From Islands of Excellence to a Sea of Change: School District of Indian River County
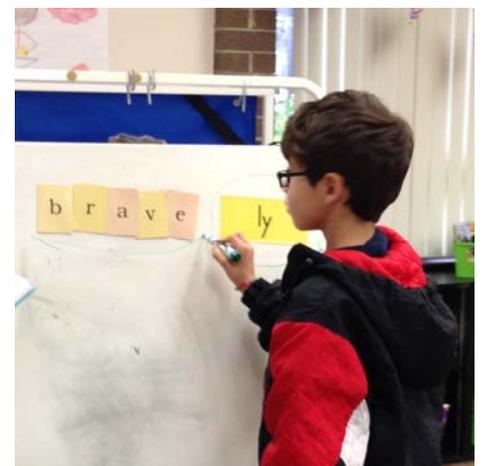
Vero Beach, Florida

2013-2014

WIN District Profile

This profile features the School District of Indian River County (SDIRC) in Vero Beach, Florida. It describes a district-wide approach to working with a community partner and Wilson Language Training to scale up an evidence-based program to 100% of the district's elementary schools in order to improve students' literacy achievement.

SDIRC at a Glance

This profile features the School District of Indian River County (SDIRC) in Vero Beach, Florida. As a Wilson Implementation Network (WIN) district, SDIRC utilized core implementation science principles in the adoption of Wilson Language Training's Fundations® program for all students in grades K-2. Throughout their implementation journey, school and district staff, The Learning Alliance (a community partner), and Wilson Language Training (WLT) worked together toward achieving a common goal: improving the literacy skills of SDIRC students.

This profile covers the years 2009 to 2014, beginning with the Exploration stage of Fundations implementation and concluding as the district reached the Full Implementation stage. The lessons learned and recommendations developed by SDIRC during the early stages of implementation informed and were institutionalized in the latter stages of implementation. The following highlights those lessons and recommendations as illustrated by SDIRC actions:

✓ **Start slow and scale up based on results:** With guidance from Wilson, the district scaled up Fundations® implementation only after piloting the program with three schools that volunteered for the initiative (2010-2011).

  ❖ WLT provided guidance on the use of implementation science principles that would support successful implementation of the program over time. WLT's training in the first three schools piloting Fundations raised the district's competence in supporting a larger scale implementation effort, engendered positive feedback from stakeholders due to promising outcomes for the first cohort of students, and increased the district's overall confidence that a larger implementation would be successful.

  ❖ With the decision to use Fundations district-wide, the district's Implementation Team analyzed its internal capacity to provide technical assistance to schools and school staff, and determined the best way to provide training and support to teachers who would be using Fundations.

  ❖ The Implementation Team recommended a gradual implementation to ensure that an appropriate level of support could be provided to each school.

✓ **Support teachers and staff to build program sustainability:** The district learned that several things were needed to sustain implementation of the program with fidelity over time.

  ❖ High quality and sufficient professional development: Training all teachers in the Fundations program provided a baseline for initial implementation. Reading coaches were further trained as Fundations Facilitators to help support implementation. In addition to Fundations training, WLT trained several staff to receive Wilson Reading System® (WRS) Level I Certification. This provided a deeper knowledge base for some individuals who were then targeted to be credentialed Fundations Presenters.

  ❖ Consistent expectations among coaching staff: With staff turnover as the most challenging aspect of sustaining program implementation, SDIRC worked toward the development of consistent expectations for all coaches across the district so that they can provide broader support to all schools. Specifically, SDIRC wants to ensure that district coaches have clear job descriptions, specific time dedicated to coaching activities, time to meet weekly to problem solve and ensure consistency in approaching, and comfort with facilitating literacy instruction.

❖ Time for teachers to reflect and build on their learning: Grade-level meetings provided the opportunity to preview upcoming Fundations Units, share tips, and review activities.

❖ A common language among staff: Because staff were using a common program, they developed a common language that could also be used in other subjects. This common language was consistent across all three tiers of instruction since the intensive Wilson Reading System program also shares the same language.

✓ **Build on existing strengths:** The district learned that they had many existing strengths that would help sustain effective evidence-based practices.

❖ Willing and able community partner: The Learning Alliance was a local community organization with an interest in and resources to support the literacy initiative at SDIRC. The development of the partnership required a coordinated effort between the district and The Learning Alliance.

❖ Local volunteers: Volunteers from a local state college and the general community helped tutor students. These volunteers received some Fundations training to help students practice building words and tapping out sounds.

❖ Coaching: Coaching was a key strength in the district. As a key implementation driver, coaching, which followed the WLT model, was built out across the district.

✓ **Support foundational skills development for all students:** All students need strong foundational reading skills, so it was important to provide this instruction to all students in the district. Furthermore, use of a common program across all the schools in the district made it easier for students to transition to new schools.

✓ **Communicate thoroughly and share successes:** Better communication prior to implementation could have strengthened the initial implementation of Fundations so that schools better understood the reasons why the district was introducing the program and the supports that would be in place to help implement it with fidelity. Having learned this lesson, the district's strong communication in the later implementation stages contributed to the overall success. Sharing achievements broadly within the school community and with community partners helped promote and maintain forward momentum of Fundations implementation. In SDIRC, principals regularly shared a Fundations "Aha Moment" at faculty meetings. The Learning Alliance conducted tours of implementing schools with local philanthropists who were current or potential supporters of the district. Tours were followed by a collaborative discussion of what they were seeing in the schools.

In addition to the establishment of a common language and increased teacher knowledge, success of the Fundations implementation can be measured by students' reading improvement. Outcome data from over 3,000 kindergarten students and over 2700 first-grade students, including English language learners, demonstrated that students receiving Fundations made greater gains than comparison students in foundational reading skills.

The following site profile describes the process of implementing Fundations with fidelity in SDIRC in order to achieve their goal of improving students' foundational reading skills.

Introduction and Overview

About this WIN Profile

This profile features the School District of Indian River County (SDIRC) in Vero Beach, Florida. As a Wilson Implementation Network (WIN) district, SDIRC adopted the core implementation science principles incorporated in Wilson Language Training's Fundations® plan for all students in grades K-2. This profile describes the district's implementation journey and features the commitment of school and district staff, The Learning Alliance (a community partner), and Wilson Language Training's team of Literacy Specialists, who worked together to achieve a common goal: improving the literacy skills of SDIRC students.

> SDIRC adopted the core implementation science principles incorporated in Wilson Language Training's Fundations® plan for all students in grades K-2.

Beginning in the 2009-2010 school year, SDIRC's leaders brought together teachers, principals, and coaches across the district and secured the commitment of a local non-profit organization (The Learning Alliance) to build a collaborative group that would tackle the district's literacy challenge. Working together, the group identified the need to bring in an effective program and training model that would best serve their students. After the selection of Wilson Language Training as an additional partner, the group recognized the importance of implementing the Fundations program with fidelity and initiated a systematic and intentional effort to ensure that teachers and administrators were engaged in effective professional development, provided with continuous support to apply new skills and knowledge, and allowed flexibility to accommodate new ways of work.

