

Memphis Merit Academy Charter School

Foundational Literacy Skills Plan

Last Updated: July 1, 2024

Approved: June 11, 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

Memphis Merit Academy Charter School utilizes Amplify's CKLA program which is rooted in the foundational framework established in our charter application, emphasizing early literacy development principles such as phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary acquisition, fluency, and comprehension. At Memphis Merit Academy, we integrate research-based strategies to create a comprehensive and effective reading ecosystem. Our commitment to excellence and instructional equity is demonstrated by implementing a research-aligned curriculum, assessments, and instructional practices that aim to disrupt inequities and provide high-quality educational experiences. CKLA's literacy instruction is grounded in the science of reading research, which includes neuroscience, linguistics, and classroom-based research studies. The eight evidence-based elements of reading and literacy instruction at MMA are phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, language, and knowledge building. Reading and writing are taught explicitly with scaffolding, creating diverse opportunities for students to read and comprehend. Students thrive when teachers consistently use high-quality literature.

In each classroom, students are engaged in direct instruction in Foundational Skills, Oral Practice, and Reading Comprehension with an interventionist's support. Students will transition through 30-minute rotations daily, participating in teacher-led small group instruction from Monday to Friday. They will engage in each component of the science of reading, including Phonics, Phonological Awareness, Phonics, Decoding, Vocabulary, Comprehension, and Fluency, for a total of 215 minutes per day. In the early grades (K-2), scholars are provided with explicit, systematic, cumulative, diagnostic, and responsive word recognition instruction from the start of kindergarten. This approach ensures all students learn to decode and read fluently by the end of Grade 2.

Our implementation of a research-aligned curriculum is shaping student success and ensuring consistent engagement and optimism in literacy. We know that a firm foundation in literacy is formed and supported by the following structures:

- **Tier I:** Whole group instruction is supported with a teacher and interventionists helping scholars begin their development into fluent readers and grounding them in

language comprehension.

- **Tier II:** Scholars are fully supported on the skill-level deficit. Based on the scholar's universal screening data in conjunction with other available data, scholars in grades K-8 will participate in 30-minute intervention group sessions daily to deepen and remediate skills in the following areas: letter naming fluency, letter word sounds fluency, phoneme segmentation, nonsense word fluency, oral reading fluency, reading comprehension and written expression.
- **Tier III:** Scholars participate in 45-minute intervention groups, targeting the same skill areas as Tier II. This tier provides more intensive support to ensure every student can succeed.

By adhering to these structures and consistently monitoring progress, MMA ensures that all students receive the support they need to thrive in literacy, laying a strong foundation for their future academic success.

Daily Foundational Literacy Skills Instruction in Grades 3-5

Memphis Merit Academy Charter School's Grade 3-5 literacy program is meticulously designed to ensure a comprehensive and engaging learning experience for students. The literacy block, scheduled for 60 minutes each day from Monday to Friday, aims to develop foundational skills essential for proficient reading. Our curriculum choice for grades 3-4 is Amplify's CKLA, while we use Great Minds, Wit & Wisdom for grade 5. Each day's lesson is designed to last between 50 to 80 minutes, with any embedded foundational skills lessons exceeding the 60-minute block continued during the Listening and Learning block on the same day. Detailed guidance on the timing for each portion of the literacy block is provided in the "Unit Overview" section of each CKLA Skills Unit Teacher Guide. This comprehensive Teacher Guide outlines learning objectives, provides background information, includes daily lesson plans, assessments, and various resources essential for teaching the Skills unit.

The program uses 100% decodable texts in the Student Reader, offering children an authentic reading experience and reinforcing their sense of success by eliminating distractions from untaught spelling patterns. Written in the style of chapter books, these texts inspire children to read more. Additionally, the Student Workbook includes activity pages that provide practice or reinforcement of skills taught in the unit, along with graphic organizers, assessment tasks, and take-home activities. The Assessment and Remediation Guide supports re-teaching and reinforcement of grade-level objectives not mastered in Skill Strand lessons. This online-only resource assists teachers in determining students' needs, selecting targeted activities and materials, adjusting instructional difficulty, and monitoring progress. This creates continuity between core classroom instruction and support instruction.

