

## **Montessori Elementary at Highland Park**

### **Foundational Literacy Skills Plan**

**Approved: May 29, 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**

Foundational literacy instruction begins in in PreK with the Montessori method and gives the child more exposure to phonemic awareness and phonics at a younger age. However, MEHP uses a foundation skills curriculum for K-2nd grade as adopted by Hamilton County which is on the state's adoption list of approved publishers. MEHP will also provide supplementary curriculum based in reading science and aligned to TN ELA state standards. Using the Montessori Method teachers will plan and incorporate foundational skills as a primary form of instruction for all grade levels with a focus on K-2 grades. Explicit instruction along with guided practice in phonological awareness (using daily phoneme awareness lessons as well as phonemic games), phonics (lessons and modeling with teacher with sound/letter recognition practice in making the pure sound), word study, vocabulary work, building fluency (monitored and assessed with a teacher), and comprehension skills. Teachers will give instruction in a variety of comprehension skills and model critical thinking early while extending high level questions to help students analyze concepts and themes, evaluate the text and perspective of the author, and develop their own work using information and accessing prior knowledge.

In a Montessori environment lessons can be done individually or in small groups. Individual instruction may look like the teacher modeled activity such as tracing a letter and naming the sound and then allowing the child to apply the skill and practice the work. Small groups lessons may include explicit or modeled instruction discussed and practice together. The teachers observes when the children are ready to practice independently and will continue to observe, evaluate, and guide the practice work as needed.

Instruction and sequencing for students who are above, on, or below grade level will be given to ensure each child is able to consistently move forward in reading skills. In addition, text study, word work, vocabulary and fluency skills will each be tailored to individual needs using the district provided text and supplemented with extra text from Freckle reading program by Renaissance and Freeleaf Publishing online material. Additional lessons and support will be given to students below grade level in classroom interventions. Freckle, Montessori Reading Remediation Pathway and other classroom materials can also provide additional resource materials needed for implementing instruction at the child's independent reading skill level. If remediation is needed in phonemic awareness or phonics interventions the teacher will provide the foundational skills instruction in the

classroom during the set time (75 mins minimum in each class) using Montessori Language based materials such as Sandpaper Letters and Movable alphabet while using explicit instruction and progressive sequencing.

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

MEHP 3rd-5th grade classrooms will integrate literacy block based in reading science and aligned to TN state ELA standards. The curriculum used is provided by Hamilton County Schools and is on the State's adoption list of accepted publishers. The integrated ELA block consists of evidence-based instructional approach for incorporating foundational literacy skills in daily instruction. While the blocks can be shifted based on either morning or afternoon time periods, the instruction during the blocks will be consistent. The literacy block will include (but is not limited to) the study and function of words, grammar, syntax, word structure (morphology), spelling patterns, word building and studies of word usage. Additionally, our supplemental curriculum allows students to explore a variety of text and is grounded in non-fiction. Fictional stories of all genres will also be included as students explore comprehension, absorb vocabulary and practice fluency skills.

While the foundations literacy instructional block is designed for 90 minutes, additional times in the classroom are spent on exploration with text in other areas of study. Cultural Studies, historical studies and extended work into Science will provide rich exposure both within and beyond the TN state standards. Within the literacy block and throughout the other areas of the class students will use comprehension, vocabulary enrichment and fluency skills that will be monitored and assessed consistently by the teacher.

For example, when third grade are studying the cultural customs and geographical locations of Indigenous People through European Exploration (prior to 1585) they will explore a variety of comprehension skills, use graphic organizers to collect information, discuss and work with vocabulary for deeper understanding, respond to scaffold questions and provide evidence-based answers from the text. Modeling and supports are given with each student guided to go further than their current skill or grade level standard to develop their own desire to learn independently. For example, vocabulary studies within the text can lead to suffix, prefix and root words studies with multiple variations and progressive word work. Also, materials and text can be adapted to each child's level to support fluency skills for practice in reading. In addition to the foundational literacy block, MEHP will use Science and Social Studies time to enhance fluency skills, vocabulary building, and comprehension through group discussion, think-pair-share, independent reading, and various other instructional strategies. Finally, all areas of the classroom use writing to allow students to explain what they know. However, with science and social studies we will incorporate graphic organizers, writing with evidence-based responses, independent and guided research, and independent and guided writing.

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

LearnZillion - K-5 Expeditionary Learning

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

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### **Additional Information about Instructional Materials**

Hamilton County has adopted approved curriculum that MEHP will use for Foundational Literacy instruction. However, MEHP will supplement ELA instruction with TN Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement and Montessori Reading Remediation Pathway to support our students reading success. These supports allow us to focus on the individual's needs for foundational skills and track the progress with additional coaching and materials outside of the school. Parents will be able to access some of the text online for free and video tutorials in phonemic awareness and phonics are given by Montessori trained reading specialists and can be view for free by parents as at-home support.

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

MEHP will use Hamilton County's adopted screener iReady, as this screener is being used by several Hamilton County Schools that MEHP has communicated with. As needed, MEHP will adopt the dyslexia screening Hamilton County adopts and will follow the requirements established in §49-1-229 and the universal screening requirements in TN's RTI2 framework manual. The universal screener will assess students in phonological and phonemic awareness, sound symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding skills, rapid naming and encoding skills. Those students identified as having multiple characteristics of dyslexia may be screened once school-based interventions have not helped and parents will be notified of the process for screening their child for dyslexia as well as results shared from the screening.

