

Jefferson County Schools

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Last Updated: November 3, 2023

Approved: May 24, 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 a foundational skills curriculum focused on a sounds-first approach grounded in reading science and aligned to Tennessee ELA standards as approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission and is the primary form of instruction. Our district expects 150 minutes of reading instruction each day in K-2 classrooms. The 150-minute reading block is divided into knowledge-building lessons (50 minutes), small group reading in which foundational skills are applied (50 minutes), and explicit foundational skills instruction (50 minutes). Full implementation of the Tennessee Foundational Skills supplement in all PreK-2 classrooms began in the 2021-2022 school year. Every Tennessee Foundational Literacy Standard is addressed and practiced.

K-2 teachers in Jefferson County provide students with daily small group reading instruction during which foundational skills are applied. Small group reading time is used to introduce phonemic awareness/word study activities, oral language practice through discussions while also building knowledge with the shared reading text. Fluency is addressed in small groups with mini lessons on the aspects of fluency included. Vocabulary study is accomplished mainly through the anchor texts of the unit but is also reinforced with literacy centers and writing tasks. Foundational skills standards are primarily and explicitly taught during the foundational skills block and additionally woven into all sections of the literacy block throughout the day in K-2 classrooms addressing phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Our improvements for next year are grounded in the continued designated time for teachers to collaborate as they solve problems of practice and through coaching cycles to support continued improvement to instructional practices.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

Jefferson County Schools provides all 3rd-5th grade students with an integrated literacy experience grounded in the science of reading and aligned to the Tennessee ELA standards. Furthermore, our teachers consistently plan ELA lessons centered around high-quality instructional materials as provided within our adopted Benchmark Advance curriculum. Daily, our students engage in rigorous

and authentic reading and writing tasks for 90 or more minutes each day. This evidence-based approach gives our students the opportunity to apply foundational skills regularly both through explicit and embedded instruction for at least 30 minutes each day.

Weekly schedules in classrooms across the district provide core instruction for their students to develop vocabulary, build knowledge, and think deeply about rigorous text. At the same time, these lessons provide opportunities to practice spelling, morphology, writing, and grammar as students strive to become fluent readers and writers. In fact, the comprehensive literacy planner from Benchmark highlights dedicated lessons within each unit that support student success in foundational skills, as well as ample opportunity to practice these skills.

Moreover, a typical unit in Benchmark begins with students immersed in text that requires them to draw from a variety of skills simultaneously. They activate prior knowledge, read quality text with teacher support, and begin to collect ideas to write about. As the unit progresses, teachers gradually release responsibility as students read independently, discuss thinking with others, and synthesize information through their writing. As teachers relinquish support, students increasingly draw from their knowledge of foundational skills as they encounter new words within text and construct paragraphs to express their viewpoints and ideas.

In addition, our teachers choose from a variety of lessons within Benchmark that are focused on explicit instruction in foundational skills. This direct instruction allows teachers to model phonetic principles via the ePocket chart, asks students to examine similar words to look for patterns, and, in turn, offers abundant time to interact with text written specifically to practice targeted foundational skills. For instance, each student has access to a Word Study eBook designed to increase their automaticity with text, and teachers put together lessons from the Phonics and Word Study Workshop as a means of increasing fluency.

As we think toward the future, we plan to continue to develop teachers' preparedness for lessons through collaborative planning and by following our JCS Unit Prep Protocol. Through this process, we expect to strengthen teachers' knowledge of foundational skills, to increase their awareness of prompting and reinforcing these skills during reading and writing experiences, and to set the expectation that they create an atmosphere of targeted and responsive instruction within their classrooms. We still have work to do to shift the mindset of teachers around unit and lesson preparation from creating a product to experiencing a process that prepares them for responsive instruction.

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2

Benchmark Advance

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5

Benchmark Advance

Supplemental Instructional Materials

We use the Tennessee Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement (TNFSCS) for our core foundational skills instruction in grades K-2.

Universal Reading Screener for Grades K-5. This screener complies with RTI2 and Say Dyslexia requirements.

Our district administers iReady to our students in grades K-5 and the Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (aimswebPlus) to students in third grade for the Spring Benchmark.

Supplemental Screeners

We use easyCBM after iReady as a diagnostic tool.

Intervention Structure and Supports

In the fall, students are given a universal screener (iReady) to determine which students have a significant reading deficiency, scoring below the 15th percentile, or are “at-risk,” scoring between the 16th and 40th percentile. Our grade-level teachers, instructional coaches, and principals review universal screener data to determine which students fall into these categories and need additional support. Students in Tier II or Tier III are given a diagnostic assessment (EasyCBM) to determine specific deficits in order to best assign students to a small group with an intervention that will narrow skill gaps. Students receive daily, small-group intervention for at least 30 minutes for Tier II and 45 minutes for Tier III in their area of greatest deficit.

