Maryville City Schools

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Previous Update: June 30, 2025

Approved: June 25, 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

Maryville City Schools' Literacy Teachers have a long-standing commitment and evidence of success for a balanced approach of teaching reading through the Pillars of Reading – Phonics, Phonemic Awareness, Vocabulary, Fluency, and Comprehension. Our student achievement and growth data have consistently placed our students in the top of the state for ALL students as well as for subgroups.

In grades K-2, Literacy Instruction and Foundational Reading Instruction is the primary form of instruction and comprises between 2.5 – 3 hours per day. These primary teachers devote this time to Foundational Standards and Skills, inclusive of print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, word and sentence compositions, and fluency. By explicitly following the Tennessee Literacy Standards, they cover all other literacy standards, including language, comprehension, speaking, listening, and writing composition. Teaching teams unpack all grade level standards for rigor and relevancy, being selective to choose materials and resources that ensure sufficient practice and reinforcement that lead to the mastery of skills and concepts.

We believe all standards should be explicitly taught with high quality direct instruction, small group instruction focused on voluminous reading, rich writing programing, and meaningful independent practice.

The following evidence-based methods are used:

- Acquisition of language-related skills through games, nursery rhymes, and rhythmic activities to grow a child's ability to hear and manipulate sounds
- Phonemic awareness drills and exercises, such as the supplemental Heggerty Phonics and iReady Reading Tasks, to develop the auditory ability to discriminate and manipulate the differences in sounds and phonetic codes.
- Development of language, vocabulary, and comprehension skills through read-aloud, shared reading, and independent reading
- Direct, explicit phonics instruction - full immersion into alphabet and the sound/letter relationships to unlock the code of reading

- Daily practice with writing composition and spelling to support encoding along with decoding
- Small Group Instruction – explicit reading instruction and monitoring, reteaching, literacy circles, skills.
- Monitoring of independent reading – asking the right questions, checks for understanding
- Whole Group Instruction – direct, overall standards instruction
- Meaningful practice in fluency, vocabulary, phonemic awareness, phonics, and comprehension
- Devotion to time-in-text, voluminous reading, and rich, engaging text, beginning with decodable readers and expanding quickly to high quality literature.

A significant goal for teachers is to know their readers, so they can best meet the needs of each child. Student achievement and growth data drives literacy instruction. Multi-metrics are used to identify the child's areas of strength and areas to strengthen. Through direct instruction, shared reading, read-aloud, writing, small groups, writing, and independent reading, classroom teachers provide a balanced approach to supportive instruction and productive struggle. Teachers want children to fall in love with books and become lifelong readers. By staying current in best practice and professional development and accessing high quality materials and resources, teachers seek to move a child through the progression in the mastery of standards and acquisition of rich and engaging text. Individual student progress is closely monitored by classroom teachers and regularly and routinely communicated with parents.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

Maryville City Schools' Literacy Teachers have a long-standing commitment and evidence of success for a balanced approach of teaching reading through the Pillars of Reading – Phonics, Phonemic Awareness, Vocabulary, Fluency, and Comprehension. Our historical student achievement and growth data have consistently placed our students in the top of the state for all students as well as for particular subgroups. Unfortunately, our ELA Growth Scores for 4th grade dropped to scores of 1 for TVAAS in 2023, 2024, and 2025. In 2025, we saw improvement in growth for individual teachers but not enough to increase the district overall growth score.

In grades 3 - 5, Literacy Instruction comprises between 1.5 – 2.5 hours per day, depending on the grade level. Third grade teachers are assigned to elementary buildings in self-contained classrooms, spending approximately 2 hours per day in literacy instruction, including reading fluency, morphology, grammar, language, spelling, and comprehension. Fourth and fifth grade teachers are assigned to intermediate schools and provide departmentalized literacy instruction for a range of 1.5 - 2 hours each day. In addition, all teachers have a commitment to infuse literacy into their classes, especially in Social Studies where writing is an integrated skill.

