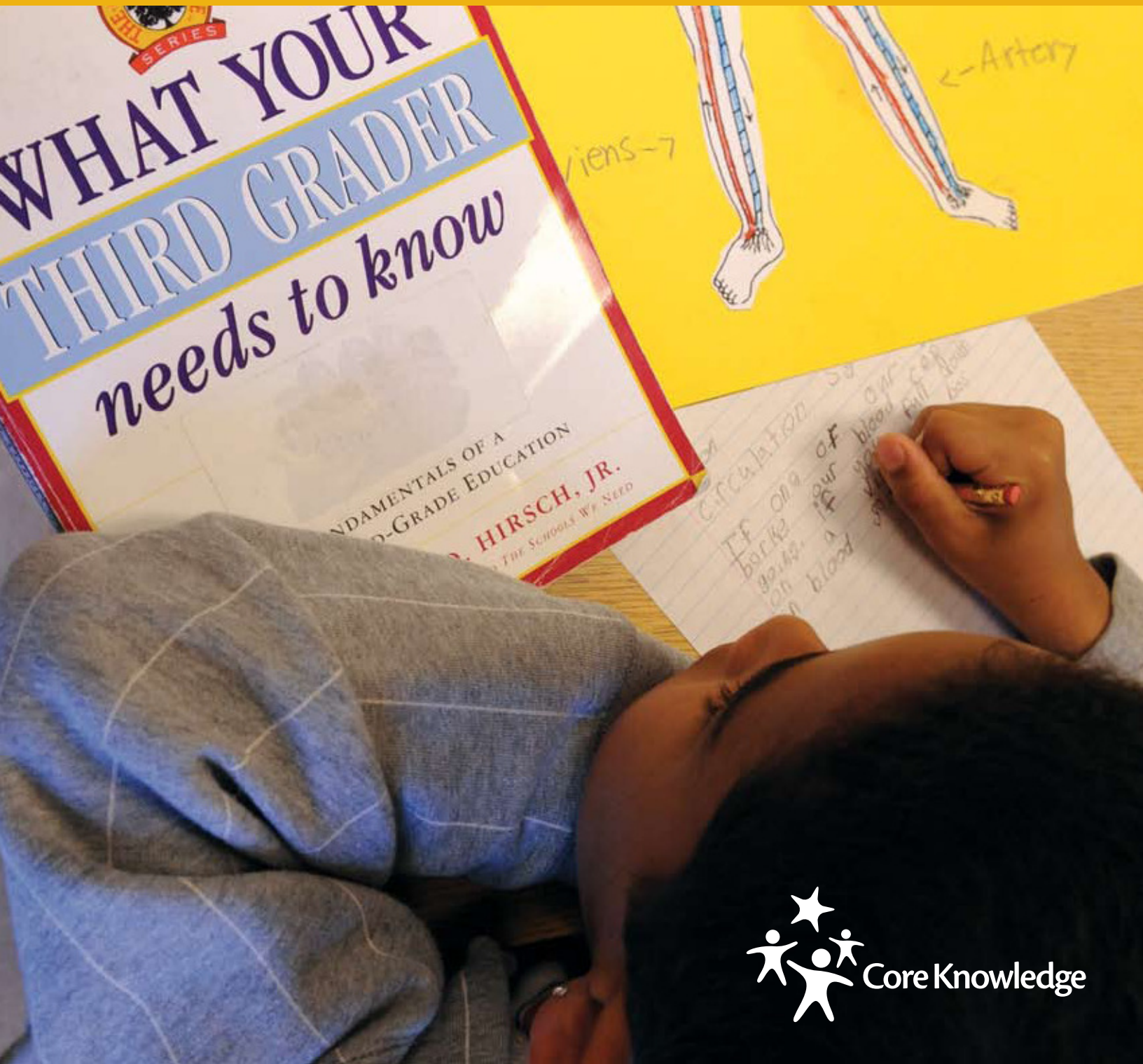


2008

Core Knowledge Foundation Annual Report



The Core Knowledge Foundation

Annual Report 2008

Highlights of 2008

- New York City launches pilot test of Core Knowledge Reading Program.
- Second-year pilots continue in seven schools in six states.
- *What Your Preschooler Needs To Know* published by Delta Trade Paperbacks, with companion activity books published by Core Knowledge.
- Nine new schools achieve “Official Core Knowledge School” status.
- Over 1,000 educators attend 17th Core Knowledge National Conference in Anaheim, California.
- Foundation publishes *Core Knowledge: What Every Child Needs to Know*, a 24-page brochure describing the benefits of the Core Knowledge curriculum for students, schools, parents and communities.
- The *Core Knowledge Blog* is/was launched to provide daily education news, commentary, awareness and advocacy for a content-rich Pre-K to 8 curriculum.

Table of Contents

A Letter From the Chairman	3
President’s Report	5
Core Knowledge Reading Program	7
Core Knowledge Schools	10
Publication Sales.	17
Core Knowledge Conference	18
2008 Financial Summary	19
Donor Recognition	20
Core Knowledge Board of Trustees	21
New Faces at the Foundation.	22
Core Knowledge Foundation Staff.	24

A Letter From the Chairman



E. D. Hirsch, Jr.
Chairman of the Board,
Core Knowledge Foundation

Dear Core Knowledge Educators and Supporters,

When I visit Core Knowledge schools or hear from teachers and parents, I almost invariably hear that they are proud of how much their children are learning. Students are typically excited to share what they have learned about Ancient Greece or Rome, for example, or the works of great artists and composers. It's certainly gratifying to see children genuinely excited and engaged. However, the point of a Core Knowledge education is not, as some critics like to believe, the accumulation of "mere facts." A broad, rich curriculum is a child's passport to full literacy, a life of civic participation, and a shared body of knowledge that makes written and spoken communication possible between and among all Americans.

