



Benchmark Education Company Response to Texas Resource Review: Ready to Advance, Texas Edition

Program Overview

Ready to Advance (RTA), Texas Edition was designed specifically to fully align with the Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines and received a score of 100% compliance from the Texas Education Agency.

All *Ready to Advance* instruction and activities are aligned with research-based, developmental learning progressions outlined and developed by program author Vicki Gibson, Ph. D. The Scope and Sequence, lessons, and pedagogical guidance were also extensively reviewed by Dr. Karin Hess, a nationally recognized researcher/author/expert, and Contributing Author.

The *RTA* scope and sequence and development of lessons and materials follow an evidence-based sequential and recursive continuum that scaffolds the presentation of new content and skills from easy to more challenging across the year. It offers repeated exposures of content and skills that deepen comprehension over time and ensure children sustain gains.

The primary goals of *RTA* are to:

- Provide teachers with a well-designed curriculum with extensive coverage of all **10 Learning Domains** with options for differentiating instruction.
- Provide **classroom management routines** and tools that help teachers manage whole- and small-group instruction while developing children's **social-emotional** skills.
- Develop children's understanding of **mathematics and science** vocabulary, concepts, and skills.
- Ensure children participate in learning experiences that develop **strong foundational skills** in vocabulary word knowledge, phonological awareness, and oral language; the prerequisites for comprehension in all domains of knowledge.

Response to Texas Resource Review Committee Findings

Benchmark Education Company appreciates the thorough efforts of the Texas Resource Review committee and its detailed gathering of evidence for each criteria. *RTA* has met criteria in most categories reviewed. However, as educators and decision-makers review the committee's findings, we encourage them to explore the further evidence provided here to support that *Ready to Advance* is the most comprehensive, robust Prekindergarten solution for all learners in all districts in Texas.



Section 2

RTA offers a variety of options for differentiating teaching and practice for 3- and 4-year old children, recognizing that children’s competencies, needs, and their performance of skills often vary depending on prior early learning experiences, children’s behavioral and emotional management, and maturity and interests. Evidence in research supports aligning instruction with children’s competencies and needs, not limiting educational opportunities based on chronological age. *RTA* provides differentiated Small-Group Lessons (Build, Teach, Extend) ensuring all children receive instruction and guidance on the topic or skill included in Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines.

In the program introduction “How to Use the Resources,” the small group accommodations for children of different ages and needs is pointed out, but not as specifically as requested by the reviewers. Benchmark has revised each Teacher’s Resource System and the Program Guide to specify the parts of the lesson that are for 3- and 4-year old children respectively.

Section 3

As pointed out by the reviewers, *RTA* includes appropriate texts, lessons, and activities that support the development of social and emotional competencies. Benchmark wishes to highlight that lesson plans in Unit 1 establish a base for Social and Emotional Learning with activities that include teacher support and guidance for implementation—modeling, teaching, monitoring progress and developing self-regulation and managing emotions. These activities are extended and built upon in every unit.

The specific Social and Emotional Text for each unit was written to explicitly reinforce and develop competencies that help children understand and respond to emotions. The Inside Front Cover of each of the Social and Emotional stories provides guidance for explicitly teaching and developing social and emotional competencies about understanding and responding to emotions. In addition to the Teacher’s Resource System and Social and Emotional Lap books, teacher materials include the following:

- **Retelling Cards** for each Social and Emotional text reinforce the social and emotion lesson of the story.
- **Social and Emotional Songs** for each unit, written by Latin Grammy-Award winners *1, 2, 3 Andrés*. (Coming Soon: a music video for each Social and Emotional Song in both English and Spanish.)
- **Social and Emotional Learning Story Props and Teacher’s Guide** have children role-play and discuss scenarios with a specific focus on understanding and responding to emotions.

As noted by reviewers, the Classroom Management Guide describes how to set up a classroom environment that supports predictable order using whole and small group activities. While specific information and graphics are presented on classroom arrangement, Benchmark will augment the online Classroom Management Tool to include additional information about different classroom sizes and designs and ways to vary classroom arrangement throughout the year with the help of children.



