

Williamson County Schools

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

First Approved: May 14, 2021

Approved: June 26, 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

During the 2020-2021 Williamson County Schools instructional time exceeded the state minimum by providing our students with 60 minutes of foundational skills daily in addition to 90 minutes for knowledge instruction in kindergarten through second grade. Our instruction is aligned to the Tennessee state academic standards and is the critical content form of instruction in the primary grades. Explicit instruction and student practice in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension is provided utilizing the state approved and sponsored TN Foundational Skills program. Adhering to Best for All, which begins phonics instruction by starting with sounds first, then attaching those sounds to spellings. This synthetic phonics approach begins by teaching the most common or least ambiguous spelling for a sound (basic code spelling); later it teaches spelling alternatives for sounds that can be spelled in several diverse ways. The system is kept simple at first and complexity is added bit-by-bit as students gain confidence and automatize their reading and writing skills. All 150 spellings for the 44 sounds in English will be taught in an intentionally sequenced progression from Kindergarten through Grade 2.

The decision was made to increase instructional time to 90 minutes daily for foundational skills in kindergarten and first grade, thus reducing the knowledge instruction to 60 minutes. That change was based on observational feedback from all stakeholders including teachers, principals, and literacy coaches in addition to data such as aimsweb, and embedded foundational skills assessments. That additional time added to the foundational skills block will allow students the opportunity to apply their decoding knowledge through the reading and rereading of decodables as well as data-driven small group instruction as needed. Additionally, we applied what was learned during Week One and Week Two of the state provided instruction on foundational skills. We have maintained this allotted time and will continue this structure throughout the 2024-25 school year. Additionally, we purchased Geodes, decodables that are aligned with our knowledge-based curriculum, during the 2022-23 school year to provide students with additional support in both decoding and building background knowledge. Utilizing these decodables for independent and small group instruction provides students with opportunities to apply isolated skills in connected text.

With the 3rd grade promotion and retention law, we recognize the need to identify students earlier to ensure strong core instruction in phonics. After reviewing Spring 2024 Universal Screening Data, we identified a group of schools with higher needs in the area of first grade oral reading fluency. During the 2024-25 School year we will provide targeted assistance to these schools through a multi-tiered system of support. Through instructional rounds, professional development, and additional data check-ins, curriculum specialists will partner with these schools to increase the number of students reading on grade level.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

In grades 3-5, Williamson County Schools provides foundational skills instruction (30 minute minimum) embedded through a 90-minute integrated literacy block. Included are opportunities for fluency, comprehension, grammar, morphology, spelling, and writing. All instruction is aligned to the Tennessee state standards. Words their Way will be used to deliver foundational skills instruction. Additionally, we utilize Great Minds Wit & Wisdom to provide a rich foundation for vocabulary and grammar skills. Through the explicit use of these two programs, we are able to provide a comprehensive approach to literacy instruction for our students in grades three through five.

For example, our fourth-grade students are currently studying a module of Greek Myths. Modules begin with a study of art to teach students how to glean information from a type of text focused on an essential question. After that initial introduction, students activate prior knowledge and read texts in a variety of ways: read aloud, partner, small group, or independently. After readings, students frequently summarize the content, through a variety of instructional practices, unpack the most essential vocabulary “word work,” respond to a series of scaffolded questions, and write responses utilizing the grammar and writing skills embedded in the Wit and Wisdom modules. In all cases, evidence from the text is used to support their answer. Vocabulary lessons provide explicit support for vocabulary needed to access the complex text. Additional time is spent on word work using Words Their Way to continue to develop both encoding and decoding skills and competencies in our students.

Additional Information

Each summer we will continue to provide professional development and training to new and returning staff. These ongoing supports will provide consistency in the implementation of these materials as well as honing and revising teacher skillset.

The schools that had TVAAS data in 2022 and 2023 at a level 1 or 2 have the following actions taken to help improve student outcomes.

- 1- Targeted coaching for ELA teachers
- 2- District support for IPG visits followed by feedback and targeted support with specific next steps for administration, instructional coaches, and teachers.
- 3- The district elementary leadership team provides these schools with additional instructional leadership coaching.

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2

Great Minds Wit & Wisdom – Approved waiver

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5

Great Minds Wit & Wisdom

Supplemental Instructional Materials

Tennessee Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement K-2

Since our district has adopted Wit & Wisdom, an approved curriculum for ELA instruction in grades 3-5, we also utilize Words Their Way to supplement foundational skills. This allows us to address any gaps in foundational skills as indicated by our screening and diagnostic data. This instruction is embedded in our 90-minute ELA block. Additional reading opportunities are provided through a supplemental reading list, designed by Wit & Wisdom to build both background knowledge and reinforce skills taught within the module.

Universal Reading Screener for Grades K-5

Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (aimswebPlus) K-5

Williamson County Schools utilizes aimsweb as our universal reading screener to identify students at-risk in grades K-5. This screener is administered three times per year, fall, winter, and spring, as guided by the RTI² framework.

