

## **Murfreesboro City Schools**

### Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

First Approved: May 14, 2021

Approved: May 3, 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**

MCS District uses a researched based curriculum, grounded in the science of reading for grades K-2nd. The foundation skills curriculum is used district wide for K-2 classrooms and has a daily, one-hour block for foundational skills instruction which is the primary form of instruction. The Expeditionary Learning (EL) Curriculum is aligned to Tennessee ELA standards and is on the state approved list from the Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission.

MCS foundation skills block includes activities which include on grade level targeted activities for phonological/phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency and vocabulary instruction and the use of decodable text to support application of skills and comprehension, for both whole group and differentiated small groups.

The curriculum is based on Linnea Ehri's phases of reading and spelling development. Word development and spelling phases are broken into 'microphases', which supports teachers with specific, targeted phonics skills (both for encoding and decoding). The foundational skills curriculum is direct, explicit, and sequential in nature. Teachers are guided to focus on the specific strengths and needs of the learner, based on the students' current microphase rather than identify a student based on his/her 'reading level'. Explicit, systematic phonics instruction is the cornerstone to the foundational skills block curriculum with a strong emphasis on incremental instructional steps, ensuring instructional gaps do not occur.

For example, mid-year in the first-grade skills block curriculum, students are beginning to syllabicate two syllable words, following basic patterns. First graders are introduced to syllable types (open, closed, and silent e).

\*The only adjustment to the current foundational skills curriculum will be to provide continued specific, sequential phonological/phonemic awareness professional development for our K-2 teachers. The Early Literacy/Sounds First training (Pre-K-2nd grade) introduced teachers to TNFSCS (Tennessee Foundation Skills Curriculum Supplement) and the phonological/phonemic awareness Sounds First teacher manuals.

The training and the materials support teacher understanding and use of the phonological awareness curriculum. Continued professional development will include use of the TNFSCS PA

manuals and the model lesson videos (ReadingDoneRight.org) for teachers to refer to throughout the year for instructional supports/scaffolds. We have found EL Foundational Skills Curriculum provides adequate explicit, systematic phonological and phonemic awareness work, covering phonological and phonemic awareness skills such as rhyming, isolating final and medial sounds, blending and segmenting sounds, adding and deleting phonemes and substituting phonemes, although the additional supports of TNFSCS PA manuals solidifies the PA work needed. In addition to the Sounds First professional trainings and teacher follow-ups, teachers will be provided the option of using Michael Heggerty, as an additional PA resource. This resource also supports the continued work of sequential, systematic, and explicit phonological awareness instruction. We will continue to support teachers with the EL Curriculum, ensuring we are using the curriculum with integrity—using the end of cycle and benchmark assessments accurately and with fidelity. Teachers will be trained how to use the data from the foundation skills benchmarks to make the best instructional decisions, both for whole group and small group instruction.

### **Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5**

MCS District has an integrated literacy block for grades 3rd – 5th grades and uses a researched based curriculum, grounded in the science of reading. The Expeditionary Learning (EL) Curriculum is aligned to Tennessee ELA standards and is on the state approved list from the Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission.

MCS 3rd – 5th grade ELA block includes activities, which include on grade level targeted activities for morphology, spelling, writing and fluency. A minimum of 90 minutes (embedded within the knowledge building content and the ALL Block/small group instruction) addresses foundation skills instruction. Teachers were provided with the EL ALL BLOCK small group curriculum, which addresses grammar usage and mechanics (spelling), targeted writing instruction, word study (advanced phonics/fluency), vocabulary (morphology) and comprehension.

For example, our fourth-grade students are now beginning the domain on The Nineteenth Amendment. They begin by briefly activating prior knowledge and read independently and/or aloud. After the daily read aloud or independent reading in on-grade level, complex text, the students summarize the content (via a talk structure), complete “word work”—see example below), respond to a series of questions, and write a response to a question that requires students to pull evidence from the text to support their answer.

