Lauderdale County Schools

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Previous Update: June 11, 2025

Approved: June 15, 2026

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

Lauderdale County Schools follows the Science of Reading, an established body of work that reveals how students learn to read and what kinds of instruction are most likely to benefit all learners. A convergence of research supports that learning reading is not a natural process and must be taught explicitly. Students in Grades K-2 are provided 30-45 minutes of Core, whole -group, foundational skills instruction based on the TN State Standards for Foundational Skills by utilizing a state-approved foundational skills curriculum, EL Skills Block 2.0. Foundational Skills instruction in Lauderdale County is the primary form instruction for students in K-2, it is the foundation for all other learning. Additionally, students in K-2 are provided with 10-12 minutes of explicit phonemic awareness instruction using the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum. The lessons focus on phonemic awareness skills, letter-sound recognition, and language awareness. Small group instruction based upon the students' Phase of Reader Development is provided to groups of students for 30-45 minutes each day.

For the 26/27 SY we will continue to add to the Kindergarten Schedule, an explicit block for handwriting using the Handwriting Without Tears curriculum. Research shows that letter formation by hand is essential in letter and word identification as well as spelling proficiency. Students in grades K-2 also spend time in small groups with teachers and interventionists working on targeted skill deficits for 40-45 minutes daily (1st & 2nd) 30-35 minutes (K).

A change we will add to the schedules in K-2 Foundational Literacy is a longer amount of time devoted to Whole Group, on-grade level instruction. Through our work with the Acceleration for All Initiative and the Early Literacy Network, we have begun to realize the importance of more time devoted to on grade level skills and accelerating student loss instead of remediating. Kindergarten will receive 60 of the 90 minutes in whole group, on grade level instruction and 1st and 2nd grade will spend 45 of the 90 minutes in whole group, on grade level instruction. This is an increase of 15-30 minutes depending on the grade level

The Foundational Skills Block is 90 minutes long, divided into three major chunks:

- Whole group instructions for 30-45 minutes

- Differentiated small group instruction (including independent work time) 30-45 minutes
- Explicit Phonemic Awareness with the whole group 10-15 minutes

In the Foundational Skills Block, whole group instruction is broken into four parts: Opening, Work Time, Closing and Heggerty Phonemic Awareness. During the Opening, students engage in familiar instructional practices that connect to prior learning, engage in high frequency word routines, participate in a quick phonological awareness activity and warm up for the Work Time.

Work Time (20-25 minutes) is the heart of whole group instruction. Whole group is where students use instructional practice routines, such as chaining, pattern power, and interactive writing, to practice newly introduced graphemes (letters), phonemes (sounds), spelling patterns, or skills. In the Skills Block, an instructional practice is a routine used consistently over one or more modules that addresses grade-level standards, ensuring that all students have access to grade-level instruction as a whole group.

During the Closing portion of whole group instruction, students complete a check for understanding, giving the teacher an opportunity each day to collect data on each student and their progress toward mastery.

During our Phonemic Awareness time, (10-12 minutes) the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness curriculum is used to provide explicit, teacher directed instruction in rhyming, initial phoneme isolation, blending, Final & medial phoneme isolation, segmenting, manipulating sounds by adding or deleting words, syllables, initial or final phonemes, and substituting phonemes at the word, syllable and phoneme level.

During differentiated small group instruction (30-45 minutes per day), teachers work with groups of students to teach new material, reteach, or extend learning based on students' needs. The teacher meets with approximately three groups per day. Students reading below grade level meet with the teacher every day. Students reading at or above grade level meet with the teacher one or two times per week.

Each day, students who are not working with the teacher engage in purposeful, independent rotations. Students engage in a combination of the following each day:

- Accountable Independent Reading
- Word Work
- Writing Practice
- Reading Fluency

Students in grades K-2 receive 90 additional minutes of literacy instruction with a knowledge-building curriculum anchored in the science of reading and that is aligned to the Tennessee ELA standard. All daily instruction includes components for knowledge-building (to build and improve the ability to comprehend complex texts and apply the knowledge as they listen, read, write, think and speak) for 70 minutes per day and additional foundational skills instruction for 20 minutes per day that includes fluency, grammar, morphology, and spelling embedded within the lesson.

