

## **Macon County Schools**

### Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Last Updated: 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**

Macon County uses Benchmark Advance as our adopted HQIM for ELA. This curriculum is aligned with Tennessee ELA standards. This curriculum uses foundational skills as the primary source of instruction at the K-2 grade level. Each of our schools has a dedicated Literacy block for 150 minutes daily with 45 minutes of foundational skills. At these grade levels, teachers have routines around phonological awareness, phonics/word study, and encoding practice along with fluency every day. Heggerty, a supplemental phonemic awareness program, is also used by all K-2 schools in addition to the phonological practice our adopted textbook series includes. Benchmark Advance provides a wide variety of materials for teachers to use during explicit instruction as well as student practice materials. Teachers have access to several online tools within the series such as ePocket charts to assist in their explicit instruction when introducing the sounds and letter correspondences. Teachers also utilize the Frieze cards and Sound Spelling Cards in explicitly teaching students correct sounds, letter correspondences, and about syllable types when decoding and encoding words. Teachers begin lessons with a phonological component by just identifying a single phoneme. Teachers then identify the grapheme(s) associated with the sound. Teachers explicitly build words with a gradual release of students building words as well as decomposing the words. Sound as well as letter manipulation in both the phonological area and phonics side are practiced. Kindergarten students are introduced to closed syllable and open syllable single syllable words. First grade students are explicitly taught closed, open, VCe, vowel team, and r-controlled vowel syllable types in single syllable words moving to two syllable words as the year progresses with both decoding and encoding. Second grade covers all syllable types and moves into multisyllabic word decoding. There are many opportunities for fluency practice from explicit instruction by the teacher modeling to individual student practice with words, phrases, sentences, and stories. Vocabulary development and comprehension work are embedded into the lessons for both explicit instruction and student practice opportunities.

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

Macon County uses Benchmark Advance as our adopted HQIM for ELA. This curriculum is aligned with Tennessee ELA standards. Each of our schools has a dedicated Literacy block for 120 minutes daily, with 90 of these minutes being uninterrupted. During this block, teachers use evidence-based approaches to teach integrated aspects of literacy. There is a minimum of 30 minutes spent daily on foundational skills such as phonological awareness, and sometimes more, as determined by student need. Phonics and word study skills are explicitly taught by teachers and students are also given practice opportunities in both decoding and encoding with these skills. Then, throughout the lesson, phonics, word structure, morphology, grammar, and writing skills are embedded. Fluency practice is built into lessons with shared reads and small group texts as well as individual practice. Comprehension, application, and vocabulary acquisition are also woven throughout the knowledge-building lessons each day. From third grade through fifth grade, students are engaged in complex texts daily while building content knowledge and using the foundational skills needed for reading with the use of Benchmark Advance's Phonics & Word Study component. Writing in response to texts and using text evidence is a key component when students are building knowledge. Students are also engaged in meaningful conversations about texts with routines and structures that are modeled and facilitated by the teacher.

### **Additional Supports**

We are focused on improving student literacy. To help support and strengthen teacher practices and student achievement for identified student subgroups, Macon County has done the following:

- required that all K-5 teachers undergo either in-person or online Early Reading Training, course 1 as offered by TDOE, and we have ensured a 100% completion rate of this.
- Over 50% of our K-5 teachers have also completed course 2 of Early Reading Training as well.
- Each elementary school also has a designated instructional coach in their building.
- Schools have received several hours of training from our contracted vendor, SchoolKit, specifically in both unit and lesson internalization and prep in our weekly PLCs to support students and subgroups of students.
- Our instructional coaches took their shared SchoolKit learning back to their individual schools, to better support and coach their teachers.
- An administration change has also been made at one of our elementary schools and, with the help of our CORE ELA consultant, we have an onboarding plan developed to help educate her on what best foundational skills practices do, and do not, look like.

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

Benchmark Advance

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

Benchmark Advance

## **Supplemental Instructional Materials**

Macon County uses Heggerty Phonemic Awareness to provide PK-2 students with additional foundational skills instruction.

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

Tennessee Universal Reading Screener K-5

## **Intervention Structure and Supports**

Macon County has a certified teacher serving as an Interventionist in each of our K-5 schools. Every classroom has a dedicated Intervention block each day for Reading Intervention. Students are screened 3 times a year by AimsWeb+. After the Fall Screening, data team meetings are held with the Interventionist, ESL teacher, Special Education Teacher, Instructional Leader, Principal, and classroom teachers to identify at-risk students and the best placement. Students are identified as at-risk based on the results of the AimsWeb+ screener. Typically, students falling below the 16th percentile are identified as our most vulnerable students and these students begin receiving Tier 3 Intervention in Reading for 45 to 60 minutes with the Interventionists and assistants trained by the certified Interventionist. Students falling below the 40th Percentile receive Tier 2 Intervention with their classroom teacher for 30 minutes.

