

Washington County Schools

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Last Updated: November 9, 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

Students receive instruction with grade-level Tennessee State Standards in small and whole group settings to provide a strong foundation in literacy. The following are K-2 specific REQUIREMENTS for instructional time in ELA:

Kindergarten, First, and Second grades: 150 minutes daily.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades K-2 exceeds the state minimum by providing our students with 60 minutes of foundational skills daily in addition to 90 minutes for knowledge instruction in kindergarten through second grade. Our district uses Benchmark Advance, a foundational skills curriculum grounded in the science of reading and aligned to Tennessee ELA standards as approved by the State Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission.

Benchmark Advance provides foundational skills instruction and includes explicit instruction and student practice in fluency, vocabulary, phonemic awareness, phonics, and comprehension. Adhering to Best for All, which begins phonics instruction by starting with sounds first, then attaching those sounds to spellings. Each grade level also engages with ten units designed to build world knowledge from strands consistently mapped across grade levels with a vertical progression of topics and essential questions. Students participate daily in activities such as word work that provides direct, explicit instruction to build phonological awareness, phonics skills, and fluency both in and out of the text. Vocabulary and comprehension are developed through listening/read-aloud opportunities where teachers strategically ask questions and model thinking that leads to application during independent reading. The foundational skills instruction contains activities and practices that teach the following foundational skills: phonological awareness (recognize rhyming words, blend and segment compound words, blend, segment, and count syllables, blend and segment onset-rime, blend, segment, and count phonemes, segment compound words, and isolate individual phonemes) and phonics (identify individual letter sounds, decode regular words, decode words with common rime families, identify sounds for letter combinations, decode one-syllable words with letter combinations, identify common spellings for long and short vowel sounds, know and apply final-e conventions, read words with r-controlled vowels, read words with l-controlled

vowels, read words with inflected endings, read words with prefixes and suffixes, read two-syllable words with various syllable types, read multi-syllable words, and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis in text). Benchmark Advance program's scope and sequence, are clearly developed to progress from easier to more complex skills (e.g., short vowels with one spelling before long vowel sounds with multiple spellings), separate the teaching of confusing letters and sounds (e.g., i/e, /a/ /e/), and contain a built-in review and repetition cycle to ensure mastery of taught skills so students can transfer them to all reading and writing demands. For example, students learn basic letter-sound correspondences for consonants and vowels and the VCe rule before they are required to decode words with the VCe pattern in them. Furthermore, students are provided opportunities to practice reading using Benchmark small group texts and decodable texts aligned with learned sound-spelling and high-frequency words taught in explicit instruction. They are also used for fluency practice.

Our improvements for next year are grounded in the implementation of high-quality materials and the integration of literacy skills and knowledge. Teachers will solidify the use of the lesson prep protocol and refine its use and application using their high-quality instructional materials, Benchmark Advance. Washington County is also a participant in the Early Literacy Network, supporting teachers and leaders in the implementation of high-quality instructional materials through ongoing professional development learning both strands of literacy instruction: Knowledge building and foundational skills. Within the network, our local K-2 teachers collaborate with others across the state sharing resources and strategies focused on early literacy.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

Students receive instruction with grade-level Tennessee State Standards in small and whole group settings to provide a strong foundation in literacy. The following are 3rd-5th grade-specific REQUIREMENTS for instructional time in ELA:

Third, fourth, and fifth grades: 90 – 110-minute Literacy Block daily.

Third, fourth, and fifth grade should have a 90-minute literacy block that includes reading (45 minutes), grammar, morphology, and writing (45 minutes). Literacy blocks include explicit support for fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Washington County Schools has an integrated literacy block for grades three through five anchored in the science of reading and aligned to Tennessee Academic Standards for English Language Arts. Our curriculum materials, Benchmark Advance, have been approved by the State Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission.

Students receive between 90 and 110 minutes of daily literacy instruction. Each grade level engages with ten units designed to build world knowledge from strands that are consistently mapped across grade levels with a vertical progression of topics and essential questions. Benchmark Advance is centered around knowledge-building (to build and improve the ability to comprehend complex texts and apply that knowledge as they listen, read, write, think, and speak) For 20-30 minutes each day, students participate in metacognitive morphology, comprehension, vocabulary, word study, and, grammar/language mini-lessons designed to provide them with the skills and strategies needed to be proficient readers. Teachers meet with small groups of students for 20-40 minutes each day to scaffold reading behaviors, reinforce strategies, and build fluency. In addition, students participate

in daily 15-minute writing mini-lessons. Students are then given time for independent writing while teachers meet with small groups of students who have similar writing needs. The fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills are not taught in isolation but are embedded within the lesson to ensure continuity, cohesion, and connection. For example, our third-grade students will study Economics. As students move through the unit selections through close reading opportunities, they will build on their vocabulary of critical thinking and broaden their vocabulary of literary genres, techniques, and features. Each unit begins by briefly activating prior knowledge and reading independently and/or aloud. After the daily read-aloud (or independent reading 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, and write a response to an inferential question that requires students to use evidence from the text to support their answer. For example, in vocabulary lessons, teachers provide explicit support for the vocabulary needed to access the complex text. In the economics lesson, the students study words with suffixes -able, -ful, -less as in dependable, useful, useless, etc. Students use their word knowledge as they engage in group discussion and writing activities.

Our improvements for next year are grounded in the implementation of high-quality materials and the integration of literacy skills and knowledge. Teachers will solidify the use of the lesson prep protocol and refine its use and application using their high-quality instructional materials, Benchmark Advance.

