

Dear Family:

A new school year has launched! This year, I will be using a program called ***Fundations® Level 3***. All levels of Fundations provide a systematic and explicit approach to reading and spelling with phonics. In Level 3, emphasis is placed on advanced word structure, spelling, vocabulary, and cursive handwriting. We will combine instruction in these areas with the reading of a wide variety of literature including poetry, narrative, and expository text.

When a child has a **“coach”** in addition to a classroom teacher, the child makes significant academic progress. Let’s be a **“team”** – I will be the teacher, and you the coach. I will be sending you the necessary tools to take on your coaching role. I will keep you informed of what is happening in the classroom and I will also provide you with suggestions and a guide as to what you can be doing at home.

Please read the Fundations letters I send home. Your child will be asked to identify language concepts in words through a process called marking, and these letters will show you how to mark up words. They will also contain updates, program information, and activity ideas. Set aside time to do these activities with your child. Monitor your child’s progress and share any accomplishments and concerns with me.

I look forward to a very successful year as we work together with your child!

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:

The first several units in Foundations® Level 3 will review concepts previously taught while adding new information. This is a key component of the program. We will build on the skills already in place so that we can progress further into the study of word structure by focusing on advanced spelling rules and morphology (patterns of word formation).

In Unit 1, we will review **closed syllables**. A **closed syllable** is a word or part of a word that has one vowel "closed in" or followed by one or more consonants. The vowel does not need to have a consonant before it, but it must have at least one consonant after it. Examples include **cup**, **whip**, **last** and **at**. A **closed syllable** makes the vowel short (as in *ă* in apple, *ĕ* in Ed, *ĭ* in itch, *ŏ* in octopus and *ŭ* in up). The vowel is marked by the breve sign (˘). **Closed syllable** words are marked this way:

w h ĭ p  
c

The five **closed syllable exceptions** will also be revisited. **Closed syllable exceptions** have a similar pattern to closed syllables, but they have a long vowel sound instead of the expected short vowel sound. It is helpful to stress the meaning of the word *exception* to your child (something that does not follow the rules). The **closed syllable exceptions** are:

/īd/ as in **child**      /īnd/ as in **kind**      /ōst/ as in **post**  
/ōld/ as in **cold**      /ōlt/ as in **colt**

Closed syllable exception words are marked this way: m ō s t  
x

In addition, to review, students will learn some new sounds. They will learn **tch** - **catch** - /ch/ and to choose **tch** rather than **ch** after a short vowel, and will mark the new sound by underlining it (**catch**). And last but not least, I will teach students that **w** and **qu** change the sound of the letter **a** (as in **wash**, **squash**).

Throughout Level 3, your child will study **homophones**, or words that sound alike but are not spelled the same and have different meanings. For example: **no/know** and **write/right**. You will see that several activities will provide practice with the meaning and spelling of these words.

Please work with your child to reinforce the above concepts by using the enclosed activity suggestions. If you have any questions, please write them down and I will get back to you. I truly appreciate your partnership. You will find that working with your child is very rewarding and your child will treasure your involvement. **We are off!**

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

Fundations® Unit 2 reviews the following suffixes: **-s, -es, -ed, -ing, -ive, -able, -en, -er, -est, -ish, -y, -ful, -less, -ness, -ly, -ty, and -ment**. Suffixes are a letter or group of letters added at the end of a word or word part to form another word, as in **stronger** or **tallest**. Students will categorize these suffixes as **vowel suffixes** or **consonant suffixes**. Vowel suffixes begin with a vowel (**-es, -ed, -ing, -ive, -able, -en, -er, -est, -ish, -y**) while consonant suffixes begin with a consonant (**-s, -ful, -less, -ness, -ly, -ty, and -ment**).

