Fundations® for Connecticut: Guidance on Fundations® Curriculum Model and Program Design

**The program is evidence-based and scientifically based.**

Fundations® is both evidence-based and scientifically based. The content of the Fundations® program is based on extensive reading research on how students acquire literacy skills. Scientific evidence reveals that reading is the intersection of five critical components: **phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension**. Teaching students to read requires instruction in all of these (Stuebing et al., 2008). In fact, they are specified as critical foundational reading skills in the National Reading Panel report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000), and a review of research on adult and adolescent literacy instruction by the National Institute for Literacy (Kruidenier et al., 2010). Specifically, all children should receive direct, systematic instruction in these five areas during grades K–3. Together, they form the foundation upon which higher level reading skills, critical to success in college and the work force, are built. Without the ability to fluently pull print from the page and comprehend it, students will be unable to understand complex text, one of the best predictors of college success (ACT, Inc., 2006).

While addressing the general student population, the **science of reading** also stipulates that these same foundational skills must be taught to students and adults with reading deficits (Kruidenier et al., 2010; Lonigan & Shanahan, 2009; NICHD, 2000). A lack of foundational skills is a major cause of poor performance among struggling readers. Word-level deficiencies limit an individual’s exposure to text, which in turn impede vocabulary development and reading comprehension (Stanovich, 1986). To overcome these deficiencies, students and adults with reading deficits require direct, systematic instruction in the foundational skills of reading. The content of Fundations® is based on this research.

## Phonemic Awareness

Research supports direct instruction in phonemic awareness as a critical component of an effective reading curriculum (Ehri et al., 2001; Lonigan et al., 2009; Melby-Lervåg et al., 2012), and Fundations’® approach to phonemic awareness is based on research validating best practices that maximize growth in phonemic awareness skills.

The National Reading Panel Report, published by a team of experts, summarized the findings from an extensive set of comprehensive, formal, evidence-based analyses of the experimental and quasi-experimental research literature on reading instruction. The Report stated that, “Instruction that taught phoneme manipulation ***with letters*** helped normal developing readers and at-risk readers acquire phonemic awareness better than phonemic awareness instruction without letters.” (NICHD, 2000, Chapter 2–28). Furthermore, Shaywitz found that, “While phonemic awareness refers to the sounds of spoken words, it ***often helps to use letters*** to emphasize the different sounds and to facilitate transferring this skill to reading” (2003, pp. 178–179).

Aligned with these findings, Fundations® teaches phonemic awareness according to the research. Students learn to blend, segment, and manipulate sounds using cards and tiles that include letters. It is a misconception that Fundations® does not include phonemic awareness because it links instruction of sounds in spoken words to letters. Recent discussions by Tim Shanahan, Linnea Ehri, and other noted reseachers reaffirm our approach. Shanahan states, “The reason I say that it makes more sense to teach phonemic awareness with letters than without is because research shows that instructional routines that do that end up with greater success” (Shanahan, 2020).

This approach is also supported by The Reading League, which emphasizes instructional practices based on scientific evidence. One example of instructional practices the Reading League recommends is instructing phonemic awareness and letter instruction simultaneously.

Phonological awareness is an umbrella term referring to two distinct areas: phonological sensitivity and phonemic awareness. Phonological sensitivity refers to the awareness of larger structures of language such as: word awareness, syllable awareness, rhyme, and onset and rime. Fundations® focuses on the research that points to the importance of phonemic awareness which is directly related to the acquisition of reading and writing. Phonemic awareness relates to an awareness of the individual phonemes of the spoken word or syllable. Research has informed us that phonological sensitivity skills are not prerequisites for phonemic awareness. Therefore, phonological sensitivity instruction is not a prerequisite to phonemic awareness instruction. This means that less instructional time should be spent on phonological awareness activities such as rhyming if students can perform higher-level phonemic awareness skills of segmentation and manipulation.

Fundations® Level K spends some (but not extensive) time dedicated to lower-level phonemic awareness skills (i.e., rhyming, alliteration, syllable awareness, and onset-rime), but focuses on the most critical phonemic awareness skills (i.e., blending segmenting and manipulation). This is supported by extensive research on skills most critical to reading acquisition,

* “A key test of whether earlier phonological sensitivity skills are an essential step toward awareness of phonemes is whether students who have not yet learned how to segment syllables can be taught to identify and segment phonemes: the answer is ‘yes’ (Cary & Verhaehge, 1994). The important implication is that it is ***not necessary*** [emphasis added] to devote the time and effort to foster skills in phonological sensitivity in order of children to acquire phoneme awareness” (Brady, 2020, p. 21).
* “The necessity of proceeding in kindergarten and first grade from phonological sensitivity instruction to phoneme awareness instruction is not supported. Instead, teachers in these grades should target student mastery of phoneme awareness” (Brady, 2020, p. 22).

The Reading League further reinforces this point identifying that: “NOT supported by scientific evidence: Emphasis on larger units of speech (syllables, rhyme, onset-rime) rather than individual phonemes” (TRL, 2022, p. 22).

Fundations® efficiently focuses on these higher-level phonemic awareness skills of phoneme blending, segmentation, and manipulation of sounds, which research has identified as key for functional value in decoding/reading. “…it is the segmenting and blending of phonemes that has functional value in reading” (Shanahan, 2015).

In Fundations®, blending, segmenting, and manipulating individual sounds is integrated into phonics and spelling instruction. Students use a finger tapping procedure to aid in segmenting and blending sounds. All activities are multisensory in nature, teachers and students use individual letter cards, letter tiles, syllable cards and finger tapping to make this process explicit for all students, especially those who are struggling. As students progress, Fundations® instruction shifts from emphasizing phoneme segmentation to emphasizing syllable segmentation/division, and applying that skill to the structure of all words studied.

Some, but not extensive, time is dedicated to lower‐level phonological awareness skills and handwriting (i.e., letter recognition, print awareness, word awareness, syllable awareness, and rhyming) with activities included in the Standard Lesson and Home Support Pack as well as targeted small‐group lessons, as needed.

Fundations’® instruction focuses extensively on:

* Segmenting sentences into words
* Segmenting/blending syllables in words
* Isolating/identifying phonemes in words
* Blending phonemes into words
* Manipulating phonemes

## Phonics

Phonics instruction in Fundations® is explicit and systematic. Students are taught sound mastery in both letter to sound, and sound to letter. Students do daily drill of sounds saying letter keywords and sounds. Drills Sounds is only a “drill” aspect of Fundations®. This is designated to create fast neurotransmitting pathways to access sounds. Students have lots of opportunities to practice sounds within a variety of activities.

Students are directly taught the letter-sound correspondence in written form. This aligns with recent research demonstrating that students in the primary grades make stronger gains when provided with direct phonics instruction as compared to incidental phonics instruction that is not clearly defined and explicitly taught (Stuebing et al., 2008). The same is also true of students with reading deficits (Mathes et al., 2005; Torgesen et al., 2001). Fundations® also aligns with a synthesis of research studies demonstrating that interventions with the largest impact on students with reading disabilities or struggling readers were those that emphasized both phonics instruction and provided opportunities to apply phonics skills when reading connected text (Wanzek & Vaughn, 2007).

Fundations® phonics instruction, goes beyond sound-symbol knowledge and students are explicitly taught how to blend sounds into words. This is systematically done following the six basic syllable patterns in English. By the end of Level K, students learn to read and spell closed syllable words with a CVC pattern and begin to learn about word structure, including concepts like digraphs, long and short vowel sounds, and high frequency words. In Level 1 they progress further into words structure. They learn blends, base words, and suffixes as well as closed, vowel consonant-e, open, r-controlled, and vowel team syllable types in single and multisyllabic words. Students learn to read and spell words with CVC, CCVC, CVCC, CCVCC and CVCe patterns as well as regular and irregular high frequency words. Level 2 builds on this foundation of skills and progresses further into study of word structure. Students learn to identify all syllabe types previously mentioned including the final stable syllable (consonant-le) and focus on advanced spelling rules and morphology.

