



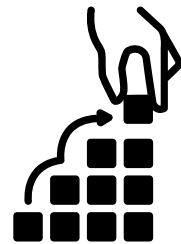
VASD

ELEMENTARY FOUNDATIONS

Grades 1-8

FOUNDATIONS

GRADES 1-8



What is Foundations?

Foundations is a program designed for students who have IEPs in grades 1-8. The program is located at a stand-alone site within district boundaries. Students from VASD neighborhood elementary schools, middle schools, and charter schools may benefit from this program.

The purpose of Foundations is to allow students the opportunity to access grade-level academic and social-emotional standards within scaffolded learning routines. Learning occurs in a modified school environment with a modified school schedule. The primary focus is to provide explicit instruction in Social Emotional Learning to promote regulation and stamina in a structured, supportive setting.

Foundations is considered when all other supports within the neighborhood have been tried and the student is still not finding success. Prior to considering Foundations, the IEP team engages in a behavior support coaching cycle lasting 6 to 8 weeks. This includes weekly team meetings, IEP revisions, and extensive regulation strategies incorporated into the student's day. This process allows staff to make adjustments to the student's programming in the neighborhood or charter school with support from an individual who has expertise in Functional Behavior Assessments/Behavior Intervention Plans (FBAs/BIPs) and social-emotional learning strategies prior to recommending placement in a different setting.

If, after the behavior coaching cycle, the student demonstrates the following, the IEP team may consider having the student participate in Foundations:

- Need for numerous seclusions and/or restraints due to externalizing behavior; physical aggression, elopement
- Exclusive staffing
- Need for own space
- Spending 90-100% of the day alone in the special education environment due to dysregulation

Additionally, students transitioning from more restrictive environments, such as residential treatment programs or those receiving shortened school days, may also be considered.



Foundations Access

Foundations is a part-day program where students receive explicit instruction in social-emotional learning and participating in school routines. Students split their school day between Foundations and their neighborhood or charter school. Coaching from the Foundations staff will be provided at the neighborhood or charter school to ensure consistency and support across different learning environments.

Although Foundations is not part of the neighborhood or charter school, it may be considered the least restrictive environment for some students. Per the Department of Public Instruction [Information Bulletin 00.04](#), the least restrictive environment is both a legal principle and a set of legal requirements found in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It does not require that every child with a disability participate in the regular education classroom. The overriding rule in determining a child's Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) is that it must be individually determined based on their unique abilities and needs. Recognizing that the regular education setting and/or general education curriculum may not be appropriate for every child with a disability, districts are required to make available a range of service, location, and building options (a "continuum of alternative placements") to meet the unique educational needs of students with disabilities.

The VASD believes it is important to have a modified school environment for some students. This type of environment is not available in the neighborhood or charter school. Providing a controlled, small environment allows an opportunity for students to access learning routines in an environment that is supportive of regulation and safety needs, while limiting ease of elopement and disruption to other students. When we highly modify the physical environment, we believe students will be better able to access their learning. With more participation in learning routines and regulation, we hypothesize a reduction in the need for office discipline referrals, seclusion and restraint.

When determining if Foundations is the best option for a student, the IEP team collaborates with the Assistant Director of Special Education, the Director of Special Education, and the school Principal. The IEP team also invites the Foundations Lead to visit the student at their neighborhood or charter school and to participate in the IEP team meeting, where placement options will be discussed. The Foundations Lead will participate in the meeting to discuss and determine the placement decision. Additionally, the Foundations Lead will provide the family and team with written information about Foundations and arrange a tour for the family and student.



Once a student begins attending Foundations, the IEP team meets monthly to ensure that the team is consistently assessing progress towards IEP goals and potential readiness to return to the student's neighborhood school full-time. Weekly school-team meetings focus on ensuring communication and collaboration between Foundations and the neighborhood or charter school. Additionally, Foundations staff will provide support, observations, and visits at the child's neighborhood or charter school. We are also committed to offering additional training for Special Education Assistants (SEAs) and Case Managers (CMs) on topics specific to the Foundations program to enhance the support students receive. The case management responsibilities remain with the student's neighborhood school so that the student continues to be seen as a student in that school.