> ### What is WIN?
>
> The Wilson® Implementation Network (WIN) encompasses selected schools and districts that are implementing one or more of the Wilson programs: Fundations®, Just Words®, or the Wilson Reading System®. These schools and districts were invited to participate in the WIN after demonstrating a dedication to improving literacy outcomes, commitment to creating systems to develop a culture of learning for students and adults alike, and passion for sharing lessons learned along the way. For more information, please contact Dr. Paul Tortolani, Vice President of Education: PTortolani@wilsonlanguage.com

By the 2013-2014 school year, the district and partners had built a sustainable implementation infrastructure with an aligned and efficient system to support teachers, trainers, and coaches in the continued implementation of Wilson programs. This allowed them to meet their goal of scaling up Fundations to all of the district's elementary schools.

To demonstrate the systematic and intentional approach of implementing Fundations within each school, this profile is organized around the "formula for success" and application of the Active Implementation Frameworks described in accompanying guide, *Make "It" Happen: Using Implementation Science with Wilson® Programs*. Key activities and lessons learned by the School District of Indian River County are highlighted.

In reading this profile, it is important to remember that the implementation activities and lessons shared should be considered in context and viewed as an example of what has been done in one district. However, many ideas can be generalized and may be useful to other districts seeking a model for how to achieve success with their own implementation efforts.

About the School District of Indian River County

Mission & Values

SDIRC's mission is "To serve all students with excellence."[1] Its core values are described as:

"Core Values... We believe:
- It is our responsibility that every child will learn
- In the continuous improvement process
- In holding all individuals within the organization accountable for their decisions and actions
- In the power of the human spirit
- In honesty and integrity in all relationships
- Diversity adds value to the organization
- Students are the focus of all decisions and actions
- Family and community involvement are essential to student success
- In a safe, healthy, and supportive learning and working environment
- In effective and efficient management of all resources."

Students

✓ 17.6% receive special education services	✓ 8.3% primarily speak a language other than English (ESOL)
✓ 19.4% receive Title I Assistance	✓ 57.4% receive free and reduced lunch

---

[1] SDIRC mission, values, and school information retrieved from www.indianriverschools.org/district-about-us.

Schools

The School District of Indian River County serves approximately 18,000 students in 27 schools. There are 13 elementary schools that encompass grades K-5. These are:

- Beachland Elementary
- Citrus Elementary
- Dodgertown Elementary
- Fellsmere Elementary
- Glendale Elementary
- Indian River Academy
- Liberty Magnet
- Osceola Magnet
- Pelican Island Elementary
- Rosewood Magnet
- Sebastian Elementary
- Treasure Coast Elementary
- Vero Beach Elementary

Table 1: Schools & Enrollment

	# of Schools	Enrollment
Elementary	13	7,352
Middle	4	3,489
High	2	4,709
Other	3	323
Charter	5	2,204
TOTAL	**27**	**18,077**

Key Role of Implementation Science

As discussed in the accompanying *Make "It" Happen* guide, key principles from implementation science research are used to guide the implementation of an intervention so that it is done with fidelity and in a manner that will sustain itself over time. In particular, the "formula for success" (see Figure 1) can be used as a framework for thinking about the pieces that need to be considered and operationalized so that a school or district can more dependably expect to achieve its intended outcomes.

> For a more detailed explanation of the Formula for Success or the Active Implementation Frameworks, please see the accompanying *Make "It" Happen* guide.

Figure 1: Formula for Success

| Effective Interventions | X | Effective Implementation Methods | X | Enabling Contexts | = | Intended Outcomes |

This formula illustrates that **effective interventions** alone do not lead to intended outcomes, but are also contingent upon **effective implementation methods** and **enabling contexts**. Therefore, when a school or district introduces a new program or set of practices to better meet students' needs, stakeholders in the school and district need to pay attention to and build strategies around the entire formula for success (Duda, Penfold, Wernikoff, & Wilson, 2014). Embedded in this formula are the **Active Implementation Frameworks** that outline how this work can be accomplished**:**

- What—Usable Interventions
- Who—Implementation Teams
- When—Implementation Stages
- How—Improvement Cycles
- How—Implementation Drivers (NIRN, 2013)

Figure 2 illustrates how the Active Implementation Frameworks are connected to the Formula for Success.

Figure 2: Linking the Formula for Success with the Active Implementation Frameworks

Duda, et al. (2014)
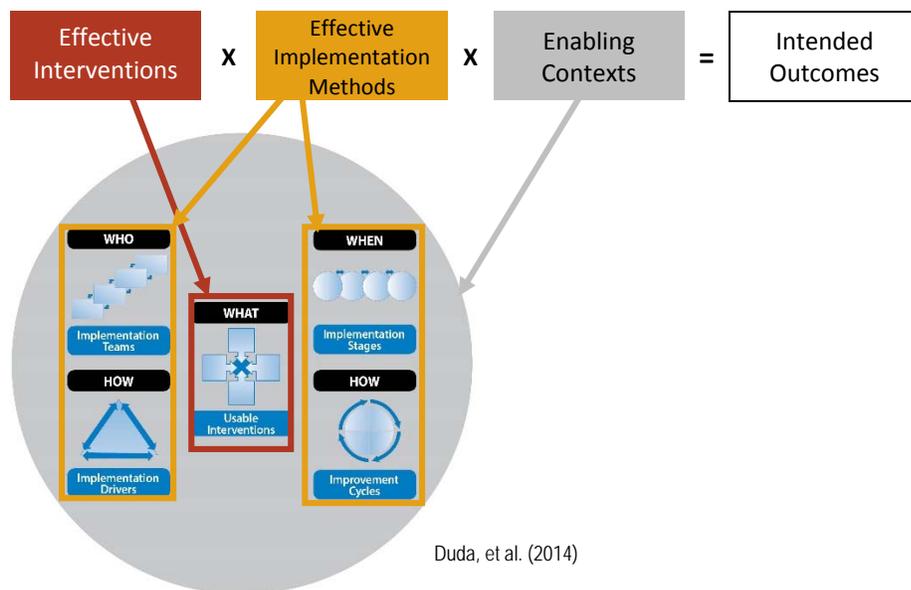
SDIRC's Application of the Formula for Success

The story of SDIRC's journey to transform the literacy achievement of its K-2 students begins with a discussion of the **enabling contexts** because of the critical role this played in allowing for and driving change in the district. It follows with a discussion of how the district selected an effective intervention and then applied effective implementation methods. What matters in the end is whether the district achieved its intended outcomes, that is, whether students benefited from these actions, and indeed they did. The Improved Student Outcomes section highlights key data demonstrating student improvement during the course of the implementation efforts.