## Fluency

Research consistently demonstrates fluency to be a strong predictor of reading comprehension (Adams, 1990; Breznitz, 2006; Fuchs et al., 2001; Hudson et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2011). Therefore, Fundations® has adopted fluency instruction strategies demonstrated by research to increase the text reading fluency of primary and secondary students (Chard et al., 2002; NICHD, 2000; Wexler et al., 2008). Poor readers may have difficulty marking phrase boundaries for meaning in silent reading, and therefore it may not be easy for them to determine prosody during silent reading to support comprehension of the passage (Kleiman et al., 1979). Also, many students lack syntactic awareness ability to phrase appropriately when reading (Benjamin & Schwanenflugel, 2010; Mokhtari & Thompson, 2006). Since prosody helps readers chunk text into syntactically appropriate units that assist them in constructing meaning (Schreiber, 1980, 1991; Schreiber & Reid, 1980), students have opportunities to work on this skill with a passage that is controlled to have words they should be able to decode.

Fluent Reading is an essential reading skillks for comprehension. Automaticity is a term that refers to quick and automartic recognition of words in isolation. It is necessary for fluency, but it is not sufficient. In addition to automaticity, students need to develop prosody (phrasing) and expression. In Fundations®, students have multiple opportunities to develop quick and automatic word recognition as well as prosody and expression. To develop fluency and speed of reading, studnets learn how to read in thought groups, or phrases that connecgt meaning. Students do both echo and choral reading of stories to develop fluency. Students are directly taught a penciling technique to chunk text into meaningful phrases, and practice fluently reading connected texts with accuracy, automaticity, and prosody.

## Vocabulary

There is a strong relationship between a student’s vocabulary and their ability to decode. Since students come to school with a wide variance of word knowledge, it is essential that the classroom provides a rich oral language environment as well as access to incidental and explicit word learning through exposure to many kinds of text. Research demonstrates the difficulties struggling readers face in learning new vocabulary (Stanovich, 1986), Fundations® incorporates many opportunities for students to build vocabulary. Throughout the primary grades, vocabulary can be enhanced by teacher read alouds accompanied by talk about the text and vocabulary. Words are continually taught incidentally and directly through various activities with distributed practice. Teachers choose words to study based on student need considering Beck et al.’s research concerning vocabulary instruction (2002). Teachers focus on academic vocabulary words as much as possible. Unit resources are provided in each unit from which teachers may choose specific words that are valuable for practice, depending on their students. Next, students have distributed opportunities to practice reading and use vocabulary words across different contexts and activities. This helps foster a deeper understanding of word meanings and students’ memory of them (Cepeda et al., 2006; Dempster, 1988).

## Comprehension

The ultimate goal of reading is comprehension. Comprehension strategies are taught explicitly, which is particularly useful for those who struggle with comprehension (Gersten et al., 2001). Instruction within Fundations® is based on research that describes the behaviors of good and poor readers, what we know impacts one’s ability to comprehend, and research on strategies that support comprehension (Marzola, 2011). Fundations®addresses both reading and listening comprehension instruction, and incorporates instruction in visualization strategies, guided close reading, and oral language instruction.

Although Fundations® is not a comprehension program, it does provide instruction to help students learn how to think actively while reading and to self-monitor their understanding. This direct instruction includes the development of student ability to form a visual image to construct a mental picture from words, the ability to imangine a scene and predict subsequent events and to recall and explain what was in the written text.

Students are taught to stop and support their understanding of the text with gestures, mental imagery and drawing picture notes if needed. Mental images aid comprehension and memory by acting as mental pegs onto which the information can be hooked (Sadoski & Paivo, 2001). Students must be able to hold onto information form one sentence to the next to create cohesions so they undersand and link events in a story. In Fundations® Levels 1 and 2, students have direct and explicit instruction to create mental images as they read simple decoding passages. Teachers help them to do this by stopping and supporting to ensure their understanding of the words with gestures, mental imagery, and drawing picture notes as needed This scaffolding is called Comprehension S.O.S in Wilson programs. This stands for Stop-Orient-Support/Scaffold. Comprehension S.O.S. is a teacher led interactive discussion about written text.

Fundations® Level 3 does not include Storytime lessons included in previous Fundations® levels. This is so students begin to understand that anytime they read they need to make a movie in their minds that guides them to create a mental image of the words in the passage. This links words to the picture in their minds and helps students with both understanding and the recall of information.

Comprehension S.O.S. activities always conclude with retelling of the story read. The ability to retell a story or information that has been read is an important skill that should be developed. Retelling confirms and solidifies understanding and helps with the learning of information. It also helps develop students’ oral language.

Level 3 does not include the Storytime activity, however, teachers continue to develop the ability to retell stories in detail using Comprehension S.O.S. In Fundations® Levels 1 and 2, students also learn the difference between narrative story and informational text. The understanding of text structure also aids comprehension. Students are introduced to the difference between narrative fiction and informational nonfiction and the critical elements that distinguish them. Students learn that fiction passages are stories that are not true and are written to entertain the reader; nonfiction stories are combination of narrative and informational text. The key purpose of informational text is to teach or provide specific information about a topic. Discussion of informational text includes building background knowledge of the topic, identifying facts learned in the passage, and identifying areas for further exploration while students learn to read authentic text

## Spelling and Writing

Fundations® incorporates instruction in spelling skills due to research demonstrating a connection in the brain between reading and spelling activities, leading researchers to believe that spelling strongly reinforces reading (James & Engelhardt, 2012). “ Spelling, (going from sound to letter) strongly reinforces reading, (going from letter to sound) and its instruction should be linked to a child’s reading lesson” (Shaywitz, 2003). This is important for all students who are learning to read, but especially critical for students who are struggling or have dyslexia. For students with dyslexia, it is particularly important that they “learn to spell words with sounds and patterns that have been previously introduced for reading and practiced” (Carreker, 2011, p. 282).

The accurate visual representation of both letters and words is orthography. The ability to picture and store a visual representation provides the foundatiuon for reading and spelling. Students learn to segment and spell words in correspondence to decoding patterns. They learn to segment and associate letters with sounds rather than memorize these words. Spelling is generally more difficult than reading because with spelling, students have no visual cues and must determine the correct letters in sequence. Although decoding and spelling instruction in Fundations® follow the same sequence, for some students, spelling may be more challenging. Fundations® students also systematically learn punctuation, capitalization, and proofreading skills. This begins along with print awareness in kindergarten and is reinforced throughout all levels.

In Fundations®, spelling is connected to phonics instruction and is taught through explicit instruction in spelling rules, proofreading strategies to support accurate spelling, and high-frequency sight words.

**The program is focused on competency in the following areas of reading: oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, rapid automatic name, or letter name fluency and reading comprehension.**

Fundations® thoroughly teaches to mastery to ensure competency in all foundational skills standards and provides specific, measurable learning objectives to ensure student competency in oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, rapid automatic name, or letter name fluency and reading comprehension.

Decoding and encoding skills reinforce each other as teachers use both sides of the alphabetic principle Encoding practice solidifies word recognition, so in Fundations® if a student is reading words with consonant blends, then they are learning to spell them as well. Typically, the daily activity begins with reading activities and ends with spelling. Within a 30-minute lesson Fundations® emphasizes the mastery of skills through activity-based learning. Rotating through diverse activities using different modalities and reinforcement. supports learning and mastery, while maintaining interest.

**Scaffolding and Gradual Release Model**

Optimal learning is facilitated by a gradual release of responsibility model. The learning activity sequence on a given day or within a week move students along towards mastery and independence following these steps:

1. “I do it,” where the teacher demonstrates and provides new material through a combination of verbal explanation and demonstration with manipulatives such as sound cards and syllable frames period
2. “We do it,” which is guided instruction and practice, in which the teacher guides students with questioning to use manipulatives or to demonstrate underlying understanding of new concepts at the front of the class period
3. “You do it together,” which is collaborative learning. Students complete activities such as Dictation in their working groups students and can assist each other to successfully complete tasks
4. “You do it alone,” which leads to independent success. Students demonstrate concept mastery on their own for check-up and Unit tests

Taught in a sequential and cumulative manner from Unit to Unit, and year to year are:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Letter formation and Letter name Fluency | * Irregular (trick) word instruction |
| * Phonological & phonemic awareness | * Vocabulary |
| * Sound mastery | * Fluency |
| * Phonics, word study, &   advanced word study | * Comprehension strategies |

Competency and mastery are necessary for each of the skills listed at each level of instruction to ensure automaticity at each level of achievement. Through explicit, and systematic instruction students build on previously taught skills. This has the greatest impact on reading and writing achievement. Students have ample opportunities to learn and apply skills for reinforcement. Instruction continually spirals back to relate new concepts to with previously mastered ones. In this way, students can develop a deeper understanding of the structure of words. Engaging students in multiple learning modalities with multisensory instruction increases active participation and maintains the students focus. The highly interactive nature of the activities engages several senses simultaneously. The learning activities are integrated and designed to incorporate auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic modalities.

