



# Tennessee Literacy Success Act

## Implementation Report

Tennessee Department of Education | July 2024

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# Executive Summary

In January 2021, Governor Bill Lee called a special legislative session to combat pandemic-related learning loss, accelerate student learning, and address the state's ongoing early literacy crisis. As part of the Governor's legislative package that special session, the [Tennessee Literacy Success Act](#) (Public Chapter 3 of the First Extraordinary Session of 2021) outlines a bold policy framework that engages students, families, districts, teachers, and higher education institutions to improve early literacy rates in Tennessee through a focus on foundational literacy skills instruction. The Tennessee Literacy Success Act (TLSA) aims to ensure that students in early grades are on track to meet grade level proficiency by the end of third grade. Major components of this legislation include:

- foundational literacy skills instruction and student intervention supports
- Adoption and use of instructional materials approved by the state board and aligned to Tennessee standards
- universal reading screeners
- home literacy reports
- teacher preparation and training

To ensure effective implementation of foundational literacy skills instruction, each LEA and public charter school must also develop and submit to the department for approval, a foundational literacy skills plan (FLSP) for students in kindergarten through grade 5 (K-5). The TLSA establishes various reporting requirements as well.

The TLSA, along with other state initiatives and investments in early literacy, continues to have a positive impact on grade level performance on the English language arts portion of the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) test. Proficiency rates for third grade improved from 32.1% of students performing on grade level in 2021 to 40.9% in 2024. This exceeds performance levels prior to the pandemic and is the highest level of proficiency since standards were changed in 2017.

This report has been authored by the Tennessee Department of Education (department) to provide the chairs of the education committees of the Tennessee Senate and House of Representatives with an overview of the implementation of the Tennessee Literacy Success Act. Preparation of the report included collaborative measures involving the State Board of Education (SBE) and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC) in providing feedback and thoughts on the implementation of the Act. A letter from the state board is included as Appendix A in this report.

# State Board Rules and Policies

To implement the Tennessee Literacy Success Act, it was necessary for the Tennessee State Board of Education (SBE) to revise current rules and policies and create several new rules and policies. This important implementation work ensured all stakeholders in education—from education preparation providers to new and currently licensed teachers, to school and district administrators—have clear parameters for implementing the new requirements in law with fidelity. The rules and policies listed below had substantial revisions or were newly created, to support implementation of the Literacy Success Act.

## ***Rules***

All SBE rules may be accessed on the Secretary of State's website [here](#).

- Rule 0520-01-03-.15 Universal Student Screeners and State-Adopted Benchmark Assessments
- Rule 0520-01-03-.16 Promotion and Retention
- Rule 0520-02-03-.11 Educator Endorsements

## ***Policies***

All SBE policies may be accessed on the SBE website [here](#).

- Promotion and Retention Policy 3.300
- Universal Screener Policy 3.302
- Professional Assessments for Tennessee Educators Policy 5.105
- Educator Licensure Policy 5.502
- Educator Preparation Policy 5.504
- Literacy and Specialty Area Standards for Educator Preparation Policy 5.505

# Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction

In accordance with [T.C.A. § 49-1-905\(a\)\(1\)](#), the Tennessee Literacy Success Act requires that all districts and public charter schools provide foundational literacy skills instruction to K-3 students as the primary form of instructional programming in English Language Arts (ELA). To demonstrate effective implementation of foundational literacy skills instruction, school districts and public charter school are required to submit a Foundational Literacy Skills Plan (FLSP) for students in grades K-5, which captures compliance information and many reporting requirements of the TLSA, to the department for approval.

## ***Foundational Literacy Skills Plans***

As part of the Tennessee Literacy Success Act, T.C.A. § 49-1-905(f) required each district and public charter school to submit a Foundational Literacy Skills Plan (FLSP) outlining minimum components. T.C.A. § 49-1-905(g)(1) establishes that initial plans were to be submitted to the department for approval by June 1, 2021, and revised plans are to be resubmitted by July 1, 2024, and every three years thereafter, unless districtwide data from the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) indicates strong growth on the English language arts portion of the fourth grade Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) test.