Enabling Contexts

In SDIRC, the journey of moving from "islands of excellence to a sea of change" began in three pilot schools and grew to 13 elementary schools over the course of four years. The district's openness to change and willingness to work with outside partners allowed them to try a new approach to bringing stakeholders together. It was also enabled by a community partner, The Learning Alliance, who saw the need for change and was willing and able to work with the district in a supportive manner to advance the initiative, and by WLT who wrote and delivered the plans for Fundations implementation over the four years.

District Team

A core value of SDIRC is to ensure that all students are prepared for lifelong learning and have the basic building blocks to help them achieve their goals. Recognizing the importance of reading as a prerequisite for all other academic subjects, school and district leaders wanted to raise the literacy achievement of their students. To do so, they sought a program that would best match the literacy needs of their students and had demonstrated evidence of program effectiveness. They were also open to new ways of working toward their goal and willing to build a system that would sustain these efforts in the future.

## Community Partnership: The Learning Alliance

The district began partnering with The Learning Alliance in 2009 to support its efforts to improve student literacy achievement across all the schools in the district. The Learning Alliance is a non-profit organization based in Vero Beach, Florida, that partners with community groups to improve children's literacy rates. The Learning Alliance supported the district's selection of the Fundations program as an effective intervention, and provided funds for the professional learning that Wilson Language Training provided, which was important to the rollout and scale up of the Fundations implementation. The Learning Alliance also supported the initial collection and analysis of data to evaluate the implementation and success of the initiative, and provided ongoing support in the schools.

Effective Interventions

After key representatives from the district, SDIRC schools, and The Learning Alliance came to consensus around students' needs and the existing gap in the core literacy program, they articulated a clear and common goal of improving their students' literacy achievement. Next, they began to search for the "what," or effective intervention[2], that when used as intended would help them achieve their desired results.

---

[2] In the context of implementation science, the term "intervention" refers to the new program, policy, or set of practices that is introduced into the current system with the intention of improving outcomes for students. It may be broader than an intervention program at the individual student level, which provides targeted instruction to meet that student's needs and may be accompanied by intensified instructional delivery, increased learning time, and/or reduced instructional group size.

The "What": Usable Interventions

WHAT

Usable Interventions
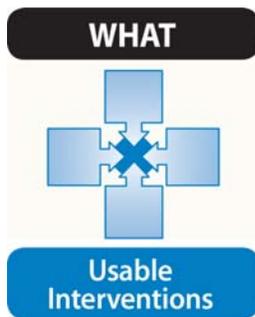
Usable interventions are the "non-negotiable" core components that are critical to building an implementation infrastructure. Usable interventions include: clear description of the intervention, essential functions, operational definitions, and performance assessments (NIRN, 2013).

Why Fundations Was Selected

Beginning in 2009-2010, the district and The Learning Alliance collaborated to identify a program that would meet its needs and be scalable and sustainable into the future. In general, literacy achievement had flattened out, and principals and coaches noticed a particular drop off of scores at second grade, making it clear that a supplement to the core program was needed. After a review of various programs and their research, the Fundations program was identified.

The Learning Alliance and some district staff were familiar with another of the Wilson programs, the Wilson Reading System (WRS) for students with reading disabilities and dyslexia. They wanted to learn more about the Fundations program when implemented in an RTI (Response to Intervention) setting, so they visited an elementary school in New York City that had been highlighted at a recent conference.

In the end, the partners selected the Fundations program as the usable intervention that could be rolled out across the district because it:

✓ met the requirement of a program with demonstrated evidence of improving student outcomes in the area that matched students' needs (word study) and where there was a gap in the core literacy program;

✓ had anecdotal data that it could improve student engagement and social-emotional behaviors;

✓ could be implemented within an RTI or MTSS (Multi-tiered System of Supports) framework, which would allow the schools to use the program in Tier 1 (core) and Tier 2 (strategic intervention) instruction;

✓ provided clearly defined guidance on how to implement the program with fidelity, which would improve teachers' instructional practices; and offered comprehensive professional development aligned to that guidance.

Effective Implementation Methods

"Fundations training and implementation has provided our teachers with a strong foundation in the structure of the English language. They have learned multiple strategies to use when teaching the different components of reading. With this knowledge, teachers are able to provide thorough, direct, and explicit instruction that impacts student achievement and develop successful life-long learners. Our district also provides teachers with continuous support from our coaches. This includes modeling, shoulder coaching, weekly to monthly study groups for upcoming units and data analysis."

Dr. Fran Adams, Superintendent

According to the science of implementation, once a new intervention program or set of practices is selected, building local capacity to engage in and sustain the implementation work is critical. The application of the following Active Implementation Frameworks supports the people who are engaging in this important work and creates an aligned system that will lead to the desired results:

- **Who: Implementation Teams**
- **When: Implementation Stages**
- **How: Implementation Drivers**
- **How: Improvement Cycles**

The "Who": Implementation Teams

WHO

Implementation Teams

An Implementation Team consists of 3 to 5 members who are skilled in multiple areas associated with the tasks to be performed in the intervention, active implementation components, and data collection. This team is accountable for ensuring that all staff are supported in implementing the program with fidelity and that the system is facilitating this new way of work (NIRN, 2013).

Composition of the Implementation Team

Members of the SDIRC Implementation Team and their functions are listed in Table 2. Notably, the team consisted of leaders with dedicated time to:

- Intentionally examine ways to support high-fidelity use of Fundations so that students benefit.
- Develop district-wide systems to support staff (i.e., teachers, trainers, coaches, and principals).
- Use data to make decisions about staff support and ways to share information with the community.

Table 2: Implementation Team and Roles

| SDIRC Implementation Team	
Position	**Role**
Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent	Lead and support
Director of Curriculum	Integrate and align Fundations with other district initiatives
District Literacy Coach	Provide ongoing support to staff
K- 12 Reading Specialist	Provide general literacy coaching and technical assistance to SDIRC teachers
Title I Director	Integrate and align Fundations with other district initiatives
District Fundations Coordinator (Position is funded by district and The Learning Alliance)	Provide general literacy coaching and technical assistance to SDIRC teachers; certified Fundations Facilitator
The Learning Alliance (Community Partner)	Provide financial and technical assistance support to SDIRC schools and general literacy coaching support
Wilson Implementation Team	
Wilson Literacy Advisor	Provide guidance and develop annual implementation plans
Wilson Literacy Specialists	Provide literacy training and ongoing coaching and implementation support to all schools

Role of the Implementation Team

During the pilot adoption of Fundations in the first three schools, the SDIRC Implementation Team with The Learning Alliance met on a monthly basis. As implementation progressed, they began to meet weekly, as needed, with informal implementation discussions in between. By the fifth year of implementation, the Implementation Team returned to meeting monthly to review progress and challenges. The Learning Alliance provided assistance to schools from the pilot to latter implementation stages. Also, the District Fundations Coordinator met weekly with the school-based literacy coaches to discuss how to support skills. The emphasis on aligning professional development to the needs of each individual receiving coaching (e.g., teachers, staff, trainers, community members, and volunteers) and to the use of Fundations with fidelity was empowering to staff because they could see student growth as a result of their efforts.

