

Hickman County Schools

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Last Updated: September 1, 2023

Approved: June 11, 2024

This Foundational Literacy Skills Plan has been approved by the Tennessee Department of Education and meets the requirements of the *Tennessee Literacy Success Act*. All portions of the Foundational Literacy Skills plan were submitted to the department and approved. To view the supplemental artifacts, please contact the district directly.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades K-2

Our district uses McGraw Hill Wonders as our approved curriculum, and we supplement the foundational skills instruction with the materials from the TN Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement. This curriculum is approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission and is aligned to the Tennessee ELA standards and to the research of the Science of Reading. This curriculum uses foundational skills as the primary form of instruction. Students in grades K-2 spend a minimum of 45 minutes per day in foundational skills instruction which includes activities that build phonological awareness and provides phonics practice and fluency practice, in addition to comprehension and vocabulary work (“word work”). During that instruction, teachers explicitly teach a sound, the students practice the sound aloud, the teacher models writing the sound, the students refer to their individual code chart on which they write the sound, then students apply the skill in independent practice (individually or in small groups).

For example, during the second quarter of first grade, students will learn how to decode separated digraphs (for example, like and same) and vowel digraphs (for example, seed and boat) and will be able to learn and use the most common spellings for each sound. Students have the opportunity to strengthen their knowledge of this learning when using decodable texts that are aligned with the sounds taught in explicit instruction.

Our district also uses McGraw Hill Wonders for our reading curriculum, knowledge band. Students spend 45 minutes per day listening and responding to read-alouds and reading and answering comprehension questions both orally and in writing. Students also participate in small group instruction during this time with the classroom teacher on strengthening their reading skills.

As a supplement, students will also incorporate the knowledge component of the Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) program into their learning experience. The program serves to expand students' understanding and vocabulary across the realms of literature, history, geography, and science.

In 2024-2025, our district is implementing a comprehensive K-12 writing plan designed to enhance students' writing skills progressively across all grade levels. Clear and specific expectations for

writing proficiency will be outlined for each grade, ensuring a consistent and coherent development of writing abilities as students advance through their education.

In grades K-2, the focus will be on foundational writing skills. Kindergarten students will start with basic letter formation, understanding the relationship between letters and sounds, and beginning to express ideas through pictures and simple words. By first grade, students will progress to writing complete sentences, using basic punctuation. Second graders will begin to write short paragraphs, expand their vocabulary, and begin to understand the structure of a simple story or essay.

To assess student mastery and ensure they are meeting the outlined expectations, three benchmark assessments will be conducted at various points throughout the academic year. These benchmarks will provide valuable insights into each student's progress, allowing for targeted support and instruction to help all students achieve writing proficiency. For the younger students in K-2, these assessments will be age-appropriate and designed to gauge their understanding and application of fundamental writing skills.

In the coming year, we're committed to facilitating dedicated collaboration time for teachers to deepen their grasp of the curricula and its influence on our instructional methods. We'll transform their collaborative efforts into practical lesson plans, focusing on reinforcing Tier I instruction, integrating differentiation strategies, and establishing standardized writing norms.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

In grades 3-5, our educational structure involves teacher departmentalization, with students benefiting from dedicated 90-minute literacy blocks each day (30 minutes for foundational literacy). Our evidence-based curriculum resources have been meticulously chosen from the state's approved list by the Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. We utilize the Great Minds Wit and Wisdom 3-5 curriculum. While the allotted time for literacy remains constant, the daily schedule adapts to the specific lessons.

Each day's curriculum is designed to foster knowledge-building and includes explicit instruction, offering students ample opportunities to apply what they've learned through reading, writing, critical thinking, verbal communication, and attentive listening tasks. Our selected materials also immerse students in the intricacies of morphology, grammar, spelling, vocabulary acquisition, fluency, and comprehension. These aspects are seamlessly woven into the curriculum, avoiding isolated teaching.

Students engage with reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language skills in a cohesive manner. Each module seamlessly integrates strands of standards throughout, facilitating students' success as they leverage their expanding background and vocabulary knowledge related to the module's subject. This integrated approach empowers students to flourish, allowing them to apply and enhance their skills across various areas.

The materials provide thorough instruction and diagnostic support in fundamental concepts such as print understanding, phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, syntax, and fluency. This progression follows a clear and logical path. These foundational skills are not only pivotal but also integral elements of an all-encompassing reading program. This program is

intricately crafted to nurture adept readers who have the capacity to understand a wide array of texts across various genres and fields.

As mentioned earlier, our district is implementing a comprehensive K-12 writing plan designed to enhance students' writing skills progressively across all grade levels. This plan ensures a consistent and coherent development of writing abilities as students advance through their education.