## **Required Foundational Literacy Plan Approval**

In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-1-905(f), all districts and public charter schools must include specific criteria in their Foundational Literacy Skills Plans to demonstrate their plan for delivering strong foundational skills instruction to all students. Plans must include descriptions of how the following components are met:

- daily foundational skills instructional time for grades K-2 and 3-5,
- the adopted foundational skills instructional materials,
- the approved Universal Reading Screener selected,
- interventions and support available to students,
- a family notification plan (Home Literacy Report), and
- a professional development plan focused on foundational skills for K-5 teachers.

The department also requires artifacts including samples of master schedules indicating times for foundational literacy skills, approved textbook waiver if instructional materials are not state board approved, schedules reflecting time for intervention, samples of Home Literacy Reports for grades K-3

and Grades 4-5, and a sample professional development calendar in FLSPs to be submitted as evidence of compliance with all components.

Foundational Literacy Skills Plans are reviewed by the Early Literacy Strategy Team within the Academics and Instructional Strategy Division. Reviewers have had normed training using the Foundational Literacy Skills Plan Rubric found within the Foundational Literacy Skills Plan Toolkit. Upon approval, each plan is returned to the district or public charter school to post on their website. The department must post FLSPs to its website within 10 days of approval. See all currently approved FLSPs [here](#).

For the first year of implementation in 2021, 187 school districts and public charter schools that serve grades K-5 submitted FLSPs. Of those submitted by school districts, 58 (41 percent) were approved without revisions, while the department required revisions prior to approval for 85 districts. Among charter schools, six (14 percent) of the 44 plans were approved without revisions. Overall, sixty-six percent of plans submitted during the first year required revisions to the FLSP or to artifacts submitted as evidence as required by the department. The most common reason for revisions was the need to include or clarify information related to the parent notification plan or changes to the sample home literacy reports. By July 1, 2021, all but one FLSPs submitted by districts or public charter schools had been approved.

For the 2022-23 school year, 65 school districts and public charter schools submitted revisions to FLSPs. Forty-two districts and 7 charter schools submitted FLSP revisions for the 2023-24 school year. Most revisions were due to changes in the universal reading screener selection.

The TLSA requires the comptroller of the treasury to report findings after a review of foundational literacy skills plans by November 1 each year, beginning in 2021. See the full report [here](#).

In response to the report, the department has revised the [Foundational Literacy Skills Plan Toolkit](#) and provided [additional guidance](#) to support districts and public charter schools with implementation of FLSPs and 2024 plan revisions.

### **Revised Foundational Literacy Plan Requirements**

Beginning in 2024, district and public charter schools must submit revised Foundational Literacy Skills Plans to the department by July 1, and once every three years thereafter. School districts and public charter schools are not required to resubmit plans if data from the Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System (TVAAS) indicates strong growth for all students and for each student subgroup on



the fourth grade English language arts portion of the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) test during the two test administrations immediately preceding the date the plan is due.

The first statewide resubmission cycle began in spring 2024. For this resubmission cycle, the department reviewed grade 4 ELA TVAAS data for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years to determine which districts and public charter schools must submit revised foundational literacy plans. School districts and public charter schools that obtain a level 4 (above expectations) or level 5 (significantly above expectations) in TVAAS growth for all students and for each student subgroup in grade 4 ELA for both years of the resubmission cycle are not required to resubmit a new plan. The department requires that any district or public charter school that reflects a level 1 (significantly below expectations) in districtwide TVAAS growth for grade 4 ELA for two years, has any school in the district that reflects level 1 TVAAS growth for two years for grade 4 ELA data, or has any individual subgroup that has a grade 4 ELA districtwide TVAAS level of 1 or level 2 (below expectations) for two years must resubmit yearly until the three-year review cycle begins again. If a district or public charter school is at a level 3 and does not fall into one of the other categories, they will submit on a three-year cycle.

Multiple supports are in place to guide the implementation of submitting revised FLSPs. These have been shared through email, newsletters, and the Commissioner's Update for Directors.

