

Johnson City Schools

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Approved: May 12, 2021

Updated: June 30, 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

For students in grades K-2, Johnson City Schools utilizes HMH Into Reading, which is aligned to Tennessee ELA standards as approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. Students receive between 120-150 minutes of daily literacy instruction.

Students build knowledge through a series of successive modules (9 modules in K and 12 modules in grades 1 and 2), that target their diverse needs using whole-class instruction, teacher-led small groups, and options for building independent reading, student discussion, and student writing. Teachers guide children through meaningful experiences as they read texts of appropriate complexity, actively view and listen, explore vocabulary, and participate in collaborative discussions to support reading comprehension development.

HMH Into Reading also includes 45-60 daily minutes in grades K-2 to support children in building a strong foundation for literacy. Students engage in activities that develop alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, phonics, spelling, handwriting, recognition of high-frequency words, vocabulary, and fluency. Each grade level has a specific foundational skills systematic scope and sequence to use during explicit literacy instruction. During literacy instruction, teachers follow an alphabet knowledge instructional routine as the teacher says the letter name and sound, asks the children to repeat the name and sound, share classmates' names with that letter name and sound, models the handwriting stroke for both the upper- and lower-case letter, and then asks students to apply the skill in small groups or during independent practice. Teachers also access articulation videos which support students to correctly pronounce each letter sound. Additionally, phonological awareness lessons engage students in practice with identifying, blending, segmenting, and manipulating sounds in oral language.

As students progress from alphabet knowledge into reading words, teachers use the blending sound-by-sound routine to display a word on the letter cards in order, slide the second letter over, and then slide the third letter over. This routine is explicitly taught with the whole class or small groups to blend words with a target short vowel, consonant digraph, trigraph, blend, or long vowel spellings and to model precise and consistent hand motions to blend words. In addition, students have the opportunity to practice and apply their skills as they work with words to build independence by building, spelling, and writing words through Know It, Show It activities.

Furthermore, students are provided opportunities to practice reading using Start Right Readers, which are decodable texts aligned with learned sound-spelling and high frequency words taught in explicit instruction. They are also used for fluency practice.

Improvements for next year include: 1) provide teachers with opportunities for collaboration regarding student data to inform teaching practices and 2) provide teacher collaboration for unit- and lesson-level preparation to meet the literacy needs of all students.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

Johnson City Schools has an integrated literacy block for grades three through five anchored in the science of reading and aligned to Tennessee Academic Standards for English Language Arts. Our curriculum materials, Benchmark Advance, have been approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. Students receive between 90 and 135 minutes of daily literacy instruction.

Each grade level engages with ten units designed to build world knowledge from strands that are consistently mapped across grade levels with a vertical progression of topics and essential questions. Students listen to, read, think about, discuss, and write about culturally responsive texts.

Daily instruction includes ten minutes of reading aloud rich, complex texts to model fluency and build students' listening comprehension. For 15-30 minutes each day, students participate in metacognitive, comprehension, vocabulary, word study, and grammar/language mini lessons designed to provide them with the skills and strategies needed to be proficient readers. Teachers meet with small groups of students for 20-45 minutes each day to scaffold reading behaviors, reinforce strategies, and build fluency. They ensure that all students read independently to build volume and stamina. Teachers confer with students on their text selections and application of strategies. In addition, students participate in daily 15-minute writing mini lessons. Students are then given time for independent writing while teachers meet with small groups of students who have similar writing needs.

The following is an example of a foundational literacy strategy that our teachers use to help students read larger words.

Model: Write or highlight a multisyllabic word in a sentence, underlining the target word. Guide students through the steps of the Reading Big Words Strategy to read the word.

1. Look for any common word parts at the beginning of the word, such as prefixes (un, re-, dis-).
2. Look for any common word parts at the end of the word, such as suffixes (-ing, -ed, -ly, -ful).
3. Look at what's left—the base word. Use knowledge of spelling patterns and syllable types to read it.
4. Sound out and blend together all the word parts (prefix, base word, suffix).
5. Say the word again quickly. Finally, check the word in the sentence to see if it makes sense.

