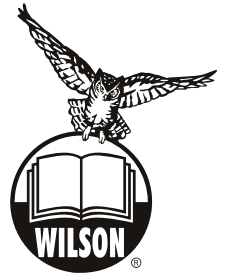


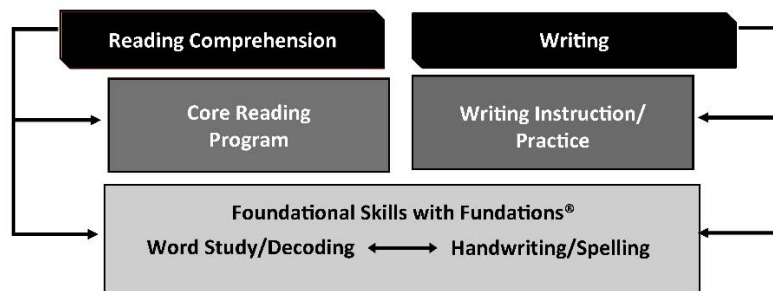
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Wilson Language Training®
Background Information on Foundations®



Foundations® is widely adopted to thoroughly and systematically solidify students' foundational skills using a research-based *structured literacy approach*. Its instructional design is supported by scientific research and informed by 30+ years of working with students, including those with dyslexia.

Foundations teaches decoding, spelling, and handwriting in a carefully integrated and scaffolded sequence that is taught to mastery. It is combined with a literature-based language arts program to address comprehension and writing more thoroughly.



Essential Features

Print Concepts, Letter Recognition, and Letter Formation

Print awareness is intentionally woven into many activities. Teacher modeling is explicit, using manipulatives such as sentence frames, syllable frames, sound cards, and letter tiles. Teachers and students physically demonstrate the skill; it is not just explained by the teacher. Students are explicitly taught:

- words are made up of individual letters
- words, linked to meaning, are distinct elements of oral and written communication
- words are separated by spaces in print
- reading occurs from left to right/top to bottom
- sentences, made of individual words, begin with capital letters and end with punctuation
- elements of a book (front/back cover, title, author, illustrator)

Automatic, fluent handwriting instruction is an integral part of Foundations, simultaneously linked with letter identification and letter-sound mastery. In Level K, students master the letter formations of all 26 letters, upper- and lowercase, using verbal cues, repetition, skywriting, tracking, and writing practice. Grades 1 and 2 teachers have all materials and instructions 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.

Phonological/Phonemic Awareness (PA)

Foundations efficiently focuses on the phonemic awareness skill 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 (b/ig), 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).

Some, but not extensive, time is dedicated to lower-level PA skills (i.e., rhyming, 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
- Segmenting words into phonemes
- Blending phonemes into words
- Manipulating phonemes

It is a misconception that Fundations does not include PA because in addition to sounds in spoken words, it *also* links instruction to letters. Research strongly supports Fundations' use of letters to teach phonemic awareness.

Not Just Phonics: Total Word Structure...and Spelling

Fundations teaches **both reading (decoding) and spelling (encoding) simultaneously with a multisensory, structured language and literacy approach** which explicitly teaches total word structure, not just phonics.

Structured literacy includes synthetic, systematic phonics instruction but it goes well beyond learning phonics for initial decoding. Many phonics programs teach sounds and can “check off the box” for grade-level phonics but are often insufficient because they fall significantly short of teaching word structure beyond sounds, and do not teach decoding and spelling concurrently. Fundations, on the other hand, comprehensively provides the structured literacy elements that are linked to the acquisition of foundational skills.

Fundations presents an explicit and systematic study of the English written language system in a clearly defined sequence, distributed across four Levels: K, 1, 2, and 3. Students cumulatively learn to process words more quickly by using the patterns of syllables and orthographic rules (spelling conventions) involving base words and affixes. Students investigate words and use a variety of techniques to analyze single-syllable and multisyllabic words, unknown words, and words with spelling options. This is important for students to efficiently read longer, unfamiliar words as their reading skills progress and the complexity of grade-level text increases.

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. Additionally, students learn punctuation, capitalization, and proofreading skills.

Accuracy, Automaticity, and Fluency

Fundations students develop deep word-level knowledge and automatic word identification skills beginning with strategies that target accuracy, such as tapping out sounds and marking word elements. Lessons progress to a focus on quick and automatic word recognition. Teachers make word chains with Sound Cards and students learn how to scoop sentences into meaningful phrases to develop prosody and expression when reading connected text.

Fundations provides **Fluency Kits** for Levels 1 and 2 for students who need additional practice with controlled text. The kits include exercises for sounds, word lists, and phrases to develop automaticity, and provide controlled text material for fluency practice. Fundations was designed with the expectation that students would also have many opportunities to practice reading connected text as part of their core ELA curricula. However, recognizing that core materials lack authentic text that is appropriate for emerging and developing readers, Wilson collaborated with Great Minds to create the Geodes[®] Classroom Libraries, which provide 64 titles explicitly corresponding to Fundations' scope and sequence for grade 1, 64 titles for grade 2, and 48 titles for kindergarten.

Foundations also includes Vocabulary and Comprehension Strategies

Foundations, a comprehensive foundational skills program, is not intended to be a core ELA program. However, teachers create a rich oral language environment to reinforce that words have meaning throughout Foundations lessons. They develop “word conscious” classrooms, constantly emphasizing both structure and meaning. For text, students practice visualization 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 Beimiller, 2010) 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.

Principles of Instruction

The power of Foundations is not just the **what** but the **how**. Principles and methods of structured literacy include the following: explicit, systematic, cumulative, hands-on, engaging and multimodal, diagnostic, and responsive instruction (International Dyslexia Association, 2017). In Foundations, skills overlap and are taught in an integrated fashion, not in isolation. Within each lesson, there are several learning activities in which all students participate, aiming to both build on previously learned skills and teach new ones. These word-level skills are explicitly taught through a wide set of grade-level appropriate lesson activities. The daily rotation of learning activities results in varied and repeated practice using a multimodal approach with engaging materials. Manipulatives help students process information, understand it, and thus succeed in their learning and application of skills.

Widely used assessments, such as DIBELS, AIMSweb, and others, are a source of valid data for informing student mastery of foundational skills. Additionally, Foundations uses spelling dictation to efficiently measure word recognition (see Student Achievement Partners, 2017, p.15), as it requires a student to have orthographic mapping skills. This approach recognizes the intimate link between decoding and spelling, which is at the core of Foundations instruction. Through dictation, students demonstrate several skills/concepts at once:

- Print carries meaning
- Sentences are formed and read left to right
- There are spaces between words in a sentence
- Letter formation
- Words are made up of letters
- Capital letters start sentences and punctuation ends them
- Spelling
- Decoding (as assessed through spelling)

Foundations students who need more support (as indicated by classroom performance, Foundations Unit tests, and other school-wide assessments) are further assessed with tools, such as Foundations Progress Monitoring. As a result, specifically targeted and responsive lessons are then delivered to those students who need more so that they can attain mastery with the application of their word-level knowledge.

Foundations **thoroughly** teaches foundational skills, **including** total word structure, spelling, and handwriting. It strongly meets the requirements of end-of-year goals for all children through intentional design of scaffolded and differentiated assessment. The principles of instruction and multi-tiered approach are highly effective for English learners and struggling students. *All students will benefit from this structured literacy approach, but for many students, it is critical.*

For detailed information about Foundations and the associated professional learning that helps teachers learn and incorporate the science of reading into their classroom, visit: www.wilsonlanguage.com/edreports.

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