

**Jefferson County Schools**  
**Foundational Literacy Skills Plan**

**Approved: May 18, 2021**

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 district expects 150 minutes of reading instruction each day in K-2 classrooms. The 150-minute reading block is divided into knowledge-building lessons (45-60 minutes), small group reading in which foundational skills are applied (45-60 minutes), and explicit foundational skills instruction (30-45 minutes). In the 2019-2020 school year we began requiring teachers to utilize our foundational skills curriculum, JC Phonics. Full implementation of the Tennessee Foundational Skills supplement in all PreK-2 classrooms is now planned for 2021-2022, with an increase in required time planned. Going forward, our district will expect 45-60 minutes of foundational skills instruction each day. JC Phonics consists of 120 PowerPoint mini lessons with review, new learning, application, poetry, and decodable text, along with interactive links. Every Tennessee Foundational Literacy Standard is addressed and practiced, including sentence composition standards. JC Phonics is loosely based on the Fountas and Pinnell Phonics program. All K-3 teachers participated in professional development on how children learn to read. These sessions were led by the instructional coaches and based on the materials/training provided by the TnCore office (based on the work of Louisa Moats). Teachers were provided with resources to teach Fountas & Pinnell Phonics. Some of the materials proved cumbersome, so the county developed JC Phonics, which has a determined sequence of lessons based upon a developmentally appropriate phonics progression. It goes from simple to complex with explicit instruction on phonemic/word sound games, phonics rules, letter/sound relationships, spelling patterns, high frequency words, word meaning, word structure, and word solving actions. Included in each lesson is a link to a decodable reader for the students to practice the learned skills along with fluency.

K-2 teachers in Jefferson County provide students with daily small group reading instruction during which foundational skills are applied. Small group reading time is used to introduce PA/Word study activities, oral language practice through discussions while also building knowledge with the shared reading text. Fluency is addressed in small groups with mini-lessons on the aspects of fluency included. Vocabulary study is accomplished mainly through the anchor texts of the unit, but is also reinforced with literacy centers and writing tasks. Foundational skills standards are woven into all sections of the literacy block throughout the day in K-2 classrooms. The inclusion of time spent on explicit language skills is reinforced and remediated by the students' time in authentic text whole group and small group with the teacher.

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

Jefferson County Schools provides all 3rd-5th grade students with an integrated literacy experience grounded in the science of reading, as well as, aligned to the Tennessee ELA standards.

Furthermore, our teachers consistently plan ELA lessons centered around high-quality instructional materials as provided within our newly adopted Benchmark curriculum. On a daily basis, our students engage in rigorous and authentic reading and writing tasks for 90 or more minutes. This evidence-based approach gives our students the opportunity to apply foundational skills regularly both through explicit and embedded instruction.

Weekly schedules in classrooms across the district provide core instruction for their students to develop vocabulary, build knowledge, and think deeply about rigorous text. At the same time, these lessons provide opportunities to practice spelling, morphology, and grammar as students strive to become fluent readers and writers. In fact, the comprehensive literacy planner from Benchmark highlights dedicated lessons within each unit that support student success in foundational skills, as well as, ample opportunity to practice these skills.

Moreover, a typical unit in Benchmark begins with students immersed in text that requires them to draw from a variety of skills simultaneously. They activate prior knowledge, read quality text with teacher support, and begin to collect ideas to write about. As the unit progresses, teachers gradually release responsibility as students read independently, discuss thinking with others, and synthesize information through their writing. As teachers relinquish support, students increasingly draw from their knowledge of foundational skills as they encounter new words within text and construct paragraphs to express their viewpoints and ideas.

In addition, our teachers choose from a variety of lessons within Benchmark that are focused on explicit instruction in foundational skills. This direct instruction allows teachers to model phonetic principles via the ePocket chart, asks students to examine similar words to look for patterns, and, in turn, offers abundant time to interact with text written specifically to practice targeted foundational skills. For instance, each student has access to a Word Study eBook designed to increase their automaticity with text, and teachers put together lessons from the Phonics and Word Study Workshop as one means of increasing fluency.

Given that this past year was our initial experience with a new curriculum, we realize that not all teachers were prepared to implement every component of Benchmark; and we anticipate that our teachers will more fully utilize all types of foundational skill lessons in the coming year. As we think toward the future, we plan to develop teachers' preparedness for lessons through collaborative meetings and by following our JCS Unit Prep Protocol. Through this process, we expect to strengthen teachers' knowledge of foundational skills, to increase their awareness of prompting and reinforcing these skills during guided reading and writing experiences, and to set the expectation that they create an atmosphere of targeted and responsive instruction within their classrooms. Without a doubt, the key to our future success resides in building the capacity of our teachers and preparing them to utilize the wealth of resources available.

