

## **Hamilton County Schools**

### **Foundational Literacy Skills Plan**

**Approved: May 26, 2021**

**Updated: February 27, 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**

Kindergarten through second grade students spend a minimum of one hour in foundational skills instruction daily. This is known as our “Skills Block” in our state approved EL Education curriculum. Whole-group foundational skills instruction is 15 minutes daily. In the remaining 45 minutes, students receive small-group instruction and complete independent work stations based on their independent reading level and focused on building foundational skills. Throughout the course of this hour, students receive explicit instruction and independent practice every day in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

According to our curriculum, EL, “The K-2 Reading Foundations Skills Block is a one-hour block that uses a structured phonics approach, grounded in the Phase Theory of Dr. Linnea Ehri, which describes behavior related to the types of letter-sound connections students are able to make as they learn to read and write. As such, the Skills Block is meant to ensure that, by the end of grade 2, students acquire the depth of skills they need in the Reading Foundations standards to navigate grade-level text independently. The lessons and assessments explicitly address the Reading Foundations standards, as well as some Language standards associated with spelling and letter formation.”

We plan to focus professional learning for K-2 teachers on the Skills Block. We will use the training received from Reading 360, the Foundational Skills Training to align to the EL Education curriculum and strengthen teachers’ knowledge and mastery in foundational skills. EL Education provided a correlation document to align their curriculum to TN State Standards. As a district, we have provided teachers with additional training and guidance on ensuring all lessons are aligned to TN State Standards.

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

For students in grades 3-5, the ALL Block (Additional Language and Literacy) in EL Education focuses on morphology and vocabulary, additional work with complex texts, reading and speaking fluency, accountable independent reading, and writing practice. This includes time spent working on grammar and spelling within the context of writing. Within the 60 minutes daily ALL Block rotations, students experience explicit supports in fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension through flexible grouping designed to address individual students’ needs. The daily grouping within ALL Block is

heterogeneous (independent work stations) and includes a 20-minute teacher guided instructional rotations that are differentiated for different levels, including English Language Learners (homogenous). ALL Block is one hour a day and the rotations last for six weeks at a time, so that all students get through the entire rotation. This time includes “flex days” built into the schedule each week. Flex days can be used for additional practice, writing, reteaching, completion of work, and/or assessments.

This summer, teachers in grades 3-5 have the opportunity to participate in the state’s Foundational Literacy training. Building on learning from this training, district staff will strengthen the teacher’s understanding of the trajectory of foundational skills to further support students with gaps in decoding.

State assessment data and universal literacy screeners will identify students in grades 3-5 struggling with becoming proficient readers. These students will (be scheduled into/receive) 30 minutes of Tier 2 instruction daily to improve foundational reading skills. EL Education provided a correlation document to align their curriculum to TN State Standards. As a district, we have provided teachers with additional training and guidance on ensuring all lessons are aligned to TN State Standards.

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

Open Up - K-5 Expeditionary Learning

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

Open Up - K-5 Expeditionary Learning

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

We currently use iReady for our universal screener for grades K-2 and 4-5. Our third grade students are given the Tennessee Universal Reading Screener, aimswebPlus.

### **Intervention Structure and Supports**

In the fall, students are given a universal screener to determine his or her reading abilities. Our grade-level teachers and principals review universal screener data to determine which students score between the 0-25th percentile. Those students are classified as in need of Tier II or Tier III instruction. The universal screener is used to determine specific needs for students classified as Tier II or Tier III.

All students receive Tier I instruction while students in need of Tier II and III instruction receive an additional 30 minutes in their area of greatest deficit. Hamilton County Schools utilizes research-based options for reading intervention support for our students who are “at-risk” and/or who have been identified with a significant reading deficiency. Our recently 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. Progress monitoring takes place bi-weekly to assess student’s progress. If that intervention is not proving to be effective, more comprehensive, strategic interventions become an option. Data teams use progress monitoring

data to inform decisions about duration, material, and intensity changes when a student is not showing progress. These teams meet every 4 ½ weeks to determine if the intervention is effective or to determine next steps. The RTI team also looks at other variables (attendance, behavior) as part of the decision making process.

