

## **Union County Schools**

### Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Last Updated: May 13, 2021

Approved: May 31, 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**

UCPS has a dedicated foundational reading skills block focused on a sounds-first approach for grades K-2 grounded in the science of reading and standards-aligned for Tennessee English Language Arts. Our curriculum materials, Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) are selected from those approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. K-2 students will spend 60 minutes daily engaged in direct instruction in foundational skills which is the primary form of instruction. The foundational skills strand provides comprehensive instruction and practice in foundational skills, such as phonological awareness, phonics practice, word recognition, vocabulary, fluency, reading comprehension, and writing instruction. The students receive explicit instruction in all forty-four sounds and their 150 spellings. The instruction progresses through a seamless continuum of skills in a specific order. This scope & sequence builds from the simplest to the most complex, taking advantage of previous learning. The program moves from the most frequent and least ambiguous spellings to the least frequent or most ambiguous spelling.

So, as an example, Kindergarten students will learn the least ambiguous spellings for the /s/ sound: 's' as in sit. And 'ss' as in dress. The following year they will build on this learning and add 'c' as in bicycle, 'ce' as in lettuce, and 'se' as in tortoise. And then finally, in Grade 2 they will add the most ambiguous and least frequent spellings for the /s/ sounds: 'sc' as in scissors and 'st' as in listen.

Our improvement for next year will be to ensure that teachers have continued support through LIN and Literacy Coaches to accelerate student learning and maximize the potential of their instructional materials. This includes a designated time for teachers to collaborate as they plan lessons. Teachers will continue to use and internalize the module preparation protocol and the lesson preparation protocol.

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

Our curriculum materials in Grades 3-5, Wit and Wisdom, are selected from those approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission and are aligned with TN ELA standards. Our students receive a total of 90 minutes of ELA instruction. Wit and Wisdom's approach is integrated and text-based: daily reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar, fluency, and vocabulary study is based on and draws on evidence from high-quality texts. Although the daily

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 they listen, read, write, think, and speak) for about 60 minutes per day and foundational skills instruction that includes fluency, grammar, morphology, spelling, and writing for at least 30 minutes per day. The fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills are not taught in isolation but are embedded within the lesson to ensure continuity, cohesion, and connection.

Each of the four modules focuses on a topic essential for building background knowledge, vocabulary, and writing skills. During each module, students read or hear read aloud a series of texts on a topic and examine those texts critically and systematically. A framework of Content questioning engages students in the content and through the process of reading complex texts. These questions guide students' daily work of encountering, understanding, and analyzing complex text. Students then distill each text's deeper meaning and explain how the texts build their knowledge of the topic.

Craft Questions are another line of daily questioning that teaches students the elements of strong writing, grammar, speaking, and listening skills and allows students to apply these skills for a variety of purposes. The knowledge of craft allows students to respond in discussions and writing to the texts they read.

By repeatedly engaging in these lines of questioning and learning strategies, students develop their critical thinking skills so they can transfer them to future texts. Through a rigorous and intentional design, students gain content knowledge and become aware of how to read texts, write, speak, and listen.

For example, our third-grade students begin the year with a Module titled "The Sea". During this module, students encounter five texts as well as poems and artwork to build their knowledge of the topic. They begin the lesson by listening/reading and annotating a text with wonder. After listening or reading the complex text, students use their annotations to help answer text-dependent questions and unpack the most essential vocabulary to help aid with comprehension. Deep dive lessons provide explicit support for vocabulary, style, and conventions. Students also examine using morphemes to determine the meaning of words. For example, the students study the root "graph" meaning to write or record. This allows students to use their word knowledge to unlock the meaning of several unfamiliar words such as biography, paragraph, and oceanographer that they might encounter while reading. Therefore, foundational skills instruction is embedded in all aspects of the 90-minute block and is dedicated to developing students' holistic literacy approach to fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension as recommended by research.

Our improvement for next year will be to ensure that teachers have continued support through LIN (Literacy Implementation Network) and Literacy Coaches to accelerate student learning and maximize the potential of their instructional materials. This includes a designated time for teachers to collaborate as they plan lessons. Teachers will continue to use and internalize the module preparation, lesson preparation, and student work analysis protocols.

## **Additional Supports**

Union County Schools is dedicated to improving literacy for all students. We will focus on literacy growth and achievement for specific schools and subgroups in our district as indicated below.

Identified schools have and will continue to receive extra literacy support from TNTP and the LIN network to increase student engagement and mastery in all classrooms. The district will continue to support these schools with specific literacy focused professional development throughout the school year, and plan learning walks to identify instructional needs in our ELA classrooms and next steps to ensure student improvement. Student data will be thoroughly analyzed to determine specific ELA areas in need of support.

To better support lower-performing subgroups, the district included goals, strategies, and action steps for specific subgroups in the district's literacy plan. Part of this plan is to include special education teachers in all ELA training and discussions about data.

Additional supports for our identified schools and subgroups include:

- Restructuring our schedule to include tutoring before, during, and after school. This was done in conjunction with the bus transportation department and altering student pick up times and drop offs to allow for students to be at school earlier for tutoring sessions, etc.
- We now have a dedicated tutor at each school.
- Strategic planning with teachers to allow for tutoring (for specific subgroups and/or schools) to take place at alternative times after school that fit with family schedules. In some cases, tutoring support was provided during the 5:00-6:00 pm time slot. We will continue this practice in the coming year.