Fundations® activities engage students in metacognitive thinking so that they understand the underpinnings of word structure and can approach and generalize new concepts. This ensures mastery and competence at each stage of learning and for each of the important concepts they learn. This ensures competency in each area.

Teachers can differentiate providing structured support for students who have emerging skills. The learning activities are not assessments, although they can be helpful to help teachers see that some students may need more help than others it is important for teachers to provide students with support for learning with guidance during the learning activities students may have help from teachers, aides, or peers.

A Gradual Release of a Control Approach is extremely effective. Formative assessment can be informal and is used during the learning process. Its purpose is to inform a teacher of how well the students are learning.

“Show Me” is a phrase that will be used with clear instructional objectives which require learners to do both intellectual work and demonstrate their thinking with performance. Teachers will then provide immediate feedback to students, so that they know how they are doing and what they can do differently if they are struggling.

Teachers assess student achievement of skills based on knowledge and application. They look at student progress from multiple perspectives. This includes direct observation of daily work and independent application of skills throughout the day. Teachers require students to explain their thinking when determining unknown words or when attempting to spell a word for their independent writing. Even if the word is not accurate, they can correct it with guiding questions or what they know about parts of the world that they have mastered. The teacher will lead them to help them explain what they can tell about the parts of words, and teachers help students begin to self-monitor their responses and use problem solving thinking to complete decoding or spelling. This may include looking at their Student Notebooks for spelling of high frequency trick words or referring to a poster to check a sound. True assessments of student mastery will include weekly check-up quizzes or unit tests. Students receiving an intervention of Fundations® will also be assessed with the Fundations® progress monitoring tool.

Although not designed to be a core ELA Program, Fundations® teachers create a rich oral language environment to reinforce that words have meaning through lessons. Teachers develop “word consciousness” in the classroom, consistently emphasizing both structure and meaning. As teachers instruct students about letter naming, phonemic awareness, phonics and word structure, they also build vocabulary assisting students to understand multiple meanings of words. This builds foundational skills for the best reading comprehension.

Students learn to build a coherent mental model though Storytime discussions about the information and structure of a story that they listen to or read. Teachers instruct them to “Make a movie in their heads,” as a way to begin learning a strategy for reading comprehension. They learn a technique called Comprehension S.O.S, to build the ability to construct a coherent mental model of the text and to imagine a scene and predict subsequent events. They learn to retell about what they read in their own words, showing that they understand and can convey the main ideas and details of text. Students engage in rich discussions about text increasing oral language, background knowledge and depth of vocabulary knowledge, which will be necessary for more advanced reading and writing.

Instruction is integrated and overlaps so that both oral and written language can develop.   
Students explicitly learn specific skills and have many opportunities to practice and expand these to mastery through a variety of activities that overlap. For example, in the Word of the Day activity, the teacher emphasizes various ways that the word may be used in a sentence, after the phonetic word structure for the particular word is presented.

**Additional Fluency Practice**

For additional fluency practice, the Geodes® Classroom Libraries for Levels K, 1, and 2 (published by Great Minds® in association with Wilson Language Training) can be used. The Geodes are readable texts; the text is at least 80% decodable and is aligned to the scope and sequence of the Fundations® curriculum. These accessible, knowledge-building books for emerging and developing readers allow students to build background knowledge, learn academic vocabulary most efficiently, and provide motivating texts for applying and practicing skills that have been taught.

**How is the curriculum model or program evidence-based and/or scientifically based?**

Fundations® is evidence-based and scientifically based. Scientific evidence reveals that reading is the intersection of five critical components: **phonemic awareness and phonics (also referred to as alphabetics), fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension**. Teaching students to read requires instruction in all of these (Stuebing et al., 2008). In fact, they are specified as critical foundational reading skills in the National Reading Panel report (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000), and a review of research on adult and adolescent literacy instruction by the National Institute for Literacy (Kruidenier et al., 2010). Specifically, all children should receive direct, systematic instruction in these five areas during grades K–3. Together, they form the foundation upon which higher level reading skills, critical to success in college and the work force, are built. Without the ability to fluently pull print from the page and comprehend it, students will be unable to understand complex text, one of the best predictors of college success (ACT, Inc., 2006).

While addressing the general student population, the **science of reading** also stipulates that these same foundational skills must be taught to students and adults with reading deficits (Kruidenier et al., 2010; Lonigan & Shanahan, 2009; NICHD, 2000). A lack of foundational skills is a major cause of poor performance amongstruggling readers. Word-level deficiencies limit an individual’s exposure to text, which in turn impede vocabulary development and reading comprehension (Stanovich, 1986). To overcome these deficiencies, students and adults with reading deficits require direct, systematic instruction in the foundational skills of reading. The content of Fundations® is based on this research.

## *Fundations® Research Base*

## Phonemic Awareness

Research supports direct instruction in phonemic awareness as a critical component of an effective reading curriculum (Ehri et al., 2001; Lonigan et al., 2009; Melby-Lervåg et al., 2012), and Fundations®’ approach to phonemic awareness instruction is based on research validating best practices that maximize growth in phonemic awareness skills.

The National Reading Panel Report, published by a team of experts, summarized the findings from an extensive set of comprehensive, formal, evidence-based analyses of the experimental and quasi-experimental research literature on reading instruction. The Report stated that, “Instruction that taught phoneme manipulation ***with letters*** helped normal developing readers and at-risk readers acquire phonemic awareness better than phonemic awareness instruction without letters.” (NICHD, 2000, Chapter 2–28). Furthermore, Shaywitz found that, “While phonemic awareness refers to the sounds of spoken words, it ***often helps to use letters*** to emphasize the different sounds and to facilitate transferring this skill to reading” (2003, pp. 178–179).

Aligned with these findings, Fundations® teaches letters with sounds to help students learn how to manipulate and segment sounds. It is a misconception that Fundations® does not include phonemic awareness because it links instruction of sounds in spoken words to letters. Recent discussions by Tim Shanahan, Linnea Ehri, and other noted reseachers reaffirm our approach. Shanahan states, “The reason I say that it makes more sense to teach phonemic awareness with letters than without is because research shows that instructional routines that do that end up with greater success” (Shanahan, 2020).

This approach is also supported by The Reading League, which states that an example of an instructional practice, “aligned with the findings from the scientific evidence base: Phonemic awareness and letter instruction: Instruction in the identification of phonemes in spoken words and how they link to letters” (The Reading League [TRL], 2022, p. 22).

Another research-based feature of Fundations® is to emphasize the higher-level phonemic awareness skills of segmentation and manipulation. With consideration toward efficient and effective instruction, it is important to distinguish between phonological awareness and phonemic awareness skills, recognizing that phonemic awareness skills are the most important in the hierarchy. This means that less instructional time should be spent on phonological awareness activities such as rhyming if students can do higher level phonemic awareness skills of segmentation and manipulation.

Fundations® Level K spends some (but not extensive) time dedicated to lower-level PA skills (i.e., rhyming, alliteration, syllable awareness, and onset-rime). This is supported by extensive research on skills most critical to reading acquisition,

* “A key test of whether earlier phonological sensitivity skills are an essential step toward awareness of phonemes is whether students who have not yet learned how to segment syllables can be taught to identify and segment phonemes: the answer is ‘yes’ (Cary & Verhaehge, 1994). The important implication is that it is ***not necessary*** [emphasis added] to devote the time and effort to foster skills in phonological sensitivity in order of children to acquire phoneme awareness” (Brady, 2020, p. 21).
* “The necessity of proceeding in kindergarten and first grade from phonological sensitivity instruction to phoneme awareness instruction is not supported. Instead, teachers in these grades should target student mastery of phoneme awareness” (Brady, 2020, p. 22).

