

McKenzie Special School District

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Last Updated: May 25, 2021

Approved: May 22, 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

Our K-2 teachers have a 90-minute literacy block each day with 45 minutes of foundational skills instruction as the primary form of instruction. Our kindergarten teachers use Wonders by McGraw Hill, and 1st-2nd uses Benchmark Advance. Both are aligned to Tennessee ELA standards as approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. Their focus is to teach daily foundational skills through a systematic, explicit approach while incorporating instruction and student practice in fluency, vocabulary, phonemic awareness, phonics, and comprehension. The scope and sequence of the curriculums is based on research of effective instruction for struggling readers. The adoption of high-quality instructional materials has changed how our teachers plan for and deliver instruction. Teachers are spending less time gathering resources and more time implementing instruction.

We plan to make improvements next year by adding Heggerty daily to every K-2 classroom; it will help align our literacy instruction with the Science of Reading. Heggerty is a comprehensive approach to early literacy instruction that uses an explicit, systematic approach to teach phonemic awareness.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

Our 3rd-4th teachers use Benchmark Advance and have a 90-minute literacy block each day with at least 30 minutes of foundational skills instruction; these grades are housed on our elementary campus. The curriculum material was selected from those approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. Teachers have daily read alouds, mini lessons to focus on vocabulary development, whole and small group instruction, and writing and grammar. Benchmark Advance provides gradual release opportunities to enhance student learning and engagement.

Our 5th grade is at our middle school and has a 60-minute literacy block with at least 30 minutes of foundational skills instruction. We use Wonders by McGraw Hill. Our curriculum materials were selected from those approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. We teach foundational skills through a systematic, explicit approach while

incorporating instruction and student practice. Foundational Skills are taught through instruction, practice, and assessment of phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and word recognition to remediate identified gaps in skills. Spelling and writing are included daily. Wonders focuses on student-centered learning, small-group teaching, and mini lessons with embedded supports for differentiation.

Both curriculums for our 3rd-5th grade band include daily lessons aligned to TN state standards where instruction includes morphology, grammar, spelling, writing, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Although the daily schedule is not the same each day, all daily evidence-based instruction includes components for knowledge-building (to build and improve the ability to comprehend complex texts and apply that knowledge as they listen, read, write, think, and speak). Our teachers include daily practice with read alouds and silent reading for grade-level and challenging texts. They implement daily activities for building comprehension skills that include but are not limited to summarizing the text with a partner, writing in response to an essay question while citing text-based evidence, unpacking difficult vocabulary using context clues, and engaging in group discussions through higher-level questions.

Additional Information

Our district has written in our LEA plan very specific plans to target our student groups in need of more support through high dosage low ratio tutoring, tiered interventions groups targeting their deficit areas, HQIM, research-based and intensive tiered curriculum materials to be used during small-group interventions, data-tracking, and through intensive professional development. Our district focus for PD this year is differentiation. We are contracting with Levering Education and will provide two days of intensive research-based training to help our teachers understand and implement differentiation.

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2

McGraw Hill Wonders—Kindergarten

Benchmark Advance—Grades 1 & 2

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5

Benchmark Advance—Grades 3 & 4

McGraw Hill Wonders—Grade 5

Supplemental Instructional Materials

In addition to our core curriculum, we will begin using Heggerty for grades PreK-2nd in August 2024.

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

We administer the Tennessee Universal Reading Screener, aimswebPlus, to our students in grades K-5. We give the STAR Literacy Suite to our pre-k students.

Intervention Structure and Supports

We administer universal screeners to all students using Aimsweb Plus. For students scoring lower in reading subtests, we go a step further and administer survey level assessments, the PASS and PWRS, so we can drill down and find the student's specific area(s) of deficit. Based off these assessments, students are placed in intervention classes and provided with instruction in their deficit area(s). Students receive intervention in a small group setting daily for a minimum of 45 minutes each day; in our lowest grades, we provide intervention for 45 minutes each day.

Some of the intervention pieces we use with our students include Sounds Sensible and SPIRE, Making Connections, Orton Gillingham, Read Naturally, and Reading Rewards. We have trained our interventionists, special education interventionists, and our K-2 teachers in using Orton Gillingham techniques. Moving forward, we are training more staff members this summer. Additionally, we are adopting Heggerty foundational skills to start using with our kindergarten students. All curriculum and materials are research-based and scientifically proven to be effective with effectively teaching phonics.

Progress monitoring in all schools takes place bi-weekly. School-level data teams consisting of the administrator, classroom teacher, interventionist, and EL Teacher (if needed) meet every 4.5 weeks and review each student's progress monitoring data and any other data deemed necessary to make informed decisions to ensure success for the student. Students may stay in their current tier, move to a different tier, have their intervention changed, be dismissed from tier II or III, or be referred for a comprehensive evaluation based on these meetings. Communication is reported to parents every 4.5 weeks about their child's progress.

All interventions and schedules are aligned with the expectations outlined in the Tennessee RTI² Manual.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

Our district notifies families in grades K-5 if their child has a significant reading deficiency or is at-risk of a significant reading deficiency. We notify families immediately after the district's schools complete the fall universal screening. Students' scores are communicated in family-friendly language that provides a clear explanation of student skill gaps and the depth and extent of student needs. We also provide activities at no cost for families to support learning at home. The families are told what intervention their student will receive and the amount of time each day the student will receive services. This is coupled with a description of the importance of being able to read on grade level by the end of grade 3 and includes information on the promotion pathway to grade 4.

Our district explains how students are assessed and what a "significant reading deficiency" means. Families are consistently notified of their child's progress, or lack of progress every 4.5 weeks after school-level data meetings. We send home family letters and benchmark results three times a year for our K-5 students. Teachers have continuous communication with parents throughout the year. At parent teacher conferences that take place once in the fall and once in the spring, we use multiple sources of data for meaningful discussions about the student. Part of the data we include is benchmarking and progress monitoring from Aims Web Plus.

Professional Development Plan

Teachers in our district have participated in the free and optional Reading 360 Early Literacy Training series developed by the Tennessee Department of Education. We ensure any new K-5 teacher to our district completes Course 1 of the Early Reading Training prior to teaching.

- In July 2024, we are sending all PreK-2nd teachers to Elevate Nashville, which includes many sessions on reading, phonics instruction, and foundational literacy.
- In July 2024, we will also provide a half day of PD for all PreK-2nd staff with Katie Garner, Secret Stories.
- In August 2024, our plan is to train newly hired staff in the Orton Gillingham approach to teaching foundational literacy skills. We have already provided Orton Gillingham training to our K-2 general and special education teachers and school-level interventionists, plus all paraprofessionals.

These professional development opportunities will continue our district focus on strong foundational literacy skills instruction.