- In February 2024, the department released the Revised FLSP Toolkit, containing deadline information, the rubric used in scoring each plan, a detailed outline of all components required in the literacy plan, and sample narrative responses. Also included are sample schedules and Home Literacy Reports to support the entire revision process.
- In April 2024, the department sent emails to districts and public charter schools indicating their resubmission group based on TVAAS growth levels. Districts and public charter schools fell into one of three groups:
  - **Group 1**—no revision required until the next resubmission cycle in 2027;
  - **Group 2**—revision required each year until the 2027 resubmission cycle; or
  - **Group 3**—revision required in 2024, but not again until the 2027 resubmission cycle.
- In May through June 2024, the department held a weekly office hours to respond to district and public charter school revision questions.
- The department continues to provide personalized assistance through phone calls, video conferences, or email responses to address any questions or concerns during the revision process as well.

For the 2024 FLSP submission cycle, Group 1 includes only one charter school not required to resubmit its plan due to substantial TVAAS growth. A total of 73 districts and public charter schools included in Group 2 and are required to submit their plans yearly, and 125 districts and public charter schools are on a three-year cycle for submission, as indicated by Group 3 criteria.

# Instructional Materials

## High-Quality Instructional Materials

In accordance to [T.C.A. § 49-1-905\(b\)\(1\)\(2\)\(3\)](#) also places a focus on high-quality instructional materials, recognizing that helping students learn to read requires strong instructional materials aligned to Tennessee standards. The Tennessee Literacy Success Act reiterates that all districts and public charter schools must use ELA textbooks and instructional materials aligned with the state’s academic standards, either by adopting materials from the approved Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission list or receiving a waiver from the State Board of Education. All textbook and instructional materials for English language arts were required to be aligned to Tennessee’s academic standards by January 1, 2023. According to Foundational Literacy Skills Plans, all school districts with students in grades K-5 reported using textbooks from the state approved list. Most public charter schools were compliant; however, data limitations prevent complete reporting. The department continues to work with school districts and public charters to ensure compliance with this section and improve data quality for accurate reporting. See the full report for all grade bands prepared by the Office of Research and Education Accountability for the comptroller [here](#).

### Adoption Trends

The table below lists the State Board of Education-approved instructional materials for grades K-5 from 2019. The description following the table explains the trends in district adoption of these materials and highlights the most widely adopted instructional materials across the state.

Figure 1. Approved publishers for ELA instructional materials

ELA Publishers Approved by State Board of Education for Grades K-5		
Amplify	Core Knowledge Language Arts	K-5
Benchmark	Advance	K-5
Cengage	Reach for Reading	K
Great Minds	Wit & Wisdom	3-5
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt	Into Reading, Tennessee	K-2, 4-5
Imagine Learning Classroom	EL Education	K-5



ELA Publishers Approved by State Board of Education for Grades K -5		
<b>Imagine Learning Classroom</b>	GuideBooks	3-5
<b>McGraw Hill</b>	Wonders	K-5
<b>Open Up</b>	Book Worms	3 only
<b>Open Up</b>	OUR Expeditionary Learning	K-5
<b>Scholastic</b>	Scholastic Literacy	5 only

Districts chose to adopt some materials more often than others. Amplify CKLA was adopted by more districts for grades K-2 (33%) and 3-5 (25%) than any other option, and Benchmark Advance was the second most frequently adopted HQIM in grades K-2 (23%) and 3-5 (22%). Based on information provided by the department and the Office of Research and Accountability, the comptroller published a full report required by TLSA that can be accessed [here](#).

### **State-Developed Supplemental Foundational Literacy Curricular Materials (K-2)**

To provide additional foundational skills materials, the department created the [Tennessee Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement](#). The supplement was developed by Tennessee district leaders, teachers, and nationally recognized literacy experts to be used by Tennessee districts, teachers, parents, and higher education institutions to support students' foundational literacy skills development. Resources are organized by grade (pre-K through 2) and include instructional units, decodable readers, student workbooks, foundational skills practice activities, and intervention materials along with ancillary resources to support explicit and systematic early reading instruction. Implementation guides are also available for all stakeholders and include digital learning opportunities to assist in facilitation and how to incorporate the materials into daily instruction.

