Memphis Shelby County Schools

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Last Updated: June 28, 2022

Approved: June 3, 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

Memphis-Shelby County Schools (MSCS) utilizes McGraw-Hill Wonders curriculum for grades K-2 Foundational Skills instruction. Wonders is a comprehensive, researched-based English Language Arts (ELA) program that aligns to TN Academic Reading Foundational Literacy Standards.

While Wonders incorporates key components of literacy that promote speaking and listening development, explicit phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, fluency, vocabulary acquisition, grammar, and writing tasks in addition to text comprehension, foundational skills instruction is demonstrated as the primary form of instruction—exceeding 45 minutes, daily. The MSCS K-2 ELA instructional frameworks allocate a 120-minute comprehensive literacy block that provides explicit, systematic instruction in phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary. Additionally, the curriculum embeds foundational skills in the vocabulary and comprehension lessons throughout the ELA block during whole group instruction, small group instruction, and literacy workstations.

Wonders utilizes evidence-based methods to teach foundational skills in grades K-2. Through the gradual release of responsibility, teachers engage students in explicit, direct whole group instruction, and they provide students with guided and collaborative practice with phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Teachers lead small groups of students in differentiated skills-focused lessons to meet their varied literacy needs. Literacy workstations are implemented to ensure students have multiple, varied opportunities to practice and apply foundational literacy skills and strategies collaboratively and independently.

For example, during whole group instruction teachers utilize toolkit resources such as word building cards to support students' development of sound awareness and letter sound correspondence. Teachers explicitly model and guide students in letter/sound practice with blending and segmenting CVC words. Students practice identifying, reading, and writing CVC words in and out of context.

During small group instruction, teachers work with flexible groups of students to address specific foundational literacy skill deficits, while the remaining students complete workstation task cards that are leveled to ensure appropriate practice and student success.

Our district's improvements for next year will build the capacity of K-2 teachers to confidently and competently implement evidence-based practices and high-quality literacy lessons that drive literacy growth and achievement.

Our improvements include (1) employing Specialized Education Assistants (SEAs) to provide instructional support to students in K-2 classrooms; (2) providing five, full-days of district-wide literacy-focused professional learning specifically for K-2 teachers; and (3) building the capacity of one teacher leader in every elementary school to support K-2 colleagues with evidence-based literacy instruction.

SEAs will provide instructional support to students in K-2 classrooms. SEAs will assist teachers with the daily implementation of learning goals and objectives by working with students to reinforce skills and concepts to advance students' literacy performance within and outside of the 120-minute comprehensive literacy block.

The Early Literacy Department will provide five full-day professional learning sessions to support K-2 teachers with transferring the science of reading research into instructional practice using the evidence-based ELA curriculum, Wonders.

Teacher leaders in elementary schools—Foundational Literacy Laureates—engage in monthly PD to build their knowledge of the science of reading research and practices. Laureates redeliver district-created presentations and provide instructional support to K-2 colleagues.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

Memphis-Shelby County Schools (MSCS) utilizes McGraw-Hill Wonders curriculum for grades 3-5 Foundational Skills instruction. Wonders is a comprehensive, researched-based English Language Arts (ELA) program that aligns to TN Academic Reading Foundational Literacy Standards.

While Wonders incorporates key components of literacy that include morphology, grammar, spelling, fluency, vocabulary, and writing in addition to text comprehension, foundational skills instruction is an integral form of instruction. The MSCS ELA instructional framework for grades 3-5 allocates a 90-minute comprehensive literacy block that provides explicit, systematic instruction in morphology, grammar, spelling, fluency, vocabulary, and writing in addition to text comprehension. Additionally, the curriculum embeds foundational skills (for a minimum of 30 minutes) in the vocabulary and comprehension lessons throughout the ELA block.

Wonders utilizes evidence-based methods to teach foundational skills in grades 3-5. Through the gradual release of responsibility, teachers engage students in explicit, direct whole group instruction to support students' fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Teachers lead small groups of students in differentiated lessons to meet their varied literacy needs. Literacy workstations are implemented to ensure students have multiple, varied opportunities to practice and apply foundational literacy skills and strategies collaboratively and independently.

Embedded vocabulary is provided alongside explicit instruction to maximize word acquisition and understanding. Teachers utilize an instructional toolkit of vocabulary strategies that students employ to tackle unfamiliar words. For example, teachers utilize the vocabulary visual cards to engage students in the Define/Example/Ask routine (cooperate- to work together to get something

done/I cooperate with my sister to clean our room/How do you and your family cooperate to get jobs done?). Teachers intentionally employ the gradual release of responsibility (GRR) model to ensure students receive explicit and direct whole group instruction, teacher-led small group instruction, and opportunities to become independent and critical thinkers and learners as they engage in collaborative discussions and quality literacy workstations.

