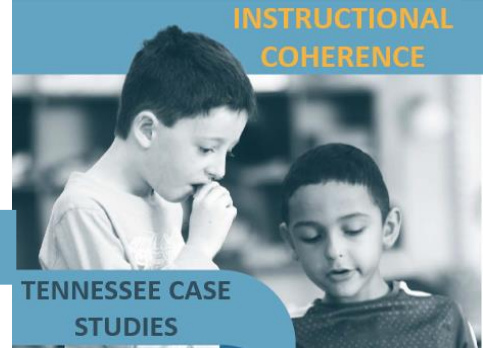# EARLY LITERACY SUCCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS:
## A COHERENT PATH FORWARD

OVERVIEW

During the 2022-23 school year, a group of four Tennessee districts sought support to work toward the shared goal of sustainably scaling their high-dosage tutoring (HDT) programs in first- through third-grade literacy. They oriented their work around a theory of change that focused on integrating their HDT programs into their system's long-term academic, staffing, and funding strategies. Over the course of the year, district efforts focused on:

- **Considering a new vision for student academic support in early grades literacy** that would be grounded in the research on reading, instructionally coherent to the assessments and materials from core instruction, and aligned to the research on high-dosage tutoring

- **Developing foundational skills mastery trackers** aligned to the assessments and materials from core instruction to track student progress and facilitate collaboration between certified educators, tutors, and interventionists

- **Designing and implementing a small instructional coherence pilot** to incorporate use of foundational skills diagnostics assessments, trackers, and content from high-quality instructional materials in HDT and a small subset of RTI^2 settings

Establish A Vision for instructionally coherent K-3 literacy academic support.

Schedule And Staff to align to the vision and assess capacity needed to serve all identified students.

Calculate The Cost of the HDT model, identify revenue, and adjust design over time to sustainably achieve scale.

- **Analyzing student growth trends** using universal literacy screeners to understand differences in outcomes by intervention setting for students who started the year in different percentile performance ranges aligned to the guidance for HDT, RTI^2 Tier 2, and RTI^2 Tier 3.
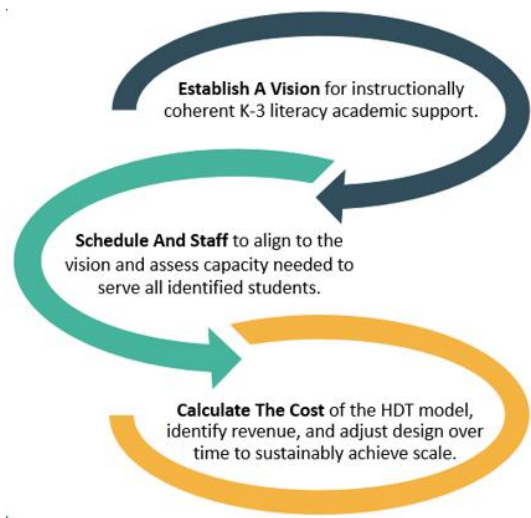
The remainder of this document highlights case studies from two of these districts:

- » **District A:** This case study highlights a mid-size district working to increase instructional coherence across HDT, Tier 2, and Tier 3 settings.
- » **District B**: This case study highlights a large district working to pilot instructional coherence in HDT and Tier 2 as a priority in a subset of elementary schools.

DISTRICT A CASE STUDY (MID-SIZE DISTRICT)

Current And Ideal State Of Early Literacy Academic Support. In early fall 2022, a team of district and school leaders from District A met to discuss their "current state" and "ideal state" for K-3 literacy academic support using the Instructional Coherence Self-Assessment as a guide. They reflected on the current vision and implementation practices for their HDT programs as well as their RTI[2] tiered intervention settings. Below is a summary of the district's reflections as they worked to increase instructional coherence for K-3 literacy.

