

Dear Family:

A new school year has been launched! This year, I will be using a program called Foundations® 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 shall 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 shall 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 **Foundations**. We will have fun teaching and helping your child build a strong foundation for literacy!

In the next letter, I shall share with you Unit 1 and its 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 up-dates, 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. If your child had Foundations® in Kindergarten, Unit 1 is mostly review and will go quickly. If your child did not have Foundations in Kindergarten, do not become discouraged with the pace of the progress. It may appear to be slow moving, but it is laying the necessary foundations for your child to be a fluent, independent reader.

During the next few weeks, I will be reviewing:

- The sequence of the alphabet.
- Letter formation from **a** to **z**.
- The letter name, a keyword and sound for the consonants:
b c d f g h j k l m n p q r s t v w x y z
- The letter name, a keyword and sound for the short vowels:
a e i o u

The keyword is a specific word which we will use to help your child master each sound. Notice the letter **y** is not included as a vowel. This comes later. If **y** begins a word it is considered a consonant and for now, it will only begin words.

Please work with your child to reinforce the above concepts. See the attached activity suggestions in order to do this. If you have any questions, please write them down and I shall get back to you.
WE ARE OFF!

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

I am now introducing Unit 2 in Foundations®. Your child is going to:

- Learn phonemic awareness skills.
- Blend, read, and spell short vowel words with three sounds.
- Learn or review six words by memory: **a, and, the, is, his, of**. These are called Trick Words because they cannot be sounded out. Instead, your child needs to learn these by memorizing them.
- Learn capitalization, punctuation, and word spacing for sentence dictation.
- Retell stories in detail and sequence.

It is important for your child to recognize and be able to hear and “move around” the beginning, ending and middle sounds of a word. As always ***your help*** is appreciated to keep your child on track. To help your child focus on sounds, you can play word games such as ***“I’m Thinking of an Object”*** and ***“Change That Word.”*** The directions are on the following pages.

Also, make flashcards on index cards for the Trick Words. Have your child read these quickly each night. Throughout the year, I will have you make more Trick Word flashcards to practice.

Remember to have FUN! Also, please write down any questions you might have, and I shall get back to you.

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

The past few weeks have been busy ones! We have been working on three-sound words, and sentences as well as “trick” words. Thank you for working with your child. Your help reinforces what is being taught in school. Please continue your good work. We are about to begin Unit 3.

In class, I am working on **consonant digraphs**. A consonant digraph is two consonants together that make one sound such as “s” and “h” together make the sound of /sh/. Because a consonant digraph makes only **one sound**, they only get **one tap**. For example, the word “**sh o p**” has three taps even though there are four letters because there are only three sounds to the word.

I have been working on the following consonant digraphs:

sh - ship - /sh/

ch - chin - /ch/

ck - sock - /k/

wh - whistle - /w/

th - thumb - /th/

Your child knows that the sound /k/ at the end of a word is usually spelled with the letters “ck.”

Homework for the next two weeks will include these consonant digraphs as well as “qu” which is referred to as the “buddy letter” because “q” always has his buddy “u” right next to him in words in the English language.

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

I am now working in Unit 4 of the Foundations® program. I am pleased with the progress and I hope you are as well.

In this section, I teach one of the first spelling rules. It is called the **Bonus Letter Rule**. To read the word **puff**, one would only need the letters **puf**. For the word **hill** only the letters **hil** are needed. For the word **kiss**, you only need **kis**.

However, in our language when a one syllable word ends in an **f**, **l**, or **s**, a second **f**, **l**, or **s** is added when spelling the word. We call this a bonus letter.

Your child will also learn the sound of **all** as in **ball**, **tall** and **wall**. (This sound is written like this: /**ól**/). When there is a bonus letter after the letter **a**, the sound of **a** changes.

Homework for the next two weeks will include these new concepts. Remember, write any questions you may have and I shall get back to you.

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

The concept in Unit 5 of Foundations® is one that your child should grasp quickly.