The Tennessee Literacy Standards are used as the core framework. Teachers unpack these standards for rigor and relevancy, being selective to choose materials and resources that ensure mastery of skills and concepts. Teachers explicitly teach these standards through high quality direct instruction, small and large group instruction focused on voluminous reading, rich writing experiences, and meaningful independent practice. The Foundational Literacy Standards are taught both in isolation and embedded in the other literacy standards, practices, and processes.

Differentiation is applied in small groups, RTI, and through tutoring services to provide foundational reading instruction that aligns more with 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade foundational reading standards to provide intervention to close instructional gaps for individual students in phonemic awareness and phonics.

In grades 3, 4 and 5, the Foundational Skills focus on the following:

- Application of grade level phonics and word analysis skills when decoding words and in connected text. (syllables, roots, suffixes, prefixes).
- Knowledge and application of grade level phonics and word analysis when encoding words and producing writing compositions.
- Ability to read grade level text with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
- Ability to apply the appropriate rate, pace, and expression to the reading process.
- Utilization of techniques to unlock meaning - content clues, self-correction, reread as necessary.
- Application of accurate language conventions.
- Ability to unlock meaning of unknown words – context clues, affixes, reference materials, figurative language, academic and grade level vocabulary and language.

The following evidence-based methods are used:

- Development of language, vocabulary, and comprehension skills through active reading
- Direct, explicit, grade level appropriate foundational skills instruction paired with embedded instruction through the other five pillars.
- Whole Group Instruction – direct, overall standards instruction
- Small Group Instruction –literature circles, reteaching, skills, foundational reading skills, vocabulary, spelling, and fluency.
- Daily practice in writing composition
- Monitoring of independent reading – asking the right comprehension questions, checks for understanding
- Development of vocabulary through explicit and applied strategies within authentic text

Student performance achievement and growth data drives literacy instruction. Multi-metrics are used to identify the child's areas of strength and areas to strengthen. Teachers invest in knowing their readers and providing them the tools to engage in text and develop the love of reading as they move students from the continuum of learning to read to reading to learn. A strong balance and abundance of fiction and non-fiction text are provided to develop fluency, vocabulary acquisition, and comprehension. The progression in the mastery of standards is monitored by classroom teacher and regularly and routinely communicated with parents.

Additional Supports

While consistently achieving scores in overall high achievement, one grade level in the district earned growth scores at a TVAAS level of 1 for 2022-2025. Through analysis of these scores, the focus area for this grade level is with the middle and upper achievement groups. Students in the lower two achievement groups made adequate growth progress. Two subgroups, Students with

Disabilities and ELL made adequate progress as well. A similar pattern was noted for students in all other subgroups with the low achievement levels making growth gains, but the upper achievement levels not making those same gains.

A review of Achievement and Growth data for the 23-24 school year revealed the following insights. While our percent of students scoring at the on-track or mastered level in ELA has outpaced the district average, our percent of students scoring at this level since 2021-22 has fallen from 68% to 65.4%. When reviewing our subgroup performance, we have seen higher levels of achievement than the district average, except with our economically disadvantaged group. When looking at TVAAS levels (growth) for the school, we see that all students and every subgroup except for our English Language Learners are experiencing negative growth. This trend began in 2021-22 and has gotten worse each subsequent year. This trend has remained consistent across our subgroups during this time as well.

Additionally, by further analysis of TCAP data, 4th grade teachers discovered the biggest gap in gains in student writing. During the school year, 24-25, teachers analyzed writing practices, aligned instructional practices across grade levels, and increased daily writing and feedback. Teachers also attended the National Council of Teachers of English conference and procured strategies and a new writing curriculum for use in 25-26 school year. During the 25-26 school year, educators focused on writing curriculum, writing feedback and created an annual plan to implement writing benchmarks with collaborative scoring for strong feedback, alignment and professional development purposes to support a consistent writing program in 4th grade.

