

## **Gibson County Special School District**

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

First Approved: May 18, 2021

Approved: June 14, 2024

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 Benchmark Advance, a foundational skills curriculum grounded in reading science and aligned to 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 foundational skills instruction in grades K-2. Gibson County Special School District elementary schools have literacy blocks that are at least 150 minutes daily in grades K-2 with the 60 minute daily designated block for foundational skills instruction. This instructional time contains activities and practices that teach the following foundational skills: phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, grammar and reading comprehension.

Phonics and phonemic awareness are taught using Benchmark Advance and Heggerty Phonemic Awareness curriculum in K-2. During the phonemic awareness portion of the lesson, teachers explicitly teach skills like rhyme, phoneme isolation, blending, segmenting, adding, deleting, and substituting sounds to help students develop the mental capacity to notice, attend to, and manipulate phonemes within words. During the phonics portion of the lesson, the teacher explains the connections between graphemes and phonemes helping students understand the connection between letters and their sounds and the systematic way they work together to form words. Students apply these skills during independent practice and small group times. Fluency, vocabulary, grammar and reading comprehension activities and strategies are included in the Benchmark Advance curriculum as "mini" lessons. These lessons often apply grade level phonics to increase reading accuracy and automaticity. During the mini lessons, teachers deliver explicit reading comprehension instruction asking students to make inferences and explain their thinking behind the inferences, determine central ideas and key details of text, analyze text, interpret language, understand different points of view, and build knowledge from content rich fiction and nonfiction texts. The Benchmark Advance curriculum has a purposeful scope and sequence with a spiral review and a repetition cycle allowing students to continue practicing skills throughout all units of the curriculum. Our improvements for next year are grounded in building district-wide grade level collaborative opportunities where teachers can perfect their craft by participating in unit and lesson

preparation sessions helping them internalize the curriculum and better understand the students' development of skills through the scope and sequence outlined by the developers. The most recent assessment data will be analyzed to help teachers know where access points are needed in the instruction to assist struggling students.

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

Our district has an integrated literacy block for grades three through five grounded in reading science aligned to Tennessee ELA standards. The district adopted Benchmark Advance for grades three through five. These curriculum materials were 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 90-120 minutes in third and fourth grade and 90 minutes in fifth grade. Although the daily schedule is not the same every day, all instruction includes at least 30 minutes of foundational skills instruction that incorporates fluency, grammar, morphology, spelling, and writing. All daily instruction also includes components of knowledge-building for about 60 minutes per day.

Benchmark Advance engages students in work around fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary skills are not taught in isolation, but are integrated within each lesson and spiral within each unit to ensure continuity, cohesion, and connection. For example, our third-grade curriculum includes a unit on animal adaptations. The unit integrates the skills of main idea and key details, vocabulary skills of using context clues, writing skills, and grammar with the scientific knowledge of how living things survive in their environment. Foundational skills are addressed through an integrated approach in the curriculum where students focus on reviewing these skills while addressing other standards in the grade level. For example, in Unit 1, students practice syllable division, review short vowel sounds, and point out familiar suffixes to help them decode words. They then check this word and its meaning by using context clues to determine the appropriate meaning of the word. This holistic approach allows students to practice foundational skills in meaningful text that also offers opportunities to develop students' fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills. The Benchmark Advance curriculum has a purposeful scope and sequence with a spiral review and a repetition cycle allowing students to continue practicing skills throughout all units of the curriculum. Our improvements for next year are grounded in building district-wide grade level collaborative opportunities where teachers can perfect their craft by participating in unit and lesson preparation sessions helping them internalize the curriculum and better understand the students' development of skills through the scope and sequence outlined by the developers. The most recent assessment data will be analyzed to help teachers know where access points are needed in the instruction to assist struggling students.

### **Additional Information**

One elementary school received a 1 in TVAAS in School Wide literacy for the 22-23 school year. To support this school and improve their literacy scores, the teachers were required to participate in mandatory planning sessions in grades K-5 for ELA with other teachers throughout the district that taught the same grade level. During these sessions, teachers used the planning protocol procedures developed through participation in the AALN network literacy initiative to plan lessons using the

Benchmark Advance curriculum. Common assessments were also used across the district to ensure that classes in all schools were being instructed at the same level of rigor. Literacy walks were also conducted regularly in this building using the IPG to ensure that the HQIM was being used with fidelity. Instructional coaches led individual professional development sessions with teachers based on their needs as determined through these walks.

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

Benchmark Advance

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

Benchmark Advance

### **Supplemental Instructional Materials**

Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum

### **Universal Reading Screener for Grades K-5.**

Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (aimswEBPlus)

### **Intervention Structure and Supports**

During the month of August, the aimswEBPlus universal screener is given to determine which students have a significant reading deficiency, scoring below the 15th percentile, or are “at risk”, scoring between the 16th and 40th. Team meetings involving the ELA teacher, principal, and intervention team are held to review data and determine which students need additional support. These teams continue to meet throughout the year to determine if/when adjustments to the intervention need to be made based on the results of progress monitoring and benchmark tests. Students demonstrating need are classified as Tier II or Tier III. Diagnostic assessments are then given to determine specific deficits to best assign students to the appropriate group that will narrow their skills gaps.

