

Libertas School of Memphis

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Approved: May 29, 2021

Updated: November 13, 2023

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

Our literacy program has two evidence-based pillars:

- 1-Sound-based phonics to learn fluent decoding
- 2-Coherent background knowledge to support reading comprehension

Our curriculum is Dr. Maria Montessori's method, supplemented by Core Knowledge Language Arts, which are aligned to Tennessee State Standards - see attached detailed alignment. Montessori and CKLA complement each other in aims and means, guiding children to learn to read and to read to learn. Montessori and CKLA stress oral language, especially phonemic segmenting and blending. We feature nursery rhymes, poems and songs, and strengthen letter-sounds through multisensory instruction with sandpaper letters and "chaining charts." Sensorial works prepare children indirectly for print concepts and fine motor skills (e.g. pincer grip, circular articulation, left/right sweep and return) and work habits. Montessori stresses the "writing road to reading" - encoding as the corollary of decoding. Our instructional sequence of letter-sounds foregrounds the "basic code" of most likely representation of the 43 sounds in English so that children begin expressing their ideas - a motivational factor - with the movable alphabet, later transcribed into handwritten journals. Reading flows from writing, as children proceed through phonetically-controlled reading materials containing the spelling patterns they are learning along with true "puzzle" words, introduced based on frequency of use. Children learn letter-sounds and fluency starting with Montessori decodable card materials and proceeding through CKLA's readers. Montessori lessons teach successive parts of the "advanced code" of alternative spellings and "code overlaps" (different spelling patterns to learn the same sounds). We build comprehension through content-rich domain / background knowledge and vocabulary. Studies show that knowledge is cumulative, systematically building on the known. Montessori cultural and cosmic curricula and CKLA present nomenclature and units that build coherently within and across grades and subjects to ensure that all children have shared foundations of knowledge. They are content-specific, explicitly naming what is taught in ELA, history, geography, science, and the arts. Our curricula complement each other in format. Montessori lessons are 1:1 or small group, followed up with independent or peer practice. CKLA instruction is through small groups, for reading practice, and large groups, for "Listening and Learning" interactive read aloud sessions (studies show that children even until middle school

comprehend more readily from listening, making it an optimal way to learn above-grade level vocabulary). Literacy instruction occurs throughout the day. During 3-hour interdisciplinary work cycles teachers rotate through lessons and check for understanding, while students participate in lessons or practice “follow up work.” (Work cycles are planned, and observed by coaches weekly, after which teachers receive feedback.) The total time during the work cycle on foundational literacy skills is 105 minutes, plus another ~40 minutes in “content literacy” (science and social studies). Finally, an additional 60 minutes is spent on other reading/literacy with content during daily CKLA “Listening and Learning.” We monitor progress with curriculum-based and standardized assessments:

- Normed observation and recording of student work
- Oral assessment of phonetic blending, segmenting, and reading
- Review of work artifacts and writing samples using state rubrics
- Nationally-normed interim assessments

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

The same general structure of curriculum, instruction, and assessment for 3-5 exists as outlined for K-2 above and the attached curriculum/standards alignment. Adjustments for grades 3-5 include the following. As children complete our phonetically-controlled sequence of “advanced code” spelling patterns, and CKLA readers at the 3rd grade level, they transition into small literary book groups where they explicitly learn vocabulary and practice fluency and comprehension, which are also supported during content instruction (see below). Montessori word study and grammar materials teach analysis of morphology and etymology. Total time during the work cycle on foundational literacy skills is 45-60 minutes, plus up to another 60 minutes in “content literacy” (science and social studies). Finally, an additional 45-60 minutes is spent on literacy in content during daily CKLA Listening and Learning blocks, which in Upper Elementary (4th-5th) becomes “ELA Seminar.” The format changes, occurring in a separate classroom with more conventional desks and structure, as it also functions as a preparation for transition to middle school. The content is also slightly adapted to ensure the units cover TN science and social studies standards at these grades. Writing is taught in conjunction with this content instruction; children are expected to write daily in response to reading content. Evidence that our literacy approach works in both K-2 and 3-5 can be found from several sources:

- TVAAS Level 5 (2019)
- Highest ELA proficiency in the ASD in (2019)
- Exceed 100% average growth to goals on NWEA MAP test (2017, 2018, 2019)
- PreK children finish the year already knowing ~50% of letter-sounds before they start Kindergarten (2021)
- Improvement in writing samples based on state rubrics: 11% among distance learners and 18% among in-person learners (2021)

- Improvement in grade-level reading using curriculum-based measure: 44% in 1st grade, 28% in 2nd, 20% in 3rd, 34% in 4th, and 11% in 5th (2021)

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2

Amplify - K-5 Core Knowledge Language Arts

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5

Amplify - K-5 Core Knowledge Language Arts

Additional Information about Instructional Materials

More information is available about the intersection of Montessori and Core Knowledge Language Arts within our charter and is available upon request.