Additional Information

Our main goals will continue into the 2024-2025 school year as we work with TNTP and the Literacy Implementation Network (focusing on grades 3-5) and the Early Literacy Network (ELN). We have adopted High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM), which align with our rigorous Tennessee standards, promote effective classroom shifts, and advance our progress towards the Instructional Practice Guide (IPG), all in service of improving literacy instruction for all students. Teachers and leaders will continue to develop these skills while also collaborating to refine unit and lesson preparation procedures. They will effectively analyze student benchmark and screener data to plan for intervention support. Leader learning will focus on the Instructional Practice Guide/Literacy Core Actions 1-3, identifying best practices through "look-fors," and working in small groups to gather walkthrough data and determine the next best steps. Additionally, our school(s) with (Level 1 and Level 2) TVAAS growth scores will receive robust support based on their current ELA data through the assignment of a district ELA instructional specialist. This specialist will work directly with the schools on a daily basis, focusing on enhancing teacher instructional plans and classroom strategies. Support will be provided through Professional Learning Communities, classroom observations, and instructional modeling sessions.

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2

Benchmark Advance

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5

Benchmark Advance

Supplemental Instructional Materials

Steps to Advance is a component of Benchmark Advance designed to support advanced learning and address gaps within our RTI instructional blocks. Benchmark Advance serves as our primary resource during reading blocks.

Universal Reading Screener for Grades K-5

Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (aimswebPlus) K-5

Intervention Structure and Supports

Students receive daily, small-group intervention for at least 45 minutes 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 recently adopted ELA curriculum contains an assessment and intervention guide in which teachers can find activities that directly address skill and knowledge gaps. They can tailor this to the needs of their RTI group of students. If that intervention is not proving to be effective, more comprehensive, strategic interventions (such as 95% Group and Orton-Gillingham strategies) become an option.

Data teams meet every 4 ½ weeks to determine if a change in the intervention 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 programming, intensity, or provider.

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. WCDE utilizes the PASS (Phonological Awareness Skills Screener) and the PWRS (Phonics and Word Reading Survey) as a dyslexia screener for those students who show struggles at the word level. PASS helps teachers detect students who may be at risk for reading and spelling difficulties and also difficulty developing phonological awareness. PWRS helps teachers identify which phonics correspondences and patterns a student has learned and which ones a student needs to be taught. Students who do demonstrate those characteristics receive intensive intervention as outlined in the Say Dyslexia Law using programs that meet the law’s requirements.

Our district has provided training by Orton-Gillingham and uses Orton-Gillingham materials and Sounds Sensible and SPIRE (both of which are based on Orton-Gillingham strategies) as interventions for students with characteristics of dyslexia. Our district notifies families of students who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia. Families are notified that all of the curricula used is based on the Orton-Gillingham approach of systematic, explicit, sequential, phonics-based instruction and is considered strong support for those students exhibiting characteristics of dyslexia.

The intervention takes place daily 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 make them

stronger in that 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. Students who need fluency support may receive intervention using the Tennessee Foundational Skill Supplement.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

Our district notifies parents in grades K-5 if their child is “at-risk” for or has a significant reading deficiency immediately after the district’s schools complete the fall universal screening. Students’ scores are communicated in parent-friendly language that provides a clear explanation of student skill gaps and the depth and extent of student needs. The parents are told what intervention their student will receive and the amount of time each day the student will receive services as well as recommended activities (that do not require purchased resources) that will support students in the area of deficit (activities are not tailored by the child but tailored by skill deficit generally). This is coupled with a description of the importance of being able to be ready by the end of 3rd grade and information on the pathways to 4th grade. These communications go out to parents with students in grades K-3 three times annually and are shared in grades 4 and 5 annually.

The district defines for families how students are assessed and what a “significant reading deficiency” means. Parents are subsequently notified of their child’s progress, or lack of progress, after the 4 ½ week’s data team meetings. In the parent 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.

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

Professional Development Plan

Teachers in our district will continue to participate in the free and optional Reading 360 Early Literacy Training series developed by the Tennessee Department of Education.

Our plan for providing PD for all K-5 teachers is as follows:

During the 2023-2024 school year – Teachers in grades Pre-K through eight were engaged in Week 1 of the Early Literacy Training series, asynchronously. This training was focused on foundational reading development and instruction and is grounded in a phonics-based approach. We ensured that participating educators earn a completion certificate prior to starting Week 2. During this training, teachers learned practical strategies for implementing explicit, systematic phonics instruction, as well as fluency practice and vocabulary work. The participating teachers included interventionists, special education teachers, and elementary instructional coaches.

Our goal throughout the 2023-2024 school year was to continue our work with TNTP and the Literacy Implementation Network (focus on 3-5) and ELN – Early Literacy Network. We have adopted

HQIM, which takes us far on the path to aligning to our rigorous TN standards, improving the shifts in our classrooms and progress towards the IPG, in service to improving literacy instruction for all students.

Our main goals will continue into the 2024-2025 school year as we work with TNTP and the Literacy Implementation Network (focusing on grades 3-5) and the Early Literacy Network (ELN). We have adopted High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM), which align with our rigorous Tennessee standards, promote effective classroom shifts, and advance our progress towards the Instructional Practice Guide (IPG), all in service of improving literacy instruction for all students. Teachers and leaders will continue to develop these skills while also collaborating to refine unit and lesson preparation procedures. They will effectively analyze student benchmark and screener data to plan for intervention support. Leader learning will focus on the Instructional Practice Guide/Literacy Core Actions 1-3, identifying best practices through "look-fors," and working in small groups to gather walkthrough data and determine the next best steps. Additionally, our schools will receive robust support based on their current ELA data through the assignment of a district ELA instructional specialist. This specialist will work directly with the schools on a daily basis, focusing on enhancing teacher instructional plans and classroom strategies. Support will be provided through Professional Learning Communities, classroom observations, and instructional modeling sessions.