## **Implementation Support**

### **Early Literacy Networks for District Support**

To support implementation of foundational literacy skills instruction, the Early Literacy Network was established to provide professional development to districts. During the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years, 93 districts participated in the network. Districts were given grants of \$80,000-100,000 over two years, depending on the size of the district, to fund implementation support in grades K-2 from an approved vendor. Districts participated in monthly communities of practice tailored to support their specific needs and quarterly in-person regional convenings to collaborate with district partners across the state. The department will continue to sustain implementation of foundational literacy skills instruction by launching [Early Literacy Network 2.0](#) through state funding for the 2024-25 school year. It will provide district support through regional convenings, virtual learning sessions, asynchronous

learning modules, and learning walks using the [Tennessee Foundational Skills Instructional Practice Guide](#). These efforts aim to reinforce a commitment to enhancing the knowledge of leaders and educators in implementing foundational skills effectively.

### **Literacy Implementation Networks for District Support**

The Literacy Implementation Network (LIN) is a collaborative group of districts that work together to support the implementation of High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) in all grade bands that started in August of 2020. There are ten regional networks positioned across the state with 59 participating districts. These regional networks engage in monthly learning webinars, collaborative sessions, and learning walks to reflect and refine their classroom instructional practices. As a part of the network, the participating districts get support from a content-aligned vendor to support their specific context and needs. Districts utilize the [Tennessee Instructional Practice Guide](#) (IPG) to collect data and support the overall impact of the network on classroom instruction. In addition, the state hosts a LIN convening to support collaboration between districts and across the state.

The LIN supports teachers in implementing three core actions by keeping high-quality instructional materials at the center of instruction (Core Action 1), the effective use of questions and tasks during instruction (Core Action 2) and creating opportunities for increased student engagement and ownership of their learning (Core Action 3).

During the fourth year of support, IPG data shows that districts are making gains in each of the core actions and focusing on allowing students to take ownership of their learning. Data indicates that during the classroom visits that occurred during the spring 2024, 89 percent of the teachers scored “yes” in Core Action 1 of the TN IPG. This data signals that teachers understand the importance of keeping high-quality instruction materials at the center of their instruction. This number is staying consistent as we are progressing the focus to Core Action 2 and Core Action 3. Currently districts are reporting 40 percent of teachers scoring a “yes” or “mostly” in Core Action 2 (effective use of questions and tasks) during the 2023-24 school year and move into year 5 of implementation support. Districts are also developing plans for sustainability and expansion to ensure all students have access to high-quality instruction in their ELA classrooms.

### **Centers of Regional Excellence (CORE) Support for Districts**

The department’s Centers of Regional Excellence (CORE) literacy team and the Academics team partnered to host two virtual collaborative sessions during the 2023-24 school year. CORE support was available to all school districts and public charter schools. The focus for each session was determined based on leader feedback and included sessions for ten different ELA curricula adopted by districts

(Amplify, Wit and Wisdom, Expeditionary Learning, HMH Into Reading, Benchmark, Learnzillion, Wonders, Savvas, Study Sync, and Springboard). CORE consultants served as facilitators of the collaborative sessions - prompting organic sharing of district celebrations and problems of practice. Both sessions were well attended, with 90 district leaders and educators attending in January and 150 participants in May. Feedback was positive, with the majority noting the desire for future opportunities for CORE support, and many responses indicated interest for in-person meetings.

## Universal Reading Screeners

### ***Selection of Universal Reading Screeners***

To assess student progress throughout the school year and identify areas for improvement of implementation efforts, the Tennessee Literacy Success Act requires that all districts and public charter schools administer a universal reading screener three times each year to students in grades K-3 and submit the results of each universal reading screener administered to students to the department. Districts may choose to administer either the Tennessee Universal Reading Screener, provided by the department and free to districts, or one of the other screeners approved by the State Board of Education in the [Universal Screener Policy 3.302](#).

The approved universal screeners include:

- Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (aimswebPlus);
- DIBELS, 8th Edition;
- easyCBM;
- FastBridge/FAST Suite;
- iReady + iReady Early Reading Tasks;
- Measures of Academic Progress Suite (MAP); and
- STAR Early Literacy & Star Literacy.