Practice: Guide students to use the strategy to decode multisyllabic words as they read. Discuss with students which steps of the strategy helped them the most.

Extend (Read, Build, Write): Have students build words they struggled with using syllable and word part cards (e.g., re-, new, -ing), then have them write the words. Work with students to write a sentence with each word to confirm meaning.

Benchmark Advance phonics program's scope and sequence is developed to progress from easier to more complex skills, separate the teaching of confusing letters and sounds, and contain a built-in review and repetition cycle to ensure mastery of taught skills so students can transfer them to all reading and writing demands.

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt - K-2, 4-5 Into Reading, Tennessee

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.

The JCS universal screening process gives state-approved screeners three times a year in K-5. We use the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (**DIBELS**) tests to assess K-1 Reading. This includes tests in First Sound Fluency (FSF), Letter Naming Fluency (LNF), Letter Sound Fluency (LSF), Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF), and Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF-Acc and NWF-WRC) to assess decoding, phonics, and phonemic awareness skills. We use the DIBELS Word Reading Fluency (WRF), Text Reading Comprehension (TRC), and Oral Reading Fluency (ORF-Acc and ORF-WRC) to assess decoding skills, reading fluency, reading accuracy, and reading comprehension.

We use **EasyCBM's** Multiple Choice Reading Comprehension (MCRC) and Passage Reading Fluency (PRF) to test reading comprehension, fluency, and accuracy in grades 2, and 4-12.

For our 3rd grade students, we use the **Tennessee Universal Reading Screener**, AimswebPlus.

All students who fall below the 26th percentile and/or are determined to be at risk for a significant reading deficiency are given follow-up screeners and survey-level assessments to identify individual skills to be targeted in intervention. The Phonics and Word Reading Survey (PWRS) is used to find specific areas to work on and characteristics of dyslexia in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, sound/symbol awareness, alphabet knowledge, decoding, encoding, and rapid naming.

These tests, along with other sources of data, help the RTI team determine tier placements, starting points, and individualized skills to work on in Tier II or III groups using the Phonics First, Seeing Stars, or Guided Reading programs. The team creates individualized programs of instruction for students using these research-based frameworks. Results and decisions are shared with parents immediately and are often made with parent input.

We would like to use the state universal screener in the future, and are eagerly awaiting the announcement of the state option before finalizing that decision.

Intervention Structure and Supports

In accordance with the RTI Framework, all students are universally screened three times a year in K-5. The RTI team reviews universal screening scores below the 26th percentile on DIBELS, the Tennessee Universal Reading Screener, and EasyCBM, as well as other sources of data, to determine which students are at risk for, or have, a significant reading deficiency. These students are put in Tier II or III intervention groups after their parents are contacted. They are given the Phonics and Word Reading Survey to determine specific deficit areas to work on and to screen for characteristics of dyslexia. Students receive daily, small group intervention that addresses their specific skill gaps for at least 30-45m in Tier II or 45-60m in Tier III, which increases in intensity or time and decreases in group size to reflect student need. These groups are progress-monitored bi-weekly, fidelity-checked often, and discussed during monthly RTI meetings.

Growth is determined in these RTI team meetings by analyzing multiple sources of data, including progress monitoring results, fidelity checks, classwork, and perceptual data including observations of students in a variety of settings (classroom, special services, etc.). This information helps the team to decide how to best modify intervention instruction and materials to meet the fluctuating needs of the student. For example, if a student is not growing in a Tier II group using the Guided Reading program, they may be switched to a Tier III group using Phonics First after a period of time (usually around 4 data points) in which the team implements strategic changes (i.e.-smaller group, additional time, change in teaching style or activities) designed to better meet his/her needs. This information is shared with parents and other stakeholders at least monthly to best support the student in a variety of settings.