I will also re-teach the procedure for identifying basewords when reading or spelling words with suffixes. It is important that students identify and isolate the baseword before reading the whole word with the suffix added. For example, for the word **tallest**, students will say and spell **tall** before adding the suffix **-est**; **tall - tallest**. When marking a word with a suffix, underline the baseword and circle the suffix, like this:

tallest

In weeks 2 and 3, I will teach students how to identify **1-1-1 words**. A 1-1-1 word has 1 closed syllable, 1 vowel, and 1 consonant after the vowel.

A related lesson will teach students an important new spelling rule: when to **double the final consonant** of a 1-1-1 baseword. The final consonant is doubled when adding a vowel suffix (**ship + ing = shipping**) but not when adding a consonant suffix (**ship + ment = shipment**). When the final consonant is doubled, the extra p is starred and the word is marked this way:

ship\*ing      shipment

Once again thank you for your interest and help at home.

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

Fundations® Unit 3 is a one-week quick review. We will first review the **vowel-consonant-e syllable**, also called the **v-e syllable** (the dash represents any consonant). It is made up of a **vowel**, then a **consonant**, then an **e**. The first vowel is long and it is marked with a macron ( ¯ ). The **e** is silent. Here is an example of how to mark a v-e syllable word:

pīnē  
v-e

I will then review the two **u** sounds in a **v-e syllable**: /ū/ as in mule and /ü/ as in rule and remind students that **s** can say /z/ when it is between two vowels as in the words **nose**, **rose**, and **wise**.

Because the **v-e syllable** can be combined with other syllables to make multisyllabic words, I will re-teach syllable division principles. Multisyllabic words with a **v-e syllable** can be marked like this:

vōlūmē  
c v-e

I will explain that although the **v-e syllable** is usually the final syllable of a word (as in **include**), it sometimes can be found in the first syllable of compound words (as in **baseball**). Lastly, we will reinforce the reading and spelling procedures for two-syllable words with both closed and vowel consonant-e syllables. All of these review concepts are important to prepare students for a new spelling rule which will be taught in Unit 4.

This packet contains plenty of activities to help emphasize the above concepts. Thank you for your help and be sure to have fun! Please write down any questions you might have for me and I will get back to you.

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

In Unit 4, I will review the **exception** to the **vowel-consonant-e syllable**. This exception, **-ive**, can also be a suffix (as in **active**). It is pronounced with a short **i** sound. I will point out that the **e** in **-ive** is added because words in English never end with the letter **v**.

Students will also learn a new spelling rule for adding suffixes to **vowel-consonant-e syllables**. When adding a consonant suffix to a word that ends in a silent **e**, students will simply add the suffix:

**safe + ly = safely**

**reptile + s = reptiles**

**hope + ful = hopeful**

A **v-e syllable** with a consonant suffix is marked like this:

**reptiles**  
c v-e

However, if the suffix begins with a vowel, students will drop the **e** before adding the suffix:

**confuse + ing = confusing**

**include + ed = included**

**brave + est = bravest**

A **v-e syllable** with a vowel suffix is marked like this:

**included**  
c v-e

I hope you are finding working with your child rewarding and fun.  
Thank you again for your help.

Sincerely,





Dear Family:

Unit 5 introduces your child to the **schwa**. This is defined as a vowel with an unexpected sound. When a word contains a schwa, the vowel most often sounds like a short **u** or a short **i**, but not necessarily equal to it. An example is the word **salad**. The second **a** sounds similar to a short **i**, but not exactly like it. Schwa is marked as follows:

s <sup>ə</sup>ă l a d  
c c

Often, the second syllable of a two-syllable word is **unaccented** (or not emphasized) and contains a vowel that is not easily heard correctly. In these cases the schwa sound is “swallowed up.” If this **unaccented second syllable** ends with the consonant **n**, the vowel sound may be “lost” (as in the word **mitten** = /mit n/.) And when the letter **e** is followed by **t** in an unaccented second syllable, the **e** sounds like /i/, as in **velvet**.

