

Cocke County Schools

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Last Updated: June 14, 2024

Approved: June 25, 2025

This Foundational Literacy Skills Plan has been approved by the Tennessee Department of Education and meets the requirements of the *Tennessee Literacy Success Act*. All portions of the Foundational Literacy Skills plan were submitted to the department and approved. To view the supplemental artifacts, please contact the district directly.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades K-2

Our CKLA (Core Knowledge Language Arts) foundational literacy instruction is fully aligned with the Tennessee Academic Standards and includes a minimum of 45 minutes of daily instruction dedicated specifically to foundational skills. In our K–2 classrooms, this instruction is the primary mode of literacy teaching and is delivered through a dedicated skills block lasting no less than 60 minutes each day.

The CKLA Skills Strand provides explicit instruction and ample student practice in all essential areas of foundational literacy: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Key instructional components include systematic decoding and encoding, direct teaching of letter-sound correspondences, phoneme segmentation, and application through modeled and independent practice. Students engage daily in oral practice, written work using individual code charts and reading to support fluency and comprehension.

Our district remains committed to strengthening CKLA implementation. In the upcoming school year, collaborative PLCs for K–2 teachers will focus on refining instructional practices, and teachers will integrate new learning from the Tennessee Early Literacy training completed this summer. Additionally, our schedule ensures a minimum of 90 minutes daily for phonics instruction and at least 60 minutes for CKLA core knowledge development.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

Our district has adopted the CKLA (Core Knowledge Language Arts) curriculum for grades 3–5 to ensure a comprehensive, evidence-based approach to literacy instruction that aligns with the Tennessee Academic Standards. The CKLA program is approved by the Tennessee Textbook and Instructional Materials Quality Commission and fully supports the state’s foundational literacy skills expectations for upper elementary grades.

In grades 3–5, students receive a minimum of 30 minutes of daily instruction in foundational literacy skills, which may be embedded within or delivered as a separate component of the ELA block. Instruction includes explicit, systematic teaching and student practice in morphology, grammar,

spelling, writing, and fluency. These skills are not taught in isolation but are intentionally woven throughout the daily CKLA lessons to promote continuity and meaning-making. Fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension are explicitly addressed in every domain, with instructional scaffolds and opportunities for students to apply skills in reading and writing tasks.

For example, in the fifth-grade unit on Chemical Matter, students begin by activating prior knowledge and engaging with grade-level complex text, either through teacher-led read-alouds or independent reading. Instructional activities include targeted vocabulary work (“word work”), scaffolded comprehension questions, think-pair-share discussions, and written responses to inferential prompts that require text-based evidence. These activities reinforce word knowledge, comprehension, and analytical writing while supporting oral language development.

CKLA's embedded foundational skills instruction aligns with the research-based best practices outlined in the Tennessee Foundational Literacy Skills Plan. Explicit fluency instruction is provided using grade-appropriate materials. In third grade, teachers dedicate 10–15 minutes daily to fluency work using CKLA's fluency notebooks. In fourth and fifth grades, fluency support is individualized based on student need and implemented using CKLA-provided resources.

Writing instruction is deeply embedded within every domain, with students regularly drafting, revising, and editing written responses based on text. Grammar and spelling are integrated through direct instruction and application within writing tasks. Morphological awareness is developed through the study of prefixes, suffixes, root words, and word origins, supporting vocabulary growth and reading comprehension.

Our district remains committed to continuous improvement in foundational skills instruction. We are using common PLCs to support collaboration, shared analysis of student work, and refinement of instructional practices. Additionally, insights from the Tennessee Early Literacy training will further strengthen our approach to teaching foundational skills in grades 3–5, ensuring that all students build the strong literacy foundation necessary for future success.

Additional Supports

To address low 4th grade ELA TVAAS scores, our district is implementing a focused, evidence-based literacy plan to improve student outcomes.

Core Tier I instruction in grades 3–5 uses the CKLA (Core Knowledge Language Arts) curriculum, aligned with Tennessee Academic Standards and approved by the state Textbook Commission. CKLA provides explicit, daily instruction in foundational skills—including morphology, grammar, spelling, writing, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension—with at least 30 minutes dedicated to foundational literacy within the 90-minute ELA block.

