

McMinn County Schools

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Approved: May 18, 2021

Updated: May 17, 2022

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 uses the Skills Block portion of Expeditionary Learning, which is grounded in the Science of Reading, aligned to the TN ELA Standards, and approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. The Skills Block serves as the primary delivery method of the district's daily foundational skills instruction. The one-hour K-2 Reading Foundations Skills Block uses a structured phonics approach based on the Science of Reading. The Skills Block is designed to ensure that, by the end of grade 2, students acquire the depth of skills needed in the Reading Foundations standards to navigate grade-level text independently. The lessons and assessments explicitly address the Reading Foundations standards, as well as some Language standards associated with spelling and letter formation.

McMinn County Elementary Schools utilize literacy blocks that span a minimum of 120 minutes daily in grades K-2 with 60 minutes of those being dedicated to foundational skills instruction. The K-2 Skills Block focuses on three of the Five Components of Reading. The K-2 Skills Block, like the K-2 module lessons and K-2 Labs, is divided into four eight-week-long modules that span a full year. In the K-2 Skills Block, each module is broken into seven five-day "cycles" of instruction. These cycles include an intentional sequence of Instructional Practices (simple routines such as Chaining or Spelling to Complement Reading), each of which builds on the learning from the previous lesson and connects to the next lesson's learning.

Every eight-week module includes a flex week of five days. These days can be used at the teacher's discretion throughout the cycle for things such as reteaching or making up for an abbreviated school week. Each Module Overview includes suggestions for these days based on the content of the module. The K-2 skills block is divided into two major chunks: 15-20 minutes of whole group instruction and 40-45 minutes of differentiated small group instruction which includes independent work time. The teacher meets with 2-3 differentiated small groups based on student microphases.

Expeditionary Learning benchmark assessments are tightly aligned with the phases and microphases to assist teachers in pinpointing and tracking students' progression through the phases toward mastery of taught skills. This targeted information empowers teachers, students, parents, and school leaders with common language to discuss, plan, and set goals around students' strengths and areas of need. Benchmarks are administered three times each year. Cycle

assessment administration ranges from every cycle to 1-2 times per module depending on grade level. Snapshot assessments are available in kindergarten and grade 1, with a shift to exit tickets in Grade 2. In both cases, these assessments are used to track progress toward mastery of daily learning targets.

McMinn County's focus in foundational skills instruction for next year is to move towards a more unified preparation and delivery of whole group instruction and more intentional differentiation for small group instruction. Expeditionary Learning's systematic and explicit approach to teaching foundational literacy skills has strengthened our teachers' ability to understand and implement strategic shifted and appropriate instructional practices.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

Our district uses Expeditionary Learning, which is grounded in the Science of Reading, aligned to the TN ELA Standards, and approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. McMinn County Elementary Schools utilize 90-minute literacy blocks daily in grades 3-5. Students in grades 3-5 consistently read complex text to gain deeper content knowledge of the topic and further familiarize themselves with the structures, syntax, and vocabulary of complex text. A minimum of 30 minutes each day is spent in foundational skills instruction including morphology, grammar, spelling, writing, and fluency. Foundational skills instruction is embedded in this program throughout the content modules and reinforced in the ALL (Additional Language and Literacy) Block. Students build background knowledge and vocabulary, both domain-specific and academic, through reading in the content modules. In the ALL Block, AIR Time builds knowledge and increases vocabulary acquisition. As students learn more about a topic, Expeditionary Learning demands they read additional difficult texts on the same topic to improve foundational reading and comprehension skills.

In grades 3-5, phonics instruction should focus on the structure of words including syllabication patterns, more complex spelling patterns, the morphology of words (i.e., affixes and roots) as it relates to word meaning. The ALL Block gives students opportunities to practice with all aspects of word study in a variety of activities, including vocabulary games, vocabulary squares, and Frayer Models. In addition, students read more fluently when they have a greater understanding of the standard conventions of written English. These skills are addressed within the GUM (Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics) portion of ALL Block.

Explicit vocabulary instruction is a key feature of the Expeditionary Learning Curriculum in grades 3-5. In addition to this explicit vocabulary instruction, students receive implicit instruction in general academic and domain-specific vocabulary through exposure to a large variety of complex informational and literary texts. In the ALL Block students have additional time to practice module-related word analysis through word study games and activities.

McMinn County's focus in literacy instruction in grades 3-5 next year is to move towards a more unified preparation and implementation of ALL Block to enhance literacy while specifically focusing on the GUM (Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics) and Word Study and Vocabulary portions.

