

Johnson County Schools

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Approved: May 21, 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

Johnson County Schools uses the foundational skills curriculum, Benchmark Advance, grounded in reading science and aligned to the Tennessee ELA standards as approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. This curriculum uses foundational skills as the primary form of instruction and has a designated block of time (60 minutes daily) for the foundational skills instruction in grades K-2. This instructional time includes activities that build phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency practice in addition to comprehension and vocabulary work/word work. During that instruction, teachers explicitly teach a sound, and the students practice the sound aloud. This allows students to learn how to correctly pronounce pure sounds. The teacher also uses this time to model how to write sounds correctly and the students refer to their individual manipulatives as they practice these skills. The students apply the skills they learn through independent practice, through small group instruction, and individual learning time.

For example, the 1st grade curriculum- unit 3, students will learn about r-blends, s-blends, and final constant blends. Teachers will use decodable readers, a virtual e-pocket chart, cards and manipulatives, and songs that support the learning of the unit. Students have the opportunity to practice the skills learned through decodable readers that are aligned to the sounds taught during explicit instruction, and they also align to the content being taught through the integrated ELA units.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

Johnson County Schools has an integrated literacy block for grades three through six grounded in reading science and aligned to the TN ELA standards. Our curriculum materials are selected from those approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. During the integrated ELA block that meets an evidence-based approach to applying foundational skills within daily lessons, our students receive a total of 90 minutes of ELA instruction. Although the daily schedule is not the same each day, all daily 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) for about 60 minutes per day and foundational skills instruction that includes fluency, grammar, morphology, spelling, and writing for at least 30 minutes a day. Our adopted curriculum also engages students in work around fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

The fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills are not taught in isolation, but are embedded within the lesson to ensure continuity, cohesion, and connection.

For example, our 5th grade students do a unit of study called “The U.S. Constitution: Then and Now.” In this unit, students discover how one of the nation’s most important documents has been shaping our lives for hundreds of years. They discover how the Constitution continues to change to expand and protect the voting rights and civil rights of Americans, regardless of race or gender. The selections include a variety of genres, including informational text, speeches, historical fiction, and biographies. Understanding the way our government can influence the way we live will help students become responsible citizens. Word study activities for the unit include: variant vowels, suffixes, compound words (both hyphenated and open), final sounds, prefixes, silent letters (kn, wr, gh, gn, wh), diphthongs, Latin roots, and inflectional endings. Spelling lessons are also incorporated in the unit. Vocabulary instruction is embedded in the lessons, and teachers provide support for vocabulary as needed across the complex text. The 90 minute block is dedicated to developing students’ holistic literacy approach to fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension coherently as recommended by research.

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 RTI² and Say Dyslexia requirements.

AIMSweb

Intervention Structure and Supports

In the fall, students are given a universal screener (AIMSWEB) to determine which students have a significant reading deficiency or are “at-risk”. Our grade-level teachers, interventionists, 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 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 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 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, Moby Max, Benchmark Advance Interventions, West Virginia Phonics, Saxon Phonics, Lindamood Bell, and others 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, such as attendance and engagement as part of the decision making process before a change is made to the programming 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 additional survey level assessments 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 supplemental program as one 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 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 make them stronger in that skill. For example, students who need instruction in comprehension may read a new text and answer scaffolded questions, all related to the knowledge-building unit they are studying in Tier I instruction. For students who need fluency support, they may receive intervention using the SPIRE program.

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 (as evidenced by students scoring in the 0-25th 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. This is coupled with a description of the importance of being able to read by the end of 3rd grade.

The district defines how students are assessed and what a "significant reading deficiency" 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 as well as recommended activities (that do not require purchased resources) that will support students in the area of deficit. Activities are not tailored by child, but tailored by skill deficit generally. These communications go out to parents with students in grades K-3 three times annually and are shared in grades 4 and 5 annually.

Additionally, the ELA curriculum contains parent letters in the younger grades that outline the foundational skills and knowledge domains for the coming unit that will inform and equip parents to work with the child. Families can better understand how to support their student(s) through questions about their texts and through an awareness of what foundational skills their child(ren) are learning.

Professional Development Plan

Teachers in our district will participate in the free Reading 360 Early Literacy Training series developed by the TN Department of Education. Our plan for providing PD for all teachers is as follows:

April-May 2021- All teachers in grades PreK-5 will engage in the on-line Early Training series. Teachers will complete this by May 21, 2021. This training will focus on foundational reading development and instruction and is grounded in a phonic-based approach. We will ensure that educators earn a completion certificate prior to the in-person training.

June 2021- Our district will host the cohort based, in-person training of the Early Literacy Training series for all teachers in grades PreK-2nd grade, the elementary instructional coach, elementary and district administrators, elementary SPED teachers, and RTI Interventionists. This week will emphasize practical classroom application of research findings around strong instruction in phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary.

Ongoing- We hope that the state on-line course will still be available and we will require new teachers to take this course unless they are certified through their EPP (educational prep provider).