



# FOUNDATIONS & FRAMEWORKS

A K-6 Instructional Reading Program



EQUIPPING TEACHERS TO DEVELOP

**ENGAGED READERS**

*invested in the  
conversation*

[foundationsframeworks.org](http://foundationsframeworks.org)

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## **CAN WE REALLY KNOW?**

The classroom is quiet and every student appears engrossed in a book. But their teacher wonders: Are they REALLY reading? Is their thinking being CHALLENGED, or are they just skimming the surface? Are they LEARNING and GROWING? Is their THINKING on track, or are they reinforcing bad habits? Are they reading ACCURATELY and COMPREHENDING fully? If they *can* read all the words, are they expanding their VOCABULARIES by contemplating the meaning of words?

Reading is complex, and teaching reading is complicated.

## **ELIMINATE THE GUESSWORK**

Foundations & Frameworks equips teachers and students with research-based, time-tested strategies and tools so that:

- ★ The path to learning is clearly defined. Teachers are equipped to teach and students are eager to try.
- ★ Instruction is scaffolded to guide students through thinking and learning. Growth becomes measurable.
- ★ Student thinking is captured, explored, and made visible. Students show how they think deeply about things they understand.
- ★ Vocabulary and fluency are taught authentically so engaged students take ownership of their learning processes.

*Foundations & Frameworks is an instructional reading program developed at Briarwood Christian School in Birmingham, AL and is supported and maintained by Clerestory Learning/Make Way for Books, LLC in Pelham, AL.*

“THE SYNTHESIS OF CURRENT RESEARCH WITH TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS HAS CREATED A PROGRAM THAT TRANSFORMS THE ENTIRE PROCESS OF READING INSTRUCTION.”

— Foundations & Frameworks Teacher

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

Foundations & Frameworks fits together the critical pieces of balanced literacy, creating a focused instructional approach for optimal development.



These critical pieces develop through strategic use of best instructional practices. Foundations & Frameworks weaves such practices into a practical framework.



## **THE FOCUS: INCREASED THINKING FOR DEEP COMPREHENSION**

Foundations & Frameworks develops students who read for deep understanding.

### **EXPLICIT COMPREHENSION SKILL INSTRUCTION**

When a teacher models a comprehension skill, students see the process and are ready to engage. Process questions systematically guide student thinking, and visual tools provide a structure for skill application and reading comprehension. Students practice one comprehension skill in depth, understand it well, and transfer it to other texts.

### **PRACTICE & PREPARATION**

Students prepare for small group discussion by using SPECS Logs to record written responses and develop visual tools that help process and organize ideas. Teachers give students rubrics to clearly define levels of thinking that lead to exemplary achievement.

### **SMALL GROUP**

Students read rich literature at their instructional levels and participate in teacher-led, student-dominated small groups. Through collaborative comprehension, students understand skills more deeply. Students explore new vocabulary, share visual tools, discuss the text, and receive instructive feedback almost daily.

**There is a cycle at the heart of the instructional framework:** Students practice and prepare for small-group interaction, which readies them to practice with another section of text in preparation for small-group interaction.

### **SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT**

Rubrics establish clear expectations and teach students that reading for deep understanding is strategic and within reach. Rubrics objectify assessment and simplify grading.

### **QUALITY CHILDREN'S LITERATURE**

Carefully-selected, rich text runs through all program components, facilitating skill application and deep comprehension. It is authentic, of high interest, culturally relevant, of redeeming value, and in leveled to match student instructional needs.

## HOW DOES FOUNDATIONS & FRAMEWORKS COMPARE?

CURRICULUM COMPONENT	FOUNDATIONS & FRAMEWORKS	READING WORKSHOP FORMAT e.g., Daily 5, CAFE	BALANCED LITERACY APPROACH e.g., curriculum in a box
<b>Whole Group Instruction</b>	Days 1-3 of a unit: <b>explicitly teach</b> comprehension skill, model, discuss, practice until a basic level of understanding is achieved	Daily Mini-lessons: teach or review a bite-sized skill, model, send students off to practice	Daily Mini-lessons: teach or review a bite-sized skill, model, send students off to practice
<b>Comprehension Skills</b>	<b>Deep understanding of one or two</b> per unit.	Practice several at a time within a genre, resulting in a survey of skills rather than mastery.	Practice several at a time within a genre, resulting in a survey of skills rather than mastery.
<b>Building Metacognition</b>	Students learn to ask themselves process questions to apply the comprehension skill being taught. There is <b>accountability to learn and use the metacognition skills</b> when building a visual tool.	Teachers model metacognition and send students off to practice. No daily accountability for practicing the metacognitive skills. No measure or evidence of understanding for each student.	Teachers model metacognition and send students off to practice. No daily accountability for practicing the metacognitive skills. No measure or evidence of understanding for each student.
<b>Graphic Organizers</b>	Visual tools <b>mirror the thought process</b> students use to deeply comprehend text. <b>Students develop the visual tools</b> by exploring and revealing their thinking. Visual tools <b>expand thinking</b> as students gain confidence and automaticity.	Students write on sticky notes and place them on a class graphic organizer or keep a graphic organizer in mind while jotting and marking text.	Students fill in pre-printed graphic organizers to show what they were able to find while reading, limiting thinking to the number of ideas that can be recorded on their worksheet.

