

Union City Schools

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Last Updated: May 17, 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 a foundational skills curriculum called CKLA that is based on the Science of Reading and is aligned to Tennessee ELA standards. There are three major dimensions of the research-based CKLA program: (1) the two-strand approach to instruction in K-2 (2) the language-based and knowledge driven approach to building children's capacity with complex text and vocabulary, and (3) the importance of explicit and systematic phonics instruction to build automaticity with the written code. Our students in grades K-2 receive 60 minutes of Knowledge instruction and 60 minutes of foundational skills instruction to make up their Literacy Block.

The two-strand design refers to the fact that the CKLA program is organized around two distinct blocks of language arts instruction, each with its own set of activities, materials, and goals. In the Knowledge strand, oral language and listening comprehension skills are honed through interactions with complex, knowledge-based texts.

In the Skills strand time is dedicated to building decoding and word-level automaticity within controlled decodable texts. Our effective phonics instruction includes systemic ordering of phonetic targets that progress in number and complexity over time, systemic practice in which children have intentionally designed opportunities to apply and use the sound-spellings they are taught and systemic instructional planning whereby methods of instruction are consistent and progress depending on students' learning. Our instruction focuses on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. CKLA read-alouds are also an important tool that is used across grades to build children's independent capacity for understanding and analyzing complex text. The read-aloud experience is specifically designed to integrate key messages about successful reading from cognitive, developmental, and applied research bases.

We are planning to move back to self-contained classrooms in K-2. This will allow teachers to focus more on ELA literacy skills with fewer interruptions.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

Our district uses a foundational skills curriculum called CKLA that is based on the Science of Reading and is aligned to Tennessee ELA standards for grades 3-5 literacy instruction. Our curriculum materials are selected from those approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. During the integrated ELA block that meets daily, students in grades 3-5 receive at least 75 minutes of instruction through an evidence-based approach to applying foundational skills for a minimum of 30 minutes daily. In Grade 3, the program continues to develop skills (grammar, spelling, morphology), but the content of the Knowledge strand begins to integrate in the Skills strand in more systematic ways. There is still almost-daily read-alouds, but students also read independently about the topics introduced during the read-alouds. This serves as a bridge toward the program design in Grades 4 and 5, where instruction moves away from the two-strand model toward a single, integrated language arts block. By Grades 4 and 5, the focus is on fluent reading for meaning making and the emphasis instructionally is on increasing efficiency and skill in the integration of word and text level skills, as occurs with proficient readers. Although Grades 4 and 5 do not have two distinct strands of materials, the premise of the CKLA design-building both knowledge and skills-is consistent across all grade levels. This program is designed to take a systematic and explicit approach to teaching the English code. The program's integrated approach to instruction, practice and extension, and progress monitoring/individualization creates a systematic instructional approach designed to support all learners.

We also offer before school intensive tutoring in ELA for students in grades 3-4 in order to meet the requirements of the new 3rd grade retention law. Every effort is made to guarantee that students receive the best educational opportunities to excel in the early literacy classrooms.

Additional Supports

Our district is dedicated to improving student literacy. We will focus on the supports below to assist our identified schools and subgroups.

Our elementary school has made several changes to improve our TCAP scores.

- By adjusting our master schedule, we have increased the amount of time spent on ELA in every grade.
- We will adjust to a self-contained environment for all 2nd grade classrooms instead of departmentalization. This will help with flexibility in the classroom and allow more time for ELA instruction.
- We have restructured our class student make up. Prior to this school year we had advanced classes in grades 3 and 4. Based on our data we decided to heterogeneously group all classes in these grades. Therefore, every class has high, medium, and low students. This will allow the higher functioning students to serve as peer tutors in the classrooms to lower functioning students.

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2

Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5

Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts

Supplemental Instructional Materials

- Orton Gillingham
- Evidence Based Literacy Instruction
- Mastery Connect

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

Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (aimswEBPlus): Grades K-5

Intervention Structure and Supports

In the fall, students are given a universal screener (AIMSWEB) to determine which students have a significant reading deficiency or are “at-risk”. Our interventionists, grade-level teachers, and principal review universal screener data to determine which students score between the 0-40th percentile. Those students showing need are classified as needing Tier II or Tier III instruction. Students classified as Tier II or Tier III are assigned to small groups according to their skill deficits based on aimswEBPlus Benchmark Subtests. Students receive daily, small group intervention for at least 45 minutes in their area of greater deficit.