Reflections	Current State	Ideal State
Identification And Grouping	• We identify students for academic support using Aimsweb+. We use the Tennessee Foundational Skills Curriculum Supplement (TNFSCS) placement test to determine small groups for core instruction, but we do not currently use this information to drive small-group support for Tier 2, Tier 3, or HDT. • Students scoring at or below the 10th percentile are identified for Tier 3. Students scoring between the 11th-25th percentile are identified for Tier 2. Students identified for tutoring are those on the cusp of mastering grade-level standards.	• We will use the TNSCS placement test to determine small groups for all academic support settings — HDT, Tier 2, and Tier 3 — to determine students' specific needs beyond the initial identification information with Aimsweb+. • We will group students according to this data for core instruction as well as for small-group support during HDT/intervention blocks.
Staffing And Content	• We have 45-minute intervention blocks built into the school day. • Students receiving only core instruction remain in the classroom with the core teacher or go to special subjects. Tier 2 uses a mix of TNFSCS or other materials. Tier 3 uses different intervention material, and teachers have autonomy here. HDT primarily uses resources aligned to TNFSCS and the approved ELA curriculum in an effort to accelerate student learning in that setting. • Interventionists support Tier 2 and Tier 3. Certified educators have been hired to the district to support as tutors.	• We will shift the content for Tier 2 and Tier 3 to TNFSCS as well as the adopted ELA materials to accelerate student learning. • Time during the intervention block will be used to provide a second foundational skills lesson by the core teacher to the students who are below grade level. This allows students who are behind to accelerate through eight to nine skills lessons per week (rather than the four to five that their grade-level peers are receiving). Fridays will be reserved for planning, reinforcing new skills, and assessments.
Progress Monitoring	• RTI[2] teams meet every 4.5 weeks to review Aimsweb+ data and use the trend line to determine whether to stay the course with the support students are receiving. • HDT students remain in HDT all year. Progress monitoring occurs every two weeks using the aligned curriculum-embedded assessment. • Finding time for collaborate across roles and settings is challenging.	• We will change from a pull-out to a push-in model of support where interventionists and paraprofessionals go into the classroom and offer HDT support for students following the second foundational skills lesson. • The curriculum-embedded assessment from TNFSCS will be used to track progress daily and will be shared among all staff to support collaboration.

Implementation Tools And Artifacts. District A set an overall goal to align core instruction, HDT, Tier 2, and Tier 3. The **Model Overview**, **Example Literacy Schedule For Second Grade**, and **Instructional Roles And Responsibilities** below are artifacts District A used to support implementation of a more instructionally coherent vision for K-3 literacy. Under this model, the district was ultimately able to serve more students by the end of the year using available staff capacity.

Model Overview

Core Instruction, 60 Minutes	
Students receive their core foundational skills lesson based on placement data from TNFSCS.	
INTERVENTION/HDT, 45 Minutes	
All students remain in their core classroom for intervention time immediately following the core literacy block.	
Students Working On Grade-Level Skills	**Students Working On Below Grade-Level Skills**
Do work on computers, engage in partner reading, or engage in an enrichment activity.	Receive a second skills lesson from their teacher and small group HDT from push-in support.

