

Roanoke County Public Schools

The background of the entire page is a collection of silhouettes of various evergreen trees, including tall, thin pines and shorter, fuller spruces and firs. The trees are rendered in different shades of green and black, creating a layered, forest-like effect.

Comprehensive Literacy Plan

June 2022

RCPS Literacy Plan

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Introduction

"Literacy not only involves competency in reading and writing but goes beyond this to include the critical and effective use of these in peoples' lives, and the use of language (oral and written) for all purposes." LDCNL International Literacy Council

Literacy is a key component to success. A strong foundation in literacy puts students on a path to success in academics and beyond. RCPS is committed to providing that strong foundation to every student we have the privilege to teach. Roanoke County Public Schools' Literacy Plan is designed to meet the diverse learning needs of all students. We take a developmentally appropriate approach based on the most current research and best practices including the Science of Reading. The plan includes those elements necessary to provide the best possible learning outcomes for students in kindergarten through grade twelve.

In order to provide the best possible experience for all students, RCPS uses research-based best practices from leading experts in the fields of literacy, special education, education, neurology, and psychology. These practices are then made our own by the expert teachers in our schools.

Students in Roanoke County will experience a system-wide literacy focus that ensures consistency across our twenty-seven schools. This focus begins with the foundational skills necessary for emerging readers (phonological awareness and the alphabetic principle), and carries the students through decoding and language comprehension, which enables critical thinking in the advanced stages of literacy. With this focus, our plan will meet the needs of all students, from struggling readers to those well ahead of their age and grade level.

The plan, as articulated in this guide, is a living, breathing plan that will continue to evolve as the needs of our students change and the research data inform our direction. A constant reflection to evaluate what is working and what needs adjustment is imperative to ensure we are doing the best for our students.

It is important that the pace of implementation and change does not exceed our capacity to follow the plan well. What began in 2008 has, with the hard work of the literacy committee, grown to include grades K through 8. Our goal to perpetually evaluate and develop the plan includes a structure to provide ongoing professional development that supports the components of the literacy plan. By building capacity in our system within our strong workforce, we continue to refine our ability to deliver the best possible educational practices for our students.

The content of this guide provides the framework, the expectations, and some detailed explanation of our approach to literacy. This guide is a companion piece to the repository of online resources available to our teachers through our Blackboard content management system. Sample lesson plans, rubrics, and many other materials are posted in Blackboard. This hub of resources grows constantly, as additional materials become available. We encourage staff and administrators to check the site on a regular basis.

The RCPS Literacy Plan employs both whole group and small group reading instruction with a wide variety of both strategies and scheduling options. These options allow differentiation and the latitude to meet the needs of specific students while ensuring access to best practices. We have a tiered intervention process that uses multiple measures to calibrate needs, and best meet goals for the student. Additionally, there are many enrichment opportunities in the plan.

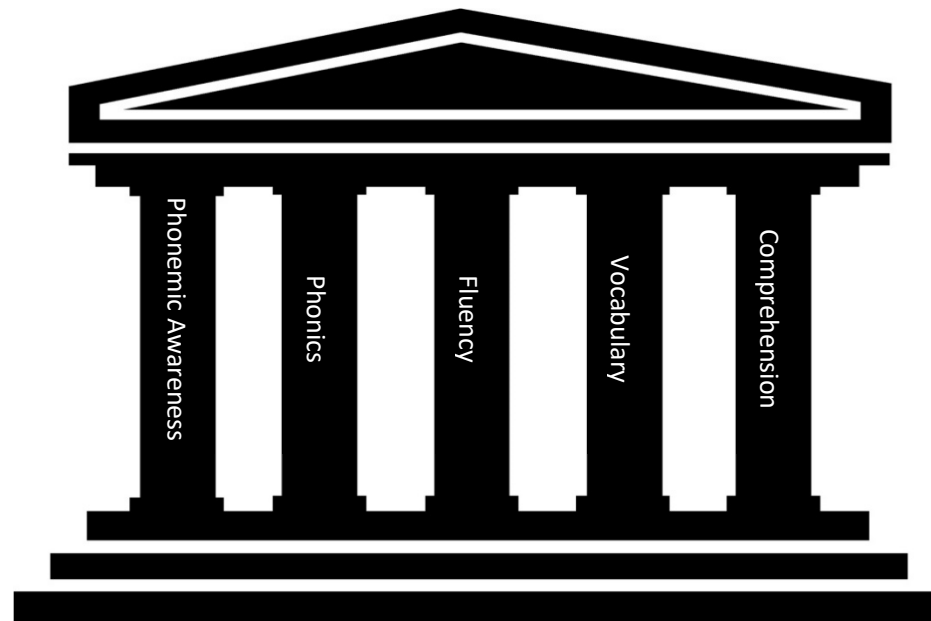
On behalf of the literacy committee, we thank the teachers and administrators who contributed to this guide and who continue to do outstanding work with our students.