Our improvements for next year are tailored to supporting teachers through on-going, professional development that will focus on utilizing high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) to ensure students are engaged in standards aligned literacy instruction. This would include support around maximizing the 90-minute comprehensive literacy block to ensure a balanced focus on comprehension and foundational literacy skills development during each component of the lesson (whole group, teacher led small group, and workstations). Teachers will be professionally developed by means of professional learning communities, CANVAS on-line modules, district-level Teacher Development weeks, and vendor led professional development opportunities. Additionally, we will ensure job embedded opportunities to collaboratively plan for effective instructional delivery.

Additional Supports

MSCS has outlined several strategies to drive literacy success for all students and support all identified schools, including leveraging support from TDOE and community partners to provide resources and support to teachers, students, and families.

- Design, customize, and facilitate professional learning aligned to Science of Reading (SoR) and Special Education (SpEd) & English Language Learners (ELL) best practices
- Foundational Literacy Laureates support K-2 colleagues around evidence-based literacy practices
- Employ Literacy Coaches to provide instructional coaching to K-5 teachers at identified schools
- Provide foundational literacy PD to SEAs to support teachers and students within the classroom at identified schools
- Provide iReady intervention and data analysis training to support with 4th grade tutoring
- Leverage SEAs to provide tutoring to students in grades 3-4 before, during, and after school at identified schools
- Leverage community partners to assist with providing training to SEAs
- Leverage community partners (i.e., Literacy Mid-South) to provide tutoring for 3rd grade students
- Leverage community partners (i.e., Memphis Teacher Residency (MTR) to offer college coursework to K-5 teachers to take the Praxis in pursuit of a Reading Specialist Certification.
- Leverage community partners to assist with training literacy coaches to provide coaching and instructional support to K-5 teachers
- Ensure completion of the Reading 360 Early Reading Training for all new leaders, teachers, and education assistants at identified schools
- District advisors and coaches facilitate collaborative planning and deliberate practice sessions at identified schools

- District advisors, coaches, school leaders, and Laureates co-plan, model literacy lessons for the identified schools
- observe and provide actionable feedback on K-5 literacy instruction with a focus on the identified schools

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2

McGraw Hill Wonders

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5

McGraw Hill Wonders

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

We administer the approved iReady Suite to our K-5 students as our universal reading screener.

We also administer the Tennessee Universal Reading Screener, aimswebPlus, to our 3rd grade students in the spring.

Intervention Structure and Supports

Curriculum Associates i-Ready intervention platform and Ready teacher toolbox are utilized to provide academic interventions (Tier II, Tier III, and At-Risk) for students in grades K-5. The i-Ready tool provides individualized learning paths for students and skills-based small group resources for teachers, targeting the following ELA domains: Phonological Awareness, High-Frequency Words, Phonics, Vocabulary, and Comprehension (Literature & Informational Text). The Tennessee Minimum Universal Reading Screener Matrix is utilized to ensure all required assessments are administered to all students. Students found to have dyslexia characteristics may meet criteria for an ILP-D if they meet criteria under TISA rule.

Following the administration of the i-Ready reading diagnostic, K-5 students are administered additional skills-based measures by way of the i-Ready literacy tasks as part of the universal screening, benchmarking, and screening for characteristics of dyslexia. Any student can receive additional screening to determine possible deficits and characteristics of dyslexia. Students displaying deficits in fifty percent or more of those grade-appropriate subtests identified in Tennessee Minimum Universal Screening Matrix, is the next data point that the school-based RTI[2] Data Team must consider prior to developing an ILP-D. The RTI[2] Data Team is able to move forward with initiating an ILP-D only if students meet both of these previously described requirements provided the parent and team agree that the student demonstrates characteristics of dyslexia. The following i-Ready components also assist in addressing components of a dyslexia specific intervention:

- Multisensory: i-Ready Instruction for reading engages students' auditory, visual, and tactile senses in many lessons. Audio support is available in all content. Audio and visual feedback reinforces correct responses and redirects students on any misunderstandings. Lessons incorporate visual cues—including color changes, bounce, and highlighting text—to help

students connect letters, word parts, and patterns to the corresponding sounds in words. Visual presentations within lessons include graphic organizers and pictures for reinforcing instruction, along with accompanying audio support.

- Explicit: The highly scaffolded lessons in i-Ready Instruction follow a consistent instructional strategy that begins with explicit instruction. During explicit instruction, students work through a tutorial that explains the topic or skill and calls upon students to access prior knowledge and models the skill in engaging real-world scenarios. Teachers can access small group materials to support explicit instruction during face-face small group time, via the Tools for Instruction and Ready Teacher Toolbox.

- Aligned to Deficit: The i-Ready experience begins with the in-depth Diagnostic assessment that identifies student's overall performance level in reading, by domain and subskill level. This ensures that online lessons in i-Ready Instruction, teacher-led instructional activities from the included Tools for Instruction lesson plans or the optional Ready Teacher Toolbox, and any existing instructional materials are targeted to students' specific skill deficits and instructional levels.

- Language Based: i-Ready vocabulary lessons and vocabulary tools for Instruction lesson plans include many opportunities for students to make sense of what they are reading. Practice includes decoding, encoding, and spelling patterns. Every lesson ends with an engaging text, where students are challenged to use what they learned to decode and make meaning, to deepen their understanding of what they are reading.