We have research-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 recently adopted ELA curriculum, CKLA, contains an assessment and remediation guide in which teachers can find activities that directly address skill gaps. They can tailor this to the needs of their RTI group of students. If that intervention is not proving to be effective, more comprehensive, strategic interventions (such as Orton-Gillingham) become an option. Data teams meet every 4 ½ weeks to determine if a change or the person providing the intervention is warranted. The data team also looks at other variables (attendance, engagement) as part of the decision-making process before a change is made to the programming or provider.

Our students receive explicit instruction in their area of deficit in small groups using research-based materials and strategies. Our school uses a research-based supplemental program as one intervention for students with characteristics of dyslexia. Our school notifies families of students who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia. We have implemented the Orton-Gillingham approach of systematic, explicit, sequential, phonics-based instruction as it is considered a strong support for those students. Families of Tier II & Tier III students will receive a notification letter if their child has been identified as needing additional help with reading skills based on the universal screener. This letter has suggestions to support students with these skills at home. We also just purchased EBLI (Evidence Based Literacy Instruction) which is a speech-to-print based instruction that provides systematic and explicit instruction in the foundational skills of reading, writing, and spelling. It addresses phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, handwriting, spelling, and writing with an end goal of students being able to read and spell more fluently in order to comprehend and write about what they read.

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 make them stronger in that skill.

Our system has purchased Mastery Connect to assist teachers with addressing early literacy standards. This program allows teachers to sequence the standards that are taught and then test over those standards 3 times a year. This benchmark data is utilized to determine the skills that are proficient and the ones that need to be retaught before state testing in the Spring.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

Our school notifies parents in grades K-5 if their child is “at-risk” for or has a significant reading deficiency (as evidenced by students scoring in the 0-40th percentile) immediately after the school’s complete the fall universal screening. Our school plans to communicate in parent-friendly language a clear explanation of Tier II and Tier III student progress, or lack of progress, after the 4 ½ week data team meetings. The school sends home parent notifications three times a year (after each benchmark) if their child has been identified as a Tier II or Tier III student. The letter provides information as to how their child’s skills gaps will be addressed. The letter will explain the importance of being able to read by the end of 3rd grade, the new 3rd and 4th grade promotion pathways, and suggestions for ways to support their child’s literacy skills at home, free of cost. Free books are also provided to students to be utilized at home for extra reading practice.

Professional Development Plan

All ELA teachers in our system participate in high-quality professional development in literacy. This PD is grade specific and helps teachers learn how to address the state standards in each grade. All providers for our PD have a proven track record of supporting our district with foundational skills instruction. The PD is based on phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary.

Teachers in our district have completed course 1 of the Early Reading Training. Any new teacher to our district will complete course 1.

Our PD plan is as follows:

- June 2024- We have hired extra reading intervention teachers and have employed an early literacy coach that has been trained and can demonstrate knowledge and competency in early literacy to assist teachers with planning for instruction. All of our reading intervention teachers for grades K-5 will receive a weeklong training called the Comprehensive Virtual IMSE Orton-Gillingham approach to teaching reading. Orton-Gillingham is a highly structured approach that breaks reading and spelling down into smaller skills involving letters and sounds, and then builds on these skills over time. It was the first approach to use explicit, direct, sequential, systematic, multi-sensory instruction to teach reading, which is not only effective for all students but essential for teaching students with dyslexia. The training will focus on these principles.
- June 2024- All of our 2nd grade self-contained teachers will participate in professional development this summer to plan for the new schedule for next year. Most of this PD will

focus on addressing early literacy skills and preparing our students to be proficient in the 3rd grade

- June 2024- All ELA teachers in grades 3 and 4 will meet with our ELA instructional coaches to review current practices and make plans for instruction for the following school year.
- July 2024- All ELA teachers in grades K-5 will be involved in Mastery Connect training. This training will help teachers provide instruction and assessment in foundational skills instruction from a company that has a proven track record in helping districts prepare for state testing in ELA.
- July 2024- All of our intervention teachers that have completed Orton Gillingham training will participate in a weeklong training called the Intermediate IMSE Orton-Gillingham approach to teaching reading. Orton-Gillingham is a highly structured approach that breaks reading and spelling down into smaller skills involving letters and sounds, and then builds on these skills over time. It was the first approach to use explicit, direct, sequential, systematic, multi-sensory instruction to teach reading, which is not only effective for all students but essential for teaching students with dyslexia. The training will build upon the knowledge gained in the first course and will be provided by a licensed trainer virtually. Teachers receive a certificate for completing the course.
- January 2025- Teachers and leaders will review reports at the 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 RTI² groups.
- May 2025- Teachers and leaders for grades K-4 will review reports at the school and classroom levels to determine both trends in deficits and individual student data to make plans for the following school year.