Wilson Language Training provided Fundations training to all teachers across the four cohorts of schools. WLT also provided on-site coaching visits to a set of schools each year, led selected teachers through the Wilson Reading System Level I Certification process, and conducted Fundations Facilitator Certification and Fundations Presenter Certification training. Utilizing an implementation science framework, WLT directed the introduction and rollout of Fundations with fidelity in a manner that built local capacity and increased the likelihood of long-term sustainability. That process of systematically implementing Fundations became part of the school and district culture. To demonstrate the buy in to this implementation process, the district reported that the implementation of subsequent initiatives has followed the process they developed for Fundations implementation.

> Utilizing an implementation science framework, WLT directed the introduction and rollout of Fundations with fidelity in a manner that built local capacity and increased the likelihood of long-term sustainability. That process of systematically implementing Fundations became part of the school and district culture.

The "When": Implementation Stages

WHEN
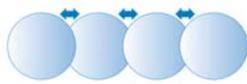
Implementation Stages

The implementation process is not linear. It is a mission-oriented process that typically takes 2-4 years and involves multiple decisions, actions, and corrections. The process includes four "Stages" (Exploration, Installation, Initial Implementation, Full Implementation) that will lead to the long-term survival and continued effectiveness of the new practice or system improvement. Conducting stage-appropriate implementation activities is necessary for successful service and systems change (NIRN, 2013).

Scaling Up Implementation

Based on the recommendation of WLT, the School District of Indian River County rolled out Fundations incrementally. Rather than engaging all 13 schools in implementation from the very beginning, the process began with three pilot schools in the first year and added several elementary schools each year until all elementary schools were using the program by the fourth year. Table 3 highlights the rollout by implementation year.

Table 3: Scaling up of Fundations Across Schools by Implementation Year

Year	Number of Schools Implementing Fundations	Total % of Schools in District Implementing Fundations
1	3	27%
2	8	62%
3	11	85%
4	13	100%

In addition, Fundations was rolled out incrementally within each school. That is, a school in its first year of Fundations implementation began with only two Levels of the program: Level K (kindergarten) and Level 1 (first grade). In the second year, it adopted Fundations Level 2 (second grade).

The purpose of the gradual rollout was to allow sufficient support and training for staff to understand and use each of the Fundations program Levels as designed without it becoming overwhelming. Once the schools' literacy coaches understood Levels K and 1, it was easier for them to support Level 2 the following year. It also meant that principals could focus support on limited grade levels, allowing them to be more hands-on during implementation.

The Learning Alliance supported the implementation of Fundations across SDIRC's schools by providing financial resources for materials and training. The process for training school and district staff was an important component of scaling up implementation. From the beginning, training and coaching of staff in Fundations was provided by Wilson Literacy Specialists who held the introductory training workshops, conducted the three-day Introductory Workshop in the Wilson Reading System, provided school and classroom coaching visits, and led individuals through the Wilson Reading System Level I Certification training, Fundations Facilitator Certification training, and Fundations Presenter Certification training.

> *"Some teachers were skeptical about implementing Fundations; however, by the second semester those same skeptics were contacting me to say they were amazed at the knowledge their children were gaining. When other schools heard the usual skeptics making these kind of statements they knew they wanted this program for their students...even schools that were traditionally thought of as already being high achieving."*
>
> Sue Curtis, Educational Consultant
> The Learning Alliance

The Learning Alliance's financial support enabled the schools' literacy coaches to become WRS Level I certified and supported some of those staff with further development to become Fundations Facilitators and Presenters. Over time, Fundations-trained school and district-based staff grew to take on the responsibilities for training and coaching new staff. As of 2014-2015, the district had three Fundations Presenters, who can conduct Fundations workshops for Levels K, 1, and 2, as well as the Intervention workshop. Having this internal capacity to provide ongoing training and support contributes to the sustainability of the program.

Implementation Timeline

In this profile, the timeline of Fundations implementation activities is organized by Stages of Implementation and addressed by school year.

Exploration Stage. The first stage of the decision making process is known as Exploration. The Exploration Stage for a new literacy program in the School District of Indian River County began in 2009-2010. During this period, the district's Implementation Team explored programs that would fulfill its needs. The team selected Fundations because it met the requirement of a program with demonstrated evidence of improving student outcomes, thoroughly addressed the content area that matched students' needs, and was designed to fit within an RTI framework, which would allow the schools to use the program in Tier 1 (core instruction) and Tier 2 (strategic intervention).

Installation Stage. The following school year, 2010-2011, the district entered the Installation stage of Fundations implementation. They used a voluntary application process that had previously been used for other district-wide initiatives to select three pilot schools to use Fundations. This allowed the district to test the current readiness and capacity of the schools to adopt the new program at Tier 1 (core instruction) and Tier 2 (early intervention). The application process required schools to provide evidence that their area of need aligned with the district's focus for the new program, and information on how they would support the program. The process made it transparent to schools that the district was not forcing the program on them, and required schools to more carefully reflect on their readiness to implement the program. The Learning Alliance raised funds to support extensive professional development for staff from the three pilot schools to learn about the rationale and use of the Fundations program from Wilson Language Training.

Initial Implementation Stage. During the 2010-2011 school year, the district moved into the Initial Implementation stage. In this stage of implementation, staff from the district and The Learning Alliance partnered with WLT to implement Fundations. This process helped set up the professional supports for first generation teachers and coaches and established conditions to foster staff and student success before making the determination of what it would take to implement Fundations with fidelity. It also built confidence among school and district staff and The Learning Alliance team members that Fundations was the right match for SDIRC, and that SDIRC had the capacity, support, and ability to use the program with fidelity. The Implementation Team decided to continue to build capacity one cohort of schools at a time until 100% of elementary schools were using Fundations.

The following school year, 2011-2012, the district continued in the Initial Implementation stage by scaling up the use of the Fundations program to five additional elementary schools so that more than half of the 13 elementary schools in the county were now using the Fundations program.

In 2012-2013, due to the positive response from teachers, school staff, families, and community members, The Learning Alliance and district supported three more schools in adopting Fundations.

Full Implementation Stage. The Fundations program achieved Full Implementation across the district in the 2013-2014 school year. This included the remaining two elementary schools in the district, both magnet schools, which received the necessary training, coaching, and support to fully adopt the program. According to the Implementation Team, Fundations was not initially implemented in these magnet schools because the team believed the program was not needed there. However, once implementation in the other schools began, it became evident that Fundations would benefit *all* students in the district by providing them with the foundational skills essential for reading.

The Learning Alliance continues to partner with the district. However, many of the school-based literacy coaches are now the primary resource for supporting teachers in the use of Fundations because many are certified Fundations Facilitators who are also WRS Level I certified. The WRS Level I Certification provides the literacy coaches with a higher level of training in word study and prepares them to seek Fundations Presenter Certification. They indicated that WRS Level I training made them a stronger coach overall, and they recommended that all literacy coaches receive WRS Level I Certification prior to Fundations implementation.