In small groups throughout the week, students receive support with foundational skills using UFLI (Tier 2 and 3) during the Reading Workshop. UFLI is an explicit and systematic program designed to ensure students systematically acquire each needed skill and apply it with automaticity and confidence. Another integral part of our program is the Orton-Gillingham Approach (Tier 2 and 3), a direct, explicit, multisensory, structured, sequential, diagnostic, and prescriptive method for teaching

literacy. This approach is particularly effective for individuals who struggle with reading, writing, and spelling, such as those with dyslexia. It is based on a body of time-tested knowledge and scientific evidence about how individuals learn to read and write, addressing the specific challenges faced by those with dyslexia.

For data-driven instruction, the I-Ready Teacher Toolbox (Tier 2 and 3) is used, providing small group interventions and support during the Reading Workshop.

This digital collection of standards-based resources helps teachers introduce new concepts, reteach standards, or assist students in learning prerequisite skills from earlier grades. The Teacher Toolbox includes digital access to Ready Reading, Reading Writing, and Magnetic Reading materials.

Our 3-5 instruction aligns with TN standards and includes morphology, grammar, spelling, writing, and fluency. Explicit supports for fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension are also provided.

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades K-2

Amplify CKLA

Approved Instructional Materials for Grades 3-5

Amplify CKLA grades 3-4

Great Minds, Wit & Wisdom grade 5

Supplemental Instructional Materials

At Memphis Merit Academy Charter School, students benefit from a robust support system designed to enhance their reading skills. The school employs the iReady Teacher Toolbox for both Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, ensuring that students receive targeted assistance Monday through Friday. These interventions are integrated into the Reading Workshop and consist of small group sessions focused on foundational skills. This digital collection of standards-based resources is instrumental in providing data-driven instruction, enabling teachers to introduce new concepts, reteach standards, or help students grasp prerequisite skills from earlier grades. The Teacher Toolbox for ELA seamlessly complements the i-Ready program and can also supplement the core ELA curriculum. It includes digital access to Ready Reading, Reading Writing, and Magnetic Reading materials.

Additionally, the school implements the Orton-Gillingham Approach for students requiring more intensive literacy support. This approach is known for its direct, explicit, multisensory, structured, sequential, diagnostic, and prescriptive methods, making it particularly effective for individuals who struggle with reading, writing, and spelling, such as those with dyslexia. The Orton-Gillingham Approach is not a mere method or program but a comprehensive approach that offers flexibility and depth when utilized by a well-trained instructor. It draws from a body of knowledge validated over the past 80 years and scientific evidence on how individuals learn to read and write, the challenges they face, particularly with dyslexia, and the best instructional practices to address these difficulties.

The school also incorporates the UFLI program for Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, with sessions held from Monday through Friday. These small group interventions, conducted during the Reading Workshop, focus on teaching students the foundational skills necessary for proficient reading. UFLI's explicit and systematic program follows a carefully developed scope and sequence, ensuring that students systematically acquire and apply each reading skill with automaticity and confidence.

Universal Reading Screener for Grades K-5

Our K-5 Universal Reading Screener is iReady. This screener assesses students in the following reading areas: letter names, letter sounds, phonemic segmenting, nonsense words, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension.

We also administer the Tennessee Universal Reading Screener (aimswebPlus) to students in third grade for the Spring Benchmark.

Intervention Structure and Supports

In alignment with Tennessee's RTI framework, we will administer the iReady Diagnostic and literacy tasks to K-6 students three times per year (Fall, Winter, Spring). We will use a triangulation of data to determine Tier groups for RTI² placement and use iReady along with historical and current student data to compare data for placement of our students in the RTI² model. We review the iReady benchmark data within one week of administration; students performing at or below the 40th percentile in one or more areas will then receive further assessment with iReady so that we can determine scholar placement of Tiers for instruction and intervention. MMA will monitor scholar reading levels through the administration of iReady benchmark and weekly curriculum assessments 3 times per year.

MMA's Approach to Dyslexia Screening Process

Step 1. MMA will administer a nationally normed assessment, as a part of the universal screening process three times a year to further triangulate data and determine student deficiencies and areas of focus for intervention. The assessment areas will also include assessment of basic reading, reading fluency, and written expression.

