

Tennessee Nature Academy

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

First Approved: May 5, 2023

Approved: June 14, 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

No K-2 students

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

Tennessee Nature Academy plans to use the Expeditionary Learning instructional materials for Grade 5 and will access these materials from eleducation.org rather than from Learn Zillion. These are the same materials as “LearnZillion - K-5 Expeditionary Learning” (now called Imagine Learning) but accessing them via eleducation.org allows Tennessee Nature Academy to deliver them in paper-and-pencil format instead of through LearnZillion’s digital delivery platform. As a nature-based school, the paper-and-pencil format aligns with our school’s intentionally low-tech philosophy for lower middle school students.

Our curriculum materials are selected from those approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. In addition to supporting students’ growth and success in reading comprehension, writing, and speaking and listening, our ELA curriculum also addresses the foundational literacy standards applicable to 5th grade: phonics and word recognition (5.FL.PWR.3), word composition (5.FL.WC.4), fluency (5.FL.F.5), sentence composition and grammar (5.FL.SC.6), and vocabulary acquisition (5.FL.VS.7a).

Instruction at TNA also supports students’ learning in foundational literacy skills related to morphology and spelling. Students at TNA participate in 65 minutes of English Language Arts instruction each day. Although the focus and pacing of each ELA block varies, daily instruction uses research-based strategies to support foundational literacy instruction (e.g. instruction in word recognition, word composition, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency) for 30 minutes daily, and supports students as they build their grade-level literacy skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening for the remaining 35 minutes.

While some skills are introduced and initially taught in isolation, they are ultimately embedded within future lessons to ensure comprehensive literacy development across all language domains. For example, students at TNA may initially engage with sentence composition skills like using correlative conjunctions (5.FL.CS.6e) through direct instruction. Students might continue to practice these skills in isolation in one or two additional class periods and would then integrate these skills

into their regular literacy practice in class. TNA teachers use various instructional strategies to support students in developing their foundational literacy skills, specifically related to fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. First and foremost, instruction at TNA is data driven. Teachers use formative and summative assessments in ELA to measure what students know and can do, analyze the results of these assessments, and plan an appropriate response based on trends revealed during the analysis process. TNA uses explicit instruction to provide students with the knowledge or skills they need to complete a task: explicit instruction allows teachers to name goals, model problem-solving processes, and provide opportunities for students to practice these processes to mastery with appropriate support and feedback. TNA encourages an inquiry-based approach to teaching to supplement explicit instruction in literacy. Inquiry-based teaching allows teachers to facilitate student exploration with varying degrees of structure and support. Finally, TNA uses inclusive teaching strategies to support the needs of all learners as they develop foundational literacy skills: these strategies include co-teaching, small group instruction, cooperative learning, Universal Design for Learning, and Sheltered English Instruction. Inclusive teaching strategies allow for learning to be personalized to fit students' zones of proximal development, address the needs of diverse student populations, and support all students in accessing and connecting to the curriculum.

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2

Not Applicable

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5

Imagine Learning EL Education (formerly LearnZillion Expeditionary Learning) Grade 5

Universal Reading Screener for Grades K-5

Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (aimswebPlus) Grade 5

Intervention Structure and Supports

TNA uses norm-referenced assessments to measure students' performance and progress in reading. Students complete TNA's universal reading screener, aimswebPlus, at the beginning, middle, and end of each academic year. TNA administers this assessment to incoming 5th graders during early fall testing sessions. The mid-year aimswebPlus screener takes place in December, and the end-of-year screener takes place in May. Students who score at or below the 40th percentile on aimswebPlus are considered to be "at-risk" for or having a significant reading deficiency. TNA conducts diagnostic literacy testing to determine students' needs for Tier II or Tier III instruction. In accordance with Tennessee's "Say Dyslexia" bill, TNA also screens students for characteristics of dyslexia. To do so, TNA uses survey-level assessments for reading that measure phonological and phonemic awareness, sound-symbol recognition, alphabetic knowledge, decoding skills, encoding skills, and rapid naming skills. Based on these assessment results, TNA assigns students to reading intervention groups based on their shared foundational literacy skill gaps. TNA's schedule includes a 30-minute reading intervention block each day; students who do not require additional interventions in foundational literacy participate in an independent reading block during this time.

During this block, students in need of additional practice participate in 30 minutes of foundational reading instruction in a small group setting with a qualified reading instructor or interventionist. Intervention strategies include pre-reading and small group literacy instruction (in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension).

TNA uses resources from Reading A-Z and Words their Way to support students in need of additional practice. Students who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia participate in supplemental literacy interventions using the Wilson Reading System, which is an explicit, systematic, multi-sensory approach to literacy instruction based on Orton-Gillingham principles.

Students who require additional support in foundational literacy beyond the 65-minute ELA block and the 30-minute reading intervention block participate in a second, targeted literacy intervention at the end of the day for 45 minutes. Students in Tier II and Tier III interventions participate in the aimsweb CBM progress monitoring assessment to measure their progress in this setting. Our team reviews and analyzes progress monitoring data and uses these data to maintain or adjust the duration, materials, and intensity of literacy interventions to support students in making adequate progress.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

Tennessee Nature Academy conducts universal reading screeners for 5th grade students in the summer/fall, winter, and spring. We notify parents/guardians that their 5th grade student has a significant reading deficiency or is at risk for a significant reading deficiency as indicated on TNA's universal reading screener. We share this information using family notification letters, which we send out twice per year after our data team has finished collecting and reviewing student data (including additional data gained through other diagnostic assessments and survey-level assessments for characteristics of dyslexia).

Our family notification letters describe students' specific areas of deficit, name the importance of literacy for student outcomes, describe the importance of 3rd grade literacy in relation to these outcomes and provide suggested no cost literacy supports that families can enact at home. These letters also include copies of students' performance results on the universal reading screener to help families better understand their student's performance in relation to their peers nationwide. TNA staff stay in regular contact with these families throughout each semester. Part of this communication includes sharing progress updates, including results of subsequent assessments and any new data that might suggest that a change in literacy interventions is appropriate for individual students.

Professional Development Plan

Teachers at Tennessee Nature Academy will participate in the free Reading 360 training series developed by the Tennessee Department of Education. This course is delivered asynchronously online and focuses on foundational literacy skills including phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary. Since our program serves students in grades 5-12, TNA will ask teachers who have not previously completed Course I in Early Reading to complete Course I of the Secondary Literacy Training series. TNA will ask teachers to demonstrate proof of their



knowledge and competency in foundational literacy by sharing their certificates of completion with the principal.