

## **Carter County Schools**

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Last Updated: September 20, 2023

Approved: May 7, 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**

Carter County uses a foundational skills curriculum focused on a sounds-first approach grounded in the science of reading and aligned to the Tennessee ELA standards as approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. Benchmark Advance lessons are utilized for at least 45 minutes of the students' foundational literacy block, which is the primary form of instruction. This instructional block includes activities that build print concepts and the alphabetic principle. Activities are built in that teach phonological awareness. Students are taught how to orally identify and manipulate the sound units of language within syllables, words, and speech. Phonics and word recognition are also incorporated in the ELA block. The teachers explicitly teach a sound with the students practicing the sound aloud. The teacher continues by modeling the sound. Students practice using their individual code chart where they write the sound. Students are then asked to apply the learned sound or sound pattern in a small group or individual setting. Fluency is additionally addressed in lessons. This allows students to practice reading a text accurately, quickly, and with expression. This practice builds stamina for reading complex and lengthy texts. The fluency aspect serves as a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. This practice of reading texts is developed within the student's reading growth. Vocabulary development is highlighted to ensure students can comprehend the text they are reading. Teachers allow students to have productive struggle to infer and realize the meaning of unknown words. Building knowledge is also provided through direct instruction to ensure better understanding of the student's passage. High frequency words are directly taught to enhance reading fluency. Prefixes, suffixes, and word parts are included in vocabulary instruction. Using these components of literacy allows comprehension, the goal of reading instruction, to occur. Teachers during their lessons use HQIM to engage in conversations about the text to develop the science of reading. Our classrooms consist of students' annotation of passages, and responding to questions that are rigorous concerning the text. Students must summarize, infer, reflect, support questions with evidence, synthesize meaning, and discuss ways the text contributes to the meaning and the reader's understanding of the passage. Teachers develop these strategies with high-level student work through conversation, questioning, and writing.

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

Carter County School District organizes our ELA instruction in an integrated literacy block for grades three – five. Our instruction is grounded in the science of reading and is aligned to the Tennessee ELA standards. Benchmark Advance was selected as the textbook for reading instruction and is an approved curriculum by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. Our students receive 90 minutes of ELA instruction in Tier 1. Students are introduced to complex and lengthy texts that build knowledge, in addition to providing practice using rigorous passages. Students practice using advanced decoding skills which include morphology practice to enhance decoding strategies to prepare students for understanding complex texts. Students exercise reading using strategies to increase their knowledge and performance in speaking, thinking, listening, reading, and writing utilizing complex texts which build both contextual knowledge and fluency.

During the ELA block, 30 minutes are allocated for evidence-based foundational skill instruction, which consists of embedded instruction and isolated skill practice. Isolated skill instruction in morphology is taught to allow students strategies to segment and blend decodable parts of multisyllable words and morphemes which can also be divided into meaningful word parts. The goal of this process is for students to receive accelerated advanced phonics instruction that will benefit them when they must break longer words into prefixes, suffixes, and based words to increase pronunciation and understanding of unknown words. Benchmark Advance curriculum engages students in work and support with fluency, vocabulary, writing, and comprehension.

These components of literacy are not designed to be instructed in isolation but are embedded within multiple lessons throughout the units. Utilizing these embedded foundational skills, students learn to develop their literacy skills within a natural learning process within an assigned text.

For example, weekly lessons would have the students' learning intention of understanding and completing rigorous tasks with character analysis within two separate texts. The instruction would begin with activating prior knowledge and reading the text either in a group or individual setting. The teacher would have the student unpack key vocabulary and teach needed background knowledge. Specific unknown words would be syllabicated noting key elements of the word that might lead to the meaning. Vocabulary practice would be in written form and high-level discussion within the lesson. Questioning would lead to understanding of the text/comprehension with the vital component of the learning connection to additional passages and real-world perspectives. Through building knowledge and reflection, students would write using text evidence. For example, if the students' learning goal was to develop an explicit character analysis, the writing task would be to compare the two passages and write an opinion essay about which passage revealed the characteristics of the main character the best, using textual evidence.

## **Additional Supports**

To support our schools and subgroups that scored a 1 or 2, Carter County Schools added extra staff members to support small group instruction and to help with student teacher ratio. Extra time was added to our daily schedules to support ELA instruction. TN ALL CORPS tutoring and partnership

with the Niswonger Foundation provided low- ratio high-dosage tutoring to our students during the school year. Summer school is provided to students needing extra intervention in ELA/ Foundational Skills. Also, extra money was spent on purchasing additional HQIM for all ELA classrooms and professional development focused on reading science.