Tier 3 Intervention Programs in Reading that are utilized in Macon County are 95% Group, SPIRE, and Saxon Phonics with the strongest focus on their specific skill deficit(s). Tier 2 Intervention students receive skill-specific support from programs such as Benchmark Advance Intervention, FCRR, Saxon Phonics, Corrective Reading, Journeys Toolkit, Sidewalks, UFLI Foundations Toolbox, and Reading Mastery.

All Tier 3 and Tier 2 students are given both a phonological awareness (PASS) and phonics and word (PWRS) reading screener twice yearly to dig deeper into deficit skills. Some Intervention programs have program-specific screeners as well. Reading Intervention for both Tier 2 and Tier 3 includes explicit, systematic, and research-based instruction. Progress is monitored in the skill areas in which students show deficits. After each 4 ½ weeks of instruction, data teams are held throughout the year. Data team decisions include best placements, group size, parent notification, need for additional supports, analysis of progress monitoring graphs, correlation of grades earned vs. performance level, as well as other data including Benchmark Advance tests and overall well-being of individual students within the RTI framework. Flexibility and awareness of individual student needs are key to these meetings.

Parents are notified of progress and appropriate changes are made with placements and intervention programs as needed. Per the Say Dyslexia law, students displaying characteristics of dyslexia also receive a notification. Those students receiving a letter are in interventions that target those specific skills in a multisensory, systematic, phonics-based, explicit manner (such as SPIRE or 95% Group). Fidelity checks are in place at all schools in Tier 3 and Tier 2 Intervention blocks as well as for all Tier 1 instruction.

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

Upon initial screening in the Fall with AimsWeb+, families are notified with an initial letter explaining their student's literacy scores. These home literacy reports include the following:

- student scores in parent-friendly language,
- clear explanation of skill gaps and the depth and extent of student need,
- information about how those gaps will be addressed during intervention,
- includes no-cost activities for families to support learning at home,
- information on the importance of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading proficiency and 4<sup>th</sup> grade promotion pathways, and
- communication with parents three times a year in grades K-3 and annually in grades 4 and 5.

Additional RTI information including the student placement in intervention is shared. Specific skills deficits are identified, along with intervention level, time of classes, and data team information. Every 4 ½ weeks after data team meetings are held, parents receive progress monitoring graphs attached to letters that give information in parent-friendly language on the student's progress and plans for any changes made for the student. This letter also contains information about specific characteristics of dyslexia that are screened on AimsWeb+ and additional phonics screeners used in the district (such as PASS and PWRS). Parents receive notification every 4 ½ weeks on intervention progress throughout the year. Parents also receive communication on their Tier 1 instruction in the form of progress reports every mid-quarter and end of every quarter as well as parent-teacher conferences built into the school calendar each semester.

Our adopted ELA program, Benchmark Advance, provides parent letters and skill lists with activities and games to send to families for each Unit in grades K-5 that will provide families with what students are currently learning and ideas for support. Both the district and our individual schools also frequently send letters home and make social media posts, informing or reminding families of the abundance of free resources available to them, such as Ready4K, decodable readers, summer free reading books, and the need for possible attendance at our Summer Learning Camp.

Our district also begins sending letters home with every 3<sup>rd</sup> grader in November, and then again in February and May, outlining the importance of reading proficiency, along with the pathways by which their child may advance to the 4<sup>th</sup> grade after State testing scores have been returned to the district. At the beginning of the school year, information is shared with 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade parents on accessing the Parent Portal to review personalized student TCAP information as well.

## **Professional Development Plan**

Macon County requires all K-5 teachers including Special Education, Interventionists, EL teachers, Instructional Leaders, Literacy Coaches, and Principals to attend the Reading 360 Early Reading Training, course 1. We have 100% completion of this in grades K-5 and have a process in place for new teachers to complete the training.



The majority of our K-5 teachers have also completed week 2 of Early Reading Training as well. We have been fortunate enough to be able to host four cohorts of the training here in Macon County within the last 3 years.

In planning for our professional development in the coming year, we have dedicated time at each scheduled time period to revisit, refine, and review the Reading 360 Trainings.

Teachers will also be participating in collaborations at the school level in PLCs around foundational literacy. It is our goal to improve teacher knowledge and work within our curriculum to prepare our students with the skills necessary to be successful readers.