



FOUNDATIONS & FRAMEWORKS

***Foundations & Frameworks* is a uniquely designed research-based and research-supported instructional reading program. The program incorporates brain-friendly methods of instruction to maximize learning. The program is based on a collection of best practices that are structured for daily impact on learning.**

Foundations & Frameworks is a uniquely designed research-based and research-supported instructional reading program developed at Briarwood Christian School. Since its introduction in 2001, an increasing number of schools across the US and Canada have adopted and implemented the program and are witnessing student achievement gains in vocabulary, reading comprehension, total reading, critical thinking, problem solving, and written expression.

Recognizing the need for equipping all students to fully understand ideas conveyed in text, instructional designers studied findings in reading, critical thinking and neuroscience research. Their study of reading research revealed the need to address five crucial elements: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and reading comprehension, which was confirmed by the National Reading Panel's extensive report published in 2000.

The study of critical thinking resulted from emerging support for their initial premise: reading comprehension is the result of effective thinking about written text. If students can learn thought processes that enable them to consider an author's intended message at the deepest levels, they will be equipped to understand ideas not only addressed in reading classes but in other content as well. Therefore students exposed to complex thinking in the *Foundations & Frameworks* instructional reading program would be equipped to transfer understanding to mathematics, science and social studies classes, among others.

Finally, findings in neuroscience revealed the need to tailor instruction to the way learning occurs. Understanding learning would result in more effective teaching. Therefore, *Foundations & Frameworks* would incorporate brain-friendly methods of instruction to maximize learning.

***Foundations & Frameworks* is an instructional reading program that uses a collection of best practices for equipping students to fully understand ideas conveyed in text.**

Thinking skills are explicitly taught and modeled. Because comprehension results from the thoughtful interaction between reader and text, improving student thinking positively impacts student comprehension. When a student fails to think while he/she is reading, he/she is not truly reading. By breaking thinking down into its component steps, teaching these steps explicitly, and modeling the use of these steps, teachers can equip students with the cognitive abilities needed to fully understand text.

Time is dedicated to skill mastery. Learning to use a skill requires extensive guided and independent practice. Insufficient time devoted to learning results in insufficient learning. Students must understand the structures of text and the accompanying thinking skills so that independent application and transfer of thinking skills to other areas of learning can occur. Developing such understanding, such automaticity, requires time. *Foundations & Frameworks* units devoting adequate time and providing adequate practice for students to truly master each comprehension skill.

High quality literature is used as a natural conduit for skill instruction. Great literature captures a reader's imagination and motivates further reading. *Foundations & Frameworks* uses real, complete works of children's literature to engage students and provide adequate material for in-depth comprehension. The literature is clustered according to readability and is used for comprehension skill instruction. For example, a book with cliff-hanging events may be used to teach and practice understanding plot, whereas a book with great character development may be used to study and practice character or comparison/contrast.

Small group interaction is a daily practice. Small groups enable teachers to know their students and adjust instruction to meet the needs of individuals. Small groups also provide an opportunity for students to further develop their understand-

ing of text through thoughtful discussion with the teacher and with others reading the same text. The small groups structure also gives teachers the flexibility to group students for re-teaching, reviewing, or for providing additional, individualized guided practice. While small group sessions take place, other students in the classroom prepare for their small group session by reading, adding entries to SPECS Logs, and completing practice with vocabulary words. SPECS Logs (Space Extending Comprehension Skills) are specially designed notebooks that foster student comprehension of text by providing space for the development of visual tools.

Visual tools are used to organize and represent patterns of thinking. Visual tools are graphic tools used to organize and connect information from a text. Because they represent the thinking process that has been explicitly taught and modeled, visual tools foster the thinking necessary to comprehend text. With an associated visual tool for each skill, *Foundations & Frameworks* equips students to think effectively in reading and in every other area of learning. For example, a flow chart used in the study of sequence of events provide an image of the process—sequence of history, the sequence of the scientific process, the sequence of steps involved in long division, the sequence of throwing a ball correctly, and much more content in every area.

Vocabulary instruction emphasizes complete word understanding. Vocabulary instruction must emphasize complete word understanding to be effective. Definitional, contextual, and conceptual word understanding leads to ownership, allowing the student to not only comprehend new words, but to use them effectively in speaking and writing. *Foundations & Frameworks* emphasizes all three areas of word understanding through individual, small group, and whole class instruction and activities. Frequent feedback from teachers enables students to refine their understanding of words and promotes intentional and accurate word usage.

***Foundations & Frameworks* is an investment in education's most valuable asset—teachers.**

Research has repeatedly confirmed that the most significant factor in a student's academic achievement is the classroom teacher. To improve reading achievement, improve reading instruction a sound professional development investment in teachers results in teachers who know why they do what they do. *Foundations & Frameworks* is such an investment. Teachers who have completed *Foundations & Frameworks* training are better equipped to teach reading because they understand the basic elements that make up the process and they understand the process itself. This enables them to make instructional decisions that positively impact student achievement. They know the students and they know reading so they can design instruction intentionally, matching student need with instruction.

For a school to implement *Foundations & Frameworks*, teachers are required to attend a 10 day training in major elements of reading instruction, including the following: instructional design, reading comprehension, visual tools, small groups, vocabulary, assessment, beginning reading, and content area reading. Graduate credits are offered to participants for completed coursework, most of which is completed during the 10 day training.

Research of *Foundations & Frameworks* validates its effectiveness.

Endeavoring to evaluate the validity of *Foundations & Frameworks* and its effectiveness within the school setting, Mrs. Debbie Robertson (2002) studied the program's impact on 3rd–4th grade students in reading. 100% of the study's participants improved in vocabulary and reading comprehension, and more than half increased their percentile ranking by 10 points or more.

On a larger scale, Dr. Julie Albee (2004) researched the program's impact on nearly 1500 students in 3rd–6th grade at six different schools in different regions of the country and with diverse student populations. After only seven months, the average vocabulary gain represented 1.7 years worth of development. Similarly, comprehension growth averaged 1.3 years worth of development. Since only seven months passed between the pre-test and post-test in this study, the results represented remarkable gains. Additionally, the results did not include the top 25% of 5th grade students and the top 30% of 6th grade students because their post-test scores were higher than the testing instrument's ability could adequately measure.

A research project was conducted by Dr. Kevin Washburn (2006) examining the effects of *Foundations & Frameworks* and a basal series reading program on reading comprehension and critical thinking achievement of 5th grade students in rural Wisconsin. In both reading comprehension and critical thinking, the mean gain of students in the *Foundations & Frameworks* group was significantly greater than the students in the basal series program group. The study also presented a rubric to use in considering neurocognitive elements, instructional processes, instructional materials, and professional development components of each program. *Foundations & Frameworks* was assessed as having "consistent alignment with research finding" in these areas in contrast to the basal series program having "limited alignment with research findings" in the same areas.