In the 2022-23 school year, K-3 students demonstrated improved performance on universal reading screeners compared to the 2021-22 school year. In the 2021 spring administration of universal reading screeners, 52.1 percent of K-3 students scored above the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile, thus indicating that these students did not show signs of being at-risk for a significant reading deficiency. In the 2022 spring administration of universal reading screeners, the percentage of K-3 students who did not display signs of being at-risk for a significant reading deficiency increased to 55.2 percent. Additionally, in the 2022-23 school year, the percentage of K-3 students who either were at-risk for a significant reading deficiency or had a significant reading deficiency decreased between each administration window of universal reading screeners, thus demonstrating that the targeted supports provided to students

throughout the school year are improving their reading skills. As of the time this report was due, the department was still analyzing the data from the 2023-24 school year and will report on that data in the future.

## Home Literacy Reports

The Tennessee Literacy Success Act requires districts and public charter schools to provide a Home Literacy Report to a parent or guardian of a K-3 student immediately after each administration of a universal reading screener if the student is identified as having a significant reading deficiency. Districts are also required to notify a parent or guardian of a student in grades 4 and 5 each school year if the student has a significant reading deficiency. Home Literacy Reports must include information about the importance of students reading by grade 3, no-cost at-home reading activities, recommendations about individualized reading intervention supports, and information about promotion to grade 4. The department's [Foundational Literacy Skills Plan Toolkit](#) gives detailed information about the requirements of Home Literacy Reports and sample letters that districts can use for all grade levels. Furthermore, districts are encouraged to send Home Literacy Reports to all students as a best practice to communicate academic progress to all families.

### **District Resources for Families to Support Home Literacy Reports**

The department provides [Toolkits for Families](#) to assist districts in conveying transparent and easy-to-understand information to families regarding [student testing](#), [Response to Instruction and Intervention Supports](#), and to help parents engage during [parent conferences](#). These toolkits aid families in comprehending the content of home literacy reports, universal screener reports, and TCAP family reports, along with guidance on utilizing this information effectively to support their students at home. The toolkits were released in April 2024 for districts to share with families. These toolkits are housed on Best for ALL Central and in the first month, the toolkits had 519 page views from 201 users. Districts are mentioning the toolkits in their Foundational Literacy Skills Plans as resources for communicating with families. Before the start of the 2024-25 school year, the department plans to release three additional toolkits for families. These toolkits will concentrate on enhancing caregivers' comprehension of literacy, fostering phonemic awareness, and facilitating support for literacy activities at home.

### **At-Home Literacy Resources for Families**

Districts must provide a list of free at-home literacy resources and activities as part of their Home Literacy Report. In previous years, the department partnered with The Governor's Early Literacy Foundation to provide free at-home decodables to families. To sustain these implementation resources, the department developed [interactive decodables](#) housed on [Best for ALL Central](#) to

continue to provide families with free books and support districts with a free literacy resource to include in their Home Literacy Reports. These interactive books incorporate engaging features for families and offer guidance to caregivers on effectively engaging with the text alongside their students. The interactive decodables were released in March 2024 and currently have almost 12,000 page views and over 7,400 users, demonstrating that this is a resource that families and districts value. Educator Preparation and Training

The Tennessee Literacy Success Act recognizes that for students to be proficient in reading, teachers must also have the tools and training to effectively teach foundational literacy skills. The Tennessee Literacy Success Act required the department to develop and submit to the State Board of Education for approval, foundational literacy skills standards for use by Educator Preparation Providers (EPPs) for the instruction of candidates seeking a license to teach students in grades K-3 and for those seeking an instructional leader license. The State Board of Education approved the EPP standards in July 2021, and all EPPs were required to provide training on reading instruction focused primarily on the foundational literacy skills standards starting in August 2022.

In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-1-906(a)(b), this act also requires the department to provide a free professional development course to K-5 teachers on foundational literacy skills instruction, also known as the department's [Early Reading Training](#), and all teachers in grades K-5 were required to complete the course by August 1, 2023. Teachers must show completion of either the professional development course or passage of the Tennessee Early Literacy Assessment to receive and maintain their license. T.C.A. § 49-1-906(c) requires the department to develop a foundational literacy skills course and instructional materials that may be used by high school students participating in the Teaching as a Profession (TAP) program of study.