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<b>Read and Respond</b>	Students <b>daily engage in critical thinking</b> through writing, by explaining, or drawing further conclusions from their work developing the visual tool.	Students journal about books and reflect upon their learning.	Students answer questions scripted by the curriculum.
<b>Small Group</b>	Teacher meets with each small group <b>daily</b> and <b>guides students on their journey from basic competency to advanced mastery</b> of each comprehension skill. Students in each group read the <b>same high-interest authentic literature at a common instructional level</b> . The literature lends itself to the skill students are learning. Daily elaborative discussion builds <b>critical thinking</b> . Students learn to <b>discuss literature respectfully and intelligently</b> . <b>Vocabulary instruction</b> is woven in to promote deep understanding and accurate usage. <b>Fluency</b> is developed through meaningful reading of text portions.	Teacher pulls together small groups based upon common student needs. Students receive a mini-lesson and then engage in practicing the common skill using self-chosen books. Teachers try to spend a few minutes with each student to give instructive feedback. Teachers meet with each student on an “as-needed” basis rather than regularly.	Teacher uses leveled text to scaffold understanding of skills taught during mini-lessons. Teacher builds small-group lessons from the materials based upon most pressing need. Teachers meet with each group based upon need so some students get more small-group time than others.

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<b>Vocabulary</b>	Teachers select <b>words from the books</b> students are reading. Students explore the words using <b>vocabulary boxes</b> that prompt students to make personal connections to a word as well as explore the word in various ways for <b>deep understanding and retention</b> .	Students expand their vocabulary by tuning in to interesting words while reading. All students learn genre-based vocabulary. Interesting words are noticed and collected through read-alouds.	Vocabulary words are highlighted and taught in context of literature. Students engage in activities using the vocabulary words and understanding their meaning.
<b>Fluency</b>	Modeled and practiced at small group <b>using meaningful excerpts from text</b> that engage students in deeper thinking about the text.	Fluency tools are taught through mini-lessons and students practice on their own and with a partner.	Fluency is explicitly taught in mini-lessons and text designed to teach fluency skills. Students practice on their own, with a partner, and in small group.
<b>Writing to Reflect</b>	Students write a <b>daily reflection</b> about what they read, what they are thinking, or what they learned about reading.	Students gather back together at the end of the reading block to share reflections as a whole group or with partners.	Students have limited opportunities to reflect upon what they are reading and learning throughout the unit.
<b>Phonics &amp; Spelling</b>	Provides a research-proven framework for quality phonemic awareness and phonics instruction, that blends listening, speaking, writing, and spelling with reading. This approach works easily with any additional curriculum resources a school selects.	Explicit phonics instruction and word study is taught through mini-lessons and practiced during center rotations or Reading Workshop.	Explicit phonics instruction and word study is taught through mini-lessons and practiced during center rotations or Reading Workshop.



## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **How does Foundations & Frameworks meet the needs of individual students?**

While all students focus on improving their comprehension skill use, each does so with text at an appropriate instructional level. Every unit includes texts at four different levels of readability, enabling flexibility for teachers to provide a text that matches each student's needs. Skill instruction is scaffolded and levels of achievement are clearly defined. The time devoted to skill development provides space for students to grow as they practice each skill and receive feedback on their efforts. This structure enables maximum ability development in each student.

### **How is critical thinking taught?**

Comprehension skills are thinking strategies, and *critical thinking* describes a "toolbox" of specific thinking strategies. Foundations & Frameworks identifies and teaches these strategies directly. The program's scope guides appropriate grade-to-grade growth in each skill, and specific prompts (process questions) enable students to work at each new level of development. Combined with the teacher's skill modeling and frequent feedback, student thinking is guided, developed, and challenged. All this thinking produces rich, deep, and meaningful interactions during small group sessions, which further refine student thinking and produce full comprehension of a text.

### **How is literature chosen?**

Because matching students to text is paramount in ensuring student growth and enjoyment of reading, an extensive list of recommended, authentic, meaningful, high-interest literature has been developed for the program. Titles connect to specific comprehension skills and readability levels increase incrementally from unit to unit. Teachers select books from the list that are interesting and relevant for their students and that meet their range of readability needs.

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### **How is vocabulary taught?**

Best practices for vocabulary instruction are woven into each unit so that students add 10-12 new words to their working vocabulary. Students are able to understand these new terms while listening and reading, and incorporate them in speaking and writing. Each new word is taught directly, providing students with definitions, etymologies, sample sentences, and other relevant details. Students practice using each new word orally within a confined context (e.g., Use *concentrate* in a sentence about a Friday night football game.), in broader contexts, and then in discussion using their texts. Additional practice with word meanings helps students develop conceptual understanding and experience its correct use.