A recent pattern in the district has been an increase in both performance and growth for the previous grade level, sending many proficient and advanced students. Instructional adjustments need to occur for this grade level to earn both high achievement and high growth for our high performing students.

Support for literacy instruction will be provided through professional development and through additional resources. Through professional development opportunities, teachers will analyze subgroup data and respond with appropriate curricular adjustments in terms of materials and pacing. Differentiated instructional practices to meet the needs of all learners during the literacy block will be the pervasive topics of the professional learning community for English Language Arts teachers. Both horizontal and vertical collaboration conversations will occur annually to support alignment of the curriculum.

Fourth and fifth grade teachers utilized the i-Ready Reading Assessment three times per year in 25-26 school year to have consistent data across schools to ensure stronger vertical data to drive instructional tasks and supports.

Since the achievement group is not showing adequate growth, inclusive of ALL students as well as gender, economics, and race subgroups, are the students in the Proficient or Higher Achievement rankings and are considered proficient readers, specialized supports include:

- Foundational literacy –
    - An intense review of instructional resources for 4th and 5th grade students/teachers. These are the last two years these standards are included in the ELA curriculum and explicit instruction in this area is seen as an opportunity to address our weaknesses.
    - Professional Development in the inclusion of research-based explicit instruction with the foundational literacy standards. This would also include increased instruction and practice with vocabulary building including overall word study – prefixes, suffixes, and root words.
- Curriculum & Instruction-
    - Identify the Power Standards that are predominant in the TCAP Assessment and align those standards that represent a majority of the TCAP questions to drive instruction and pacing.
    - Spiral practice in reading short and long reading passages and answering questions about the text that mirror the rigor and type of achievement test questions using tools TE21 and TestNav.
    - Increase instruction and practice in Vocabulary building activities and overall word study – prefixes, suffixes, and root words
    - Increase of productive struggle and analysis of reading selections to ensure students are independently reading and comprehending grade level text and above grade level text.
    - Increase the amount of writing practice and the consistency of strategies across grade levels and schools. Continued incorporation of writing instruction and strategies related to “The Writing Revolution 2.0” resource that teachers used this past school year.
    - Leverage quality tools (Writeable, MagicSchoolAI, Red Ink, etc.) to shorten the feedback loop for high quality writing feedback for all students, select high quality text, and ensure an appropriate DOK when assessing mastery.
- Assessment-
    - Test item analysis of the TCAP Assessment Blueprints to determine the frequency of question types and the percentage of questions for those standards to increase high quality questions and rigorous student work and assignments.
    - Build and implement three benchmark writing tasks with two fourth grade level texts and prompts to assess student writing. All fourth-grade teachers will collaboratively score and provide high quality feedback to improve writing. (All three writing types will be represented.)
- Professional Development-
    - Collaborative development of writing benchmarks aligned to TN State Standards.
    - Collaboratively revising and refining the MCS Intermediate School Framework, aligning it with the MCS Elementary Framework and alignment of practices.
    - Continued and intentional vertical and horizontal planning to ensure consistent and high-quality instruction that builds on previous knowledge to ensure maximum rigor in instruction and to grow our highest achieving students.
    - I-Ready Assessment professional development to maximize assessment reports to drive personalized and small group, just in time instruction

    - Annual and ongoing training of instructional assistants to provide high quality literacy support.
    - Vertical alignment/Classroom visits to third grade classrooms along with collaborative planning sessions to lessen the temporary disruption in reading language arts related to a school transition. Adjustment and alignment of curriculum & instructional practices from 3rd to 4th grade to maximize learning growth.
- Resources-
    - Expanded minutes dedicated to literacy – Use of science and social studies instructional time realigned to spend dedicated time in text with related non-fiction texts and passages and writing instruction embedded within the courses.
    - Increased certified staffing for intervention – The addition of a part-time RTI teacher for program will allow for more consistent and higher quality interventions for these students.
    - Active interdisciplinary literacy instruction into other core content areas; especially science and SS but also in STEM and appropriate encore classes.
    - Leverage trained instructional teaching assistants to provide strong literacy support to 4th grade students during their literacy block.

