

Lincoln County Schools

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Last Updated: March 1, 2024

Approved: June 18, 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

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades K-2 Lincoln County Schools has a dedicated foundational reading skills block for grades K-2 rooted in the science of reading and aligned to Tennessee ELA standards. Amplify's Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) was selected from those approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. K-2 students spend at least 45 minutes each day in direct systematic foundational skills instruction aligned to Amplify/CKLA's research-driven scope and sequence of foundational skills. This instructional time includes explicit instruction, practice activities, and application within text to build phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. This primary foundational instruction is coupled with the Listening & Learning knowledge-building component to provide a comprehensive curriculum; however, foundational skills instruction is the primary form and focus of all K-2 literacy instruction. The CKLA scope and sequence includes direct, explicit instruction and aligned student practice in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, grammar, spelling, and writing. There are four guiding principles for the CKLA skills strand:

- **Explicit Phonics:** Explicit, systematic phonics instruction is a more effective way to teach decoding than "whole language" or whole word methods.
- **Synthetic Phonics:** Synthetic phonics (or linguistic phonics), in which instruction is oriented from sound to letter, is an especially powerful way to teach phonics.
- **Repeated Oral Practice:** Repeated oral practice and oral reading are proven methods of improving fluency.
- **Intensive Practice:** Intensive practice with skills-aligned text is essential to build reliability and automaticity in reading.

The curriculum engages students in ongoing reading fluency and comprehension practice with readers aligned to the skills students are learning to make meaning from text and to produce the written word. These readers increase in length and complexity as students develop their reading and spelling skills.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5 Lincoln County Schools has an integrated literacy block for grades 3-5 anchored in the science of reading and aligned to Tennessee ELA standards. Amplify's Core Knowledge Language Arts, our curriculum materials in grades 3-5, was selected from those approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. During the integrated ELA block that meets an evidence-based approach to applying foundational skills within daily lessons, our students receive a total of 90 minutes of ELA instruction in grade three and a minimum of 70 minutes of ELA instruction in grades four and five each day.

Although the daily routine is not the same each day, all daily instruction includes at least 30 minutes of foundational skills instruction that includes fluency, grammar, morphology, spelling, and writing; along with components for knowledge-building including comprehension and direct vocabulary instruction (to build and improve the ability to comprehend complex texts and apply that knowledge as they listen, read, write, think, and speak). Skills- including fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, include explicit supports. They are not taught only in isolation but are embedded and practiced within the lessons and text to ensure continuity, cohesion, and connection. A daily lesson sequence in grade 3 CKLA may include briefly activating prior knowledge and reading independently and/or aloud in partners or as a whole group. After the daily read-aloud (or independent reading in on-grade level, complex text), the students may summarize the content (through a think-pair-share model), unpack the most essential vocabulary ("word work"), respond to a series of scaffolded questions with both discussion and writing and write a response to an inferential question that requires students to use evidence from the text to support their answer.

Students also receive vocabulary instruction where teachers provide explicit support for vocabulary needed to access the complex text. In some lessons, the students may study the root words to understand how they can use parts of words to determine meaning. Students use their word knowledge as they engage in group discussion and writing activities. Therefore, foundational skills instruction is embedded in all aspects of a 90-minute block and is dedicated to developing students' holistic literacy approach to fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension coherently as recommended by research.

In grades 4-5, a daily lesson sequence using Amplify's Core Knowledge Language Arts typically includes whole-class instruction targeting grade-level standards for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language with complex texts. Whole-class instruction provides a space for students to think deeply about meaningful text, talk with other students to develop and refine their thinking about text, and write about their knowledge and understanding of complex text. Students also participate in small-group instruction during which they receive targeted instruction in morphology and spelling patterns, reading fluency, and grammar. Small group time may also be used to support students with vocabulary and additional knowledge building needed to fully engage with the unit texts, as well as personalized instruction in their writing.

