

Johnson City Schools

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

First Approved: June 30, 2023

Approved: June 10, 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

For students in grades K-2, Johnson City Schools utilizes HMH Into Reading, which is aligned to Tennessee ELA standards as approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. Students receive between 120-150 minutes of daily literacy instruction.

Students build knowledge through a series of successive modules (9 modules in K and 12 modules in grades 1 and 2), that target their diverse needs using whole-class instruction, teacher-led small groups, and options for building independent reading, student discussion, and student writing. Teachers guide children through meaningful experiences as they read texts of appropriate complexity, actively view and listen, explore vocabulary, and participate in collaborative discussions to support reading comprehension development.

HMH Into Reading also includes 45-60 daily minutes in grades K-2 to support children in building a strong foundation for literacy. Students engage in activities that develop alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, phonics, spelling, handwriting, recognition of high-frequency words, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Each grade level has a specific foundational skills systematic scope and sequence to use during explicit literacy instruction. During literacy instruction, teachers follow an alphabet knowledge instructional routine as the teacher says the letter name and sound, asks the children to repeat the name and sound, share classmates' names with that letter name and sound, models the handwriting stroke for both the upper- and lower-case letter, and then asks students to apply the skill in small groups or during independent practice. Teachers also access articulation videos which support students to correctly pronounce each letter sound. Additionally, phonological awareness lessons engage students in practice with identifying, blending, segmenting, and manipulating sounds in oral language.

As students progress from alphabet knowledge into reading words, teachers use the blending sound-by-sound routine to display a word on the letter cards in order, slide the second letter over, and then slide the third letter over. This routine is explicitly taught with the whole class or small groups to blend words with a target short vowel, consonant digraph, trigraph, blend, or long vowel spellings and to model precise and consistent hand motions to blend words. In addition, students

can practice and apply their skills as they work with words to build independence by building, spelling, and writing words through Know It, Show It activities. Furthermore, students are provided opportunities to practice reading using Start Right Readers, which are decodable texts aligned with learned sound-spelling and high frequency words taught in explicit instruction. They are also used for fluency practice.

Improvements for next year include: 1) provide teachers with opportunities for collaboration regarding student data to inform teaching practices and 2) provide teacher collaboration for unit- and lesson-level preparation to meet the literacy needs of all students.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

Johnson City Schools has an integrated literacy block for grades three through five anchored in the science of reading and aligned to Tennessee Academic Standards for English Language Arts. Our curriculum materials, Benchmark Advance (grade 3) and HMH (grades 4-5), have been approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. Students receive between 90 and 135 minutes of daily literacy instruction with at least 30 minutes of integrated foundational skills instruction.

Each grade level engages with ten units designed to build world knowledge from strands that are consistently mapped across grade levels with a vertical progression of topics and essential questions. Students listen to, read, think about, discuss, and write about culturally responsive texts.

Daily instruction includes ten minutes of reading aloud rich, complex texts to model fluency and build students' listening comprehension. For at least 30 minutes each day, students participate in metacognitive, comprehension, vocabulary, word study, morphology, spelling, writing, and grammar/language mini lessons designed to provide them with the skills and strategies needed to be proficient readers. Teachers meet with small groups of students for 20-45 minutes each day to scaffold reading behaviors, reinforce strategies, and build fluency. They ensure that all students read independently to build volume and stamina. Teachers confer with students on their text selections and application of strategies. In addition, students participate in daily 15-minute writing mini lessons. Students are then given time for independent writing while teachers meet with small groups of students who have similar writing needs.

The following is an example of a foundational literacy strategy that our teachers use to help students read larger words.

Model: Write or highlight a multisyllabic word in a sentence, underlining the target word. Guide students through the steps of the Reading Big Words Strategy to read the word.

1. Look for any common word parts at the beginning of the word, such as prefixes (un, re-, dis-).
2. Look for any common word parts at the end of the word, such as suffixes (-ing, -ed, -ly, -ful).
3. Look at what's left—the base word. Use knowledge of spelling patterns and syllable types to read it.
4. Sound out and blend together all the word parts (prefix, base word, suffix).
5. Say the word again quickly. Finally, check the word in the sentence to see if it makes sense.

Practice: Guide students to use the strategy to decode multisyllabic words as they read. Discuss with students which steps of the strategy helped them the most.