Example Literacy Schedule For Second Grade

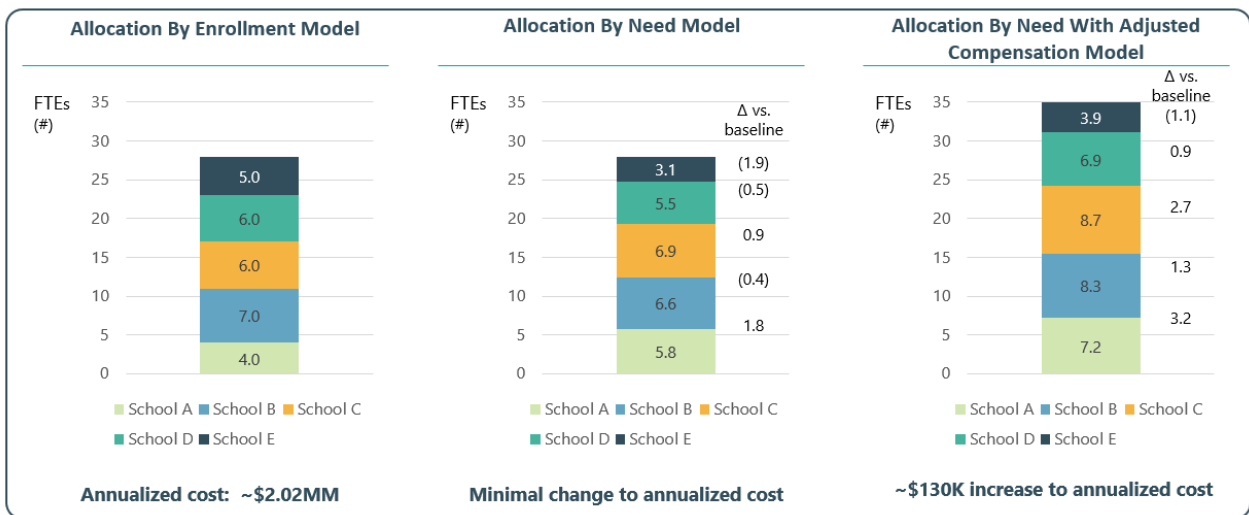| Classrooms	Blocks	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2nd Grade Classroom 1 *Students On Grade Level*	**Core Instruction**	Grade 2, Unit 1, Lesson 11	Grade 2, Unit 1, Lesson 12	Grade 2, Unit 1, Lesson 13	Grade 2, Unit 1, Lesson 14	Grade 2, Unit 1, Lesson 15
	Intervention /HDT	Independent Reading & Enrichment				
2nd Grade Classroom 2 *Students Significantly Below Grade Level*	**Core Instruction**	Grade 1, Unit 1, Lesson 1	Grade 1, Unit 1, Lesson 3	Grade 1, Unit 1, Lesson 5	Grade 1, Unit 1, Lesson 7	Grade 1, Unit 1, Lesson 9
	Intervention /HDT	Grade 1, Unit 1, Lesson 2	Grade 1, Unit 1, Lesson 4	Grade 1, Unit 1, Lesson 6	Grade 1, Unit 1, Lesson 8	Assessment / Flex day

Instructional Roles And Responsibilities

Instructional Roles and Responsibilities	
Classroom (Core Literacy) Teachers	• Administer TNFSCS placement assessment, enter data into **Foundational Skills Data Tracker**, and work with the school team to create student groups for core instruction. • Create a weekly plan of lessons for core instruction and HDT/ Intervention. • Track student skill mastery in the tracker to note when they are ready to move on to the next skill. • Lead instruction for whole groups and a small group. • Participate in collaboration conversations for support student.
Support Staff	• Facilitate teacher identified lessons from curriculum for designated small groups. • Monitor student progress in the tracker and add notes as applicable. • Observe student engagement for grade-level students during small-group time. • Participate in collaboration conversations as applicable.

Financial Sustainability

With support from technical assistance, District A was able to leverage a dynamic staffing and cost model to inform decision-making for education assistants (EAs) and additional intervention staff roles across the district's schools. They developed three cost models (outlined below). The **HDT Cost Estimator** tool is available as a helpful resource for schools and districts to work through similar models.

- **Allocation By Enrollment Model:** This is the current staffing formula used in the district where EAs are assigned based on the total student population of each school. It assigns one EA per 60 students.
- **Allocation By Student Need Model:** Using the number of students in the "below" and "approaching" categories, the district was able to understand what staffing shifts and costs would look like under a new model.
- **Allocation By Student Need With Adjusted Compensation:** Given the results from these models, the district was interested in understanding their fiscal capacity to support model students. They modeled a compensation alternative where one-third of the full-time educators serving in tutoring or intervention roles would be part-time EAs paid on the district's hourly wage scale instead of the teacher salary scale. Under this model, the district was able to staff an additional seven roles with little overall increase (less than 10 percent) to the annual cost.

Allocation By Enrollment Model

FTEs (#)

School	FTEs
School E	5.0
School D	6.0
School C	6.0
School B	7.0
School A	4.0

Annualized cost: ~$2.02MM

Allocation By Need Model

FTEs (#)

Δ vs. baseline

School	FTEs	Δ vs. baseline
School E	3.1	(1.9)
School D	5.5	(0.5)
School C	6.9	0.9
School B	6.6	(0.4)
School A	5.8	1.8

Minimal change to annualized cost

Allocation By Need With Adjusted Compensation Model

FTEs (#)

Δ vs. baseline

School	FTEs	Δ vs. baseline
School E	3.9	(1.1)
School D	6.9	0.9
School C	8.7	2.7
School B	8.3	1.3
School A	7.2	3.2

~$130K increase to annualized cost

DISTRICT B CASE STUDY (LARGE DISTRICT)

Current And Ideal State Of Early Literacy Academic Support

District B leaders met in the fall of 2022 to discuss their current processes and supports related to HDT, Tier 2, and Tier 3 support with the goal of identifying opportunities to increase the instructional coherence of the early literacy academic support. Below is a summary of the team's reflections as they worked through the **Instructional Coherence Self-Assessment**.

