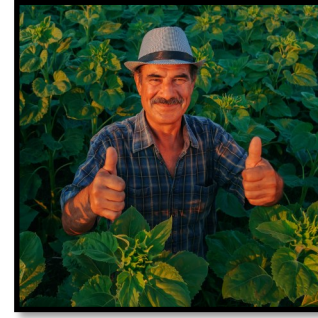
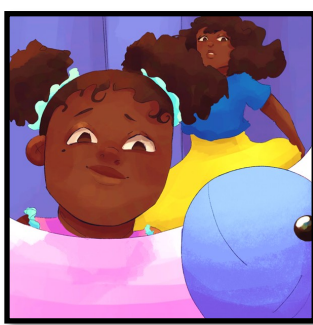
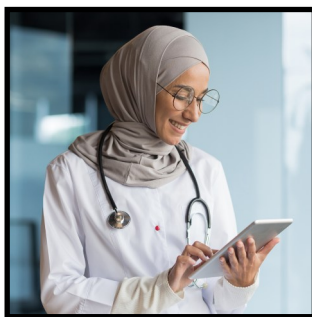
The **ALIGNED** Decodables stand out as compared to some competitors because of the variety of the books! Seven different illustrators worked to create the books; no AI was utilized. The illustrators often changed up their style from book to book. This led to a beautiful and constantly changing variety of illustrations.



4. THE DIVERSITY

When considering how to deal with classroom issues of ethnicity, culture, gender, and other differences among students, “teachers must create an environment that ensures that all learners see people from their identity group reflected positively in the instructional materials, pictures, books, and videos used in the classroom and throughout the school” (Vogt & Shearer, 2003, p. 118). These factors have powerful effects on self-esteem and motivation that affect the literacy development (Vogt & Shearer, 2003)” (Sittthitikul, P., 2014).

The **ALIGNED** decodables stand apart because they were written with diversity and inclusion in mind. Using seven different illustrators, with differing ethnicities and backgrounds, allows for a multitude of artistic styles and viewpoints. The books were carefully created to ensure only positive representations of people of different color, religion, or ability were included.



6. THE NON-INSTRUCTIONAL REASONS

The Complete K-2 set is comprised of 200 titles, including full-color readers, interactive reproducible readers, and three chapter books. Fiction, non-fiction, and graphic novel genres are included. The **ALIGNED** Decodables have been vetted, approved for quality, and are found on the decodable lists created by UFLI, The Reading League, MetaMetrics, and Teach My Kid to Read. These books are being used across the US and Canada, and **ALIGNED** is an approved vendor for the NYC SD DOE, LA Unified SD DOE, and on SAM.GOV.

The **ALIGNED** Decodables were proudly featured in the April 2025 issue of **Language Magazine** in their section "Reading Supports: A Selection of Engaging Products and Programs to Boost Your Students' Reading Levels".

Improving Literacy & Communication
language)(
magazine

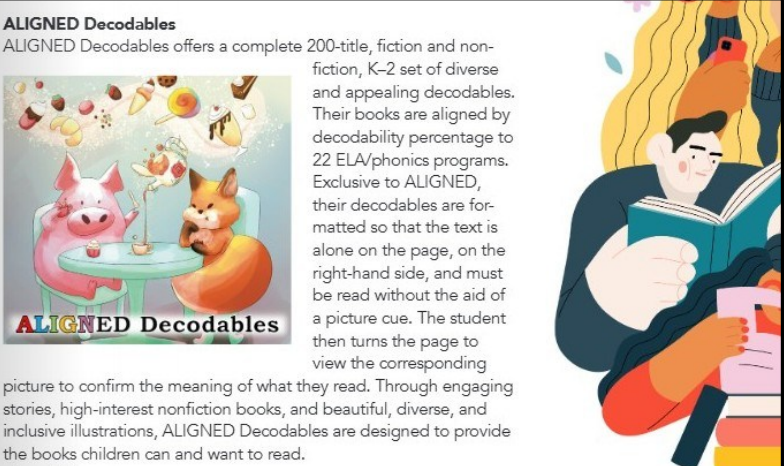
ALIGNED Decodables

ALIGNED Decodables offers a complete 200-title, fiction and non-fiction, K-2 set of diverse and appealing decodables. Their books are aligned by decodability percentage to 22 ELA/phonics programs. Exclusive to ALIGNED, their decodables are formatted so that the text is alone on the page, on the right-hand side, and must be read without the aid of a picture cue. The student then turns the page to view the corresponding picture to confirm the meaning of what they read. Through engaging stories, high-interest nonfiction books, and beautiful, diverse, and inclusive illustrations, ALIGNED Decodables are designed to provide the books children can and want to read.

decodables.com

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THE TOP THREE BENEFITS OF TARGETED PRACTICE BY USING THE LESSON-TO-TEXT-MATCHED **ALIGNED** DECODABLES (AND THE RESEARCH TO BACK IT!)

“Decodables are most valuable when they line up directly with what the students are learning, known as ‘lesson-to-text match’ (LTTM)” (Pugh, Kearns, & Heibert, 2023; Spear-Swerling, 2019; Cheatham & Allor, 2011; Adams, 2009; Armbruster et al, 2001; Roit, 2008; National Reading Panel, 2000). Through a system that **ALIGNED** has created, their books are aligned by decodability percentage lesson by lesson, sound by sound, word by word to 22 of the top ELA/Phonics programs on the market, with more on the way!



THIS ALLOWS STUDENTS TO HAVE TARGETED PRACTICE!

What is “targeted practice” in reading instruction?

Targeted practice is taking the new sounds and inserting them into the code with letters/sounds the reader already knows. Not only does this help the reader learn the new sounds, but it strengthens their previously learned skills.

While learning new letter sounds/patterns, **targeted practice** is best!

“An essential part of the process for beginners involves learning the alphabetic system, that is, letter-sound correspondences and spelling patterns, and learning how to apply this knowledge in their reading. Systematic phonics instruction is a way of teaching reading that stresses the acquisition of letter-sound correspondences and their use to read and spell words (Harris & Hodges, 1995)” (National Reading Panel, 2001).

Benefit #1 The Scaffolding Effect

The “cognitive load” it takes to read the new texts is reduced when the student is practicing with already known letters/sounds and inserting the new letters/sounds into that knowledge. By adding new sounds and including scaffolding of previously learned sounds, the student receives strong targeted practice.



What is “Cognitive Load Theory”?

“Cognitive Load Theory explains the way that we consider working memory while teaching complex concepts or solving problems. A higher cognitive load lowers the percentage of information that is stored in long term memory because you overwhelm your working memory” (Practical Psychology, 2023).

