

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH) would like to extend our thanks to the Institute for Education Policy at Johns Hopkins School of Education for their ELA Knowledge Map™ review of the *Journeys* program. Research-based, *Journeys* has long been a leader with demonstrated efficacy. Since the first version of *Journeys* was created, over 25 research studies have been performed to evaluate the program’s effectiveness, and findings of this research have been used to improve and refine the instruction and structure of this program.

*Journeys* has a Strong ESSA Evidence level and has been proven to improve reading achievement. For example, PRES Associates, Inc.’s “gold-standard” RCT study found that students using *Journeys* significantly outperformed the control group, on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in reading comprehension and vocabulary achievement.

*Journeys* includes complex texts, appropriate for each grade level, with engaging themes, rich language, and elements of style. High-quality literary and informational texts are at the center of the program. *Journeys* texts offer engaging narratives and expository texts about interesting topics and offer an expanded focus on literary and informational texts across the grade levels. In addition, the content of the lessons is carefully designed around themes and topics that support the essential building of students’ knowledge of different domains.

*Journeys* recognizes the reciprocal relationship between literacy and content knowledge. The more that students know about a topic, the more easily they can comprehend texts about the content; the more students read about a topic, the more they build their knowledge of that topic. Through reading complex and high-quality literary and informational texts throughout *Journeys*, students strengthen their content knowledge and encounter engaging themes and texts. By building their content knowledge, students are better prepared to comprehend increasingly complex texts as they continue through school.

In the ELA Knowledge Map™ report, the Institute’s “analysis of the *Journeys* curriculum finds that the materials included are generally high-quality” (p. 2). Specifically, “Grades 2 through 5 achieved overall quality scores that fell within the Institute’s range for high quality” (p. 24). As stated in the Institute’s report, “[i]t is important to note that absences at certain levels may reflect curricular progression decisions and other factors, and that the heat maps should be considered in the context of the evaluated system” (pp. 9–10). For example, Grades K and 1 scored lower than the upper grades due to the inclusion of (essential) decodable texts. Crucial to learning to read, decodable texts are designed to reinforce decoding skills, over deep topic knowledge.

It is important to note that *Journeys* supports student knowledge development through additional program components besides the texts themselves, for example: (1) Unit Openers describe the unit topic or theme, offer a hook to the content with a video or media connection that gives additional background or context; (2) The digital FYI Site is tied to unit topics and extends students’ knowledge of new content and ideas. These links to vetted nonfiction articles connect to each unit’s topic and provide opportunities for students to expand their understanding of the topic and use the articles as a source for research and writing to support students’ increased domain knowledge; and (3) Interactive Lessons in Listening, Speaking, and Writing offer contemporary and engaging tutorials along with activities on topics of interest to students.

Given the Institute’s “analysis covers a representative sample based on materials provided by the system, and does not account for more specific variety in the selected texts” (p. 1), a comprehensive list of *Journeys* texts, including texts related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is available by request from HMH.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Please note: By “a representative sample based on materials provided by the system,” the Institute means that it reviews all student-facing materials, *excluding level readers*, due to the innate variation in such material.