

November 2019



Wilson Language Training®
Response to EdReports Evaluation
Fundations®

Fundations® offers a program more comprehensive than what is captured by the EdReports rubric.

The bullets below identify aspects of the Fundations program not reflected in the review. As a result, the true essence of Fundations is not captured, and comparison using this rubric does not represent Fundations' significant differences with other programs.

- 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).
- 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.
- Transcription skills (automaticity of letter formation and spelling) are foundational for writing. Fundations instruction emphasizes the mastery of these skills with equal importance as the foundational skills for reading. In Fundations, mastery of these are facilitated by tightly integrating letter formation with letter recognition and letter-sound instruction, as well as simultaneously teaching decoding and spelling. This essential instruction not only sets foundational skills for writing, it is key to developing students' fluent word recognition since spelling instruction has a strong effect on both word reading skills and fluency (see Reed, 2012).
- Fundations uses encoding as an effective assessment of word recognition, because it requires a student to have orthographic mapping skills. This is an efficient way to identify those students who have mastered specific phonics skills versus those who need an additional assessment followed by targeted instruction and further progress monitoring.
- All students benefit from Fundations' design to explicitly and thoroughly teach the structure of the English language. However, not all children need the same amount of practice with each skill. Fundations intentionally teaches all skills to all students, but then provides varying degrees of targeted practice with the application of specific skills to meet students' needs. The report did not count related materials used for targeted practice (Fluency Kits, Progress Monitoring Tools, home support packets, and companion online resources for targeted instruction).

- Foundations is an **integrated**, structured language and literacy approach, not simply a phonics approach. Thus, *how* skills and concepts are taught is equally as important as *what* is being taught.
- The review did not recognize how Foundations uses several activities across the curriculum to teach skills in varied ways with manipulatives. As just one example, the review states in 1B, “Materials do not include sufficient and explicit instruction for all students about the organization of print concepts (e.g., follow words left to right, spoken words correlate to sequences of letters, letter spacing).” Foundations thoroughly and explicitly teaches all of these things. The manual does not specifically label print concepts whenever the instruction occurs, because they are so interwoven into several activities and throughout the curriculum.

In addition to the above, the review did not include the full Foundations materials available. While Foundations provides accuracy, automaticity, and/or fluency practice within each daily lesson, the Fluency Kits are provided for students needing additional practice with more controlled text. The review recognized the kits but did not count these materials throughout the review. Foundations was originally designed with the expectation that students would have practice with books during the ELA block outside of the Foundations standard lesson. Recognizing that the availability of meaningful, readable books was lacking, we collaborated with Great Minds® to publish authentic, knowledge-building readables that provide practice with phonetically regular and high frequency word-level skills *specifically aligned* with Foundations’ scope and sequence. The Geodes® Classroom Libraries (Grade K—47 titles; Level 1—64 titles; and Level 2—64 titles) were not allowed as part of the review but would have strongly met the indicators requiring books.

Educators should be made aware that 1) the rubric fails to evaluate the essence of Foundations and its full program components, and 2) there is a significant disparity between the core ELA rubric on foundational skills and this supplemental foundational skills review. The inconsistencies between the criteria, as well as in the overall weighting and evidence expectations, result in an “apples-to-oranges” comparison.

Recognizing that effective foundational skills instruction is more than simply checking off a list of grade-level phonics skills, we remain steadfast that Foundations provides teachers with not just the *what*, but the *how* to thoroughly and systematically include the science of reading (and spelling) in their classrooms. We invite educators to thoroughly review the program and professional learning as well as detailed, counterevidence to the review provided on our website: www.wilsonlanguage.com/EdReports.

References

Nation, K., & Castles, A. (2017). Putting the learning in orthographic learning. In K. Cain, D. Compton, & R. Parrila (Eds.), *Theories of reading development* (pp 147–168). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: John Benjamins.

Reed, D. K. (2012). *Why teach spelling?* Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.