The district goals for literacy are growth scores earning a TVAAS score of five for every grade level.

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2
Scholastic Literacy *(approved waiver)*

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5
Scholastic Literacy *(approved waiver)*

Supplemental Instructional Materials
Heggerty Phonics
iReady Reading Tasks

Universal Reading Screener for Grades K-5
i-Ready Suite K-5
Our district also administers the Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (aimswebPlus) to students in third grade for the Spring Benchmark.

Supplemental Screeners
Our supplemental screeners include Aimsweb, STAR, and FastBridge.

Intervention Structure and Supports
Maryville works diligently to follow the guidance outlined in Tennessee's RTI framework manual to identify students with reading delays and provide interventions to remedy weaknesses so all students can be successful readers. High-quality Tier I instruction is critical to the foundation of the district's RTI^2 model in coordination with a problem-solving approach to meet individual student

needs. Universal screening measures are employed regularly to all students in K-8. Those students identified as “at-risk” or as having a significant reading deficiency who have failed to make sufficient progress with Tier I classroom interventions are referred to Tier II interventions following a multi-metric review of data including universal screening measures. Collaborative RTI^2 data review support teams collect and analyze data and recommend Tier I, II, and III interventions specific to meeting students’ individual needs.

Tier II supports are typically provided with a pull-out, direct intervention model and are consistently provided in addition to Tier I supports. Interventions are research-based and specifically address a student’s area of deficit. Examples of Tier II intervention programs include, but are not limited to, Funemics, Systematic Phonics, Wilson: Fundations, RISE, Journeys, Sidewalks, and Marie Carbo. Intervention is provided in a small group setting with trained personnel for at least 30 minutes daily. Interventions are implemented with fidelity and selected programs/instruction are adjusted to support student progress.

Tier III supports are the most intensive of the RTI^2 interventions and occur in addition to Tier I supports. Referral to Tier III is based on regular analysis of progress monitoring data indicating a student is failing to make adequate progress based on Tier II supports. Tier III intervention is more rigorous in nature with programs such as Stepping Stones, PALS, R.I.S.E., Signs for Sounds, Heggerty Phonics, Systematic Phonics, Marie Carbo, and iSpire. Explicit daily instruction for Tier III is provided by trained personnel in smaller, more intensive groups. Students who fail to adequately respond to Tier III instruction may be referred for a special education evaluation. Tier III intervention for grades K-8 has a duration of at least 45 minutes daily. Interventions are implemented with fidelity and selected programs/instruction are adjusted to support student progress.

The intervention framework is built on providing increasing intensity of support based on student progress. RTI services are in addition to grade level instruction and do not replace strong Tier 1 differentiated instruction provided in the general education classroom. Tier 2 and Tier 3 services occur in addition to grade level content instruction through evidence-based instruction. RTI^2 intervention is a protected and scheduled time at each school. Students receiving Tier 2 and Tier 3 academic services are monitored weekly with progress monitoring assessments in academic areas of weakness. School-based support teams review student progress for Tiers 2 and 3 every 4.5 weeks as well. The purpose of these reviews is to identify students who are not making satisfactory progress to explore new intervention strategies and tools or consider a change in tiered support. For students who are making strong progress, a consideration to drop tiers is explored.

Intervention tools are selected based on the students’ specific area of need. Students who indicate characteristics of dyslexia are provided dyslexia-specific interventions. Progress monitoring occurs in the areas of need to close instructional gaps.

All the teaching assistants and tutors in grades K-7 have been trained using the Tennessee’s All Core Tutoring Course. Tutoring support is provided as defined by the State. As with RTI support, student

performance and growth data are routinely tracked for students receiving tutoring. Collaboration occurs regularly and routinely between tutors, assistants, and certified teachers.