What is “scaffolding” in reading instruction?

The student would be unlikely to be successful if every letter in the words of books were unknown and/or new. By knowing some and adding some new ones, the student has support to practice the new sounds (van de Pol and Beishuizen, 2001).

“...the learner’s cognitive load is reduced with the aid of scaffolding and this thus allows the learner to perform parts of a task that he or she would otherwise not be able to perform (van de Pol and Beishuizen, 2001).

Benefit #2 The Confidence/Motivation Effect

The reader builds confidence in their abilities by having success in slowly and steadily building their sound knowledge and decoding skills and applying them to new texts. This confidence builds motivation to learn more sounds and move forward towards harder and harder texts.

This is where the **ALIGNED** books shine! The student wants to read the next story. Therefore, they will work to learn the new sounds.

SUCCESS BUILDS SUCCESS!

“Expectancy of success is more than a perception of general competence; it represents a future-oriented conviction that one can accomplish the anticipated task. If I do not believe I will be successful in accomplishing a task, I am unlikely to begin. Such beliefs can be both general (e.g. global self-concept) and specific (judgements of ability to learn a specific skill or topic).” (Cook and Artino, Jr., 2016)

Reason #3 The Enjoyment/Engagement Effect

The **ALIGNED** books will help to develop intrinsic motivation to read. The reader enjoys not only the feeling of success but also the stories, making them more likely to continue reading. Students with intrinsic motivation to read, such as the desire to read the next **ALIGNED** book, are shown to be more fervent readers, and consequently more successful readers.

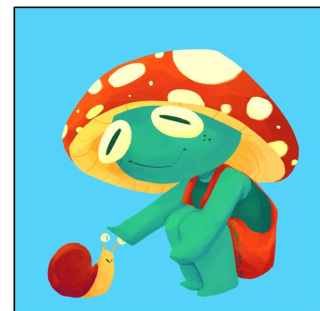
“Motivation and engagement play a crucial role in literacy development and achievement.” (Lee, Y., Jang, B. G., & Conradi Smith, K., 2021)

What is intrinsic motivation?

Intrinsic motivation is doing something because you are motivated by internal factors, such as a feeling of success or wanting to move to a higher skill level of a task. Extrinsic motivation is when the perceived benefit or value comes from the outside. For example, earning a sticker on a chart, or a “well done” from a teacher or parent.

*“**Intrinsic motivation** to read comes from personal interest or enjoyment of reading and is related to positive experiences with reading itself. Studies have shown that intrinsic incentives, such as personal interest in the material, curiosity, involvement in the text, and a preference for challenge (e.g., McGeown et al., 2012) are better predictors of reading frequency and comprehension than extrinsic incentives, such as rewards or grades, parental pressure etc.” (Vogrinič Čepič, Mascia, T. & Aerila, JA., 2024).*

The **ALIGNED** books help your students learn how to read and to love reading, by providing targeted, real-world practice in stories that keep them engaged and motivated!



Interactive and Reproducible Decodables from **ALIGNED** Decodables!



These new “blackline master” decodable readers give teachers another tool in their toolbox to give their students targeted phonics practice in an engaging way! Teachers can easily copy, cut, and fold these 43 adorable readers (directions included) and place them in the hands of young readers. Perfect for whole or small group practice!

ALIGNED Title: Royal Farm

Phonics Focus: oi, oy

Word Count: 115

The letter pattern “oy” comes at the end of the word and “oi” in the middle. Add the missing letters, then pick two words to draw pictures of. <table border="1"> <tr><td>b</td><td>__</td></tr> <tr><td>c</td><td>__ n</td></tr> <tr><td>c</td><td>__ l</td></tr> <tr><td>f</td><td>__</td></tr> <tr><td>b</td><td>__ l</td></tr> <tr><td>j</td><td>__</td></tr> </table>	b	__	c	__ n	c	__ l	f	__	b	__ l	j	__	Royal Farm  Written by Christine Hjorth Illustrated by _____
b	__												
c	__ n												
c	__ l												
f	__												
b	__ l												
j	__												
As the farmhand and horse take their voyage, Colton basks in the peace and quiet of the open field. He thinks that is the point of the ride.	The noise annoys her pen mate, Colton the horse. It really makes his blood boil. It always destroys his good mood.												

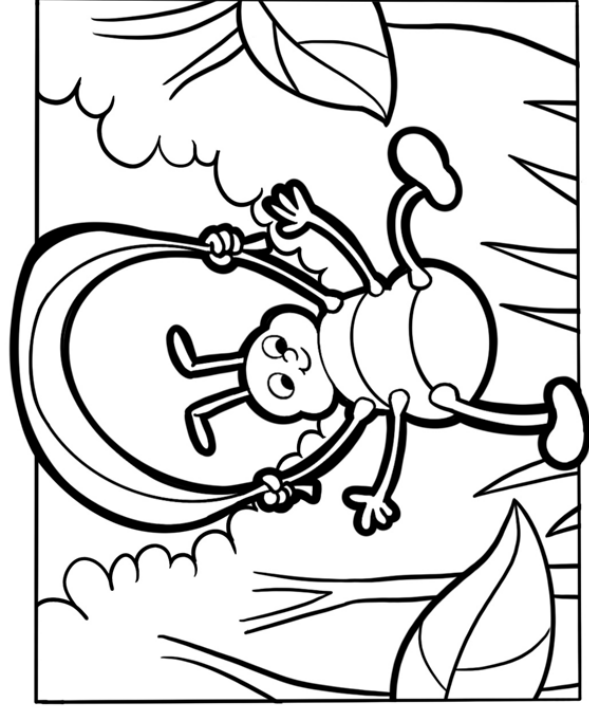
Oink! Oink! Zoya makes a joyful noise. Zoya is a swine who lives at Royal Farm. She is happy as she enjoys rolling in the moist mud.	Comprehension Questions 1. Who and what annoys Colton the horse? _____ 2. What is something someone does to annoy you? _____
Colton can't avoid the noise, and he does not want to join. He has no choice but to stand there and listen all day!	Just then, the farmhand comes by. He saddles Colton up for a ride. A break from the noise makes Colton rejoice!

Through the pages of story, students are required to read without the aid of a picture cue. Then they are asked to illustrate the pages, demonstrating an understanding of the text they just read. At the end of the story, students will find comprehension questions and a “word work” activity to practice the phonics skill that the book is highlighting. These can be a valuable addition for independent work, centers, or homework practice!

