

The specific activities incorporated into the **Fundations® Pre-K Activity Set** are designed to support students’ emerging understanding of the alphabetic principle of letter-sound associations, and the written language skill of manuscript letter formation. Its purpose is to teach pre-k students the names of the letters and the corresponding sounds, as well as teach them the formation of lowercase and uppercase letters. The activities included are not intended to provide a full literacy curriculum.

Skills Practiced in Fundations® Pre-K

- Letter-Sound Knowledge
- Forming Key Linkages (between letter names, formations, and sounds)
- Alphabetic Principle
- Alphabetical Order
- Letter Formation/Handwriting

Fundations® Principles of Instruction

- Explicit Instruction
- Systematic Instruction: Sequential and Cumulative
- Multisensory Instruction
- Repetition
- On the spot, supportive feedback

Research: The Importance of Early Literacy Skills

Alphabetic knowledge refers to children’s familiarity with letter forms, names, and corresponding sounds, as measured by recognition, production, and writing tasks. Together, such knowledge represents an important component of emergent literacy (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998).

The NAEYC recognizes the development of the alphabetic principle as a goal for the preschool years (International Reading Association & National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998). The Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework expects that a preschool child “recognizes and names at least half of the letters of the alphabet” and “produces the sounds of many recognized letters” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2015, p. 47). States that have defined pre-k learning standards include letter-naming skills.

Research confirms that it is worthwhile to teach these foundational skills in a formal and purposeful way. The National Early Literacy Panel (NELP) was convened in 2002 to review the research available on early literacy skill development in children from birth to age five. In 2008, the panel published its findings in the report titled, “Developing Early Literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel.” It found that conventional reading and writing skills developed from birth to age five have a clear and consistently strong relationship with later conventional literacy skills. This report identified variables that ranged from a strongly predictive to moderately predictive relationship to later literacy.

The strongest and most consistent predictors of later literacy development were found to be alphabetic knowledge, phonological awareness and memory, rapid automatic naming of letters and objects, and writing letters (NELP, 2008).

As summarized by Goodson, Layzer, Simon & Dwyer (2009, p. 6), the NELP report specified the following strong and consistent predictors:

- Knowing the names of printed letters
- Knowing the sounds associated with printed letters
- Being able to manipulate the sounds of spoken language
- Being able to rapidly name a sequence of letters, numbers, objects or colors
- Being able to write one’s own name or even isolated letters
- Being able to remember the content of spoken language for a short time

Table 1 explains how the Foundations Pre-K activities support these predictive skills, thereby providing children with a strong start for learning how to read.

Table 1. How Foundations® Pre-K Activities Support Strong and Consistent Literacy Predictors

A. Early Predictors of Later Conventional Literacy Skills: Strong and Consistent Predictors	B. Foundations® Pre-K Activities: Support Predictors
- Knowing the names of printed letters - Being able to label letters correctly, e.g., ‘F’ is the letter called “eff”	Students are introduced to the letter name and sound association with the help of a “keyword” picture. The 26 letters of the alphabet are explicitly and systematically taught in the first 13 weeks of instruction and practiced daily throughout the yearlong curriculum.
- Knowing the sounds associated with printed letters - Understanding that the sound /f/ goes with the letter ‘F’ - Or, knowing that the letters ‘at’ at the end of words are pronounced “aah-tuh”	
- Being able to manipulate the sounds of spoken language—breaking words apart into smaller sound units such as syllables or phonemes, adding or deleting sound units - Understanding that the word bulldozer is made up of three syllables, ‘bull’, ‘doz’, and ‘er’ - Or, knowing that if you take away the /j/ sound from the word change, you get the word chain	Phonemic awareness is fostered by directly teaching children that letters are associated with individual sounds within the spoken English language. By doing so, Foundations® Pre-K directly teaches children an important piece of metacognitive knowledge that undergirds phonological awareness, and phonemic awareness specifically. Students are taught to use keywords to remember the sounds. In teaching this, they are taught to listen and isolate the initial sound in the keyword.
- Being able to rapidly name a sequence of letters, numbers, objects, or colors - When shown a set of numbers, being able to name numbers in order, quickly and easily - Or, being able to recognize patterns of objects or colors	Rapid naming is an indicator of the cognitive skill of visual-verbal proficiency and cannot necessarily be taught. However, the ability to name letters rapidly does depend upon a student’s automaticity with letter names. In the Pre-K Activity Set, the letter-sound associations for all 26 letters of the alphabet are explicitly and systematically introduced. A daily letter-sound drill helps student to gain that automaticity.
- Being able to write one’s own name or even isolated letters - Being able to put one’s own name on a drawing - Or, being able to correctly write letters that are shown on a set of word cards	The Foundations® Pre-K Activity Set provides direct instruction in letter formation for both lowercase and uppercase letters. Letter formation is closely linked to sound-symbol knowledge and is explicitly taught using gross motor sky writing activities, tracing, copying and forming letters from memory when ready.
- Being able to remember the content of spoken language for a short time - Being able to remember simple, multi-step instructions from the teacher about getting ready for outdoor time (e.g., clean up table, put materials on shelf, stand in line at the door) - Or, being able to remember earlier parts of a story read aloud to make sense of later parts of the story	Instruction in the pre-k activities is visible, explicit, and interactive. The teacher directly teaches all skills to students through modeling and active learning. All lesson components require students to follow directions and routines. Learning activities are designed to incorporate visual, auditory, tactile, and kinesthetic modalities.