Extend (Read, Build, Write): Have students build words they struggled with using syllable and word part cards (e.g., re-, new, -ing), then have them write the words. Work with students to write a sentence with each word to confirm meaning.

Benchmark Advance phonics program's scope and sequence is developed to progress from easier to more complex skills, separate the teaching of confusing letters and sounds, and contain a built-in review and repetition cycle to ensure mastery of taught skills so students can transfer them to all reading and writing demands.

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Into Reading

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5

Benchmark Advance (grade 3)

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Into Reading (grades 4-5)

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

DIBELS, 8th Edition (Grades K-1)

EasyCBM (Grades 2, 4-5)

Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (aimswebPlus) (Grade 3)

Intervention Structure and Supports

In accordance with the RTI Framework, all students are universally screened three times a year in K-5. The RTI team reviews universal screening scores as well as other sources of data, to determine which students are at risk for, or have, a significant reading deficiency. These students are put in Tier II or III intervention groups after their parents are contacted. They are given the Phonics and Word Reading Survey to determine specific deficit areas to work on and to screen for characteristics of dyslexia. Students receive daily, small group intervention that addresses their specific skill gaps for at least 30-45m in Tier II or 45-60m in Tier III, which increases in intensity or time and decreases in group size to reflect student need. These groups are progress-monitored bi-weekly, fidelity-checked often, and discussed during monthly RTI meetings.

Growth is determined in these RTI team meetings by analyzing multiple sources of data, including progress monitoring results, fidelity checks, classwork, and perceptual data including observations of students in a variety of settings (classroom, special services, etc.). This information helps the team to decide how to best modify intervention instruction and materials to meet the fluctuating needs of the student. For example, if a student is not growing in a Tier II group using the Phonics First program, they may be switched to a Tier III group using Phonics First after a period of time (usually around 4 data points) in which the team implements strategic changes (i.e.-smaller group, additional

time, change in teaching style or activities) designed to better meet his/her needs. This information is shared with parents and other stakeholders at least monthly to best support the student in a variety of settings.

Our program builds foundational reading knowledge in a systematic and sequential way to teach students phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. We build from letter sound knowledge and word building, to decoding and analyzing high level text in a variety of settings and modalities. Each step is taught explicitly and cumulatively, using the research-based, dyslexia-specific activities from Orton-Gillingham's Phonics First Program. This program addresses every aspect of dyslexia-specific instruction noted in the Say Dyslexia Law, including phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, sound/symbol recognition, decoding, encoding, and rapid naming. Each reading concept is taught using a multisensory, cumulative, and systematic approach steeped in reading research. Students are taught to use a variety of reading strategies from these programs. Each student is given the specific tasks and type of questioning he or she needs to grow.

Additional supports include participation in summer programs, after-school learning camps, literacy nights with families, bookmobiles, online book access through Accelerated Reader and EPIC as well as free decodables to take home that align with phonics skills being taught. Community literacy programs are also available at community centers in neighborhoods with high populations of these students.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

Our district notifies K-5 parents immediately after the team has decided the student is at risk for, or has, a significant reading deficiency based on the universal screeners given 3 times per year and other pertinent student data. Our district Family Notification Plan details each student's scores in family-friendly language. Our literacy report provides clear explanations of skill gaps, the depth and extent of student need, and specific information about how the gaps will be addressed during intervention. The district family notification plan includes no-cost activities for families to support learning at home along with information on the importance of reading proficiency and 4th grade promotion pathways for the students currently in 3rd grade. Finally, our plan includes clear communication with families three times per year for students in grades K-5.

Professional Development Plan

Teachers in our district will or have already participated in the free and optional Reading 360 Early Literacy Training series developed by the Tennessee Department of Education in partnership with TNTP.

Our plan for providing professional development for all PreK-5 teachers is as follows:

All teachers in grades PreK through five (along with ESL, special education teachers, and instructional coaches) completed Week 1 of the asynchronous Early Literacy Training series. This training focused on foundational reading development and instruction and is grounded in a phonics-based approach. We ensure that all participating educators earn a completion certificate.



Teachers in our district in kindergarten through second grades and third through fifth grades meet quarterly with the grade band literacy coach to analyze the student achievement and growth data. This provides opportunity to guide educators in early literacy instructional strategies.

Additional Comments

Literacy coaches remain an important resource for the Johnson City Schools in providing job embedded staff development.