Add "b" to the words. Draw a line from the word to the matching picture.



it — us at
CU — SU —



Bud
the
Bug

Written by Christine Hjorth

Illustrated by Riley Ann Ryder and _____

Bud put a sub in the tub.

Bud the bug got in the tub.

1

Color in the "b" in these words, then underline them in the book.

6

Bud bug

tub big

sub but

Bud the bug dug in the mud.

3

4

The tub is in a mug.

Bud is big, but not big in the mug.

8

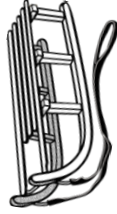
Add "l" to each word. Draw a line to the picture that matches the word.

c__ap

f__ag

p__ug

s__ed



Written by Christine Hjorth

Illustrated by Belen Roldan and _____

Trent and Glen are in the Mud Club!

Trent dumps mud on top of the bulb.

Trent dumps a clump of mud on Glen!

1

Comprehension Questions

6

1. Who are the characters in this story?

Glen and Trent plant a bulb. Glen plops the bulb in the mud.

3

2. Would you like to be in the Mud Club? Why or why not?

4

Glen dumps a clump of mud on Trent!
Trent slips in the slop and lands flat.

Glen drips a blob of mud on top of Trent. Glen flops in the mud.
HA! HA! HA!

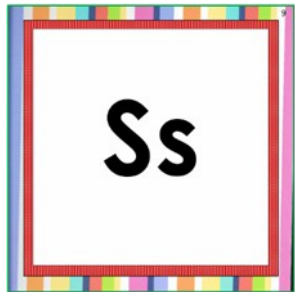
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How is the content specifically designed for students in grades K–2? How are the vocabulary, sentence structure, and topics age-appropriate?

I have taught hundreds of students how to read. I observed my classroom full of students gradually increase their reading competency skills. I also noted what was engaging, funny, and age-appropriate. Before I started writing these decodables, I was in the classroom writing decodable practice passages, games, and stories week-by-week for my own students. I saw what worked and what didn't. I took what I knew as a certified teacher in Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, and Gifted Education, and my experiences directly with the students, and poured that knowledge into the decodable stories. No AI was used in writing, producing, or aligning any of the books. The topics are age-appropriate and current. There is a combination of fiction and non-fiction. The non-fiction titles are high-interest, with topics such as sports, animals, music, and space.

- The books start out in kindergarten with letter sound introduction aligned with the early lessons of a typical kindergarten scope and sequence. These early books have only a letter on the page and a picture to match that beginning sound. They are formatted with the **“Flashcard Layout”**.

Right-hand side of the book, letter alone on the page.



Turn to next page, left-hand side, illustration that matches the previous page.



ALIGNED Title: Ss Book

- As more letter sounds are introduced, including the short vowels, the decodables move into practice with one word on the page.

Right-hand side of the book, text alone on the page.



Turn to next page, left-hand side, illustration that matches the previous page.



ALIGNED Title: Short I

**All of the books are formatted in this
ALIGNED-exclusive “flash card” format!**

- As the lessons progress and useful high-frequency words are introduced (e.g. the, in, and it), simple sentences appear in the books.

Right-hand side of the book, letter alone on the page.



Turn to next page, left-hand side, illustration that matches the previous page.



ALIGNED Title: Fox Hid

- This pattern continues. As more letter patterns and high-frequency words are introduced, the sentences become more robust. The sentences are simple and one per page through most of kindergarten and then build from there into first grade. Having taught for years, I made decisions based on my experience working directly with students, as well as research and academic training, to know when adding complexity is appropriate. The beginning of first grade has decodables that review skills from kindergarten and are an opportunity for the students to practice and build some confidence on the simpler books before moving forward (this is also true for second grade).

Right-hand side of the book, letter alone on the page.



Turn to next page, left-hand side, illustration that matches the previous page.



ALIGNED Title: Tuck



Right-hand side of the book, letter alone on the page.



Turn to next page, left-hand side, illustration that matches the previous page.

ALIGNED Title: A Rainy Day

- Through first grade, the number of sentences and their complexity increase gradually through the year.



ALIGNED Title: *Seth and Beth*

For example, the addition of similes, such as "She flies like a sloth."



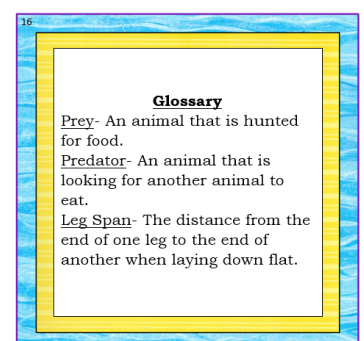
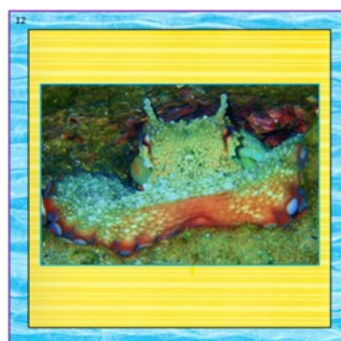
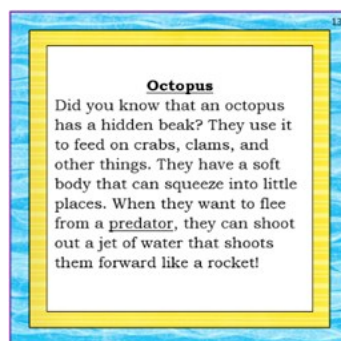
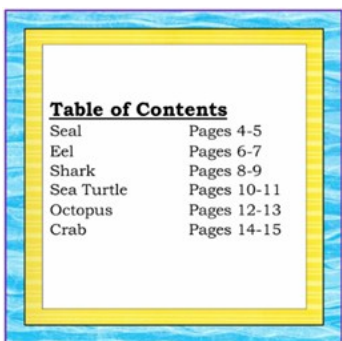
ALIGNED Title: *Spiders Hunting*

- Some of the lessons have multiple **ALIGNED** titles assigned to them so there are options for the teacher to help meet individual student needs. One of the books would typically have a lower word count and the other a higher word count, as options. It also helps meet interest level of the students, so they can decide which book they would like to read.
- As the students move through the end of first and into second grade, the stories are longer and more complex. More inferences are needed to be made by the students,



ALIGNED Title: *Skittle's First Day*

For example, the text states, "She sniffles." in response to the question, "Will she like it?" What can you infer from the word "sniffles"?



ALIGNED Title: *Animals of the Sea*

How do the **ALIGNED** decodable books support vocabulary acquisition?

