

## **Giles County Schools**

### Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Last Updated: June 30, 2023

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**

Giles County's K-2 teachers use Amplify's CKLA as their core curriculum for literacy instruction. Students in this grade-band spend 135 to 175 minutes each day immersed in literacy experiences, with a minimum of 60 minutes focused on daily explicit foundational skills development. Amplify's CKLA curriculum is built on research grounded in the science of reading and is fully aligned to the Tennessee ELA Standards as approved by the state of Tennessee Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. The CKLA curriculum has a two-strand design for kindergarten, first, and second grade: (1) Skills strand and (2) Knowledge strand. Each strand has its own distinct block of literacy instruction (minimum of 60 minutes of skills and 60 minutes of knowledge). During the daily Skills strand, foundational skills are the primary focus of instruction and are taught in an explicit, systematic, comprehensive, sounds-first approach that builds over time. Daily explicit foundational skills instruction and student practice activities center around phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, spelling, grammar, handwriting, the writing process, vocabulary, and comprehension. This instruction is accompanied by 100% decodable readers that contain only the sound-spelling patterns and sight words students have been taught to date. Students interact with these phonetically controlled, decodable texts in order to build decoding and word-level automaticity. In order to ensure automaticity and fluency, the Skills strand of CKLA supports children's acquisition of the written code of English (including spelling patterns, grammatical rules, and conventions) through daily explicit and systematic instruction, practice, and application of those skills in meaningful activities, with built-in remediation supports. A paper published by the Core Knowledge Foundation titled, "CKLA Curriculum: Links to Research on Teaching and Learning" states that, "Research consistently demonstrates that explicit phonics instruction has important, lasting benefits to children's reading accuracy, and this is one of the most emphasized aspects of phonics instruction for children struggling to learn reading. CKLA's systematic phonics component, the Skills strand, embodies many dimensions of systematic instruction by: 1) explicitly teaching the 150 spellings for the 44 sounds of English in an intentionally sequenced progression from Kindergarten through Grade 2 (progressing from the most common, least ambiguous spellings in Kindergarten to the least frequent, most confusing sound spellings in Grade 2. 2) including a variety of features

designed to minimize confusion and maximize practice and application of each sound spelling (consistent with research that such an approach leads to significant benefits in efficiency and accuracy within children's learning), and 3) emphasizing the use of systematic, mastery-oriented practice. Our improvements for next year are grounded in the continuation of designated time for teachers to collaborate around unit and lesson preparation protocols so that they can make the necessary shifts from planning (gathering resources) to preparation (internalizing the major unit and lesson goals for foundational skills.) We also want to continue to immerse our teachers in job-embedded professional development grounded in cognitive science, the science of reading, a sounds-first approach to foundational literacy, print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, and the TN Academic Standards for ELA.

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

Giles County's third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers use Amplify's CKLA as their core curriculum for literacy instruction. Students in this grade-band spend 90 to 120 minutes each day immersed in literacy experiences. Amplify's CKLA curriculum is built on research grounded in the science of reading and is fully aligned to the Tennessee ELA Standards as approved by the state of Tennessee Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. The CKLA curriculum is built around an integrated literacy design for grades 3-5 (integrating a Skills strand and a Knowledge strand). This integrated literacy block meets an evidence-based approach to applying foundational skills within daily lessons. In third grade, the curriculum continues to develop the grammar, spelling, and morphology skills that were the foundation of the K-2 Skills strand; however, the content of the Knowledge strand begins to integrate into the Skills strand in more systematic ways, and the focus of the Skills strand shifts from decoding to building language through grammar, spelling, and writing. Third grade continues to finish out the language code that is considered foundational. There also continues to be daily read-alouds, but students are responsible for reading independently about the topics introduced during those read-alouds. This serves as a bridge toward the curriculum design in fourth and fifth grade. In grades 4-5, instruction moves away from the two-strand model toward a single, integrated literacy block. The focus shifts to fluent reading for meaning-making with an instructional emphasis on increasing efficiency and skill in the integration of word-level and text-level skills (as research shows are characteristics of proficient readers). While the overall schedule is not the same each day, all daily instruction includes components for knowledge-building (to build and improve the ability to comprehend complex texts and apply that knowledge as students listen, read, write, think, and speak about texts) for around 90 minutes and foundational skills instruction (which includes fluency, grammar, morphology, spelling, and writing) for a minimum of 30 minutes each day. Students are provided with daily opportunities to practice and refine code as well as build knowledge. Amplify CKLA engages students in grades 3-5 in work around fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The skills necessary for these major components of reading are not taught in isolation; they are embedded within each lesson to ensure continuity, cohesion and connection. Teachers have sidebar supports, as well as fluency, decoding and encoding remediation guides, to assist students who may struggle with foundational skills or need additional assistance and support. Our improvements for next year are grounded in the continuation of designated time for third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers to collaborate around unit and lesson preparation protocols so that they can make the necessary shifts from planning (gathering resources) to preparation (internalizing

