

## **Rutherford County Schools**

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Last Updated: February 23, 2024

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**

Rutherford County School District (RCS) adopted the state-approved Open Up Resources Expeditionary Learning Education Skills Block, a foundational skills curriculum grounded in reading science and aligned to Tennessee ELA standards. This curriculum uses foundational skills as the primary form of instruction and has a designated block of time for foundational skills instruction in grades K-2. Rutherford County elementary schools have literacy blocks that are 150 minutes daily in grades K-2 with a minimum of 60-minute designated block for foundational skills instruction.

The foundational skills instruction contains activities and practices that teach the following foundational skills: phonological awareness (recognize rhyming words, blend and segment compound words, blend, segment, and count syllables, blend and segment onset-rime, blend, segment, and count phonemes, segment compound words, and isolate individual phonemes) and phonics (identify individual letter sounds, decode regular words, decode words with common rime families, identify sounds for letter combinations, decode one-syllable words with letter combinations, identify common spellings for long and short vowel sounds, know and apply final -e conventions, read words with r-controlled vowels, read words with l-controlled vowels, read words with inflected endings, read words with prefixes and suffixes, read two-syllable words with various syllable types, read multi-syllable words, and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis in text).

This instructional time also includes explicit instruction and student practice activities that build fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. The scope and sequence of the curriculum are based on research on effective instruction. The Skills Block uses a structured phonics approach, grounded in the Phase Theory of Dr. Linnea Ehri, which describes behaviors related to the types of letter-sound connections students can make as they learn to read and write. The intent is to ensure that, by the end of Grade 2, students acquire the depth of skills they need in the Reading Foundations standards to navigate grade-level text independently. The lessons and assessments explicitly address the Reading Standards: Foundational Skills, as well as some Language standards associated with spelling and letter formation.

Our improvements for next year will continue to focus on using micro-phase data to address individual needs in small-group instruction. This will require teachers to assess and analyze benchmark data. This data will allow teachers to address individual foundational skill needs.

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

RCS has an integrated literacy block that is comprised of Module lessons and Additional Language and Literacy Block (ALL Block) for grades three through five grounded in reading science aligned to Tennessee ELA standards. The district adopted Open Up Resources Expeditionary Learning Education for grades three through five. The curriculum materials are selected from those approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. During the integrated ELA block, an evidence-based approach to applying foundational skills within daily lessons, our students in grades 3-5 receive 90 to 120 minutes. All daily instruction includes components of knowledge-building for 60 minutes per day and 30-60 minutes of foundational skills instruction during ALL Block that includes fluency, comprehension, grammar, morphology, spelling and word work, and writing.

The adopted curriculum also engages students in work around fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills are not taught in isolation but reinforce and extend the work from the Knowledge module lessons to ensure continuity, cohesion, and connection.

For example, our 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders work with words emerging from complex texts related to content that cut across many domains with an emphasis on morphology, syllabication, and spelling. During the ALL Block, students practice with word analysis of additional words from text, using words in context, and using word study games and activities to apply what they are learning. Our improvements for next year will be the use of differentiated small group instruction to target the needs of all students in foundational skills and to utilize benchmarks to determine microphases if needed to pinpoint foundational skill gaps.

### **Additional Information**

To address the educational hurdles encountered by schools with TVAAS levels 1 or 2, the district has crafted a strategic plan to strengthen reading and foundational abilities. This plan involves a targeted approach, utilizing district reading specialists to support both large and small group instruction through planning, lesson studies, model teaching, and conducting classroom observations with the Instructional Practice Guide (IPG) to pinpoint areas for improvement. Upon identifying key areas for improvement, district specialists collaborate with the school's reading coach to devise and execute instructional strategies with teachers. This partnership ensures that the strategies are tailored to meet the specific needs of the school and are effectively integrated into classroom practices. This strategy guarantees personalized attention and professional expertise to foster students' reading proficiency.