The Reading League further reinforces this point by providing an example of instructional practice, “NOT supported by scientific evidence: Emphasis on larger units of speech (syllables, rhyme, onset-rime) rather than individual phonemes” (TRL, 2022, p. 22).

Fundations® efficiently focuses on these higher-level phonemic awareness skills of phoneme blending and segmentation, which research has identified as key for functional value in decoding/reading. “All of these various phonological awareness skills — the ability to separate syllables within words, the ability to segment onsets from rimes (e.g., big), the ability to rhyme, and the ability to segment or blend phonemes are all correlated with each other. But it is the segmenting and blending of phonemes that has functional value in reading” (Shanahan, 2015).

In Fundations®, blending, segmenting, and manipulating individual sounds is integrated into phonics and spelling instruction. Students use a finger tapping procedure to aid in segmenting and blending words. As students progress, Fundations® instruction shifts from emphasizing phoneme segmentation to emphasizing syllable segmentation/division, and applying that skill to the structure of the words being studied.

Some, but not extensive, time is dedicated to lower‐level PA skills (i.e., rhyming or alliteration) with activities included in the standard lesson and Home Support Pack as well as targeted small‐group lessons, as needed.

Fundations’® instruction focuses extensively on:

* Segmenting sentences into words
* Segmenting/blending syllables in words
* Isolating/identifying phonemes in words
* Blending phonemes into words
* Manipulating phonemes

## Phonics

Phonics instruction in Fundations® is explicit and systematic. Students are directly taught the letter-sound correspondence in the written form of the English language. This aligns with recent research demonstrating that students in the primary grades make stronger gains when provided with direct phonics instruction as compared to incidental phonics instruction that is not clearly defined and explicitly taught (Stuebing et al., 2008). The same is also true of students with reading deficits (Mathes et al., 2005; Torgesen et al., 2001). Fundations® also aligns with a synthesis of research studies demonstrating that interventions with the largest impact on students with reading disabilities or struggling readers were those that emphasized both phonics instruction and provided opportunities to apply phonics skills when reading connected text (Wanzek & Vaughn, 2007).

## Fluency

Research consistently demonstrates fluency to be a strong predictor of reading comprehension (Adams, 1990; Breznitz, 2006; Fuchs et al., 2001; Hudson et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2011), so Fundations® has adopted fluency instruction strategies demonstrated by research to increase the text reading fluency of primary and secondary students (Chard et al., 2002; NICHD, 2000; Wexler et al., 2008). Poor readers may have difficulty marking phrase boundaries for meaning in silent reading, and therefore it may not be easy for them to determine prosody during silent reading to support comprehension of the passage (Kleiman et al., 1979). Also, many students lack syntactic awareness ability to phrase appropriately when reading (Benjamin & Schwanenflugel, 2010; Mokhtari & Thompson, 2006). Since prosody helps readers chunk text into syntactically appropriate units that assist them in constructing meaning (Schreiber, 1980, 1991; Schreiber & Reid, 1980), students have opportunities to work on this skill with a passage that is controlled to have words they should be able to decode. In Fundations®, students are directly taught a penciling technique to chunk text into meaningful phrases, and practice fluently reading connected texts with accuracy, automaticity, and prosody.

## Vocabulary

Because of the research demonstrating the difficulties struggling readers face in learning new vocabulary (Stanovich, 1986), Fundations® incorporates many opportunities for students to build vocabulary and comprehension. Vocabulary is taught directly and with distributed practice. First, students are taught the meaning of select words. Selection of words is based on Beck et al.’s research on vocabulary instruction (2002). Next, students have distributed opportunities to practice reading and use vocabulary words across different contexts, which helps foster a deeper understanding of words’ meanings and students’ memory of them (Cepeda et al., 2006; Dempster, 1988).

## Comprehension

The ultimate goal of reading is comprehension. Comprehension strategies are taught explicitly, which is particularly useful for those who struggle with comprehension (Gersten et al., 2001). Instruction within Fundations® is based on research that describes the behaviors of good and poor readers, what we know impacts one’s ability to comprehend, and research on strategies that support comprehension (Marzola, 2011). In doing so, Fundations® addresses both reading and listening comprehension instruction, and incorporates instruction in visualization strategies, guided close reading, and oral language instruction.

## Spelling

Fundations® incorporates instruction in spelling skills due to research demonstrating a connection in the brain between reading and spelling activities, leading researchers to believe that spelling strongly reinforces reading (James & Engelhardt, 2012). This has led to the recommendation that as children learn to read words they also learn to spell them (Shaywitz, 2003; Carreker, 2011). For students with dyslexia, it is important that they “learn to spell words with sounds and patterns that have been previously introduced for reading and practiced” (Carreker, 2011, p. 282). In Fundations®, spelling is connected to phonics instruction and is taught through explicit instruction in spelling rules, proofreading strategies to support accurate spelling, and high-frequency sight words.

## English Language Learners

The ultimate goal of reading is comprehension. Research has found that the ability to decode words is a prerequisite for reading comprehension. Therefore, for students who need practice with decoding, whether ELL or not, targeted, systematic phonics instruction is essential (Torgesen et al., 2007). Furthermore, as with all students, ELL students need instruction in word learning, comprehension strategies, and academic language in order to comprehend text (Torgesen et al., 2007). Research findings suggest that, as with native English speakers, the intervention approach for ELLs should match the learner’s area of difficulty. That is, the teacher should clearly understand a student’s area(s) of difficulty or weakness (Francis et al., 2006). In response, Fundations® incorporates a set of research-based principles of instruction for English Language Learners, described in more detail in the Principles of Instruction section, further below.

***Evidence of Fundations® Effectiveness***

Many studies have been conducted to determine the effectiveness of the Fundations® program. The consensus across these studies is that, when implemented properly, students using Fundations® in Tiers 1 and 2 achieve greater gains in foundational literacy skills compared to students using programs previously implemented by the schools. These results held with English language learners (ELL) as well.

Kindergarten students who received Fundations® instruction in Florida, New York, and Massachusetts demonstrated:

* Better learning of letter knowledge.
* Larger gains in phonological and phonemic awareness.
* Greater gains in phonological decoding.
* Reduction in risk of later reading difficulties.

**First-grade students who received Fundations® instruction demonstrated:**

* Larger gains in oral reading fluency.
* Improvement in phonemic awareness (phoneme segmentation).
* Improvement in phonological decoding (reading nonsense words).
* Significant gains in basic reading skills.
* Reduction in risk of later reading difficulties.

**ELLs (Grade 1) who received Fundations® instruction demonstrated:**

* Greater gains in phonemic awareness.
* Greater gains in oral reading fluency.

**ESSA Evidence**

An independent analysis of data from a Florida district determined that Fundations® implementation in the general classroom (Tier 1) is associated with better performance on four of six tested DIBELS scores in first grade and the DIBELS Letter Naming Fluency (LNF) subtest in kindergarten. LNF is a critically important and telling factor of the potential for developing literacy in younger students. Alphabetic knowledge, as measured in this subtest, is a strong predictor of how easily a child will learn to read. The study included multiple regression analyses with statistical controls for demographic and behavioral factors and is sufficient for a rating of “Promising Evidence” / Tier 3 on the U.S. Department of Education’s Every Students Success Act (ESSA) evidence scale.

**Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) Independent Review**

The FCRR completed an independent review and identified the following program strengths:

* Fundations® is derived from research that has been proven to be successful with a wide variety of learners.
* Fundations® is highly systematic, both within lessons and across lessons.
* Multisensory methods are employed in teaching children sounds, their representative letters, and their combination into words, phrases, and sentences.
* Students learn a variety of techniques to analyze multisyllabic and unknown words, and words with spelling options.
* Frequent practice and review build mastery in students.
* Fundations® can be taught in a 1:1 setting, a small group, or to a whole class, and can be used for prevention, intervention, or immediate, intensive intervention purposes.
* Many lesson activities and games are geared toward whole class or group participation.
* Materials are very teacher-friendly, and the Fundations® Learning Community gives excellent demonstrations of each of the teaching activity types used in the program. A teacher can thus review each technique as needed.
* No program weakness was noted.