What is the Science of Reading?

The Science of Reading is a comprehensive body of research that consists of decades of research and scientific knowledge that spans across many languages. It entails the research of many experts from relevant disciplines such as literacy, education, special education, psychology, neurology, and more.

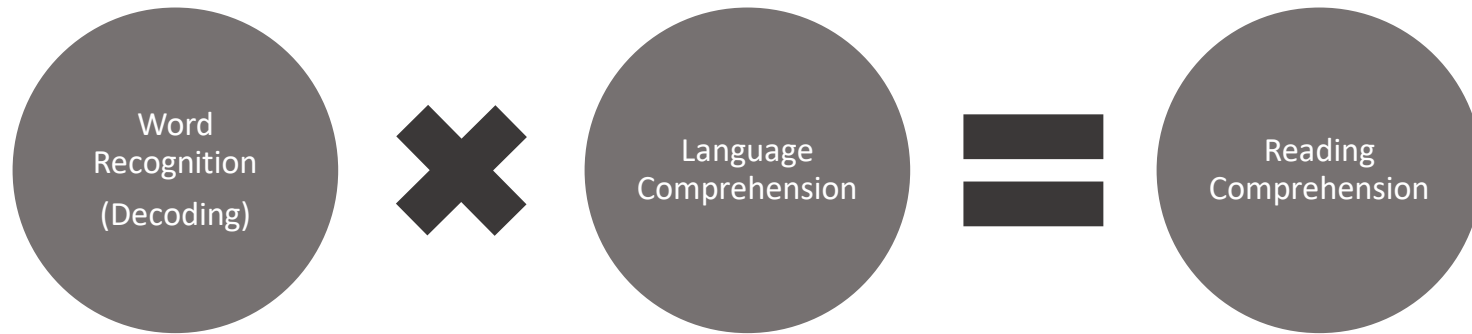
The Science of Reading is supported by research that provides us with the information we need to understand how the brain learns to read. It helps us to gain a deeper understanding of the different parts of the brain that are responsible for reading development. Using this research, we can identify and implement evidence-based best practices when it comes to literacy instruction.

It is also important to note that in 2000, the National Reading Panel defined the **5 pillars of reading**.



How do these pillars come together to support learning to read?

To best describe how these components come together, one must understand the Simple View of Reading. The Simple View of Reading is a formula demonstrating the widely accepted view that reading has two basic components: word recognition (decoding) and language comprehension. The Simple View formula has been supported and validated by several research studies. Understanding the formula will help educators with assessing reading weaknesses and providing appropriate instruction.



How Can Teachers Apply the Simple View of Reading to Teaching and Intervention Methods?

The Simple View of Reading indicates that in order to have strong reading comprehension, students must have BOTH decoding skills and language comprehension. We must teach students to decode effectively and efficiently as early as possible. When students can decode, they are able to access the text. When they can access the text, their reading comprehension capabilities equal their language comprehension abilities.

We must also provide students with strong content knowledge in many domains at all grade levels for them to develop adequate language comprehension abilities. As a result, the Science of Reading, while necessary, is not sufficient on its own for a comprehensive literacy plan.