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2

LearnZillion - K-5 Expeditionary Learning

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5

LearnZillion - K-5 Expeditionary Learning

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

Tennessee Universal Reading Screener

Intervention Structure and Supports

McMinn County's Universal Screener/Benchmark is given to all K-5 students three times per year.

RTI2 School-level teams consider all available student data including, but not limited to, classroom performance, grades, formative/summative assessments, and teacher observation to determine intervention placement. RTI2 Data Team Meetings are used to determine placement, intensity, and scheduling of students into Tier II, Tier III, and Tier I (on and above grade level) intervention groups.

Instruction is delivered during an intervention period of 45 minutes daily with all students receiving leveled instruction by certified or highly trained personnel within each tier group.

Survey-level/diagnostic assessments are conducted to inform specific intervention needs for students in Tier II and Tier III and are used to guide small-group instruction. Expeditionary Learning assists teachers in directly addressing skill gaps as determined by the student's microphase.

Supports are provided that include systematic, sequential, phonics-based instruction in foundational reading skills using materials from the Expeditionary Learning Skills Block.

Progress Monitoring for students in Tier II and Tier III occurs bi-weekly and is administered by certified or highly trained personnel. School data teams meet every 4.5 weeks to review student progress and determine if a change in the intervention or in the intervention provider is needed.

Fidelity monitoring is completed at least three times per 8-10 data points to ensure instruction is implemented with reliability and validity. Persons monitoring fidelity may include principals, assistant principals, and district personnel; will adhere to the specified number of direct and indirect checks per the state RTI2 framework.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

Immediately following the completion of Fall Universal Screening, McMinn County Schools sends notification to parents of students in grades K-5 indicating whether their child is "at-risk" for or has a

significant reading deficiency as evidenced by students scoring at or below the 25th percentile. Students' scores are communicated in a parent-friendly language report which provides a clear explanation of student skill gaps and the depth and extent of student needs. The parents are informed of the specific intervention their student will receive and the amount of time each day the student will receive intervention services. This is coupled with a description of the importance of being able to read by the end of third grade.

The district defines how students are assessed and what is meant by a "significant reading deficiency" to enhance parent understanding. Data teams meet to review and discuss student progress every 4.5 weeks. Following the data team meetings, parents receive communication which includes the following information: whether the child is/is not making sufficient progress (as evidenced by progress monitoring and universal screening data), any changes being made if there is no evidence of sufficient progress, and recommended activities that will support students in skill deficit (tailored to the general skill deficit and not requiring purchased resources). These communications go out to parents of students in grades K-5 at 4.5 week intervals throughout the school year.

Additionally, the Expeditionary Learning Curriculum contains parent letters in grades K-2 that outline the foundational skills and knowledge domains for the coming week that will inform and equip parents to work with their child(ren). Families can better understand how to support their student(s) through questioning them about texts and by developing an awareness of what foundational skills their child(ren) are learning.

Professional Development Plan

Teachers in McMinn County Schools will participate in the Reading 360 Early Literacy Training series developed by the Tennessee Department of Education. This is a free and optional opportunity for teachers. All teachers in K-5 will have access to complete at least Week 1 asynchronously. Our detailed plan is as follows:

April–May 2021 – K-5 teachers, interventionist, instructional coaches, RTI2 Specialists, special education teachers, and anyone holding a license allowing them to teach in grades K-5 were offered the opportunity to complete Course 1 of the Early Literacy Training Series. This training was asynchronous and focused on the foundational reading development grounded in a phonics-based approach. Teachers completing Course 1 earned a certificate prior to attending Course 2 in-person.

May 2021 – McMinn County Schools committed to hosting two in-person Course 2 trainings. McMinn County has 108 teachers registered to attend. K-2 classroom teachers will also receive a free set of instructional materials and decodables to help support foundational literacy instruction in the classroom. This in-person training will demonstrate practical classroom application of instruction in phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary. Prior to attending the in-person training, K-2 teachers will first attend a 1-hour session with our current TNTIP partner. This training will allow the presenter to frontload information which will be critical for teachers in understanding how to incorporate materials from the upcoming training into their current Skills Block.

June-July 2021 – Teachers who are unable to attend training in May will register for Course 2 in-person training at an alternate location.

Fall 2021-Summer 2022 – Continued support and professional development will be provided for Pre-K – 5th grade teachers and interventionists during in-service days, PLCs, and Staff Development Days. The TN IPG is a multifaceted tool which will be utilized in providing additional support to administrators at both the district and building levels. Additionally, a strong structure of support will be available through our district's dual participation in both the HQIM Literacy Implementation Networks and the Early Literacy Networks. Participation in these networks will allow for collaboration among participating districts and vendors using the commonly shared TN IPG Tool to support high quality instruction in foundation literacy.