



The Susan and Dom Telesco Center for Creative Education

...transforming teaching and learning through creativity and the arts

The Foundations School **Curriculum Guide**

Mission

The Foundations School's mission is to prepare students for future academic success and lifelong learning by cultivating compassionate, creative, problem solvers and leaders through research-informed, innovative education.

Vision

TFS envisions a future in which a child's zip code no longer predicts their academic success, where learning gaps are prevented rather than remediated, and where elementary schools serve as engines of equity, innovation, and evidence-based practice-ensuring every student leaves elementary school prepared to thrive.

Student Creed

"I am creative and curious.

I will try my best, even when it's hard.

I learn from my mistakes and never give up.

I am honest, even when no one is watching.

I ask for help when I need it.

*I treat everyone with kindness and respect.
I share gratitude and say, 'thank you' often."*

School Philosophy

We believe...

...that elementary education is the most powerful opportunity to shape a child's academic trajectory and life outcomes. When students receive strong instruction early, grounded in evidence, creativity, and care, they are far more likely to thrive academically and socially throughout their lives.

...that all children are capable of high levels of learning when instruction is developmentally appropriate, intellectually rigorous, and responsive to individual needs. We acknowledge that not every student will achieve the same *academic outcomes* due to significant developmental, cognitive, or learning differences, but every student can make meaningful growth and reach their own potential with the right supports. Learning should be active, joyful, and purposeful, engaging students as thinkers, problem solvers, and collaborators.

...that as a laboratory school, The Foundations School is committed to the continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Classroom teachers are central to this work, serving not only as instructors but as contributors to research and innovation. We intentionally study what works, refine practice based on data and observation, and share effective models that can strengthen elementary education more broadly.

...that strong foundations in literacy, mathematics, and critical thinking are essential, and that the arts and creativity, and real-world problem solving are not supplements, but integral to deep learning. Academic excellence and whole-child development are inseparable.

...that schools should prepare students not only for future academic success, but for responsible participation in their communities. Through compassion, curiosity, and leadership, students learn that their education empowers them to contribute meaningfully to their world.

Purpose of this Guide

TFS's curriculum team has carefully vetted and selected research-based curriculum to be the foundational resources, or blueprints, we use to guide us when planning for student learning. Our teachers use diagnostic assessment data to carefully plan learning goals in every classroom, utilizing and adapting these exemplary resources as they go. This guide serves as an overview of curricula available at our school. As long as there is a variety of children, with various needs, and various ways of knowing, TFS will continue to use a variety of tools, resources, and methods founded in research and evidenced-based practice to BEST meet their learning needs.

Standards

All curricula, instructional units, and individual lessons are aligned with Florida State Standards and express clear learning goals for our students. TFS seeks to bring these standards to life with our carefully planned lesson sequences, engaging content, and meaningful learning activities. The Foundation School uses the new Florida B.E.S.T. standards for English Language Arts (ELA) and math, Florida's CPALMS for social studies, the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) for science, and the National Core Art Standards for the Arts.

Curricula

Literacy.

TFS at the Center for Creative Education fully recognizes the five pillars of early literacy described in the National Reading Panel's report often referred to as "The Science of Reading". These pillars, Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension are evident in all our curricula, instructional methodologies, and assessments.

Our strength and demonstrated success in teaching reading lies in our use of a variety of reading/language arts curricula – WHAT is taught. Students have varying learning needs and styles, and our teachers and directors have the autonomy and flexibility to utilize the most appropriate curriculum based on the students' needs and diagnostic results. No single curriculum could possibly meet the needs of every student in every class every year. Conversely, to some degree, every curriculum addresses some if not all five pillars. TFS espouses the research embodied in "The Science of Reading" and meets those five pillars by using the combination of: Wilson

Foundations, Fountas and Pinnell Balanced Literacy, Leveled Literacy Intervention, and Sound Sensible/S.P.I.R.E., depending on the students' needs and learning styles.

Fountas & Pinnell Classroom™, is a balanced literacy approach that incorporates guiding reading, interactive read-aloud, shared reading, writing, phonics and word study, and is our main literacy curriculum. Using a balanced literacy approach enables teachers to target specific foundational reading skills that emerging and remedial readers need to become proficient. The *Fountas & Pinnell Classroom™* incorporates high-quality texts, including engaging fiction and nonfiction children's literature, student inquiry, and is language-based in that it builds in opportunities for children to talk about what they are learning. These opportunities allow children to “refine their ideas, reveal their understandings and perspectives, and make meaning from texts and experiences.” The curriculum is comprehensive yet not linear, so it is readily conducive to what the teacher and the curriculum team determine the students need. Fountas and Pinnell provide this summary of this “responsive teaching” approach:

“The moment-to-moment instructional decisions that teachers make, based on their observations and analysis of children’s learning behaviors, are honored and supported by Fountas & Pinnell Classroom™. In this system, you teach individual readers, not a program. Consider each lesson blueprint for instruction to best support the learners in the classroom. (Fountas & Pinnell Literacy, 2018)”

The lessons and instructional units easily lend themselves to arts-integration and can be accessed at various entry points for modifying lesson sequences, thus fitting the class's needs and readiness.