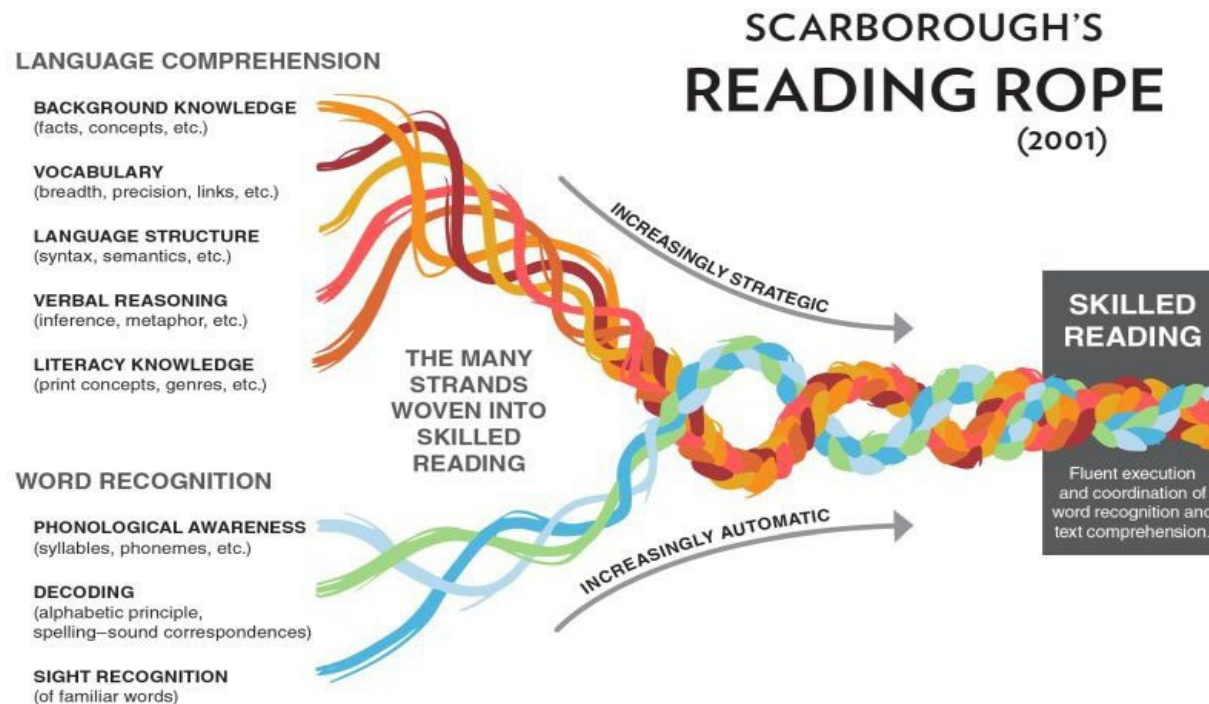
Intervention for struggling readers must address the student's weakness. This weakness can be decoding, language comprehension, or BOTH. Intervention should be focused on language comprehension ONLY if there is a weakness in this area. It should be focused on decoding if it is determined a weakness for the student. This instruction should be explicit and systematic. Students of all ages can have a weakness in decoding.

Decoding and language comprehension are assessed separately, but both are required to achieve reading comprehension. Scores for both decoding and language comprehension are required to identify a specific area of weakness.

Scarborough's Reading Rope

Dr. Hollis Scarborough created the Reading Rope in the 1990s. She created it as a visual for parents and educators to see how learning to read happens. In this image, she shows how two strands intertwine to help students become successful readers. These two domains are word recognition and language comprehension.

One thing Dr. Scarborough describes is that strands get tighter as reading becomes more skilled. But if the strands get frayed, it can hinder reading development and weaken the entire rope.



What The Science of Reading is... And What It Isn't

The Science of Reading is not	The Science of Reading is
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Phonics Only• A Curriculum or Program• A Strategy or An Approach• Comprehension Only• A Fad• Guessing Or Memorizing Words	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evidence Based• Scientific Research• Explicit• Systematic• Sequential

Clarification of Terms

Advanced - Readers who have mastered the previous skills and are ready to work on literary analysis and complex word analysis. These readers are typically in the higher grades (6-12). The focus is vocabulary and comprehension.

Alphabetic Principal - The idea that letters and letter patterns represent the sounds of spoken language

Auditory Drill - When the teachers say the sound and the student produces its letter or letter pattern, often done through a multisensory technique such as in a sand tray or shaving cream

Background Knowledge - The knowledge a student brings to the text

Beginning - Readers who have progressed past the emergent stage and are ready to read more complex texts, work on short vowel sounds, blends, and digraphs. The focus is phonics.

Decoding - The ability to apply letter sound knowledge/relationships to read written words.

Decodable Text - Carefully sequenced text to align with letter-sound knowledge and phonics skills that have been taught.

DSA (Developmental Spelling Assessment) - Test designed to assess the word knowledge of students and how they apply it to their ability to read and spell.

Emergent - Readers who are able to identify letters and can begin learning letter sounds. The focus is phonological awareness.

