

## **Carter County Schools**

### **Foundational Literacy Skills Plan**

**Approved: May 30, 2021**

**Updated: August 3, 2021**

**Updated: July 18, 2022**

**Updated: September 20, 2023**

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's core literacy program is Benchmark Advance, which is aligned to Tennessee State ELA Standards and is approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. Such high-quality materials combined with best instructional practices that use an integrated approach to teaching foundational skills will build capacity for students to comprehend complex literary and informational texts. Foundational skills instruction occurs within an integrated framework aligned to reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language.

Students in grades K-2 receive 45 minutes of foundational skill instruction each day. Instruction on foundational skills grounded in science is the primary form of instruction. Teachers in grades K-2 explicitly teach foundational skills across both whole group and small group instruction. Students are afforded many opportunities to practice foundational skills and review during independent practice. Foundational literacy skills instruction in grades K-2 include the following components:

- Print concepts

As teachers model the reading and writing process, students learn print concepts, as well as the alphabetic principle, which are foundational to phonics.

- Phonological awareness

Students learn to orally identify and manipulate the sound units of language such as words, syllables, and speech, all of which are necessary to benefit from phonics.

- Phonics and word Recognition

The goal of phonics is the ability to recognize letters, spelling patterns, and whole words effortlessly. Our district uses a systematic scope and sequence that allows them to enhance decoding and spelling skills incrementally. Teachers combine listening, speaking, writing, and sensory based materials routinely to teach decoding and spelling.

- Fluency

Fluency automates word reading, which allows students to increase the amounts of mental energy they can devote to understanding complex ideas and vocabulary. Students routinely listen to texts

as the teacher models fluent reading. This daily practice allows students to enjoy and comprehend texts in a natural context. Students build fluency through repeated oral readings of texts, poetry, and reading performances called reader's theater. Students receive daily opportunities to read increasingly complex text, which also boosts fluency development.

- Vocabulary

Students with extensive vocabularies have a much easier time comprehending complex texts. It cannot be assumed that students understand vocabulary words. Teachers routinely define words that may interfere with understanding prior to encountering them in text. It is also through wide reading opportunities that students acquire a robust vocabulary. As children learn to read more advanced texts, they learn meanings of new words. Additionally, teachers provide explicit vocabulary instruction on high-yield words encountered across fiction and nonfiction texts.

- Comprehension

Comprehension is always the goal of reading instruction. Teachers in our district do not assume that students are comprehending just because they can read words. Teachers across the district ensure students develop background knowledge on topics presented in texts. Teachers generate questions that span from literal to complex in order to determine various levels of comprehension. Students routinely receive instruction on how to visualize, question, summarize, and interpret what they read. Students receive daily opportunities to think, speak, listen, and write to demonstrate comprehension, and are taught to engage in conversations with peers regarding their thoughts and feelings about the texts they read.

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

Our district uses Benchmark Advance for core literacy instruction in grades K-5 which is aligned to TN State Standards and has been approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission.

In grades 3-5, students develop more advanced phonemic awareness skills and phonics knowledge, which contribute to the development of fluent reading. Such skills are a necessary foundation to reach the primary goal of reading: comprehension.

Each student in grades 3-5 receives 90 minutes of Tier 1 literacy instruction each day. The weekly lesson structure ensures that students receive instruction with complex texts of knowledge-building motivational topics 60 minutes per day. During this time, students are engaged in reading complex texts that build both contextual knowledge and fluency as they read, think, listen, speak, and write, all of which work in an orchestrated manner to enhance comprehension. Complex texts provide the source for which the following foundational skills are explicitly taught using an embedded approach: fluency, grammar, morphology, spelling, and writing. Each day, 30 minutes is allocated to foundational skills instruction that is grounded in science, which within the context of a weekly plan, consists of both embedded and isolated skills instruction.

Within isolated skills instruction, students are taught systematic procedures for decoding and encoding multisyllabic words that are not embedded within a selected text. Students are taught to segment and blend manageable decodable parts of multisyllable words, and that morphemes can

be divided into meaningful word parts. Students “word detectives” as they break longer words into their prefixes, suffixes, and base words. For example, students are instructed to locate and highlight the morphemes in multi-morphemic words such as: dissatisfied unstoppable ridiculously hydrophobic metamorphosis oxygenate fortifications.

- Additionally, students are “word builders” as they are given base words and prefixes/suffixes to see how many words they can build and determine meanings of using the following:

- Prefixes: un-, de- , pre-, re-, co- , con- , -anti
- Suffixes: -ful -ly -less -able/-ible -ing -ion -y -ish -ness -ment
- Greek and Latin Roots: aqua, auto, bio, cent

Within an embedded foundational lesson, students learn to decode within a natural context aligned to a selected text. For example, prior to reading a text about the water cycle, students watch a video on the content and collaborate with peers to tap background knowledge on the topic. Prior to reading a complex text article, the teacher demonstrates decoding of words such as evaporation, precipitation and transpiration using an inquiry-based approach. Such decoding practice with explicit vocabulary instruction facilitates conversations regarding work meanings, which establishes a firm foundation for comprehension. Teachers assess understandings of foundational skills: grammar, morphology, spelling, and writing along with comprehension as students use and spell newly acquired vocabulary words within responses and summaries of written tasks.