The **ALIGNED** Decodables were written with the inclusion of high-quality vocabulary words in mind. Diverse and rich vocabulary is spread throughout the books. From the time I started writing the decodable books, vocabulary was a major focus. I used the introduction of the letter patterns to include words that might not typically be learned by a young child, but that are invaluable when building a strong background with language. Research shows that having a robust and broad vocabulary can make the difference between a strong reader and a poor reader, especially in the area of reading comprehension.

The nuances of word meanings and what they do to a person's ability to fully comprehend the story are of particular interest to me. For example, did the boy "go" to the park? Or did the boy "hurry", "walk", or "stomp" to the park? All three of these words can lead the reader to a different understanding of what the boy is feeling while going to the park.

"The relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension has been well documented in the literature, with studies consistently highlighting a reciprocal relationship between these skills (e.g., Cain & Oakhill, 2011; Verhoeven et al., 2011; Duff et al., 2015; for a review, see Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986; Elleman et al., 2009; Wright & Cervetti, 2016; Adlof, 2019; Elleman et al., 2019; Silverman et al., 2020; Cervetti et al., 2023)." (Zeng Y, 2025).

Zeng, Y. et al suggest that, "Merely teaching word meanings may not be sufficient for long-term vocabulary acquisition. Instead, students may require more extensive exposure to words across varied contexts and more engaging strategy-based instruction, such as teaching morphological awareness and contextual word-solving strategies" (2025)

It has long been understood that teaching vocabulary in isolation is ineffective!



The **ALIGNED** books are written to slowly build on learned phonics skills by moving from simplest to most complex patterns. This affects the vocabulary inclusion in two ways.

A. Tier two and three words are often included because they highlight the letter pattern that was added during that lesson/week.

B. If used with the comprehension program described on the next page, teachers will introduce new vocabulary words either right before or during reading, for immediate practice in context. Words are often repeated in many titles that follow.

ALIGNED Educational Resources is currently developing a comprehension and writing program. This program focuses heavily on vocabulary introduction, and the multiple meanings of words. Each vocabulary word will have a vocabulary picture card illustrating the multiple meanings (e.g. "tap" can mean the faucet on a sink, the making of a tapping noise on a desk, or a type of dance). The teacher introduces these and then encourages the students to think critically while reading to determine which meaning is used in the sentence. This program, called "**INTEGRATED: The Other Strands of the Rope**", will be released by grade level starting with kindergarten in January, 2026.



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Turn to next page, left-hand side, illustration that matches the previous page alone.

ALIGNED Title: Kits and Pups

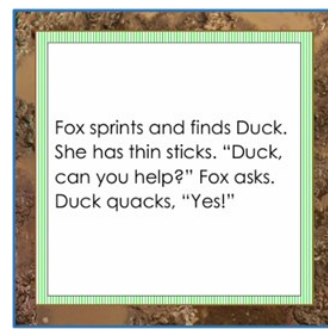
Vocabulary is used to practice CVC short i words and to introduce students to the different names for baby animals. This example also introduces the students to an alternative meaning for the word "kid".

All of the books are formatted in this ALIGNED-exclusive "flash card" format!



ALIGNED Title: Skip the Skunk

Vocabulary is used to practice blends as well as introduce an alternative to the word "sad".



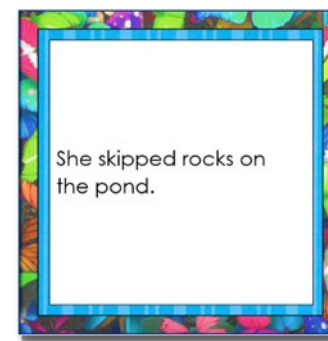
ALIGNED Title: Stuck!

Fox doesn't "run", he "sprints". Duck "quacks" instead of "says".



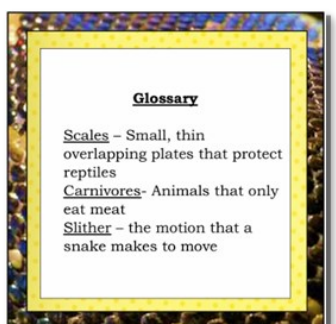
ALIGNED Title: Spiders Hunting

Vocabulary is consistently used in non-fiction books to build knowledge of the topic.



ALIGNED Title: Deb Went Camping

Vocabulary is used to practice the -ed suffix, as well as introduce an alternate meaning for the word "skipped".



ALIGNED Title: Snakes

Non-fiction books in later stages of the scope and sequence use the vocabulary word in sequence and also have a glossary.



ALIGNED Title: Packing

The vocabulary denotes different emotions when Matthew came "barreling" down the stairs, but "stomped" back up them. This helps students build their skills in making inferences.

How do the **ALIGNED** Decodable books support phonics-based instruction rather than a leveled text system?

The **ALIGNED** Decodables soundly support “phonics-based instruction”. A “phonics-based instructional model” is one that teaches students how to read in a systematic, methodical way. Students start by learning the most basic phonics skills first (e.g. consonant sounds). They then build upon that knowledge by learning new, increasingly difficult (or inconsistent) phonics skills (e.g. vowel teams), and entering those into the schema that has been created.

By learning new letter patterns as well as high-frequency words and inserting them into practice opportunities containing already known skills, a strong scaffolding effect is created. This not only increases the automaticity of the new skill, it also reinforces the existing skill. Students move forward in learning to read with confidence and a positive attitude because of the success this model affords them.

“An essential part of the process for beginners involves learning the alphabetic system, that is, letter-sound correspondences and spelling patterns, and learning how to apply this knowledge in their reading. Systematic phonics instruction is a way of teaching reading that stresses the acquisition of letter-sound correspondences and their use to read and spell words (Harris & Hodges, 1995)”
(National Reading Panel, 2001).

This is opposed to teaching in a “leveled text system”, which leaves students feeling as though learning to read is arbitrary and almost mysterious. The assigned levels of text feel random at times and provides an unclear path as to what a student needs to learn to be able to move to the next level. It does not present students the opportunity to learn new skills in a systematic way and enter that new knowledge into previous schema. It encourages using “cues” instead of focusing on phonics skills and the ability to decode. And thus, when students move past “picture books”, they are left without the tools to read higher level texts.