Our improvements for next year are grounded in the continued designated time for teachers to collaborate weekly to solve problems of practice (refine the opportunities to develop and practice

writing skills, for example) and internalize the instructional plan through unit-level and lesson-level preparation. We will also be strengthening our instructional improvement cycles to include more analysis of student work. Constant, Ongoing Cycles of Continuous Improvement have been scheduled into the PLC calendar for the 26/27 SY that aligns to the work we are doing with the Acceleration 4 All initiative and the Early Literacy Network.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

Students in grades 3-5 are provided 90 minutes of literacy instruction utilizing a knowledge-building curriculum that is anchored in the science of reading, aligned to Tennessee ELA standards. The curriculum materials, Wit & Wisdom ELA, are selected from those approved by the state Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission. Although the daily routine is not the same each day, all daily instruction includes components for knowledge-building (to build and improve the ability to comprehend complex texts and apply the knowledge as they listen, read, write, think and speak) for 90 minutes per day. The fluency, vocabulary, and morphology skills are not taught in isolation but are embedded within the lesson to ensure continuity, cohesion, and connection.

A core lesson sequence in grades 3-5 Wit & Wisdom includes a framework of text-specific content questioning to engage students in the module content and in the process of reading complex texts. Students engage in daily work around reading, understanding, and analyzing complex text.

Students articulate their learning through speaking and writing about their knowledge of the topic of study. Students also have regular practice examining the crafts of writing, speaking, and listening, through Craft Questions: students develop responses to the texts they read and grow their critical thinking skills. Some daily lessons give students targeted fluency practice through the reader's theater, poetry readings, and student-led declamations. In addition to directly addressing grade-level reading, writing, speaking, and listening standards, Core lessons provide embedded instruction in grade-level foundational reading skills such as spelling, language, and vocabulary. Additionally, each day, students participate in isolated practice with grade-level foundational reading skills in Deep Dives. The Deep Dives focus on vocabulary, morphology, and language conventions pertinent to the core lessons.

Grade 3-5 foundational skills instruction is embedded in all aspects of the 90-minute block. It is dedicated to providing embedded evidence-based instruction in fluency, vocabulary, grammar and necessary skills-based competencies. In addition, students are provided with explicit small group foundational skills instruction based on their Phase of Reader Development determined through EL Skills Block Benchmark testing. These small groups are for 30 minutes each day.

Additional Supports

Lauderdale County Schools plans to support all our schools with subgroups that had TVAAS data in 2022 and 2023 at a level 1 or 2 by implementing the following in our district:

- Lauderdale County Schools use Wit & Wisdom, a Great Minds product for ELA instruction in grades K-5. We have a waiver for this program in K-2 because of the lack of a foundational skills piece. We use the EL Education Skills Block curriculum to supplement this missing piece for Foundational Skills in our K-2 classrooms.

- Our district has adopted an approved curriculum for ELA instruction; however, we have chosen to supplement it 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 also use the sounds-first activities as our daily warm up in all elementary schools across the district.
- Lauderdale County Schools has partnered with the Early Literacy 2.0 Network (ELN) to strengthen our understanding and implementation of the foundational skills instruction. We are conducting PLCs on our Foundational Skills IPG focuses from our walkthrough trends, walking through foundational skills classrooms and providing feedback using the FS IPG, as well as analyzing student work samples to drive our small group instruction and any skill not mastered that may need to be retaught. Teacher Leaders, along with district and school admin. attend ELN meetings, both virtual and in person and they are taking advantage of more shared learning opportunities through the use of asynchronous learning modules provided by the ELN. Teacher leaders and school admin redeliver this information to classroom teachers throughout the year in PLCs or at Inservice Days.
- Lauderdale County concluded its work with the Literacy Implementation Network. (LIN) Our work was focusing on two schools where the data is the lowest. With the sustained work learned through LIN, and our work with Acceleration for All (A4A), we are paying particular attention to specific populations at these schools during our walkthroughs, and we are targeting our feedback around CA 4 of the Knowledge Building IPG. We are also including our SPED teachers in our Instructional Prep and Student Work Analysis time at each school so they can support the teachers in how to support the special education students to a great extent.
- 3-8 teachers at two schools with a TVAAS score of 1 or 2 were and will be supported with a professional learning plan for the 25-26 school year and the 26-27 school year. This structured guide outlined each individual teacher's performance goals, action steps, and support focus. Administrators met with, and will continue to meet with, each teacher monthly to monitor their plans by recording the assistance and support provided, as well as documenting the progress that was made in the teacher's deficit areas.

