

Williamson County Schools

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Approved: May 14, 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

During the 2020-2021 Williamson County Schools instructional time exceeded the state minimum by providing our students with 60 minutes of foundational skills daily in addition to 90 minutes for knowledge instruction in Kindergarten through second grade. Our instruction is aligned to the Tennessee state academic standards and is the critical content form of instruction in the primary grades. Explicit instruction and student practice in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension is provided utilizing the state approved and sponsored TN Foundational Skills program. Adhering to Best for All which begins phonics instruction by starting with sounds first, then attaching those sounds to spellings. This synthetic phonics approach begins by teaching the most common or least ambiguous spelling for a sound (basic code spelling); later it teaches spelling alternatives for sounds that can be spelled in several diverse ways. The system is kept simple at first and complexity is added bit-by-bit as students gain confidence and automatize their reading and writing skills. All 150 spellings for the 44 sounds in English will be taught in an intentionally sequenced progression from Kindergarten through Grade 2.

The decision has been made to increase instructional time to 90 minutes daily for foundational skills in Kindergarten and first grade during the 2021-2022 school year, thus reducing the knowledge instruction to 60 minutes. That change was based on observational feedback from all stakeholders including teachers, principals, and literacy coaches in addition to data such as aimsweb, and embedded foundational skills assessments. That additional time added to the foundational skills block will allow students the opportunity to apply their decoding knowledge through the reading and rereading of decodables as well as data-driven small group instruction as needed. Additionally, during the 2021- 2022 school year, we will apply what was learned during Week One and Week Two of the state provided instruction on foundational skills.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

In grades 3 – 5, Williamson County Schools provides foundational skills (word work) instruction embedded through a 90-minute integrated literacy block. Included are opportunities for fluency, comprehension, grammar, morphology, spelling, and writing. All instruction is aligned to the Tennessee state standards. Words their Way will be used as the primary source to deliver foundational skills instruction. Additionally, we utilize Great Minds Wit & Wisdom to provide a rich

foundation for vocabulary and grammar skills. Through the explicit use of these two programs, we are able to provide a comprehensive approach to literacy instruction for our students in grades three through five.

For example, our fourth-grade students are currently studying a module of Greek Myths. Modules begin with a study of art to teach students how to glean information from a type of text focused around an essential question. After that initial introduction, students activate prior knowledge and read texts in a variety of ways: read aloud, partner, small group, or independently. After readings, students frequently summarize the content, through a variety of instructional practices, unpack the most essential vocabulary “word work,” respond to a series of scaffolded questions, and write responses utilizing the grammar and writing skills embedded in the Wit and Wisdom modules. In all cases, evidence from the text is used to support their answer. Vocabulary lessons provide explicit support for vocabulary needed to access the complex text. Additional time is spent on word work using Words Their Way to continue to develop both encoding and decoding skills and competencies in our students.

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2

Approved waiver for other materials

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5

Great Minds - 3-5 Wit and Wisdom

Additional Information about Instructional Materials

Since our district has adopted Wit & Wisdom, an approved curriculum for ELA instruction, we also utilize Words Their Way to supplement foundational skills. This allows us to address any gaps in foundational skills as indicated by our screening and diagnostic data. This instruction is embedded in our 90-minute ELA block. Additional reading opportunities are provided through a supplemental reading list, designed by Wit & Wisdom to build both background knowledge and reinforce skills taught within the module.

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

Williamson County Schools utilizes aimsweb as our universal reading screener to identify students at-risk in grades K-5. This screener is administered three times per year, fall, winter, and spring, as guided by the RTI² framework. All students in grades K-5 are also screened using our universal dyslexia screener, which measures all areas required by Say Dyslexia Law (phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, sound symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding, and rapid naming). Additionally, we included a spelling inventory to measure encoding skills. When a student scores below the 26th percentile on these universal reading measures, they are screened using the PWRS Assessment to identify specific gaps in decoding.

Intervention Structure and Supports

Williamson County Schools adheres to the guidance in the state's RTI2 model to identify and support students identified as "at-risk" for reading deficiencies. In the fall, students in grades K-5 are given a universal reading screener (aimsweb). Based on close review of the data provided from our universal screeners, grade level-teachers and building data teams meet to determine which students score below the 26th percentile. Students who demonstrate the need are identified as Tier II (11 – 25 percentile) or Tier III (1 – 10 percentile). Students designated to receive Tier II or Tier III instruction are given additional diagnostic assessments to determine the specific deficits to help building data teams assign students to a small group for intervention to target the most significant area of reading deficiency.

