



## **Fundations Supports Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education**

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In 2019, NYC issued the [New York City Department of Education Definition of Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education](#) and the NYS issued the [New York State Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework](#): Fundations helps to support implementation of this vision.

The Fundations® program is for grades K-3 general education students and struggling or at-risk readers in the lowest 30<sup>th</sup> percentile. It thoroughly teaches the Foundational Reading Skills and strongly supports the other Reading, Writing, and Language Standards set forth in the New York State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards by covering phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension, along with other basic conventions of the English writing system such as handwriting, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation. As a program that promotes a welcoming learning environment, high student expectations, rigorous work, inclusive curriculum, and ongoing professional learning, Fundations supports New York City and New York State’s vision of culturally responsive-sustaining education.

### **A WELCOMING AND AFFIRMING ENVIRONMENT**

#### **Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport**

Fundations® teachers are encouraged to use various strategies in their classrooms to maximize positive relationships and interactions among students as well as between the teachers and students.

As needed, teachers can seek assistance on creating an environment of respect and rapport through Wilson professional learning supports. The Prevention/Early Intervention (PLC) online learning community offers expert tips on strategies teachers can use in their classrooms to maximize positive relationships and interactions among students and between the teacher and students. For example, the PLC offers teachers additional resources and opportunities to seek guidance. Wilson Literacy Specialists are also available to work directly in schools with individual teachers and grade levels to support new learning and ensure that it is incorporated into teaching practice.

For Fundations, the Literacy Specialist convenes Study Group Meetings to provide a model for ways a teacher might share her new knowledge with others during Professional Learning or grade level meetings.

#### **Establish a Culture for Learning**

Wilson believes that it is essential to foster a positive learning environment. Fundations®, like the other Wilson programs, encourages teachers to allow students to respond when they are ready, allowing them time to acquire language and skills by listening and doing. In Fundations in particular, teachers are reminded that although it is essential to take seriously the critical task of setting a foundation, it is just as important to remember to have fun, hence the name, *Fundations*.

Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, Fundations is a rigorous curriculum that expects all students to master the skills presented. Students who may need additional practice receive Fundations intervention instruction in a small group setting. The teacher has consistently high expectations for all students to master the skills and provides the necessary supports to ensure that this occurs. Students often work in teams and are taught how to use positive feedback to encourage their partners to learn the skills.

## **Managing Classroom Procedures**

Since Foundations® lessons are made up of activities that are repeated throughout the course of the program, students become very familiar with the activities and their respective routines and behaviors, and are able to move from one activity to the next with minimal teacher direction. Expert Tips and video demonstrations provided in the PLC offer teachers guidance on how to transition from one activity to another, including ways to assign students tasks to facilitate those transitions, making teachers more efficient.

## **Managing Student Behavior**

As already stated, lessons are made up of activities that are repeated throughout the course of Foundations® so that students become very familiar with them and their respective routines and behaviors. This allows students to move from one activity to the next with minimal distraction or teacher direction and to be more engaged in learning activities. Also, because students are actively engaged in hands-on learning with every activity, student behavior is well managed.

## **Organizing Physical Space**

Program materials explain in detail how to set up a classroom. Additionally, video demonstrations and Expert Tips, provided in the PLC, offer teachers further guidance on how to set up the classroom for lessons so that access to and usage of teacher and student materials are seamless and do not detract from instructional time.

## **HIGH EXPECTATIONS AND RIGOROUS INSTRUCTION**

Foundations® engages students in metacognitive thinking as it is essential that they understand the underpinnings of word structure and can apply and generalize these concepts. Students are taught how to use their skills and have them become self-reliant, using tapping and scooping as well as reference materials (posters, Desk Strips, and their Student Notebooks) to assist them with independent decoding and spelling throughout the day.

Teachers use questions to reinforce student knowledge, such as, “How can you check to be sure?” or “Show me how you know that.” Teachers also use questions to be sure students understand the importance and relevance of what they are learning, such as, “How will knowing that the letter **q** always has **u** with it help you with spelling?” It is important to use questioning to guide higher order thinking. Metacognitive questions are built into Foundations instruction; however, teachers are encouraged to add additional ones, as appropriate. During questioning, Foundations teachers draw on the experiences and cultures of their students and they encourage their students to do the same when responding and during discussions.

## **Communicating with Students**

Instructional routines are described in the Foundations® Teacher’s Manual and are consistent throughout the program.

- Lessons follow regular routines so that teachers and students become proficient in understanding how to move from one activity to the next.
- Teachers share with students the goals and objectives of the lesson. Teachers are also expected to use questions to remind students about objectives during the lessons (e.g., “Who remembers what we are learning about the two kinds of suffixes in words today?”).
- Within the Teacher’s Manual, each activity is also clearly defined and described. Teachers discuss with students the purpose of each activity and the overall objective of the lesson.