In vocabulary lessons, teachers provide explicit support for vocabulary needed to access the complex text. In one lesson, the students study the affix ‘tion’ to support word meaning and comprehension of the text. Students use their word knowledge as they engage in group discussion and writing activities. Therefore, foundational skills instruction is embedded in all aspects of their 90-minute block and is dedicated to developing students’ holistic literacy approach to fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

A specific example, mid-year in the fourth-grade skills within the ALL BLOCK curriculum, students are looking closely at morphemes within words to support word level and text level comprehension. Students address the use of affixes as clues to the meanings of words.

\*There are currently no plans to change or supplement the EL ED 3rd – 5th grade curriculum although there will continue to be additional year-long professional developments which support teacher clarity and implementation of the curriculum with integrity.

Foundational skills are embedded in the ELA block. EL Curriculum uses an integrated approach to teaching foundational skills, addressing skills while building knowledge and vocabulary. Student foundational skills are addressed during Tier 1, whole group and small group ELA instruction along with targeted, direct foundational skills instruction for students receiving Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention instruction.

### **Additional Supports**

We will continue to closely monitor our subgroups throughout the year, using iReady benchmarks (Fall, Winter, Spring), our standards-based benchmark and AimswebPlus benchmarks (Fall, Winter, Spring), our skills-based benchmarks to form targeted Tier 1 small group interventions and enrichment to address standards and/or foundational skills areas of need. In addition, one subgroup has students in the upper quintile (quintile 5) who are not demonstrating growth. As a district, we will support teachers in better understanding our EL Curriculum (Tier 1) and its use as designed, avoiding over scaffolding, and allowing students to do the majority of the work: speaking, thinking, reading and writing, which will support independence and higher levels of thinking/students' output. Students will receive support targeting both lower and upper quintiles (quintiles 1 and 4). As a district, we are currently working with our special education teachers with the use and understanding of the EL Curriculum to support students with Tier 1 instruction. Special Education teachers have been trained to provide some opportunities for frontloading of EL lessons (vocabulary, content, language dives, etc...) so students are better able to be engaged and participate in Tier 1 ELA instruction. Students at the lower quintiles are provided targeted foundation skills instruction to address their specific areas of skill(s) need. One subgroup indicates lack of growth in the lower quintiles (1-3) and in quintile 5. We will continue to press for use of the EL Curriculum with integrity, avoiding over scaffolding and pushing for small group instruction to address students' foundational skills areas of need.

### **Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2**

Open Up OUR Expeditionary Learning

### **Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5**

Open Up OUR Expeditionary Learning

### **Supplemental Instructional Materials**

Our district has adopted an approved curriculum for ELA instruction; however, we have chosen to supplement K-2nd for phonological and phonemic awareness. Our district will use TNFSCS/Sounds First or Michael Heggerty's Phonological/Phonemic Awareness Curriculum to enhance the EL Curriculum and support phonics instruction. This supplement allows us to focus more deeply on the phonological awareness and phonemic awareness skills that are crucial for success Pre-K through

second grade. We will use the daily sounds-first activities as our daily warm up, both whole group and small group, in all schools across the district

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

We use aimswebPlus as our universal screener and progress-monitoring tool for K-5 reading, which meets the criteria for the dyslexia screening requirements.

### **Intervention Structure and Supports**

In the fall, students will be given a universal screener to determine which students have a significant reading deficiency or are “at-risk”. MCS has data team members with several school stakeholders (interventionists, grade-level teachers, instructional coaches, administrators, school psychologists) who review the universal screener data to determine which students score between the 0-25th percentile AND indicate a skill deficit. Those students demonstrating an area of need are classified as in need of Tier II or Tier III instruction. Students classified as Tier II or Tier III are given a survey level diagnostic assessment (aimswebPlus) to determine specific deficits in order to best assign students to a small group with an intervention that will narrow skill gaps. Students receive daily, intervention instruction 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 are identified with a significant reading deficiency. Our adopted ELA curriculum contains an assessment and remediation guide in which teachers can find activities that directly address skill gaps. They can tailor this to the needs of their RTI group of students. If the intervention does not indicate effectiveness over time, more comprehensive, strategic interventions (such as Wilson Reading) become an option. Students are progress monitored using aimswebPlus.