In grade 3, students will build on their foundational skills by writing cohesive explanatory paragraphs. They will focus on organizing their thoughts clearly, using appropriate transitional words, and supporting their main ideas with relevant details.

In grades 4-5, students will further develop their writing abilities by learning to write multi-paragraph essays in three genres: narrative, explanatory, and opinion. Emphasis will be placed on developing a clear main idea, supporting details, and logical organization. Students will also learn to revise and edit their work to improve clarity and coherence. By fifth grade, students will work towards developing sophistication in their writing by enhancing their use of descriptive language, incorporating varied sentence structures, and refining their voice and style, thus laying a strong foundation for advanced writing tasks in subsequent grades.

In the forthcoming 2024-2025 school year, our agenda prioritizes providing comprehensive professional development to educators in grades 3-5, focusing on enhancing their skills in lesson planning. This includes effectively applying instructional strategies aimed at fostering student growth and academic achievement, with a particular emphasis on growing subgroups of students based on data. We'll emphasize small group instruction, leveraging acceleration to pre-teach upcoming lessons and skills.

Additionally, we're introducing a district-wide writing plan, encompassing a structured framework and sequence for writing instruction across grades K-12.

Additional Supports

Support for Subgroups of Students: To support subgroups of students who did not show growth on the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) in 4th grade, we will begin by analyzing the data to identify specific students in each affected subgroup. We will conduct needs assessments to pinpoint academic challenges and form small, focused groups tailored to these needs. Instruction will utilize the acceleration model, frontloading material that will be covered in ELA classes. Regular progress monitoring through formative assessments and bi-weekly or monthly data review meetings will ensure instructional strategies remain effective. Additionally, ongoing professional development for teachers will focus on strategies for diverse learners and interventions, supported by collaborative planning sessions to share best practices.

Support for Schools: To support our lowest performing school, we will provide principal coaching to enhance instructional leadership and data-driven decision-making skills. Coaching will be provided by the K-8 Supervisor and National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (N.I.E.T.). Our approach will focus on three key areas: planning, walkthroughs, and PLC/PD. Principals will be trained in setting measurable goals for student growth and developing actionable plans. Walkthroughs will be conducted regularly to provide real-time feedback and identify areas for immediate improvement.

School-wide interventions will include establishing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) for collaborative teacher support and continuous professional development (PD), ensuring curriculum alignment with state standards. By following this comprehensive plan, we aim to equip schools with the necessary tools and resources to foster a positive learning environment and ensure all students achieve academic growth.

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2

McGraw Hill Wonders

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5

McGraw Hill Wonders: Grade 3
Great Minds Wit and Wisdom: Grades 4 and 5

Supplemental Instructional Materials

To meet the requirements of the Tennessee Literacy Success Act, our educational strategy entails the adoption of specific curricula tailored to different grade levels. In the foundational years of grades K-3, we have embraced the McGraw Hill Wonders curriculum. Moreover, our district's commitment to literacy excellence extends to the comprehensive implementation of the Tennessee Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement resources. This commitment is evident across the spectrum of grades, ranging from kindergarten through second grade. A particular highlight of this initiative is the complete inclusion of Sounds First instruction, underscoring our dedication to nurturing strong foundational skills in our young learners. In grades 4 and 5, we have thoughtfully integrated the Great Minds Wit and Wisdom curriculum, encompassing not only comprehensive subject matter but also essential foundational skills. It's pertinent to note that both these curricula have been meticulously selected from the state's list of approved materials for adoption. Additionally, we're introducing a district-wide writing plan, encompassing a structured framework and sequence for writing instruction across grades K-12. In addition, as mentioned above, we supplement the knowledge portion of our K-2 instruction with Amplify CKLA.

Universal Reading Screener for Grades K-5.

DIBELS, 8th Edition: Pre-K
Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (aimswebPlus): K-5

Additional Screener information

Our district will use Aimsweb as our Universal Reading Screener for K-5 students and will provide professional learning to all of our teachers and interventionists on the use of those assessments and the data they provide.

Intervention Structure and Supports

In the fall, all students are assessed using Aimsweb to determine which students display reading deficiencies or are considered “at-risk”. Our grade-level teachers, interventionists, and building administrators review the universal screener data to determine which students performed at or below the 40th percentile and those students are classified as needing assistance from Tier II and Tier III instruction. A diagnostic assessment is given to students who qualify for services in Tier II and Tier III to determine specific areas of deficit so that students are placed in appropriate small groups with targeted interventions to close skill gaps. Students receive small group interventions each day for a minimum of 45 minutes in the area of their assessed deficit. Our schools have research-based options for reading intervention support for students who are “at-risk” or who have been identified as having reading deficiencies. The foundational skills curriculum we currently use contains an assessment and remediation guide which allows teachers to implement specific activities to directly address skill gaps for RTI groups. If that intervention is not sufficiently meeting student needs and closing learning gaps, teachers can use a more comprehensive intervention (such as Heggerty or Wilson Reading) as an option.