Foundations Structure

To ensure a smooth start for the student, these steps are followed:

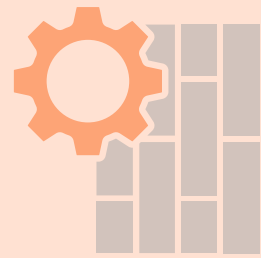
1. **Determine Student Schedule:** Identify whether the student will attend in the morning (AM) or afternoon (PM) and establish the start date.
2. **Notify Key Personnel:** Inform the PowerSchool secretary in the neighborhood or charter school to roster the student for Foundations during the designated attendance times.
3. **Transportation Arrangements:** The Foundations lead completes the Transportation Request form to arrange necessary transportation, including mid-day transportation for the student.
4. **Food Service Coordination:** Contact the Food Service Lead, to ensure the student is included in the breakfast and lunch count.
5. **Daily Visual Schedule:** Develop a daily visual schedule for the student's time at Foundations to aid in their understanding of the daily routine.
6. **Progress Monitoring:** Create a daily progress monitoring form aligned with the student's IEP goals to track their development effectively.

By following these steps, we can provide the necessary support and resources to help the student succeed.

For morning attendees, students start their day at Foundations. The schedule will consist of 120 minutes on Mondays and 150 minutes per day from Tuesday to Friday. Afternoon attendees will end their day at Foundations. Afternoon students will have a schedule of 150 minutes each day. Transportation will be included as a Related Service for the midday routes to/from the neighborhood or charter school to Foundations

The Foundations Program is located in a stand-alone site that is within district boundaries. The space includes two classrooms: a sensory regulation room, and an instructional room. There is a single-stall bathroom nearby, ensuring minimal to no transitions for students. Additionally, the facility provides access to school meals and space for outdoor gross motor activities.

The IEP team reviews placement at Foundations on 8-week intervention cycles. Students may enter Foundations anytime within the school year. If, after 8 weeks, a student is making progress toward their IEP goals and developing the skills necessary to participate in the educational community, the IEP team will begin a planned transition back to their neighborhood or charter school.



During this transition, a reduction in the need for safety interventions at Foundations is expected, with a goal of less than one incident per month. Foundations staff will continue to be part of the support team as the child transitions back to their neighborhood or charter school, which will happen gradually over a period of up to two weeks.

After the first month of returning full-time to the neighborhood or charter school, our team will provide support through Behavioral Support Coach (BSC) check-ins. If a student requires higher levels of support after this first month, a shorter BSC coaching cycle will be completed to determine the next steps needed for ongoing support.

If, after 8 weeks, a student is making progress toward their safety goals but shows limited improvement in participating in academic routines, the IEP team may decide to continue the student's placement at Foundations.

If a student has been involved in Foundations for at least one intervention cycle and continues to exhibit behaviors that make it unsafe for Foundations staff to support them, the IEP team may explore the option of an out-of-district placement. This consideration arises in situations where the student frequently requires restraint or seclusion to ensure safety (at least once a week), when staff injuries lead to absences or significant harm, when there are repeated incidents of extensive property destruction at the Foundations site, or when the student attempts self-harm that necessitates medical intervention.



Foundations Curriculum

At Foundations, the focus is on creating a unique environment that supports students' neurodiverse learning needs. We utilize a Social Emotional Learning curriculum, Character Strong, that is different from the Universal SEL in VASD. Students also receive lessons from Kelly Mahler's Interoception curriculum, and interoception practices are incorporated into our daily routine. This helps students become more aware of their feelings and bodily signals, and how those affect regulation and behavior.

