

Hickman County Schools

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Last Updated: June 11, 2024

Approved: May 8, 2025

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 the Tennessee Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement as our foundational skills curriculum. 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. This curriculum is approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission and is aligned to the Tennessee ELA standards and to the Science of Reading. 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 2025-2026, 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 which includes a minimum of 30 minutes of foundational literacy skills instruction daily. Our 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 - 3-5 Wit and Wisdom 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 and grammar, 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 2025–2026 school year, our agenda prioritizes working with the Instructional Practice Guide (IPG) to provide targeted professional development for educators in grades 3–5, with a strong focus on Core Action 1—ensuring lessons are aligned to the standards, include clear learning goals, and utilize high-quality, grade-level instructional materials. 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

In response to consecutive years of 4th grade ELA TVAAS scores falling significantly below expectations, Hickman County Schools has implemented a multi-tiered approach to strengthen Tier I instruction and accelerate student growth.

- Beginning in the 2024–2025 school year, we provided targeted support to schools through ongoing professional learning focused on evidence-based literacy practices, explicit writing instruction, and differentiated small-group instruction aligned to individual student needs. This practice will continue.
- Teachers in grade 4 will continue to receive job-embedded coaching on using high-quality instructional materials with fidelity, particularly Great Minds Wit and Wisdom, which is aligned with Tennessee Academic Standards and the science of reading.
- PLCs will continue to focus on planning, unpacking standards, analyzing formative data, and using scaffolding strategies to support all learners, especially subgroups performing below expectations.
- Additionally, we are implementing a district-wide K–12 writing initiative to strengthen students' written expression and reading comprehension. In grade 4, students will receive daily writing instruction aligned to module texts, with an emphasis on structure, grammar, and vocabulary application.

- Intervention efforts will also be enhanced through more precise use of universal screening and progress monitoring data. Identified students will receive targeted intervention during designated RTI² blocks using research-based tools like Lexia and Heggerty.
- District leaders will continue conducting instructional walkthroughs using the IPG (Instructional Practice Guide) to provide timely feedback and inform coaching cycles. These supports are designed to ensure all 4th grade students receive rigorous, high-quality instruction that promotes measurable literacy growth.
- For the upcoming school year, we plan to adjust the districtwide schedule and move our after school tutoring to a during the school day tutoring option to improve student tutoring attendance.

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

K-2--TN Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement / Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA)

Universal Reading Screener for Grades K-5.

Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (aimswebPlus): K-5

Intervention Structure and Supports

In the fall, all students are assessed using Aimsweb to determine which 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. We also consider other student data before determining which students are classified as needing assistance from Tier II and Tier III instruction. A diagnostic assessment is then 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 using progress monitoring data to determine a potential need for changes in interventions, intensity, 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. Computer-based interventions may be used as part of RTI² support, but they must supplement—not replace—explicit, teacher-led instruction. Students should receive regular progress monitoring and teacher interaction to ensure the computer-based tool aligns with their specific skill needs and is implemented with fidelity.

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

Home Literacy Reports and Family Communication Plan

Hickman County Schools is committed to fostering strong family-school partnerships to support literacy growth. We implement home literacy reports that communicate student progress and intervention information in clear, family-friendly language. These reports are a key component of our RTI² process and are aligned with state requirements, including the Tennessee Literacy Success Act and Say Dyslexia Law.

Skill Gaps and Intervention Information

Home literacy reports provide specific details about each student's identified skill gaps, including whether the deficits fall within phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, or

comprehension. The reports clearly describe the depth and extent of the need, referencing percentile rankings and grade-level expectations. In addition, families are informed about the intervention(s) being provided at school, including the curriculum or programs used (e.g., Lexia Core5, Heggerty, Wilson), frequency and duration of sessions, and how these supports are targeting the student's individual learning needs.

No-Cost Home Activities

To empower families to support literacy at home, each report includes no-cost reading activities tailored to the student's areas of need. These may include games for phonics practice, read-aloud strategies, fluency passages, vocabulary-building exercises, and comprehension question stems. Materials are written in a way that is accessible to all caregivers, regardless of educational background.

Importance of Reading Proficiency by End of Grade 3

Our reports emphasize the critical importance of reading proficiently by the end of third grade, highlighting how early literacy success is closely tied to long-term academic achievement and student confidence. The message is clear and encouraging. When families and schools work together, children thrive.

Grade 4 Promotion Pathways

Included in the report is a section outlining grade 4 promotion pathways, explaining Tennessee's requirements for students who do not meet reading proficiency benchmarks. We provide information about available supports, including tutoring and summer programming, and emphasize early intervention as a way to prevent retention and support student success.

Frequency of Family Communication

Hickman County Schools maintains a consistent and proactive communication schedule:

- For students in grades K-3, home literacy reports are sent home three times per year, following each benchmark assessment period.
- For students in grades 4-5, a summary report is sent annually, including progress data, intervention details (if applicable), and promotion pathway reminders.

In addition to the written reports, schools follow up with family engagement opportunities such as parent-teacher conferences, RTI² meetings, and literacy nights. These events provide families with an opportunity to ask questions, see materials firsthand, and learn how to support their child's reading development more effectively.

By prioritizing family-friendly communication and timely updates, Hickman County Schools ensures that all caregivers are well-informed partners in their child's literacy journey.

Professional Development Plan

All administrators and K-5 teachers have been required to complete the mandatory early literacy implementation training (Early Reading 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.

In addition to the required early literacy training, Christy McManus, Angie Manor, and Abigail McKamey—each a trained provider with a proven track record of supporting districts—will lead extended professional learning.

This training begins with early literacy foundations and continues with in-person summer sessions scheduled for July 24, 25, and 30, held at school sites. The work is sustained throughout the year via job-embedded support in professional learning communities (PLCs), where teachers continue to apply strategies and deepen their understanding of high-quality literacy instruction.

Moreover, teachers in grades K–3 using the McGraw Hill Wonders and CKLA curriculum, 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 One of the IPG, ensuring that instruction is aligned to high-quality texts and tasks, promotes student engagement with complex content, and provides opportunities for evidence-based thinking and discussion.