**For more information and details about the Fundations® Studies of Program Effectiveness, please see** [**here**](https://www.wilsonlanguage.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Fundations-Evidence-of-Effectiveness.pdf)**.**

**How does the curriculum model or program support direct, explicit instruction in all areas of reading (i.e., oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, rapid automatic name, or letter name fluency and reading comprehension?**

Fundations® instruction is visible and explicit. The teacher directly teaches all concepts and skills to students through explanation, modeling, and active learning. The teacher provides classroom demonstrations by using manipulatives to accompany explanations. All learning involves active participation, allowing students to learn through various modalities and helping them to maintain focus.

Lessons are interactive in nature and designed to fully engage students in the task at hand. All skills and concepts are taught and reinforced through different modalities using visual auditory tactile and kinesthetic senses. This not only reinforced learning in varied ways, but it also helps students maintain their focus. For example students learn by hearing sounds, manipulating color-coded sound syllable and word cards, using a finger tapping technique, writing and spoken words, reading aloud, and repeating what they read in their own words, and listening to others read aloud.

**How does the curriculum model or program support frequent opportunities for students to practice and gain literacy skills?**

Fundations® supports frequent opportunities for students to practice and gain literacy skills. Fundations® procedures ensure student engagement with hands-on activities by providing students with multiple opportunities to deliberately practice and reinforce all skills. Information is presented in different ways and with varying activities within a lesson. Students demonstrate their understanding and application of concepts through a variety of tasks. Students’ correct answers are given immediate positive feedback. Students’ errors are also corrected “on the spot” with guided questions so that students learn from their mistakes.

In addition, lessons are interactive in nature and designed to fully engage students in the task at hand. All skills and concepts are taught and reinforced through visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic senses. This provides learning through various modalities and helps students maintain their focus. For example, students learn by hearing sounds; manipulating color-coded sound, syllable, and word cards; performing finger tapping exercises; writing down spoken words; reading aloud and repeating what they have read in their own words; and listening to others read aloud.

**Phonological and Phonemic Awareness**

Fundations®’ phonological awareness instruction focuses most extensively on the key components related to the acquisition of reading and writing (i.e., phonemic awareness skills of blending, segmenting, and manipulation). Research strongly identifies that phonemic awareness instruction is most effective when also linked with letters.

By design, Fundations® Level K sets as the goal to efficiently focuses on the most complex phonemic awareness skill of phoneme blending and segmentation which research identifies as the key skill and the functional value in decoding/reading. Phonemic awareness instruction begins in Level K by tuning students into the separate phonemes in a word and develops their understanding that sounds of spoken language work together to make words (phonemic awareness).

Although Fundations® doesn’t name an activity “Phonemic Awareness,” the oral language exercises of isolating phonemes in a spoken word are ample. The skill of isolating phonemes orally first (without letters) in a spoken word is emphasized in the procedure of Echo/Find Words and Dictation Activities. During these activities students first hear the word and must segment the sounds. The Wilson® finger tapping technique is used to analyze spoken words, segmenting and clarifying them into phonemes. The teacher says a word; students echo and then tap out the individual phonemes. Students then identify letter tiles (manipulatives) or write the word applying the alphabetic principle. Although letters are used to first demonstrate segmentation and manipulation students do phonemic skills without letters and confirm the accuracy of the segmentation by then attaching letters.

During each activity, teachers dictate several words which help students recognize the change in the spoken word when a specified phoneme is added, changed, or removed. This is phoneme manipulation. Words with digraphs, blends, digraph bends and words up to five sounds are segmented and blended. For multisyllabic words, the focus is on syllabic segmentation. The procedure for Echo/Find Words (multisyllabic words) and Dictation/Words (multisyllabic words) teaches students to first hear the word orally, then break the words into syllables.

Phonemic awareness is not just something performed at the beginning of the program and in isolation, but rather it is conducted (daily) throughout the year as it is directly integrated into the study of word structure as follows:

* + Kindergarten students will orally segment three sound words including words with digraphs because the CVC pattern is the syllable pattern taught in Level K.
  + In Level 1, students will progress to orally segmenting and identifying up to 5 sounds in a single syllable including digraph-blends as well as isolating and segmenting phonemes in words with the long vowel sound in the v-c-e syllable type as they learn this word structure.
  + When students progress to learning multisyllable word structure at the end of Level 1 and in Levels 2 and 3, they are required to tune into (phonologically) the number of syllables in the word. When provided a word orally, students must break the words into syllables then further identify the phonemes in each syllable.

Thus, phonemic awareness is not just something that is done in isolation at the beginning of K through grade 1, but rather it is skill that is integrated into the process of acquiring reading skills throughout the K-3 Fundations® curricula.

Fundations® also spends some (but not extensive) time dedicated to lower-level PA (phonological sensitivity skills) continuum (i.e., word awareness, rhyming, alliteration, syllable awareness, onset-rime) Even so, these activities are included in Make it Fun, Word Play, and Storytime activities in the standard lesson as well as with the Home Support Packet and additional activities provided on the Fundations® Learning Community (the companion website). (Please note that Fundations® doesn’t name an activity “Phonological Awareness,” rather these activities are integrated into other activities such as Make it Fun, Word Play and Storytime.)

**Phonics and Word Study**

Fundations® is a comprehensive word study program which teaches the alphabetic, syllabic, and orthographic structure of words. It presents all skills in a systematic and sequential manner in four levels: Level K, Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3. All previously taught skills are brough forward in a cumulative way. Students have ample opportunity to apply these skills for reinforcement. Instruction continually spirals back to relate the new concepts with previously mastered ones. In this way, students are able to develop a deeper understanding of the structure of English words.

While a synthetic, systematic phonics program is essential, it is not sufficient. Fundations® goes beyond phonics to thoroughly integrate the instruction of total word structure, including syllable patterns, affixes, and orthography (rules of English written language) so that students fully internalize the “system” of the English language. This is key for students to go beyond the recognition of single-syllable words and master multisyllabic word decoding. It is also essential to move students from reading words primarily via alphabetic decoding to more automatically recognizing written words (see Nation & Castle, 2017). Students investigate words and use a variety of techniques to analyze single-syllable and multisyllabic words, unknown words, and words with spelling options, including their knowledge around vowel sounds in syllables. This is important for students to efficiently read longer, unfamiliar words as their reading skills progress and the complexity of grade-level text increases.

**Print Concepts**

Encoding (spelling) skills are taught in tandem with decoding skills. This is because spelling is a foundational skill for writing and strongly reinforces reading. Research demonstrates that spelling has a strong effect on reading fluency and word reading skills (Shaywitz, 2003; Reed, 2012). Mastering the spelling of words provides an orthographic mapping of the word so it can then be recognized during a reading task with more fluency. Spelling skills are taught with decoding skills through: Introduce New Concepts, Echo/Find Words, Dictation Words and Sentences. Additionally, students learn punctuation, capitalization, and proofreading skills.

Fundations® and its materials and activities provide abundant practice with learned concepts of word structure and analysis, while also engaging students in metacognitive thinking as it is essential that students understand the underpinnings of word structure and can apply and generalize these concepts.

In Fundations®, sound mastery is a critical component of phonics. In Fundations®, students are directly taught a consistently used keyword to help them remember a letter’s sound. Research has shown that the use of keywords works as a memory device to help students associate the sound relationship to the letter. The Drill Sounds/Warm Up activity reinforces the alphabetic principle and allows student an opportunity to “warm up” for each lesson by practicing the letters, keywords, and sounds they have already learned. This 2–3-minute sound drill is designed to create fast and efficient neurotransmission pathways to access sounds (sound mastery and automaticity). Sound master is reinforced in the following activities: Letter‐Keyword‐Sound, Drill Sounds, Echo/Find Letters, Dictation/Sounds, Echo/Letter Formation, Skywrite/Letter Formation, and Make it Fun.