Academically, students participate in making progress towards grade level standards by using portions of the Savaas literacy curriculum and Bridges math curriculum. Materials are differentiated to meet the individual learning needs of each student. In terms of training, our staff is equipped to understand and support students with behavior consistent with Pathological Demand Avoidance, a specific profile of autism, through partnerships with community providers. We also train staff in Nonviolent Crisis Intervention, Advanced Physical Skills (NVC-APS) training, to ensure a safe environment for all students.

Foundations Staffing

The Foundations Lead will be on-site at Foundations and has extensive experience working with students who have complex learning profiles. This individual coordinates communication and support with school-based staff, taking the lead in researching, learning, and implementing effective instructional practices focused on both academics and social-emotional learning. Additionally, they coach staff to ensure the successful transfer of strategies to the neighborhood school.

The Special Education Teacher works directly with students at Foundations, focusing primarily on those with complex learning profiles related to social-emotional learning. This teacher also provides guidance and coaching to other staff members present. However, it is important to note that this individual will not serve as the special education case manager for students; that responsibility will remain with the neighborhood or charter school.

Each student at Foundations has an assigned school-based SEA as part of their IEP. The SEA supports the student in Foundations and will learn strategies and techniques from the Special Education Teacher to apply when working with the student back at their school. Additionally, related services personnel assess the best locations for providing necessary services, and are able to provide service minutes at Foundations and/or the neighborhood school. As part of the student's team, we collaborate with community partners with existing service providers such as Community Liaison Support Specialists (CLSS), mental health services, and Applied Behavior Analysis therapy.

Foundations Data

A variety of data is reviewed on a regular basis. Seclusion and restraint data is reviewed monthly and is one factor used to determine if a student is a candidate for Foundations. Quarterly, staff and family survey data is used to assess the program efficacy.

Charts 1 and 2 compare the number of times restraints and seclusions were used in 2023-24 to 2024-25. It specifically compares:

- All students K-12 2023-24 to 2024-25
- Cohort data
 - Students in Kindergarten (K) in 2023-24 who are in first grade in 2024-25
 - Students in first grade in 2023-24 who are in second grade in 2024-25
- Students in Kindergarten in 2023-25 to students in Kindergarten in 2024-25
- Seclusion data for 2023-24 and 2024-25 for students who are currently in Foundations.

Chart 1: Number of Restraints

			Cohort		Cohort					
	All students		K	Grade 1	Grade 1	Grade 2	K		Foundations	
Month/Year	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25
September	18	4	7	0	2	2	7	0	12	3*
October	13	15	7	3	3	1	7	8	3	2
Total	31	19	14	3	5	3	14	8	15	5

*includes 1 student not in last year's data set because they transferred to VASD this year

Chart 2: Number of Seclusions

			Cohort		Cohort					
	All students		K	Grade 1	Grade 1	Grade 2	K		Foundations	
Month/Year	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25	23-24	24-25
September	8	2	2	0	1	0	2	0	3	1*
October	7	11	7	2	0	0	7	6	0	1
Total	15	13	9	2	1	0	9	6	3	2

*includes 1 student not in last year's data set because they transferred to VASD this year

Summary

There was a reduction in restraints and seclusions for the following groups:

- All students
- Students who were in K in 2023-24 who are in 1st grade in 2024-25
- Students who were in Grade 1 in 2023-24 who are in Grade 2 in 2024-25
- Students in K this year compared to students in K last year. In October, 1 student accounted for all 8 restraints.
- Students in Foundations

Beginning of the Year Feedback from Families

On a family survey, 100% of respondents (sample size: 2) agreed or strongly agreed with the following:

- My student has expressed that they feel happy going to school, or are perceived to feel happy through their actions (smiling, willingly getting on transportation to go to school, etc)
- My student has expressed they feel safe at school, or it is perceived they feel safe at school through their actions
- My student has had a reduction in the number of restraints, seclusions, and/or suspensions when compared to last year at approximately the same time of year

Fifty percent (50%) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the following:

- I feel confidence in the educational programming my student is receiving
- Communication from staff allows me to understand what my student is participating in

Families shared the following anecdotal comments:

*"He is beginning to **feel safe at school**. He is communicating better and being more forgiving of himself for his difficult moments."*

"Going to school atmosphere, staying and being safe to his own self and others."