Additional Supports

Due to the Level 1 of TVAAS in growth for specific student subgroups and two of our schools for the 22-23 school year and subsequent ATSI designations for the same school, we have redoubled our

efforts in working with our CORE and regional support systems to further analyze our school-level and state data to determine areas to strengthen and areas to celebrate. We have used the HQIM materials in both ELA and this year's math adoption materials to support district and school-level lesson and unit preparation professional development across the district to aid in cross-collaboration among same-grade peers. We have also worked this summer to create a calendar with built-in dates for ELA and Math walks in each school building to further support all teachers in each building and to assist administrators in norming on the IPG for ELA. Our instructional supervisors also are liaisons in each building and have weekly meetings with the administrator team every Monday morning to discuss weekly updates around instructional happenings and to be seen and heard as well as to maintain healthy relationships with all teachers across the district.

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2

Amplify CKLA

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5

Amplify CKLA

Universal Reading Screener for Grades K-5

Fastbridge Suite K-2, 4-5

Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (aimswebPlus) 3

Our district administers the Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (aimswebPlus) to students in third grade for the Spring Benchmark.

Intervention Structure and Supports

Lincoln County's tiered support system follows the Tennessee RTI² Manual. Processes, personnel, training, and materials are designed to build a strong foundation through early and continued screening, research-based and high-quality instruction for all, Tier I remediation and differentiation, Tier II and III progressive intervention, progress-monitoring, data team meetings, and planning PLCs. A universal screener is used three times each year. School-level teams use this and other data to determine the needs of individual students within the tiered model of support. Intentionally planned support ranges from Tier I differentiation to intensive Tier III and dyslexia interventions.

In the fall, winter, and spring; students are given a universal reading screener (URS) to determine which students score in a range that may indicate a need for additional support and to determine progress between screenings. Grade-level teachers, administrators, and other school experts study universal screener data using decision-making protocols that include multiple variables to determine each student's specific need for support. Training has been provided annually in the processes of team data usage, planning and decision-making protocols, and bimonthly or weekly team PLC meetings.

After each URS benchmark, students scoring below the 16th percentile, suggesting a "significant reading deficiency"; and those scoring between the 16th and 40th percentile, suggesting an "at-risk,"

status are identified. All students scoring at or below the 40th percentile are given diagnostic survey-level assessments that are not a part of the URS to further identify each student's specific skill gaps and to identify any existing characteristics of dyslexia. Students with scores above the 40th percentile that show possible characteristics of dyslexia or are not showing grade-level classroom performance are also given diagnostic survey-level assessments. Students who score in an advanced range are also identified. This information is used to determine the best level of support: including the group, who will serve the group, the specific skills or skill umbrella, the amount of time served, the instructional approach, the materials used, and how progress will be measured. Students classified as Tier II or Tier III receive the greatest level of support with Tier III being the most intensive support. Those with the least need for support are served in groups of no more than 5 students for a minimum of 30 minutes daily or 3 students for 30 minutes 3 times a week by trained tutors or classroom teachers using curriculum-aligned materials. Tier II students needing more intensive support are served by the most highly trained and experienced classroom reading teachers or interventionists during an RTI block designed to accelerate growth to eliminate or narrow skill gaps for all students. These students are served daily in a group of 5 or less for a minimum of 30 minutes and usually 45-60 minutes. Students in Tier II may receive instruction using curriculum-aligned materials or Orton-Gillingham according to their specific needs. Tier III provides more intense support than Tier II. All Tier III students are served by a highly trained reading intervention teacher who has received the credentials to use the Orton-Gillingham methodology and Orton-Gillingham International materials. These students receive 45-60 minutes of intervention daily. All support levels receive explicit, systematic intervention daily designed to address identified skill deficits along a hierarchical sequence.

