

# FOUNDATIONS COLLEGE PREP

## MARRYING THE BEST TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS WITH PROVEN PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

“We know that teachers, like students, come into school at different places. It’s our goal to maximize every teacher’s effectiveness.”

MICKI O’NEIL, FOUNDATIONS COLLEGE PREP

### KEY FEATURES:

- ✓ New School
- ✓ Rotation Blended Model
- ✓ Next Generation Staffing Model
- ✓ College Readiness & Success

### AT A GLANCE:

**Start Date:** Fall 2014  
**Grades Served:** 6-12  
**Location:** Chicago, IL  
**Operator:** Foundations College Prep  
**Operator Type:** Charter  
**Setting:** Urban  
**Students at Start:** 112  
**Students at Capacity:** 840

### MODEL TOOLBOX:

**Learning Management System:** Hapara  
**Student Information System:** PowerSchool (limited), SchoolRunner  
**Gradebook:** SchoolRunner  
**Assessment Tools and Approaches:** NWEA, F&P, teacher-created assessments; a frequent assessment cycle informs Flex Time; ExitTicket  
**Digital Content Providers:** iReady, STMath, TenMarks, Reading Plus (pilot), ThinkCERCA (pilot), eSpark  
**Hardware:** Chromebooks (students and staff), iPads

At Foundations College Prep, differentiation is key not just for the students but also for the teachers.

The Foundations team believes that great teachers can transform students’ lives. Concerned that large classes and high demands often overwhelm first-time teachers before they even get their feet wet and that the reach of top teachers is no greater than other teachers, Foundations is focused on reimagining the way teachers work and support one another to maximize capacity across the professional spectrum.

The school extends the reach of its best teachers to more students through technology and non-traditional staffing. In large, foundational courses, a master teacher leverages the support of a resident teacher (a teacher with limited experience) and self-paced digital content to provide targeted instruction to 40 students in a flexible environment. Teachers utilize a variety of strategies to meet the goals of students, including station rotations, small-group instruction, problem-based learning, and discussion seminars. While technology helps to support basic skill mastery, teachers focus instructional time on building critical-thinking and problem-solving skills.

Through these differentiated teacher roles, expert teachers have meaningful leadership and reach-extension opportunities while resident teachers hone their skills with smaller groups of students under the guidance of a master teacher. Another possible role is the instructional lead, someone who models excellent teaching half-time and coaches other teachers in their subject area.

Expert teachers may also decide to focus solely on excellent instruction without taking on additional responsibilities. Foundations believes this approach provides ongoing support for teachers as they advance in their careers while also ensuring that every student has access to expert teachers.

Maximizing the reach of teachers supports the school’s mission of college prep and college success. School leaders strive to have their low-income students attend and graduate college at the same rates or higher than their higher income peers. To do so, college readiness approaches are woven throughout the curriculum and schedule, and even reflected in the classroom design.

In grades 6–9, students start the typical day in Advisory and participate in two 90-minute foundational courses in math and literacy. In large classrooms, students rotate between instruction and group or project work and hone their skills using digital content. Teachers access just-in-time data dashboards as they plan daily rotations. The afternoon block is Flex Time, when every student across the school is flexibly grouped based on both their reading and math levels. In those groups, students rotate through math/reading small groups, digital content, and art or gym.

Technology is woven into each class in different ways: providing interactive videos to supplement instruction, giving students access to remedial or accelerated curriculum to meet their individual needs, providing interactivity during large lectures, or allowing students to continue the conversation online after class ends.

## BY THE NUMBERS:

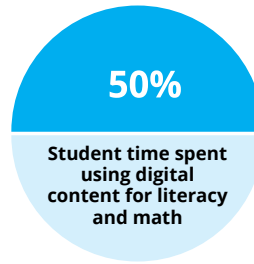
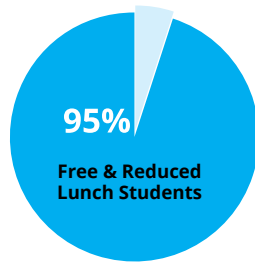
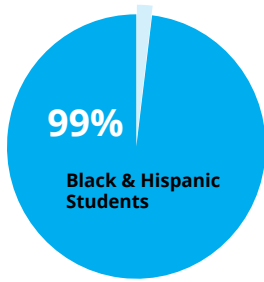
**Year 1 public revenue per pupil:**  
\$12,780

**Year 1 expenses per pupil:**  
\$13,559

**Year 4 revenue per pupil:**  
\$11,305

**Year 4 expenses per pupil:**  
\$10,358

**Years to sustainability: 1**



**BLENDED SUBJECTS:**  
Math, Literacy

As students advance, their classes deliberately mimic a more collegiate experience. For example, students might participate in a large lecture led by a master teacher with 60 of their peers before moving into small, discussion-based seminars. In other classes, students might watch a Khan Academy lesson online and then participate in an online discussion, much like the structure of online college courses.

Through partnerships with local universities such as the University of Chicago, high school students have access to current Ph.D. students as mentors and instructors. Mentors and role models acclimate students to the academic side of the college experience by speaking directly to what college is actually like. For the school's high-need population, this might be a student's first real link to college.

In the end, the Foundations team hopes that the school—personalized for students and teachers, and grounded in a rigorous college prep curriculum—creates learners who can perform as well as or better than their higher-income peers. And technology becomes an essential tool that facilitates an entirely different kind of school, one that re-imagines the way teacher talent and the school day are used.

## A DAY IN THE LIFE

**Sample 6th Grade Schedule (A Day)**

Class	Size	Teacher(s)	Use of Tech
Advisory	14	●	Rich Dashboards
Reading Foundations	40	● ●	Rotation
Math Foundations	40	●	Rotation
		● ●	
<b>Lunch</b>			
Writing Foundations	30	●	Rotation Optional
SS/Science Foundations	30-40	●	Optional
Interdisciplinary Project	20	●	Tech-rich
Elective	Varies	●	Varies
Lab/Small Group	Varies	●	Lab

**Sample 6th Grade Schedule (B Day)**

Class	Size	Teacher(s)	Use of Tech
Advisory	14	●	Rich Dashboards
Writing Foundations	40	● ●	Rotation
Math Foundations	40	●	Rotation
Problem Solving		●	
<b>Lunch</b>			
Reading Foundations	30	●	Rotation Optional
Gym	30-40	●	Optional
Science Lab/SS Seminar	20	●	Tech-rich
Elective	Varies	●	Varies
Lab/Small Group	Varies	●	Lab

● Expert Teacher   ● Proficient Teacher   ● Resident Teacher   ● Staff Members (Type Varies)

A snapshot of a sixth-grader's day. It begins in Advisory, where teachers use data dashboards to inform daily lessons and goal planning. Foundational courses are rotational, allowing students to move between direct instruction and either group work or individual, self-paced content.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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**NEXT GENERATION  
LEARNING CHALLENGES**

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