To review the key activities at the district level in each year and stage of implementation, see Table 4, which focuses primarily on district implementation and rollout of Fundations, particularly training of staff in a manner to build internal capacity.

> *"By having in-depth training in Fundations from Wilson Language Training, I have felt empowered to work side-by-side with a teacher and have direct impact on students' knowledge. Fundations coaching has given me a direct and explicit way to support a teacher to move students to the next Unit, concept, or place in spelling and reading. I am a firm believer that the Fundations program is a gateway to explicit instructional coaching for teachers. It provides both coach, teachers, and parents a clear lens into a student's reading and spelling ability. Professionally this program has grown my area of expertise, as well as my coaching abilities with teachers instructionally. Thank you to Wilson for ALL your support.*
>
> Kimberly Smith, Literacy Coach
> Indian River Academy

Table 4: District-wide Implementation Timeline

|	
2009-2010	**Exploration**
	• The Learning Alliance (L.A.) explored several programs, including Fundations.
	• L.A. and WLT visited a WIN school in Brooklyn, NY, that had been successfully implementing Fundations.
	• L.A. collected information on Fundations and met with WLT staff to review program and implementation.
	• L.A. recommended the adoption of Fundations to the district.
	• L.A., in collaboration with the district, decided to pilot Fundations in 3 schools.
2010-2011	**Installation**
	• L.A. raised funds to partner with the district to begin Fundations implementation in the 3 pilot schools.
	• L.A. paid for the cost of materials, training, and coaching.
	• WLT provided the district with a Fundations Implementation Plan for the initial year.
	• Over the summer, pilot schools applied and were selected via an application process to implement Fundations Levels K & 1 at Tiers 1 & 2 (Cohort 1).
	Initial Implementation
	• L.A. continued to provide funding for materials, training, and coaching.
	• WLT provided WRS Level I Certification training to selected staff.
	• WLT conducted Fundations workshops (Levels K & 1 and Intervention); attendance mandatory for staff at the 3 schools.
	• L.A. began to build school and district-level capacity to support schools implementing Fundations by offering technical assistance and resources.
	• WLT provided 8 on-site coaching visits to each participating school, with follow-up support provided by L.A. staff.
2011-2012	• L.A. continued to partner with the district to support Fundations implementation.
	• WLT provided a "Next Step Plan" to direct the scale-up of the implementation of Fundations.
	• 5 additional schools implemented Fundations Levels K & 1 at Tiers 1 & 2 (Cohort 2).
	• Title I funding and financial support from L.A. was used to purchase materials.
	• L.A. continued to fund training and coaching.
	• 3 returning schools began implementing Fundations Level 2 program at Tiers 1 & 2.
	• WLT conducted Fundations workshops (Levels K, 1, 2, and Intervention); attendance mandatory for staff in participating schools.
	• WLT provided WRS Level I Certification training to another cohort of school/district staff in order to continue to build capacity to support schools implementing Fundations.
	• WLT provided WRS Level II Certification training to selected district staff.
	• WLT provided Fundations Facilitator Certification training (Levels K and 1) to District Reading Coaches.
	• WLT provided on-site coaching visits to participating schools, with follow-up support from L.A. staff.

2012-2013	• L.A. continued to partner with the district to support Fundations implementation. • WLT provided another Next Step Plan to guide further expansion of Fundations in the district. • WLT provided Fundations Presenter Certification training for Levels K, 1, and 2 of the program and Intervention support to selected district staff. • 3 additional schools selected to implement Levels K & 1 at Tiers 1 & 2 (Cohort 3). • 5 returning schools began to implement Level 2 at Tiers 1 & 2. • For returning schools, financial responsibility for the purchase of student consumable materials shifted from the district and L.A. to the schools. • The District Fundations Presenters conducted Fundations workshops for Levels K, 1, & 2; attendance mandatory. • L.A. funded the cost of the Presenter's time when workshops were conducted during non-school time. The district funded teacher attendance at workshops during non-school time. • WLT provided Fundations Facilitator Certification training, Level 2, to District Reading Coaches. • WLT provided on-site coaching visits to participating schools, with follow-up support from L.A. staff.
	Full Implementation
2013-2014	• L.A. continued to partner with the district to support Fundations implementation. • WLT provided a final Next Step Plan to guide full implementation of Fundations in the district. • 2 magnet schools implemented Levels K & 1 at Tiers 1 & 2 (Cohort 4). • All 11 elementary schools continued the implementation of Levels K, 1, and 2 at Tiers 1 & 2. • District Presenters conducted all Fundations workshops (Levels K, 1, & 2 and Intervention/Progress Monitoring). • All coaching and support provided by district's literacy coaches.

Sustaining Full Implementation

In the summer of 2014, the SDIRC Implementation Team systematically reviewed and discussed each school and determined their stages of implementation during the upcoming school year. While the district as a whole had reached the Full Implementation stage of Fundations implementation, the team concluded that individual schools in the district were in the Initial Implementation or Full Implementation stage, with some variability within those stages. To assess reasons for the variability, the team identified specific strengths and challenges faced in each school that that may have affected their use of Fundations with fidelity.

The Implementation Team learned that it is not just time that affects a school's ability to fully implement a program. There are other variables at work, such as the arrival of new teachers and staff at a school, or other external factors such as changes in data collection methods or district/state mandates. Each of these variables may shift a school's stage of implementation to an earlier point. This is a typical developmental pathway that schools and districts follow since the external context is always changing and may coincide with changes in the internal context. Nevertheless, because the School District of Indian River County engaged in systematic and intentional planning to create an implementation system that would allow for program sustainability, they were able to maintain the process and practices that they had worked so hard to develop.

The "How": Implementation Drivers
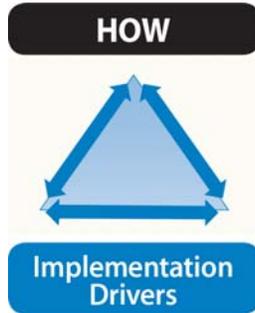
Implementation "Drivers" are key elements of capacity and infrastructure that influence a program's success. The components are integrated and compensatory. This means they work together, and that a weakness in one component can be made for with strengths in the others (NIRN, 2013).

SDIRC's efforts to implement Fundations was guided by the Implementation Drivers that help facilitate an organization's ability to achieve its intended outcomes:

- ✓ **Staff Competency Drivers**: Develop, improve, and sustain educators' competence and confidence to implement effective educational practices and supports.

- ✓ **Organization Drivers**: Ensure sustainability and improvement at the organization and systems level.

- ✓ **Leadership Drivers**: Guide leaders to use the right leadership strategies for the situation (NIRN, 2013).

Staff Competency Drivers

From the time that Fundations was adopted by the district, The Learning Alliance and Wilson Language Training were committed to building internal school and district capacity to implement and sustain the program independently in the future. In order to do that, attention to building and aligning the coaching system was essential.

