

Hickman County Schools

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Previous Update: May 8, 2025

Approved: June 29, 2026

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 for knowledge building and writing. For foundational literacy instruction, we use CKLA Skills strand and the Sounds First resources from the TN Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement. Wonders and CKLA resources are approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission and are aligned to the Tennessee ELA standards and to the Science of Reading research.

Students in grades K-2 spend a minimum of 45 minutes per day in foundational skills instruction which includes activities that build phonemic and 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 practice writing 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 (such as 'like' and 'same') and vowel digraphs (such as '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 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.

In grades K-2 writing instruction, 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. In 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, two 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 students in grades K-2, these assessments will be age-appropriate and designed to gauge understanding and application of fundamental writing skills.

In the coming year, we're committed to facilitating dedicated collaboration time for teachers to continue to deepen their grasp of the curricula and its influence on our instructional methods. We will transform their collaborative efforts into practical lesson preparation, 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, 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.

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 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.

Additional Supports

Support for Subgroups: 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: Ongoing coaching support will be provided to our school leaders by the the K-5 supervisors. 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 strengthening 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 K-2

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5

Great Minds Wit and Wisdom: Grades 3-5

Supplemental Instructional Materials

- K-2-TN Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement (TNFSCS)
- Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA)
- 95% Group Vocabulary Surge A/B

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 read 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. Additionally, we will begin utilizing the United Way Raise Your Hand tutoring program in our grades 1-3 during the 2026-2027 school year.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

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.

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 target the student's individual learning needs.

To empower families to support literacy at home, each report includes no-cost reading activities tailored to the students' 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.

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.

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.

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 completed the early literacy training as required for licensure 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 received it elsewhere.

Moreover, teachers will receive tailored support throughout the year. This support encompasses professional learning communities (PLCs), professional development sessions, and coaching cycles facilitated by instructional coaches focused on effectively utilizing unit and lesson preparation protocols. Collaborative PLCs will provide teachers with the opportunity to fully utilize preparation guides and collaborate on lesson preparation for each unit of study.