When students are in their RTI groups, they receive small group explicit instruction in their area of deficit using research-based materials and strategies. Progress-monitoring of specific skill gaps is used to determine progress toward mastery. The intervention support increases in intensity according to their tier level and the effectiveness of the applied intervention. Data teams use progress monitoring data to inform decisions about duration, materials, and intensity changes when a student is not showing progress. Our adopted ELA curriculum contains an assessment and remediation guide with activities that directly address skill gaps. The CKLA Assessment and Remediation Guide (ARG) provides multiple additional resources for use in supporting students on their path to mastery of grade-level foundational skills. All teachers have been trained in these evidence-based instructional materials and methods for supporting students. Reading support ranges from additional support through the CKLA materials discussed above to Orton-Gillingham methodology. All interventionists and special education teachers in Lincoln County are trained in Orton-Gillingham International (OGI) methods and materials. Students in Tier III and those who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia, receive intensive intervention as outlined in the Say Dyslexia Law using programs that meet the law's requirements.

Our district notifies families of students who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia and information about the Orton Gillingham International curriculum and instructional methods used to support these students. OGI is a systematic, explicit, sequential, and multi-sensory instructional approach and is considered a strong support for at-risk students.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

Lincoln County 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 screening. Students' scores are communicated in family-friendly language that provides a clear explanation of student skill gaps and the depth and extent of student needs. Parents or caregivers are told what intervention their student 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 on grade level by the end of grade 3 and includes information on the promotion pathway to grade 4.

Lincoln County has chosen to extend the K-3 letter to 4th grade. Therefore, we have a letter for grades K-4 that goes home three times a year and a separate letter for grades 5-8 that goes home at least annually. Our district explains how students are assessed and what a "significant reading deficiency" means. Families are subsequently notified of their child's progress, or lack of progress, after the 4 ½ week data team meetings. In the family notifications/communication, data teams note any changes being made if the child is not showing sufficient progress as evidenced by progress monitoring and universal screening data. Recommended activities are provided (that do not require purchased resources) and will support students in the deficit skill areas (activities are not tailored by child but tailored by skill deficit generally).

Additionally, the ELA curriculum contains family letters in the younger grades that outline the foundational skills and knowledge domains for the coming week that will inform and equip families to work with the child. Families can better understand how to support their students through questions about their texts and through an awareness of what foundational skills their children are learning.

Professional Development Plan

All K-5 teachers in our district have participated in the free and optional Reading 360 Early Literacy Training series developed by the Tennessee Department of Education. In April of 2021, all classroom teachers in grades Pre-K through two, interventionists and special education teachers who serve grades Pre-K through five, and instructional supervisors serving grades Pre-K through five completed Week 1 of the Early Literacy Training series, asynchronously. This training focuses on foundational reading development and instruction grounded in a phonics-based approach. All new teachers also complete this training.

In July of 2021, our district hosted two cohort-based, in-person training sessions and all classroom teachers in grades Pre-K through two, interventionists and special education teachers who serve grades Pre-K through five, and instructional supervisors serving grades Pre-K through five completed Course 2 of the Early Literacy Training series. This course emphasized practical classroom application of research findings around strong instruction in phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary. In the spring and summer of 2022, all classroom teachers in grades 3-5 and new teachers in PreK-2 completed these two courses.

In July of 2022, our district hosted another cohort-based, in-person training session for all remaining PreK-5 teachers. Lincoln County also participated in two literacy networks and teachers collaborated in ongoing PLCs on effective delivery of their ELA lessons. Through these networks, Tennessee Department of Education-approved vendors were selected to provide training and guidance in the implementation of K-5 foundational skills instruction grounded in a phonics-based approach that included training in phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary. This professional development was void of cueing and MSV strategies. School-level curriculum coordinators and lead teachers provided support based on building walk-throughs using the Tennessee IPG (Instructional Practice Guide). Lincoln County teachers are required to demonstrate their knowledge and competency in teaching foundational literacy skills through certification requirements, IPG walk-throughs, and formal TEAM observations.