

Houston County Schools

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Approved: May 27, 2021

Updated: October 31, 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

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades K-2

Houston County School District uses Benchmark Advance's reading series, which was one of the textbooks and instructional materials on the list approved by the State Board of Education and include complete alignment to foundational skills standards. Benchmark Advance teaches foundational skills in the shared readings and phonics mini lessons which are grounded in reading science and designed around the research of Wiley Blevins. The curriculum focuses on the foundational skills as the primary form of instruction and utilizes a systematic and explicit built-in spiral review daily, allowing for frequent application and practice of skills in reading. In grades K-2, a one-hour block of time is built-in specifically for foundational skills instructions each day. In all, Houston County Schools have literacy blocks in K-2 that range from 100 - 145 minutes daily. The foundational skills instruction (45 minutes) contains evidence-based methods of teaching students to read and includes activities and practices that teach the following foundational skills:

- phonemic awareness (recognize rhyme, syllable blending, phoneme isolation, phoneme categorization, phoneme blending)
- phonics/word recognition (identify individual letter sounds, decode regular words, decode words with common rime families, identify sounds for letter combinations, decode one-syllable words with letter combinations, identify common spellings for long and short vowel sounds, know and apply final -e conventions, read words with r-controlled vowels, read words with inflected endings, read words with prefixes and suffixes, read two-syllable words with various syllable types, read multi-syllable words, and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis in text)
- fluency (rate and pausing, expression, intonation)
- print concepts (directionality: left to right, top to bottom, page to page, features of a sentence; spoken words are represented by written language; words are separated by spaces; recognize and name all letters of the alphabet)
- vocabulary (ask and answer questions about unknown words in a text, identify real-life connections between words and their use)

The scope and sequence is sequential, however; understanding that students need four to six weeks of review, Benchmark's curriculum spirals in order to ensure students have the opportunity to review, practice, and apply their learning.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

Our district adopted Benchmark Advance's reading series, which was one of the textbooks and instructional materials on the list approved by the State Board of Education and includes complete alignment to the foundational skills standards. Benchmark Advance utilizes an integrated literacy block for grades three through five which is grounded in the science of reading research as well as the research of Wiley Blevins. In grades 3-5 a 50 minute block of time is built into the literacy block to meet the evidence based approach to applying foundational skills within daily lessons of at least 30 minutes. In all, Houston County Schools have literacy blocks in 3-5 that range from 95 - 85 minutes daily. In grades 3-5 the foundational skills lessons morph into word study lessons, or how words work. These lessons begin by teaching phonics to support intermediate readers decode multisyllabic words. They also explicitly teach lessons on prefixes and suffixes, Greek and Latin root words, as well as morphology and the six syllable types. Students learn a specific skill and then apply it to a familiar text in a mini lesson. Grammar, spelling, and writing skills are embedded within lessons rather than in isolation. Collectively, all of the lessons include components for building knowledge; additionally within the lessons fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills are embedded rather than taught in isolation to ensure continuity, cohesion, and connection.

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 RTI² and Say Dyslexia requirements.

Renaissance Learning's STAR Literacy Suite is our universal screener for grades K-5 and is on the state approved list. The screener complies with RTI² and Say Dyslexia requirements and is used to assess reading at the beginning, middle, and end of the year for grades K-5.

Our district also administers the TN Universal Reading Screener (aimswebPlus) to students in third grade for the Spring Benchmark.

Intervention Structure and Supports

Intervention Structure and Supports

At the beginning of the year, all students are given a universal screener (STAR Early Reading or STAR Reading) to determine which students have a significant reading deficiency or are at-risk. The school's Data Team reviews the screener results as well as any classroom performance, TCAP

results, prior intervention outcomes, and teacher observation data available for each student to determine which students score between the 0-25th percentile. Those students demonstrating need are classified as in need of Tier II or Tier III instruction. Students are then placed in small groups and provided daily specific research-based interventions based on their individual skill deficit needs.

Students who are placed in Tier III receive the most intensive interventions and explicit instruction in their area of deficit in small groups daily and are progressed monitored every two weeks. Students who are placed in Tier II receive interventions and explicit instruction in their area of deficit in small groups daily and are also progress monitored every two weeks.

As noted on both elementary schools' master schedules, intervention takes place daily during a grade-level time set aside specifically for RTI2. We use the Lexia program (both online and printable lessons), various skill-based activities, letter naming, letter sounds, phoneme segmenting, word reading fluency, passage reading fluency, or reading comprehension based upon individual student needs, as well as book studies with the 4th/5th graders. We have the Wilson Reading program available, if needed, for Tier III students who do not make progress with our other supports. The other supports are utilized with both Tier II and Tier III just at different levels, extended time, etc. We are very student specific in our skill-based activities.

Our school-based data teams meet every 4 to 4.5 weeks to evaluate student data and determine their progress. The team makes a collective decision to either continue the intervention, change the intervention, or change Tier placement altogether.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

Houston County schools notify parents in grades K-5 if their child is "at-risk" for or has a significant reading deficiency (as evidenced by students scoring in the 0-25th percentile) immediately after the schools complete the fall universal screening. 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. The parents are told what intervention their student will receive and the amount of time each day the student will receive services. This is coupled with a description of the importance of being able to read by the end of 3rd grade.

The district defines how students are assessed and what a "significant reading deficiency" means. Parents are notified of their child's progress, or lack of progress, after the first 4 ½ week data team meetings. In the parent notifications/communication, data teams note the intervention(s) and any changes being made if the child is not showing sufficient progress as evidenced by progress monitoring and universal screening data as well as recommended activities (that do not require purchased resources) that will support students in the area of deficit (activities are not tailored by child, but . These communications go out to parents who have students in grades K-3 three times a year and are shared in grades 4 and 5 annually.

In addition to the above, our Benchmark Advance curriculum contains parent letters that outline the foundational skills and knowledge domains for the coming units. These letters help families support

their child's learning by providing simple activities that they can do at home to reinforce the skills being taught in the classroom.

Professional Development Plan

Professional Development Plan

Teachers in our district will participate in the free and optional Reading 360 Early Literacy Training series developed by the Tennessee Department of Education. Our plan for providing professional development for all K-5 teachers is as follows:

April-June 2021

All K-5 teachers will engage in Week 1 of the Early Literacy Training series, asynchronously. This training will focus on foundational reading development and instruction and is grounded in a phonics-based approach. We will ensure that participating educators earn a completion certificate prior to starting Week 2 work in July.

July 2021

Our district has registered for the cohort-based in-person training offered as Week 2 of the Early Literacy Training series for all teachers in grades K-2nd. We have also registered teachers in grades 3-5 as well as some interventionist, special education, and PreK teachers. This week will emphasize practical classroom application of research findings around strong instruction in phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics fluency, and vocabulary.

In conjunction with the Reading 360 Early Literacy Training Series, our district is working with our CORE Literacy Team to develop a "Reboot" for our High Quality Instructional Materials due to COVID 19 derailing all of our plans for rolling out the new materials last year. During our July inservice week we are planning two days of professional development to address the district vision for excellent literacy instruction and the roll our HQIM play in meeting those expectations. We will also focus on unit level prep as well as lesson level prep.

Throughout the year our PreK-5th grade teachers will receive the following literacy professional development: PLCs, focused Professional Development from district leaders, vendor, and Academic Walks using the IPG.