

Dear Family:

A new school year has been launched! This year, I'll be using a program called **Fundations**[®] to teach some important basics of reading and spelling. However, I am going to ***need your help***.

We know that when a child has a "Coach" in addition to a classroom teacher, the child makes significant progress. We will work together as a "team" – I'll be the teacher, and you the coach.

I will do my best to provide you with the necessary tools to take on that role. I'll keep you informed of "what is happening" in the classroom and provide suggestions and a guide as to "what can be happening" at home.

I look forward to a very successful year as we work together with your child in Fundations. We will have fun teaching and helping your child build a strong foundation for literacy!

The next letter will include Unit 1 and related activities.

Once again ***thank you*** for your interest and cooperation.

Sincerely,





You are likely wondering, “What is Foundations?”

Research indicates that **systematic** and **explicit phonics instruction** is effective for all children. Foundations provides a systematic and explicit approach to reading and spelling with phonics. We will combine this instruction with the **reading of good literature**, which is just as important for your child’s development.

Foundations is systematic

because it follows a very definite sequence for teaching and it follows a very definite procedure to teach those concepts.

Foundations is explicit

because this program does not leave room for guessing. It teaches all concepts directly. The children will review letters and how to form these letters. They will learn sounds using keywords to help them remember. They will soon move on to blend the sounds into words.

As the year progresses, Foundations introduces many aspects of word structure and sentence structure. I shall be sending home guides and activities for all of this.

You are also probably wondering, “How can I become a successful ‘Coach’ in this reading program?”

As a ‘Coach’ you can:

- 1.** Read the Foundations letters that I send home. These letters will contain updates, program information, and activity suggestions.
- 2.** Set aside time to do the “home activities” with your child.
- 3.** Monitor your child’s progress and share successes as well as concerns with me.

I feel certain that you will find working with your child in Foundations very rewarding. Your child will treasure your involvement!



Help Develop Oral Expression And Vocabulary

You can help your child develop **oral language** (the spoken word) with the following ideas. Do these anytime you are with your child:

1. Encourage your child to answer “wonder” statements.

Say such things as “I wonder why a dog barks.” Or say, “I wonder if Grandpa likes spinach.”

2. Help your child expand his/her vocabulary by rephrasing.

When your child says something such as, “He’s scared,” you could say, “Yes, the dog barks because he is frightened, you are correct!”

3. Ask open-ended questions.

Do not ask, “Are you raking leaves?” (The child would simply answer, “yes.”) Instead, ask, “What are you doing with your rake?” The child will answer you and then you can rephrase the answer to further develop vocabulary (see # 2).

4. Limit the amount of TV

However, if your child watches a children’s program, talk about it (see #'s 1, 2, 3).

5. Provide household props that encourage pretend play.

Use spoons/pans in the bathtub; cups/teapots/dolls; small rakes/shovels. While playing, be sure to talk through your actions (see #'s 1, 2, 3).

Verbally interacting with your child simply means taking every opportunity to talk with your child. With our busy lives, interactions between adults and children are often directive (“do this,” “do that,”) or negative (“stop hitting,” “don’t run.”) Try to break this pattern whenever possible. Both you and the child will have pleasant experiences and you will be helping to develop oral expression and vocabulary.

Dear Family:

We are now ready for you to be your child's Coach. In Unit 1, your child will learn (or review) letter names and sounds for the letters a-z, and letter formation for lower-case letters. This is laying the necessary foundation for your child to become a fluent, independent reader.

During the next few weeks, I will be teaching or reviewing:

- *Letter recognition a-z*
- *Letter formation from a-z for lower-case letters*
- *Sound recognition (consonants and short vowels)*
- *Print awareness*
- *Word awareness*
- *Story re-telling and comprehension*
- *Rhyming*
- *Phonemic awareness skills to identify the beginning and ending sounds in words*

I will explain these in more detail as we go through the Unit. As you can see, it is a lot! That is why Unit 1 will take us the next 12 weeks.

Each week, I will send home the letters that we are working on in class. I will also send home other activity suggestions to reinforce skills.

If you have any questions, please write them down and I'll get back to you. WE ARE OFF!

Sincerely,

Important! Please keep each letter page. You will need them to construct an alphabet book when you are in Unit 2.



Dear Family:

Thank you for working with your child at home. We are ready to begin Unit 2 in Foundations®.

During the next several weeks, I will be teaching or reviewing:

- letter formation for upper-case (or capital) letters A, B, C...
- letter sequence a-z
- story prediction
- reading short vowel words (three sounds)

Your child may already be able to recognize and form the upper-case letters and the review will go quickly.