> *"The school's literacy coaches have been a key to sustainability. They worked diligently to complete WRS Level I Certification and Fundations Facilitator Certification so they would have deep knowledge about reading and the Wilson programs. They were eager to learn how to coach, lead study groups, and support teachers between visits. They celebrated results—whether it was gains in student achievement or in a teacher improving their practice."*
>
> Connie Steigerwald, Literacy Specialist
> Wilson Language Training

In the first years of implementation, coaching was provided by a Wilson Literacy Specialist, who also provided coaching when schools began to implement Fundations in a new grade level.

The district's literacy coaches were required to go through training to become certified Fundations Facilitators. Once they became certified in a specific Level, they provided the coaching and support to supplement the weekly support offered by The Learning Alliance.

In the second year of implementation, The Learning Alliance and district arranged for an open Q&A about Fundations, facilitating a discussion between teachers from the implementing schools and other SDIRC schools with similar demographics. This helped reduce teacher resistance, and teachers became a resource to each other. Visits to schools and classrooms were arranged—teachers observed Fundations in the grade below theirs to become familiar with how and what was being taught.

Organization Drivers

In order to scale up use of the Fundations program to all schools in the district, it was important to build a systematic process for making decisions, collecting data, and aligning supports (fiscal and personnel) within and across each school, and understanding the stage of implementation for each school.

Below are some examples of district-wide systems-change activities that occurred to help build a common measurement system, common reporting and communication protocols, and professional learning communities.

✓ Following Wilson's model, literacy coaches took the lead on partnering with teachers and the district's Implementation Team to review results of the Fundations Unit Tests by grade level. This review guided the determination of where to target their support.

✓ Schools administered DIBELS assessments and provided this data to The Learning Alliance for analysis and monitoring of student improvement.

✓ The district recognized a need for more efficient and easy-to-access data systems. Since all the schools were using a common literacy program and common assessments, the district was able to hire a new Data Manager, who is leading the effort to identify methods for capturing and sharing data across the district.

Leadership Drivers

Under the leadership of Superintendent Fran Adams, district staff partnered with The Learning Alliance and Wilson Language Training, keeping them informed of decisions made, data or information needed, and additional supports needed. They worked together around three shared goals:

1) improving literacy outcomes for all students;
2) creating a sustainable system so that future generations of students can benefit; and
3) creating internal capacity and leadership across the district to implement Fundations with fidelity.

As a result, strong ties were developed with many entities across the county. For example, in 2012, volunteers working in SDIRC were provided the opportunity to visit the K classes and learn some of the skills used in Fundations, such as building words and tapping so they could provide additional practice for students. The district also established a partnership with a local state college to have college students tutoring in a high-priority school. They have received some training to support Fundations. This approach to shared leadership allowed for flexible and more efficient use of resources, and the opportunity to sustain this work.

The "How": Improvement Cycles

Improvement Cycles are purposeful processes of initiating and managing changes in education practices, school and district functions, and state supports for districts. Improvement cycles may be used to solve smaller challenges that may impact day-to-day activities through larger system challenges in which changes and modifications may be made over time (NIRN, 2013).

Examples of how SDIRC's Implementation Team made decisions systematically and intentionally to improve processes or plans are shared throughout this document. Key points in the process include using data to make decisions, partnering with local organizations and school teams, and progressively scaling up Fundations to all schools in the county.

The Implementation Team used the following type of improvement cycles in their efforts to build and sustain implementation capacity to use Fundations with fidelity.

1) <u>Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle</u>: The district used this process for rapid problem-solving issues.

2) <u>Usability Testing</u>: The district started with a few teachers, and evaluated the amount of resources and supports needed before scaling up implementation.

3) <u>Transformation Zone</u>: The district systematically started with a few schools, added a manageable number of schools each year, and eventually engaged in a district-wide approach to maintain positive outcomes for students.

4) <u>Policy to Practice Feedback/Feed-forward Loops</u>: The district created a protocol requiring all schools to use the same assessments, and provided the necessary supports to achieve efficient data collection and use, and access to a common data platform.

Summary of Effective Implementation Methods

By investing in an implementation infrastructure (i.e., implementation drivers), SDIRC has created a culture of trial and learning, with all members of the community sharing accountability in improving literacy for all students. By applying an implementation system (i.e., communication protocols, Implementation Teams at district and building levels), the district was able to continue to improve its support of staff and sustain best practices. Below are some key lessons the Implementation Team shared for scaling up and sustaining Fundations, and which they plan to use to implement evidence-based practices in the future.

- **Create strong community partnerships**. Some students from the local state college were tutoring in a high-priority school, so The Learning Alliance invited these volunteers to support the kindergarten classes at SDIRC. They received some training to help students practice select skills taught in Fundations, such as building words and tapping.

- **Start slow and gradually scale up based on results**. Bring on schools incrementally based on being able to adequately support initial implementation and feedback from stakeholders.

- **Provide teachers time to reflect and build on their learning**. At grade-level meetings time was provided to preview the upcoming Fundations Unit to share tips and review activities. Created a document "Looking Ahead" for each Unit.

- **Plan for program sustainability**. As schools were being supported by The Learning Alliance and WLT staff, school-based staff were receiving professional development and working toward certification to facilitate and coach Fundations as well as conduct workshops allowing them to eventually take over this work and become self-sustaining.

- **Support high-quality and sufficient professional development**. In the case of Fundations, have selected staff that will support Fundations become WRS Level I certified, if feasible, to help them become stronger coaches.

- **Support development of foundational skills for all students**. Don't make assumptions that schools do not need the new program, as all students need strong foundational reading skills.

- **Foster the development of a common language among staff**. Using Fundations in all schools has created a common language among all staff. Indian River schools are seeing this common language spread to other subjects. For example, math teachers are embedding some practices from Fundations into their lessons, such as emphasizing the metacognitive practice of asking students "the why."

- **Use a consistent program across district schools**. This has made it easier for students to transition to new schools within the district.

Improved Student Outcomes

The School District of Indian River County in Vero Beach, Florida, partnered with The Learning Alliance and Wilson Language Training to implement Fundations in all of the district's elementary schools. In these locations, Fundations was implemented as the foundational skills component of the total literacy plan. To gauge the effect of Fundations on student outcomes, the school district undertook an impact study, examining results from 11 of 13 elementary schools (Cohort 4 schools were not included in the study). They contrasted the gains in literacy skills made by kindergarten and first-grade students using Fundations to the gains made by kindergarten and first-grade students prior to the implementation of Fundations.

A key finding was that, on average, kindergarten and first-grade students made greater gains in foundational literacy skills predictive of future reading success when Fundations was being used as the foundational skills program. Specifically:

> On average, kindergarten and first-grade students made greater gains in foundational literacy skills predictive of future reading success when Fundations was being used as the foundational skills program.