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

Open Up OUR Expeditionary Learning K-5

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

Open Up OUR Expeditionary Learning K-5

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

Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (aimswebPlus): Grades PreK-5

### **Intervention Structure and Supports**

Three times a year, students are given a universal screener (aimswebPlus) to determine whether students have a significant reading deficiency or are “at risk”. Our intervention teams review universal screener data. Survey-level assessments are administered to identify the specific area of skill deficit. Upon evaluating the results, the intervention team determines the most suitable placement for the student, either in standards-based intervention or Tier 2 intervention. If a child scores below the 16th percentile, survey-level assessments are administered to determine a specific area of skill deficit. Based on those results the intervention team determines the most appropriate placement either in Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention. Progress monitoring is carried out biweekly and is based on a combination of the outcomes from the universal screener and survey-level assessments.

The RTI<sup>2</sup> Intervention Team’s major work includes ensuring interventions are implemented with integrity, reviewing, and discussing student data/attendance, and correlating intervention to specific areas of deficit. Intervention teams meet every 4 ½ weeks to review students currently served in intervention discussing any possible movement or changes in intervention and any new teacher referrals. Data teams focus on historical data as well as current progress monitoring data and attendance. Teams also discuss a student’s responsiveness to the intervention based on district and school-level fidelity checks.

Interventionists are trained in evidence-based interventions depending on school-level availability. RCS students receive explicit instruction in their area of deficit in small groups using evidence-based materials and strategies. Some students are also screened for characteristics of dyslexia. Students who demonstrate those characteristics receive intensive interventions as outlined in the Say Dyslexia Law using resources that meet the law's requirements. Families are notified of the results of the screener as well as other resources that might be beneficial for their child. Our interventions and schedules are aligned with expectations outlined in the RTI<sup>2</sup> manual.

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

Rutherford County Schools (RCS) informs parents of students in grades K-5 if their child is identified as “at-risk” or has a significant reading deficiency. This determination is based on the results of the universal screener and historical data indicating a need for additional services. The students’ scores are shared through reports that are parent-friendly and available in multiple languages. These reports provide a clear explanation of the gaps in the student’s skills and the depth and extent of the student’s needs. This ensures that parents, regardless of their primary language, have a

comprehensive understanding of their child's academic performance and areas for improvement. The communication also includes what intervention their student will receive and the amount of time each day that the student will receive services explaining the progress and placement of their child. This is coupled with a description of the importance of being able to read by the end of 3rd grade and information on the pathway to 4<sup>th</sup> grade. We also share no cost activities families can do at home to support literacy.

Parents are notified of their child's progress, or lack of progress, after the four-and-a-half-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.

These communications go out to parents with students in grades K-3 three times annually and are shared in grades 4 and 5 annually. Schools also include information about summer reading activities and opportunities through their individual communication tools and end-of-year letters.

### **Professional Development Plan**

Ongoing: All K-5 teachers will complete the asynchronous course for Reading 360 Early Literacy Training. This training, which is free and optional, focuses on foundational reading development and instruction and is grounded in a phonics-based approach.

July 23<sup>rd</sup> and July 24<sup>th</sup>: PD sessions will be held that cover the EL Curriculum Skills Block for each grade level K-2, the EL Curriculum ALL Block for each grade level 3-5, Phonemic Awareness, and Characteristics of Dyslexia. These trainings will be conducted by the RCS Elementary ELA Specialists and RTI Specialist. Teachers will practice the skills learned and data will be trained regarding implementation.

August 2: All K-5 ELA teachers will attend PD session on ELA framework of Skills Block and ALL Block. This training will be conducted by the RCS Elementary ELA Specialists. Teachers will practice the skills learned and data will be trained regarding implementation.

RCS Curriculum Leads: Each school has a curriculum lead for each grade level K-5. These leads attend a 3-hour Literacy PD session four times a year, which includes foundational skill training. These trainings will be conducted by the RCS Elementary ELA Specialists. Teachers will practice the skills learned and data will be trained regarding implementation.

District ELA specialists provide support PD for individual schools. This includes Coaching Cycles, focused ELA PD determined by teacher evaluation and test data, and Learning Walks using the IPG.

District RTI specialist provides support PD for academic interventionists and individual schools. This includes using the universal reading screener, support for characteristics of dyslexia, and facilitating Orton-Gillingham training for new interventionists each year.