Math. TFS's curriculum team has selected HMH *Go Math!*, *Go Math!* is designed using the proven 5E instructional model. The 5E model uses a constructivist approach to learning, which means it focuses on students constructing knowledge from experiences. The [Biological Sciences Curriculum Study \(BSCS\)](#) initially developed the 5E model, or center inquiry practices, in a cycle that provided a process to facilitate learning. The 5E instructional model consists of five phases: engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate. Throughout the process, students work collaboratively to observe, investigate, analyze, and draw conclusions. Meanwhile, the teacher serves as a facilitator, guiding students in the learning process. Its experiential approach to math concepts lends itself well to

incorporate learning through creativity and the arts, with plenty of opportunities for students to master their foundational math skills while advancing higher-level problem-solving and math reasoning.

We also use TouchMath which is a multisensory math strategy that uses touch points (dots) on numbers to help students accurately count and solve basic operations. It provides a structured system that supports students in developing foundational computation skills.

TouchMath is used as an intervention and support strategy in small groups to build foundational skills in addition and subtraction. It is implemented through explicit modeling, guided practice, and independent application, and is gradually faded to promote independence and mental math. The benefits of using TouchMath are:

- Increases accuracy and reduces guessing
- Builds confidence in struggling learners
- Supports students with gaps in number sense or working memory
- Provides a concrete-to-abstract bridge for understanding math concepts
- Enhances engagement through tactile and visual learning

TouchMath is used primarily in Grades K–2 for foundational instruction and in Grades 3–5 as an intervention tool for students who need additional support, including those performing below grade level or receiving targeted interventions.

Science and Social Studies. TFS is using an integrated, thematic, interdisciplinary approach to its science and social studies curricula. This means that we correlate what students are learning in literacy in math with what they are learning during their science and social studies time. Aligning the curriculum with common themes allows for more in-depth, meaningful understanding. Using this cross-curricular approach provides students with the context and connections necessary for retaining and expanding on new information. Further, this immersion helps students build curiosity and excitement for learning. Science and social studies lessons are largely project-based and often hands-on, so students can experience content with authenticity. Science content is derived from *HMH Science* and Social Studies content comes from *Social Studies Weekly*.

IXL Learning. TFS uses IXL in math, language arts, science and social studies in all grade levels. The curricular content readily aligns to Florida standards. The platform provides practice and instruction using an adaptive algorithm to adjust question difficulty based on student performance. IXL's real time diagnostic pinpoints students' grade-level proficiency in just 45 minutes per subject. This platform is used primarily as a curriculum supplement but can also be used for re-teaching or remediation of specific standards.

Social Emotional Learning. TFS uses a combination of resources from the Responsive Classroom approach (developed by the Northeast Foundation for Children), CASEL (The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning), and various best practices for social cognition development to create a caring, meaningful social curriculum. According to CASEL , "Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development," and is defined as "the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions." (online, www.casel.org, 2020) We begin each day with a Morning Meeting in every classroom, to connect with students on a personal level, teach specific social skills, and establish a positive tone for the day. Throughout the school day various aspects of social emotional learning, such as collaboration, development of relationship skills, and self-awareness, are integrated in all classroom activities.

Economic and mental health issues along with delayed emotional and academic development, and increased absenteeism all impact our student's well-being and success. Whether increasing self-control or building empathy for others, our young people need help learning these skills in order to become their best self.

TFS recognizes this opportunity to further support the development of the whole child and has adopted a school-wide, SEL curriculum called PATHS. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning has been reviewing SEL programs since 2003 and has included PATHS in the CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs.

All Assistant Teachers at TFS are trained in the PATHS curriculum and have access to both on and offline resources as needed. This is a vital tool for these staff members, as they are the ones who

monitor the students during less structured times of day (recess, morning care, aftercare, etc.) These are the times social skills and intrapersonal coping skills become tested. Our staff are prepared to respond appropriately with evidence-based and standards-based responses.