- Systematic and Cumulative: i-Ready Instruction is systematic, clear, and precise, with topics and skills that are carefully sequenced and broken down into small, essential components and taught individually. Upon completion of the Diagnostic assessment, i-Ready determines student performance level within each domain of reading and then automatically places students at the appropriate level within a logical sequence of lessons. Lessons are designed to help students master simple skills, before progressing to more complex skills, beginning at the student's functional level, and then allowing the student to progress to higher and more complex levels. The lessons from i-Ready Teacher Toolbox follow a consistent progression of skills and standards across all grade levels.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

i-Ready serves as the universal reading screener, and aimswebPlus serves as the progress monitoring tool. Information about how students score is regularly communicated with parents to bridge the connection between school and home. The RTI[2] Data Team reviews multiple sources of data to determine appropriateness of RTI[2] skills-based interventions. Student intervention plans are subsequently developed and monitored in PCG EdPlan. Parent communication is generated in EdPlan and disseminated to parents regarding initial intervention placement and monthly student progress within intervention. Data teams can develop Academic Support Plans for at risk students, using the plans to track supports and progress around specific literacy deficits.

Structures are in place for notifying parents of students with significant literacy deficiencies. For all students K-8, MSCS includes in the home literacy report (sent at least three times each year), the child's instructional reading performance level on the quarterly report card and provides the

student's iReady family report which offers additional information about reading performance along with literacy support suggestions and recommended texts. The home literacy reports for parents clearly articulate (1) the importance of being able to read by third grade, (2) student scores in parent-friendly language, (3) explanations of a student's specific skill gaps, (4) how the school will intervene and support students in their identified literacy skills deficits areas, and (5) no-cost activities for families to support learning at home. Parents also receive information on the pathways to 4th grade.

Parents of students in grades K-2 receive a quarterly literacy report which communicates the aforementioned information, as well as their child's progress toward the Literacy Success Act Criteria. The K-2 quarterly home literacy reports include the results of each administration of the universal screener, quarterly report card grades, and formative assessment scores.

Parents of students in grades 3-5 also receive a quarterly home literacy report. The 3-5 benchmark home literacy reports include the results of each administration of the universal screener, report card grades, and formative assessment scores. Samples of parent communication for grades K-2 and 3-5 are included in this plan.

Given the size of our district, it essential to use multiple communication methods with our families to ensure they understand the law and the 4th grade promotion pathways under Policy 49-6-3115(a)(1) for students in grade 3 with an achievement level of "approaching" or "below" on the ELA portion of the student's most recent TCAP test.

Throughout the school year, Memphis-Shelby County Schools will keep parents of 3rd and impacted 4th graders informed about the state's promotion law, its expectations for each grade, and the promotion pathways. This communication will take various forms, including home literacy report letters, emails, school-level parent meetings, and district-level parent meetings. Our district will host weekly virtual "ParTea About Literacy" meetings from December through March, providing parents with updates and addressing their concerns.

MSCS will host "radio talks" where parents could call in, ask questions, and learn about next steps. Parents can access information about the law, exemptions, and promotional pathways on our Literacy Commitment website. As we conclude the second year of implementing this law, we have found all these communication methods to be extremely helpful.

Professional Development Plan

Memphis-Shelby County Schools offers K-5 teachers yearlong foundational skills professional development opportunities aligned to the Tennessee foundational literacy state standards. Utilizing a phonics-based approach, the modules engage teachers in deep foundational skills training. Each module offers activities, engagement strategies, and support for fragile learners. Sessions are designed to support instruction in whole group, small group, and literacy workstations. They include phonological awareness, print concepts, phonics and word recognition, word composition, sentence composition, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

Teachers are required to demonstrate knowledge and competency through pre-and post-session assessments, quick checks throughout presentations, and classroom observations. Sessions are offered in-person and virtually via Microsoft TEAMS. Teachers have an opportunity to accumulate approximately 100 hours of foundational literacy professional learning, which includes TDOE's Early Reading Training.

The professional learning experiences will be provided by the MSCS Early Literacy Department, which is composed of literacy professionals possessing extensive knowledge in foundational skills content, standards, instructional best practices, and practical classroom strategies. The department has a proven track record of designing and facilitating PD, as well as supporting K-2 teachers in foundational skills instruction. They have engaged in professional learning experiences with LETRS, Orton-Gillingham, SAP Foundational Skills Modules, and TDOE's Early Reading Training.

In addition, our professional development plans include the Reading 360 Early Literacy Trainings
- Course 1 asynchronous
- Course 2 in-person June-July 2024

Additional Information about this Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Additionally, foundational literacy sessions are specifically designed for Foundational Literacy Laureates, K-2 Teachers, 3-5 Teachers, and Specialized Education Assistants. We also provide resources and professional development to parents/families, and community organizations. The goal is to leverage state, community, and district resources to positively impact the literacy landscape in Shelby County.