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

NWEA MAP as a standards-based screener, followed-up with a skills-based screener for students who are identified as at-risk based on MAP. Our reading screening complies with Tennessee's RTI2 framework requirements, including all relevant MAP test components. This screening protocol complies with the dyslexia requirements under Tennessee law.

We also administer the TN Universal Reading Screener (aimswebPlus) to students in 3rd grade for the Spring Benchmark.

Intervention Structure and Supports

Tiers 2-3 intervention address specific skill gaps and include progress monitoring. Tier 2 intervention features extra time with core lessons with classroom teachers or assistants in our multi-sensory, multi-ability, individually-paced classrooms. Tier 3 intervention uses pedagogically complementary materials with different personnel and setting: 5 days per week for 30-45 minutes with groups of 2-4 children, by licensed teachers - or someone with a BA under licensed supervision - trained in Orton-Gillingham reading remediation. Whereas Montessori is phonemic (proceeding from sounds, suitable for most typically cognitively developing students), O-G is phonographic (letter-based, necessary for 10-15% of the population, according to Prof. Diane McGuiness, University of South Florida). Steps to ensure the fidelity of intervention: Universal screening three times annually; weekly lesson plan review; biweekly observation and debrief; weekly Child Study / RTI meetings to review data and adjust plans; monthly schoolwide internal benchmark review; Tier 3 progress monitoring cycle under RTI2; three times per year teacher formal TEAM observation and review. Evidence that this approach works: In 2019, tier 3 intervention caseload in 3rd-4th grade started at the 14th national percentile and grew 164% of goals; Students with disabilities in 1st-4th receiving this intervention grew 6 national percentiles - double that of typical peers; among students starting in the lowest quintile and receiving tier 2 support, 23 students made double digit gains in national percentile rank. Research: "Moderate" or "strong" evidence for effectiveness of Montessori method: Lillard, Angeline, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2017. Lottery design with control group; four tests longitudinally. Over time, low-income children in non-Montessori school performed lower relative to others, whereas low-income children in Montessori were "not significantly different from control or Montessori high-income sample[s]." <https://news.virginia.edu/content/study-montessori-education-erases-income-achievement-gap> "Promising" evidence for Montessori: Brown, Katie, "Comparison of

Reading and Math Achievement for African American Third Grade Students in Montessori and Other Magnet Schools," *Journal of Negro Education*, 86(4). "Demonstrates positive outcomes for African American children in public Montessori in reading and math at grade 3."

https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7709/jnegroeducation.86.4.0439?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents
"Promising" evidence: "Evaluation of Montessori Education in South Carolina Public Schools." Riley Institute: <https://riley.furman.edu/sites/default/files/docs/MontessoriOverallResultsFINAL.pdf> Tier IV evidence that Orton-Gillingham "provid[es] academic support and enrichment for at-risk students." Dynarski, Mark. "Dropout Prevention IES PRACTICE GUIDE," 2008. TN Ed. Research School Turnaround: Evidence Guide, p28.

<https://eplan.tn.gov/DocumentLibrary/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentKey=1364070&inline=true>
"Strong evidence of effectiveness" under ESSA guidelines for Orton-Gillingham-based intervention, through Wilson Reading, for African American students and those qualifying for free- and reduced-price meals. Torgesen, J., et al (2007). National Assessment of Title I, Final Report: Volume II: Closing the Reading Gap, Findings from a Randomized Trial of Four Reading Interventions for Striving Readers (NCEE 2008-4013). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. <https://www.evidenceforessa.org/programs/reading/elementary/wilson-reading>. Also <http://www.successforall.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Program-Summary-Struggling-Readers-09122016.pdf>

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

At Libertas, family engagement represents a key element of student success. Our literacy program includes regular family engagement components, as well as group family-to-family enrichment activities throughout the school year. Our aim is to foster trusting relationships so that we can collaborate about student needs, and empower parents with knowledge to be their best for children. We exceed the requirement of three annual communications in K-3 and once annual in 4-5. We schedule at minimum two formal conferences with each family each year, to get detailed information about their child's progress, skills, and interventions. For each of these sessions, we provide most recent universal screener / nationally normed test scores, as well as internal data and progress reports (which are also generated and sent home twice per year at intervals between these conferences), presented with family-friendly language. Parents or guardians are also welcome to observe their child in literacy sessions. In addition to these required face-to-face meetings, we send home two additional reports each year with information about student performance relative to state reading standards as well as narrative descriptions of the child's reading performance. Families are required to complete a daily reading homework log. In 20/21, year to date reading homework completion is 75% YTD, despite the pandemic. Finally, we also have 10 (once per month) contacts per family per year, made by classroom teachers or assistants via phone (or, when needed, text message). Throughout, parent communication emphasizes that 3rd grade reading proficiency is extremely important for future academic success. To support parents' involvement with reading practice at home, we provide book resources sent home or chosen from our school's "take home library." We also provide training and information on how to do so effectively. These include monthly newsletters and online links, but also periodic parent training and collaboration sessions. to increase parent confidence in supporting children's academics.

Libertas provides free, and robust the family engagement activities including:

- monthly "parenting partners" sessions where we discuss a topic of parental concern,
- monthly student enrichment sessions that parents attend, and
- quarterly curriculum nights, -
at-home learning information.

