



Early Intervention FAQ Grades K-2

Why does AACPS use two Tier 1 Foundational Literacy Skills programs?

AACPS provides two Tier 1 programs — Wilson Foundations and Fountas & Pinnell Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study (PWS) — to meet the needs of all students in our diverse school district in the area of foundational literacy skills. Each program was carefully selected to ensure students have equitable opportunities to learn the foundational literacy skills defined in the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards. Students are placed into the appropriate Tier 1 program based on their performance on the DIBELS 8th Edition screening. This assessment provides a comprehensive look at early literacy skills based on the grade level and time of year.

The two Tier 1 programs use different approaches to teaching the same standards and skills. Both programs use a systematic curriculum that focuses on the building block of written language. Wilson Foundations uses a multisensory approach, whereas Fountas & Pinnell Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study uses an exploratory approach. Both programs teach students to use sounds, letters, and words in reading and writing. Students receive direct instruction from the teacher and have time to apply the skills independently and in small groups.

Do students learn different things in the two different Foundational Literacy Skills programs?

Both programs teach the Maryland College and Career Readiness Reading Foundational and Language Standards. By the end of the second grade, all students receive instruction in all standards, regardless of the program. The approach to instruction differs in the two programs as explained above. Videos highlighting the difference in the instructional approaches are available at www.aacps.org/readytoread.

Is the Foundational Literacy Skills block the only time when students receive literacy instruction during the school day in grades K-2?

No. The Foundational Literacy Skills learning block is one component of a comprehensive literacy curriculum in AACPS. The Science of Reading proves that word recognition and language comprehension are critical in developing students as proficient readers; the AACPS literacy curriculum balances instruction in both. Students receive explicit instruction that enables them to recognize words and understand language. The Foundational Literacy Skills learning block focuses specifically on strategies to help students recognize words. Other instructional blocks, including Interactive Read Aloud, focus on developing students' language comprehension. Additional blocks that include Guided Reading, Shared Reading, Explicit Comprehension and Literacy Centers provide the opportunity for students to use word recognition and language comprehension strategies simultaneously. During Writer's Workshop, students have an opportunity to encode, or use individual sounds to build and write words. This block allows teachers to see if students can transfer what they learn in the Foundational Literacy Skills block to their own writing.

Student groupings for the Foundational Literacy Skills block do not impact student grouping in other blocks. Teachers use data from DIBELS 8th Edition as well as other literacy assessments to ensure instruction in each block meets students' needs.



Do students enrolled in Wilson Foundations miss other components of the comprehensive literacy curriculum in AACPS?

No. All students receive 30 minutes of instruction in foundational literacy skills daily. Students who receive the Fountas & Pinnell Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study program and students who receive the Wilson Foundations program both participate in all components of the comprehensive curriculum in AACPS. None of the components that make up AACPS' robust elementary curriculum are compromised to account for students' participation in either of the two foundational literacy programs.

Which part of DIBELS 8th Edition shows students will benefit from Wilson Foundations as opposed to Fountas & Pinnell Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study program?

DIBELS 8th Edition measures critical skills necessary for early reading with an emphasis on phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency. The composite score is weighted based on the student's grade level and time of year. The composite score is used to identify areas where students are not meeting developmental benchmark goals in early literacy skills.

The Wilson Foundations curriculum is a structured literacy program designed to teach foundational skills in an explicit and systematic way. Explicit teaching means that teachers clearly explain and model key skills. Systematic means that there is a well-organized sequence of instruction, with important prerequisite skills taught before more advanced skills. *Especially for students who struggle in learning to read, Structured Literacy approaches are far preferable to the typical literacy practices* (International Dyslexia Association Educator Training Initiatives Brief Structured Literacy An Introductory Guide). Students who demonstrate weaknesses in one or more areas based on the DIBELS assessment, benefit from instruction in Wilson Foundations as it addresses the deficits in early literacy skills. This program ensures students are explicitly taught early literacy skills in a sequential manner, ensuring their success with reading and writing.

