

Knox County Schools

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Last Updated: April 13, 2023

Approved: May 7, 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

Foundational literacy instruction aligns with TN standards for students in grades K-2. Knox County Schools (KCS) requires schools to plan for a minimum of 45 minutes of foundational literacy instruction daily.

Foundational skills instruction is the basis for all reading, talking, and writing during the literacy block. Explicit instruction includes teacher modeling and student practice in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The instructional model includes a 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.

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

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

Foundational literacy instruction aligns with TN standards for students in grades 3-5. A minimum of 30 minutes is dedicated to foundational skills instruction.

Intermediate foundational literacy skill instruction includes transitions to multisyllabic words, syllable types, and morphology and includes grammar, spelling, and writing. Explicit instruction includes teacher modeling and student practice in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension as well as including explicit supports, for fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

All KCS elementary schools use Benchmark Advance 2022, which embeds foundational literacy throughout the literacy 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 Advance

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5

Benchmark Advance

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

KCS administers the Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (Aims Web Plus) for students in K-5.

Intervention Structure and Supports

KCS prioritizes intervention, as early as possible, to prevent reading difficulty in later years. Members of the central office reading and intervention departments sit on the Knox County Dyslexia Board and participate in International Dyslexia and Tennessee Dyslexia professional development and advocacy.

Intervention schedules and supports are aligned with the expectations outlined in the RTI2 manual. Schools are required to submit schedules showing where students who are determined to need intervention will receive Tier II evidence-based intervention or Tier III evidence-based intervention. 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. These interventions address specific students' skills gaps and allow for progress monitoring of those gaps to track student improvement.

Intervention materials may include, but are not limited to:

- Benchmark Advance: Start Up, Build Up, Spiral Up: Phonic Skills
- Benchmark Advance: Steps to Advance
- Benchmark Advance: Phonics Intervention
- SPIRE
- Core5 (Lexia)
- Sound Sensible

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 to meet every 4 1/2 weeks throughout the school year to review progress monitoring data and class performance in order to make recommendations about the duration, material, and intensity of the students' intervention plans. KCS included some sample intervention schedules, but they are subject to change based on student needs. The six RTI2 facilitators along with the RTI2 specialists work with schools to review individual student data and to structure programming that is responsive to student needs.

Students who do not demonstrate proficiency on the 3rd or 4th grade ELA portion of the TCAP assessment may receive intervention and academic supports:

- High-dosage, low-ratio tutoring throughout the entirety of the 4th or 5th grade academic year; and/or
- Learning Loss Bridge Camp before the upcoming school year.

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. Families will also receive a Characteristics of Dyslexia Letter for students to 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 assessments and provides a narrative with a graph to show parents where their children are testing according to national norms. The information included supports parents with the interpretation of the data. The letter clearly explains the student's skill gaps and the depth and extent of student needs in family friendly terms. Additionally, the letter provides information regarding how the specific skill gaps will be addressed during intervention services. Moreover, the letter that is sent to all K-6 families articulates and explains the importance of reading proficiency by the end of third grade. The letter explains that if reading proficiency is not met there are specific pathways for fourth-grade promotion (i.e., learning loss bridge camp and year-long, high-dosage low-ratio tutoring).

The Characteristics of Dyslexia Letter is based on deeper diagnostics after the aimswebPlus benchmark for students who have scores reflecting need 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. The parent-support 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. 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/1v4v2Hn4LKVSCkAYPj7fOhR_x9WIZWGj?usp=sharing

Professional Development Plan

KCS educators engage in both large-scale professional development and ongoing, job-embedded learning opportunities grounded in the Science of Reading. The KCS reading department also supports a year-long cohort of K-3 teachers in a literacy boot camp learning experience. The course includes a job-embedded bridge to practice demonstrating knowledge and competency. The bridge to practice means teachers must implement what they learned in their classroom and submit evidence as their assignment as well as receive one-on-one coaching.

Providers of the year-long literacy boot camp have completed LETRS training in Foundational Literacy and Literacy and Writing. Five of the providers have a Reading Specialist degree or endorsement. 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 emphasizes 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 to vocabulary, language structure, and content knowledge. Additionally, the course provides the opportunity for curriculum-based professional learning, which allows educators to apply their deepened content knowledge to implementation with High-Quality Instructional Materials.

Ongoing, job-embedded support is essential to bridge content knowledge to classroom implementation. Therefore, KCS has regional facilitators (5) that provide school-specific support including, but not limited to:

- Unit and lesson internalization and preparation
- Foundational small group internalization and preparation
- Instructional leadership support (instructional coach, assistant principal, and principal) to lead literacy change management
- Extended professional learning opportunities through Early Release Day PD
- Ongoing facilitation support of PLCs focused on foundational literacy
- Classroom instructional walkthroughs with the literacy IPG
- Routine reflective conversations based on IPG data collection tied to action planning
- Student work data analysis protocol facilitation and support.

Additionally, KCS K-6 educators have participated and continue to participate in the Read 360 asynchronous learning experience as well as the optional summer Read 360 course. Our district is committed to continuing to host Read 360 summer sessions and support novice and experienced educators in receiving this training.