

Knox County Schools

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Approved: May 28, 2021

Updated: April 13, 2023

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

Foundational literacy instruction aligns with TN standards. KCS requires schools to plan for a minimum of 60 minutes of foundational literacy instruction daily. CARE is a KCS term for foundational literacy skills. Some schools schedule it under that name. Others embed it in the literacy block.

Foundational skills instruction is the basis for all reading, talking, and writing during the literacy block. Explicit instruction includes teacher modeling and guided practice in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Instructional model - gradual release in action moving from decoding to encoding to making meaning. Instruction with meaningful practice provides students with the skills to apply learning to real reading and writing experiences.

Most of our schools will use Benchmark Advance 2022. Benchmark Advance 2022 includes foundational literacy instruction written by Wiley Blevins. Instruction begins with a sound first phonics-based approach within a comprehensive scope and sequence. Students move through a systematic progression of skills with spiral review to avoid decayed learning.

Our three schools using Wit and Wisdom will use Foundations by Wilson. Beginning in the 2023-2024 school year, all schools will use Benchmark Advance for K-2 students.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

Foundational literacy instruction aligns with TN standards. A minimum of 30 minutes dedicated to foundational skills instruction. For the 20-21 school year, some schools may have labeled it FLIPS.

Transitions to multisyllabic words, syllable types, and morphology.

Explicit instruction includes teacher modeling and guided practice in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

Schools will follow the Benchmark Advance 2022, which embeds foundational literacy throughout the block, so students receive direct instruction and then have practice with their authentic, knowledge-building texts and writing later in the lesson.

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2

Benchmark - K-5 Advance

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5

Benchmark - K-5 Advance

Additional Information about Instructional Materials

We have a waiver for four of our schools with grades 3-5 to continue using Wit and Wisdom. Three of them have K-2 programs and will use Wit and Wisdom with Foundations for their foundational component. We have a waiver to allow the K-2 programs to use Wit and Wisdom with Foundations.

Beginning in the 2023-2024 school year, all K-2 will use Benchmark K-5 Advance. Therefore, no waiver will be needed.

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

Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (Aims Web Plus)

Intervention Structure and Supports

KCS prioritizes intervention, as early as possible, to prevent reading difficulty in later years. All members of the central office reading team sit on the Knox County Dyslexia Board and participate in International Dyslexia and Tennessee Dyslexia professional development and advocacy. Schools are required to submit schedules showing where students who are determined to need intervention will receive 30 minutes of Tier II evidence-based intervention or Tier III evidence-based intervention (i.e., Voyager Passport, SPIRE, Wilson Reading, Rewards, Language!Live, Reading Mastery, Heggerty, Corrective Reading). They are required to use interventions that correspond to the students' areas of deficit to address the specific skill gaps identified through the universal screener and additional diagnostics. The RTI2 teams at each school meet to review each student's data and class performance to determine the best intervention for each student. They continue meet every 4 ½ weeks throughout the school year to review progress monitoring data and class performance in order to make recommendations about continuation or adjustment to the intervention plan. KCS included some sample intervention schedules, but they are subject to change based on student need. The six RTI2 facilitators along with the RI2 specialist work with schools to review individual student data and to structure programming that is responsive to student needs.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

KCS will send home the universal screener Aims Web Plus report after each of the three benchmark periods for all students in grades K-6 and annually for students in grades 7 and 8. Families will also receive a Characteristics of Dyslexia Letter for students for whom it applies. Letters regarding the characteristics of dyslexia will be sent at the time of identification. The Aims Web Benchmark letter explains the role of benchmark assessment, provides a narrative and a box and whisker graph to show parents where their children are testing according to national norms and how to interpret the data. It also tells parents if students need to progress as they are or if they need to be considered for enrichment or intervention. The Characteristics of Dyslexia Letter is based on deeper diagnostics after the Benchmark for students who are flagged by the benchmark assessment or who are identified by their teachers based on classroom assessments. It identifies the specific areas of deficit

for the student and identifies the evidence-based intervention that the school will use to fill the skill gap. Both letters provide information about the importance of 3rd grade reading proficiency and suggest no-cost at home strategies to support students and direct the parents to the KCS RTI2 and Reading websites which will have additional explanation, guidance, and support beginning in August 2021. The website has been developed by the KCS Reading Department and the RTI2 Department. UTK literacy faculty and the Knox County Dyslexia Council have provided feedback about the information and utility of the website to inform parents of the components of reading, strategies that they can use at home, and directions for advocating for their child should they notice reading difficulty. Because we could only upload two documents below, we selected two that address different ways that we communicate based on the child's individual needs. Here is a link to a folder with many templates that KCS uses to communicate with families regarding their children's reading progress.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1v4v2Hn4LKVScAYPj7fOhR_x9WIZWGj?usp=sharing

Professional Development Plan

The Year-Long Reading Course (YLRC) is grounded in the science of reading and cognitive science, and it takes place for 10 half-days from August to May. The course includes a job-embedded bridge to practice to demonstrate knowledge and competency. The bridge to practice means that they have to implement what they learned with their classroom and submit evidence as their assignment.

Providers have completed LETRS training in Foundational Literacy and Literacy and Writing. Three of the providers have a Reading Specialist degree. All of them have been trained by Dr. Louisa Moats or her colleagues and adjust the curriculum with her permission. Adjustments have been made to recognize progress in cognitive science and the 9 principles of learning.

The course moves through a progression of introducing teachers to the Simple View of Reading and Ehri's Hourglass of Reading Progression and emphasize the importance of phonemic awareness for the underpinning of reading proficiency. The course goes on to emphasize the need for attention to handwriting, decoding, auditory review, encoding (word building), high frequency words, the structure of the language, and assessment. The pedagogical philosophy is anchored in explicit, systematic, multisensory instruction with spiral and review. Teachers develop systems for assessing the constrained skills to solidify the upper skills in Scarborough's Reading Rope and develop strategies for continuing to develop the unconstrained skills at the lower end of the rope through a knowledge-based curriculum with attention on vocabulary, language structure, and content knowledge.

All teachers new to Knox County attend this course in their second year of teaching in the district. To date, KCS has 350 teachers who will need this course in school year 21-22. Plans include running 10 cohorts to keep the groups manageable with feedback and support. For teachers who have been through the Year-Long Reading Course (based on Sopris and the work in the field of cognitive science) KCS has ongoing professional development available in Canvas (self-paced). KCS also does a refresher for foundational literacy professional development three times per year (in-person and synchronous). Because professional development rarely transfers to practice without job-embedded support, 5 district personnel form an Elementary Reading Team, and they work with Elementary

Supervision and principals to provide systematic on-site follow-up through micro-teams, district learning days, and teaching and learning days.

Additional Information about this Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Our district has been focused on a comprehensive, multisensory approach to structured literacy since at least 2012 when I came into Central Office. We are forming a solid partnership with our EPPs so we have a pipeline of educators who come to us knowing how to teach reading, and as those relationships are strengthened, our reading course is poised to adjust. As we plan the use of our ESSER 3.0 funds, we envision a partnership with UTK's Dean McIntyre and her restructured literacy faculty to develop a job-embedded reading specialist certificate, so we can increase the capacity of the teachers and teacher-leaders serving in our elementary schools.