- ✓ Kindergarten students who received Fundations made larger gains than comparison students in phonemic awareness, the ability to identify individual sound units within a spoken word, a requisite skill for learning phonics and decoding.

- ✓ Kindergarten English language learners who received Fundations made larger gains in phonemic awareness than did English language learners who did not receive Fundations.

- ✓ First-grade students who received Fundations made larger gains than comparison students in oral reading fluency, a student's ability to accurately and quickly read text. Fluent reading supports reading comprehension and is highly predicitve of future reading success.

- ✓ First-grade English language learners also made larger gains in oral reading fluency than did English language learners who did not receive Fundations instruction.

Measuring Student Gains

Growth in foundational reading skills was assessed using the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). DIBELS is a screening tool that measures reading skills that are most predictive of future reading success; the skills measured and the specific tests used to assess these skills change as a student progress from the beginning to the end of the school year and from grade to grade. DIBELS is commonly used to inform the intensity of instruction provided to support reading acquisition. Students who score at or above benchmark on a DIBELS test have a level of proficiency in the domain being tested that is predictive of future reading success.

Addressing the needs of kindergarten students

Student outcome data from a total of 3,115 kindergarten students were included in this impact study. Of these students, 1,584 attended kindergarten prior to the implementation of Fundations and received a different program for foundational literacy skills (i.e., instruction as usual). The remaining 1,700 kindergarten students attended the 11 schools after the adoption of Fundations and received foundational literacy skills instruction using Fundations.

Students' gains in phonological awareness were measured from the beginning to the middle of the school year using the DIBELS First Sound Fluency (FSF) assessment. The DIBELS Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) assessment was used to track student growth in phonological awareness from the middle to end of the school year.

> **First Sound Fluency (FSF)** is defined as one's ability to isolate the first sounds in a word. It is an important phonemic awareness skill, which is highly related to reading acquisition and reading achievement.

As depicted in Figure 3, kindergarten students who received Fundations instruction made larger gains in the DIBELS FSF measure from the beginning of the school year (BOY) to the middle of the year (MOY). On average, students receiving Fundations gained 16 points, whereas students who did not receive Fundations gained 12 points. In addition, while the average FSF score for both groups was above benchmark at the beginning of the year, students using Fundations were able to maintain benchmark during the year. By the middle of the year, the average FSF score of students who received Fundations instruction was still above benchmark, whereas the average FSF score of students who did not receive Fundations instruction fell below benchmark.

> **Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF)** is a measure that assesses phonemic awareness skills. It is believed to be essential for mapping speech to print.

As illustrated in Figure 4, students who received instruction using Fundations also made larger gains in the DIBELS Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF) measure from the middle to end of the school year (EOY), gaining on average 16 points. In contrast, students who did not receive Fundations instruction gained only 8 points on average.

Figure 3. Kindergarten
First Sound Fluency
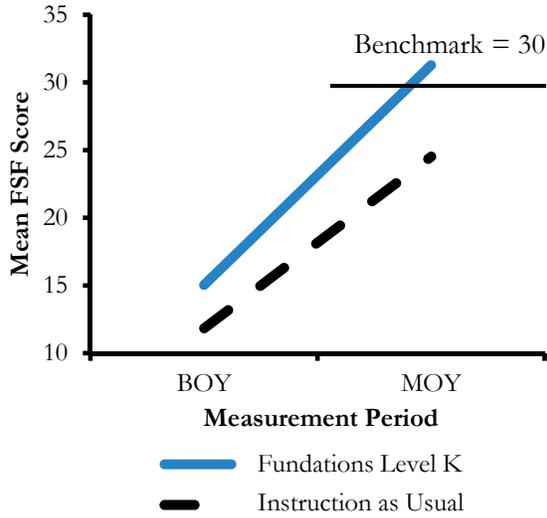
Figure 4. Kindergarten
Phoneme Segmenation Fluency
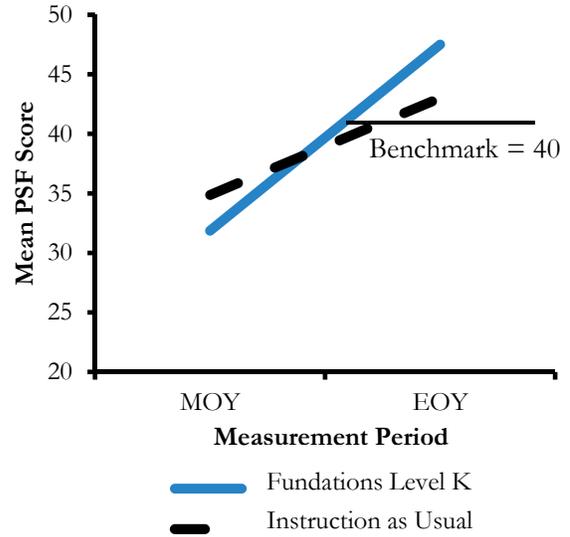
Highlights

✓ Teachers and staff that implement Fundations with fidelity (as intended) can expect improvement in both First Sound Fluency and Phoneme Segmentation Fluency for Kindergartners.

✓ These above-benchmark scores were maintained across the school year for students who used Fundations.

Addressing the needs of first-grade students

Student outcomes data from 2,720 first-grade students were also included in the impact study. Of these students, 1,460 attended first grade prior to the adoption of Fundations and received a different program for foundational literacy skills. The remaining 1,260 first-grade students attended the 11 schools after the implementation of Fundations and received foundational literacy skills instruction using Fundations.

Figure 5. 1st Grade ORF

Benchmark = 47 words per minute

— Fundations Level 1
▬ ▬ Instruction as Usual

Oral reading fluency (ORF) is a student's ability to quickly read text. It supports reading comprehension and is highly predictive of future reading success.

Students' gains in oral reading fluency were measured from the middle to the end of the school year using the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) assessment. As depicted in Figure 5, first-grade students who received Fundations instruction made larger gains from the middle to the end of the school year in the number of words they correctly read on the DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) measure. Compared to the middle of the year, Fundations students read, on average, 23 more words correctly at the end of the year. In contrast, students who did not receive Fundations only read 18 additional words correctly.

Highlights

✓ First-grade students who received Fundations made greater gains in oral reading fluency than students receiving instruction as usual.

✓ Fundations students read, on average, 23 more words correctly at the end of the year.
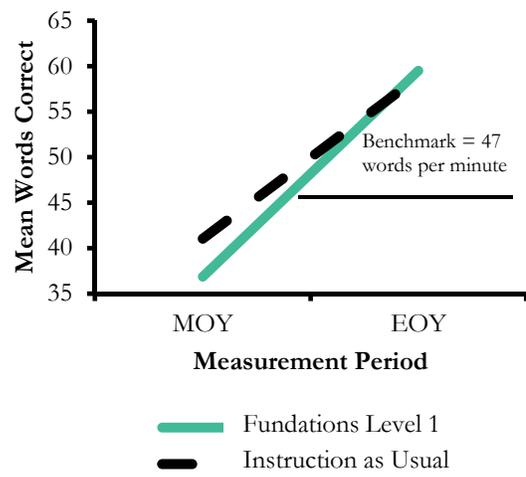
Addressing the needs of English language learners

The School District of Indian River County provides instruction to ELL students, allowing for a contrast to be made between the gains in literacy skills obtained by ELL students who did and did not receive Fundations instruction.