Step 2. MMA RTI² data team will consider the results of the skills-based universal screener and curriculum weekly and module assessments, teacher observations, grades, formative assessments, summative assessments, and other relevant family medical history or information. MMA will consider any additional requests for screenings for dyslexia.

Step 3. MMA RTI² data team will identify "at risk": students based on the multiple sources of data, survey level and/or diagnostic assessments to determine student intervention needs. The assessments will measure phonological and phonemic awareness, sound symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding skills, rapid naming, and encoding skills.

Step 4-5. The RTI² team makes decisions about interventions, accommodations, etc. using progress monitoring data where decisions on changes to the intensity, duration, or materials of a student's

intervention are made if the student is not showing progress. Parent notification will be made after the screening process and the intervention plan with Tiered Instruction will be implemented based on student skill-deficit areas as identified by the universal screener, iReady.

Memphis Merit Academy Charter School students receive hybrid instruction - both direct and computer based RTI Instruction, Monday through Friday. Tier II students receive 30 minutes of skills targeted instruction and Tier III students receive 45 minutes.

Tier 2 and Tier 3 scholars will receive intervention with the following ratios:

Tier II :

- Ratios: K-5 (1:5), 6-8 (1:6)
- Intervention Time: 30 minutes per day
- Frequency: 5 days per week, totaling 150 minutes per week
- Structure: **Daily** 30-minute teacher-led sessions
- Progress Monitoring: Weekly

Tier III :

- Ratios: K-5 (1:3), 6-8 (1:4)
- Intervention Time: 45 minutes per day
- Frequency: 5 days per week, totaling 225 minutes per week
- Structure: **Daily** 45-minute teacher-led sessions
- Progress Monitoring: Weekly

This structured approach ensures that all students, particularly those requiring additional help, receive focused and effective instruction to improve their literacy skills.

Parent Notification Plan/Home Literacy Reports

At Memphis Merit Academy Charter School, parental communication is a vital component of our approach to supporting student literacy. After each universal reading screener, parents receive a detailed letter outlining their child's specific reading deficits and what these entail. Additionally, parents are updated monthly on their child's progress over the previous four weeks. Every 5-6 weeks, parents are informed about their child's progress in Tier I literacy instruction as measured by a curriculum assessment.

For students in kindergarten through 3rd grade, and as we expand to higher grades, the school identifies those "at risk" for reading deficiencies—students scoring in the 0-40th percentile and classified as Tier II or Tier III in the RTI² framework. At the conclusion of the universal screening process, parents are notified through a detailed letter and updates on the scholar's progress report and report cards. This parent letter uses accessible language, provides resources, and outlines next steps to support their child's reading development.

The letter includes the child's current reading level, specific deficiencies, the school's plan of action to address these areas, and no cost resources for parents to use at home. We emphasize the critical importance of achieving reading proficiency by the third grade, explaining that children who read at

grade level by this milestone are more likely to graduate from high school, pursue and complete post-secondary education, and maintain gainful employment in the future. We also share promotion pathway information. This literacy letter is provided a minimum of three times a year for K-3 and annually for 4-5. Memphis Merit Academy is committed to providing the necessary support to ensure each child can reach these important outcomes.

Professional Development Plan

At Memphis Merit Academy Charter School, coaching and professional learning are meticulously structured to enhance literacy instruction. Teachers participate in 60-minute internalization sessions weekly to prepare for upcoming units, with Grade 3 teachers following specific CKLA protocols. Data internalization meetings are held every Monday after school to review previous lesson data, ensuring teachers are well-prepared for future lessons. Coaches conduct weekly observations, providing real-time feedback and logging observations in SchoolMint, with additional support for priority teachers through dedicated coaching meetings. Monthly system walkthroughs align literacy leaders on action plans, while practice clinics guide teachers in delivering lesson content. System PD Days, held three times a month, cover testing administration, mandatory training, and staff meetings. The weekly schedule includes a mix of in-school activities like coach pop-ins and admin team 1:1s, and after-school sessions for data internalization, practice clinics, tutoring, and RTI Data Meetings, ensuring comprehensive support for both teachers and students. Our teachers have also completed or will complete TDOE's Reading 360 Early Reading Training.

Additional Comments

Memphis Merit Academy's Authorizer is Memphis Shelby County Schools.