Students receive daily, small-group intervention for 30-45 minutes in their area of greatest deficit. These meetings are repeated after the winter and spring benchmarks are given. We have researched-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 HQIM, Benchmark Advance, contains comprehension, fluency, phonics and word recognition, and phonological awareness intervention guides in which teachers can find activities that directly address skill gaps. Heggerty and UFLI are also used as additional supports, especially in the area of foundational skills. Teachers can tailor these supports to the needs of the RTI group of students. If those interventions are not proving to be effective, more comprehensive, strategic interventions (SPIRE, 95% Group Blending, and 95% group Multi-Syllable Routine) become an option. The RTI Coordinator and Intervention Teams meet every 4 ½ weeks to determine if a change in the intervention or person providing the intervention is needed. All data (academic, attendance, engagement, behavior) is considered as part of the decision-making process before a change is made to the programming or provider. Students are screened using the Phonological Awareness Skills Screener and/or the CORE

phonics survey to determine if they have characteristics of dyslexia. Students found to demonstrate these characteristics receive intensive intervention as outlined in the Say Dyslexia Law using programs such as SPIRE, 95% Blending, 95% Group Multi-Syllable Routines, UFLI, and Heggerty Phonological Awareness that meet the law's requirements. Our district notifies families of students who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia by sending a home literacy report which informs them of specific deficit areas that will be addressed, and which program(s) will be used to support them. 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 meet their areas of deficit as determined by survey level assessments. For example, students who need extra help in the area of decoding and encoding receive explicit instruction and practice with blending drills that develop the student's automaticity in these areas. Students may use manipulatives or grapheme cards to build and manipulate word chains allowing them multiple opportunities to practice reading (decoding) and spelling (encoding) the words.

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

Our district notifies families in grades K-8 if their child has a significant reading deficiency (as evidenced by students scoring below the 15th percentile) or is at-risk of a significant reading deficiency (as evidenced by students scoring between the 16th and 40th percentile) after our schools complete the Aims web universal reading screeners in fall, winter, and spring. Students' scores are communicated via our "GCSSD RTI<sup>2</sup> Home Literacy Report" in family-friendly language that explains the student skill gaps. The families are told what intervention will be used to target the student's skill gaps and the amount of time each day the student will receive services. The letter also details the importance of being able to read on grade level by the end of grade 3 and includes information on the promotion pathway to grade 4. Tips are included in the report on how parents can help their children at home. We also include activities that do not require purchased resources to support students around the deficit (activities are not tailored by child but tailored by skill deficit generally).

Home-school connection letters provided by the Benchmark Advance ELA curriculum, are sent home in grades K-6 that outline the skills and knowledge domains for the coming unit that will inform and equip families to work with the child. Families can better understand how to support their students through questions about their texts and through an awareness of what foundational skills their children are learning. Families are notified of their child's progress, or lack of progress, after the 4 ½ week data team meetings through our "GCSSD Response to Intervention Progress Monitoring Letter." Parents receive a copy of the progress monitoring data and are informed of any changes in intervention placement. If a parent meeting is warranted, the intervention team further contacts the parent via phone calls or email to set up a face-to-face meeting.

To help families navigate the 4th grade promotion pathways, several parent meetings are held throughout the year to explain the pathways and answer questions parents may have. Letters are sent home to students in danger of scoring "approaching" or "below" on the ELA portion of the most recent TCAP as determined by CASE, our standards-based benchmark assessment that is given three times a year.

## **Professional Development Plan**

Teachers in our district have been required to complete the free Reading 360 Early Literacy Training series provided by the Tennessee Department of Education. We require all teachers that have not completed this training (when applicable) to do so as part of our new teacher training program.

Our plan for providing PD for all K-5 teachers is as follows:

**July-Reading 360 Early Literacy Training** All teachers in grades Pre-K through 5 will engage in Week 1 of the Early Reading Training series, asynchronously as part of their new teacher training program requirements. This training will focus on foundational reading development and instruction and is grounded in a phonics-based approach. Once educators have earned their certificates, they will submit them to the Supervisor for review and upload them to TN Compass.

**August- PD on AIMS web reports** All teachers in grades Pre-K through 2 will attend professional development training during the district PD week to discuss each test given during the AIMS web testing window and the purpose of each test. They will also learn about, and review reports available in AIMS web that will help them make data-based decisions for their students around foundational skills instructional practices.

**September- Analysis of district universal screener data teams** involving teachers, administration, and the intervention team will meet to review reports at the district, school, and classroom levels to determine both trends in deficits and individual student data to inform classroom practice, to build and meet the needs of RTI<sup>2</sup> groups.

**October- District wide PD- PLC sessions** Using protocols developed during the K-8 AALN ELA initiative, teachers will collaborate to prepare and/or adjust unit and lesson level plans to meet current instructional needs.

**December/January- Analysis of district universal screener data teams** involving teachers, administration, and the intervention team will meet to review reports at the district, school, and classroom levels to determine both trends in deficits and individual student data to inform classroom practice, to build and meet the needs of RTI<sup>2</sup> groups.

**January- District wide PD- PLC sessions** Using protocols developed during the K-8 AALN ELA initiative, teachers will collaborate to prepare and/or adjust unit and lesson level plans to meet current instructional needs.

**April- District wide PD- PLC sessions** Using protocols developed during the K-8 AALN ELA initiative, teachers will collaborate to prepare and/or adjust unit and lesson level plans to meet current instructional needs.

**May- Analysis of district universal screener data teams** involving teachers, administration, and the intervention team will meet to review reports at the district, school, and classroom levels to determine both trends in deficits and individual student data to inform classroom practice, to build and meet the needs of RTI<sup>2</sup> groups.