- Integral to the delivery of each program is direct and explicit instruction with teacher and student modeling and immediate, explicit feedback to the student.
- By modeling their thinking during direct instruction, teachers provide students with the strategies they need to help themselves and their peers when they encounter a new or challenging situation.
- Teachers also utilize metacognitive strategies in their instruction so that students gain an awareness of how to assess their own understanding and ways to generalize their learning to other applications.

### **Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques**

Fundations® teachers use questioning and discussion techniques to monitor student understanding, help students learn the strategies they need to monitor their understanding and become independent learners, and help students gain metacognitive awareness of how to apply their knowledge and skills to other applications outside of Fundations.

- Fundations uses the “I do, we do, you do together, you do alone” technique to model new skills and strategies. By modeling their thinking during direct instruction, teachers provide students with the strategies they need to help themselves and their peers when they encounter a new or challenging situation. As part of this technique, teachers also ask questions to model their thinking when focusing on word structure, reading, and spelling strategies, vocabulary discussion, and when visualizing and retelling stories. Teachers gradually transfer this questioning process to students by teaching them to model their own thinking. It is important to note that Fundations teachers draw on the experiences and cultures of their students when teaching vocabulary and questioning. They encourage their students to do the same.
- Throughout lessons, students are asked to make inferences based on the evidence, explain their thinking, defend their responses, and build upon their peers’ use of evidence.
- Teachers ask questions designed to help students use what they have learned. Examples include: “What can you do to help yourself if you can’t remember the sound of a digraph?”; “How can you check to be sure you spelled a word correctly?”; “Show me how you know that the words you’re reading are r-controlled syllable types.”

### **Engaging Students in Learning**

To ensure that students are engaged in the learning process, Fundations® teachers teach specific learning strategies and use of tools. These strategies and tools also serve to scaffold students’ learning in order to build a deep understanding of the content. For example:

- As described earlier, instruction incorporates multiple learning modalities (visual, auditory, kinesthetic/tactile) simultaneously in order to ensure that all students are engaged and acquire a deep understanding of concepts. Examples include:
  - Students learn to tap phonemes and scoop syllables to increase accuracy of reading and spelling, but are later reminded to “tap or scoop if you need to, but if you know the word, just read it” (or spell it).
  - Students manipulate letter tiles to build words representing specific syllables and concepts.
  - Students write on white boards and erase words based on categories called out by the teacher.

- Students learn strategies to support their own learning. For example, Foundations students maintain a Student Notebook as a reference tool and as a way to organize their learning. Students learn how to find information they have added to the Notebook to support their learning and understanding, and as they strengthen that learning, they are weaned off its use. Other strategies include teachers asking students to use classroom posters on a regular basis to double check their understanding or to improve their understanding, and to tap phonemes or scoop syllables to help them read a word. Students who find they need these tools for additional support are reminded to think about which learning tool is appropriate for the situation.

### **Using Assessment in Instruction**

Foundations® teachers use data collected formally and informally to gauge student understanding and know whether to reteach or move on in a lesson.

Informally, teachers check for student understanding in ways that also help students to have a meta-cognitive awareness of their strengths and skills and strategies they need to work on as well as to see who understands the concept/information. Students demonstrate their understanding through a variety of tasks such as:

- Building words and responding to Dictation Activities.
- “Marking” concepts within words during dictation activities to show understanding.
- Responding to questions from the teacher.
  - Teachers use questioning techniques from the suggestions in the Teacher’s Manual and modify them as needed to check for understanding. It is important to note that during questioning, Foundations teachers draw on their students’ experiences and cultures. They encourage their students to do the same during responses and discussions.
  - Teachers check in with students to see who understands the concept/information (e.g., “Thumbs up if you think this is a closed syllable”).
- Reading aloud
- Circulating among students to check for understanding and respond to questions. Where teachers see significant misunderstanding, teachers should reteach effectively by using other examples, as well as mark-ups, references, or by using students as leaders to isolate their skills.

### **INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT**

Foundations® offers teachers and students: culturally responsive materials; Home Support Packs for families in both English and Spanish; assessments that reflect different modalities and proficiencies; and different kinds of learning including cooperative learning.

### **Using Culturally Responsive Teacher and Student Materials**

Foundations®, like Wilson’s other reading programs, has been approved by the California State Board of Education as meeting the state’s social content standards. This means that Foundations materials:

- 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.

### **Supporting English Language Learners (ELLs or ELs)**

Many students are English Language Learners (ELLs or ELs). Foundations® teachers directly and systematically teach ELs 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 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 (Gentry & Graham, 2010, p. 6).