Data teams meet every 4.5--6 weeks to determine if a change in the intervention or the person providing the intervention is needed. The data team also looks at other variables (attendance, engagement, historical data) as part of the decision-making process before a change is made to the programming or provider. Students receive explicit instruction in their area of deficit, in small groups using research-based materials and strategies.

MCS has systematic procedures at all levels of assessment, instruction, and intervention to meet the needs of students with dyslexia or characteristics of dyslexia. The Dyslexia Resource guide released by the TDOE outlines specific procedures that our district has implemented. The characteristics outlined in that document (pg. 7) informs our assessment procedures as well as the dyslexia screening procedures (pg. 14). MCS procedures for identification of Characteristics of Dyslexia ensure TDOE requirements are met.

MCS:

- a) identifies students by the composite score of the universal reading screener and
- b) identifies students who demonstrate deficiencies in fifty percent (50%) or more of the grade appropriate subtests of skills via the use of TDOE Minimum Universal Reading ScreeningMatrix (p. 17-18).

MCS utilizes the following screening and assessment procedures:

Tier 1: All K-3 students are provided a skills-based assessment three times per year (universal screener) for reading, to identify students who may struggle in the area of foundational skills and comprehension (basic skills needed for a particular grade level). All 4th-5th grade students who are currently in Tier 2/Tier 3 interventions or who 'flag' on the iReady Reading benchmark assessment are administered the aimswebPlus benchmark to determine if further diagnostics/interventions are needed. All K-6 students are provided a standards-based assessment (iReady Reading) to determine Tier 1 strengths and needs. Students who need on grade level foundational skills supports, receive targeted foundation skills instruction using the EL (reading) curriculum.

Tier 2: Students who score below the 25% and above the 10% and are struggling in Tier 1 are considered for Tier 2 interventions. Some of the reading interventions for Tier 2 reading are: Michael Heggerty Phonological Awareness Manual, TNFSCS Phonological Awareness Manuals, Tools4Reading, Florida Center for Reading Research, 95Percent, 95Percent multi-syllable routines, iReady Reading tools, TDOE Foundations Skills, and EL ED Skills Block skill targeted curriculum materials.

Tier 3: Students who score below the 10% and struggling in Tier 1 are considered for Tier 3 interventions. The reading interventions for Tier 3 reading are: Michael Heggerty Phonological Awareness Manual, TNFSCS Phonological Awareness Manuals, ReadingDoneRight (PA), 95Percent, 95Percent multi-syllable routines, iReady Reading tools, TDOE Foundations Skills, and UFLI, all targeted to students' specific area of need. All interventions listed are systematic, explicit, and researched based. The interventions are cumulative in nature, ensuring students are fluent and automatic with a skill prior to moving to the next level. All interventions listed have a multi-sensory component that supports students with characteristics of dyslexia.

### **Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports**

MCS notifies parents in grades K-5 if their child has a significant reading deficit (as evidenced by students scoring below the 15th percentile) or is at-risk of a significant reading deficit (as evidenced by students scoring between the 16th-40th percentile) 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 based on tier. This is coupled with a description of the importance of being able to read by the end of 3rd grade, along with an explanation of the fourth-grade promotion pathway.

The district defines how students are assessed and what a "significant reading deficit" means. Parents are subsequently notified of their child's progress, or lack of progress, after the 4 ½ week 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 along with recommended activities (that do not require purchased

resources) that will support students in the area of deficit. These communications go out to parents with students in grades K-3 three times annually and are shared in grades 4 and 5 annually.

MCS has also subscribed to the Ready4K text messaging program which encourages and provides parents of Pre-K-3rd grades with ideas and activities to support student receptive and expressive language/vocabulary and early literacy skills. Parents receive texts three times per week to support their Pre-K-3rd grade student. These texts emphasize the importance of supporting their child with language acquisition skills along with early literacy skills.