“The 3-cueing approach to support early word recognition ignores 40 years of overwhelming evidence that orthographic evidence involves the formation of letter sound connections to bond spelling, pronunciation, and meaning of specific words in memory” (Ehri, 2014). “Moreover, relying on alternative cueing systems impedes the building of automatic word-recognition skill that is the hallmark of skill word reading (Stanovich, 1990, 1991)”. (Petscher et al. 2020)



There are many versions of “guided readers” and “leveled books” on the market today that are simply rebranded as “decodables”. They are books heavy in predictive text, where the differing word in the sentence is way outside the scope and sequence; not a high-frequency word. They are books that use prompting illustrations for the students to continue with the damaging habit of using picture cues, even if the teacher does not specifically instruct them to do so.

The **ALIGNED** Decodables were written to directly combat this type of reading instruction. Guided readers, or rebranded books that maintain that style, have no place in a phonics-based instructional model.

There are particular characteristics of decodable books that support a phonics-based model, as opposed to a leveled text model. The following chart displays the **ALIGNED** Decodables' solid strength in this area.

Books that follow Leveled Text style...	ALIGNED Decodables following a phonics based instruction model...
...contain predictive text.	...do not allow students to rely on predictive text.
...utilize illustrations that enable students to use the picture to “guess”, or “predict”, a word on the page.	...do not allow the students to “cue” off of the picture with its industry- <u>first and only</u> “flashcard” format of having the text alone on a page, and the illustration on the subsequent page.
... contain superfluous words that do not maintain a systematic sequence of phonics.	...only contain “out of sequence” words that will later be introduced as high-frequency or “heart words” within a reasonable time after appearing in a book. These are labeled on the Alignment Chart for teacher ease-of-use in identifying the “heart” portion.
...have a low decodability percentage.	...have a decodability percentage in which 97% of all titles in the 200 K-2 title set have a decodability percentage greater than or equal to 95%. (These numbers are specific examples to UFLI as one example, but this trend applies to all curricula listed.)
...do not focus on a specific phonics skill or group of phonics skills.	...includes texts that have a definite focus on a specific phonics skill, group of skills, or high-frequency word.
...do not align to the program that a school is using.	...aligns directly to the Scope and Sequence of 22 ELA/Phonics programs on the market.
...are not age-appropriate for a student's grade.	...systematically build in text difficulty, word count, sentence structure, and story theme.
...do not take into account quality vocabulary words and integration.	...consistently uses Tier Two and Tier Three words because of the letter patterns contained in them.

How is the decodability percentage calculated and shown on the Alignment Chart? How does high-frequency word introduction come into play?

The titles are aligned by decodability factor based on letter pattern, high-frequency word, syllable, and affix (e.g. word ending like -s) introduction. To determine the “decodability percentage” for each book:

1. I separated out individual words and broke them down by letter/sound pattern.
2. I determined which words and/or letter patterns were decodable using the decoding skills that had been introduced by a given week in the scope and sequence.
3. Using the scope and sequence, I then identified which high-frequency words (or “heart words”) had been introduced leading up to a specific lesson. If a word had been taught to the students, the word was not counted as against the decodability percentage. (For example, if the word “the” is introduced in Lesson 1, it is from then on considered “decodable”.)
4. The total word count of the book was determined.
5. Any word that was not decodable, either by sound pattern introduction or having been taught as a high-frequency or “heart word”, was considered “out of sequence”. I noted how many times that word appeared in that book.
6. The summed amount of “out of sequence” words (if any), and the number of times they appeared, became the numerator. The total amount of words in the book was the denominator. This was calculated to determine the decodability percentage.
7. The few “out of sequence” words that do exist are noted on the **ALIGNED** Alignment Chart and the letter pattern that would make it “out of sequence” is in bold and underlined, so that the teacher can teach them as heart words. Percentages were noted if the use of one word multiple times significantly affected the percentage (e.g. the word “her” being used 4 times in a book before the r-controlled vowel had been introduced).



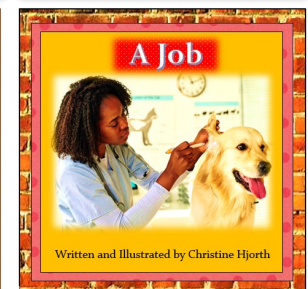
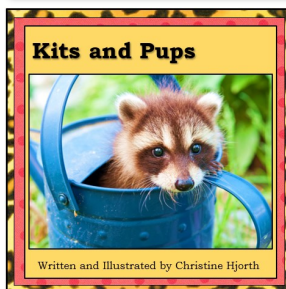
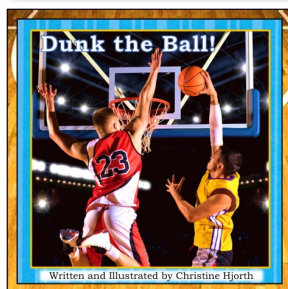
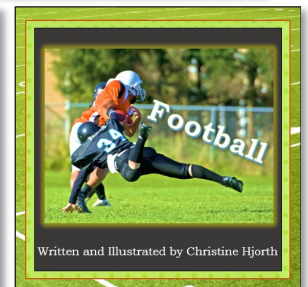
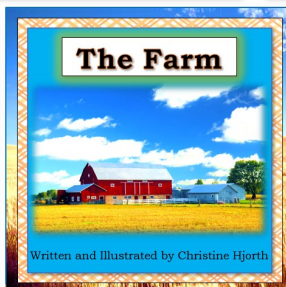
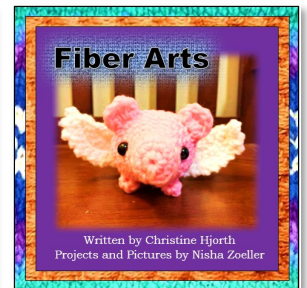
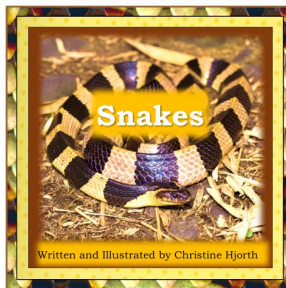
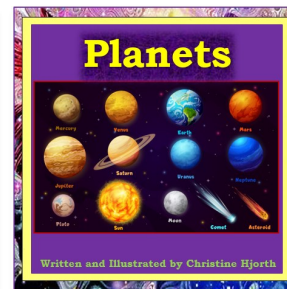
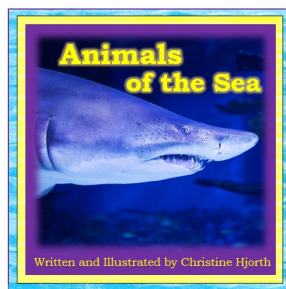
How are the stories crafted to be engaging and culturally relevant for students in grades K-2?