**Automatic Word Recognition**

Fundations® students develop deep word-level knowledge and automatic word identification skills beginning with strategies that target accuracy such as taping out sounds and marking word elements. The Wilson® tapping technique adds a powerful tactile component to clarifying phonemes before blending to decode. Students cumulatively learn to process words more quickly by using the patterns of syllables and orthographic rules (spelling conventions) involving base words and affixes. Sounds Cards and Syllable Cards are used to teach concepts of syllable types in a multisensory way. Students investigate words and use a variety of techniques, including their knowledge around vowel sounds in syllables, to analyze single-syllable and multisyllabic words. Lessons progress to a focus on quick automatic word recognition. Activities provide ample practice for decoding practice including Introduce New Concepts, Word of the Day, Word Talk, Teach Trick Words-Reading, Make it Fun, Storytime. For each Fundations® level, every unit includes a comprehensive list of controlled text for only the word structure taught in that unit or previously taught concepts. Additional single-word decoding practice for accuracy and automaticity as well as application of emerging decoding skills with connected text is provided in the Home Support Packet 1, Fluency Kit for Levels 1 and 2, the Fundations® Stories Set 1, and with the books in the Geodes® Classroom Libraries.

With Fundations®, automatic word recognition of Level K, 1 and 2 Trick Words, combined with students’ emerging phonetic knowledge, will provide mastery instruction for the most common sight words on both the Fry and American Heritage high frequency lists. Phonetically irregular high frequency words and high frequency words with regular sound-spelling patterns not yet introduced in the curriculum are taught as Trick Words in Fundations®. Trick words are introduced within the context of a sentence to promote automatic and fluent reading in to aid in defining the word when necessary. Although students are taught to recognize these high frequency words by sight, Trick Word instruction is not taught in isolation. Kinesthetic-tactile memory techniques are used to help students create visual pictures of irregular parts of words to store them in memory. Trick Words are practiced in decoding and spelling activities that include sentences, phrases, and story reading.

**Print Awareness**

In Fundations®, print awareness is developed through varied practice designed to advance students’ understanding that print has different purposes and is an ordered system that must be approached in a way that unlocks its meaning. Print awareness is explicitly connected to books and stories during the Fundations® Storytime Activity. It should be noted that Fundations® is designed to be combined with a literature-based program with the understanding that ample opportunities to engage in meaningful print, including modeling print concepts in authentic reading contexts such as teacher read-alouds, will be provided with the core ELA program.

Print awareness is also demonstrated and reinforced during several Fundations® activities that use the Sentence Frames to teach concepts. Fundations® activities using Sentence Frames include Introduce New Concepts, Teach Trick Words, Trick Word Practice, Word Play–Word Awareness, Word Play-Read Sentences, and Dictation/Sentences.

These activities emphasize that sentences are read left to right and words are separated by spaces in print. Also, key elements of sentence structure such as capitalization and punctuation are directly taught. Standard Sound Cards and Letter tiles help to demonstrate the difference between individual letters and printed words, and that letters make up words.

**Letter Formation**

Letter formation is tightly integrated with learning the letter name and letter sound. Students simultaneously learn its formation and the letter-sound correspondence; creating important linkages to the visual, motor, and phonological image of the letter. Students master letter formation with verbal cues, repetition, sky writing, tracing, and writing practice. Letter formation is initially introduced using gross motor memory during the Sky Write/Letter Formation activity. Teachers use a gradual release approach to support student’s incremental skill mastery. Students first use gross motor memory to trace the letter, then to copy it, and finally to write the letter from memory. Letters are grouped into “like patterns” and grid lines (Wilson grid) for writing are given specific names and used as reference points. Students are guided through a letter’s formation using consistent verbalization. The following daily activities offer practice in a multi-modal/multisensory manner using engaging materials. Letter-Keyword-Sound, Drill Sounds, Echo/Find Letters, Dictation/Sounds, Echo/Letter Formation, Skywrite/Letter Formation, Student Notebook, Alphabetical Order, Make it Fun in Level K, students master the letter formations of all 26 letters, upper- and lowercase. Grades 1 and 2 teachers have all materials and instruction to reteach and review these as needed. Cursive letter formation is explicitly taught in Level 3 or can also be taught in grade 2. Throughout the curriculum, legibility is highly valued.

**How does the curriculum model or program allow for high-quality, daily differentiation of foundational skills so all students achieve mastery of foundational skills?**

Fundations® provides for high-quality, daily differentiation of foundational skills for all students so that all can reach mastery. Whole group instruction is delivered to the entire class during the Fundations® Standard Lesson. Teachers plan lessons that incorporate differentiation of instruction depending on student need. All students learn differently, and teachers plan to accommodate their learning differences as they present lessons in the whole group as it becomes apparent that some students have particular needs. This provides high quality and consistent initial reading instruction. Explicit instruction and decoding benefits all children including those high in phonemic awareness and alphabetic knowledge (Fielding- Barnsley 1997).

Likewise, fluency instruction develops fluency skill with all students dash normal, at risk, low achieving, ELL, and students with learning disabilities; and this may in turn increase overall reading comprehension achievement. In Fundations®, teachers conduct the Learning Activities with students, scaffolding instruction by providing guiding, modeling, and cueing of the students. This reduces the possibility of student error and is beneficial to all learners. Teachers take into account student strengths and weaknesses, providing direct instruction that is engaging. Students learn to feel comfortable asking questions or making errors as the teacher provides direction through questioning, providing reference materials, rewording instruction, and providing assistance that will lead to mastery.

Differentiation is key for instruction for students who are lagging behind and for advanced students during the standard lesson. Fundations® Manual has suggestions provided in the Activity Section, the Introduction of each Unit and, on the Fundations® Learning Community for their particular grade. Differentiated instruction is based on the assumption that students differ in their learning modalities, needs, strengths, and abilities. Fundations® activities meet these differences. Fundations® Learning Activities give students many ways to understand the content and ensure that all students are able to participate. These activities involve all modalities of learning so that students who learn in a variety of ways can have access to the curriculum. Thus, differentiation via the process of the “how” of teaching Fundations® provides a variety of ways in which students learn and make sense of the content. As the lesson progresses, teachers observe student performance to ensure that learning has taken place. Teachers adjust their lessons based on the responses of individual students to plan subsequent lessons most diagnostically and prescriptively. The goal is mastery for most of the students and teachers become adept and differentiating instruction and lesson planning based on individual needs that arise during whole class instruction by focusing attention on specific students as the need arises. Understanding student progress happens informally as teachers listen to and observe student responses and more formally, as teachers view Unit Test data to inform their instruction.

Throughout the standard lesson teachers provide appropriate levels of challenge for all students. During desk activities, teachers circulate around the room so they can quietly interact with individual students. This can include using questions to guide struggling students to corrections as well as to challenge more advanced students by asking them extension questions, (such as using a word in two different ways). Teachers can differentiate the process by engaging students in critical and creative thinking and adding greater complexity or abstractness to the tasks for advanced students. Since this is a collaborative learning time, students who are English proficient and who are more readily developing English literacy can provide additional scaffolding for students who are lagging behind during the desk activities. Teachers provide praise and acknowledge students for their contributions, but also monitor that they do not “take over” and do the activity for their peers.

**English Language Learners**

Fundations® is also appropriate for differentiation for English Language Learners (ELLs or Els). It is helpful if English language learners can read in their native language which will help them learn English. ELs are directly and systematically taught how the English language works for both reading and spelling. Learning the English spelling system helps ELs learn letter/sound correspondences, increase vocabulary and develop a greater fluency in reading and writing. Through the study of related words, students begin to see that English Spelling, which is complex, is systematic and governed by rules (Graham, 2010, p.6).

ELs often lack the English vocabulary and background knowledge which is sometimes assumed. Additional support can be provided for students with pictures, using props or gestures. It is very important for ELs to have many opportunities to practice new vocabulary and support their understanding. If ELs struggle to learn to read in their native language and show evidence of difficulty learning to read in English, it may be due to an underlying language learning disability. That may require further assessment for a language-based learning disability and necessary assessment help teachers to determine the students’ needs.

ELs benefit from many of the principles of instructions that have been built into the Fundations® program. Teachers lead instruction explicitly. Instruction is provided as teachers instruct students with these principles:

* Integration of listening, speaking, reading and writing,
* Explicit modeling and strategy instruction
* Verbal explanation of concepts that are enhanced by visual, physical and kinesthetic involvement
* Opportunities for student interaction in supportive groups
* Hands on activities
* Clear and consistent directions and cueing systems
* Ample opportunities to reinforce skills
* Repetition of vocabulary, including the vocabulary of word structure (such as digraph and short vowel)
* Assessment of content knowledge that is performance rather than language based.