Teaching Methods

Another demonstrated success at TFS is our methodologies – HOW something is taught. Visit any class on any day and you will observe these methodologies being used in our classrooms: Guided Instruction, Direct Instruction, Differentiation, Small Group, Student-Centered Learning, Project-Based Learning, Cooperative Learning, Personalized Learning, Global Collaborations, and our signature methodology...Arts Integrated Learning!

Our core methodology is **Arts Integration**. Arts Integration is an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form. Students engage in a creative process which connects an art form and another subject area and meets the evolving objectives of both. Our teachers and teaching artists build authentic connections between core content and arts concepts that are responsive to students' learning needs. Art is deeply intertwined with a child's natural inclination to explore, express, and connect with the world around them. TFS recognizes this and values deeply the role that the arts and creativity should play in teaching and learning.

Teachers are instructed and encouraged to plan **cross-curricular units of studies**. For any single subject to be siloed to exist in and of itself is antithetical to the nature of TFS. It is the goal of TFS for any unit of study to cover as many standards in as many content areas as possible. While explicit skills or content in any subject must still be taught, assessed, and perhaps, re-taught, it is the goal of TFS that students develop associations and relationships among varying content areas.

Another distinguishing methodology at TFS is **Global Collaborations**. CCE recently acquired Blue Planet Global Education, a non-profit which specializes in coaching teachers in using international, classroom-to-classroom collaborations to teach core curriculum and global competence. We use the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals as a guide in connecting students and teachers from different countries so they can learn about global issues together, understand each other's perspectives, and provide solutions for a better future. Students in both countries explore global

sustainability through engaging, collaborative, arts-integrated projects. This methodology helps students become critical thinkers, develop their creativity and empathy, solve problems effectively, work with others, and communicate clearly. Most importantly, it sparks a genuine curiosity about the world and inspires them to make a positive impact.

Differentiated Learning

TFS has constructed three tiers of instruction that are designed as a response to our student's learning needs. These three tiers include Core Instruction, Supplemental Instruction, and Intensive Instruction.

Core Instruction (Tier 1): Fundamental content provided to all students which is print-rich, explicit, and systematic. Corrective feedback is made available to every student. This Core Instruction is designed to build background and content knowledge based on the Florida State Standards.

Supplemental Instruction/Interventions (Tier 2): provides explicit, systematic, small group teacher-led instruction matched to student need, targeting gaps in learning to reduce barriers to students' ability to meet Tier 1 expectations. This level of intervention provides weekly opportunities at minimum to practice the targeted skill(s) and receive corrective feedback. This level of support is in addition to all Tier 1 interventions and is monitored monthly.

Intensive, Individualized Instruction/Interventions (Tier 3): provides explicit, systematic individualized instruction based on student need, one-on-one or very small group instruction with more guided practice. Immediate corrective feedback is available, and progress monitoring may occur more frequently than Tier 2.

Assessments

TFS administers the i-Ready Diagnostic in Reading and Math to all K-5 students every trimester. The *i-Ready Diagnostic* is a test designed to help teachers support each student and create a path of personalized instruction for every learner. The adaptive test adjusts its questions to suit each student's needs. Each item a student sees is individualized based on their answer to the previous question. For example, a series of correct answers will result in slightly harder questions, while a series of incorrect answers will yield slightly easier questions. Think of it like a vision test: the blurry letters and incorrect

answers help the eye doctor find the correct glasses for you. The *i-Ready Diagnostic* gets harder until a student answers an item incorrectly and then narrows in on exactly where a student needs support.

Students in Grades K–3 who receive the i-Ready Early Literacy and Dyslexia Risk Screener are screened three times a year using a combination of the i-Ready Diagnostic for Reading and i-Ready Literacy Tasks. All students receive the Early Literacy Screener and, depending on their performance, some students will also receive the Dyslexia Risk Screener. With this approach, all students are screened in Oral Language, Phonological Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension. Then, certain students who are Approaching or Below Benchmark will receive a decoding and automaticity measure. For the students assessed in the additional areas of decoding and automaticity, the Dyslexia Risk Indicator considers their performance on all administered assessments and returns a result of At Risk, Some Risk, or No Observed Risk for dyslexia risk factors.

Go Math! Is a comprehensive mathematics curriculum developed by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH) for students in kindergarten through sixth grade. The embedded formative assessments ensure students get the support they need and are administered every trimester to serve as a growth measure or progress monitor between i-Ready Math diagnostics.

IXL is a personalized online learning platform focusing on math, language arts, science, and social studies. While this platform is a comprehensive curriculum it aligns with Florida State Standards. Students can engage with content through games, lessons, and practice questions, making learning fun and accessible. These learning opportunities produce analytics and insights into student progress for teachers and parents. TFS faculty can also rely on the assessment support of IXL. This support consists of assessments that prepare students for standardized test and other assessments.