In addition, the district follows TDOE guidelines for students who met criteria of an ILP-D. An ILP-D parent notification letter is created for students who fall below the 25th percentile on 50 percent of the universal screener subtests and demonstrate historically a need for reading supports. Parents are notified that their child has met criteria for an ILP-D via letter sent home or a phone call to parent(s). Once parents provide either written or verbal consent, the ILP-D is written and created within the TNPulse platform and targeted interventions are provided.

### **Professional Development Plan**

Currently, 99% of our teachers have completed the Early Reading Training. All new teachers to our district have summer onboarding requirements which include completion of this training in foundational skills instruction.

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

May 28-31, 2024 – Twenty five percent (plus) teachers of grades in grades K through 2nd, will engage in a weeklong Summer Literacy Institute training (with a sounds first approach to instruction) in combination with a ‘deep dive’ into the EL curriculum--knowledge building component of the EL Curriculum. This training will focus on foundational reading development, using a sounds first approach along with a ‘deep dive’ into the knowledge building component of the EL Curriculum. The foundational skills component of the training is a science of reading, phonics-based approach to skills-based instruction.

July 8-12, 2024 – There will be a training targeting 20 plus 3rd-6th grade teachers at the Summer Literacy Institute training. Teachers will have a ‘deep dive’ into the EL Curriculum, targeting deep thinking and writing in response to the complex texts within the curriculum. Teachers will analyze student work compared to EL Curriculum exemplar writing samples and determine next steps when implementing lessons. Teachers will prepare for ALL Block lessons which target grammar, morphology, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension skills.

July 15-19, 2024 – There will be a training targeting 20 plus 3rd-6th grade teachers at the Summer Literacy Institute training. Teachers will have a ‘deep dive’ into the EL Curriculum, targeting deep thinking and writing in response to the complex texts within the curriculum. Teachers will analyze student work compared to EL Curriculum exemplar writing samples and determine next steps when implementing lessons. Teachers will prepare for ALL Block lessons which target grammar, morphology, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension skills.

July 22, 2024—There will be a summer Coaches’ Institute which supports coaches with the EL Curriculum, with analyzing school level, grade level and classroom level data, and with coaching cycles to support teachers within their building. The instructional literacy focuses for the 2024-25 year will be the topic of discussion.

July 23-24, 2024-There will be a New Teacher Orientation which targets new teachers to the profession and to the district. There will be an overview of the EL Curriculum both for Skills Block and for Knowledge building lessons. Teachers will learn how to assess students using the foundation skills curriculum assessments to determine small groups targeting students’ areas of need. Teachers will walk through a lesson internalization for both Skills Block and Knowledge building lessons.

July 31, 2024-K-6 teachers will receive a two-day professional development, which offers multiple reading sessions. The sessions address phonological awareness, phonics, morphology, spelling, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The sessions will be offered by Central Office personnel and instructional coaches within the district.

July/August 2024 (specific dates TBD-) K-6 grade teachers (with fewer than 3 years of experience) will receive EL Curriculum targeted training addressing foundation skills lessons as well as knowledge building lessons. Lesson internalization, lesson coherence, and teacher clarity of the EL curriculum will be the focus of the training.

Fall 2024 (specific dates TBD)- K-2nd grade teachers will be offered a three-day training using a sounds first approach. Teachers will explore the science of reading and how a sounds first approach to foundation skills instruction aligns to the research. Teachers will ‘deep dive’ into the EL Foundation Skills Curriculum and align the work to a sounds first approach.

In addition, MCS will continue to provide many professional developments offered throughout the school year (2024-2025) to deepen teacher understanding and efficacy of instructional foundational skills and knowledge building practices, using the EL Curriculum as the training focus. Teachers will indicate an understanding and internalization of these trainings with the use of the IPG during learning walks, along with opportunities to meet and discuss the curriculum during meetings offered throughout the year.

#### Monthly Literacy Network Meetings

Each grade level (K-6) across the district, will meet monthly to discuss EL Curriculum implementation trends, spotlights, and needs. The meetings target foundation skills curriculum needs/concerns/trends as well as the knowledge building curriculum needs/concerns/trends. Teachers from each school meet monthly to further internalize lessons, lesson components, analyze student work and determine best practices to support student success.