



Contemporary Approaches to Intervention:
Wilson Foundations

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Background: Foundations is based on the Orton-Gillingham Principles of reading instruction and the Wilson Reading Program which both focus on multi-sensory instruction to increase literacy. Wilson *Foundations* can be used for whole class instruction (called Tier 1) or an early intervention program for students with scores in the lowest 30% of the class range (Tier 2), as determined by screening and reading diagnostic exams. Tier 1 instruction is intended as a general literacy program and Foundations will focus on Tier 2 instruction. Tier 2 Instruction is an early intervention approach provided to at-risk students in need of strategic intervention and conducted in a small group setting by the classroom teacher or interventionist.

Population: Wilson Foundations is intended for students, 2nd grade through adult who have not mastered fundamental skills for reading.

Description: A general education teacher, reading specialist, SLP, or intervention personnel can administer Foundations within a school or at home. No training is required, but obtaining a certificate in Foundations from Wilson is recommended. If *Foundations* is provided in a Tier 1, whole-class setting, the intervention consists of “double dose” Foundations lessons for 30 minutes, 3-5 times per week. If *Foundations* is *not* provided in a Tier 1, whole-class setting, the intervention includes the Foundations standard lesson (30 minutes daily) plus “double dose” lesson (30 minutes 3-5 times per week) for a total of four to five hours of intervention per week.

Foundations targets several different fundamental areas of reading:

- **Phonemic awareness:** Identification and practice of: Initial, final and medial phonemes; phonemic segmentation & manipulation; syllable awareness, word awareness.
 - “Tapping” to provide physical representation of the sounds to practice phonemic segmentation and blending.
 - Connect thumb to index, middle, then ring finger to “pull” the letter-sounds together.
 - “Scoop” multiple letters which produce only one sound.
- **Phonics (sound system) & Word Study (total word structure):**Drilling letter-to-sound and sound-to-letter to provide explicit instruction of how to blend sounds into words using explicit instruction of the six syllable types for total word structure.
 - “a- apple-/a/” “b-ball-/b/”
 - Explicit instruction of the six syllable types according to Foundations.
- **Fluency:** To develop quick word recognition, prosody (pitch, volume, tone) and expression.
 - Practice high-frequency words in timed exercises with word lists in order to help students reach words per minute reading goals.
- **Vocabulary:** Word of the day, flashcards, student notebooks with alphabetized vocabulary entries.
- **Spelling:** Two-way practice of reading (decoding) and spelling (encoding); utilizes gel boards and magnetic building boards.
- **Comprehension strategies:** Storytime; retelling and visualization; choral and echo reading.

Cost: \$355 for Foundations teacher materials, \$44 per student for materials

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cumulative and sequential program (systemic, with emphasis on mastery) ● Emphasizes fine and gross motor memory learning through handwriting exercises ● Utilizes tactile manipulatives and “tapping” (kinesthetic feedback) of sounds to support phonological awareness ● A complete program that is ready to use and prepared for teachers that follows Common Core State Standards ● Access to Intervention Placement Inventory and Progress Monitoring Kit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited focus on reading comprehension ● Integration of curricular materials makes <i>Foundations</i> difficult to use without whole kit ● It may be hard to integrate new students into the program since it builds on itself ● Structured program does not allow much room to tailor intervention to the child’s specific needs

Empirical Evidence: While Wilson provides many examples for support, RTI Action network also reported that Public School 380 in Brooklyn, NY, improved student outcomes and reduced unnecessary referrals to special education by establishing an RTI framework using Wilson Foundations in Tiers 1 and 2. As of July 2010, no studies have met the What Works Clearinghouse standards to enable them to draw conclusions on the effectiveness of the Foundations program on students with learning disabilities. For example, some studies did not have equal experimental and control groups.

For more information and training:

Wilson Foundations Website: www.foundations.com

Resources:

www.orton-gillingham.com

Sources:

Feldman, S. (2009). “Public School 380: Brooklyn, NY,” RTI Action Network.

<http://www.rtinetwork.org/voices-from-the-field/entry/2/92>.

U.S. Department of Education (2010). “Students with Learning Disabilities: Foundations,” U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, What Works Clearinghouse WWC Intervention Report, July.