It is also helpful if your child already knows the sequence of the alphabet from a to z. If not, frequently practice singing the “alphabet song” making sure your child says every letter distinctly (“**lmnop**” often get lumped together).

I have provided you with a list of ABC books. Reading these or other ABC books will also be very effective.

Also, your child will now begin to independently read short words by blending three sounds together!

In this Unit, words will begin with the letters **f l m n r s**, and end with the letters **d g p t**. The middle sound will be a short vowel sound: **mat, nap, sit**.

Please be sure to let me know if you have any concerns at this time.

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

We have been working on concepts of print, oral expression, phonological awareness, letter formation and sound recognition.

We are now ready to move forward to Unit 3 in Foundations®. In Unit 3, your child will continue to practice and learn:

- *to distinguish long and short vowel sounds*
- *to use phonemic awareness skills to identify the beginning and ending sounds in words*
- *to blend three sounds into words*
- *segmenting and spelling 3-sound short vowel words*

In this Unit, spelling words will begin with the letters **f l m n r s**, and end with the letters **d g p t**. The middle sound will be a short vowel sound.

Your child will also learn to read sentences in meaningful “chunks” or phrases. With practice, this skill will greatly enhance comprehension.

Your child will learn Trick Words. These are high frequency words that must be memorized. You will cut out Trick Word flashcards to help your child practice.

Be sure to review your child’s “Alphabet Book” often. As you work with your child, keep this available for reference. Whenever your child hesitates with a sound, have him or her look up the keyword.

Enjoy helping your child discover the world of reading. Provide help whenever needed. Most importantly, remember to have fun!

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

Your child is well on the way to reading and writing. We are now ready to begin Unit 4 in Foundations®. I hope you have had fun!

In Unit 4, your child will continue to practice:

- *how to blend and read more three-sound words*
- *how to segment or pull apart sounds in a word*
- *how to spell three sound words*

Your child will also continue to learn high frequency Trick Words. You will cut out Unit 4 Trick Words to help your child practice. Continue to practice Unit 3 words.

Your child will also learn how to read and spell words with **consonant digraphs**. A consonant digraph is two consonants together that make one sound such as “s” and “h” together make the sound of /sh/. Your child will learn the following consonant digraphs:

- | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| sh - ship - /sh/ | ch - chin - /ch/ | ck - sock - /k/ |
| wh - whistle - /w/ | th - thumb - /th/ | |

I will also emphasize the fluent reading of sentences, using phrasing. When your child reads, it should sound like he is talking rather than reading one word at a time. To help guide your child with phrasing, we scoop under phrases:

The dog and cat sat on the deck.

Model fluent reading for your child whenever you read to him.

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

At last, we are ready to begin the final unit in Foundations®. You have been a wonderful coach and support.

In Unit 5, your child will continue to practice reading sentences in phrases and will learn how to write a sentence. Emphasize capitalization and punctuation.

We will also learn the difference between stories that are real and stories that are make-believe. This is a list of narrative (make-believe) and informational (real) stories to read together.

- A Bear Cub Grows Up*** by Pam Allman (Scholastic; 2005)
- A Ladybug's Life*** by John Himmelman (Scholastic; 1998)
- All About Frogs*** by Jim Aronosky (Scholastic; 2008)
- Bear's New Friend*** by Karma Wilson (Margaret K. McElderry; 2006)
- Carl's Sleepy Afternoon*** by Alexandra Day (Farrar, Straus and Giroux; 2005)
- The Frog with the Big Mouth*** by Teresa Bateman (Whitman, Albert, & Company; 2008)
- The Grouchy Ladybug*** by Eric Carle (HarperCollins; 1996)
- I'm a Manatee*** by John Lithgow (Simon & Schuster; 2003)
- Manatees*** by Frank Staub (Lerner; 1998)
- Marsupials*** by Nic Bishop (Scholastic; 2009)
- Marsupial Sue*** by John Lithgow (Simon & Schuster; 2001)
- Oceans Alive: Octopuses*** by Ann Herriges (Bellwether; 2006)
- Octavia and Her Purple Ink Cloud*** by Donna and Doreen Rathmell (Sylvan Dell; 2006)
- The Rottweiler*** by Charlotte Wilcox (Capstone; 1996)

We have had a wonderful year exploring the world of print. I am so pleased with the progress made this year. Thank you for all of your help at home.

Sincerely,

