



Literacy

Tennessee Literacy Success Act FAQs

1. Will this document be updated?

Yes. The department will compile questions and update the FAQ each Friday.

2. What is the intent of the Tennessee Literacy Success Act?

The Tennessee Literacy Success Act (hereinafter referred to as “the Act”) requires LEAs and public charter schools to use foundational literacy skills instruction as the basis of K-3 English language arts instructional programming and submit a foundational literacy skills plan to the department for approval. Foundational literacy skills plans must articulate the district or public charter school’s plan for K-5 literacy including instructional time, materials to be used, planned interventions for struggling students, parent communication, and plans for literacy instruction professional development. This framework includes students and families, current classroom teachers, schools, districts, and institutions of higher education to improve literacy rates in Tennessee.

3. Does the Tennessee Literacy Success Act require districts to use Reading 360?

No. The Act outlines the Tennessee early literacy policy framework that ensures that all Tennessee children learn to read using a foundational literacy skills approach grounded in phonics. The Act outlines four requirements for foundational literacy skills for our state that include the Foundational Skills Literacy Plan, the use of a universal screener for literacy tracking, the inclusion of foundational literacy skills in educator preparation and leader preparation programs as well as assurances that LEAs will use high-quality materials to teach foundational literacy skills.

Reading 360 programming provides free and optional supports that help districts provide high-quality early literacy instruction to children. Programming includes free and optional teacher training, grants for implementation support, family at-home resources to support reading, free and optional screeners and literacy assessment systems as well as a wealth of free digital early literacy resources through the online literacy tool.

4. What universal screener is required by the Tennessee Literacy Success Act?

The department will provide a free Tennessee universal reading screener, which may be used for all of the following:



- To meet the requirements of the Act,
- To meet the screener requirements within the RTI2 framework,
- As a dyslexia screener, and
- As an approved alternative growth model for teacher evaluations.

Using the Tennessee universal reading screener for the above will likely consolidate the number of different assessments needed in districts. LEAs and public charter schools also have the option to use a locally adopted universal screener that is approved by the state board of education. The Act requires districts and charter schools to continue to administer the Tennessee universal reading screener or a universal reading screener approved by the state board of education to all students in grades K-3 three times each year during three administration windows set by the department. LEAs and public charter schools may also choose to administer the free Tennessee universal reading screener or a universal reading screener approved by the state board of education to pre-k students.

5. Does this bill change the state's current RTI² requirements?

No. This bill aligns the universal screener requirements of RTI2 with the Tennessee Literacy Success Act and the Say Dyslexia bill to ensure coherence.

6. When will the new, free Tennessee universal reading screener be available for districts to use?

The department anticipates the release of the Tennessee universal reading screener by the end of May, 2021.

7. Are school districts required to report the results from the administration of the Tennessee universal reading screener or a universal screener approved by the state board of education to the department?

Yes. School districts and public charter schools must submit the results from universal reading screeners to the department while maintaining compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g), § 10-7-504, and other applicable state and federal privacy laws. Screener results may not be used to assign accountability determinations for any school or district.

8. What is required to be included in a Foundational Skills Literacy Plan?

School districts must create a local foundational literacy skills plan for students in kindergarten through fifth grade and submit the plan to the department for approval by June 1st, 2021.



The plan must include:

- (a) The amount of time and description of time devoted to foundational literacy skills instruction,
- (b) Adopted foundational skills instructional materials,
- (c) Universal reading screener selected,
- (d) Interventions and support available to students,
- (e) Parent notification plan, and
- (f) Professional development plan for K-5 teachers.

9. Where can families find a school district’s foundational skills literacy plan?

Each school district must post its foundational literacy skills plan, approved by the department, on the district’s web page. The department is also required to post all district plans on the department’s web page.