ELs often lack English vocabulary and background knowledge which is sometimes assumed. Foundations teachers provide additional support by showing students pictures or using props and gestures. They continually think of their ELs and create opportunities for them to practice new vocabulary and support. Additionally, when introducing and teaching vocabulary, Foundations teachers draw on the experiences and cultures of their students. They encourage their students to do the same.

If ELs struggled 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 in addition to the challenge of a second language. Further instruction and assessment helps Foundations teachers determine the student's needs.

ELs and students with a language learning disability (both primary English speakers and ELs) benefit from many of the principles of instruction built into the Foundations program. For example, during the initial teacher-led instruction, teachers model using classroom demonstrations of concepts which can be particularly effective for these students (Janney & Snell, 2004). Classroom demonstrations occur when a teacher's verbal explanation for concepts is enhanced by visual, physical, and kinesthetic involvement. Thus, Foundations' multisensory instruction provides multiple examples of these demonstrations that can benefit these students. The interactive and "hands-on" activities help to reinforce the acquisition of language associated with reading and spelling as well as literacy skills.

The following are key principles in Foundations that are critical for both ELs and students with a language learning disability:

- Integration of listening, speaking, reading and writing
- Explicitly modeled skill and strategy instruction
- Verbal explanation 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). Additionally, both teachers and students draw on their experiences and cultures when teaching and learning new vocabulary.
- Assessment of content knowledge that is performance rather than language-based

## Providing Home Support in Spanish

The Foundations® Home Support Packs for Levels K-3 are available in both English and Spanish. These packets inform parents and support personnel about what is happening in the classroom and suggest home activities that reinforce classroom learning. They include reproducible letters to parents explaining each Unit, and home activity sheets for student practice. Each pack corresponds to the sequence of the respective Teacher’s Manual.

## Designing Student Assessments

Foundations® teachers are trained to assess for student understanding in formal and informal ways that are integrated into the program.

Informally, teachers check for student understanding in ways that also help students to have a meta-cognitive awareness of their strengths and skills and strategies they need to work on:

- Students build words and respond to dictation activities.
- Students “mark” concepts within words during dictation activities to show understanding.
- Teachers use questioning techniques from the suggestions in the Teacher’s Manual and modify them as needed to check for understanding. It is important to note that Foundations teachers draw on the experiences and cultures of their students when using questioning techniques. They encourage their students to do the same when responding and during discussions.
- Teachers check in with students to see who understands the concept/information (e.g., “Thumbs up if you think this is a closed syllable”).
- Teachers circulate among students as a foundational piece of checking for understanding and responding to questions.

Formative assessment/progress monitoring is built into Foundations with every single lesson. The teacher is able to assess students’ skills because instruction is visible and explicit, and all students are actively participating in the learning. During each part of the lesson, a teacher is assessing how the student is responding to his/her instruction and how the students’ skills and understanding of concepts are progressing as well. The next lesson in Foundations is written with the students’ needs in mind. The sounds, words (real as well as nonsense), phrases and sentences are chosen for decoding and encoding to specifically target any problems students are having as well as assisting the teacher in making sure the students are understanding the new concepts taught in that lesson.

- Teachers administer Unit Check Up quizzes and Unit Tests, summative assessments that take place at the end of each Foundations Unit to measure a student’s knowledge of concepts that are taught in a specific Foundations Unit. Results of the quizzes and tests guide teachers’ decisions about whether to advance to the next Unit; whether particular students need support; or whether to reteach the Unit to the whole class. If 80% of the class does not score 80% or higher on a Unit Test, the teacher will analyze student assessment data and reteach Learning Activities to target those areas of difficulty and ensure that students achieve mastery.
- Based on data collected, students are identified as needing Tier 2 intervention support or as being well-placed in the core reading group. Students who consistently score below 80% on Unit Tests are included in small group Foundations intervention lessons for targeted instruction.
- Students are re-grouped as needed after completing curriculum-based progress monitoring testing based on their progress toward grade level skills. Progress monitoring assessments done

during Foundations intervention lessons may help identify students who may need a more intensive (Tier 3) intervention using the Wilson Reading System.

- Tier 2 students receive regular progress monitoring to measure what they know compared to the curriculum. The Foundations Level K and 1 Progress Monitoring Tools specifically measure skills introduced in Foundations Levels K and 1. Specific fluency measures are provided to measure progress after each week of instruction. Charts and class records monitor progress toward the benchmark and are discussed with students.
- When Foundations is exclusively implemented as a Tier 2, early intervention program, teachers can use the Intervention Placement Inventory to determine which Foundations Level a student should begin with (K, 1, or 2). The Intervention Placement Inventory provides a quick assessment of:
  - letter names
  - sound to letter correspondence
  - single word reading and spelling

### **Encouraging Cooperative Learning**

In Foundations®, optimal learning is facilitated by a gradual release of responsibility model that moves from “I do it” (teacher demonstration), to “We do it” (guided instruction/practice), then “You do it together” (collaborative learning), and finally, “You do it alone” (independent success).