the major unit and lesson goals). We also want to continue to immerse our teachers in job-embedded professional development grounded in the integration of foundational skills and knowledge-building (integrated literacy instruction) and the TN Academic Standards for ELA.

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

Amplify CKLA

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

Amplify CKLA

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

Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (aimswebPlus)

### **Intervention Structure and Supports**

Giles County's RTI<sup>2</sup> screening process is used to identify students with risk indicators for reading struggles and provide them with additional support. In the fall, winter, and spring, all students are administered the TN universal reading screener to determine which students have a significant reading deficiency (as evidenced by a URS reading composite at or below the 15th percentile) or are at-risk for a significant reading deficiency (as evidenced by a URS reading composite between the 16th and 40th percentile). The subtests administered through the URS evaluate grade-appropriate skills associated with characteristics of dyslexia, including phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge, sound/symbol recognition, decoding skills, encoding skills, and rapid naming. Grade-level RTI<sup>2</sup> teams (consisting of grade-level teachers, school administrators, RTI<sup>2</sup> coordinators, and other key stakeholders) review universal screener data following each administration to determine students who have or are at-risk for having a significant reading deficiency and need additional support through Tier II or Tier III interventions. Students falling into these categories are further assessed using survey-level/diagnostic assessments to drill down and determine specific deficits. These survey-level assessments aid RTI<sup>2</sup> teams in identifying the unique needs of each individual student and confirm the level of support needed to plan and implement appropriate instruction and evidence-based interventions. They are used to identify specific gaps in foundational skills in order to provide targeted, prescriptive intervention specific to student needs that will help students become proficient readers. While our universal reading screener is used as a guide to assess risk, school teams also evaluate multiple forms of data as they engage in data-based decision making to drive instructional decisions and deliver appropriate interventions. These may include, but are not limited to, benchmark assessments, summative assessments, progress monitoring, diagnostic assessments, and teacher observations. Based upon the data analyzed by the RTI<sup>2</sup> team, students are assigned to small groups with an intervention that will narrow skill gaps in their area of greatest deficit. Students receive daily, small-group intervention during their grade-level specified RTI block in the master schedule. From tier to tier, instruction is intensified through reduction of student to staff ratio and increase in instructional time. Students in Tier II intervention receive instruction at a ratio of one to five for thirty minutes daily, whereas students in Tier III receive instruction at a ratio of one to three for forty-five to sixty minutes daily. In addition, students

in Tier III receive instruction from the most highly qualified staff in order to best fill gaps in foundational skills. All dyslexia-specific reading interventions are systematic, cumulative, explicit, aligned to deficits, multi-sensory, and language based (as defined by the 2016 dyslexia bill).

