

## News Release

### Springhurst “Foundations” Program is the Foundation of Word Study and English Language Arts Curriculum

**Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., December 17, 2013**— Springhurst Elementary students in grades K-1 are using a brand new “word study” program this fall called Foundations. This multisensory, systematic, phonics, spelling and handwriting program will be rolled out to 2<sup>nd</sup> graders next year and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders the following school year. Foundations teaches the foundational skills of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and also supports other standards in reading, writing, speaking, listening and language.

According to the District’s K-8 Literacy Coordinator Michelle Kaczmarek, the District’s Word Study Committee first conducted a word study inventory and began exploring different word study options two years ago. At that time, Springhurst was using a combination of various word study and spelling programs and there needed to be school-wide consistency across the grade levels and classrooms. The school’s Teacher Leaders oversaw an initial program search and then expanded the Committee to include ELL, AIS, speech and language teachers and staff. The group reviewed 11 distinct programs.

“Foundations was the program that most closely matched our school criteria (covering phonics, spelling, vocabulary and grammar), supported differentiation and was aligned to the CCSS,” said Ms. Kaczmarek. “There was also real research behind the program that substantiated its effectiveness in increasing students’ abilities to spell and write. Staff development and varied assessment offerings were a part of the program as well.”

The Foundations website [www.foundations.com](http://www.foundations.com) notes that the standard lesson is designed as a 30-minute daily lesson with the entire class. In addition, Foundations includes supplemental small group activities to reinforce and extend each lesson for students with a wide range of learning abilities or who need more specialized instruction. Each level of Foundations presents skills in a carefully structured scope and sequence. These “steps” build on previously taught skills and are brought forward cumulatively: from unit to unit, year to year. They include:

- Letter Formation
- Phonological and Phonemic Awareness
- Sound Mastery
- Phonics
- Vocabulary
- Irregular (Trick) Word Instruction
- Fluency
- Comprehension
- Written Composition

“We are a reading and writing workshop school,” said Ms. Kaczmarek. “This program is a great fit with our English Language Arts curriculum and lays the groundwork for life-long literacy. It’s auditory, it’s visual and it’s kinesthetic. The new word study program also incorporates handwriting and sentence conventions, which is an added benefit. ”

For students there is a very clear structure to a Foundations lesson. How does it look in the classroom? All lessons:

- Begin with a sound drill, use large and small sound cards (and a puppet where appropriate)
- Follow the drill with decoding activities using “tapping” and “scooping”
- Include encoding or spelling
- Include the multisensory teaching of non-phonetic sight words called trick words
- Practice sky writing, tracing, white board and notebook practice

For teachers, it provides the skills and tools needed to present a structured, sequential, and cumulative phonics/spelling lesson using multisensory teaching techniques. It brings a consistency of language being used when teaching word study and each lesson has a clear scope, order and progression.

Other area school districts currently using Foundations include Brewster, Croton-Harmon, Ossining, Somers, Tarrytown, Pleasantville, Port Chester, Byram Hills and Harrison. According to Douglas Berry, Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the Dobbs Ferry School District, in addition to Foundations, Springhurst 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders also began using Wordly Wise <http://www.wordlywise3000.com/> and Grammar Workshop <http://www.sadlier-oxford.com/grammar/grammarworkshop.cfm> in September, a further enhancement to the District’s literacy program.

“Wordly Wise is a vocabulary development program and Grammar Workshop teaches grammar skills. Both programs help students read and dissect higher level text,” said Mr. Berry. Similar to Foundations, they are aligned to the CCSS, have assessments built-in, offer flexible planning and execution and are teacher, student and parent friendly. All three programs, Foundations, Wordly Wise and Grammar Workshop are engaging for students, comprehensive in scope, developmentally appropriate in their application and produce tangible results.”

**For more information, please contact:**

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