### **Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2**

Benchmark Advance

### **Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5**

Benchmark Advance

### **Supplemental Instructional Materials**

Carter County Schools has adopted an approved curriculum for ELA instruction. However, we have chosen to supplement our K-2 ELA block with the Tennessee Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement. The Sounds First program is used as a daily warm up to engage our students to enhance our foundational skills instruction. This supplemental program is allotted a 45-minute/ 60-minute time per day to develop students' foundation in literacy. The Benchmark Advanced curriculum is utilized to supplement foundational skills and knowledge-based areas which will enhance students' ability to build capacity for students to decode and read to comprehend complex literary and non-fiction texts. This supplemental material resource allows our students the opportunity to further encounter and learn foundational skills daily within our ELA instructional teaching.

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

Our universal reading screener for students in K-5 is the Tennessee Universal Reading Screener, aimswebPlus.

### **Intervention Structure and Supports**

Carter County students are given a universal screener 3x a year to determine which students have a reading deficiency, scoring below the 15th percentile, or are "at-risk," scoring between the 16th and 40th percentile. Each school has "support teams" that are comprised of the school administrator, RTI<sup>2</sup> lead, Counselor, RTI<sup>2</sup> Staff members, classroom teachers, and other support areas. This team reviews the screener data to determine which students need Tier II or III instruction. Tier II or III students are then given survey level assessments to determine their specific deficit areas to group students for their small group instruction. Each school has an RTI<sup>2</sup> time for each grade-level built into their master schedule. Students receive 45 minutes small group instruction daily with a dyslexic researched approved curriculum. Interventions address specific skill gaps.

Our school support teams meet every 4 ½ weeks to determine if the intervention is working or if there is a need for a change in intervention or person providing the intervention. Other variables are looked at as well such as attendance, teacher input etc.

Carter County uses intensive dyslexic research-based interventions such as SPIRE, WILSON, FOUNDATIONS, and SEEING STARS. The intervention is chosen depending on the child's deficit. Deficits are determined through various survey level assessments. These survey level assessments are also used to determine if students are showing characteristics of dyslexia. Families are notified that their child is demonstrating characteristics of dyslexia.

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

Carter County Schools notifies K-5 parents or guardians by sending a letter to each student that is identified as having a significant reading deficiency either by scoring below the 15th percentile or between the 16th and 40th percentile as well as students who are scoring at or above grade-level. This letter is sent home immediately after each Universal Screener is completed, three times each school year. The letter includes the RTI<sup>2</sup> process, dyslexia information, the key areas that were identified by the Universal Screener (phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge, sound/symbol recognition, decoding skills, encoding skills, rapid naming) as well as links to resources for parents to use to support their student's learning at home. This letter is communicated in the family's home language and in an easy way for parents to understand. The letter continues to inform families of the tier of their student and the amount of time each day the student will receive intervention. Additionally, the plan provides information on the importance of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading proficiency and the 4<sup>th</sup> grade promotion pathways.

Families are provided with a progress report of their child's progress, or lack of progress, after the 4 1/2-week school team data meetings. The report also communicates any changes being made if the child is not showing sufficient progress through progress monitoring and universal screening data.

At the school level, letters are sent home frequently promoting reading and the importance of being able to read by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Each school is constantly in contact with families about supporting them with activities they can do at home to help with reading.

### **Professional Development Plan**

June / July Carter County School District will recommend Course 2 Reading 360 Early Reading Training for teachers in grades K-5 who have not already completed this course. Our teachers have completed course 1 of Early Reading Training, and a plan is in place for any new teachers to complete ERT course 1 prior to course 2.

August – TNTP will provide training on the overall process of the Benchmark Advance Curriculum to teachers that are new hires or existing teachers who are new to the K-5 ELA assignment.

August – Advanced Phonics Training will be completed for ELA teachers in grades 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grades.

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August – RTI<sup>2</sup> Leads in each school will participate in aimswebPlus training for the new screener that will be administered beginning 2024 – 2025.



August – May Carter County will continue to receive PD for teachers, principals, and central office staff provided by the TNTP contracted through the LIN grant. PD opportunities will be scheduled as needed.

September 13, 2024 – Central Office Staff and Grades 3rd – 5th Lead Teachers will participate in a Literacy Conference “Write Your Story: Plain Talk About Literacy” at Walters State Community College.

September – April Teachers will be engaged in monthly PLC meetings with Central Office staff for the purpose of unit planning. This will develop all literacy components and add reinforcement provided through data analysis from Principal TEAM evaluations and IPG ELA Walks.

December – Central Office Staff as well as teachers will attend the Title 1 Conference.