Reflections	Current State	Ideal State
Identification And Grouping	• Students are identified for HDT, Tier 2, and Tier 3 using the iReady Universal Screener. Some, but not all, Tier 2 instructors use the foundational skills assessment from the core instructional materials to support intervention; this is not used for Tier 3 or HDT. • Tier 3 students are identified as scoring at or below the 10th percentile. Tier 2 students are identified as scoring between the 11th-25th percentile. HDT students are the same as Tier 2 and Tier 3 students, plus any who are failing in core instruction.	• Tiers will be determined in the same manner as they currently are, but students will be assessed using the placement assessment from core block high-quality instructional materials. They will have their skills mastery and gaps tracked using these trackers, and this data will inform instruction needs and grouping within HDT and Tier 2, and 3.
Staffing And Content	• Tier 2 is offered for 30 minutes a day. Tier 3 is 45 minutes a day. There is a mix of pull-out and push-in models based on individual school schedules. HDT happens after school. • Tier 3 instruction uses a specific program to support these students. Tier 2 and HDT have a less structured curriculum. Tier 2 instructors can select from several different curricular options and sometimes use materials aligned to core instruction. Tutors can teach whatever they want if they are certified, but classified and student-teachers must use district-created curriculum that is based on TNFSCS. • Core literacy teachers provide most Tier 2 support and mostly to their own students. Interventionists provide Tier 3 support. Tutors are mostly certified teachers working with their own students, but some classified staff and teacher candidates also provide support.	• There will be 10 schools piloting HDT during the day with student-teachers providing HDT during intervention. • Tier 3 instruction will remain as is for now, given the success we believe we are seeing here. Tier 2 and HDT will start using the high-quality instructional materials and embedded assessments. • In the short term, delivery structures will remain the same. A longer-term plan will be to consider having both interventionists and tutors push in to core classrooms to have multiple adults working collaboratively to support small groups working on specific areas of need.
Progress Monitoring	• The district has been using the iReady Universal Screener and other assessments to progress monitor student growth in intervention settings. • Interventionists (Tier 3) and core literacy block teachers have weekly joint planning time. Tier 2 and tutors do not have any collaborative planning time, but they are mostly core literacy teachers at this time.	• Core literacy teachers and staff in Tier 2 and HDT will begin to use the placement assessments from the adopted high-quality instructional materials. They will maintain and update each student's skills tracker as skills are mastered. • The skills trackers will be live, shared documents that all instructors who support a student can see.

Implementation Tools And Artifacts

District B set an overall goal to align core instruction, HDT, and Tier 2 only in terms of content but to use aligned assessments to support identification of need across all settings. The **Model Overview**, **Example Master Schedule Across Grade Levels**, and **Instructional Roles And Responsibilities** below are artifacts District B used to support implementation of a more instructionally coherent vision for K-3 literacy. Under this model, the district was ultimately able to serve more students by the end of the year using available staff capacity. However, given the impact of instructionally coherent HDT, the district also chose to hire additional tutors in HDT roles to serve more students by the spring semester.

Model Overview

Core Instruction, 60 Minutes	
Students receive core lessons aligned to the grade-level scope and sequence from the adopted high-quality instructional materials.	
INTERVENTION/HDT, 45 Minutes	
Students transition to HDT, Tier 2, and Tier 3 settings for support. Tier 2 and Tier 3 students who are also identified for HDT support receive this support after school.	
Core Instruction, HDT, and Tier 2 Students	**Tier 3 Students**
Engage with the same high-quality adopted instructional materials from the core block.	Continue to use a different program in small groups that are created using the foundational skills placement assessment from core instruction.