The partnership with EPPs is supported by state leaders across K-12 and higher education. Dr. Steven Gentile, Executive Director of Tennessee Higher Education Commission, noted that, *"Success in college and career hinges on strong literacy skills. Tennessee's efforts to ensure all students have a strong literacy foundation is key for individual success and building the skilled workforce for thriving communities."*

## ***Education Preparation Providers***

Pursuant to the Tennessee Literacy Success Act, the department developed a signed assurance process to ensure EPPs that offer early childhood, elementary, special education, and instructional leader programs align to the 2021 EPP foundational literacy skills standards by August 1, 2022. Of the state's 44 approved EPPs, 40 offer programs that align with the requirements of this law. All 40 EPPs submitted completed signed assurances. The signed assurance required three components:

- EPP Head Administrator attestation page;
- completion of matrices demonstrating alignment between courses and clinical experiences with the standards; and
- demonstration of EPP plans for integrating the EPP foundational skills standards within applicable programs.

The department's educator preparation team completed the first review of all signed assurances using a rubric developed by the Academics team. This process involved reviewing the matrices and narrative prompt responses against the criteria in the rubrics, outlining evidence sufficiently meeting expectations, and providing actionable next steps for the EPP if any of the evidence was misaligned to the rubric. As reported in the 2023 State Board of Education [Educator Preparation Report Card](#), all active EPPs met these expectations.

To support EPPs with the implementation of the foundational literacy skills standards, the department collaborated with stakeholders to develop integrated course content focusing on the areas of foundational literacy skills, high quality instructional materials, and trauma-informed practices to aid with this process. According to the signed assurance submissions, 80 percent of EPPs planned to implement foundational literacy skills content, 35 percent planned to implement HQIM content, and 68 percent planned to implement trauma informed practices content. Also, the department has engaged substantively with EPPs to ensure all EPP faculty and staff involved in preparing educators in these critical areas are adequately prepared and supported. EPPs receive ongoing support via numerous networking and engagement opportunities, including but not limited to an EPP strand at the Reading 360 Summit, sessions at TACTE convenings, opportunities to participate in the Literacy Implementation Network, virtual literacy convenings, and direct department support as requested.

In February 2023, the State Board of Education (SBE) released refinements to the adopted foundational skills standards ([Literacy and Specialty Area Standards policy 5.505](#)). The updates in the literacy standards for educator and instructional leader preparation programs were made to include effective criteria for instructing students with characteristics of dyslexia. This revision also includes updates to clarify foundational literacy skills, expanding the scope of listed skills to include core skills of encoding and rapid naming. These refinements have been included in the annual monitoring of EPP implementation of foundational literacy skills standards.

To meet the guidelines of TLISA, the department must conduct an annual review of EPP implementation of foundational literacy skills standards to be included in EPP annual reports as well as published in the [State Board of Education Educator Preparation Report Card](#). To meet this requirement, EPPs submitted evidence demonstrating instruction is aligned with all applicable foundational literacy standards, which

includes matrices demonstrating alignment between courses and clinical experiences with the standards as well as corresponding course syllabi.

## ***Early Reading Training Course I***

The Tennessee Literacy Success Act tasks the department with providing educators with a course on foundational skills available, at no cost, to teachers in kindergarten through fifth grade that may be used to earn professional development points. [Early Reading Training](#) is offered online and satisfies the professional development requirement. As of May 2024, over 50,000 educators have successfully completed Early Reading Training Course I.

In Early Reading Training, teachers learn critical information essential to teaching young students to read. The 30-hour training includes five sessions that dig deeply into research-based practices for teaching foundational skills.

- **Session 1:** Sounds First- A Research-Based Approach to Foundational Literacy
- **Session 2:** Print Concepts and Phonological and Phonemic Awareness
- **Session 3:** Phonics and Words Recognition
- **Session 4:** Developing Skilled Readers
- **Session 5:** Sounds-First Instruction- How High-Quality Instructional Materials Help

## ***Secondary Literacy Training Course I***

[Secondary Literacy Training](#) is a companion course to the Early Reading Training to provide educators who teach grades 6-12 professional learning on foundational skills instruction. This training is available at no cost, and participants can earn professional development points. Secondary Literacy Training also satisfies the professional development requirement. As of May 2024, over 11,500 educators have successfully completed Secondary Literacy Course I.

During Secondary Literacy Training, educators learn about supporting emerging readers and implementing high-quality instructional materials. The 30-hour, asynchronous, training includes five sessions that share research-based practices for teaching foundational skills in the secondary grades.

