

University Schools of Memphis

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

First Approved: July 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

University Schools 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. This curriculum uses foundational skills as the primary form of instruction and has a designated block of time (120 minutes minimum to 150 minutes maximum) for foundational skills instruction in grades K-2. This instructional time includes activities that build phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics practice, and fluency practice in addition to comprehension and vocabulary work (“word work”).

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. During that instruction, teachers explicitly teach a sound, the students practice the sound aloud (learning how to produce pure sound), the teacher models writing the sound, the students refer to their individual code chart on which they write the sound, then students apply the skill in independent practice (small group or individual). 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.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

University Schools utilizes the McGraw-Hill Wonders curriculum for grades 3-5 Foundational Skills instruction. Wonders is a comprehensive, researched-based English Language Arts (ELA) program that aligns with the 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 demonstrated as the primary form of instruction. There is an allocated 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 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.

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2

McGraw Hill Wonders K-5

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5

McGraw Hill Wonders K-5

Supplemental Instructional Materials

Our district has adopted an approved curriculum for ELA instruction; however, we have chosen to supplement in several ways. Our district will use the Tennessee Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement to further address foundational skills in daily instruction. This supplement allows us to focus more deeply on the phonological awareness and advanced phonemic awareness skills that are crucial for success all the way through second grade. We use the daily sounds-first activities as our daily warm-up at our elementary school.

Universal Reading Screener for Grades K-5

i-Ready Suite K-5

Our district also administers the Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (aimswebPlus) to students in third grade for the Spring Benchmark.

Intervention Structure and Supports

In the fall, students are given a universal screener (iReady) to determine which students have a significant reading deficiency, scoring below the 15th percentile, or are “at-risk,” scoring between the 16th and 40th percentile. Students are screened three times per year in September, December, and May. Our grade-level teachers and executive directors review universal screener data and other student data to determine which students fall into these categories and need additional support. 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 to determine specific deficits 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 to our students who are “at-risk” and/or who have been identified with a significant reading deficiency. University Schools use the iReady Instructional Tool-Box to meet varied student needs. In addition, our adopted ELA curriculum contains an assessment and remediation guide in which teachers can find activities that directly address skill gaps. The curriculum has also developed an adaptive learning platform for grades K-5 that focuses on phonemic awareness, phonics, and structural analysis. They can tailor this to the needs of their RTI group of students. If that intervention is not proving to be effective, more comprehensive, strategic interventions (such as Making Connections and SPIRE) become an option.

Data teams meet every 4½ weeks to determine if a change in the intervention or the person providing the intervention is warranted. The data team also looks at other variables (attendance, engagement) as part of the decision-making process before a change is made to the programming or provider. 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 additional survey level assessments to determine if they have characteristics of dyslexia. Students who do demonstrate those characteristics receive intensive intervention as outlined in the Say Dyslexia Law using programs that meet the law’s requirements. Our district uses a research-based supplemental program as one intervention for students with characteristics of dyslexia. Our district notifies families of students who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia through an RTI Initial letter. Families are notified through the classroom teachers that specific interventions are being used, that are based on the Orton- Gillingham approach of systematic, explicit, sequential, phonics-based instruction and is considered a strong support for those students. Dyslexia resources, including those from TDOE, are posted on the University Schools webpage.

Intervention takes place daily during a grade-level time in the master schedule just for RTI. When students are in their RTI groups, they work on activities and assignments that make them stronger in that skill. For example, students who need instruction in comprehension may read a new text and answer scaffolded questions, all related to the knowledge-building unit they are studying in Tier I instruction.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

Our district notifies families in grades K-5 if their child is “at-risk” for or has a significant reading deficiency or is at risk of a significant reading deficiency immediately after the district’s schools complete the fall universal screening. Students’ scores are communicated in family-friendly language that provides a clear explanation of student skill gaps and the depth and extent of student needs. The families 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 and includes information on the promotion pathway to grade 4. The district defines how students are assessed and what a “significant reading deficiency” means.

Families are subsequently notified of their child’s progress, or lack of progress, after the 4 ½ week data team meetings. In the family notifications/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 families with students in grades K-3 three times annually and are shared in grades 4 and 5 annually. Additionally, the ELA curriculum contains family letters in the younger grades that outline the foundational skills and knowledge domains for the coming week that will inform and equip families 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

K-5 teachers and administrators in University Schools will be updated on the revised Foundational Literacy Skills Plan. New K-5 teachers will attend additional training about literacy instruction requirements, access to the district’s HQIM (Wonders), and how to access on-going professional development opportunities related to literacy instruction and intervention. K-2 teachers and literacy coaches will also review access to and materials available for the TN Foundational Literacy Skills Supplemental resources, as well as discuss ways to incorporate those materials. Teachers will meet in PLCs to collaborate around trends in student data, observed instruction, and effective teaching strategies. Any training provided by the department will be redelivered.

Our teachers have completed the Early Reading Training. A plan is in place for new teachers to our district to complete this training as well.