Students receive daily, small-group intervention beyond core instruction (30-45 minutes), targeting the specific identified reading deficit. Students identified for such intervention receive explicit, targeted instruction utilizing vetted resources as prescribed to address the specific gap in skills. (WCS has compiled a list of research-based options for reading intervention available to students who have been identified with a significant reading deficiency.) Intervention providers use diagnostic and placement assessments to tailor plans to meet the needs of RTI students, and closely monitor progress on a biweekly (Tier II) or weekly (Tier III) basis. Building data teams meet every 4 ½-6 weeks to determine if the intervention is effective or if a change is needed. Decisions made during data team meetings bring into consideration additional sources of data (attendance, engagement) before making changes such as pacing of the program, increased number of minutes, change in program or provider.

In the fall, all K-5 students are given our universal reading screening measures. Students who fall below designated cut scores are given additional survey level assessments to screen for dyslexia. Following fall screening and school-level data team meetings, letters are sent to all parents of students who have been identified as a student in need of a dyslexic-specific intervention. This letter outlines the process for screening, plan for intervention (including the provider and times/schedule), specific area(s) of deficit the intervention will focus on, and access to resources for parents via the state of Tennessee's "Say Dyslexia" bill.

Students in grades K-5 who have characteristics of dyslexia receive specialized instruction daily using the SPIRE program, which uses an Orton-Gillingham approach (language-based, structured, sequential, cumulative, explicit, and multi-sensory phonics instruction). Elementary students who have deficits in the area of fluency receive targeted interventions such as Read Live, Read Naturally or Six-Minute Solution, which include repeated reading with feedback. Making Connections and The Comprehension Toolkit are used to address the needs of students with a deficit in reading comprehension.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

Following each screening window (fall, winter, and spring) and school-level data team meetings, letters are sent to all WCS parents of K-5 students who have been identified as a student who should receive reading intervention to address a specific area of deficit (identified by scoring below the 26th percentile). This letter sent to parents identifies the screening process, specific plan for reading

intervention (including the provider and times/schedule), the area(s) of deficit the intervention will focus on, and access to resources to support parents. The letter is accompanied by a report detailing the child's scores and outlines the specific gaps in the student's reading skills.

For students who participate in reading intervention, parents receive a report from aimsweb that details student literacy progress and the Reading Student Skills summary every 4 ½-6 weeks, typically at progress and end-of-the-quarter reporting times.

Classroom newsletters, family tip sheets, and school wide family reading nights are used to provide information on the importance of reading proficiency by third grade as well as engage and encourage family participation in their child's journey toward reading proficiency.

Professional Development Plan

Our elementary curriculum specialist and key literacy coaches provided training for all general education and special education K-2 teachers on Foundational Skills in summer 2020 and followed up with coaching on implementation throughout the school year of 2020-2021.

WCS teachers will participate in the Reading 360 Early Literacy Training series being offered by the Tennessee Department of Education. We are hosting eight cohorts during the summer of 2021 with a total of 397 K-2 general education classroom teachers signed up and enrolled for both weeks one and two. The few remaining K-2 teachers who were unable to attend the TDOE Early Literacy training are being required to attend a one-day Foundational Skills professional development course delivered by our Early Literacy Specialist during the Summer of 2021 with the understanding that future attendance in the TDOE training will be required during the next offering.

All teachers who are enrolled in the TDOE Early Literacy Training two week series will engage in the Week One virtually. This training will focus on foundational reading development and instruction and is grounded in a phonics-based approach. All WCS teachers participating in Week One are being required to earn a certificate of completion by May 21, 2021, as the first four cohorts of Week Two begins on May 25, 2021.

As previously stated, our district has registered close to 400 teachers for the in-person weeklong training known as Week Two. This week will focus on practical classroom application of research findings around strong instruction in phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary.

Since 397 of the 400 seats are currently filled with K-2 general education teachers, we were able to fill the three empty seats with Student Support Services and English as a Second Language teachers.

We will encourage all elementary literacy coaches, K-5 SSS teachers, and 3-5 ELA teachers to complete the Week 1 asynchronous course in summer 2021 or during the school year of 2021-22. Since our literacy coaches were unable to attend the TDOE Early reading week Two Trainings, the information covered during the in-person training will be delivered to WCS literacy coaches during their monthly meetings throughout the 2021-2022 school year.