# kid•FRIENDLy Considerations:  A Guide for Selecting Software

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**Definition**
An English Language Arts (ELA) or mathematics computer software program for K-12 is a research or evidence-based program used in conjuntion with a core curriculum.  The essential components of such a program include diagnostic assessments and data-driven differentiated instruction.

**Purpose**
This document may be used as a general selection guide with criteria for informal evaluation of a reading ELA or mathematics software program(s). The questions provided are intended to guide collegial conversation when discussing the needs, type and "fit" for a program as a team reviews school student data. Specific content components will be shared for ELA or mathematics.  Primary programs should include the five basic components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.  Programs for grades 4 to 12 should include the five basic components plus writing.  Mathematics requires a balance of building content conceptually then working toward fluency where indicated in the standards. The questions for consideration are listed through the perspectives of students, teachers, principals, district office, and parents. The software is intended to supplement classroom instruction.

**Connection to kid·FRIENDLy RTT-D Grant**
In considering software for students in a kid·FRIENDLy environment, the selection should be made with the goals of the grant in mind.  Quality, standards aligned, research-based programs with adaptive capabilites can provide schools with a valuable resource for learning.  Software programs provide the most benefit to students, especially those who need to pace their learning, when the software (1) customizes learning through assessments, (2) utilizes research-base pedagogy, (3) delivers interactive examples and tutorials, (4) provides timely feedback, and (5) engages students. Personalized learning environments extend learning opportunities beyond the school walls and beyond traditional school calendar days, and when personalization is optimized, kid·FRIENDLy students will have access to a wide range of tools providing them with a variety of methods for accessing, engaging and expressing their work.

**Document Categories**
This document is divided into five sections to give the perspective of stakeholders, (i.e., students, teachers, principals, district office, and parents). Additionally, two columns of multiple perspective questions are provided for school teams to use in guiding team reflections and discussions during the review process for software.

| Perspective | Considerations for Selection | Considerations for Look-Fors, Support, and Implementation |
|---|---|---|
| **Student** | • What are the targeted grade level(s) for this program?  Does data support the decision?<br>• **ELA Primary**: Does the software focus on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehensions (five components of reading) for (K-3) ELA?<br>• **ELA Grades 4 to 12:**  Does the software focus on the five components of reading plus writing?<br>• **Mathematics**:  Does the software explicitly provide learning of the content through conceptual understanding, procedural skill **and** fluency as defined by common core?<br>• Is the software user friendly for students?<br>• Are students engaged in high level thinking in order to construct concepts and improve comprehension or problem solving?<br>• Are formative assessments embedded with ongoing instructional activities?<br>• Is the learning linked with the results of the student's diagnostic assessment?<br>• Can the software be adapted to meet the instructional needs of students?<br>• Will the students be able to set goals and know when those goals are met?<br>• Are the instructional activities and texts age appropriate? | Look-fors:<br>• Students will be aware of the intended learning goals.<br>• Students will be actively engaged in learning.<br>• Students will be discussing the content.<br>• Students may be using a journal or scratch paper to assist with thinking, writing or problem solving.<br>• Students will have the opportunity for advancement in content.<br>• Students will be involved in on-going assessment.<br><br>Questions:<br>• How does this software foster students' application of learnings on their own?<br>• Does the software provide for constant review and feedback for students? |

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| **Teacher** | • Does this software support and align with classroom instruction?<br>• Have you piloted the program or talked with other educators implementing the program?<br>• Does the software provide timely, accurate, and easily accessible data to inform instruction?<br>• Are the activities aligned with the depth of knowledge and reasoning defined in the common core standards? Does the vendor designate which standards are not appropriate for the software?<br>• Are the logistics of the software a good "fit" for the school?<br>• Are the goals of the software consistent with research on teaching and learning, and are they using successful practices?<br>• Are the goals explicitly and clearly stated?<br>• Is the content culturally ethnically sensitive, free of bias, and reflects diverse student participation and interests?<br>• Does the vendor provide professional development that contributes to the teacher's understanding of the programs framework, instructional skills, and use of materials? | Look-fors:<br>• Teachers can monitor student use of the program including motivational support structures such as games, badges, challenges, etc.<br>• Teachers and students can use reports to set individual learning goals.<br>• Teachers have an opportunity to embed the resources provided by product within classroom lesson plans and instruction.<br>• Teachers can access data reports for progress monitoring of individual students.<br><br>Questions:<br>• Does the software specify conditions and resources needed for implementation?<br><br>• Are the teacher guides user friendly? |

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| **Principal** | • Is the student data well organized to be easily accessed for determining the effectiveness of the software?<br>• Does the software offer 24/7 access?<br>• Does the software provide parent feedback?<br>• Do the assessments identify aspects of student progress over time?<br>• Does the software give data that support the narrowing of achievement gap or accomplishments between disaggregated groups?<br>• Has the software been shown to be effective when delivered to students who are demographically similar to the students with whom it will be used?<br>• What are the start-up requirements of the program? (teacher training, hardware, materials)<br>• What qualities or competencies are needed to have qualified personnel use the software effectively? | Look-fors:<br>• Administrator has access to data reports to inform school program.<br>• Data reports will inform school program and structures. (Professional Learning Communities, Team Planning, Professional Development, etc.)<br><br>Questions:<br>• What supports will be needed if the software can be accessed 24/7?<br>• Does the software have an implementation plan? (initial stage, partial implemented, fully implemented)<br>• How will the software be monitored for fidelity of implementation?  What supports are provided from the vendor for support?<br>• Will the software be sustainable as the core instruction changes? |
| **Central Office** | • Does the software align with the district goals for reading and mathematics?<br>• Is the program sustainable over time?<br>• Does the program align with the RTI model for the district? | • What will be the plan to evaluate the overall impact of the software?<br>• Will funding and materials become a barrier to implementation? |

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| **Parents** | • Will the students have access to the program outside of school?<br>• Will the students be pulled from other classes or areas where they will miss instruction?<br>• How often will parents receive feedback concerning student progress?  How will progress be communicated?<br>• How do parents know students will receive classroom (Teacher to Student) instruction when needed? | • What communication tool(s) are available for parents to explain the program and its purpose?<br>• To what extent are families meaningfully involved in supporting their child's learning with this program?<br>• Is the learning likely to be transferred to other settings? |

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