We have research-based options for reading intervention support available to our students who are “at-risk” and/or who have been identified with a significant reading deficiency. Our adopted ELA curriculum (Benchmark Advance) contains an assessment and remediation guide in which teachers can find activities that directly address skill gaps. Beginning in the 2024-2025 school year, we will also utilize Steps to Advance, which is an intervention program for Benchmark Advance that promotes learning acceleration. For K-2 students, we also utilize the Assessment and Remediation Guide (ARG) from TNFSCS. If the intervention is not effective, more comprehensive, strategic interventions like SPIRE become an option. Data teams meet to determine if a change in the intervention duration, materials, or the person providing the intervention is warranted. The data team also looks at other variables (attendance, engagement) as part of the decision-making process before a change is made to the intervention or provider.

Our students receive explicit instruction in their area of deficit in small groups using research-based materials and strategies. We follow the dyslexia characteristics identification process laid out for students to qualify for plans for ILP-Ds in TN Pulse. Students who do demonstrate those characteristics receive intensive intervention as outlined in the Say Dyslexia Law using programs that meet the law's requirements. We notify families of students who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia. Families must agree for their child to receive an ILP-D. Intervention is provided through RTI even if families do not agree to an ILP-D. Often, we utilize SPIRE curriculum to support students with characteristics of dyslexia, as it 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 for 30 or 45 minutes during a grade-level time in the master schedule just for RTI. When students are in their RTI groups, they work on activities and assignments that strengthen their areas of deficit. For example, students who need instruction in comprehension may

work in ACT Accessing Complex Texts to build the comprehension skills needed to successfully access the knowledge-building units they are studying in Tier I instruction. For students who need fluency support, they may receive intervention using Six Minute Solution for fluency and prosody.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

Our district notifies families in grades K-5 if their child has a significant reading deficiency (as evidenced by students scoring below the 15th percentile) or is at-risk of a significant reading deficiency (as evidenced by students scoring between the 16th and 40th percentile) immediately after the district's schools complete the fall universal reading screening. Students' scores are communicated in parent-friendly language that provides a clear explanation of student skills, skill gaps, the depth and extent of student needs, and a description of the importance of being able to read by the end of 3rd grade as well as information on the 4th grade promotion pathways. These communications go out to parents with students in grades K-3 three times annually and are shared in grades 4 and 5 annually.

Our district explains how students are assessed and what a "significant reading deficiency" means. Families are told what intervention their student will receive, how that intervention supports student learning needs, and the amount of time each day the student will receive services. In accordance with the RTI² manual, data reviews for each RTI² student are completed every 4.5 weeks and parents are notified of student's progress every 4.5 weeks and provided with recommended cost-free activities that support the student in their area of deficit.

Professional Development Plan

In accordance with guidelines, every teacher with an endorsement to teach reading in Jefferson County Schools has passed the Early Reading Training (Best for All Reading 360 Initiative). We participated in the PreK-2 Implementation Coaching Network for two years. The focus of that work was on implementation of the Tennessee Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement. We have an instructional coach in every elementary school to support new teachers that come on board.

We have a comprehensive professional development plan each year. We utilize a collaborative planning schedule across the district to work with teachers during planning time, and we also utilize our professional development days to address foundational skills instruction. In addition to principal observations of classroom instruction for the evaluation model, we also hold district walkthroughs. During the walkthroughs, we look for trends across classrooms with the Foundational Skills IPG. We use our collaborative planning structure and our professional development days to address those trends.

An overview of our district literacy focused professional development is outlined below:

April – May 2024

- Reading 360 Early Literacy Training (Week 1) Online self-paced modules for all K-5 teachers that have not completed them previously.

June - July 2024

- Reading 360 Early Literacy Training (Week 2) In-person cohort-style training applying the theoretical knowledge gained in the online modules to foundational skills curriculum and instruction.

August 2024

- ELA goals for the district will be shared including foundational skills goals and data. Updated pacing guides will be shared. Teachers will begin unit and lesson prep.

September - December 2024

- Teacher collaboration & Instructional Coaching: Teachers will unit and lesson prep through school-level PLCs and district-wide monthly collaborative planning sessions for each grade level and content area. Coaching cycles and support will be provided to teachers as needed.

April - May 2025

- Repeat cycle to refresh foundational skills instructional strategies with Course 1 of the Reading 350 Early Literacy Training.