### **Are standards addressed?**

The depth of skill development within Foundations & Frameworks matches and frequently exceeds all expectations of the CCSS as well as typical state standards. Flexibility within the program's structure allows for work with any idiosyncratic standards, such as those mandated by a specific school system or addressed on a specific standardized test.

### **What tools are available for teachers to use in lesson planning?**

During Foundations & Frameworks Basic Training, teachers explore the research-supported best practices for literacy instruction and how these practices work together within a unit. The *Foundations & Frameworks Toolbox* provides the specifics necessary for developing unit and lesson plans. Each unit, teachers introduce a comprehension skill with a recommended read-aloud, design small group interactions using best practices, select meaningful vocabulary words, and develop assessments of student learning. Unit development is addressed specifically and thoroughly during Foundations & Frameworks Basic Training.

## **IS THERE A MEASURABLE IMPACT OVER TIME?**

### **Here's a little of what Foundations & Frameworks' teachers have witnessed:**

*Students are able to analyze and implement what they have learned into other areas, and their vocabulary has increased a great deal. Their comprehension level has improved across the curriculum.*

*Depth of thought and increased connections.*

*I saw a marked improvement in the students' abilities as they traveled from 6th to 8th grade. Additionally, our high school teachers reported improved abilities of the students who have gone through the program in the lower grades. Students' test results, ability to comprehend, and to write well have improved since implementing the program.*

*Hard data, work habits, and general love of reading. Test scores have indicated significant growth this year.*

*Improved grade level achievement, deeper thought processes, and better writing skills.*

*Our scores for achievement tests have confirmed that our students are better understanding what they are reading. We hear from upper school teachers that our students do well in the area of reading comprehension.*

*All of our students are able to stay busy examining their books for the full class period now, where in the beginning they wanted to quickly put just a few things on their visual tool and be done. This shows that they are breaking the book down into easy to comprehend parts.*

*Students enjoy reading and library time. Students are able to hold intelligent conversations.*

*We can see an increase in their critical thinking. We see them applying these reading skills to other subjects as well. The intellectual art is becoming more detailed and demonstrates evidence of their growth.*

## WHY TEACHERS LOVE TEACHING WITH FOUNDATIONS & FRAMEWORKS

*A seasoned Foundations & Frameworks teacher-trainer-specialist shares her experience*

### Visual tools include process questions that are vertically aligned.

When my fourth graders came to me with two years of F&F experience, the growth and depth of learning was significantly different than in previous years. They recognized visual tools and were interested in how we would build on them. They had retained their learning, so reteaching was minimal. I noticed critical thinking opportunities were more plentiful. By mid-year, I enjoyed watching my students lead evolving small group conversations. They were passionate about their understandings and ready for discussion!

### Visual tools are built in accountability.

The idea of having students ask themselves process questions while reading in order to draw the visual tool is brilliant! The process questions held them accountable to monitor meaning while reading; **they had to make sense of the text in order to build their visual tool.** When they came to small group, I saw exactly what they were thinking about while they were reading. It takes the guesswork out of trying to figure out what students are understanding and how to best meet their needs.

### Books match student interests and abilities and facilitate the comprehension skill being taught.

My students got SO EXCITED to hear book talks because they loved all the books I chose for them. I loved all of the books too because they are matched to comprehension skills which made teaching and practicing a specific skill easier. It was great to choose books from a literature list I knew was high quality, rich, and appropriate.

### Rubrics provide a journey for learning, growth, and understanding.

The rubrics showed me the steps to mastery. This helped me meet students where they were and encourage them to the next level. The learning expected of them was not a mystery and students had freedom to learn at their own pace.

### Small group conversation is meaningful and interesting.

Since all students used the same process questions and visual tool, they came to small group with a common language. This helped me teach students how to have meaningful conversations about literature. *They* created the visual tool, so **they were invested in the conversation.** No more blank stares or spoon-fed discussions! Small group was fun and interesting every day!

### I grew as a reader and critical thinker while teaching Foundations & Frameworks!

The Toolbox taught me the thinking required for each comprehension skill; it deepened my understanding of teaching reading so I could effectively meet the needs of all my students!

### Using the framework for instruction helped me fit everything in. It just makes sense.

I used to struggle to fit everything into my literacy block and felt guilty about the pieces I dropped. Using the F&F structure helped me keep the pieces in balance so that I fit the most important things in daily and juggled the rest. I became more intentional about my time and I knew exactly where all of my students were in their understanding because I met with them daily! My students learned more, thought more deeply, made more connections, and took ownership of their learning. Teaching the way the brain learns works!

## What <sup>COULD</sup> does your classroom conversation look like?



Video taken at UMS-Wright Preparatory School • Mobile, AL

## THE REST OF THE STORY

In final moments of a small group, two fifth-grade students couldn't wait to discuss the book's climax with their teacher. They huddled together, and with hushed voices engaged in lively conversation sprinkled with aha moments. [Enjoy!](#)