Supplemental Screeners

All students in grades K-5 are also screened using our universal dyslexia screener, which measures all areas required by Say Dyslexia Law and ILP-D (phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, sound symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding, and rapid naming).

Additionally, we included a spelling inventory to measure encoding skills. When a student scores below the 40th percentile on these universal reading measures, they are screened using the PWRS Assessment to identify specific gaps in decoding. If needed, additional survey level and/or grade appropriate measures will be administered to determine necessary intervention supports.

Intervention Structure and Supports

Williamson County Schools adheres to the guidance in the state's RTI² model to identify and support students identified as "at-risk" for reading deficiencies. In the fall, students in grades K-5 are given a universal reading screener (aimsweb). Based on a close review of the data provided from our universal screeners, grade level-teachers and building data teams meet to determine which students score below the 40th percentile. Students who demonstrate the need are identified as Tier II (16 – 40 percentile) or Tier III (0 – 15 percentile). Students designated to receive Tier II or Tier III instruction are given additional diagnostic assessments to determine the specific deficits to help building data teams assign students to a small group for intervention to target the most significant area of reading deficiency.

Students receive daily, small-group intervention beyond core instruction (30-45 minutes based on tier), targeting the specific identified reading deficit. Students identified for such intervention receive explicit, targeted instruction utilizing vetted resources as prescribed to address the specific gap in skills. (WCS has compiled a list of research-based options for reading intervention available to students who have been identified with a significant reading deficiency.) Intervention providers use diagnostic and placement assessments to tailor plans to meet the needs of RTI students, and closely monitor progress on a biweekly (Tier II) or weekly (Tier III) basis. Building data teams meet every 4 ½-6 weeks to determine if the intervention is effective or if a change is needed. Decisions made during data team meetings bring into consideration additional sources of data (attendance, engagement) before making changes such as pacing of the program, increased number of minutes, and/or change in program or provider.

In the fall, all K-5 students are given our universal reading screening measures. Students who fall below designated cut scores are given additional survey level assessments to screen for dyslexia. Following fall screening and school-level data team meetings, letters are sent to all parents of students who have been identified as a student in need of a dyslexic-specific intervention. This letter outlines the process for screening, plan for intervention (including the provider and times/schedule), specific area(s) of deficit the intervention will focus on, and access to resources for parents via the state of Tennessee's "Say Dyslexia" bill.

Under the TISA Act, additional screening for unique learning needs will support the identification of students with characteristics of dyslexia that meet the requirements for an ILP-D. This screening and identification will take place during fall, winter, and spring universal screening windows. Once a student meets ILP-D criteria and parents are notified and are in agreement with the plan, an ILP-D is written and submitted to TNPulse. This written plan identifies the dyslexic specific intervention needs of the student and will be provided by trained staff under the state's RTI² model.

Students in grades K-5 who have characteristics of dyslexia receive specialized instruction daily using the SPIRE program, which uses an Orton-Gillingham approach (language-based, structured, sequential, cumulative, explicit, and multi-sensory phonics instruction). Elementary students who have deficits in the area of fluency receive targeted interventions such as Read Live, Read Naturally or Six-Minute Solution, which include repeated readings with feedback. Making Connections and The Comprehension Toolkit are used to address the needs of students with a deficit in reading comprehension.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

Following each screening window (fall, winter, and spring) and school-level data team meetings, letters are sent to all WCS parents of K-5 students who have been identified as a student who should receive reading intervention to address a specific area of deficit. This letter/home literacy report sent to parents identifies the screening process, specific plan for reading intervention (including the provider and times/schedule), the area(s) of deficit the intervention will focus on, and access to no-cost resources and activities to support parents. The letter is accompanied by a report detailing the child's scores and outlines the specific gaps in the student's reading skills in addition to how their gaps will be supported. We provide information on the importance of reading proficiency by third

grade and information on the pathway to 4th grade. These home literacy reports are sent home to K-3 students three times each year and at least annually for students in grades 4-5.

For students who participate in reading intervention, parents also receive a report from aimsweb that details student literacy progress and the Reading Student Skills summary every 4 ½-6 weeks, typically at progress and end-of-the-quarter reporting times.

Classroom newsletters, family tip sheets, and school wide family reading nights are also used to provide information on the importance of reading proficiency by third grade as well as engage and encourage family participation in their child's journey toward reading proficiency.

Professional Development Plan

Our elementary curriculum specialist and key literacy coaches provided training for all general education and special education K-2 teachers on Foundational Skills in summer 2020 and followed up with coaching on implementation throughout the following school years.

WCS teachers participated in the Reading 360 Early Literacy Training series offered by the Tennessee Department of Education. New teachers will complete this training as well.

In addition to the state's early reading training, all new K-2 teachers will receive six hours of professional development in the area of foundational literacy. This training will be provided by the district during the summer as well as the beginning of the school year. A collection of exemplary phonics lesson videos will be curated on district ELA website. These videos will be used in ongoing professional development at the district and school level.