In kindergarten, there were 93 ELL students who did not receive Fundations instruction and 301 ELL students who did. As illustrated in Figure 6, ELL students who received Fundations instruction made greater gains in FSF relative to ELL students who received instruction as usual. ELL students who received Fundations instruction gained 19 points from the beginning to the middle of the year. In contrast, students who did not receive Fundations instruction gained 9 points.

In first grade, there were 31 ELL students who did not receive Fundations instruction and 265 who did. As depicted in Figure 7, ELL students who received Fundations instruction made greater gains from the middle to the end of the year in the numbers of words they could correctly read on the DIBELS ORF measure. On average, Fundations students correctly read an additional 23 words at the end of the year and achieved the end-of-year benchmark. In contrast, students who did not receive Fundations only read an additional 15 words correctly and did not reach the benchmark.

Highlights

- ✓ Kindergarten ELL students who received Fundations instruction made greater gains in first sound fluency than students receiving instruction as usual.

- ✓ First-grade ELL students who received Fundations made greater gains in the oral reading fluency than students receiving instruction as usual.

- ✓ First-grade ELL students who received Fundations achieved benchmark, whereas comparison students did not.
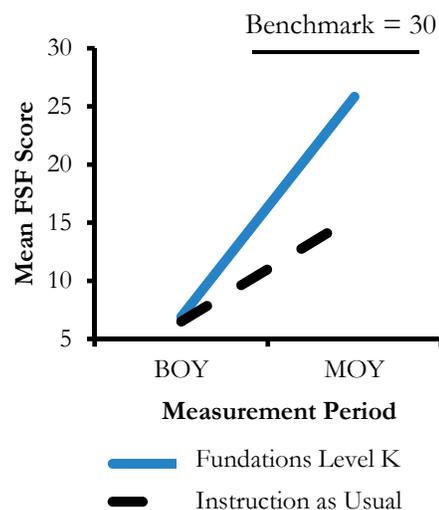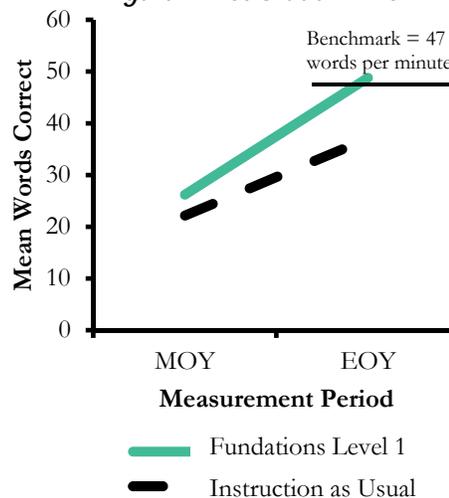
Figure 6. ELL Kindergarten FSF

Legend:
Fundations Level K
Instruction as Usual

Figure 7. 1st Grade ELL ORF

Legend:
Fundations Level 1
Instruction as Usual

Summary of Key Findings

Collectively, the student outcomes data confirm that the gains that SDIRC has achieved in its implementation of the Fundations program using the principles of implementation science are improving the ability of their students to read. Furthermore, greater numbers of kindergarten and first-grade students in the district closed the gap and achieved developmentally appropriate levels of reading when Fundations was being implemented.

Conclusions

This site profile provides some highlights of one district's journey combining best practices for literacy instruction with best practices from implementation science. The use of the Active Implementation Frameworks to deliver Fundations with high fidelity has resulted in positive outcomes for students. It has also resulted in a common language of instruction and common understanding of the foundational literacy skills across the district. Since SDIRC has systematically developed the infrastructure necessary for continued leadership and built staff confidence and competence in the use of Fundations, it increases the likelihood that this program will be sustainable so that future generations of students may also benefit.

References and Related Resources

Duda, M., Penfold, A., Wernikoff, L., & Wilson, B. (2014). *Make "it" happen: Using implementation science with Wilson programs.* Oxford, MA: Wilson Language Training Corp.

National Implementation Research Network (NIRN). (2013). *Active implementation frameworks.* Chapel Hill, NC: Author. Retrieved from: http://implementation.fpg.unc.edu/

Wilson, B.A. (2009). *Wilson Just Words.* Oxford, MA: Wilson Language Training Corp.

Wilson, B.A. (2012). *Fundations* (2nd ed.)*.* Oxford, MA: Wilson Language Training Corp.

Wilson Language Training. (2014a). *Fundations overview and studies of program effectiveness.* Oxford, MA: Author.

Wilson Language Training. (2014b). *Just Words overview and studies of program effectiveness.* Oxford, MA: Author.

Wilson Language Training. (2014d). *WRS program information.* Oxford, MA: Author.

For more information about Wilson Language Training programs go to: www.wilsonlanguage.com.

For more information about the Wilson Implementation Network, please contact Paul Tortolani: PTortolani@wilsonlanguage.com.

To learn more about Indian River County School District and the schools they serve go to: https://www.indianriverschools.org/

To learn more about The Learning Alliance: http://www.thelearningalliance.org/

For a copy of the Wilson Implementation Profile for Salisbury Elementary School go to: http://www.wilsonlanguage.com/PDF/Wilson_Implementation_Network_Site_Profile.pdf

For more information about Implementation Science go to www.nirn.fpg.edu.

Acknowledgements

Wilson Language Training wishes to thank Superintendent Dr. Fran Adams and the dedicated staff at the School District of Indian River County and The Learning Alliance, who reflected on the implementation process in these schools and shared their experiences. We appreciate their support in developing this profile and for their commitment to the students and families they serve.

We also wish to recognize and express our appreciation to the following individuals who co-authored this report:

Michelle Duda, Ph.D., BCBA-D, Founder and President, Implementation Scientists, LLC, and Scientist, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, who shared her tremendous knowledge in the field of implementation science by authoring the sections of this report describing implementation science and its application in the School District of Indian River County.

Linda Wernikoff, Senior Education Consultant, Wilson Language Training, whose comprehensive understanding of school systems and implementation of WLT's programs informed her writing about the Wilson Implementation Network and the application of implementation science in the School District of Indian River County.

Dr. Tim Odegard, Director of Research and Evaluation, Wilson Language Training, who drew upon his expertise in scientific research to analyze and interpret the data from each of the schools in the School District of Indian River County and author the student outcomes section of this report.

Preferred citation:

Wilson Language Training. (2015). *WIN district profile: School District of Indian River County.* Oxford, MA: Author.

*Our mission
is to provide quality professional learning
and ongoing support so that educators
have the skills and tools they need
to help their students become fluent,
independent readers.*

Wilson works.