The Foundations School Assessment Schedule											
2025-2026											
	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June
i-Ready Diagnostic #1 (Reading)	Gr K-5										
i-Ready Fluency Related Reading Skills #1	Gr K-5										
Dyslexia Screener #1		Gr K-5*									
i-Ready Progress Monitor (Reading) - Title I Only		Gr K-5	Gr K-5	Gr K-5	Gr K-5						
i-Ready Diagnostic #2 (Reading)						Gr K-5					
i-Ready Fluency Related Reading Skills #2						Gr K-5					
Dyslexia Screener #2						Gr K-5*					
i-Ready Progress Monitor (Reading) - Title I Only							Gr K-5	Gr K-5	Gr K-5	Gr K-5	
i-Ready Diagnostic #3 (Reading)										Gr K-5	
i-Ready Fluency Related Reading Skills #3										Gr K-5	
Dyslexia Screener #3										Gr K-5*	
i-Ready Diagnostic #1 (Math)	Gr K-5										
HMH Growth Measures #1 (Math)		Gr K-5	Gr K-5								
i-Ready Progress Monitor (Math) - Title I Only		Gr K-5	Gr K-5	Gr K-5	Gr K-5						
i-Ready Diagnostic #2 (Math)						Gr K-5	Gr K-5				
HMH Growth Measures #2 (Math)					Gr K-5	Gr K-5	Gr K-5				
i-Ready Progress Monitor (Math) - Title I Only							Gr K-5	Gr K-5	Gr K-5	Gr K-5	
i-Ready Diagnostic #3 (Math)										Gr K-5	
HMH Growth Measures #3 (Math)									Gr K-5	Gr K-5	Gr K-5
Iowa Assessment (Practice)								Gr 3-5			
Iowa Assessment (Reading, Math & Science)											Gr 3-5
* Administered only to students who exhibit risk factors associated with dyslexia as evidenced by the results of the diagnostic and fluency measures.											

Grading

TFS records and stores all student information pertaining to grades in the Student Information System, Gradelink. Student grades are derived from a variety of learning opportunities by the teacher and have been assigned a point-possible numerical value or percentage. Faculty must also assign a “weighted value” to all assignment types (tests, homework, etc.) While tests may assess a student’s achievement, Faculty are strongly encouraged to weight assignment types so that a student’s grade is derived from all their work not only the test at the end.

TFS has chosen a standards-based report card. This means that students receive a grade or performance indicator for each standard covered by class content, in addition to general subject areas. While a composite grade in any course is beneficial, TFS feels that a report card which lists

the standards in that content area helps families understand the skills required and assessed within that course in determining the composite course grade. The SIS requires faculty to assign standards to every assignment recorded in the system. Faculty can at-a-glance see which standards they have covered and which standards they have yet to cover. Additionally, TFS has established the score of 80% on any standard or domain strand as “proficient.” Faculty can run proficiency reports at any time to clearly understand which content or standard may need re-taught or remediated and for which students.

TFS utilizes the grade scale of 4-exceeding, 3-meeting, 2-approaching, 1-beginning, 0-not meeting standard, and N/A-not assessed. Not every standard will be assessed every trimester. The SIS automatically assigns N/A to every standard for which there is no corresponding assignment in the gradebook for that trimester.

TFS requires a graded assignment in every class subject weekly. Of course, more assignments are certainly permitted. In fact, TFS realizes that some students may require multiple measures over time while, conversely, not every student needs or would benefit from every assignment. Faculty have the autonomy to assign individual assignments to individual students to track their independent progress without requiring all assignments of every student all the time. This grading feature assures that and student’s progress toward any standard is being tracked based on their individual knowledge gaps and learning needs.

Communication & Reporting

Families who have students enrolled in TFS can access grades, assignments, attendance, school information, etc. at any time through the Parent Portal in Gradelink. Additionally reports cards are published in the Parent Portal at the end of every trimester for families who are not in any financial arrears. Report cards at TFS are standards-based so that families are not only informed of a subject grade but also areas within that subject that show areas improvement and or significant accomplishment.

As required by Florida state law, TFS administers a norm referenced, standardized tests to all students grades 3rd -5th. Historically, TFS has selected the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. This is an achievement test not a cognitive or I.Q. test. The four subjects tested are Reading, Math, Science,

and Social Studies. TFS complies with Florida State law and submits the results of these exams annually. The Learning Systems Institute (LSI) at Florida State University is responsible for collecting test score information for the evaluation of the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship (FTC) and the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Educational Options (FES-EO) programs.