Teachers deliver whole group instruction to the entire class during the Foundations Standard Lesson. This provides high quality and consistent initial reading instruction.

To accomplish this, the teacher conducts the Standard 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.

During desk activities, the teacher circulates around the room to quietly interact with individual students. This may include using questions to guide struggling students to corrections as well as to challenge more advanced students by asking them extension questions. Teachers can differentiate process by engaging students in critical and creative thinking and adding greater complexity or abstractness to tasks for advanced students. Because 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 are encouraged to praise and acknowledge these students for their contributions, but also monitor that they do not “take over” and do the activity for their peers.

### **ONGOING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

Wilson® offers a range of in-person and virtual professional learning opportunities to support implementation of Foundations® with fidelity. Courses, workshops, and integrated teacher support (i.e., study groups, and/or online learning communities, and more) provide guidance on using the program effectively with a variety of learners.

### **Reflecting on Teaching**

Regular informal and formal assessment of student learning built into Foundations® requires teachers to constantly reflect on the effectiveness of their instruction. Foundations teachers can consult the Teacher’s Manual for guidance on how to differentiate instruction for advanced or struggling students.

Wilson recommends that teachers receive classroom or virtual coaching support in order to support their implementation of Foundations with fidelity, which will promote successful student learning.

When teachers need help to improve student learning, they can also seek assistance through Wilson professional learning supports. For example, the Prevention/Early Intervention Learning Community (PLC) offers teachers additional resources and opportunities to seek guidance. Wilson Literacy Specialists are also available to work directly in schools with individual teachers and grade levels to support new learning and ensure that it is incorporated into teaching practice. For Foundations, the Literacy Specialist convenes study group meetings to provide a model for ways a teacher might share her new knowledge with others during professional learning or grade-level meetings.

### **Maintaining Accurate Records**

Foundations® assessments are scored in a manner that shows a breakdown of skills for each student so that teachers can easily look back and understand where specific students require extra practice or reinforcement. Teachers can then discuss these trouble spots with the respective students and plan lessons to include some of the elements the individual students need practice with, directing the instruction to them during the lesson. Whole Class Test Trackers, Individual Class Test Trackers, and Unit Test Class Test Trackers with Retesting are available on the online Prevention/Early Intervention Learning Community (PLC). Foundations teachers may use these resources to organize information and highlight students who are not reaching benchmark.

### **Communicating with Families**

Foundations® teachers are instructed to send home weekly exercises from the Home Support Pack that provide information about the program and activities for extra practice with parents. Teachers can also include copies of Unit Tests or Progress Monitoring graphs to indicate student progress.

### **Participating in the Professional Community**

Foundations® has data collection tools that allow teachers to easily track student progress and share with other teachers via study groups and online learning communities where teachers can share via discussion boards. The Prevention/Early Intervention (PLC) online learning community provides teachers with a set of Study Group Guidelines to help facilitate meetings.

### **Growing and Developing Professionally**

Wilson provides professional learning supports to help Foundations® teachers continue to develop their knowledge and skills about reading and reading instruction.

- An initial one-day Virtual Launch Workshop is offered for each Foundations Level (i.e., one day of training for Level K, another day for Level 1, etc.).
- Following initial training, Wilson recommends that Foundations teachers receive on-site or virtual coaching during the school year.
- Wilson Literacy Specialists work directly with individuals and grade levels to support new learning and ensure that it is incorporated into teaching practice. The Literacy Specialist convenes Study Group Meetings to provide a model for ways a teacher might share her new knowledge with others during Professional Learning or grade level meetings.
- Schools may also develop Foundations Certified Facilitators who are trained to become experts in supporting teachers' implementation of specific Levels of Foundations.
- Foundations Facilitators may go on to receive additional training to become a Foundations Presenter.



- All teachers have access to online learning communities specific to the selected program. There, teachers can access additional resources to support their instruction, find answers to questions they may have, and seek support from other colleagues who are also logged into the site.

### **Showing Professionalism**

Fundations<sup>®</sup>, like all Wilson programs, is based on research-based best practices in reading and writing instruction. By teaching comprehensively and to mastery the foundational skills students need to be successful, teachers are taking a proactive approach to help their students grow to be successful readers. For students struggling with reading and spelling skills, Wilson programs offer the much-needed intervention instruction. Furthermore, Wilson's professional learning supports help teachers differentiate instruction for all their students so that no student falls through the cracks. Wilson's philosophy is that all students can become successful readers, and Wilson programs are designed so that, when implemented with fidelity, this is achieved.

In conclusion, individuals participating in Fundations professional learning gain the confidence, knowledge, and experience to teach students in an explicit, interactive, multisensory, and cumulative manner while providing ample opportunity for reinforcement and feedback.