Decodables are most valuable to practice newly developing phonics skills. However, the argument has been made that there is more to reading than just decoding, and that traditional decodables alone may not be enough. Three papers that reviewed a multitude of studies state that students need content/vocabulary rich, authentic texts to build the other valuable skills needed for reading (Cheatham & Allor, 2012; Birch, et al., 2022, Pugh, Kearns & Hiebert, 2023). This comes from the fact that some decodables do not provide texts that are “semantically rich and address meaningful and interesting topics” (Pugh, Kearns & Hiebert, 2023). The **ALIGNED** Decodables are specifically written to bridge this gap!

The **ALIGNED** Decodables provide robust texts with strong story lines to keep students engaged by highlighting and providing opportunities for students to build comprehension skills such as identifying characters' feelings, relating and connecting those characters' feeling to themselves, identifying story sequence, and determining the problem and solution of a story. The content-rich, non-fiction titles engage students in learning about topics that may be of interest to them, like sports, animals, camping, fishing, jobs, dogs, spiders, and music. The decodables are culturally relevant with topics that include smart phones, drones, and spending time with friends in different settings.

Examples of the non-fiction titles included with **ALIGNED Decodables**

“Students who enjoy reading, and make it a regular part of their lives, are able to improve their reading skills through practice. Better readers tend to read more because they are more motivated to read, which, in turn, leads to improved vocabulary and comprehension skills.” (PISA 2018 Results, vol. II. ch. 8, OECD, [2020](#)).



What practical decisions were made based on the author's experience and knowledge of having been in the classroom?

I hold three teacher certifications - Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, and Gifted Education. I taught first grade for many years in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. I have a real "on the ground" and "in the trenches" understanding of what it is like to be in a classroom that many other publishers of decodable books do not have. It led me to make careful, well-researched, and practical decisions about my books. I learned many lessons about educational materials and tried to avoid pitfalls that I found myself dealing with while teaching.

Practical things like:

- **Size**: The books are 5.5 in X 5.5 inches. My students would get frustrated and antsy if while sitting at the kidney table in a group of six, their page overlapped with the student's next to them. This pulled focus away from the lesson as an unnecessary distraction. Also, all of the books are the same width so that keeping them in the same-sized basket is not an issue.
- **Variety**: My students complained and lost interest if the books I was using all had the same illustrative style. Many companies, including ALIGNED, sell sets that span kindergarten through second grade. If all of the books look the same, I felt it would be difficult to keep the students engaged, and to suit personal preferences of what might be appealing to each student individually. Think about how you pick a book by its cover at the book store.
- **Sensitivity to different ability levels**: All of the books have the same format and variety of illustrations (for example, the recurring characters Ted and Jen show up in books in kindergarten, first, and second grade. This is so that students don't know that other students are reading at a lower level just by observing him/her reading a certain book (e.g. "That's a baby book.).
- **Content**: The goal is to meet the students on their interest and maturity level. Not too easy, and not too difficult. Not too babyish but also not too mature. Did you ever use something in your classroom and think, "Has the person who wrote this ever *talked* to a six-year-old?"
- **Budget-friendly**: Schools very often change ELA programs from year to year. This leaves books left over from a previous program that don't fit the new program, which are now taking up space in the classroom. Plus, the need to find more money in the budget to buy books that fit the new program. I took the same set of books and aligned them to all of the programs. If you buy them to use with Wonders, and next year you change to UFLI, just go to the **ALIGNED** website to get the Alignment Chart for UFLI and keep using the exact same books.

ALIGNED Decodables are aligned to the following scope and sequences.

UFLI	Fundations®	CKLA
Phonics First	IMSE 2022	95% Group
Really Great Reading	Journeys	ReadyGen
Benchmark Advance	SIPPS	MA Rooney
Into Reading	Superkids	Reading Street
Open Court	Reading by Design	EL Education
Reach for Reading	Wonders 2023	
SAAVAS	Saxon Phonics	

Disclaimer: Aligned Educational Resources is not affiliated with, nor has it been authorized, sponsored, or otherwise approved by any of the programs listed in Alignment Charts.

Example of an **ALIGNED** Alignment Chart

UFLI Scope and Sequence

This chart shows how the Aligned Decodables can be used with the UFLI program. The Aligned Decodables are aligned by percentage of decodability based on introduced letter patterns/sounds and High-Frequency Words. Research has shown that repeated practice of newly acquired skills in a “real world” context is necessary for mastery. The Aligned Books are written to do just that! Through having books that include previously introduced sounds and HFW, while slowly weaving in newly acquire skills, students build strong decoding and word recognition skills, and confidence in their ability to tackle new texts. As such, books recommended to be introduced with a certain lesson may or may not contain the skill taught in that lesson. The book may just contain previously taught skills. Please reach out with any questions by emailing AlignedEducationalResources@gmail.com.

How to read this chart: **Column 1:** Unit-Week; **Column 2:** Title of the Aligned Decodable (they are color coded to the sets they are found in); **Column 3:** Number of words in the book; **Column 4:** The decodability percentage if used in that week; **Column 5:** Any words that are “out of sequence” in the book and how many times they appear. Letter sounds are highlighted in **bold** to shows what skill in that word that makes it out of sequence.

Complete Set of Kindergarten					79 Aligned Titles	
Les	UFLI Focus	Aligned Title	Type	#Words	%	Words Out of Sequence
2	A	Mm	-	-	100	
3	S	Ss	-	-	100	
4	T	Tt	-	-	100	
5	Vc	I Sat	IR	17	100	
6	P	Short A Book	-	6	100	
7	F	Ff	-	-	100	
8	I	Short I Book	-	7	100	
9	N	In a Pit	F	31	100	
10	a/i	Short A and I	IR	19	100	
11	Am/an	Pam	IR	25	100	
12	O	Tip the Pot	F	35	100	
13	D	Mad Dom	F	19	100	
14	C	I Can	F	29	100	
14	C	Word ladder 1	NF	14	100	
15	U	Word Ladder 2	NF	27	100	
15	U	A Pup	IR	32	100	
16	G	Mag Dug	IR	23	100	
17	B	Bud the Bug	IR	36	100	
18	E	I Get	NF	24	100	
19	Cvc (see)	Tad on a Bus	IR	30	100	
20	-s	Bugs, Dogs, and Bats	IR	40	100	
21	-s/z/	Cats	F	48	100	
21	-s/z/	Sam in the Suds	IR	40	100	
22	K	Sid the Kit	IR	36	100	
23	H	Ned and Tim	F	40	100	
24	R	Dot and Dad	F	47	100	
25	R Blends	Rob and His Ribs	F	36	100	
25	R Blends	The Drips	IR	45	100	
26	L	Sal at the Bog	F	43	100	
27	L blends	Mud Club	IR	70	100	
28	W	On a Web	NF	36	100	