For students who require additional support, we provide Tier II and Tier III interventions using research-based programs such as Heggerty Phonemic Awareness, Read 180, S.P.I.R.E., and CKLA Reading small-group supports. These programs offer systematic, explicit instruction tailored to individual student needs. Students exhibiting characteristics of dyslexia, as determined by screening, receive targeted interventions, and families are notified of the support being provided.

Our RTI² data teams meet every 4.5 weeks to evaluate progress-monitoring data and make informed decisions about interventions. Decisions may include adjusting the instructional approach, changing the interventionist, or increasing time in intervention based on individual student progress and needs.

To strengthen core instruction, we are also providing professional development aligned to the Tennessee Early Literacy training and supporting teacher collaboration through PLCs. These efforts aim to reinforce foundational literacy skills in upper elementary grades and close achievement gaps for all student groups.

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2

Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5

Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts

Supplemental Instructional Materials

Materials from the Best for ALL Central Hub

Universal Reading Screener for Grades K-5

Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (aimswebPlus) K-5

Supplemental Screeners

Based off the scores of students, we further screen with PASS and PWRS for students below the 25th percentile.

Intervention Structure and Supports

Our district is committed to providing high-quality, differentiated reading interventions through a structured RTI² framework that aligns with the updated Tennessee RTI² Manual. We have established comprehensive Tier II and Tier III systems that support students who struggle with reading, ensuring interventions are timely, targeted, and research based.

Tier II supports are provided to students who are not making adequate progress in the core ELA curriculum and who score below benchmark criteria in one or more foundational skill areas. These students receive small-group instruction focused on their specific areas of deficit. Intervention is scheduled daily for 30 minutes, in addition to the 90-minute core literacy block, ensuring instructional time meets the expectations outlined in the RTI² Manual.

Tier II instruction in grades K–2 focuses heavily on phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, fluency, and early comprehension skills. In grades 3–5, interventions include support for morphology, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary, depending on students' identified needs. Intervention groups typically range from 3–5 students, and the content is aligned to foundational literacy standards.

Primary intervention materials used for Tier II include: Heggerty Phonemic Awareness (K–2), CKLA Skills Strand, Small Group Supports (K–5), S.P.I.R.E. (1–5), Read 180 (3–5), and Phonics for Reading (2–5). These materials are evidence-based and implemented with fidelity. Instruction is delivered by trained interventionists, which may include classroom teachers, specialized Title I teachers, or intervention personnel.

Students who do not show sufficient progress or score below benchmark criteria are considered for Tier III services. Tier III instruction is more explicit, intensive, and individualized, targeting the most critical skill gaps based on diagnostic and progress-monitoring data.

Tier III intervention is scheduled for 45–60 minutes daily and is delivered in very small groups (1–3 students). Instruction is targeted and diagnostic, with more frequent progress monitoring (weekly or biweekly) to track growth and inform instructional decisions.

Primary Tier III intervention programs include: S.P.I.R.E. (highly structured, multisensory phonics-based program), CKLA Intervention Groups with Targeted Supports, and Read 180/System 44 Phonics for Reading. These programs are implemented by interventionists trained in specialized reading strategies and structured literacy methods. Instruction is scaffolded, repeated, and adapted based on student data, with a strong emphasis on closing specific skill gaps in decoding, encoding, comprehension, fluency, or vocabulary.

All students receiving Tier II or Tier III services are progress monitored using Aimsweb Plus®. Monitoring frequency follows RTI² guidelines: every two weeks for Tier II students and weekly for Tier III students. The assessments are aligned to students' targeted areas of deficit to measure skill-specific growth. School-based RTI² data teams meet every 4.5 weeks to review all student progress data, determine effectiveness of current interventions, and decide whether changes are needed. These changes may include adjusting the intervention program or materials, changing the group size or intensity, assigning a different interventionist, or increasing the amount of intervention time. Each RTI² data team includes the RTI² Coordinator, classroom teacher(s), principal or curriculum coordinator, intervention teacher, guidance counselor, and, when appropriate, the school psychologist, instructional coach, or parent. All decisions are made collaboratively with a focus on student outcomes and equity of support.

Students who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia on universal screeners are flagged for additional supports. These students receive evidence-based, phonics-focused interventions such as S.P.I.R.E. or CKLA Skills Support. Families are notified of screening results and informed about the specific intervention their child will receive. These supports are monitored closely through the RTI² process.