Our program builds foundational reading knowledge in a systematic and sequential way to teach students phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. We build from letter sound knowledge and word building, to decoding and analyzing high level text in a variety of settings and modalities. Each step is taught explicitly and cumulatively, using the research-based, dyslexia-specific activities from Orton-Gillingham's Phonics First Program, Lindamood-Bell's Seeing Stars Program, or Jan Richardson's Next Steps in Guided Reading. These programs address every aspect of dyslexia-specific instruction noted in the Say Dyslexia Law, including phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, sound/symbol recognition, decoding, encoding, and rapid naming. Each reading concept is taught using a multisensory, cumulative, and systematic approach steeped in reading research. Students are taught to use a variety of reading strategies from these programs. Each student is given the specific tasks and type of questioning he or she needs to grow.

Additional supports include participation in summer programs, after-school learning camps, literacy nights with families, bookmobiles, online book access through Accelerated Reader and EPIC as well as free decodables to take home that align with phonics skills being taught. Community literacy programs are also available at community centers in neighborhoods with high populations of these students.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

Our district notifies K-5 parents immediately after the team has decided the student is at risk for, or has, a significant reading deficiency based on the universal screeners given 3x a year, follow-up screening scores, and other pertinent student data. The parents are told in clear, accessible language what type of intervention their child will receive and whom to contact for more information about the specifics of the intervention. Parents are notified if their child scores below the 26th percentile on screeners 3x a year in K-5. This letter details specific learning needs, programs and activities used to meet the needs, group specifics, and specific activities and resources they can use at home to help their child.

Parents of these students are notified via the monthly RTI progress report how their child is progressing and what changes are being made to intervention based on this data. In addition, we share specific skill gaps, strategies we are working on, and changes to group times or dynamics on these letters as needed. While we contact each parent of an intervention student at least monthly, we also collaborate with most parents more often than that. Parent conferences, phone calls, texting, video chats, and emails are all used as needed. During these additional conversations, we address any concerns they may have, share specifically how their child is doing in intervention, tell them about additional learning opportunities, and suggest ways they can help their child at home. These are vital to our partnership.

We have been notifying parents of students who were at risk of having a significant reading deficit for a decade. These letters explain their child's deficit area on the universal screener and the type and frequency of RTI intervention they would receive. Our letters include all the requirements of the Home Literacy Reports as evidenced in the uploaded documents.

If a student has characteristics of dyslexia we send a separate letter that details the targeted areas of deficit that align with these characteristics. This letter includes a section explaining the characteristics of dyslexia, parent resources, and ways to work with their child at home. This letter is sent immediately after we have a conversation with families about the findings, so all parents are well informed about their child's needs as they pertain to characteristics of dyslexia.

There are many other parent letters and strategies we use to ensure parents can easily remain active, informed, and engaged partners in their child's literacy growth. Each letter we send or conversation we have is translated for our Spanish speaking families. We enjoy getting to know our families during remote intervention groups, parent literacy nights, and other exciting school activities. Our RTI instructors zoom, call, and send personal notes and work to families with remote learners. These include instructions to help parents build reading skills at home. Our families are a vital part of our RTI teams. We work hard to build strong relationships with them that enhance literacy learning throughout life.

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 in partnership with TNTP. Our plan for providing professional development for all PreK-5 teachers is as follows:

April 2021 – Teachers in grades PreK through five (along with ESL, special education teachers, and elementary instructional coaches) will engage in Week 1 of the asynchronous Early Literacy Training series. 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. Participants will complete a summative assessment at end of the week to demonstrate their knowledge of the course’s content and objectives.

July 2021 – Our district has registered and will be a host site for the cohort-based, in-person training offered as Week 2 of the Early Literacy Training series for PreK through fifth grade teachers (along with ESL, special education teachers, and elementary instructional coaches). This week will emphasize practical classroom application of research findings around strong instruction in phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary. Teachers who complete Week 1 and 2 of training will receive a \$1,000 stipend. At the end of the week, participants will complete a summative competency assessment to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of foundational skills.

Additional Information about this Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Literacy coaches remain an important resource for the Johnson City Schools in providing job embedded staff development.