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

Benchmark - K-5 Advance

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

Benchmark - K-5 Advance

### **Universal Reading Screener for Grades K-5. This screener complies with RTI<sup>2</sup> and Say Dyslexia requirements.**

Our universal reading screener for students in K-8 is easyCBM. In addition to easyCBM, our 3rd Grade students will also take Aimsweb Spring assessment as another data point.

### **Intervention Structure and Supports**

Carter County Schools RTI programming is aligned to the guidance derived from the TDOE RTI manual. As determined in the manual, RTI is a collaborative process led by general education.

As outlined in the RTI manual, both district and school level teams work in a problem-solving approach, make determinations regarding who should be served, and ensure that the intervention plans support the individual needs and deficits of students served. School level teams consist of administrators, general education teachers, RTI interventionists, and the district RTI coach.

Our universal reading screener, easyCBM, complies with the Say Dyslexia Law and is used as the universal screener for both ELA and Math in grades K-8. Students in grades K-8 are administered the screener three times each year (fall, winter and spring). Each school-level RTI team collaboratively reviews the screener results to determine which students score between the 0-25th percentile.

In addition to easyCBM, other forms of data are generated and used to determine which students have not made sufficient progress in Tier I instruction, are classified as “high risk”, and will be placed into a Tier II or Tier III intervention group. Intervention takes place in a small group setting within the regular classroom. A push-in approach is used to “blanket a grade level” during a particular time each day, which allows the classroom teacher along with an RTI teacher, and highly trained assistants to serve students. The most expert teacher provides instruction to the students who are the most “at risk.” Student groups receiving enrichment, as well as those in intervention Tier II and Tier III groups receive 45 minutes of instruction daily.

Our district uses a variety of research-based materials for reading intervention support. The primary materials used with students who have reading skill deficits include: Benchmark Advance Intervention, Pioneer Valley’s Literacy Footprints, Leveled Literacy Intervention by Fountas and Pinnell, Beverly Tyner Foundational Reading, and Quick Reads by Freddie Hiebert. For students requiring more focused comprehension support, Serravallo’s Comprehension kits are used. Words Their Way: Word Study for phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and spelling instruction are used across tiered instruction. Teachers and interventionists can adapt these approved interventions to meet the needs of their RTI groups. Data teams use progress monitoring data to make informed decisions about duration and intensity as necessary.

Students served in intervention groups are progress monitored every 10 days using instructional level probes, which allow enough data to be generated to determine if instructional changes are deemed necessary. Parents are notified of their child’s progress every 4.5 weeks.

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

Parents are informed that the universal screener is administered three times each year (fall, winter, spring). In parent-friendly language, our district notifies parents in grades K-5 immediately after the initial screening and informs parents of the percentile ranking their child performed in. Students’ skill gaps, depth, and extent of student needs are explained to parents, as well as the amount of additional time of additional daily instruction they will receive to instructionally address skill gaps. The home literacy reports provide parents with information regarding how skill gaps will be addressed during the intervention, along with the type of setting the intervention will occur. Parents of students being served in Tier 1, II, and III are informed subsequently of their child’s progress, or lack thereof after data team meetings across school teams are held every 4.5 weeks. Additionally, a description of the importance of third grade reading proficiently is addressed in the parent notification. Additionally, in order to ensure parents have appropriate resources at home to assist their child/ren, a list of free resources are referenced for parents.

### **Professional Development Plan**

Curriculum and literacy leaders in our district will participate in the free Reading 360 Early Literacy Training series (Weeks 1 & 2) developed by the Tennessee Department of Education at the end of the 2021 school year.

Our Plan for providing professional learning for all K-5 teachers during the 2021-2022 school year is as follows:

- Our district will ensure that all teachers K-5 will participate in Week 1 and 2 of the Early Literacy Training during the summer of June 2022.
- In May of the 2021-2022 school year, teachers in grades K-5 will complete the Reading 360 Early Literacy Training series.
- Our district will continue our second-year partnership with East Tennessee State University as higher education professionals will lead professional development in the area of reading science for teachers in grades K-5.
- In conjunction with the Early Literacy Training series, the curriculum director and ELA coaches will conduct a book study on the text Letter Lessons and First Words by Heidi Anne Mesmer.
- Teachers in grades K-5 will participate in coaching cycles
- Administration will participate in Academic Walk Throughs based on current professional development in the science of reading.