

## **Rutherford County Schools**

### **Foundational Literacy Skills Plan**

**Approved: May 25, 2021**

**Updated: February 23, 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**

Rutherford County School District adopted the state approved Open Up Resources Expeditionary Learning Education Skills Block, a foundational skills curriculum grounded in reading science and aligned to Tennessee ELA standards. This curriculum uses foundational skills as the primary form of instruction and has a designated block of time (60 minutes daily) for foundational skills instruction in grades K-2. Rutherford County elementary schools have literacy blocks that are 150 minutes daily in grades K-2 with the 60 minute daily designated block for foundational skills instruction. The foundational skills instruction contains activities and practices that teach the following foundational skills: phonological awareness (recognize rhyming words, blend and segment compound words, blend, segment, and count syllables, blend and segment onset-rime, blend, segment, and count phonemes, segment compound words, and isolate individual phonemes) and phonics (identify individual letter sounds, decode regular words, decode words with common rime families, identify sounds for letter combinations, decode one-syllable words with letter combinations, identify common spellings for long and short vowel sounds, know and apply final -e conventions, read words with r-controlled vowels, read words with l-controlled vowels, read words with inflected endings, read words with prefixes and suffixes, read two-syllable words with various syllable types, read multi-syllable words, and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis in text). This instructional time also includes explicit instruction and student practice activities that build fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary.

The scope and sequence of the curriculum is based on research of effective instruction. The Skills Block uses a structured phonics approach, grounded in the Phase Theory of Dr. Linnea Ehri, which describes behaviors related to the types of letter-sound connections students are able to make as they learn to read and write. The intent is to ensure that, by the end of Grade 2, students acquire the depth of skills they need in the Reading Foundations standards in order to be able to navigate grade-level text independently. The lessons and assessments explicitly address the Reading Standards: Foundational Skills, as well as some Language standards associated with spelling and letter formation.

Our improvements for next year are to ensure that teachers are able to correctly place students in Microphases for small group instruction. This will require teachers to assess and analyze benchmark data. This data will allow teachers to address individual foundational skill needs.

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

Our district has an integrated literacy block that is comprised of Module lessons and Additional Language and Literacy Block (ALL Block) for grades three through five grounded in reading science aligned to Tennessee ELA standards. The district adopted Open Up Resources Expeditionary Learning Education for grades three through five. The curriculum materials are selected from those approved by the state Textbook and instructional Materials Quality Commission. During the integrated ELA block that meets an evidence-based approach to applying foundational skills within daily lessons, our students in grades 3-5 receive a total of 90 to 120 minutes. All daily instruction includes components of knowledge-building for 60 minutes per day and 30-60 minutes of foundational skills instruction during ALL Block that includes fluency, grammar, morphology, spelling and word work, and writing. The adopted curriculum also engages students in work around fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills are not taught in isolation, but are reinforcing and extending the work from the Knowledge module lessons to ensure continuity, cohesion, and connection.

For example, our 3rd-5th graders work with words emerging from complex texts related to content that cut across many domains with an emphasis on morphology, syllabication, and spelling. During the ALL Block, students practice with word analysis of additional words from text, using words in context, and use word study games and activities to apply what they are learning.

Our improvements for next year will be the use of small group instruction to target the needs of all students in foundational skills and to utilize benchmarks to determine microphases if needed to pinpoint foundational skill gaps.

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

Open Up - K-5 Expeditionary Learning

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

Open Up - K-5 Expeditionary Learning

### **Universal Reading Screener for Grades K-5. This screener complies with RTI<sup>2</sup> and Say Dyslexia requirements.**

Our universal screener is the Tennessee Universal Reading Screener, aimswebPlus, for students in grades K-3. EasyCBM is our universal screener for grades 4-5. These screeners comply with RTI<sup>2</sup> and Say Dyslexia requirements. The screeners are used to assess reading and math in the fall, winter, and spring for grades Kindergarten through 5th grade.

### **Intervention Structure and Supports**

Three times a year, students are given a universal screener to determine which students have a significant reading deficiency or are “at-risk”. Our intervention teams review universal screener data to determine which students score between 0-15th percentile. If a child scores between the 10th – 25th percentile, survey level assessments are administered to determine a specific area of skill deficit. Based on those results the intervention team decides most appropriate placement whether in standards-based intervention or Tier 2 intervention. If a child scores below

the 10th percentile, survey level assessments are administered to determine a specific area of skill deficit. Based on those results the intervention team decides the most appropriate placement whether in Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention. Progress monitoring occurs every other week a minimum of 8 -10 data points are needed in order to make any changes. Progress monitoring is determined from a combination of the results of the universal screener and survey level assessments.

The RTI2 Intervention Team's major work includes ensuring interventions are implemented with integrity, reviewing and discussing student data/attendance, and matching intervention to specific area of deficit. Every 4 ½ weeks, intervention teams meet to review students currently served in intervention discussing any possible movement or changes in intervention and any new teacher referrals. Data teams focus on historical data as well as current progress monitoring data and attendance. Teams also discuss a student's responsiveness to the intervention based on district and school level fidelity checks.

Interventionists are trained in evidence-based interventions depending on school level availability. Our students receive explicit instruction in their area of deficit in small groups using evidence-based materials and strategies. Some students are also screened for characteristics of dyslexia. Students who do demonstrate those characteristics receive intensive interventions as outlined in the Say Dyslexia Law using resources that meet the law's requirements. Families are notified of the results of the screener as well as other resources that might be beneficial for their child.

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

RCS notifies parents in grades K-5 if their child is "at-risk" for or has a significant reading deficiency (as evidenced by universal screener results AND having historical data indicating a need for additional services). 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 that the student will receive services (in multiple languages) explaining the progress and placement for their child. (letters and graphs) This is coupled with a description of the importance of being able to read by the end of 3rd grade. Parents are notified of their child's progress, or lack of progress, after the four-and-a-half-week data team meetings. In the parent 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. These communications go out to parents with students in grades K-3 three times annually and are shared in grades 4 and 5 annually. Schools also include information about summer reading activities and opportunities through their individual communication tools and end of year letter.

### **Professional Development Plan**

RCS K-5 teachers received a full day of training of EL Education foundational skills provided by Better Lesson and participated in the Reading 360 Early Literacy Training series developed by the Tennessee Department of Education.

Our PD for all K-5 teachers is as follows:



- All K-5 teachers received six hours of training provided by Better Lesson on Foundational Skills and Additional Language and Literacy components of the EL Education curriculum. Interventionists, special education teachers, ESL teachers, instructional coaches, and elementary instructional leaders also attended. The training focused on understanding the research and rationale behind a structured phonics program and the phases and microphases of reading and spelling development.
- All K-5 teachers completed the asynchronous course for Reading 360 Early Literacy Training. This training focused on foundational reading development and instruction and is grounded in a phonics-based approach.
- In conjunction with the 360 Early Literacy Training series, K-5th grade teachers received the following literacy professional development: PLCs, Coaching Cycles, focused Professional Development from district ELA specialists and BetterLesson, along with Learning Walks using the IPG.
- To support the professional development and establish district expectations, school administrators and instructional coaches will receive professional development on utilizing IPG effectively.
- Overview of Dyslexia (MTSU Center for Dyslexia) for interventionists this will include:
  - Monthly throughout the school year - Dyslexia cohort – small group of interventionists in collaboration with MTSU Center for Dyslexia