The sounds of the letters **m** and **n** come through the nose and because of this, the short vowel sound of **a** is somewhat distorted. Therefore, I teach the children that /**am**/ as in **ham** and /**an**/ as in **fan** are **glued** together because it is difficult to separate the **a** from the **m** or **n**.

The word **ham** will be tapped this way: /**h**/ touching index finger to thumb; then the /**am**/ touching middle finger and ring finger (glued together) to the thumb.

Make sure your child knows the letters, keyword, and sound for **am** and **an**.

Say the letters **a - m**, then the keyword **ham**, then the sound /**am**/.

Say the letters **a - n**, then the keyword **fan**, then the sound /**an**/.

The **all** sound from Unit 4 is also “glued” together. Be sure to keep the pictures for these sounds with all of the other Keyword Pictures.

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

The newest concept that I am teaching the children is one they will use frequently, that of adding a **suffix** (which is an ending) to a **baseword**. For now, the only suffix I am working with is the suffix 's'. For example:

dog - add the suffix 's' = **dogs**

It is important that your child recognizes the suffix. As an exercise, in order to train the brain to separate the suffix **from** the baseword, have your child read the baseword and then say it with the suffix as follows:

pen - pens

map - maps

To spell a word with a suffix ending, your child hears the entire word "**maps**", but then must be able to separate "**map**" from the suffix 's'.

Therefore, after repeating the word "**maps**" you may ask "**What is the baseword?**" Your child should answer "**map**." Then tap out /m/ /a/ /p/, say the letters **m - a - p**, then add the suffix 's'. The suffix does not get tapped.

Note that sometimes the suffix 's' has the /z/ sound as in the word **bug** - bugs.

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

In Unit 7, Foundations® introduces your child to additional **glued sounds**. Previously, the glued sounds of **all**, **am** and **an** were taught. A **glued sound** is one in which letters have their own sounds but they are difficult to separate. The glued sounds that will be introduced are:

Week 1

ang - fang - /ang/	ing - ring - /ing/
ong - song - /ong/	ung - lung - /ung/

Week 2

ank - bank - /ank/	ink - pink - /ink/
onk - honk - /onk/	unk - junk - /unk/

A word such as '**sink**' with the glued sound of **/ink/** will be tapped **/s/** (one tap) **/ink/** (one tap with three fingers glued together).

I shall be working with the **/ng/** sounds first. You might want to have your child practice them with the keywords. Marching while saying "**ang - fang - /ang/**" in rhythm is fun!

Thank you, as always, for your help.

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

This is a wonderful year of learning for your child. The help and support you have given are making a big difference.

We shall continue to work with short vowel words, however, we are now ready to add **consonant blends**.

A blend is two consonants together that each make a sound, as in the word "**s t o p**" - the /s/ and the /t/ each make a sound.

A blend is different from a digraph which has two letters but only one sound, such as in the word "**shop**" - the /sh/ makes only one sound.

Blends can come at the beginning of a word, such as "**s t o p**", or at the end of a word, like "**p e s t**."

Your child will learn a digraph blend. A digraph blend is a digraph blended with another consonant such as **n** and **ch** in the word **lunch**, or **sh** and **r** in the word **shred**.

I will also introduce the keywords and sounds for r-controlled vowels using an R-Controlled Vowels Poster. R-controlled vowel sounds are **ar** (as in "**car**"), **or**, **er**, **ir**, and **ur**. At this time, these sounds are introduced for reference when students are reading throughout the day. These sounds will be learned in more depth for both reading and spelling in Level 2. In the meantime, we will practice the sounds during our Drills Sounds/Warm Up activity in class.

Here we go!

Sincerely,



A black and white line drawing of a cartoon owl. The owl is wearing a graduation cap (mortarboard) with a tassel hanging down on the right side. It is sitting on a thick book. The owl's right wing is raised in a waving gesture. It has large, round eyes and a small beak.