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

Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts

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

Great Minds Wit and Wisdom

## **Supplemental Instructional Materials**

UCPS has adopted an approved curriculum for ELA instruction; however, we have chosen to supplement in grades 3-5 to address foundational skills further. Our district will use Sonday System Essentials during an enrichment learning block to focus more deeply on the phonological awareness and advanced phonemic awareness skills that are crucial for success through fifth grade.

During the 2024-2025 school year students and teachers will have access to IXL. IXL can be used during RTI time, small groups, acceleration, and high-dosage low-ration tutoring. UCPS recommends that each student in 3-5 use IXL for 45 minutes per week with 80% pass rate on assignments as recommended by IXL. Features of IXL include:

- an online program for reading that helps determine students' needs, personalize their learning, and monitor progress throughout the school year
- personalizes instruction to provide students with lessons based on their skill level and needs
- Instruction starts with the lowest domain and builds as students progress
- Skills plan that follows the scope and sequence of Wit & Wisdom

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

Our district administers the Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (aimswebPlus) to students in grades K-5.

**Intervention Structure and Supports**

In the fall, students are given a universal screener (aimswebPlus) to determine which students have a significant reading deficiency, scoring below the 15th percentile, or are "at-risk", scoring between the 16th and 40th percentile. Our principals, RTI teachers, and grade-level teachers review the universal screener data to determine which students fall into these categories and need additional support. Those students demonstrating a deficiency are classified as in need of Tier II or Tier III instruction and are given a diagnostic assessment to determine specific deficits to best assign students to a small group with an intervention that will narrow skill gaps. Students receive daily, small group intervention for at least 45 minutes in their area of greatest 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. For K-2 we offer mCLASS Intervention that coincides with our adopted curriculum, CKLA. mCLASS Intervention is a staff-led program that uses data analysis to tailor lessons so students can develop the skills they need to access their core instruction. In addition to mCLASS Intervention, our 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 Sonday System 1 and 2, Lexia, Success Maker, or Heggerty Bridge the Gap) become an option. Data teams meet every 4 ½ weeks to determine if a change in the intervention or the person providing the intervention is warranted. The data team also looks at other variables such as attendance and engagement as part of the decision-making process before a change is made to the programming or the provider.

Our students receive explicit instruction in their area of deficit in small groups using research-based materials and strategies. These students are also screened using the Shaywitz Dyslexia Screener to determine if they have characteristics of dyslexia. Students who do demonstrate those characteristics receive intensive intervention as outlined in the Say Dyslexia Law using programs that meet the law's requirements. Our district uses a research-based supplemental program as one intervention for students with characteristics of dyslexia. Families are notified that the Sonday System curriculum is used to support those students, as it is based on the Orton-Gillingham approach of systematic, explicit, sequential, phonics-based instruction and is considered a strong

support for those students. Lexia is another option for students who display characteristics of dyslexia. Lexia moves through six areas of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, structural analysis, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Lexia is highly structured and sequential and utilizes a blended learning approach. This program prescribes the appropriate intensity, has adaptive technology to include explicit instruction, includes a scaffolding system of support, and uses multisensory techniques.

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. For example, students who need instruction in comprehension may read a new text and answer scaffolded questions, all related to the knowledge-building unit they are studying in Tier I instruction.

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

After a school-based team has reviewed multiple sources of data in the screening process and identifies reading skill deficit(s) in need of intervention, parents will be notified of the student's performance and the need for intervention. A report that details the student's performance on the screener is sent home with every student.

A home literacy report is provided to parents in parent-friendly language, providing clear explanation of skill gaps and the depth of student need, as well as information on how the gaps will be addressed during intervention. The letter includes no-cost activities for families to support learning at home and information on the importance of reading on grade level by third grade. We also share information on the pathway to 4th grade. These letters go home to students in K-5 three times each school year.

Parents of students who score below the 40th percentile and are placed in a Tier 2 or 3 group are also provided with a copy of the Student Intervention Plan that details specific areas of concern, data-based decision tier placement, prescribed intervention program, and length of daily intervention instruction. Parents are notified when a student is found to have a characteristic of dyslexia, a skill deficit in one or more of the basic reading areas (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, written expression), and are placed in a Tier 2 or Tier 3 reading intervention group for basic reading skills. Information about dyslexia will be sent with the initial notification letter. This parent notification process is repeated with each benchmark screening (3 times a year) for students in K-5.

Progress monitoring data and information about student progress are sent to parents every 4.5 weeks. Data teams notify parents of changes made in a student's RTI2 placement.

### **Professional Development Plan**

Teachers in Union County have participated in the Reading 360 Early Literacy Training series developed by the Tennessee Department of Education. We have a plan to ensure all new teachers to the district have completed this training before teaching.

Our plan for providing PD for all Pre-K-5 teachers is as follows.

May/June - All teachers, Instructional Coaches, Interventionists, Special Education teachers, and ESL teachers who have not previously completed the Early Literacy training will engage asynchronously in Week 1 of the Early Literacy Training series. This training will focus on foundational reading development and instruction and is grounded in a phonics-based approach. Participating educators must earn a completion certificate prior to starting Week 2 work in June/July.

July- Our district has recommended Course 2 of the Early Reading Training for all teachers, Instructional Coaches, Interventionists, Special Education teachers, and ESL teachers in grades Pre-K through 5 who still need to complete this course. This training emphasizes practical classroom application of research findings around strong instruction in phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary. This course will be completed asynchronously.

During the 2024-2025 school year, our district is partnering with LIN (Literacy Implementation Network) to provide teachers with professional development around foundational skills practice, developing expectations for module and lesson preparation to meet individual student needs, student work analysis, and growing teacher expectations through analyzing data (CKLA data trackers and data dashboards) to identify trends, concerns, and next steps.