Students who demonstrate proficiency with early literacy skills on the DIBELS 8th Edition screener receive instruction in the Fountas & Pinnell Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study curriculum. The Fountas & Pinnell Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study curriculum teaches foundational skills in a manner that allows for more flexibility and exploration. Students are encouraged to apply their knowledge broadly to sounds and words beyond those provided in the lesson.

Why does AACPS use the DIBELS 8th Edition composite score to determine which Foundational Literacy Skills program students receive in grades K-2?

The Ready to Read Act and COMAR 13A.03.08 require school districts to identify students who are *at-risk* for reading difficulty using a screening instrument. By law, the screening tool is defined as a brief, valid, and reliable measurement used to identify or predict whether a student may be *at-risk* for poor learning outcomes. AACPS utilizes DIBELS 8th Edition as the screening instrument to identify students who are *at-risk* for reading difficulties. The composite score is used to identify students who benefit from supplemental reading instruction. According to COMAR 13A.03.08, *Supplemental reading instruction means evidence-based, sequential, systematic, explicit, and cumulative instruction or intervention to mastery of foundational reading skills including phonological or phonemic awareness and processing, phonics, and vocabulary to support development of decoding, spelling, fluency, and reading comprehension skills to meet grade level curriculum*. The composite score takes into consideration all subtests administered and weights them to provide a comprehensive screening result for each student.

Is DIBELS 8th Edition the only assessment teachers use to evaluate students in reading?



No. Teachers utilize a variety of assessments to provide a comprehensive picture of students' reading abilities. Each assessment provides different information about students' strengths and areas of growth in reading. Additional assessments for students in grades K-2 include the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System, and AACPS Reading Quarterly Assessment. These assessments vary depending on the grade level. For more information about each assessment, please visit www.aacps.org/assessments or use the QR code below.



If a child makes progress in Wilson Foundations, can they switch to the Fountas & Pinnell Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study program?

A student identified for Wilson Foundations demonstrates deficits in early literacy skills during the initial screening process. Subsequent DIBELS 8th Edition screenings that show progress in the student's performance indicate Wilson Foundations is the appropriate program for addressing the student's deficits. Since the program positively impacts the student, the student remains in the program.

What happens if subsequent administrations of DIBELS 8th Edition show my child is not making adequate progress in Wilson Foundations?

If subsequent administrations of DIBELS 8th Edition show a child does not make adequate progress in Wilson Foundations, school teams use the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) and consider the student for Wilson Foundations Tier 2 intervention. School teams use a variety of other data points, including the Wilson Foundations Tier 1 unit tests, to make appropriate decisions that meet the child's unique needs.

What is Wilson Foundations Tier 2 intervention?

Wilson Foundations Tier 2 intervention is intended for students who need additional instruction in the areas of foundational literacy skills, as demonstrated through progress monitoring during their Wilson Foundations Tier 1 instruction. Wilson Foundations Tier 2 intervention provides support in phonemic awareness and phonics to students who have deficits in those areas. Students enrolled in Wilson Foundations Tier 2 intervention continue to receive the Wilson Foundations Tier 1 curriculum. During this time, the teacher meets the unique needs of the students in a small group.

What happens if a student does not make adequate progress in the Fountas & Pinnell Phonics, Spelling, and Word Study program?

AACPS implements the DIBELS 8th Edition screener in accordance with the assessment's guidelines. This allows schools to progress monitor early literacy skills several times each year. A student participating in the PWS curriculum demonstrated appropriate progress in their early literacy skills during the screening process. However, if at any point a student in PWS is identified as *at-risk* based on a subsequent DIBELS administration, they receive supplemental reading instruction, Wilson Foundations. This ensures the student receives the appropriate foundational literacy instruction to meet their needs.



Will Wilson Foundations impact my child’s opportunity to receive advanced instruction in the area of literacy?

No. The program used to teach foundational literacy skills does not impact a student’s opportunity to receive advanced instruction for literacy.

Is language proficiency considered when placing students in a curricular pathway?

The predictive utility of DIBELS is consistent for both native English-speaking students and English learners. As such, the decision for a curricular pathway for ELs is based on the DIBELS screening data in the same way as their native English-speaking peers. English language proficiency is not a prerequisite skill for the learning of foundational literacy skills.