Section 4

In addition to the materials provided in the original submission of *RTA*, resources have been added to the *Benchmark Universe, RTA Library* in order to provide more practice for the **production of a variety of sounds, provide guidance on students' speaking skills, and to support English Language Learners.**

Interactive Sound-Spelling Cards and Articulation Videos in both English and Spanish which provides:

- Phonological Awareness Chants
- Articulation Videos
- Sample Words with the target sound for practice
- Action Rhymes for Phonological Awareness
- Support for English Language Learners and information about sound transfer.

Routines and Strategies for Supporting Language Learners which provides:

- Introduction and overview by Silvia Dorta-Duque Reyes, M.A.
- Banks of routines for English Learners
- Routines for Cross-Linguistic Development
- Strategies for using components from *Listos y Adelante* in conjunction with *RTA* to support children who speak Spanish at home
- Contrastive Analysis of English and Nine World Languages.



Section 5

The reviewers stated that “materials suggest teaching three-syllable words before two-syllable words.”

Benchmark Education Company would like to make clear that the materials do not suggest beginning with segmenting 3-syllable words. The example given is from Unit 4, however in Unit 3, students are introduced to compound words and syllable segmentation. The base for segmentation has been set by Unit 4. Students may encounter both 3-syllable and 2-syllable words after Unit 3. Words are also often chosen to fit with the context and topic that students are working on in the week to provide meaning in conjunction with phonological awareness.

Beyond the materials and strategies for using environmental print that are noted by the reviewers, *RTA* also provides opportunities to use and discuss purposeful environmental print, including:

- **Rotation Chart**
- **Helper Chart/Daily Schedule**
- **Choice Board**
- **Transitional Activity Cards**
- **Double-Sided Math, Science, and Literacy Posters**
- **Sound-Symbol Cards**
- **High-Frequency Word Cards**
- **Picture Word Cards**

The reviewers pointed out that the “materials’ text selection is at an appropriate level and includes a variety of both fiction and nonfiction,” however noted that inclusion of nursery rhymes, classics, and popular titles were limited. For *RTA Texas*, Benchmark included selections that are explicitly created for this program to address the 10 Learning Domains and would be new to PreK classrooms. It is important to note that the program includes culturally relevant and classic trade books, such as *What Can You Do with a Paleta?*, by Carmen Tafolla and *The Mitten*, by Jan Brett.



Section 10

Reviewers cited evidence to show that “materials provide some recommended targeted instruction and extended learning activities for students who have mastered the content.” Further evidence that extended learning activities are provided to maximize students’ learning potential and apply their new learning include:

- Materials recommend instruction and activities for students who struggle to master content in Small Group to support every whole group lesson.
- Materials recommend instruction and activities for students who have mastered content in Small Group to extend every whole group lesson. (BUILD and EXTEND)
- Enrichment Activities and additional suggestions for all learners are located on interior of ALL Big Books and Lap Books.
- Additional Enrichment activities are provided for all learners on Retelling and Concept Cards, Story Webs or Maps.
- Week 4 Review Lessons are specifically designed to provide Enrichment and Support for all learners.

As stated above in response to Section 4, new materials have been added to augment supports for English Learners. See descriptions of **Interactive Sound-Spelling Cards and Articulation Videos in both English and Spanish** and **Routines and Strategies for Supporting Language Learners**.

Section 11

RTA is aligned to the Texas PreK Guidelines to 100% compliance of the Texas Education Agency. The **TPG citations are shown at point of use** in every lesson, and fidelity of implementation provides a robust and compliant program. Benchmark will provide a newly annotated Scope and Sequence with TPG indicators for each section as requested.

Finally, BEC would like to reiterate and highlight our commitment to Professional Development customized for each district’s needs including **year-long planning**. Our Professional Development Division has provided professional development and learning services to all levels of educators from the founding of the company in 1998. With a focus on creating a lasting, systemic change, BEC provides ongoing training in literacy instruction. This includes best practices and instructional models such as differentiated instruction, Foundational Skills, Biliteracy, English Language Development and Acquisition, Gradual Release of Responsibility, Response to Intervention, Responsive Teaching, content-area concepts, metacognition, comprehensive literacy instruction, and student observational techniques.

Thank you to the Texas Resource Review committee for joining Benchmark Education Company in our commitment to providing the best educational materials for all learners.