### **Intervention Structure and Supports**

After screening, MEHP will have assessed the needs of our students and begin the process of providing support using RTI2. Students below the national or state norms for their grade level or are otherwise defined as at-risk in developing reading success will be diagnosed further and given extra instruction. Our RTI2 coordinator, lead teachers and principal will identify the students in the 0-25% based on the universal screener. Students will be placed in either Tier 2 or Tier 3 and given a diagnostic assessment to determine their individualized instruction needs. Students identified in Tier 2 will be given an additional 30 minutes of instruction in small groups. With MEHP's foundational literacy block being 75 min. and with our attention to individualized instruction we anticipate this Tier 2 time of 30 min. to be intense instruction and will allow for further practice of skills within the classroom literacy block of 75 min. When 45 mins of instruction for Tier 3 is needed, the master calendar will be adjusted to accommodate those students by either 15 mins before or after the allotted 30 mins already on the schedule.

During these RTI2 times, the instruction we use will be identified as highly successful for both students at-risk and students of diverse backgrounds. MEHP will adopt the district ELA curriculum that allows teacher to access remediation materials for skills gaps with students, as well as use the Montessori Reading Remediation Plan. The Montessori Reading Remediation Plan was used to provide online 30 min. tutoring of a Hamilton County 2nd grade student during the 2021-21 school year. It proved to be successful by the student's Hamilton County assessment (given by his teacher) and tutor's assessment. After being behind two grade levels in reading in 2nd grade, the child

increased 1.5 grade levels after 7 months of Tier 2 online intervention and is nearly reading on grade level for 3rd grade. He was not provided Tier 2 or Tier 3 instruction in school during the 2020-21 school year due to COVID.

Freckle will also be used as a supplement instruction for students. While both Montessori Reading Remediation Plan and Freckle are under review for researched-based implementation in tiered interventions, MEHP will implement a researched based program if children are not showing significant improvement in the first 90 days after the first assessment (August 2021) window. MEHP is prepared and will adopt a researched based program such as SPIRE, if a student is not “on track” for improvements within 90 days of the first assessment window. SPIRE is a researched based, teacher centric program that produces effective intervention for struggling readers based on 10 steps including: phonics and phonogram work, phonological awareness, word building, reading, decoding, sound dictation, spelling, and sentence dictation.

Teachers are expected to provide data on students’ progress each week and keep details of attendance and participation level within each Tier session. Attendance is marked with P – present or A – absent and participation is marked with ☐ fully participated, ☐ tired, or ☐ no participation. If a student did not fully participate, the student will be given support to discover motivation techniques to fully participate.

Each week, the RTI2 coordinator, lead teachers, interventionist and principal will meet to discuss the progress and challenges of each student. We will connect and collaborate by providing ideas and support in instruction and motivation for students. We will also provide check-ins with the student for motivation and goal setting to help each child feel successful.

Every 4 weeks, the RTI2 coordinator, lead teachers and principal will review overall and individual data to evaluate if steps are needed to adjust programming or provide additional supports. MEHP will provide intensive intervention to each student in accordance with the RTI2 model using programs that align with the Say Dyslexia Law. Students

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

There is high potential for many students to be “at-risk” after this pandemic. MEHP has been engaging parents in our planning year and will continue to reach out during the summer before the school opens to ensure parents and guardians are partners in their child’s education. We are reaching out via email, phone calls and in person visits as well as providing online resources to help parents better understand foundational skills and reading readiness. In addition, we have an ongoing plan to help parents understand the Montessori method and how each child can become a lifelong independent learner with solid reading skills.

After universal screeners are completed in August, parents and guardians will be notified of their child’s scores and if they will be receiving interventions should the score be in the 0-25 percentile. Student’s scores and letters are in parent friendly language and will be translated into Spanish for parents identified as Spanish speaking. Letters will inform parents of their child’s intervention time and examples of skills that will be covered.

In addition, teachers will reach out weekly via our parent communication platform to provide parents with documents, pictures or videos of work practiced in class. Parents can respond and/or ask questions. Details will be provided from the teachers to extend the learning at home in our parent communication platform.

MEHP has followed the state suggestions on notifying parents on defining “student success” and deficiencies. However, Montessorians typically do not apply these labels to a child’s progress. MEHP will share information regarding students’ progress with families and ensure that they understand where their child is scored within “typical” developmental levels and grade level expectations. Progress reports in K-5th will go home every 4 weeks (usually every 3 weeks on the calendar) to provide additional information on each student’s growth and updates on individual goals.

Teachers will give information monthly about planned foundational skills work for the classroom, and they will provide biweekly summaries of foundational skills covered along with other class information via the parent communication platform. Additional resources will be provided based on each child’s or family’s needs.

MEHP will inform parents on the importance of reading by 3rd grade through family literacy nights in all grade levels. Information will be provided on flyers and letters to families stressing the importance of strong, proficient reading skills by the 3rd grade. In addition, MEHP will partner with families who have students not meeting proficiency to ensure that each child reads on grade level by 3rd grade and beyond.

### **Professional Development Plan**

Summer 2021 - All MEHP teachers will have at least one week of foundational literacy skills professional development by participating in the one-week online course of Reading 360, through their state sponsored EPP Montessori training, or through one of the school’s two weeks of PD and Inservice in July and August 2021.

School Year 2021-22 – MEHP will conduct weekly (60 min.) sessions for foundational literacy review as ongoing professional development in Early Literacy for PK- 2nd grade. Professional development will be done by the director/instructional coach in the first year who is a trained, Level 5 Montessori public educator and will take place once a week during Related Arts. Total time given in the year will be 36 hours of Foundational Literacy to cover week 2. MEHP was given training in May to attend week 2 training by the state, but our teachers and staff are not coming onboard until July 2021.