GRA (Guided Reading Assessment) - Benchmark assessment and book leveling system used to determine the instructional and independent reading levels of students as well as help teachers identify books that are developmentally appropriate for each child's reading level.

High Frequency Words - Irregularly or regularly spelled words that are encountered often in grade level texts.

Intermediate - Readers who have exited the transitional stage and are ready to focus on more in-depth reading and literary skills. The focus is on vocabulary and comprehension.

Language Comprehension: Encompasses background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge. This becomes more strategic so that students can make meaning from what they read.

Leveled Readers - Books characterized and categorized by the level of difficulty of the text based on several criteria.

Orthographic Mapping - Involves the formation of letter-sound connections to bond the spellings, pronunciations, and meanings of specific words in memory. It explains how children learn to read words by sight, to spell words from memory, and to acquire vocabulary words from print.

Lexile Level - A measure of text complexity represented by sentence length and variation and vocabulary

Literacy Knowledge - Knowledge of how print is structured (concept of print, genre, etc.)

PALS (Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening) - A Virginia state-wide initiative supported by the Curry School at the University of Virginia designed to identify and offer support to early struggling readers.

PAST (Phonological Awareness Skills Test) - Comprehensive test evaluating 14 aspects of the development of phonological awareness, designed as an informal, individual assessment.

Phoneme Grapheme Mapping - A critically acclaimed work that contains sequential, systematic, and explicit lessons which help students understand the reality that the number of sounds (phonemes) they hear in a word may be different from the number of letters that represent those sounds.

Phonics Instruction - An explicit and systematic way of teaching the application of connecting written letters and spoken sounds.

Phonological Awareness - Continuum of skills that includes identifying and manipulating units of oral language (words, syllables, onset, rime). Phonemic Awareness is the ability to identify and manipulate sounds in spoken words and is a component of phonological awareness.

Pre-Emergent - Readers who are just starting to learn the alphabet and names of letters; they are completely unable to read and need to build pre-reading skills. The focus is phonological awareness and recognition.

RTI (Response to Intervention) - A Virginia state-wide initiative designed to clearly articulate levels of intervention for students struggling in all areas of instruction.

Rubric - A scoring tool used to assess student learning based on a set of criteria and standards directly tied to stated objectives. Rubrics help teachers apply grades to student work that may otherwise be considered subjective or arbitrary.

Science of Reading - A comprehensive body of research that consists of decades of research and scientific knowledge that spans across many languages. It entails the research of many experts from relevant disciplines such as literacy, education, special education, psychology, neurology, and more.

Sight Words - Words that you know by sight, not because you memorized the word as a visual unit but because they are mapped to your brain. When a word is orthographically mapped to your brain you know it instantly.

SOL (Standards of Learning) - Virginia's guiding educational standards designed to ensure that students across the state are being taught the same concepts and skills to the same degree of difficulty in the same grade level across the academic disciplines. Students in grades three and higher are tested on their mastery of these skills.

RI (Reading Inventory) - A Scholastic product designed to screen students to determine their individual reading level. The results are indicated by Lexile. It is computer administered and scored and given whole-class, taking approximately 25-35 minutes per class.

TOPA (Test of Phonological Awareness) - Designed to assess a student's phonological awareness skills in primary grades.

Transitional - Readers who have moved past the beginning stage and continue to grow as readers. They are ready for more in-depth reading instruction.

Verbal Reasoning/Inference - Refers to understanding when and how words are being figurative (metaphor, analogies, idioms, and other figurative language) and literal.

Vocabulary - Refers to the knowledge of words, including their structure, use, meanings, and links to other words

Visual Drill - When a teacher shows the student a letter or letter pattern and the student must immediately produce the sound it makes.

Whole Group - Reading instruction meant for introducing and modeling concepts for all students at the same time. This time should be used for teaching, modeling, and practicing comprehension, background knowledge, vocabulary, and writing. These skills can be carried over into small group instruction as deemed necessary.

Word Recognition - The act of seeing a word and recognizing its pronunciation immediately and without conscious effort.

