

## **Weakley County Schools**

### Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Last Updated: June 16, 2022

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**

Weakley County Schools use the Benchmark Advance curriculum for literacy instruction in grades K-2. Benchmark Advance is grounded in the science of reading research and aligned to Tennessee ELA standards as approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. The Benchmark Advance curriculum implements a 120-minute ELA block that includes knowledge building and foundational skills (a minimum of 60 minutes). In addition to Benchmark Advance, Weakley County Schools have added the TN Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement Ancillary materials to address the need for additional “Sounds First” activities. These activities and routines build phonemic awareness. The district utilizes a literacy framework based on the curriculum’s planning exemplar while maintaining the district’s pacing expectations, which allocates four weeks to each unit.

During the literacy block, instructional time includes activities that build phonological awareness, phonics practice, and fluency practice in addition to comprehension and vocabulary work. During instruction, teachers explicitly teach a sound, students practice the sound aloud, the teacher models writing the sound, and then students apply the skill in independent practice (small group or individual). Students have opportunities to practice and apply foundational skills taught when using decodable texts and when writing during the writing block portion of the curriculum, all of which are aligned with the sounds/skills being explicitly taught. Teachers use the following framework when intellectually prepping and planning to ensure that all portions of Scarborough’s Reading Rope are being addressed in the lesson. The framework/120-minute literacy block includes the following pacing and components:

Read Aloud- 10 minutes

- knowledge building, vocabulary, metacognition skills, listening comprehension

Foundational Skills- 60 minutes

- Sounds First TN Ancillary Materials
- Phonics and Word Study
- Dictation/Guided Spelling

- Handwriting
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension

Writing and Language- 20 minutes

- Grammar
- Process Writing

Small Group Instruction- 30 minutes

- Decodable Readers
- Writing/Reading Conferences
- Just in Time Instruction based on formative assessments

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

Weakley County Schools use the Benchmark Advance curriculum for literacy instruction in grades 3-5. Benchmark Advance is grounded in the science of reading research and aligned to Tennessee ELA standards as approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. This curriculum utilizes an integrated ELA block that meets an evidence-based approach to apply foundational skills within daily lessons. Students receive 90 minutes of ELA instruction, with an additional 45-minute block allocated for small group instruction used to support and/or enrich students based on targeted areas of need and formative assessments. The district utilizes a literacy framework based on the curriculum's planning exemplar while maintaining the district's pacing expectations, which allocates four weeks to each unit.

During the literacy block, 45 minutes are dedicated to Word Study (spelling and morphology), writing, and grammar and another 45 minutes are dedicated to metacognition, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. Foundational skills instruction is embedded in all aspects of the 90-minute ELA block and is dedicated to developing a student's holistic literacy approach. Teachers use the following framework when intellectually prepping and planning to ensure that all portions of Scarborough's Reading Rope are being addressed in the lesson. The framework/90-minute literacy block includes the following pacing and components:

Read Aloud- (additional 10 minutes)

- knowledge building, vocabulary, metacognition skills, listening comprehension

Foundational Skills- 90 minutes

45 minutes

- Word Study (Phonics and Morphology)
- Guided Spelling
- Handwriting
- Grammar
- Process Writing

45 minutes

- Fluency
- Comprehension/Metacognition
- Vocabulary

Small Group Instruction- (additional 45 minutes)

- Writing/Reading Conferences
- Just in Time Instruction based on formative assessments

### **Additional Supports**

Weakley County schools is dedicated to supporting the literacy growth and achievement of all students and will do so with focused support for our identified school.

For the upcoming school year, our district has three instructional goals that involve the teachers and principals.

- Teachers will gain a deeper understanding of their students' ELA data sets (TCAP, Case, AIMS Web, Formative and Summative).
  - We will focus on providing specific student support based on their data as we drill down and look closely at all data sets from every test to provide exactly what each student needs. This will not be surface level data review.
  - Principals will hold targeted data meetings and ensure faculty is knowledgeable about student ELA data after this thorough analysis.
- Teachers will plan and differentiate instruction based on the knowledge gained from the literacy related data sources while ensuring alignment with the TN Academic Standards.
- Teachers will provide timely academic feedback to all students to ensure student academic success in literacy. Principals will provide teachers with timely feedback regarding ELA instruction during regular learning walkthroughs and formal observations.

Our goal is for our teachers to know and understand students' literacy related data sets, plan and differentiate instruction based on that data, and deliver the instruction with immediate feedback to correct any student misconceptions. This focus to differentiate along with explicit, systematic instruction will be key in moving our students toward literacy improvement.

In addition, we added an instructional coach to support the teachers with literacy instruction in that building and will offer literacy tutoring for students within the school day or after school as we adjust our master schedule.