		Complete Kindergarten				79 Aligned Titles
Les	UFLI Focus	Aligned Title	Type	#Words	%	Words Out of Sequence
29	J	Gil	F	39	100	
30	Y	Dogs	NF	36	100	
30	Y	Ric and Yas	IR	58	100	
31	X	Naps	F	63	98	<u>out</u> (1)
32	Qu	The Quest	IR	35	100	
33	V	A Job	NF	37	100	
34	Z	It Is	NF	28	100	
35	Review	Kits and Pups	NF	37	100	
36	Review	Mugs	F	71	100	
37	Review	Fox Hid	F	44	10	
38	Review	A Man, A Cat, and A Rat	F	70	100	
39	Review	Pat and Tim	F	48	100	
40	Review	The Mad Pal	F	70	100	
41	Review	The Fox Yips	NF	31	100	
42	FF,SS, LL, ZZ	Ann and Gram	IR	96	100	
43	ALL, OLL, ULL	Hats	F	57	100	
44	CK	Jack the Pug	F	64	95	<u>like</u> (1), <u>oh</u> (1) <u>more</u> (1)
45	SH	Sam's Shop	F	77	97	<u>home</u> (1), <u>puts</u> (1)
46	TH	Fun at Camp	IR	46	100	
47	TH	Kash the Sloth	IR	76	100	
47	TH	This Is	NF	28	100	
48	CH	Ben and Meg	F	63	97	<u>out</u> (1), <u>put</u> (1)
48	CH	Lunch on a Bench	F	56	98	<u>like</u> (1)
49	Review	Tam	F	62	94	<u>out</u> (1), <u>her</u> (1), <u>put</u> (1)
50	WH/PH	The Graph	IR	50	100	
51	NG	This or That	NF	45	100	
52	NK	Dogs Can	NF	37	100	
53	Review	Ten Pigs on a Jet	F	55	96	<u>her</u> (1), <u>one</u> (1)
54	A_E	Jen's Snack	F	71	100	
54	A_E	Chase	IR	76	100	
55	I_E	Line Drive	IR	60	100	
56	O_E	Ted and Jen and a Fan	F	68	97	<u>her</u> (2)
56	O_E	At the Cove	IR	78	100	
57	Review	Spider Facts	NF	57	*88	<u>spider</u> (7)
58	U_E	A Kind Dude	IR	57	100	
59	Review	Dunk the Ball	NF	58	100	
59	Review	Steve	IR	82	100	
60	_CE	Jace in the Race	IR	117	100	
61	_GE	Ace and the Fire	F	74	97	<u>finds</u> (2)
62	Review	Ted and Jen	F	71	100	
63	-es	Pig in a Pen	F	63	100	
63	-es	Not the Same	IR	41	100	
64	-ed	Deb Went Camping	F	55	95	<u>her</u> (3)
65	-ing	Cass' Lost Dog	F	98	98	<u>her</u> (2)
66	Syllables	Camping	NF	47	100	
67	Comp Words	Cliff the Pest	F	63	98	<u>now</u> (1)
68	Syllables	Kick the Ball	NF	50	100	
69	TCH	Inside	NF	41	100	

Complete First Grade Set of ALIGNED Titles aligned to UFLI

65 Full Color Readers, 18 Interactive Reproducible Readers, 3 Chapter Books

86 Titles Total

Les	UFLI Focus	Aligned Title		#Words	%	Words Out of Sequence
39	Review	Gus and His Mug	F	74	100	
39	SH	Ted and his Hat	F	81	99	her(1)
40	Review	Tag the Bag	NF	43	100	
40	Review	Can you Go?	NF	80	100	
41	Review	Ted's Gift	F	70	100	
42	FF, LL, SS, ZZ	Miss Jill is Ill	F	70	100	
43	ALL, OLL, ULL	Ted and His Box	F	71	100	
43	ALL, OLL, ULL	Hit the Ball	F	35	100	
44	CK	Tuck	F	45	100	
44	CK	Jen and the Bag	F	64	98	hello (1)
45	SH	Trish	F	74	97	out(1), scoop(1)
46	TH	The Pals Fish Trip	G	112	100	
47	TH	Don and Tod	F	58	100	
48	CH	Mitch and the Egg	F	61	100	
49	Review	Catch the Ball	NF	41	100	
50	WH/PH	Mo's Can	F	195	100	
51	NG	Jax on the Swings	IR	60	100	
51	NG	Dog in a Box	F	68	94	says (4)
52	NK	Off to the Sand	F	83	100	
53	Review	Kinds of Spiders	NF	136	99	food(3)
54	A_E	Nate's Bake Game	F	116	91	eat(1), hi(2), says(7)
55	I_E	Stuck!	G	116	99	out(2)
56	E_E	The Phone	IR	68	100	
57	Review	You and Your Dog	NF	130		her(1), knock(2)
57	Review	The Drone	IR	105	100	
58	U_E	Luke the Ape	F	131	99	feel (1)
59	Review	Mike Saves the Day	F	89	96	puts(1), day(1), away(1), finds(1)
60	_CE	Cade's Ride	F	75	97	beach(2)
61	_GE	Skip the Skunk	F	68	99	about(1)
62	Review	Songs	NF	43	95	play(1), music(1)
63	-es	Jules	IR	59	100	
64	-ed	Brin and the Prom	F	85	*91	put(1), her(6), new (1)
65	-ing	Seth and Beth	F	172	99	fly(1)
66	Syllables	Flags	F	111	99	put(1)
66	Open/ Closed	Zo Goes to the Mall	IR	75	100	
67	Comp W	A Trip	NF	71	96	fly(1), sandy(1), lucky(1)
67a	Comp W	The Anthill	IR	81	100	