Further, it is important to note that Fundations® fosters a positive learning environment, which reduces anxiety and fosters best learning. Students are allowed to respond when they are ready and have the time to acquire language and skill by listening and doing. This shows acceptance and ease with making mistakes, and it is well known that when students feel less stress and anxiety in the classroom, the more able they are to learn.

Els, as well as students with language-based learning disabilities, may have more difficulty retrieving the words that express concepts during the lesson. For this reason, they may be given choices of responses from which to respond, such as. “Is this a diagraph or a blend?” giving students options to point to the answer or recall concepts with prompts. Teachers ask open-ended types of questions instead of requiring that the student elicit answers without any scaffolds. This allows ELs to recognize, instead of having to retrieve answers for given concepts or meanings of the word.

It is important to note that while some ELs may also have a language learning disability, the majority of these students will be very language able and quickly progress with direct instruction following the principles provided in Fundations®. In addition to the Fundations® Standard Lesson, teachers need to provide appropriate reading opportunities during the other parts of literacy instruction. Advanced students may select and read text that corresponds to their ability.

Students who are just beginning word recognition with varied opportunities to practice and develop skills with appropriate text. Research supports this: “Appropriate texts that are provided to read that allow students at each stage to have types of words that they have learned to read. Material should be at the student's independent reading level. If a student is asked to read at his or her instructional level, there should be a teacher or parent to help with words that are more difficult and to listen as sentences with errors are reread. Readers should not be expected to independently read materials at their frustration level. Not only will this weaken their comprehension, but it also can produce negative feelings about reading.” (Deshler & Gildroy, 2005, pp.7-8).

**Fluency Practice at Home and School**

Fundations® also provides a Parent Home Support pack that may be provided in Spanish for those parents who do not speak English as their first language.

For at risk struggling students, the amount of fluency practice with controlled text will differ. Additional opportunity to practice skills must be provided in small group, Tier 2 instruction. For students who are identified as struggling or at-risk readers, instruction should include the Fundations® Standard Lesson and an “Intervention” lesson targeting areas of difficulty the longer the intervention for struggling readers is delayed the greater the impact on a student's motivation to read; Therefore it is critical to help these at risk readers as soon as possible (Snowling & Hume, 2011).

**Formative and Summative Assessments and Resources to Inform Differentiation Strategies**

The diagnostic nature of Fundations® also combines assessment and instruction, allowing teachers to determine and address students’ strengths and challenges. Teachers write their own lesson plans to diagnostically differentiate instruction based on need and mastery of previously taught material. Teachers assess student mastery by analyzing student outcomes on formative and summative assessments and daily observations.

Whole group instruction is delivered to the entire class during the Fundations® Standard Lesson to provide high quality and consistent initial reading and spelling instruction. Multiple Learning Activities in each daily 30-minute lesson give students many ways to understand the content and assure that all students are able to participate.

Fundations® lessons are designed to incorporate scaffolded steps to new learning: modeling and explanation, guided practice and explanation, and independent practice and demonstration as a skill is mastered. The sequence of Learning Activities also progresses on a given day or within in a week to move students toward independence.

Fundations® Teacher’s Manuals provide guidelines for differentiation to help teachers challenge more advanced students during group lessons while systematically and thoroughly building their foundations knowledge of word structure. Guidelines are also provided for diagnostic planning of lessons with all students in mind so that teachers can use questioning to target student difficulties and challenge more advanced students.

The companion website called the Learning Community for Fundations®, (previously called the Prevention Learning Community -PLC), provides many center-based activities or independent activities including phonemic awareness activities, phonics activities with manipulatives, and practice with decodable text. The Fluency Kit (Levels 1-2) provides additional timed practice for repeated oral readings.

Students who are significantly below benchmark or who consistently score 80% on Unit Tests should be considered for additional support, such as small group Intervention lessons with targeted instruction. For students who need targeted support, small group instruction is provided. Please note: At‐risk students in need of strategic and targeted intervention will:

* Participate in the whole‐class Fundations® standard lesson (30 minutes daily).
* Also receive targeted Fundations® intervention lessons in small‐groups (up to 5 students) (30 minutes 3‐5 times per week).
* Achieve increased instructional intensity through small, homogeneous group lessons; increased instructional time with intervention lessons; and targeted instruction in specific areas of difficulty.

The companion website provides recourse for targeted instruction and intervention including small group format, scheduling, lesson planning, activities, and progress monitoring tools.

The guiding instructional principles of Fundations®, including multisensory, structured, and integrated skills instruction, as well as explicit modeling and ample opportunities to practice taught skills in a variety of contexts and activities, provide for high quality lessons that address students’ needs at various levels.

Fundations® provides guidance to the teacher on how to differentiate the Learning Activities for advanced and struggling learners. Given that these learning activities are conducted ***daily***, the teacher can differentiate with *every* lesson. Furthermore, Fundations® provides guidance at the beginning of the units for ways to challenge students within the concepts being taught. It is important to recognize that Fundations® inherently challenges advanced students while setting high expectations for learning of all students and supporting struggling learners along the way.

Fundations® efficiently uses data to identify students needing varying levels of support and has integrated differentiation to target the support for these students. Differentiation within the Unit lessons is directly addressed at the beginning of each Unit in all Levels of the Teacher’s Manual, as well as in the Introduction sections.

**How does the curriculum model or program provide for structured discussions that address grade-level speaking and listening standards?**

Fundations® provides for structured discussions that address grade level speaking and listening standards. As a 30-minute supplemental program focused on foundational skills of decoding, encoding, and handwriting, Fundations® contributes to this criterion, but it is expected that the core ELA program would address the indicators fully.

All Fundations® classroom tasks and instructions related to the program activities include both what the students are asked to do and how teachers facilitate their success. All Learning Activity procedures and routines require students to listen actively and respond using multi-word responses. All the Fundations® Learning Activity procedures and routines require students to follow oral directions. All Learning Activity procedures and routines require students to speak audibly and clearly to demonstrate understanding. All lesson components involve active participation and instruction is highly interactive, often engaging several senses simultaneously. Each student actively engages in every lesson activity and component and works both independently and collaboratively with classmates to apply decoding and encoding skills. Teachers are directed to identify and rotate student leaders for various lesson activities.

Although not designed to be a core ELA Program, Fundations® teachers create a rich oral language environment to reinforce that words have meaning through lessons. Teachers develop “word conscious” classroom, constantly emphasizing both structure and meaning. For text, students practice visualizing and retelling strategies. Students learn to orally provide sentences for selected words they have decoded as well as how to expand them with more details. A Word of the Day, corresponding with the word structure being studied, is selected from resources (such as Biemiller, 20210) so that students learn word structure using example words of higher utility. Students add these words using expanded sentences to a vocabulary section of their Student Notebook.

**How does the curriculum model or program comprehensively address Connecticut Core Standards for English Language Arts through both explicit instruction and authentic application?**

The Fundations® program comprehensively addresses the Connecticut Core Standards for English Language Arts: Foundational Skills through both explicit instruction and authentic application. The teacher directly teaches all concepts and skills to students through explanation, modeling, and active learning. The teacher provides classroom demonstrations by using manipulatives to accompany explanations. All learning involves active participation, allowing students to learn through various modalities and helping them to maintain focus.

As a 30-minute supplemental program focused on foundational skills of decoding, encoding, and handwriting, Fundations® fully addresses foundational skills standards, but it is expected that the core ELA program would address the remaining standards fully.

**Speaking and Listening Standards**

All Fundations® classroom tasks and instructions related to the program activities include both what the students are asked to do and how teachers facilitate their success. All Learning Activity procedures and routines require students to listen activity and respond using multi-word responses. All the Fundations® Learning Activity procedures and routines require students to follow oral directions. All Learning Activity procedures and routines require students to speak audibly and clearly to demonstrate understanding. All lesson components involve active participation and instruction is highly interactive, often engaging several senses simultaneously. Each student actively engages in every lesson activity and component and works both independently and collaboratively with classmates to apply decoding and encoding skills. Teachers are directed to identify and rotate student leaders for various lesson activities.