Grade Level Correlations - GRA and Lexile Levels Performance for Ten Months of the School Year

Alphabetic Level	Grade Level <small>(approximate)</small>	Lexile Recommendations
A	K	N/A
B	K	
C	K	
D	K/1	
E	1	
F	1	
G	1	
H	1	
I	1/2	450-620
J	2	
K	2	
L	2	
M	2/3	620-820
N	3	
O	3	
P	3/4	740-875
Q	4	
R	4	
S	4/5	875-1010
T	5	
U	5	925-1010
V	5/6	
W	6	
X	6	
Y	6/7	
Z	7/8	

- Each level indicates the instructional level; that is, the level that he or she can read with instructional support (e.g., text introduction). At levels A–K, the instructional level is the highest level a student can read with 90–94% accuracy and excellent or satisfactory comprehension, or 95–100% accuracy with limited comprehension. At levels L–Z, the instructional level is the highest level a student can read with 95–97% accuracy and excellent or satisfactory comprehension, or 98–100% accuracy with limited comprehension.
- The student's independent reading level will be one or two levels lower. The independent level is one at which the student can read without teacher support.
- If the student's instructional level matches the indicated level at the particular point in time, the student can be considered to be reading on grade level. If the student's level is higher, then the student can be considered to be reading above grade level. In this case, the student may be reading independently at the level.
- If a student's instructional level is lower than that indicated at the point in time, the student will need intervention. If the student is one to three levels lower, a Tier 2 intervention is needed. If the student is three+ levels lower, a Tier 3 intervention may be needed.
- At some points in time, students may be transitioning from one level to another (for example, C/D in month 8 of kindergarten). That means the student is reading mostly at the lower level but taking on some texts at the higher level with success. For purposes of analyzing data, consider the lower level C as reading on grade level.

Literacy Plan Minimum Assessment Calendar: Schools and teachers may go beyond the following as needed.

	K	1	2	3	4	5
<p>PALS – Literacy assessment targeting phonological and phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge, letter-sound knowledge, concept of word, word recognition in isolation, and oral reading (includes accuracy and fluency). Prescribed administration through the PALS initiative.</p>	<p>3 times yearly: Fall: All students screened Mid: Current PALS students can be screened to obtain current data. End: All students screened</p>	<p>3 times yearly: Fall: Students who are new to Virginia public schools, and students who received summer intervention are screened. Mid: Current PALS students can be screened to obtain current data. End: All students screened</p>	<p>3 times yearly: Fall: Students who are new to Virginia public schools, and students who received summer intervention are screened. Mid: Current PALS students can be screened to obtain current data. End: All students without a "high benchmark score" are screened.</p>	<p>2 times yearly: Fall: Students who are new to Virginia public schools, and students who received summer intervention are screened. Mid: Current PALS students can be screened to obtain current data.</p>		
<p>TOPA – Phonological awareness assessment targeting rhyme, alliteration, identifying words and syllables, phoneme blending, phoneme segmentation, phoneme deletion, phoneme addition, phoneme isolation, pseudoword decoding. Teacher administered and scored in one-on-one setting taking approximately 20 to 30 minutes per student.</p>	<p>Administered as teachers identify concerns about students’ phonological awareness development.</p>	<p>Administered as teachers identify concerns about students’ phonological awareness development.</p>	<p>Administered as teachers identify concerns about students’ phonological awareness development.</p>			
<p>GRA – Guided reading assessment targeting word recognition in isolation, oral reading, and comprehension. Teacher administered and scored – given one-on-one taking approximately 25 to 35 minutes per student.</p>	<p>2 times yearly: Administered as students demonstrate readiness for this assessment.</p>	<p>3 times yearly: Administered as students demonstrate readiness for this assessment.</p>	<p>3 times yearly: Administered based on RI results or previous GRA screening.</p>	<p>3 times yearly: Administered based on RI results or previous GRA screening.</p>	<p>3 times yearly: Administered based on RI results or previous GRA screening.</p>	<p>3 times yearly: Administered based on RI results or previous GRA screening.</p>