*"He has better verbiage to let others know where he is at physically and mentally. **He is beginning to believe he is not a bad person and he can trust adults again**. He is following schedules better, doing more self regulation, and asking for help more than he previously would at school."*

Beginning of the Year Feedback from Staff

A staff survey (sample size 10) yielded the following results:

**% Agree or Strongly Agree
(4 of 5 students represented)**

My student has had a reduction in the number of restraints, seclusions, and/or suspensions when compared to last year at approximately the same time of year	83%*
I feel supported in my role as it relates to this student	80%
I am contacted to support this student in crisis less often	50%
I feel confidence in the educational programming my student is receiving	100%
I have learned new techniques or approaches to support students	70%
Additional Professional Development has been valuable to support students	70%
Communication between Foundations and neighborhood schools has helped promote consistency across environments	60%

** only staff who worked with students in both Sept 2023 & Sept 2024 responded to this item*

Staff shared the following anecdotal comments:

"It sounds like several of my students are doing great at Foundations in a less chaotic environment, with the use of several visuals, and with a work/break/work/break system. Some of them also appear to enjoy that other students are present, making them feel less isolated which is great."

"Our case managers, SEAs, student service members, and admin are able to grow our positive relationship with [student] and [their] family, and we are thrilled to see [student] coming to school happy and ready to learn!"

The support that he is receiving is amazing."

"[Student] is able to transition into [neighborhood school] calmly and go to their environment. [Student] has also been able to join peers with success. There is a lot less physical aggression and running away."

"Less crisis calls at the moment"

"My only suggestion would be to have frequent scheduled times to meet with all team members at [both sites] together to be able to collaborate and connect about schedules, planning, and how to keep consistency across both locations."

Student Case Studies

Example 1: Student has not received services in-person, in-district since 2022. After securing an out-of-district placement, placement did not continue due to safety concerns. The student was accessing learning through district-provided virtual learning options and daily meetings with a case manager.

The community team described the student as being in "autistic burnout". Since returning to in-person for one hour per day, the student has re-established relationships with adults and begun to see school as a desirable place to be.

Student appears to enjoy the daily routine of coming into the space and immediately accessing the therapy swing for regulation, then transitioning to table work. We are looking to add time in the high-interest activities part of the day at the neighborhood school in Quarter 2.

Example 2: The student ended the last two weeks of the previous school year not attending, per the parent's decision to address self-harm safety needs. Student began this school year on a full day, morning at Foundations and afternoon at neighborhood school.

The first two weeks of school were highly successful, with engagement and mastery of all routines, both regulation and academic. The team discussed moving time back to the neighborhood school. In the second half of September, the student had a significant change in both affect and demonstration of unsafe behavior.

The student's medical team reported that the student no longer had medication due to delays in scheduling in-person appointments. The student demonstrated behavior that resulted in police contact. The IEP team met to make a placement determination to meet the student's current needs.

The student has since been able to access medical care and recently has returned to in-person instruction for a portion of their school day, with a plan to return to a full day of programming as soon as possible.

Example 3: The student was an out-of-district transfer into VASD in September. The student has significant communication and sensory needs due to their autism. The student was previously on a shortened day in their prior district.

The student transferred into VASD with a full day of programming at a neighborhood school. Student experienced restraint, seclusion, and out of school suspension during this first week of school to maintain safety for both student and staff.

The IEP team met and determined placement at Foundations to be appropriate based on a prior shortened day. Foundations programming is occurring during previously shortened school day time. After initial difficulty transitioning between sites, the student has engaged in regulation activities, and work table sequences, and utilized both low-tech and high-tech Assistive and Augmented Communication modalities.

This student has quickly mastered the routines of Foundations and the academic rigor continues to be increased daily.