Instructional supports (as described in the Tennessee Dyslexia Resource Guide) for students receiving dyslexia-specific interventions include:

- 1) oral/audio presentation of anchor and supplemental texts,
- 2) opportunities for fluency practice with decodable or age-appropriate texts,
- 3) multiple formats of presentation including opportunities for multi-sensory learning,
- 4) no penalty for spelling in writing tasks/opportunities to correct spelling of words with previously taught concepts,
- 5) no penalty for spelling in writing tasks/opportunities to correct spelling of words with previously taught concepts,
- 6) chunking of text and/or task, and
- 7) pre-teaching of vocabulary and/or background knowledge.

Giles County utilizes several research-based interventions (that also meet the requirements of a dyslexia-specific intervention as outlined in the Say Dyslexia Law) to address specific areas of reading difficulty including:

- 1) Read Naturally (builds phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension through high interest nonfiction stories, supporting students with multi-sensory, explicit methods and systemic, cumulative instruction),
- 2) Wilson Reading System (a multi-sensory, structured literacy program that directly, explicitly, and systematically teaches the structure of the English language by addressing fluent decoding and encoding skills based on phonological-coding research and Orton-Gillingham principles),
- 3) S.P.I.R.E. (a multi-sensory language-based reading intervention program designed to build reading success through intensive, structured and spiraling curriculum, targeting phonological awareness, phonics, spelling, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension through explicit teacher-led instruction),
- 4) CKLA Assessment and Remediation Guides (accompanies our core ELA curriculum to address students' varying levels of instructional need focusing on phonological awareness, phonics, alphabet knowledge, sound/symbol recognition, decoding, and encoding)
- 5) Reading Horizons (a language-focused, evidenced-based reading intervention program that engages students in teacher-led explicit, sequential, systematic, multisensory phonics instruction centered on sounds/phonemes and letters/graphemes), and
- 6) 95 Percent Group (a collection of high-quality, evidence-aligned materials that aids teachers in delivering explicit, systematic literacy instruction aligned to the science of reading focusing on the areas of phonological awareness and phonics).

Throughout the RTI<sup>2</sup> process, school-based RTI<sup>2</sup> teams monitor student progress every 4.5 weeks to examine student achievement and gauge the effectiveness of the intervention. Intervention logs are maintained as part of each student's intervention plan, and Rate of Improvement and Gap Analysis worksheets are completed for each child. Progress monitoring data is used as part of a collaborative, problem-solving process when determining which students need closer monitoring or more intensive intervention. Intensity of interventions can be increased through length, frequency, and duration of implementation. Decisions are made regarding students' instructional needs based on multiple data points taken in context over time. The RTI<sup>2</sup> teams determine if a change in intervention or the person providing the intervention is warranted when a student is not showing progress. Other variables (including student attendance, student engagement, and fidelity checks) are also analyzed as a part of the decision-making process before a change is made to the programming, provider, duration, or intensity and nature of interventions. Documentation of student progress is provided to families following each 4.5 week meeting to continuously keep parents informed. Families of students who have or are at-risk for having a significant reading deficiency, including students who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia, receive home literacy reports that provide a clear explanation of student skill gaps, detail how those gaps will be addressed through daily intervention, and offer ideas for reading activities that can be done at home to support their child's journey towards reading proficiency.

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

Giles County sends home literacy reports to families of students in grades K-5 if their child has a significant reading deficiency (as evidenced by a URS reading composite at or below the 15th percentile) or is at-risk for a significant reading deficiency (as evidenced by a URS reading composite between the 16th and 40th percentile). Families receive this written communication immediately following the completion of the district's fall universal screening (and following the winter and spring screening as needed for children who fall below the 40th percentile who had not previously done so.) Student scores are communicated in parent-friendly language to provide a clear explanation of skill gaps and specific area(s) of reading their child is having difficulty in (phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge, sound/symbol recognition, decoding skills, encoding skills, and/or rapid naming). The depth and extent of student needs are detailed along with information on the specific intervention and supports that will be provided daily to address identified gaps, including the amount of time for services and the name/description of the specific program that will be utilized. It includes a list of no-cost ideas/activities for at-home reading intervention support. This is accompanied with a description of the district's literacy vision and the importance of students being able to read proficiently by the end of third grade. This written communication also provides information and resources on Tennessee's 3rd grade promotion policy and available promotion pathways to fourth grade. The district explains the process of how students are assessed for reading proficiency and defines what is meant by "at-risk" of having a "significant deficiency in reading." Families of students identified under these categories are updated of student progress after every 4.5-week RTI data meetings are held with school-level stakeholders. Through written notification and/or in-person communication, RTI data teams share detailed notes of any changes that are being made to the intervention, programming, provider, or the intensity and nature of the intervention if the student is not showing sufficient progress as evidenced by universal