	K	1	2	3	4	5
RI – Adaptive assessment program targeting reading skills and longitudinal progress over time. Computer administered			3 times yearly: Once at the beginning, middle, and end of year.	3 times yearly: Once at the beginning, middle, and end of year.	3 times yearly: Once at the beginning, middle, and end of year.	3 times yearly: Once at the beginning, middle, and end of year.
DSA – Developmental spelling assessment targeting phonics knowledge. Teacher administered and scored – given whole class taking approximately 20 minutes per class.	2 times yearly: Administered at the middle of year as students demonstrate readiness for this assessment and end to all students.	3 times yearly: Once at the beginning, middle, and end of year.	3 times yearly: Once at the beginning, middle, and end of year.	3 times yearly: Once at the beginning, middle, and end of year.	3 times yearly: Once at the beginning, middle, and end of year.	3 times yearly: Once at the beginning, middle, and end of year.
RCPS Writing Rubric – Developed to accurately measure specifics strands of writing skills in the areas of thesis, organization and writing, detail and description, and usage/mechanics. Teacher administered and scored – given as writing prompts in K-2 and through whole class, small group, and individualized instruction throughout a writing unit in 3-5.	2 times yearly: Writing sample taken at the beginning and end of year.	2 times yearly: Writing sample taken at the beginning and end of year.	2 times yearly: Writing sample taken at the beginning and end of year.	2 times yearly: Teachers will guide students through essay units that define different types of writing and cover the writing process. Students’ final drafts will be included in their literacy folders.	2 times yearly: Teachers will guide students through essay units that define different types of writing and cover the writing process. Students’ final drafts will be included in their literacy folders.	2 times yearly: Teachers will guide students through essay units that define different types of writing and cover the writing process. Students’ final drafts will be included in their literacy folders.

Curriculum Mapping

Teachers in Roanoke County provide differentiated instruction on Virginia’s English Standards of Learning. The curriculum mapping provides a breakdown of these standards over the course of a year to help teachers pace their instruction and ensure all standards are taught. Each grade level literacy teacher receives a week-by-week guide that includes suggested standards in the areas of word analysis, skills/strategies for both fiction and non-fiction texts, writing/research, and oral language. In addition to the specific standards, instructional ideas, suggested materials, and questioning stems are also provided.

Literacy standards in Virginia build in complexity from one grade to another with students revisiting foundational skills year after year with increasing difficulty. The curriculum mapping mirrors that progression by beginning the year with familiar skills students have previously mastered and continue to build upon. This document is intended to be a guide that teachers can utilize based on their students’ needs. For example, teachers are able to spend more instructional time on certain standards if needed and/or speed up when students master standards at a faster pace. Review time is also built in to provide teachers with instructional flexibility.

These curriculum maps are living, breathing documents that will continue to evolve as the needs of our teachers and students change as well as our application of current research and data. Constantly reflecting on our instructional practices, scope and sequence of skills, and pacing is crucial to providing the best for our students. This reflective and evaluative process leads to the identification of what is working and what needs to be adjusted.

Instructional Focus

Literacy development is on a continuum that finds students varying widely as they grow in reading proficiency. The chart below illustrates the shift in focus from phonological awareness and fluency to vocabulary and comprehension. This shift must be driven by data, thus ensuring the proper focus for any given student. This chart is representative of the shift but is not absolute for each student or group of students. In other words, for a given group the focus may be different than the chart below.

For early-emergent and emergent readers, the focus is phonological awareness and the alphabetic principle. For the beginning-reader stage, the focus is Phonemic awareness, decoding, and automatic word recognition. For transitional learners, while continuing to work on fluency, they begin to receive strong instruction in vocabulary and comprehension. By the time they reach intermediate and advanced-reader stages, the focus has shifted completely to vocabulary and comprehension. Because instruction is based on literacy development and not age, the correlation to grade level is not absolute. There will be students in higher grades who need the focus of earlier readers and, conversely, there will be students in lower grades who are ready for a later stage focus. We must use assessment data to drive our instructional decisions about individual students.

Based on this instructional focus, the next two pages provide a suggested break down of skills and times for a language block in each grade level. You will also find resources and programs for each area when they are approved by Roanoke County Public Schools.

Suggested Literacy Block Schedules

Kindergarten Language Arts Block

Skill	Phonemic Awareness	Phonics	Comprehension	Vocabulary	Small Groups	Writing
Time	10 minutes daily	15 minutes daily	30 minutes daily		60 minutes daily	30 minutes daily
SOL	K3 a-g K6 a, b, d, e	K5 d K6 a-c K7 f, h K10 a K11 f	K1 a-j K2 a-d K5 b K8 a-e K9 a-c	K7 a-d	K4 a-e K6 a-e K8 a-e K9 a-c	K5 b, c K10 a, b K11 a-g K12 a-d