Schwa often does not pose a problem for students when reading. I will teach them to try the /ū/ sound if a word does not sound right. However, schwa may be troublesome when spelling. I will teach students to listen carefully for a **schwa** and let them know that spelling for this vowel sound can be treated like a sound option. They will learn to identify the **schwa** by indicating which vowel has the unexpected sound. Once we work with schwa, they will realize it is not so bad!

Lastly, I will be working on additional dictionary skills to help students look up words with spelling options.

Sincerely,





Dear Family:

In Unit 6, I will review the **open syllable** with students and teach the **open syllable exceptions**. **Open syllables** have **one vowel** which is the last letter in the syllable (as in **he**). This vowel's sound is **long** and to indicate this, it is marked with a macron (ˉ). Open syllables may be combined with other syllables to make multisyllabic words (as in **remote**). The **open syllable** is marked like this:

g ō  
o

We will also review that **y** often works as a vowel in **open syllables** and says /ī/ at the end of one syllable words (**cry**) and /ē/ at the end of multisyllabic words (**baby**). The sound can be marked this way:

s h y      ē m p t y  
o                      c                      o

Lastly, students will learn about **open syllable exceptions in unstressed or unaccented syllables**. This schwa (schwa is a vowel with an unexpected sound) occurs with **a** at the beginning or end of a word (**ago**, **extra**) and with **i** in the middle syllable (**compliment**). Please note that when **i** is in the middle syllable and is followed by a consonant, it has a schwa /ŭ/ or /i/ sound (**gravity**). When **i** is in the middle syllable and is followed by a vowel, it sounds like an /ē/ (**radio**). The exceptions are marked like this:

e x t r a      g r ä v i t y      r ä d i ō  
c                      c                      o                      o                      o

Remember to have fun with the enclosed exercises. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about your child's progress.

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

To kick off Unit 7, I will introduce students to the **y and suffix spelling rule**, which states that if a **y** follows a consonant in an open syllable at the end of a word, it needs to be changed to an **i** when adding any suffix. The substituted **i** will sound like the original **y** (**empty + ness = emptiness**). In addition, I will teach students that when a suffix begins with **i**, the **y** does not change and the suffix is simply added (**baby + ish = babyish**). Here is an example of how to mark these types of words:

**bābyish**

**ēptiness**

As part of this lesson, students will also learn how to pluralize words ending in **y**. When a word ends in a **y** after a consonant in an open syllable, students will know to follow the **y and suffix spelling rule** by changing the **y** to an **i**. They will then add **-es** to make the word plural (**family + es = families**). I will teach students that the suffix **-es** says /z/ when added to such words. Students will also learn how to pluralize words ending in an open syllable. They will add the suffix **es** to these words (**potato + es = potatoes**).

I hope you enjoy working on this unit. Feel free to let me know how the activities are progressing at home.

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

Thus far, your child has learned many new things about words with the Foundations program. I am so thankful to have you assisting me in this endeavor.

In Unit 8, I will review the **consonant-le syllable**. This syllable is considered a "final stable" syllable. It is always the *last* syllable in a word and it has only three letters: a **consonant**, an **l** and an **e**. The **e** is the vowel and it is silent. The **consonant** and the **l** are sounded out like a blend. I will remind students that the **consonant-le syllable** is always the last syllable in a multisyllabic word. Take a look at the following examples and how we mark them:

s i m p l e  
c -le

t a b l e  
o -le

I will then introduce the **consonant-le exception**. This includes words that end with **stle**. Both the **t** and **e** are silent so **stle** is read as /sl/. Examples of the **consonant-le exception** include castle and whistle:

c a s t l e  
c -le

w h i s t l e  
c -le

I will teach students all the different ways to spell the /ə/ sound in a final syllable (as in **table**, **label** or **final**) and how to mark the schwa in these words:

l a b e l  
o c

Students will also learn how to add suffixes to **consonant -le syllables**. To add a suffix to a **consonant -le syllable**, students must follow the silent **e** spelling rule; they will drop the **e** to add a vowel suffix (settle - settling) and keep the **e** to add a consonant suffix (settle - settlement).

