

## **Cheatham County Schools**

### **Foundational Literacy Skills Plan**

**Approved: May 23, 2021**

**Updated: June 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**

Cheatham County Schools use a foundational skills curriculum grounded in reading science and aligned to Tennessee ELA standards as approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. This curriculum uses foundational skills as the primary form of instruction and has a designated block of time (60 minutes daily) for foundational skills instruction in grades K-2. This instructional time includes activities that build phonological awareness, phonics practice, and fluency practice in addition to comprehension and vocabulary work (“word work”). During that instruction, teachers explicitly teach a sound, the students practice the sound aloud (learning how to produce pure sound), the teacher models writing the sound, the students refer to their individual code chart on which they write the sound. Students apply the skill in independent practice (small group or individual).

For example, in first-grade unit 3, week 2, the focus skill is r-Blends. Students will learn/practice phoneme blending, blend and build words, practice spelling and dictation with r-blends. Students will have the opportunity to further their learning in small groups by reading decodable text aligned with the sounds taught in explicit instruction.

Our improvements for SY2024 year will be continued professional development during the summer, collaborative planning meetings, and district-level professional development throughout the school year.

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

Cheatham County School District has an integrated literacy block for grades three (3) through five (5) grounded in science of reading and aligned to Tennessee ELA standards. Our curriculum materials are selected from those approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. During the integrated ELA block that meets an evidence-based approach to applying foundational skills within daily lessons, our students receive a total of 85-90 minutes of ELA instruction. Although the daily schedule is not the same at each school, 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. Our adopted curriculum also engages students in work around

fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills are not taught in isolation, but are embedded within the lesson to ensure continuity, cohesion, and connection.

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

Benchmark Advance

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

Benchmark Advance

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

Beginning with SY2024, The CCSD will use aimswebPlus as the universal screener for reading. We give universal screening assessments three times a year, in the Fall, Winter, and Spring. We also use it for our progress monitoring in Tiers II and III of RTI<sup>2</sup>. The screener is listed in the Tennessee RTI<sup>2</sup> framework manual as a compliant curriculum-based measure.

### **Intervention Structure and Supports**

In the fall, students are given a universal screener (aimswebPlus) to determine which students have a significant reading deficiency or are “at-risk”. Our school level data teams (grade-level teachers, counselors, school psychologists, and principals) review universal screener data to determine which students score below the 25th percentile. Those students who are at risk for reading deficiencies are tentatively classified as in need of Tier II or Tier III instruction. Students who are tentatively classified as needing Tier II or Tier III interventions are given a diagnostic/survey assessments to determine specific deficits. 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. Our adopted ELA curriculum 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 intensive, strategic interventions (such as 95 percent Group) become an option. Data teams meet every 4 ½ weeks to determine if a change in the intervention the intervention is needed. The data team also looks at other variables (attendance, engagement, student history) as part of the decision-making process before a change is made to the programming or teacher.

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 additional survey level assessments 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 95 Percent Group, a research-based supplemental program as intervention for students with characteristics of dyslexia. Our district notifies families of students who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia. Families are notified through the Progress

Monitoring Reports that the 95 Percent Group curriculum is used to support those students, as it is aligned with the International Dyslexia Association's elements of effective reading instruction for students with dyslexia. The program is also characterized as explicit, systematic, sequential, multi-sensory, phonics-based instruction aligned to meet the individual needs of students.

Intervention takes place daily during a grade-level time in each school's master schedule designated exclusively for RTI. When students are in their RTI groups, they work on activities and tasks that bridge gaps in their specific skill of need.

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

In Cheatham County Schools, parents are notified via Home Literacy Report letter if their children (1) score at or below the 15th percentile on the universal reading screener with a significant reading deficiency, (2) score between the 16th and 25th percentiles and are at risk for a significant reading deficiency, or (3) score between the 26th and 40th percentiles with a possible risk for a significant reading deficiency. Letters are sent home immediately after each universal screening for reading, three times a year. We have a letter for grades K – 3 and a letter for grades 4 – 8. Students' scores are communicated in parent-friendly language that provides a clear explanation of student skill gaps and the depth and extent of student needs. We explain the importance of being able to read on grade level by the end of 3rd grade. The parents are told what intervention – if any – their student will receive and the amount of time each day the student will receive intervention.

We also recommend activities that parents can do at home with their children to support the area of deficit. Parents are provided additional resources, including a link to the free early reader decodables (in the K-3 letter), a link to the videos that target foundational skills for students in grades Pre-K-2 (in the K-3 letter), suggestions of ways to support their child's literacy skills at home, and the Dyslexia Overview for Parents pdf provided by the Tennessee Department of Education and STEP, if appropriate. We also post these resources on our district website.

Parents are subsequently notified of their child's progress, or lack of progress, approximately every 5 weeks after data team meetings. In the parent progress report, student progress monitoring scores are shared. Data teams note any changes being made if the child is not showing sufficient progress as evidenced by progress monitoring and universal screening data. Additionally, the ELA curriculum contains parent letters in the younger grades that outline the foundational skills and knowledge domains for the coming week that will inform and equip parents to work with the child.

### **Professional Development Plan**

In compliance with the Tennessee Literacy Success Act, CCSD educators holding a license with an endorsement that allows them to teach reading in grades K-5 will complete at least one approved foundational literacy skills course by August 1, 2023. Additionally, teachers will engage in collaborative planning with foundational literacy for ongoing job-embedded professional development.