

# Open Textbook Collaborative

<https://bit.ly/OpenTextCollabNJ>

A New Jersey Higher Education OER Project funded in 2020 through the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education for the Open Textbooks Pilot Program, U.S. Department of Education



## Open Textbook Collaborative Review<sup>1</sup>

**OTC Title Under Review:** *Beginning Algebra Part I by Palma Benko, et al*

**OTC Title URL:** <https://opennj.net/beginning-algebra/all>

**Review Date and Author:** April 2023 by Tara Paxton of Rowan University

OER projects are rated for each criterion on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = very poor and 5 = excellent), generating a total score out of 55 with a brief explanation of the rating.

1. Comprehensiveness - 3

- a. The text covers all areas and ideas of the subject appropriately and can be easily navigated.
- b. How do you rate the book's overall comprehensiveness?

The overall comprehensiveness of the text is good. It covers all relevant areas and ideas of introductory algebra. The navigation of the book needs improvement. See modularity and structure comments below.

2. Content Accuracy - 4

- a. Content, including diagrams and other supplementary material, is accurate, error-free, and unbiased.
- b. Overall, how do you rate the accuracy of the content?

Without working out all of the problems in the workbook, the overall accuracy of the content looks good. There were no major issues that I came across while reviewing the diagrams and math.

3. Relevance/Longevity - 2

- a. Content is up-to-date, but not in a way that will quickly make the text obsolete within a short period of time. The text is written and/or arranged in such a way that necessary updates will be relatively easy and straightforward to implement.
- b. Overall, how do you rate the relevance/longevity of the book?

The relevance and longevity of the material is fine – however, the aesthetics of the textbook are dated. The textbook looks like it was recreated from a 1980 math textbook and in that regard will not sufficiently provide the visual cues students today or tomorrow will be able to successfully navigate. It looks like it was just typed up and not formatted at all using today's word processing software.

4. Clarity - 5

- a. The text is written in lucid, accessible prose, and provides adequate context for any jargon/technical terminology used.
- b. Overall, how do you rate the clarity of the book?

---

<sup>1</sup> N.B. This review was completed prior to a complete copyediting and reformatting of the *Beginning Algebra Part I* textbook, which addressed a number of the concerns raised herein.

# Open Textbook Collaborative

<https://bit.ly/OpenTextCollabNJ>

*A New Jersey Higher Education OER Project funded in 2020 through the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education for the Open Textbooks Pilot Program, U.S. Department of Education*



The clarity of the text was good. The topics, objectives, examples and workbook questions were well written, clear and concise. There was no jargon or overly technical terminology used and any student who is fluent or approaching fluency in English would not find difficulty in comprehending the text.

## 5. Consistency - 5

- a. The text is internally consistent in terms of terminology and framework.
- b. How do you rate the overall consistency of the text?

The consistency of the text was good. It was very simple to understand. The terminology was to the point and not overly technical. It was consistent throughout the text.

## 6. Modularity - 2

- a. The text is easily and readily divisible into smaller reading sections that can be assigned at different points within the course (i.e., enormous blocks of text without subheadings should be avoided). The text should not be overly self-referential, and should be easily reorganized, and realigned with various subunits of a course without presenting much disruption to the reader.
- b. Overall, how do you rate the modularity of the text?

The modularity of the text could have been arranged to be more graphically appealing. I found the ease in reading the text to be somewhat awkward. After the objective, the subheadings were not utilized sufficiently to cue the student as to what they were supposed to be absorbing next.

In addition – in some sections some text was over exaggerated and made to be much larger than the adjacent text. This looked like the text had been cut and pasted from another source and was not re-formatted. It made the product look sloppy and unfinished.

## 7. Organization/Structure/Flow -2

- a. The topics in the text are presented in a logical, clear fashion.
- b. Overall, how do you rate the organization/structure/flow of the text?

I found the text and workbook to be overly simplified. It did not have any consistent breaks between the sections of the text. For example: there was no visual transition between the learning objective to the definitions to the lesson. There were no sub-headings so, I didn't know if I was reading the definition or an example. There should be a bold line or sub heading to distinguish between the sections. Today's student is use to visual cues. There were no visual cues as to what part they were reading. A bold line or grayed border separating the sections should be considered.

In addition, the flow of the text was awkward. New topics were started at the very bottom of the last topic's page. These should always begin at the top of a page, again to cue the student as to the beginning of a new topic, visually.

Another suggestion is that the worksheet questions should have a line next to the question for the answer to be written or typed in to create another visual cue that this is where the work should be shown.

# Open Textbook Collaborative

<https://bit.ly/OpenTextCollabNJ>

*A New Jersey Higher Education OER Project funded in 2020 through the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education for the Open Textbooks Pilot Program, U.S. Department of Education*



## 8. Interface - 1

- a. The text is free of significant interface issues, including navigation problems, distortion of images/charts, and any other display features that may distract or confuse the reader.
- b. Overall, how do you rate the textbook's interface?

As mentioned above, one issue with the interface was the beginning of a topic starting at the bottom of the last topic's page. This can be confusing to the reader and should be re-formatted to begin at the top of a page. It will also help with navigation when a student is using the table of contents and they need to find a topic quickly. Starting off with a new topic on a new page is desirable for multiple formatting schemes.

There was distortion of charts and tables on many of the pages. The tables should be formatted in a font size so that the columns of the chart don't distort the text to fit in the text boxes. In many of the charts and tables, the instructions or examples were difficult to read because they were not fit to the text box or column and were interrupted to move to the next line while reading. In addition, the graphics in many of the charts were distorted; they weren't centered, they were not to scale with the text or they were blurred.

In addition – in some sections some text was over exaggerated and made to be much larger than the adjacent text. This looked like the text had been cut and pasted from another source and was not re-formatted. It made the product look sloppy and unfinished.

Another issue is that the navigation menu page numbers and the page numbers in the document do not match. That should be corrected. The navigation pane also does not list all of the topics. The table of contents page and the graphics page are displayed in a black background and are not easily readable.

The instructors guide also had formatting problems with the tables. The text was sized too large and made it look unprofessional. There should also have been links to other sources so that the instructor could prepare lessons and provide other sources of material for students to reference if needed.

## 9. Grammatical/Spelling Errors - 5

- a. The text contains no grammatical or spelling errors.
- b. How do you rate the grammar and spelling of the text?

After reading all of the texts, I didn't find any obvious spelling or grammatical errors.

## 10. Diversity and Inclusion - 5

- a. The text reflects diversity and inclusion regarding culture, gender, ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, education, religion. It does not include insensitive or offensive language in these areas.
- b. Overall, how do you rate the diversity and inclusion of the text?

After reading all of the texts, I didn't find any issues with diversity or inclusion. All of the examples and math problems seemed to be generic and did not include any insensitive or offensive language.

# Open Textbook Collaborative

<https://bit.ly/OpenTextCollabNJ>

*A New Jersey Higher Education OER Project funded in 2020 through the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education for the Open Textbooks Pilot Program, U.S. Department of Education*



## 11. Recommendation

- a. Do you recommend this book?

No

- b. If not, why?

There are many more modern, updated, more aesthetically pleasing to today's students and just as accurate options out there to use instead of this textbook.

Rating: 34/55