In week 3, students will learn about another final stable syllable. This one is also always the last syllable in a word. It always has four letters: either the glued sound **tion** or **sion**. Students will learn that **tion** says /shun/ as in vacation and **sion** says /shun/ as in mansion and /zhun/ as in television. The syllables are boxed as welded sounds:

m a n s i o n

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

Foundations Unit 9 reviews the **r-controlled syllable**. This syllable contains a single vowel that is directly followed by the letter **r**. The **r** changes the sound of the vowel. For example, in the word **bark**, the vowel **a** has neither the short nor the long vowel sound – instead the sound is “controlled” by the **r**. This type of syllable is marked as follows:

**bark**  
r

The vowel is circled with the letter **r** to emphasize that the two letters form the sound together. The **r-controlled syllable** can be combined with other syllables to make multisyllabic words. Therefore, we will not only review how to read and spell r-controlled syllables in isolation, but also combined with other syllable types and marked like this:

**expert**  
c r

In the second week, students will learn that at the end of a multisyllabic word /ər/ can be spelled with **er**, **ar**, or **or** (as in **beggar**) and that **ar** and **or** are affected by a **w** or **qu** proceeding it (as in **worm**). These are marked like all other **r-controlled syllables**:

**doctor**  
c r

**warm**  
r

Students will also learn that there is an **exception** to the **r-controlled syllable**. If the **r** is followed by another **r**, the proceeding vowel is often short, as in the word **carry**. These exceptions are marked this way:

**carry** /ē/  
x o

Finally, students will learn that the **1-1-1 spelling rule applies to r-controlled words** (1-1-1 words have 1 syllable, 1 vowel and 1 consonant after the vowel). This means that when the base word is a closed or r-controlled syllable with only one consonant following one vowel, you double the final consonant on the base word if adding a vowel suffix. For example, the **r** is doubled in the 1-1-1 word **stir** when adding a vowel suffix and the word is marked this way:

stir + ing = **stirring**  
r

Thank you for encouraging your child to apply these rules in all of their work!

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

Things are progressing nicely in class and the students are learning more about words every day. I am so glad you are sharing in this experience with us.

In Unit 10, we will review the **double vowel syllable** which we also call the “**D**” **syllable**. It contains two vowels next to one another such as **ai** in the word **bait**. In Foundations, these are called “vowel teams.” We will not only be reviewing, but will be learning some new vowel teams as well. This “**D**” **syllable** is marked as follows:

bait  
d

Your child will learn the following new vowel teams:

/ā/  
eigh - eight - /ā/  
ei - vein - /ā/  
ea - steak - /ā/

/ē/  
ei - ceiling - /ē/  
ie - piece - /ē/

/ě/  
ea - bread - /ě/

/ī/  
igh - light - /ī/

/ü/  
oo - book - /ü/

/ü/  
ui - suit - /ü/

We will be adding suffixes to words ending in vowel teams and mark them as follows:

play + ed = played  
d

Lastly, your child will learn that sometimes when two vowels are together, they do not make a combined sound. (When this happens, it is an exception to the double vowel syllable.) For example, the **ea** is not working as a vowel team in the word **create**.

This unit is full of new and review information. Spelling the “**D**” **syllable** can be challenging. It is a good idea to let your child use a spell checker and dictionary to determine correct spelling. You also may help your child determine the correct option.

Please let me know if your child has difficulty with this work.

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

This should be a fun unit for students. I will be teaching them to read and spell **contractions**. Contractions are the shortened forms of words. The omitted letters are replaced by an apostrophe.

First, we will learn how to reduce two words into a contraction:

**can not = can't**

Second, we will identify the words from which a contraction is made:

**can't = can not**

I will explain that we use contractions because sometimes, it sounds better to put two words together so that they are quicker and easier to say. To make the learning of contractions as easy as possible, I will guide students on the use of apostrophes and explain that apostrophes replace the letters that are taken away in a contraction. Please note that we do not mark up contractions.

