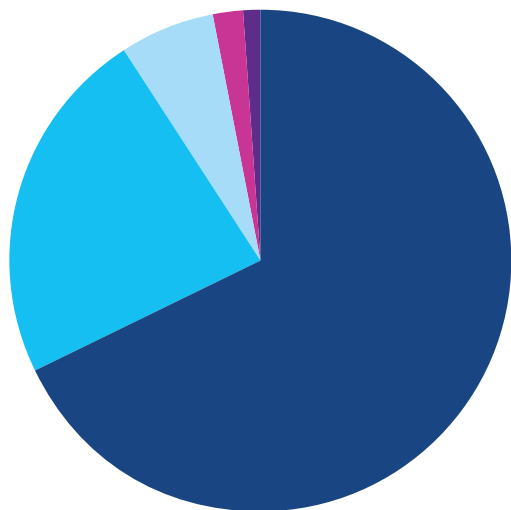


Boosting Emergent and Beginning Readers with Foundations A-Z

Foundations A-Z is a flexible, K-5 foundational skills curriculum designed to teach elementary students essential literacy skills. Teachers use this all-inclusive supplemental program with lesson plans, customizable activities and downloadable resources to improve their students' reading abilities.

Collaboratory Preparatory Academy

Tampa, FL Charter School
 Grades: K-8
 Enrollment: 117



Student Diversity

African American	68.4%
Hispanic/Latino	23.1%
White	6%
Two or more races	1.7%
Asian/Pacific Islander	0.9%

The Challenge

Last year, Jordan Snyder taught 1st grade at Collaboratory Prep, a small charter school in Tampa, FL. Many of the school's 80-100 students performed at least one, sometimes two or three grades below grade level.

The school's teachers were constantly looking for new programs to help catch the students up. They'd previously tried various methodologies, like working with an existing phonics curriculum and creating different activity stations for students to visit. For example, they had already been using Reading A-Z and Raz-Plus. The principal, Heather Jenkins, asked Jordan whether she'd be willing to pilot a new program from Learning A-Z called Foundations A-Z.

“And my students really liked it. I saw a huge difference in my students and [they] asked — actually semi-begged — to continue it because of their large gains. They were excited about reading.”

“We jumped on board with the pilot,” Jordan said. “And my students really liked it. I saw a huge difference in my students and [they] asked — actually semi-begged — to continue it because of their large gains. They were excited about reading.”

The Process

Jordan used the program in her classroom to teach foundational reading skills and build quality phonemic awareness. “My students really struggled with digraphs and vowel digraphs and diphthongs,” she said.

Because the program enables teachers to adjust based on their students' individual needs, Foundations A-Z allowed Jordan to introduce and have her students practice skills in various

ways, including whole group activities and tiered interventions. Teachers identifying students with challenges at different levels can group them into three tiers of intervention.

Jordan used Foundations A-Z for teaching phonics, pairing it with Raz-Plus to help grow her students' comprehension skills. While each program helps level up students' skills with differentiated instruction, including customizable small-group activities and lessons, independent practice, self-paced learning, and more, the two programs make a powerful duo when used together.

"One thing I like about Foundations A-Z is that it encouraged me to change my teaching approach," said Jordan. "Before I used this program, I stuck with one skill and waited until all my students mastered the skill. But Foundations A-Z recommended spending less time on one skill and moving to another — even if the first skill wasn't completely mastered — because the program builds in the ongoing review. Students could use many different activities, like matching letter blends to pictures to speaking a word into a microphone and playing it back, to apply and practice their skills".

Weekly Schedule

Monday
Whole Group with Foundations A-Z lesson (15 min)
Tuesday
Independent Reading in Raz-Plus (20 min)
Wednesday
Small group mini-lessons with Foundations A-Z (15 min each)
Thursday
Independent Reading in Raz-Plus (20 min)
Friday
Small group mini-lessons with Foundations A-Z (15 min each)

The Breakdown

Foundations A-Z is a supplemental foundational skills solution that includes units broken down into modules and daily lessons, as well as built-in professional development. Each lesson explains the skill it's teaching and offers teachers the flexibility to print, present or digitally assign additional materials.