		Complete Set of First Grade				86 Titles
Le s	UFLI Focus	Aligned Title		#W ord s	%	Words Out of Sequence
68	Syllables	The Stange Insect Contest	IR	84	100	
68	Syllables	The Box	G	158	100	
69	TCH	Pals	F	56	100	
70	DGE	The Hedgehog	IR	95	100	
71	Review	Ted's Ball	F	72	100	
72	ILD, OLD, IND, OLT, OST	Hold my Hand	IR	57	100	
73	Y as I	Coming Home	IR	83	100	
74	Y as E	A Chilly Day	NF	41	93	<u>down</u> (1), <u>day</u> (1), <u>put</u> (1)
75	-LE	Bubbles	IR	103	100	
76	Review	Sports for All	NF	146	99	<u>people</u> (1), <u>shoot</u> ing (a basketball) (1)
76	Review	Family Dress Up	F	104	99	<u>family</u> (1)
77	AR	Arden the Artist	IR	93	100	
77	AR	Fishing	NF	61	95	<u>wood</u> (1), <u>hook</u> (1)
78	OR	Fake Worlds	IR	106	100	
79	Review	The Panda Gobbles	NF	42	93	<u>giraffe</u> (1), <u>head</u> (1), <u>need</u> (1)
80	ER	A Trip to Bell Pond	F	119	98	<u>down</u> (1), <u>good</u> (1)
81	IR, UR	Basketball!	NF	109	100	
82	ER, IR, UR	Surprise!	IR	122	100	
83	Review	Birds	NF	216	99	<u>coo</u> (1), <u>stay</u> (1), <u>eat</u> (1)
84	AI, AY	A Rainy Day	F	188	99	<u>eat</u> (1)
85	EE, EA, EY	Hide and Seek	F	111	100	
86	OA, OW, OE	Willow's Fishbowl	IR	78	100	
87	IE, IGH	Spotlight	IR	116	100	
88	Review	Baseball!	NF	106	100	
89	Oo (book)	Sasha the Skunk	F	160	99	<u>too</u> (1)
90	Oo (moon)	Scoop and the Moon	F	92	99	<u>who</u> (1)
90	Oo (moon)	Tools	NF	49	100	
91	EW, UI, UE	Meet New Friends...	F	284	100	
92	Review	The Hat Shop	F	162	100	
93	AU, AW, AUGH	Animals of the Jungle	NF	137	99	<u>family</u> (1)
93	AU, AW, AUGH	The Cracked Claw	IR	94	100	
94	EA, E	The Messy Web	F	154	100	
95	OI, OY	Royal Farms	IR	121	100	
96	OU, OW	A Trip to the Shore	NF	158	99	<u>family</u> (1)
97	Review	Kinds of Dogs	NF	237	99	<u>pounds</u> (4)
98	KN, WR, MB	Skittle's First Day	F	235	100	
99	-s/-es	Football!	NF	118	100	

		Complete Set of First Grade				86 Titles
Les	UFLI Focus	Aligned Title		# Word	%	Words Out of Sequence
100	-er. -est	Eero's Dream	F	134	100	
101	-ly	Swimming	F	127	100	
102	-less, -ful	Animals Chomping	NF	93	100	
103	un-	Raj's Gift	F	211	99	th <u>ough</u> t(1)
104	pre, re	On the Grass	NF	84	100	
105	dis	On the Ice	NF	103	100	
106	Review	Spiders Hunting	NF	248	100	
107	Doub cons	The Best Pal Award	F	267	100	
108	Doub cons	Roses	NF	165	99	bl <u>oo</u> m(1), fl <u>oo</u> r(1)

Complete Set of			35 Aligned Titles		
Les	Aligned Title		#Words	%	Words Out of Sequence
41	The Bad Smell	F	53	100	
42	The Storm	F	274	100	
43	Dogs with Jobs	NF	243	100	
44	Animals	NF	50	100	
45	Volleyball	NF	207	100	
48	Packing a Lunch	NF	73	97	sch <u>oo</u> l(1), sprink <u>le</u> (1)
49	Fire Safety	NF	316	100	
57	The Kite	F	193	100	
58	The Talented Jen	F	100	95	<u>w</u> rite(1), <u>d</u> own(1), roll <u>e</u> r(1), y <u>a</u> rd(1), fl <u>y</u> (1)
62	Dress Up Time	G	257	100	
63	Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall	F	270	100	
64	Softball	NF	207	100	
66	Cycles	NF	254	100	
67	The Shopping Trip	F	259	100	
71	The Farm	NF	219	100	
76	The Cracked Branch	F	161	98	<u>w</u> rench(1), <u>n</u> ew(1), <u>h</u> ow(1), swo <u>o</u> ps(1)
79	Chip the Tricky Chick	F	219	100	
82	Fiber Arts	NF	142	100	
83	Jobs	NF	182	100	
84	The Invite	F	206	100	
84	The Shells	F	134	97	<u>g</u> ood(1), sm <u>oo</u> th(1), <u>z</u> oo <u>m</u> (1), <u>o</u> ur(1)
85	Animals of the Sea	NF	341	100	
85	Making a Meal	F	99	100	
86	Beep! Beep!	F	140	100	
86	The Boat Ride	F	227	100	
91	The Book Shop	F	302	100	
92	Packing	F	237	100	
93	The Flawless Launch	F	215	99	miss <u>i</u> on(1)
94	Connor	F	269	99	th <u>o</u> ught(1)
95	Roscoe, the Robot	F	312	100	
96	The Moon	NF	257	100	
97	Ouch! The Bad Hike	F	252	100	
99	Snakes	NF	259	100	
112	Planets	NF	329	99	bill <u>i</u> on(1), collect <u>i</u> on(1)
119	The Eruption	F	267	100	

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I am a researcher, author, and former first grade teacher with an absolute passion for literacy education and how strong reading skills have the potential to change a child's life! I have utilized my experiences teaching new, young readers to inform my practice of writing interesting and engaging books for kids of that age!

I hold three teacher certifications: Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, and Gifted Education. I have a real "on the ground" and "in the trenches" understanding of what it is like to be in a classroom, which many other publishers of decodable books lack. This led me to make careful, well-researched, and practical decisions about my books. I learned many lessons about educational materials and avoided pitfalls that I found myself dealing with while teaching.

While teaching, I started writing decodable materials that I couldn't find elsewhere, but that I thought would be the most beneficial to my students. I was writing directly to what phonics skills and high-frequency words my class had learned week-by-week. This ensured that my students always had direct and targeted practice for the new skills they had recently learned. Every student in my class ended each year reading on or above-grade level.

Having taught hundreds of children to read over the years, I saw the need to put high-quality, engaging, and decodable books in the hands of students in classrooms across the country. That is why I wrote the 200 titles of the **ALIGNED** Decodables! These vital tools fill the need schools' have to inspire their students to build their reading skills and develop a love of reading!

When not writing at my home in New Jersey, I enjoy singing, painting, and spending time with my husband of over twenty years, Erik, our two children, Connor and Gavin, and our dog, Piper. (Piper pops up very frequently in the books as a fun "Easter egg" for your students!) If you have any questions, please reach out! I love to meet people working hard in this field. AlignedEducationalResources@gmail.com.