Finally, I will teach students some special contractions:

**mustn't    won't    don't    can't    let's    I'm**

For you and your child's reference, I have included a Making Contractions reference page.

Once again, thank you for your help at home.

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

In Foundations Unit 12, I will be reviewing the soft sounds of **c** and **g**. They will review that the letter **c** says /s/ when it is followed by **e**, **i**, or **y** (as in **cent**, **city**, **cycle**) and the letter **g** says /j/ when followed by **e**, **i**, or **y** (as in **gem**, **giant**, **apology**). In this unit, we will work on spelling these sounds. They will also learn that sometimes **nce** and **nge** end **closed syllables** (**fence**, **lunge**). The **e** at the end is only present to change the sound of the **g** or **j**. I will also explain that English words do not end in the letter **j**. The sounds of the **c** or **g** should be marked, and in the case of a **closed syllable** with **nce** or **nge** the silent **e** will need to be crossed out:

/s/  
**c****in****ch**  
c

/j/  
**g****en****tle**  
c -le

/s/  
**f****en****ce**  
c

/j/  
**l****un****ge**  
c

Next, **dge**, which makes the /j/ sound, will be introduced as a trigraph that is used after a short vowel. Some **dge** words include **fudge** and **ledge**. A word like **fudge** is marked as follows:

**f****u****d****g****e**  
c

I will be telling students how words that have an **e** at the end to make a soft **g** or **c** sound also follow the silent **e** spelling rule when adding suffixes (**convinced**, **judging**). As a reminder, the silent **e** spelling rule states that, when adding a consonant suffix to a word that ends in silent **e**, we simply add the suffix. However, when the suffix begins with a vowel, we must drop the **e** and add the suffix. If an **e** is dropped, the words will be marked like this:

/s/  
**a****d****v****an****ced**  
c c

Remember to have fun while helping to build your child's foundation for lifelong literacy!

Sincerely,





Dear Family:

In Foundations Unit 13, your child will learn all about the sounds made by the **ch** (as in **chorus**) and **ph** (as in **phone**) digraphs. As with all digraphs, these two letters make one sound. These digraphs can be marked by underlining them:

phase          chords

I will also be teaching students about some letters that are silent when combined with certain letters. These are called **silent letter combinations** and they are as follows:

<del>w</del> r - /r/ ( <b>w</b> is silent)	/r/	<del>g</del> n - /n/ ( <b>g</b> is silent)	/n/
<del>h</del> r - /r/ ( <b>h</b> is silent)		<del>k</del> n - /n/ ( <b>k</b> is silent)	
<del>m</del> n - /m/ ( <b>n</b> is silent)	/m/	<del>h</del> g - /g/ ( <b>h</b> is silent)	/g/
<del>b</del> m - /m/ ( <b>b</b> is silent)			

To mark these, students simply underline the **silent letter combination** and cross out the silent letter:

~~k~~neel

One good way to help your child remember the sounds of these silent letter combinations is by telling them that two of these letter combinations say /r/, two say /n/, two say /m/ and one says /g/.

Students will continue to develop their dictionary and vocabulary skills. They have learned much about words so keep up the great work at home!

Sincerely,



Dear Family:

It is time for students to learn two new **glued sounds**.

**ture** - capture - /chər/

**tu** - spatula - /chü/

I will teach them to read and spell words containing **ture** and **tu** (as in **furniture** and **actual**).

Later in the unit, I will be introducing more letter combinations **ti** and **ci**:

**ti** - patient - /sh/

**ci** - glacier - /sh/

I will familiarize students with four advanced suffix endings: **-ous**, **-al**, **-ent**, **-an**. These actually can be *part* of a word. I will show them that when **ci** and **ti** attach to these suffixes, these letter combinations say /sh/. Examples include:

**special**

**musician**

**patient**

**martial**

Sincerely,