Dear Family:

We are in Unit 10 of Foundations® already! Your child is now going to be working with **closed syllables** that have **five sounds**. These are words that usually have a blend (two consonants each with their own sound) at the beginning of the word and a blend at the end of the word. The word “**s l u m p**” is an example. The **sl** is a blend and the **mp** is a blend.

I will be adding the suffixes **s**, **ed**, and **ing** to these five sound words as well. Remember that your child should spell the baseword first, then add the suffix ending.

Five sounds can be quite difficult to sound out, to read and to spell. I anticipate spending at least three weeks on this Unit.

I will also teach these vowel teams using the Vowel Teams poster: **oa, oe, ow, ou, oo, ue, ew, au, and aw**. Vowel teams are introduced for reference when students are reading throughout the day. These sounds will be learned in more depth for both reading and spelling in Level 2. In the meantime, we will practice the sounds during our Drills Sounds/Warm Up activity in class.

Do let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

Unit 11 in Foundations® introduces a new syllable type. So far this year, I have been working with closed syllables. It is now time to talk about the **vowel-consonant-e** syllable type or “**v-e**” **syllable**.

I demonstrate to the class how an ‘**e**’ at the end of a word changes the sound of the vowel in that word. For example, in the word **hop**, if you add an **e** the **o** will now say its name. The **o** will have the long vowel sound and the word will be **hope**.

I make sure the children know that the letter **e** does not have a sound - it just sits at the end of the word helping the other vowel to say its name. I will make a lot of examples such as **mat** to **mate**, **hop** to **hope**, and **cap** to **cape**. The key element here is to make sure your child is aware of the pattern of “v-e” (vowel-consonant-e).

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

In Unit 12, Foundations® introduces students to words that have more than one syllable. I need you to encourage your child to **scoop** each syllable when the word is read. For example, scoop the word **napkin** into two syllables like this:

n a p k i n

This is key in teaching a child to break down a word into its parts.

I will be working on **multisyllabic words** for the next three weeks.

Some words will be compound words or words that are made up of two parts. Each part can be a word by itself, for example, in the word “**sunfish**” - **sun** is a word and **fish** is a word.

Then, I shall work with words that have two consonants between the two vowels such as in the word “**magnet**” and words with closed and vowel-consonant-e syllables combined, like “**reptile**.”

The spelling procedure used to teach multisyllabic words is very important. (See the next page for these instructions.) Yes, there are several steps, however each is important to help develop the skill of breaking a word down into its parts.

Once again **thank you** for all of your help.

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

You and your child have been doing some wonderful work together. In Unit 13 I am going to add one more **suffix ending** to words. This time the suffix '**es**' will be added to the words. This suffix will be added to closed syllable words such as the word "**lunches**." The baseword is **lunch** and the suffix is **es**.

As a reminder: the procedure for reading the words **lunches** and **wishes** is to read the baseword first and then say it with the suffix as follows:

lunch - lunches

wish - wishes

To spell a word with a suffix ending, your child hears the entire word **lunches** but then must be able to separate **lunch** from the suffix **es**.

Therefore, after echoing the word **lunches** you may ask, "**What is the baseword?**" Your child should answer, "**lunch**." Then tap out /l/ /u/ /n/ /ch/, say the letters **l - u - n - c - h**, and add the suffix '**es**'.

I am planning to be in this Unit for three weeks. If you think your child needs more practice, do not be concerned, because Unit 14 reviews all the word structure and concepts we have learned; thus your child will be getting additional practice with these procedures.

Sincerely,



Dear Family

The end of the year is fast approaching. The last Unit of Foundations® reviews the word structure and concepts learned this year.

These last two weeks bring us to the end of a very exciting year. Thank you so very much for helping to make this program a success.

I encourage you to continue working with your child during the summer vacation. If possible, take time out each day to read with your child. I sincerely hope that you have an enjoyable summer.

Please let me know if you have any concerns.

Sincerely,

