

## **Weakley County Schools**

### **Foundational Literacy Skills Plan**

**Approved: May 14, 2021**

**Updated: June 16, 2022**

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**

Weakley County Schools use the Benchmark Advance curriculum for literacy instruction in grades K-5. Benchmark Advance is grounded in reading science and aligned to Tennessee ELA standards as approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. The Benchmark Advance curriculum implements a 120-minute ELA block that includes knowledge building and foundational skills. This curriculum utilizes a block of time (30 minutes daily for K-2) devoted to instruction in foundational skills. This instructional time includes activities that build phonological awareness, phonics practice, and fluency practice in addition to comprehension and vocabulary work. During the instruction, teachers explicitly teach a sound, the students practice the sound aloud, the teacher models writing the sound, and then students apply the skill in independent practice (small group or individual). Students have opportunities to practice and apply foundational skills taught when using decodable texts and when writing during the writing block of the curriculum, all of which are aligned with the sounds being explicitly taught. Teachers have been provided training with our district created Writing Focus documents, that are based on the Tennessee Academic writing standards, to use as a reference to help them evaluate student writing for mastery of foundational skills being explicitly taught. The district Writing Focus documents offer support to teachers to determine where their students are performing on their writing, and how to support or enrich students based on where they are currently performing. If students are identified as having a deficit within their foundational literacy skills and score within the lowest quartile on the Universal Screener, they are eligible to receive explicit intervention instruction in combination with their classroom instruction, that targets their specific literacy deficit.

Our improvements for next year are grounded in the expansion of designated time for teachers to explicitly teach foundational skills and assess mastery of these skills. In addition to the foundational skills lessons within our district's Benchmark Advance curriculum, we will be supplementing our Foundational Skills instruction with 15 minutes of daily instruction from the Tennessee State Foundational Ancillary materials across grades PreK-2nd grade.

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

Weakley County Schools use the Benchmark Advance curriculum for literacy instruction in grades K-5. Benchmark Advance is grounded in reading science and aligned to Tennessee ELA standards as

approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. This curriculum utilizes an integrated ELA block that meets an evidence-based approach to applying foundational skills within daily lessons. Our students receive a total of 90 minutes of ELA instruction, with an additional 45-minute block allocated for small group instruction used to support and/or enrich students based on targeted areas of need. Although the daily schedule is not the same each day, all daily instruction includes components for knowledge-building and foundational skills that includes fluency, grammar, morphology, spelling, and writing for at least 30 minutes per day. The adopted curriculum also engages students in work around fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills are embedded within the lessons to ensure continuity, cohesion, and connection within each unit of study. Foundational skills instruction is embedded in all aspects of the 90 minute ELA block and is dedicated to developing students' holistic literacy approach to fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension coherently as recommended by research. Teachers have been provided training with our district created Writing Focus documents, which is based on Tennessee Academic writing standards, to use as a reference to help them evaluate student writing pieces to assess student mastery of foundational skills that are embedded in the curriculum. The Writing Focus documents provide guidance for teachers to support and/or enrich student learning based on their current writing performance. If students are identified as having a deficit within their foundational literacy skills and score within the lowest quartile on the Universal Screener, they are eligible to receive explicit intervention instruction in combination with their classroom instruction, that targets their specific literacy deficit.

### **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 RTI<sup>2</sup> and Say Dyslexia requirements.**

Weakley County Schools Prek-8th grade will use the Tennessee Universal Reading Screener.

### **Intervention Structure and Supports**

In the fall, students are given a universal screener (Aims Web PLUS) to determine which students have a significant reading deficiency or are "at risk". Each school has a data team that reviews the universal screener data 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 classified as Tier II or Tier III are given a diagnostic assessment (PASS or PWRS) to determine specific deficits in order to best assign students to a small group with an intervention that will narrow skill gaps. Students receive daily, small-group intervention for at least 45 minutes in their area of greatest deficit.

We have research-based options for reading intervention support available for our students who are "at risk" and/or who have been identified with a significant reading deficiency. Each data team has

an organized list of research-based options that can be used to support students in their specific skill deficit.

The data team will select the support best aligned for each student's deficit and provide the intervention teacher with that research-based option for their small-group instruction time. The data team will also provide detailed lesson templates for each intervention teacher that outlines the expectations for the small-group instruction based on the area of deficit their group is demonstrating. The templates are provided for each deficit area: Phonological Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Comprehension.

Data teams at each school meet every 4.5 weeks to determine if a change in the intervention or the person providing the intervention is warranted. The data team also look at other variable (attendance, engagement) as part of the decision-making process before a change is made to the programming or provider. All of these decisions are documented and filed for each student.

Our students receive explicit instruction in their area of deficit in small groups using research-based materials and strategies. These students are also screened using the survey level assessments (PASS and PWRS) to determine if they have characteristics of dyslexia. Students who do demonstrate those characteristics receive intensive Interventions as outlined in the "Say Dyslexia" law using programs that meet the Law's requirements. Our district notifies families of students who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia.

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

Our district notifies parents in grade K-5 if their child is "at-risk" for or has significant reading deficiency (as evidenced by students scoring in the 0-25th percentile) immediately after the district's 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.

Parents are subsequently notified of their child's progress, or lack of progress, after the 4.5-week data team meetings. In the parent notification/communication, data teams note 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 tailored by skill deficit generally). These communications go out to parents with students in grade K-3 three times annually and are shared in grades 4 and 5 annually.

Additionally, the ELA curriculum contains parent letters in the younger grades that outline the foundational skills and knowledge domains for the coming week that will inform and equip parents to work with the child. Families can better understand how to support their student(s) through questions about their texts and through an awareness of what foundational skills their child(ren) are learning.

### **Professional Development Plan**

Weakley County Schools has been implementing foundational skills work for many years. However, at the beginning of the 2020 school year, we targeted a "sounds first" approach by providing professional development through the Student Achievement Partners foundational skills mini course. During this year, through walk throughs, observations, and teacher survey feedback, we have observed the need for more intensive work around the science of reading. We implemented the TN Foundational Sounds First Ancillary Materials in our Pre-K program and noticed a huge gain in phonological awareness. We are continuing the work through our K-2 grades as well based on the progress of our Pre-K students. In the summer of 2021, our K-2 teachers will participate in the online Early Literacy Training Module provided by TDOE, while 3-5 teachers will complete this training next summer. Throughout the 2021 school year, we plan to apply the knowledge gleaned from this training to our Benchmark Advance curriculum to ensure our foundational block is being implemented with a science-based approach facilitated by WCS RTI Coordinator, Jessica Glasgow, who has been selected to facilitate Week 2 of Foundational Skills training by TDOE. Along with intensive professional development with foundational skills, we will also continue HQIM implementation work centered around TNTP's unit and lesson prep tools. Along with the science of reading and HQIM, teachers will receive professional development centered around data driven instruction with a focus on universal screener data, CASE benchmark data, and TCAP data to ensure learning loss is targeted and all students are receiving appropriate skills and standards remediation.

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

Weakley County Schools is committed to a Sounds First approach to foundational literacy. We will continue to strive to deliver science based literacy approaches during our ELA instructional block as well as RTI.