screening/progress monitoring data. The team also discusses/shares ideas for recommended at-home support activities (those that do not require any purchased resources) with the child's family. These support activities are specifically tailored to the child's area of reading skill deficit. Family communication occurs a minimum of three times annually for students in grades K-5 (after each universal screener benchmark). Additionally, our adopted ELA curriculum contains family letters that outline the foundational skills and knowledge domains for each week of learning. Teachers send these communication letters weekly to continuously inform families of learning goals for literacy. These letters provide families with at-home ideas for working with their child outside of school to support the targeted skills and knowledge goals. This communication provides families with opportunities to better understand how to support their child(ren) through specific questions and activities (that do not require any purchased material) about their texts and through an awareness of the foundational skills child(ren) are learning.

### **Professional Development Plan**

Giles County utilized the Reading 360 Early Literacy Training series developed by the Tennessee Department of Education as the primary source of professional development to deepen all K-5 teachers' understanding of foundational skills instruction grounded in the science of reading. By May 2024, all K-2 teachers, ELA teachers in grades 3-5, reading interventionists, RTI<sup>2</sup> coordinators, ESL teachers, special education teachers, and all other teachers holding a license with an endorsement that allows them to teach reading in grades K-5 engaged asynchronously in Week 1 of the Early Reading Training (during protected time on scheduled district-wide PD and in-service days). Through the modules, teachers learned about foundational reading development and instruction that is grounded in a phonics-based approach. Educators were required to earn a completion certificate and submit it to school/district leaders.

All teachers who successfully completed Week 1 were encouraged to participate in the in-person, cohort-style Week 2 of the series in June/July. This training focuses on practical classroom application of research findings around strong instruction in phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary, applying the theoretical knowledge gained from participating in Week 1. Participants must complete a performance task to earn a completion certificate and submit it to school/district leaders.

Moving forward, all new K-2 teachers and new ELA teachers in grades 3-5 will be required to complete Week 1 of the Early Reading Training and earn a completion certificate. The professional learning cycle will repeat in consecutive years to refresh foundational skills instructional strategies.

Additional literacy focused professional development includes:

August-May

- **Teacher Collaboration on Unit Preparation and Lesson Preparation**  
Teachers will utilize TDOE's Unit and Lesson Preparation Guides to collaboratively prepare at the unit and lesson level around their adopted literacy curricula (HQIM). K-2 teachers will prepare units for both the Skills strand and Knowledge strand of the adopted CKLA curriculum to ensure daily explicit foundational skills instruction occurs and student practice

activities center around phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, spelling, grammar, handwriting, the writing process, vocabulary, and comprehension. Grades 3-5 will collaborate to prepare units and lessons from CKLA which meets an evidence-based approach to applying foundational skills within daily lessons through an integrated literacy block design. Collaboration will occur during monthly school-level PLCs and quarterly district-wide PLCs. Teachers will share completed protocols with school administrators and district leaders.

- ELA Standards Guides for Grades 3-12  
Teachers will utilize TDOE's ELA Standards Guides to unpack individual standards and understand how they align in an integrated approach. These guides will be used in conjunction with TDOE's unit and lesson prep protocols to better understand standards-aligned questions and tasks within adopted HQIM.