Additional supports provided by the school district include regular training for RTI, regular education teachers and special education staff on reading intervention instruction, dyslexia-specific interventions, research-based reading methodology, and differentiation strategies. Schools offer additional before and after school tutoring supports with an emphasis on reading.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

Maryville City Schools follows the processes and procedures in the Response to Intervention (RTI^2) Model regarding universal screening, provision of RTI Tiered Support, progress monitoring, and parent communication. Beginning in elementary school, children participate in universal screening three times per year (fall, winter, spring) and upon transferring to MCS for the first time. For reading, the district selected iReady Reading Assessment is administered as the Universal Screening tool administered to grades K-5. Within the general classroom structures, or Tier 1, students are provided layers of support and services through high quality materials and resources, differentiated instruction, and teaching assistant support in every elementary classroom. Families receive the universal screening data reports after each administration as well as reviewing and discussing these reports during open houses, family meetings, and parent conferences. Any identified concerns in Tier 1 instruction are conveyed through work and assessment samples. Recommendations are made, support plans are built, and structures are added in hopes to close gaps and remedy delays.

While the universal screener is critical to referral to RTI and screening for Dyslexia, Maryville City Schools utilizes a multi-metric approach to identifying students with significant reading deficiencies, characteristics of dyslexia, and potential reading disabilities. Students scoring below the 40th percentile are placed on a radar list for teachers and often provided additional assessments and differentiated instruction to best meet their needs. Students typically falling below the 25th percentile on the universal screener in reading will be strongly considered for RTI services and will receive additional benchmarking and progress monitoring assessments using AIMSWeb Plus and additional survey level assessment and screeners as needed. Students who demonstrate characteristics of Dyslexia on the Universal Screening Assessments are administered additional assessments for consideration of an ILP-D. If the student meets criteria for an ILP-D, parent communication is explicitly provided, and the ILP-D is recorded in TN-PULSE. Based on a multi-metric review of data on and teacher input, school level student impact/data review teams may refer students performing below the 25th percentile in reading for the RTI Program. Families are provided the student performance and growth assessment data along with a notice for the recommendation to the RTI program. Parents receive reports of achievement and growth/regression at least every four weeks during the school year. As students may travel up the RTI tiers, consistent communication is provided to define the tiers and the level of service associated with each one. These communication packages include suggested intervention activities as well as the interventions being provided by the school.

Communication Tools include

- Universal Reading Data Reports – provided three times per year. These data reports are provided in family friendly language with graphs to help families understand the reports. Includes clear communication on the instructional gaps and the depth of student need.
- Home Reports – provided three times per year with the data reports for students in grades K-3 and at least annually in grades 4-5.
    - Details student scores in a family-friendly language
    - Provides clear explanation of skill gaps and the depth and extend of student need
    - Provides information about how those gaps will be addressed during intervention
    - Information about the importance of learning to read by 3rd grade
    - Free, reading intervention activities for at-home use
    - Provides the Promotion Pathway for students in grade 3
- Dyslexia Screener Reports – provided for identified ILP-D students through TN-PULSE
- RTI Communication includes the initial invitation to RTI with regular reporting at a minimum of 4.5 weeks, detailing the interventions and how skill gaps will be addressed
- Quarterly Report Cards and Standards Mastery Reporting
- Third and Fourth Grade Retention Communication Bulletins detailing the TDOE process and including the TDOE Pathways for Promotion document – minimum of three times per year for all students; increased provision of the Pathways for Promotion Communication Bulletin for students indicating trajectory of non-proficiency on the ELA portion of TCAPS.
- Email and Voice Mail communication to all families on the 3rd and 4th grade retention list to provide updates regarding the ELA TCAP scores as well as appeals and pathways.
- Weekly and on-going communication through Friday Folders, email, and SeeSaw App
- Parent Conferences as needed

Modes of communication include family letters, parent conferences, website information, phone calls, emails, and texts. Teachers are mindful and thoughtful in parent communication to provide many opportunities for communication in understanding the promotion law, dyslexia screening, tutoring, and Response to Intervention. For these reasons, communication is a labor-intensive process to provide that personal touch of compassion and support through face-to-face conversations and phone calls.