The topics covered include:

- High-quality literacy instruction for adolescent readers
- Building a strong foundation for how students learn to read



- Complex text at the center of literacy instruction
- Knowledge building and vocabulary
- Supporting all readers
- High-quality instructional materials – the cornerstone of strong literacy instruction

### ***Foundational Literacy Skills Course for High School Students***

The department developed a foundational literacy skills instruction course and materials in compliance with T.C.A. 49-1-906(c). The course and course standards were approved by the State Board of Education in July 2022, prior to the August 1 deadline. This is a capstone course available to high school students as the fourth course in the Teaching as a Profession program of study. For the 2023-2024 school year, enrollment data indicates that 67 students were enrolled in this elective course.

### ***Sustaining Foundational Literacy Professional Development for Educators***

Continued support to districts for strong high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) implementation continues to be a priority. The department began in-person Early Reading Training Course II during summer 2021 and continues to offer the course to teachers during summer 2024. Course II of Secondary Literacy Training was offered in-person to teachers during the summers of 2022 and 2023 and will continue to be offered online following the summer of 2024.

During Early Reading Training course II, teachers learn how to better support their students in developing early literacy skills through the implementation of high-quality instructional materials and strong foundational literacy skills instruction. Teachers learn the research for the instructional practices supported by their materials, and teachers will have the opportunity to apply their learning through observation and instructional application during the Early Reading Training.

After May 2024, the secondary literacy courses were shifted to a virtual setting with an asynchronous format, allowing participants to progress at their own pace, mirroring the structure of the Course I training. Upon completion of [Secondary Literacy Course II](#), participants will have a strong understanding of the cognitive science and reading research that supports an evidenced-based approach to literacy instruction, the components of strong literacy instruction, and the alignment between the research, high-quality instructional materials, and the Tennessee English Language Arts Academic Standards.

Before the start of the 2024-25 school year, the department anticipates the launch of Early Reading Training Advanced Modules to sustain and focus on foundational skills professional learning opportunities for educators.

# Student Outcomes

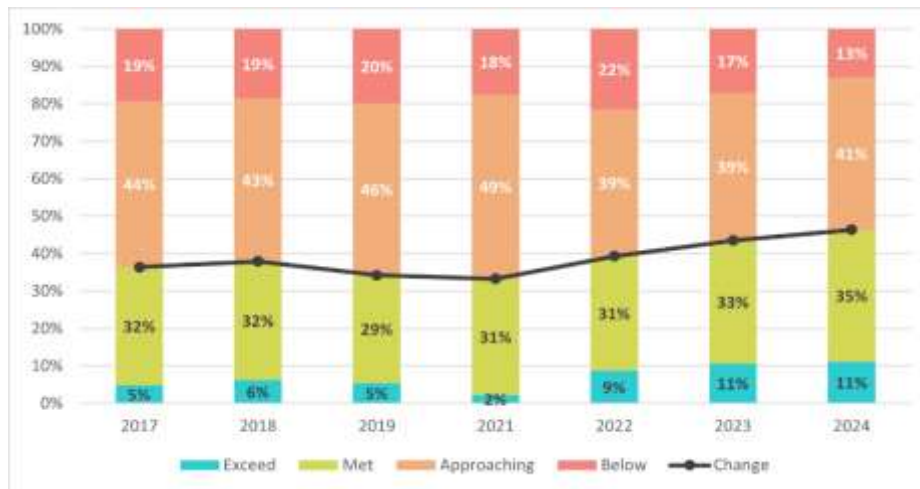
## TCAP Assessment Data

On June 13, 2024, the department released state-level 3rd grade and 4th grade results for the ELA portion of the spring 2024 TCAP assessment. On the ELA portion of the spring 2024 TCAP, 3rd grade improvement remained steady with a slight increase to 40.9 percent of students proficient, as illustrated by the black plot line across the center of the graph in Figure 2. Overall, 4th grade students achieved a 2.9 percent increase in their proficiency rate to 46.4 percent of students proficient, demonstrating the year-over-year gains for this cohort of students who reached a historic achievement level last year. Additionally, the fewest number of 4th grade students scored in the “below expectations” proficiency performance level than ever before, meaning more 4th grade students are meeting or are within reach of meeting grade level expectations. The two graphs below indicate how scores are remaining steady for 3rd grade students and significant improvement for 4th grade, thanks to the nation-leading comprehensive statewide literacy strategy for Tennessee students and the work of districts and educators across the state.