Our students receive explicit instruction in their area of deficit in small groups using research-based materials and strategies. These students are also screened to determine if they have characteristics of dyslexia. Students who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia receive interventions as outlined in the Say Dyslexia Bill using resources to meet the specific areas of need. Our district notifies families of students who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia. In our schools with the most need, we utilize programs such as SPIRE and Orton-Gilligham to provide an approach of systematic, explicit, sequential, and phonics-based instruction.

Buildings are required to submit a master schedule showing that RTI Intervention takes place daily during a grade-level time. Students in RTI groups work on identified deficits and gaps in grade-level standards and pre-requisite skill areas. For example, students who need instruction in comprehension may use close reading or other strategies related to knowledge-building to improve their ability to read grade-level text. For students who need fluency support, they may receive intervention using SPIRE, Orton-Gilligham, EL supplemental materials or Systems 44.

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

All K-5 students found to be “at-risk” for a significant reading deficiency or that have a significant reading deficiency based on the universal reading screener, will receive a letter notifying the family of the reading areas for growth and the extent of the student’s reading needs. These notifications will go out within one week of the school having results from the universal screener to all students scoring between the 0-25th percentile in reading.

This letter will notate the specific area(s) in which the student is struggling, the importance of 3rd grade reading proficiency, interventions occurring at the school, and provide the family with no-cost tips for supporting the child at home. The Home Literacy Report will go out after each universal screening window (three times a year for all students in grades K-5).

The district will also provide “Literacy Nights” throughout the district that are open to all families next year to educate our communities on reading foundational skills and how to best support these skills outside of the classroom at no-cost. In addition, eight of our K-5 schools will be included in the expansion of a Student Success Planning pilot this fall. The pilot trains schools on a model of needs assessment that combines academic data with holistic screeners to customize support for each student. Individual student connections to community partners are chosen based on a curated list of Out of School Time providers who have been vetted based on use of quality indicators of success and membership on a community panel focused on alignment to shared goals and measures. During the pilot year, a Student Success Planning interface will be added to the parent portal to engage parents around student strengths and challenge areas as well as goals and remediation strategies.

## **Professional Development Plan**

All teachers in Hamilton County must understand how to teach students how to read. Our Foundational Literacy Skills PD Plan includes training every K-5 elementary teacher and administrator in foundational skills over the next two school years.

Through the state's Reading 360 training, a representative from each grade level at each elementary school will participate in this training, as well as, every K-5 principal in the district. The training has also been offered to every K-2 teacher, K-5 ELL teacher, and K-5 assistant principal in the district that would like to attend. During the in-person training, TNTP presenters will make connections to the Expeditionary Learning curriculum and share ways for how to support all learners through foundational skills instruction.

Following Reading 360 training, attendees will be responsible for participating in PLCs at the school level supported by their building level instructional coach and district support staff. The training and subsequent, ongoing support sessions will be provided by TNTP.

By the end of summer 2021, there were approximately 560 K-5 teachers and administrators trained through Reading 360. Hamilton County Schools served as a host district and used local schools as the location of the sessions. Teachers received a \$1,000 stipend for completing the two-week professional learning experience.

The remaining educators will be trained over the subsequent school years, with TNTP as our partner training provider. Next summer, we will focus on additional foundational skills training through enforcing and adding to the repertoire of those who attend this year, and ensuring that any teacher not trained this summer will receive training next summer.

## **Additional Information about this Foundational Literacy Skills Plan**

We have also created a Foundational Skills FAQ that we will continue to add to for our school leaders.

You can access with this link:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1916vf-5YGbaOkFpO9KYF8mbAhzpTYxflhc8o55Kjx\\_/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1916vf-5YGbaOkFpO9KYF8mbAhzpTYxflhc8o55Kjx_/edit?usp=sharing)