10. How often must a school district re-submit its foundational skills literacy plan?

Each school district and public charter school must re-submit its foundational skills literacy plan once every three years, unless the district or public charter school demonstrates strong growth, in which case the district or public charter school could be authorized by the department to submit a revised plan less frequently.

However, the department is authorized to require a school district or public charter school to submit a revised foundational literacy skills plan more frequently than every three years if any of the following occurs:

- 4th grade TVAAS data for any school or schools in the district reflect an attainment level of “significantly below expectations” immediately preceding the date on which the foundational literacy skills plan or the revised foundational literacy skills plan is due; or
- the district-wide 4th grade ELA TVAAS data for individual student subgroups, as defined by Tennessee's Every Student Succeeds Act plan, reflects an attainment level of “below expectations” or “significantly below expectations” immediately preceding the date on which the foundational literacy skills plan or the revised foundational literacy skills plan is due.

In addition, a school district or public charter school will not be required to submit a revised plan if *both* of the following occur:

- The district's or public charter school's district-wide student growth data for fourth grade English language arts for the two (2) Tennessee comprehensive assessment program (TCAP) test administrations immediately preceding the date on which the foundational literacy skills plan or the revised foundational literacy skills plan is due reflects an attainment level of "above expectations" or "significantly above expectations"; and



- The LEA's or public charter school's student growth data for each individual student subgroup, as defined by Tennessee's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan, for fourth grade English language arts for the two (2) TCAP test administrations immediately preceding the date on which the foundational literacy skills plan or the revised foundational literacy skills plan is due reflects an attainment level of "above expectations" or "significantly above expectations."

11. How would a student be identified as having a significant reading deficiency?

When a student completes the universal screener three times a year, they may be identified in different categories based on the universal screener results. "A significant reading deficiency" refers to students in K through third grade who demonstrate a lack of progress in demonstrating foundational literacy skills fluently. The universal screener would show this lack of progress or mastery of appropriate skills, and a student's score on a universal screener would show lack of significant progress and/or skills significantly below grade level. For students in fourth or fifth grade, this would include students scoring at "approaching" or "below" on the English language arts portion of the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) assessment.

12. What are the requirements for parent notification?

Upon identifying any K-3 student as having a significant reading deficiency, school districts and public charter schools must notify the student's parents in writing and provide the parents with information on the importance of third grade reading proficiency, suggested reading intervention activities that can be completed at home, and specific in-school reading interventions and supports that the school district or charter school will provide for the student. In addition, for any student who has been identified as having a significant reading deficiency, school districts and public charter schools must notify the parents of the student's progress in foundational literacy skills after each universal reading screener administration (for students in grades K-3) or once each school year (for students in grades 4-5).

13. Does the Act have new professional development requirements for teachers?

Teachers in kindergarten through fifth grade must complete at least one professional development course on foundational literacy skills approved by the department by August 1, 2023. The department will develop at least one professional development course to fulfill this requirement to be made available at no cost.

14. Do the week one and week two early literacy training series coursework within Reading 360 "count" as an equivalent for the professional development requirement referenced above?

Yes. This coursework provides the equivalent of two courses of foundational literacy skills.



15. What are the requirements listed in the Act for Education Preparation Providers?

Educator preparation providers (EPPs) must provide training on reading instruction focused primarily on foundational literacy skills standards to new teacher candidates seeking licensure to teach kindergarten through third grades. Any individual who teaches or seeks to teach kindergarten through third grade must pass a Tennessee reading instruction test or complete a foundational literacy skills instruction course, provided at no cost to the candidate or the EPP, to receive, advance, or renew their teaching license.

16. Will the Department recommend changes to the Educator Preparation Standards Literacy Standards (adopted by the board in 2017)?

The department will analyze the existing literacy standards to determine alignment with the expectations laid out in the Act and make recommendations that will modify or supplement the standards with a stronger focus on foundational literacy skills. We know the current standards include some content covering foundational literacy skills but likely need additional emphasis.

TDOE Contact Information:

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