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

Benchmark - K-5 Advance

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

Benchmark - K-5 Advance

### **Universal Reading Screener for Grades K-5. This screener complies with RTI<sup>2</sup> and Say Dyslexia requirements.**

In 2020-2021 we used the iReady diagnostic in reading and math as the "standards-based" universal screener. We followed the "standards-based" screener with a skill-based screener, Easy CBM. We will consider the state universal screener when it is released.

### **Intervention Structure and Supports**

In the fall, students are given a universal screener (iReady) to determine which students have a significant reading deficiency or are "at-risk". Our grade-level teachers, instructional coaches, and principals review universal screener data to determine which students score between the 0-25th percentile. Those students demonstrating need are classified as in need of Tier II or Tier III instruction. Students classified as Tier II or Tier III are given a diagnostic assessment (EasyCBM) 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, small-group intervention for at least 30 minutes for Tier II and 45 minutes for Tier III 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 have been identified with a significant reading deficiency. Our recently adopted ELA curriculum (Benchmark Advance) 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 that intervention is not proving to be effective, more comprehensive, strategic interventions such as SPIRE, Sound Sensible, Sound Partners, iReady, Accessing Complex Text, and Six Minute Reading Solution become an option. Data teams meet every 4 ½ weeks to determine if a change in the intervention or the person providing the intervention is warranted. The data team also looks at other variables (attendance, engagement) as part of the decision-making process before a change is made to the intervention or provider.

Our students receive explicit instruction in their area of deficit in small groups using research-based materials and strategies. These students are also screened using The Phonics and Word Reading Survey (PWRS) and the Phonological Awareness Skills Screener (PASS) to determine if they have characteristics of dyslexia. Students who do demonstrate those characteristics receive intensive intervention as outlined in the Say Dyslexia Law using programs that meet the law's requirements. Our district uses a research-based SPIRE program as intervention for students with characteristics of dyslexia. Our district notifies families of students who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia. Families are notified that the SPIRE curriculum is used to support those students, as it is based on the Orton-Gillingham approach of systematic, explicit, sequential, phonics-based instruction and is considered a strong support for those students.

Intervention takes place daily for 30 or 45 minutes during a grade-level time in the master schedule just for RTI. When students are in their RTI groups, they work on activities and assignments that strengthen their areas of deficit. For example, students who need instruction in comprehension may

work in ACT Accessing Complex Texts to build the comprehension skills needed to successfully access the knowledge-building units they are studying in Tier I instruction. For students who need fluency support, they may receive intervention using Six Minute Solution for fluency and prosody.

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

Our district notifies parents in grades K-5 if their child is “at-risk” for or has a significant reading deficiency. The district defines how students are assessed and what a “significant reading deficiency” means as evidenced by student results and placement on the benchmark test. This parent notification will take place 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 skills, skill gaps, the depth and extent of student needs, and a description of the importance of being able to read by the end of 3rd grade. These communications go out to parents with students in grades K-3 three times annually and are shared in grades 4 and 5 annually.

In a follow-up letter, parents are told what intervention their student will receive, how that intervention supports student learning needs, and the amount of time each day the student will receive services. In accordance with the RTI2 manual, data reviews for each RTI2 student is completed every 4.5 weeks and parents are notified of student’s progress and provided with recommended cost-free activities that support the student in their area of deficit.

### **Professional Development Plan**

PreK-5 teachers, ESL teachers, special education teachers, and all of our instructional coaches have been invited to sign up for the state foundational skills training over the summer of 2021. We will be providing our PreK teachers with a stipend for completing the training out of local funds. We are hosting five cohorts in our district this summer. Two of our eight instructional coaches have been selected as state trainers for Week Two of the training. We plan to use both trainers for support during the 2021-22 school year as well. Additionally, our district plans to apply to participate in the PreK-2 Implementation Coaching Network around foundational skills instruction for Fall 2021. We are hoping to be granted additional funding and support to focus on the implementation of foundational skills and knowledge-building curricula in grades PreK -2. We have an instructional coach in each of our elementary schools. We are shifting their role from RtI coordinator to support for teachers around core instruction.