Figure 2. Grade 3 TCAP performance in ELA



Figure 3. Grade 4 TCAP performance in ELA



These improvements were a direct result of targeted efforts from educators, districts, families, and the state. Tennessee experienced widespread participation in all major state initiatives targeted toward early literacy that demonstrates a continued impact on the achievement and academic growth of elementary students over time.

# Summary

Tennessee has made significant strides in improving early literacy rates through strategic and long-term initiatives. In response to historically low literacy rates and pandemic related learning loss, Governor Lee, the Tennessee General Assembly, and the department prioritized investments in early grades reading instruction. The impact of bold early literacy policies, such as the Tennessee Literacy Success Act and the Tennessee Learning Loss Remediation and Student Acceleration Act, along with the investment in major initiatives like Reading 360 have already shown to improve grade 3 ELA proficiency rates to historic levels during the past two years. Additionally, thousands of students who did not demonstrate proficiency on the grade 3 ELA portion of the TCAP will receive free additional learning supports, including summer programming opportunities and/or tutoring in fourth grade.

Tennessee will continue to focus on the implementation of strategic learning supports provided to students through summer programming, tutoring, and other statewide initiatives to continue to improve early literacy rates and ensure all students are set up for lifelong success. Now is the time to strengthen, scale, and sustain early literacy instructional practices that continue to accelerate student learning, with a focus on adolescent literacy to support secondary students that struggle to meet grade level proficiency. Eliminating implementation gaps and addressing achievement gaps should become a top priority.

# Appendix A

## State Board of Education Literacy Success Act Implementation Letter



To the Chairs of the House and Senate Education Committees,

The State Board of Education is committed to ensuring rules, policies and academic standards are in place so that all students are provided with the highest quality education for postsecondary success. We work closely with the Tennessee Department of Education, local school districts, and stakeholders across the state to ensure excellence, oversight, and transparency in K-12 education policy.

Over the last several years, Tennessee has been a leader in the nation when it comes to legislation and guidance focused on foundational literacy skills and adoption and use of high-quality instructional materials in the early grades. We are grateful to the General Assembly for efforts to re-envision how we support students in the earliest and arguably most critical stages of their education. The Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement Act (TISA) introduced new initiatives to increase literacy outcomes by funding summer camps, tutoring and other academic supports. We have already seen the benefits of school districts introducing these new supports in the early grades, equipping students to be more prepared than ever for the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) and beyond. Recent TCAP test scores further highlight the success Tennessee is having in this focus on early literacy.

The framework for a student's success begins with a positive educational journey. As part of the State Board of Education's [Master Plan](#), an area of focus is literacy and ensuring all students are on grade level in English Language Arts (ELA) as measured by TCAP results. The State Board set 2023 annual goals for increases in outcomes for all students in grades 3 through 8. For example, the number of English learner students reaching proficiency on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade TCAP increased by 9.3 percentage points. This exceeded the goal stated in our master plan (a 6-percentage point increase).

Following decreases in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade ELA performance on the TCAP that were seen after the pandemic, we have seen steady improvement. The most recently reported 2024 TCAP outcomes show 3<sup>rd</sup> grade performance remaining stable and 4<sup>th</sup> grade performance increasing significantly. We are optimistic that the state's strategies to support early literacy are working. That said, while our State saw increases in ELA scores across nearly all subgroups of students in 2023, several did not meet the annual incremental goals set by the State Board. Members and staff continue to regularly evaluate progress toward our goals and update our master plan to inform recommendations regarding the use of

public funds for education every three years. With several early literacy initiatives in place across the State, we expect to see continued progress in ELA outcomes as measured by TCAP.

We recognize the significant effort and resources required of districts and schools to implement many of the recent changes that have been made to literacy instruction. We continue to be impressed by collaboration across this state to optimize opportunities for research-based learning. We are ready to support in every way we can to ensure all students are prepared to succeed in their educational and life pursuits.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert Eby".

Robert Eby, Chairman

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sara Morrison".

Dr. Sara Morrison, Executive Director

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