School data teams meet every 4 ½ weeks to monitor student progress and to determine the need for changes in interventions or in the personnel providing interventions. The data team takes into account student attendance and engagement as part of the decision-making process. Our students receive explicit instruction in their area of deficit in small groups using research-based materials and strategies.

These students are also screened using additional survey level assessments to determine if they have characteristics of dyslexia. Students who demonstrate those characteristics receive intensive intervention as outlined in the Say Dyslexia Law using programs that meet the law’s requirements. Our district uses myLexia, a research-based supplemental program, as one intervention for students with characteristics of dyslexia. Families are notified that the myLexia from Lexia Learning Systems is a research-based supplemental program which is based on the Orton-Gillingham approach of systematic, explicit, sequential, phonics-based instruction and is considered a strong support for those students. Intervention takes place daily during a grade-level time in the master schedule which is dedicated solely for RTI. When students are in their RTI groups, they work on activities and assignments that make them stronger in that particular skill. For example, students who need instruction in comprehension may read a new text and answer scaffolded questions, all related to the knowledge-building unit they are studying in Tier I instruction. For students who need fluency support, they may receive intervention using the myLexia program.

Additionally, tutoring will be implemented to support students who require ELA tutoring. Tutoring sessions will take place during regular school hours. Our tutoring program will be guided by an ongoing data collection process to ensure targeted support is provided to students who need it most. Support will include high-quality tutoring instruction designed to accelerate their learning, moving them from “approaching” to “met expectations” or “exceed expectations” levels in literacy. These gains will be achieved through access to and engagement in prioritized grade-level work that aligns with core instruction. To maintain quality and effectiveness, tutor-to-student ratios will adhere

to TN ALL Corps requirements, with a maximum ratio of 1:3 in grades 1-5. Training and professional development opportunities will be provided to tutors to ensure fidelity in tutoring delivery.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

Our district notifies parents of students in grades K-5 upon completing benchmark assessments if their child is identified as “at-risk” for or having a significant reading difficulty (as evidenced by students scoring in the 0-40th percentile). Student scores are communicated in parent-friendly language that provides a clear explanation of student skill gaps and the depth and extent of student needs. The parents are told what intervention their child will receive and the amount of time each day the student will receive services. This is coupled with a description of the importance of being able to read proficiently by the end of 3rd grade and information on the pathway to 4th grade.

The district explains to families how students are assessed and what a “significant reading deficiency” means. Parents receive notification of their student’s progress, or lack thereof, each 4 ½ weeks, after the school data team meetings. That notification includes any changes being made to the student’s programming if significant progress is not being made, as evidenced through progress monitoring and universal screening data, as well as recommended activities that will support students in the area of deficit, which are free of charge to families. These activities are tailored by skill deficit area). These communications go out to parents with students in grades K-3 three times per year, after each benchmark, and are shared with parents of students in grades 4 and 5 annually. Additionally, our ELA curriculum contains parent letters in the younger grades that provide families with information regarding the foundational skills and knowledge building for the coming unit that will inform parents as they work with their student. Families can better understand how to support their students through questions about their texts and through an awareness of what foundational skills their child is learning.

Professional Development Plan

All administrators and K-5 teachers have completed the mandatory early literacy training as required by the Tennessee Literacy Success Act. This comprehensive training includes regular education teachers, special education teachers, and interventionists. Newly hired teachers will also participate in this required training if they haven’t already received it elsewhere.

Moreover, teachers in grades K-3 using the McGraw Hill Wonders and CKLA curricula, and those in grades 4 and 5 using Great Minds Wit and Wisdom, will receive tailored support. This support encompasses professional learning communities (PLCs), professional development sessions, and coaching cycles facilitated by instructional coaches focused on effectively utilizing unit plans and lesson plan protocols. Collaborative PLCs will provide teachers with the opportunity to fully utilize planning guides and collaborate on lesson planning for each unit of study.

Furthermore, our district is actively engaged in the fourth year of a five-year Implementation Network, alongside other districts statewide. This initiative aims to provide targeted professional development to both leaders and teachers based on insights gained from literacy walks and the Instructional Practice Guide (IPG) Coaching Tool. Our district’s specific focus will be on Core Action Two of the IPG, ensuring continuous improvement in instructional practices.