

Ivy Academy: Skillern Elementary

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Approved: December 1, 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

Ivy Academy's Skillern Elementary uses Literacy Essentials, published by Access Literacy, as our foundational literacy skills curriculum. We received a waiver to use this program when our charter was approved. This program develops foundational literacy skills, with a focus on “phonemic awareness, orthography/spelling, reading with fluency and comprehension, and writing and grammar.” The program is designed to develop a strong foundation that will not only help students become fluent readers, but also spellers and writers. The foundations of English are developed through introducing students to the 72 phonograms and their rules. This begins with phonograms 1-26 in Kindergarten, and students begin learning to spell basic code and advanced code words throughout the year. In daily lessons, students learn to encode, recode, and decode spelling words, building upon their understanding of individual phonograms and how they related to each other. By combining phonemic awareness, orthography (handwriting), and an internalization of the phonograms and their rules, students begin to build upon a strong early literacy foundation and grow into fluent readers and writers.

The Literacy Essentials program is aligned to Tennessee State standards. From Kindergarten upward, there is a strong focus on print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, and word composition. Writing instruction involves lessons in the conventions of English grammar. In addition, the literacy curriculum and associated readers promote reading accuracy and fluency, as well as vocabulary acquisition. All of these elements are directly in line with Tennessee State standards for elementary school students.

Our master schedule outlines the number of minutes devoted to foundational literacy skills each day (45 minutes). In Kindergarten, students learn these skills during a 75 minute block. This is a 90 minute block in 1st and 2nd grade. In addition, students engage in punctuated practice throughout the day as they rehearse the phonograms and their rules.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

Currently, our school serves only K-2 students. The Literacy Essentials program will continue into 3rd grade with a continued focus on orthography and grammar.

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2

Waiver: Literacy Essentials

Our charter agreement has been provided which specifies that the literacy curriculum outlined in the charter application was approved for use.

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5

N/A We currently only serve K-2 students.

Additional Information

In addition to our Literacy Essentials program, students continue to develop reading fluency by Primary Phonics readers. These color-coded readers deepen phonemic awareness and fluency by focusing on certain consonant and vowel sounds across multiple series. Students practice reading these texts at school with partners, and also take them home to read with parents/guardians. Once students complete a set number of readings of each text, they move on to the next text in the series.

In addition to these readers, 1st grade students begin practicing both fluency and comprehension by moving on to McCall and Harby's Test Lessons in Primary Reading. This includes short readings and questions that build comprehension.

Universal Reading Screener for Grades K-5. This screener complies with RTI² and Say Dyslexia requirements.

In the 2022-2023 school year, we began using DIBELS 8 as a Universal Reading Screener. However, for the 2023-2024 school year, we adopted EasyCBM as our Universal Reading Screener for our K-2 students.

Intervention Structure and Supports

In the fall, all students are administered the Universal Reading Screener through EasyCBM. This allows for baseline data to inform teachers and RTI team members about the reading needs in the student body. In addition, teachers administer weekly assessments using the tools provided through the Literacy Essentials program. After this baseline data is collected, the RTI team, which consists of an RTI coordinator, exceptional education and classroom teachers, reviews the data to determine which students are "at risk" (falling in the 0-25th percentile). Based on this data, students are determined to be either in tier 2 or tier 3 category.

The Literacy Essentials program as a whole is designed as a Tier 3 program. Every student receives a level of systematic instruction that is designed for students who are struggling with reading skills and phonemic awareness, and for students with dyslexia.

All students work to master frequent spelling lists, which begins with basic code words, common phonograms, and spelling rules (such as rules for silent final “e”). Student progress is measured through spelling lists that are given as assessments weekly. All students receive instruction that is at grade level and engages them at a high level. However, in addition to the general classroom instruction, Tier 3 students are pulled into small groups (no more than 3 students) by the RTI coordinator for intensive instruction daily (45 minutes). During this time, the RTI coordinator uses data from teachers and classroom assessments to address skill gaps. For example, in the first grade, tier 3 students work to master spelling lists that have been adjusted for length and designed to focus on grade-level and curriculum driven skills. Tier 3 students work to master spelling for 10 targeted words that are chosen to meet students according to their specific skill gaps. In whole group instruction, the lessons are not modified. In RTI, targeted words are focused on. While at the Tier 1 level, students are assessed over 45-50 words at a time, Tier 3 students focus on shorter lists that are developed to build a strong foundation. As students master these lists, new phonograms are addressed through targeted lists and progress is monitored through weekly classroom assessments using these lists. Reading goals are established based on progress through readers.

Teachers work with tier 2 students in small groups during a designated time on the schedule each day for 30 minutes (see master schedule). This occurs while students are engaged in partner reading or a literacy lesson taught by an educational assistant. Tier 2 students are also working with shortened lists that are destined to target skill gaps and mastery of specific phonograms and spelling patterns. Every 4 weeks, the RTI team reviews progress monitoring data from classroom and RTI assessments in order to determine progress and determine the effect of interventions. Universal Reading Screener and Benchmark Assessment data are also helpful tools to determine progress.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

In order to notify parents/guardians about reading progress and any reading deficiencies, we use a variety of tools, including regular parent contact from classroom teachers. Parents are encouraged to practice spelling words and students bring their readers home to read with families as their progress is tracked on a daily or weekly basis. EasyCBM provides individual student reports, which can be sent home with students. Additionally, beginning after the 2nd screener window, parents are given a comparative report that outlines individual student growth and explains the role of the reading screener in the overall literacy program.

In addition, RTI tier 2 and 3 students will receive a progress letter at the end of each of the three screening windows (Fall, Winter, and Spring) to communicate progress, both in academic progress and in behavior during the RTI sessions (see sample parent letter). This letter is written in parent-friendly language, and is tailored to address the skill gaps of every student. Tier 2 and tier 3 instruction involves targeted spelling lists with phonogram patterns that are aligned with current student needs. Parents will be sent these lists to practice with their students, as well as readers that are aligned with skill gaps. In addition, we provide links to Literacy Essentials parent videos on our website to assist with at-home practice.

While we do not yet have 3rd grade students, we plan to emphasize the importance of 3rd grade reading levels through parent letters at the beginning of the school year and will develop a regular schedule for communicating progress and suggesting at-home interventions.

Professional Development Plan

Literacy Essentials is a phonics-based program with specific pedagogical procedures that require a thoughtful onboarding process for new teachers. Because of this, we offer a 3 day intensive training program to staff members over the summer. For the current school year, teachers attended these sessions between 9:00 and 3:00 from July 11-13. These sessions train teachers in every aspect of the literacy curriculum, including orthography instruction, phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, fluency, and vocabulary. For the 22-23 school year, this intensive PD program was taught by Melody Furno, one of the authors of the Literacy Essentials curriculum. As is explained on the Literacy Essentials site, Melody Furno is a veteran teacher who used “an Orton-based Method to train and consult teachers in literacy and tutor struggling readers for Columbus public schools.” For the 2023-2024 school year, this training was led by Amy Listro, who is the Lower School principal at Northwest Classical Academy in Kennesaw, Georgia. Amy Listro is a veteran teacher and trainer in foundational literacy skills using Literacy Essentials.

This training session is currently pending approval as an alternate course for Foundational Literacy Skills. In addition, teachers and administrators will undergo the Early Reading Training course through TeachALL (provided by the Tennessee Department of Education).

Throughout the school year, teachers follow the scripted Literacy Essentials curriculum, which continues to train teachers as they implement foundational skills. Teacher teams work collaboratively to plan and progress through the scope and sequence throughout the year. Observation and coaching conversations involve assessment of teacher effectiveness in these areas.