Professional Development Plan

All K-5 teachers in Maryville City Schools have completed the Early Reading Training as provided by the TDOE and as noted as a licensure requirement. It is the principal's responsibility in these grades to ensure all newly hired teachers have completed that training and are current with that expectation.

Annual Professional Development is based upon the review of Needs Assessment and data analysis. Areas to strengthen are itemized and professional development is structured to align with the areas of need. Smart Goals are determined and provided to the Director of Schools before the opening of a new school year. In addition, professional development is personalized for every teacher through the Tiger Teacher Evaluation Process. Each teacher analyzes the data to identify growth areas. Administrators' goals are to reduce the variability among teachers, so administrators help teachers

develop professional development growth plans that attend to low student performance and/or growth as well as other factors that are evidenced in the needs assessment.

Throughout the year, schools continue to provide on-going training that supplements and supports the literacy course – focusing on foundational skills instruction grounded in a phonics-based approach. Instruction is provided in phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary.

In grades K-3, for the 2026-2027 school year, there will be follow-up to last year's focus on Teacher Clarity through learning targets and success criteria. Teachers will anchor their work from the revised district's K-3 Maryville City Schools Literacy Framework Snapshots. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) will continue to reinforce and center their conversations on Hattie's Research and use his guiding questions below to frame their work.

- What am I learning?
- Why am I learning it?
- How will I know that I learned it?

A critical focus for next year will be shifting the focus from teacher actions to student actions and thinking. Time will be spent on examining instructional plans to prioritize increased student engagement where students are doing the work. Teachers will analyze their own talk time against student engagement and rigorous work time. They will focus on creating activities that require thinking and problem solving. Student work will be examined as evidence for this rigor. Additional professional learning will focus on the following:

- Balanced Learning/Instructional Modalities
- Maximizing Increased Time in Text
- Writing to Strengthen Reading
- Student Accountability and Goal Setting
- Selecting Best Technology Integration Strategies
- Instructional Flow

All new K-3 Teaching Assistants will participate in the TDOE Tutoring Training and unpack the concepts of that training, focusing on effective techniques for closing instructional gaps. All K-3 Teaching Assistants will participate in literacy training to learn strategies to support classroom instruction and maximize increased reading proficiency in foundational reading for younger students and fluency and comprehension for proficient readers.

Professional development specific to improving 4th grade literacy growth includes the following:

- Analyze subgroup data to create a response plan with appropriate curricular adjustments in terms of materials and pacing. Both horizontal and vertical collaboration conversations will occur annually to support alignment of the curriculum.
- Develop strategies for research-based explicit instruction with foundational literacy standards. This would also include increased instruction and practice with vocabulary building including overall word study – prefixes, suffixes, and root words.

- Leverage quality tools (Writeable, MagicSchoolAI, Red Ink, etc.) to shorten the feedback loop for high quality writing feedback for all students, select high quality text, and ensure an appropriate DOK when assessing mastery.
- Build and implement three benchmark writing tasks with two fourth grade level texts and prompts to assess student writing. All fourth-grade teachers will collaboratively score and provide high quality feedback to improve writing. (All three writing types will be represented.)
- Collaboratively revising and refining the MCS Intermediate School Framework, aligning it with the MCS Elementary Framework and alignment of practices.
- Continued and intentional vertical and horizontal planning to ensure consistent and high-quality instruction that builds on previous knowledge to ensure maximum rigor in instruction and to grow our highest achieving students.
- I-Ready Assessment professional development to maximize assessment reports to drive personalized and small group, just in time instruction
- Annual and ongoing training of instructional assistants to provide high quality literacy support.
- Vertical alignment/Classroom visits to third grade classrooms along with collaborative planning sessions to lessen the temporary disruption in reading language arts related to a school transition. Adjustment and alignment of curriculum & instructional practices from 3rd to 4th grade to maximize learning growth.