Implementation fidelity is a priority at both Tier II and Tier III levels. All interventionists are trained in the curriculum they deliver, and fidelity checks are conducted periodically by instructional coaches and building-level RTI² leads. Documentation logs are maintained to track attendance, instructional minutes, and delivery methods. School leaders provide feedback to interventionists and ensure that students are receiving consistent, high-quality support.

Teachers and interventionists receive ongoing professional learning in foundational literacy, intervention delivery, and data analysis. PLCs meet weekly to review student data, co-plan interventions, and share effective practices. All schools are supported by district literacy coaches and RTI² coordinators who provide guidance, training, and fidelity monitoring. Additionally, many teachers have completed or are currently completing Tennessee Early Literacy Training, which reinforces structured literacy practices and builds capacity for effective reading intervention across tiers.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

Our district implements a comprehensive home literacy report process to keep families informed and engaged in their child's reading development. We prioritize clear, family-friendly communication that supports collaboration between home and school to improve literacy outcomes.

Families of students in grades K–5 are notified immediately following the fall universal screener if their child is identified as “at-risk” for a significant reading deficiency. The home literacy report includes an easy-to-understand explanation of the student's reading skill gaps, including the depth and extent of the need. Specific information is provided about the foundational areas in which the student is struggling—such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, or comprehension—and the student's current performance relative to grade-level expectations.

The report also outlines the reading intervention the student will receive, including the name of the evidence-based program, the frequency and duration of instruction, and how the intervention will target the student's identified skill deficits. Parents are informed that progress is reviewed every 4.5 weeks through our RTI² process and that changes to the intervention may occur based on progress monitoring data. After each data review, families receive updates on their child's progress or lack of progress, and any instructional changes being implemented.

To support learning at home, the home literacy report includes a list of free, no-cost activities aligned to the student's area of need. These may include phonics games, fluency passages, read-aloud strategies, and vocabulary-building questions. We emphasize how these activities can reinforce skills practiced in the classroom.

Every home literacy report also includes information on the importance of achieving reading proficiency by the end of third grade. This section highlights how early reading success impacts long-term academic achievement, graduation rates, and future opportunities. Additionally, for students in grades 3 and 4 who are not on track, the report outlines the pathways for 4th grade promotion, helping families understand their options and next steps under Tennessee law.

Our district is committed to ongoing family engagement throughout the year. Families of students in grades K–3 receive home literacy reports at least three times per year—after the fall, winter, and spring universal screeners. In addition, they receive mid-cycle updates if any changes are made during the 4.5-week data team reviews. For students in grades 4–5, families are notified at least annually and receive a detailed report if reading concerns persist.

These ongoing communication efforts ensure families are informed, supported, and empowered to partner with schools in promoting strong literacy development for every student.

Professional Development Plan

For the upcoming school year, our district will provide all K–5 teachers with targeted professional development in foundational literacy skills instruction, grounded in the Tennessee Early Reading Training Course. This training will serve as the foundation, with additional district-level support designed in partnership with the CORE Office and TNTP to ensure effective implementation of high-quality instructional materials (HQIM), particularly CKLA.

Professional learning will begin with a quarter-day orientation to CKLA’s Foundational Skills materials, focusing on how resources are organized and how to implement instructional routines for phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary. Teachers will observe model lessons and practice using the Instructional Practice Guide (IPG) tool to identify strong instruction.

To deepen teacher capacity, the district will provide training on unit-level intellectual preparation (quarter-day) and lesson-level preparation (half-day), using a backward design approach. Teachers will engage in structured planning and apply this to CKLA’s first unit/module and weekly lesson plans.

Ongoing support will include collaborative lesson rehearsals and feedback sessions focused on upcoming units, allowing teachers to refine practice and share work samples with peers.

The district will monitor implementation and provide coaching support through instructional walkthroughs using the IPG tool, ensuring alignment between training and classroom instruction. These efforts will ensure every K–5 teacher is equipped to deliver high-quality, foundational literacy instruction aligned with Tennessee standards.

Cocke County Schools

Schools: Bridgeport, Centerview, Cosby, Edgemont, Del Rio, Grassy Fork, Northwest, Parrottsville, and Smoky Mountain.