The lesson plans include explicit instruction via step-by-step breakdowns for each section and estimates on how long teachers can expect to spend per section. And each lesson includes the standards and objectives it addresses.

The professional development section includes short coaching videos, audio, and articles with best practices and industry research on topics associated with teaching foundational reading skills to help students become more confident, fluent readers and writers.

Time savings

Teachers constantly face the challenge of maximizing their minimal time. Because it's teacher-centered, Foundations A-Z offers significant time savings by making planning easier. It includes daily lesson plans, student texts and videos, and games. The student dashboard is visible immediately upon login, so teachers can quickly check on their students' progress at any time.

"In my planner for teaching phonics, instead of detailing everything I needed to cover," Jordan said, "all I had to write with Foundations A-Z was 'module one, lesson five,' and that's it, because the program includes detailed lesson plans. I would read through the lesson to familiarize myself with the skills, but that's still a 45 to 60-minute time savings right there because I knew exactly what I'd be doing."

Another benefit Foundations A-Z provides is the ease with which teachers can find specific skills they want to teach or have their students revisit. "If you have a small group that needed to work on blends, for example, you can search the program, and it will pull that lesson or other resources like games, videos and books, up for you," said Jordan. "I really liked that feature — and it's not something you can do with other programs."

“If you have a small group that needed to work on blends, for example, you can search the program, and it will pull that lesson or other resources like games, videos and books, up for you,” said Jordan. “I really liked that feature — and it’s not something you can do with other programs.”

As Jordan began the pilot with her students, she stayed closely connected with Learning A-Z. “I asked for help several times when using Foundations A-Z,” said Jordan. “I had questions about student accounts or how to do something specific, and I got answers to my questions almost instantaneously. Learning A-Z was in constant communication with us, and I felt I had real support through the partnership — which isn’t something other programs offer. With Foundations A-Z, we aren’t just another subscriber.”

What the students loved

During this pilot, Jordan says the students liked the speaking element. “They loved speaking into the microphone and hearing themselves,” she said. She first needed to teach the students proper procedures but said they learned better when they could hear what they were doing wrong and doing right.

Foundations A-Z won’t allow students to “skate by” while working through online activities. When students answer incorrectly, the program gives them immediate feedback and additional practice and asks them to redo the activity to verify they truly understand the topic.

The program built students’ confidence levels, helping their academic learning and behavior.

“I had a student who started the year performing at a pre-K level. She made huge leaps and progress by the end of the year,” said Jordan. “To see students go from not knowing the alphabet to learning all the letters and consonant and vowel sounds was a big deal.”

Students working with Foundations A-Z saw increased confidence levels and felt encouraged to keep trying, even when they struggled with certain concepts. They appreciated its interactivity which helped them make connections between letters and sounds.

“Foundations A-Z took the work out and did the hard stuff for us,” Jordan said. “It was easy because everything is planned out so well, which allowed me to focus on the actual teaching part — and that’s half the battle right there.”

Jordan also recognized the benefit of using Raz-Plus in concert with Foundations A-Z. “Raz-Plus focuses on comprehension skills while Foundations A-Z develops those foundational reading skills. And if you can’t read well, you can’t understand the story. So I used Foundations A-Z to teach my students how to read the words, and then we used Raz-Plus in small groups to practice comprehension. You need both programs — you really can’t have just one.”

How Foundations A-Z works

Foundations A-Z, built on the Science of Reading, includes a research-based scope & sequence for grades K-5 and standards-driven lesson plans organized into three parts: teaching, guided practice and independent practice. The program also has opportunities for reteaching and enrichment.

The program incorporates knowledge building into the units and modules down to the lesson level. Each lesson also includes tips to help teachers differentiate instruction for ELL students, and embedded throughout the curriculum are social-emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching tips.

Learn more by visiting [FoundationsA-Z.com](https://www.foundationsa-z.com)