We provide student scores to families in detailed reports written in parent-friendly language. These reports enumerate for families the specific skill gaps, their depth and extent, and how they will be addressed. Workshop participation overall has been very high historically -- over 90% of families participating in at least one opportunity over the year. We hope to improve in coming years by targeting low-participation families for increased rates.

Finally, our family engagement coordinator works with our Academic and Child Study Teams to address referrals and academic barriers, through increased family engagement around student learning, and as measured by improving reading homework completion. We intervene with at least 2 families of concern each week.

Professional Development Plan

Libertas teachers are trained and supported to implement systematic literacy instruction. Targeted professional development and training required for all teachers (PK-5th) during the summer and throughout the school year builds capacity to teach phonological and phonemic awareness; fluent phonics-based decoding and encoding; grammar; and vocabulary and comprehension to increase academic growth and achievement. All Libertas teachers are required to become certified in the Montessori method, which includes extensive literacy-focused content and in-depth training in foundational skills instruction -- 37 hours in PreK and Kindergarten, and 51 hours in grades 1-5 -- plus 58 more hours in science and social studies content. And we also require ~15+ hours of literacy-focused PD throughout each school year. Attached are a sample PD calendar from the school year and an outline of hours by content area for our intensive Montessori teacher training program, which is nationally accredited by the Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education, and is pending final approval as a Tennessee Educator Preparation Program. Training is presented by TN-licensed teachers or administrators and/or MACTE-accredited teacher instructors. See attached biographies for track record of successful literacy instruction. Teachers demonstrate competency and knowledge both by submitting extensive written documentation (reflection assignments and annotated lesson/unit plans) and by completing an intensive set of oral exams. We reinforce training ongoing through weekly lesson plan review, biweekly lesson observation and debrief/coaching, biweekly teacher collaboration meetings on student work samples and formative assessments, biweekly child study team meetings to review progress data, and periodic data review days.

Additional Information about this Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Sections of the Literacy Sub-Module document that specifically address phonemic awareness, phonological awareness and fluency (highlighted within the Scope and Sequence Overview for the Literacy and Language Strand of the training program document): LF.6.1 Montessori based

Structured Literacy: The components of Structured Literacy are Phonology, Sound-Symbol, Syllable, Morphology, Syntax, Semantics and follows a multi-tiered approach Phonemic Awareness L.WL.2 Sandpaper Letters: Individual L.WL.3 Sandpaper Letters: Double L.WL.4 Sandpaper Letters: Connection L.WL.MA.1 Moveable Alphabet L.WL.MA.2 Moveable Alphabet: CVC & Blends L.WL.MA.3 Moveable Alphabet: Phrases L.WL.MA.4 Sentences L.WL.MA.5 Moveable Alphabet: Stories LF.5.1 Multisensory Methods for Teaching Phonograms (1) LF.5.2: Phonemic Awareness (1) Phonological Awareness L.R.Ph.0 Introduction to Phonics, Phonograms and Puzzle Words L.R.Ph.1 Phonetic Object Box & Picture Cards L.R.Ph.2 Phonetic Reading Cards L.R.Ph.3 Phonetic Commands L.R.PhR.1 Introduction to Phonograms L.R.PhR.2 Booklets L.R.PhR.3 Lists L.R.PhR.4 Exploration of One Key Phonogram L.R.PhR.6 Phonogram Commands L.R.PZ.1 Introduction to Puzzle Words. L.R.PZ.2 Spelling L.R.PZ.3 Alphabetization L.R.PZ.4 Language Experience Books L.R.PZ.5 Reading Schemes/Phonetic Readers Fluency L.RF.MRW.1: Alphabet Sounds LRF.MRW.2: Blending to Form Phonetic Words LRF.MRW.3 Reading Phonetic Words LRF.MRW.4 Letter Names L.RF.MRW.5 Phonograms L.RF.MRW.6 Silent 'e' L.RF.MRW.7 Puzzle Word L.RF.MRW.8 Language Experience Books L.WS.1 Spelling Analysis/ Phonograms L.WS.2.5 Phonograms and Puzzle Words L.WS.3 Suffixes L.WS.4 Suffixes and the Root L.WS.5 Prefixes L.WS.6 Classified Suffixes L.WS.7 Compound Words L.WS.8 Word Families We have added to the Professional Development Plan attached above, our TN ELA - Montessori Correlation (1-5) (K) documents, that also shows how the Montessori scope and sequence that residents get training on addresses the state standards (particularly Foundational Literacy: Standard 2 - Phonological Awareness and Standard 5 - Fluency.): For K - FL (Foundational Literacy) and For 1st - 5th Grade Foundational Literacy Standards Standard 1 - Print Concepts Standard 2 - Phonological Awareness Standard 3 - Phonics and Word Recognition Standard 4 - Word Composition Standard 5 - Fluency The Literacy Toolkit is what is used in training on developing language/literacy lesson plans, which includes strategies on building phonemic awareness and fluency.