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

Benchmark Advance

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

Benchmark Advance

### **Supplemental Instructional Materials**

TNFSCS Ancillary Materials (TN Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement)

## **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**

Two weeks after the start of school, students are given the Aims Web Universal Reading Screener. This screener is one way Weakley County Schools identifies students who are at risk for a reading deficiency. The district approved data team at each school reviews data from the universal screener. The composite score, accuracy scores, and the scores from subtests are all considered when determining student intervention needs. In addition to the universal screener, the data team also collects information regarding attendance, discipline, classroom performance, testing history, and classwork samples. Students who demonstrate the need for intervention services undergo further diagnostic assessments to pinpoint specific reading deficits. Weakley County Schools uses PWRS, PASS, SPIRE placement tests with added encoding practice, Core Phonics Survey, and Multi-Syllabic Word Lists to assign students to the intervention group that best meets each student's needs. Students receive daily, low-ratio intervention for 45 minutes in their area of greatest deficit.

Weakley County Schools has implemented the use of research-based intervention programs including Sounds Sensible, SPIRE, Barton, Benchmark Advance Intervention Program, Beverly Tyner with Decodables, and UFLI. Data Teams select the intervention program that is best aligned for each student's deficit and provide the intervention teacher with the materials needed to successfully implement the program with fidelity. Detailed lesson plan templates for each evidence-based intervention program are provided to each intervention teacher which outline the expectations for small group instruction based on specific student skill gaps. Each student has a written plan that includes the data used by the data team to make the placement determination, the intervention program being used, and measurable goals to determine student success in intervention.

Instructional coaches at each school, with the support of district personnel, work with teachers to assist them in making data-driven decisions to guide instruction. This includes using pre-tests, diagnostic screeners, Aims Web data, weekly reading tests, and classwork samples. Using this data, teachers can differentiate Tier 1 instruction to meet individual student needs in the classroom. Students who are identified as "at risk" of or having a significant reading deficiency using the district's screening process are placed in a Tier 2 or Tier 3 Intervention group. Each student has measurable goals on specific skill gaps and is progress monitored regularly to determine when the goals have been met. Data teams use progress monitoring to inform decisions about student intervention changes in duration, material, or intensity. All interventions are aligned with expectations outlined in the Tennessee RTI<sup>2</sup> manual.

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

At the conclusion of fall, winter, and spring Universal Reading Screener testing, the parents of all students in grades K-5 receive notification explaining student reading performance. This notification is written in parent friendly language, explains the student's composite score and identifies students

as having a significant reading deficiency, being at risk of having a significant reading deficiency, or performing average or above average on basic reading skills. Students' specific skill deficits are identified, the length of time being spent in intervention is detailed, and the intervention program being used is noted in this letter. In addition to individual student information, this parent notification also includes an explanation of the importance of being able to read by the end of third grade, no-cost suggestions to support literacy skills at home, and additional information about Tennessee's 3rd grade promotion policy and the pathway to 4th grade.

School level data teams meet every 4.5 weeks to analyze student progress and in-class performance. If there is insufficient progress, the team may determine a change in intervention program, a change in intervention teacher, or an increase intervention intensity is necessary to accelerate a student's progress. Any changes made in a student's plan are documented and sent home to parents with progress monitoring data attached. Recommended activities that will support students in the deficit area are included for students not showing sufficient progress.

Benchmark Advance also contains parent letters for students in the lower grades that outline the foundational skills and knowledge domains for the coming week that will inform and equip parents to support the learning taking place in the classroom. Families can better understand how to support students through questions about their texts and through an awareness of what foundational skills their child is learning.

### **Professional Development Plan**

Weakley County Schools is dedicated to the best instructional practices based on the science of reading research. Professional development is key to ensure teachers have the tools they need to properly instruct students with systematic and explicit foundational skills instruction.

- Beginning in 2020, WCS began its targeted work with a "sounds first" approach. With the adoption of the Benchmark Advance Curriculum and supplementing with the TNFSCS ancillary materials. The proper high quality instructional materials were in place to provide a rigorous deep dive into foundational skills. As the years progressed, through walk throughs, observations, and teacher feedback we continued to collect trends and develop teachers' knowledge of each piece of the literacy block.
- Between 2021 and 2024, all teachers have completed Course I of the Early Literacy Training Series, while many have also completed Course II. The district has strongly encouraged all teachers in the district to complete both courses. If a new teacher is hired into our district, we ensure they have completed this course before teaching.
- Along with the Early Reading Training, in March 2024 the district hosted MTSU's TN Center for Dyslexia for an all-day training centered around Dyslexia, Structured Literacy and intensive foundational skills instruction centered around Phonemic Awareness, Sound-Symbol Recognition, Handwriting, Decoding, Spelling, Morphology, Vocabulary and Comprehension.
- In Nov. of 2024, the district will host trainers representing the Benchmark Advance Curriculum. The training will focus on curriculum implementation of Foundational Skills in K-2 and Word Study in 3-5.

- Along with preplanned district in-service, principals offer in-house in-service hours that are differentiated based on a teacher's needs.
- Throughout the year, instructional coaches follow TDOE's unit and lesson prep cycle through intensive planning/PLCs to ensure that instructional best practices are being implemented.
- Along with the science of reading and HQIM (High Quality Instructional Materials), teachers will also receive professional development centered around data. Data driven instruction embedded as teachers analyze TCAP, MVPA benchmark, AIMSweb data, and unit formative and summative assessments to gauge instruction and next steps. Teachers use information gleaned from data driven professional development to provide "just in time" instruction and immediate feedback to students to ensure misconceptions do not develop.