1st Grade Language Arts Block

Skill	Phonemic Awareness	Phonics/Spelling	Comprehension	Vocabulary	Small Groups	Writing
Time	10 minutes daily	15 minutes daily	30 minutes daily		60 minutes daily	30 minutes daily
SOL	1.3 a-f	1.5 a-h	1.1 a-g, j-l 1.2 a, b 1.6 b 1.9 a-h 1.10 a-g	1.1 l 1.7 a-e	1.1 h, l 1.2 c, d 1.4 a-c 1.6 a, c-e 1.8 a, b 1.9 l 1.10 d, h 1.14 a-e	1.5 a-h

2nd Grade Language Arts Block

Skill	Phonemic Awareness	Phonics/Spelling	Comprehension	Vocabulary	Small Groups	Writing
Time	10 minutes daily	15 minutes daily	30 minutes daily		60 minutes daily	30 minutes daily
SOL	2.3 a-e	2.4 a-d 2.9 a 2.11 h	2.1 a-m 2.7 a-l 2.8 a-h	2.5 a, b 2.6 b-f	2.6 a 2.7 a-l 2.8 a-h 2.9 b	2.2 a-c 2.9 a, b 2.10 a-l 2.11 a-k 2.12 a-f

3rd Grade Language Arts Block

Skill	Phonics/Spelling	Comprehension	Vocabulary	Small Groups	Writing
Time	15 minutes daily	45 minutes daily 3 days per week		60 minutes daily	45 minutes daily 2 days per week
SOL	3.3 a, b 3.7 a 3.9 j	3.1 a-h 3.5 a-m 3.6 a-j	3.4 b-g	3.4 a 3.5 a-m 3.6 a-j 3.7 b	3.2 a-f 3.7 a, b 3.8 a-g 3.9 a-k 3.10 a-f

4th Grade Language Arts Block

Skill	Phonics/Spelling	Comprehension	Vocabulary	Small Groups	Writing
Time	15 minutes daily	45 minutes daily 3 days per week		60 minutes daily	45 minutes daily 2 days per week
SOL	4.8 g	4.5 a-l 4.6 a-j	4.4 a-e	4.3 a-b 4.4 a-e 4.5 a, k, l 4.6 b, l	4.7 a-m 4.8 a-h 4.9 a-f

5th Grade Language Arts Block

Skill	Phonics/Spelling	Comprehension	Vocabulary	Small Groups	Writing
Time	15 minutes daily	45 minutes daily 3 days per week		60 minutes daily	45 minutes daily 2 days per week
SOL	5.8 j	5.5 a-m 5.5 a-k	5.4 a-f	5.3 a-c 5.4 a-f 5.5 a-k 5.6 a-l	5.7 a-l 5.8 a-k 5.9 a-f

*** Will add resources and programs when the state-approved list is available.

Small Group Lesson Plan Templates *(Examples can be found in grade level pacing guides)*

Early Phonemic Awareness and Letter Sounds

Teacher:	Group:		Week Of:		
Skill/Strategy	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Visual Drills					
Auditory Drills					
Phonemic Awareness					
Letters and Sounds					
Student Observations					

Phonemic Awareness and Phonics

Teacher:	Group:		Week Of:		
Skill/Strategy	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Warm-up Visual and Auditory Drills					
Phonemic Awareness					
Phonics Instruction					
Student Observations					

Phonics and Decoding

Teacher:	Group:		Week Of:		
Skill/Strategy	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Visual and Auditory Drills					
Phonemic Awareness + Phonics Instruction					
New Read: Decodable					
Dictation					
Student Observations					

Automatic Word Recognition (Fluency) and Comprehension

Teacher:	Group:		Week Of:		
Skill/Strategy	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Word Automaticity Phonics + Decoding					
New Read Minilesson	Title: Focus:	Title: Focus:	Title: Focus:	Title: Focus:	Title: Focus:
Before Reading Background Knowledge Vocabulary Knowledge					
During Reading Verbal Reasoning (inferences, prediction, reflection, etc.) Language Structures (syntax and sentence comprehension)					
After Reading Text Structure: Reinforce comprehension strategies, comprehension discussion					

Comprehension and Vocabulary

Teacher:	Group:		Week Of:		
Skill/Strategy	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Word Analysis					
New Read Minilesson	Title: Focus:	Title: Focus:	Title: Focus:	Title: Focus:	Title: Focus:
Before Reading Background Knowledge Vocabulary Knowledge					
During Reading Verbal Reasoning (inferences, prediction, reflection, etc.) Language Structures (syntax and sentence comprehension)					
After Reading Text Structure: Reinforce comprehension strategies, comprehension discussion					