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2
Great Minds Wit and Wisdom *(approved waiver)*

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5
Great Minds Wit and Wisdom

Supplemental Instructional Materials
Our district uses Handwriting Without Tears in kindergarten and the EL Education Skills Block curriculum to supplement Foundational Skills in our K-2 classrooms. We also use Heggerty Phonemic Awareness and the Tennessee Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement in K-2.

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

Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (aimswebPlus) for grades K-5

Intervention Structure and Supports

In the fall, students are given a universal screener 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. Our grade-level teachers, principals, and other stakeholders review the universal screener data, along with additional data such as EL Skills Block Benchmark testing, teacher recommendation and student work samples, 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 in order to best assign students to a small group with an intervention that will narrow skill gaps. Students receive daily, small-group intervention for 30- 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. Our recently adopted ELA curriculum contains an assessment and small group instruction guide in which teachers can find lessons that directly address skill gaps. 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, but not limited to, LEXIA or SRA Reading) become an option. Data teams meet every 4 1⁄2 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, behavior) 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 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. Families are notified of the curriculum used to support those students, which is systematic, explicit, sequential, phonics-based instruction and is considered a strong support for those students.

Intervention takes place daily during a grade-level time in the master schedule specifically 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. Students who need fluency support may receive intervention using the SRA Reading program.

Schools in Lauderdale County, grades PreK-12, progress monitor students using our URS, weekly or bi-weekly. The results from progress monitoring and other sources of data are reviewed every 4 ½

weeks during grade level data team meetings to discuss progress for each student, or lack of progress. These data discussions sometimes result in changes to programs, time spent in intervention, or changes in providers to meet the needs of each student.

New for the 26-27 school year is the front loading of information to our Special Education students using the prologue that is provided by our Wit & Wisdom curriculum. Special Education teachers will use their intervention time to front-load information such as vocabulary or text structure to students prior to lessons in the Tier 1 classroom. Special Education teachers began training on an implementation of this practice during the 25/26 school and will continue to be provided training and support during the 26/27 school to strengthen and refine this practice.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

Our district notifies families in grades K-5 if their child has a significant reading deficiency (as evidenced by students scoring below the 15th percentile) or is at-risk of a significant reading deficiency (as evidenced by students scoring between the 16th and 40th percentile) 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 on grade level by the end of grade 3 and includes information on the promotion pathway to grade 4 as well as recommended activities (that do not require purchased resources) that will support students around the 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.

Our district explains 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 1⁄2 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.

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 students through questions about their texts and through an awareness of what foundational skills their children are learning.

Professional Development Plan

Teachers in our district have and will continue to participate in the free and optional Early Reading Training series developed by the Tennessee Department of Education. Our plan for providing PD for all K-5 teachers is as follows:

On Going – All of our current teachers in grades Pre-K through 5 have engaged in Week 1 of the Early Reading Training series. This training focused on foundational reading development and

instruction and is grounded in a phonics-based approach. We will ensure that our educators earn a completion certificate and any new teachers to our district have been trained.

Teacher collaboration for unit and lesson level prep using protocols developed in partnership with TNTP, will happen on a consistent and continual basis during weekly PLC's, Inservice days and district professional development days.

Teachers will also participate in student work analysis on a consistent and continual basis during weekly PLC's, Inservice days and professional development days utilizing a protocol developed with TNTP.

Additionally, during district professional development days, the district's vision for strategic planning and K-12 literacy will be communicated to each stakeholder. This strategic plan includes collaborative coaching at each school, teacher leader support, lesson prep PLC's, student work analysis PLC's, common grade level planning, vertical grade level planning, video reflections of taught lessons, and facilitated literacy book studies.

July – Our district has recommended Course 2 of the Early Reading Training for all teachers in grades

Pre-K through 5 who have not already completed this course. The participating teachers also include interventionists, special education teachers, and elementary instructional coaches. This training emphasizes practical classroom application of research findings around strong instruction in phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary. This course will be completed asynchronously.

Teachers in grade K-2 have also been made aware of the ELN Early Literacy Network Summer Learning Series for Teachers where they will be given the opportunity to Connect Instructional Resources to High Academic Expectations for All Students, Master Foundational Skills using Strategies to Support All Students, Plan for Productive Struggle in Early Literacy, and Build Writing Proficiency through Intentional Scaffolds

September, January and May: Analysis of district universal screener data. Teachers and leaders will review reports at the district, school and classroom levels to determine both trends and deficits, using this data to inform classroom practices to build and meet the needs of small group instruction and RTI2 groups.