**Writing Standards**

The core ELA program is expected to provide a wide range of materials to address grade level language standards and authentic writing opportunities. Fundations® contributes to the goals by setting the foundation for writing by directly teaching the study of English orthography for spelling of words and high frequency words and proofreading skills. The goal is to for students to be automatic and fluent with writing so that instruction at higher levels of writing can be addressed.

Although not designed to be a core ELA Program, Fundations® teachers create a rich oral language environment to reinforce that words have meaning through lessons. Teachers develop “word conscious” classroom, constantly emphasizing both structure and meaning. For text, students practice visualizing and retelling strategies. Students learn to orally provide sentences for selected words they have decoded as well as how to expand them with more details. A Word of the Day, corresponding with the word structure being studied, is selected from resources (such as Biemiller, 20210) so that students learn word structure using example words of higher utility. Students add these words using expanded sentences to a vocabulary section of their Student Notebook.

**How does the curriculum model or program include a wide range of authentic writing and explicit instruction in writing skills and strategies?**

## The Fundations® program includes a wide range of authentic writing and explicit instruction in writing skills and strategies. Students practice writing words, phrases, and sentences several times a week in the Dictation activities. Teachers dictate sounds, single and multisyllabic words, phrases, and sentences daily. Students complete dictation activities on dry erase boards or in their Composition Books. These activities support development of the alphabetic principle and solidify both sound-symbol correspondence and letter formation. This also helps students develop independence in spelling, as they reinforce their understanding of word structure, learning different techniques to spell words with one or more syllable, and learning about how to navigate spelling words that have sound options (i.e., ou /ow). In Sentence Dictation activities, students develop auditory memory as teachers dictate the sentences to be written. They learn about rudiments of grammar, including capital letters and ending punctuation marks. Students also learn to develop their proofreading skills as they learn to use a specific proofreading/editing procedure whenever they write. Independence is encouraged as students build their writing skills. They learn to check their Student Notebooks for sounds, spelling rules, or high frequency/Trick Words which provides guidance toward correcting their own errors.

## Spelling and Writing

Research clearly demonstrates a connection in the brain between reading and spelling activities, leading researchers to believe that spelling strongly reinforces reading (James & Engelhardt, 2012). “Spelling, (going from sound to letter) strongly reinforces reading, (going from letter to sound) and its instruction should be linked to a child’s reading lesson” (Shaywitz, 2003). For students with dyslexia, it is important that they “learn to spell words with sounds and patterns that have been previously introduced for reading and practiced” (Carreker, 2011, p. 282). Accurate spelling reflects more advanced linguistic knowledge because it requires the integration of phonological, orthographic, and morphological knowledge. Airy 2000 a synthesis of studies conducted with developing readers in the lower elementary grades concluded that integrated decoding and encoding instruction led to significant gains in phonemic awareness alphabetic decoding word reading spelling fluency and comprehension wiser and Mathis 2011.

In Fundations® students learn the sound and word structure so that they can determine how to spell words on their own when students spell a word it reflects advanced word knowledge. It also helps to establish their orthographic memory of that word this essential instruction not only sets foundational skills for writing but research has concluded that integrating decoding and encoding instruction supports students development in phonemic awareness alphabetic decoding word reading spelling fluency and comprehension.

The accurate visual representation of both letters and words is called “orthography.” The ability to picture and store a visual representation provides the foundation for reading and spelling. In Fundations® students learn to segment and spell words in correspondence to decoding patterns. They learn to segment and associate letters with sounds rather than memorize. Spelling is generally more difficult than reading because with spelling, students have no visual cues and must determine the correct letters in sequence. Although decoding and spelling instruction in Fundations® follow the same sequence, for some students, spelling may be more challenging. Fundations® students also systematically learn punctuation, capitalization, and proofreading skills. This begins along with print awareness in kindergarten and is reinforced throughout all levels.

Although Fundations® is not a core program, it does provide instruction to support writing skills and conventions, described earlier. To encourage writing outside of the foundations standard lesson teachers are encouraged to help students use journal writing in the My Fundations® Journal. Writing in the My Fundations® Journal is not part of the 30-minute Standard Lesson time, but it is strongly encouraged. Students learn to draw, and/or write in their journals several times a week. If the students do not have My Fundations® Journal, composition paper is available on the Fundations® Learning Community. Here are the skills and conventions that are explicitly taught in Fundations®:

* Handwriting (Print) is taught in Levels K-1 to enable students to learn letter formation.
* Spelling skills and conventions (rules and patterns). Cursive is taught in Level 3.
* Use of writing conventions such as use of capital and lowercase letters.
* Grammatical conventions in the use of tense (present tense, past tense, etc.).
* Use of punctuation at the end of sentences.
* Reinforcement of spelling is also taught in Dictation Activities for Sounds, Single Syllable words, multisyllabic words, High Frequency (Trick) Words, Sentences.

However, the core ELA program is expected to provide a wide range of materials to address grade level language standards and authentic writing opportunities. Fundations® contributes to the goals by setting the foundation for writing by directly teaching the study of English orthography for spelling of words and high frequency words and proofreading skills. The goal is to for students to be automatic and fluent with writing so that instruction at higher levels of writing can be addressed.

**How does the curriculum model or program provide for varied means of accessing content and demonstrating learning to meet the diverse needs of all students working above or below grade level?**

Fundations® provides for varied means of accessing content and demonstrating learning to meet the diverse needs of all students working above or below grade-level. Instruction is provided in various ways to provide learning visual, auditory, and tactile-kinesthetic modalities. This ensures that all learners have the best opportunities to learn most efficiently. Teachers regularly listen to and observe responses of all learners to ensure that their lessons meet individual needs.

**Differentiating Instruction Diagnostically**

Teachers are instructed to plan and teach diagnostically based on student mastery of concepts taught. Teachers write their own lesson plans to diagnostically differentiate instruction based on need and mastery of previously taught material. Teachers assess student mastery by analyzing student outcomes on formative and summative assessments and daily observations. (See previous response on differentiation on pages 17-19 of this document).

Throughout the Standard Lesson teachers provide appropriate levels of challenge for all students. During desk activities, teachers circulate around the room so that they can quietly interact with individual students. This can include using questions to guide struggling students to corrections as well as to challenge more advanced students by asking them extension questions, (such as using a word in two different ways). Teachers can differentiate the process by engaging students in critical and creative thinking and adding greater complexity or abstractness to the tasks for advanced students. Since this is a collaborative learning time, students who are English proficient and who are more readily developing English literacy can provide additional scaffolding for students who are behind during the desk activities. Teachers provide praise and acknowledge students for their contributions, but also monitor that they do not “take over” and do the activity for their peers.

**Engaging Students in Rigorous Work**

The programs engage students in rigorous work, asking them to employ metacognitive thinking since it is essential that they understand the underpinnings of word structure and can apply and generalize concepts.

**Supporting ELLs and Students with a Language Disability**

The following are key instructional principles in all of Wilson’s programs that are critical for both English language learners and students with a language learning disability:

* Integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing
* Explicit modeling of skills and strategies
* Verbal explanations for concepts enhanced by visual, physical, and kinesthetic involvement
* Opportunities for student interaction in supportive groups
* Procedures that ensure student engagement with hands-on activities
* Clear and consistent directions and cueing systems
* Ample opportunities to reinforce skills
* Scaffolded instruction
* Repetition of vocabulary, including the vocabulary of word structure (such as digraph, short vowel)
* Assessment of content knowledge that is performance-based rather than language-based

**How does the curriculum model or program represent various cultures and perspectives, promote cultural affirmation, and value diverse identities, backgrounds, and perspectives?**

Fundations® represents various cultures and perspectives, promotes cultural affirmation, and value diverse identities, backgrounds, and perspectives. Fundations® has been approved by the California State Board of Education as meeting the state’s social content standards. This means the materials contained in each of Wilson’s programs:

* Portray accurately and equitably the cultural and racial diversity of American society.
* Demonstrate the contribution of minority groups and males and females to the development of California and the United States.
* Depict people in varied, positive, and contributing roles to enrich students’ school experiences.
* Avoid inappropriate references to commercial brand names, products, and corporate or company logos.