Example Master Schedule Across Grade Levels

Redeployed Staff During Existing Intervention Block — "All Hands On Deck"
• *RTI² facilitator pushes in Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday* • *Music teacher pushes in Monday (8:25-9:25)* • *One counselor supports Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday* • *Principal and administrators fill gaps as needed*

Grade 1	
Timing	Content
8:00 – 8:15	Attendance
8:15 – 10:15	ELA
10:15 – 10:45	ELA RTI
10:45 – 11:15	Lunch
11:15 – 11:25	Comm. Meeting
11:25 – 11:55	Math RTI
11:55 – 12:55	Related Arts
12:55 – 2:10	Math
2:10 – 2:40	Recess
2:40 – 3:15	Science/SS

Grade 2	
Timing	Content
8:00 – 8:25	Attendance
8:25 - 8:55	ELA RTI
8:55 – 9:55	ELA
9:55 – 10:25	Recess
10:25 – 11:10	ELA (cont.)
11:10 – 12:00	Math
12:00 – 12:30	Lunch
12:30 – 1:00	Math
1:00 – 2:00	Related Arts
2:00 – 2:10	Math
2:10 – 2:40	SS
2:40 – 3:10	Math RTI

Grade 3	
8:00 – 8:15	Attendance
8:15 – 9:15	ELA Class 1
9:15 – 9:45	ELA Class 1 RTI
9:45 – 10:37	ELA Class 1
10:37 – 11:07	Recess
11:07 – 12:10	ELA Class 2
12:10 – 12:40	Lunch
12:40 – 1:30	ELA Class 2
1:30 – 2:00	ELA Class 2 RTI
2:00 – 3:00	Related Arts
3:00 – 3:15	Comm. Meeting

Instructional Roles And Responsibilities

Instructional Roles and Responsibilities	
Classroom (Core Literacy) Teachers	• Administer the foundational skills assessment from core literacy materials and enter data into the **Foundational Skills Data Tracker**. • Track data from small groups during core instruction. • Plan Tier 2 and HDT support — sometimes providing direct instruction or modeling during sessions when there will be a new sound or skill introduced to support the student and support staff. • Track student skill mastery in the tracker to note when they are ready to move on to the next skill.
Tier 2 And HDT Staff	• Push in, where possible, during intervention blocks to increase collaboration with core literacy educators. • Use high-quality instructional materials during sessions. • Track student progress in the skills trackers.

Financial Sustainability

With support from technical assistance, District B chose to investigate several cost scenarios in a dynamic model focused exclusively on all rising third graders in the district. The model focused on decision points that felt most actionable to the district, including: the percent of tutors who are certified teachers and the student-to-tutor ratio. Part of the value of this model is that it provides estimates for multiple scenarios. The district was able to run "sensitivity analyses" for the total annual cost of the program as well as the per-student cost across different assumptions for the key variables above.

		Sensitivity: Total Annual Cost				
		Tutor-To-Student Ratio				
		2.50	2.75	3.00	3.25	3.50
	100%	4,457,212	4,245,803	3,928,689	3,787,750	3,646,810
Percentage	75%	4,262,277	4,060,113	3,756,868	3,622,093	3,487,317
Of Tutors	50%	4,067,341	3,874,423	3,585,047	3,456,436	3,327,824
Certified	25%	3,872,405	3,688,734	3,413,227	3,290,779	3,168,331
	0%	3,677,469	3,503,044	3,241,406	3,125,122	3,008,839

		Sensitivity: Cost Per Student Served				
		Tutor-To-Student Ratio				
		2.50	2.75	3.00	3.25	3.50
	100%	2,098	1,999	1,850	1,783	1,717
Percentage	75%	2,007	1,912	1,769	1,705	1,642
Of Tutors	50%	1,915	1,824	1,688	1,627	1,567
Certified	25%	1,823	1,737	1,607	1,549	1,492
	0%	1,731	1,649	1,526	1,471	1,417

Both districts profiled here engaged with technical assistance providers to make these shifts. TNTP provided guidance and support on the design and early implementation steps for the adjusted instructional model. Public Impact provided direct support to school leaders to rework master schedules to align to this vision. Level Field Partners worked to understand the vision and design parameters for each model to provide financial cost modeling and estimates for districts to consider as they work to design and implement sustainable HDT programs at scale.