In fact, many people don't realize that *language* proficiency has been the heart of the Core Knowledge mission from the start. Literacy is far more than just the technique of reading and writing. The ability to read, to learn, and communicate is not even *mainly* a technique; it's mainly knowledge—as a large body of work in cognitive psychology has confirmed and reconfirmed. Nonetheless, many educational experts persist in conceiving reading proficiency as a skill. Learn to decode and apply reading strategies, they believe, and you can read anything.

If only it was that easy!

This fundamental misconception about the nature of reading explains why the Foundation has committed so much time and effort into development of the Core Knowledge Reading Program (p. 7). Our goal is to make students more proficient in all aspects of language, and make explicit the connection between broad general knowledge and reading achievement.

When students show deficiencies in reading comprehension it's usually because they have knowledge deficiencies. Language and knowledge are fused in the human mind. You can't separate them any more than you can unscramble an egg. If the world of American education had fully grasped that truth, our reading scores as a nation would not be so depressingly low.

The Core Knowledge Reading Program will make sure that even within the literacy block students stay within a key domain of knowledge long enough to become familiar with the words and concepts of a knowledge domain. When a context becomes familiar, the learning of new words speeds up greatly. Students learn both more things *and* more words, and they learn them faster. And disadvantaged students begin to catch up as they become familiar with the domain.

Thus Core Knowledge Reading both reinforces and enhances the productivity of the Core Knowledge curriculum by using optimally the time being spent in the literacy block. It's the only language arts program that takes a systematic approach to knowledge development. In addition, it's a near-optimal program in teaching students how to decode written symbols quickly and accurately. Together the Reading Program and the Core Knowledge Sequence in history, civics, science, and the arts will offer schools a way to make the best use of school time in building language and knowledge proficiency simultaneously.

Schools that patiently implement the full program including Core Knowledge Reading (which is just now completing grades K and 1) will see a big improvement over time—not just in overall achievement but also in a narrowing of the infamous achievement gap between groups.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E D Hirsch". The signature is written in a cursive style with some capital letters.

Report from the President's Office

The Call for Content-Rich Curriculum Gathers Momentum



Linda Bevilacqua
President,
Core Knowledge Foundation

Dear Friends and Supporters,

It feels like education in the United States is quickly approaching a tipping point. From Washington to Wasalia, educators and elected officials, parents and policy makers are viewing our national crisis in education with renewed vigor. Whether driven by concerns about our economic competitiveness, the new administration in Washington, or that the country seems no closer to realizing the lofty goals of the No Child Left Behind Act, a new spirit of urgency and realism seems to have taken hold. One of the leading indicators of this new attitude is in the emerging consensus around the once-unthinkable concept of national education standards. Disparate voices such as Bill Gates,

Education Secretary Arne Duncan, American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten, and the editorial board of the *New York Times* have all come out in favor of a single blueprint for what America's children should know.

At the Core Knowledge Foundation, of course, this idea has been at the very heart of our work for more than two decades. Our long-held and oft-stated belief is that every child deserves a solid, specific, sequenced, and shared curriculum. A strong foundation of common knowledge is the sure and certain route to higher literacy, greater fairness, and academic achievement.

Evidence is growing that an increasing number of educators share our vision: in 2008, New York City Schools Chancellor Joel Klein announced a pilot test of the Core Knowledge Reading Program in ten New York City schools. Those schools join seven others, currently in the second year of testing the program with very encouraging preliminary results. The importance of a content-rich early childhood education is also demonstrated by the success in 2008 of our latest book, *What Your Preschooler Needs to Know*, and its companion activity books. Meanwhile, the number of schools utilizing the *Core Knowledge Sequence* continues to grow as more educators, perhaps frustrated by flattening scores on standardized reading tests, begin to look at Core Knowledge with a fresh set of eyes.

In any other year, all this would be cause for celebration. But we must be clear-eyed about not just the education landscape, but financial conditions in 2009 and beyond. Given truly frightening economic forecasts, unrelenting pressure to deliver short-term results and increasingly scarce resources to achieve them, the competition for education spending will only intensify. School budgets are being slashed to make up for dire tax revenue shortfalls. From New York to Los Angeles, mass teacher layoffs are being considered. Indeed, Core Knowledge's own budget and spending is not immune from the pressures of the economy.

It is entirely possible, however, that tough economic times may bolster the case for Core Knowledge. The new seriousness and sense of purpose surrounding education, and limited resources to follow the latest pedagogical fads, may lead to a growing recognition that the big picture goals of American education – greater literacy and creating lifelong learners, problem solvers and critical thinkers – all rest upon a solid foundation of shared knowledge. It will be an enormous challenge and a worthy goal for Core Knowledge to take full advantage of the shifting winds. I firmly believe we are well positioned to do so.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Bevilacqua". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent flourish at the end of the name.

Core Knowledge Reading Program

Research, Design and Field Testing

Positive Signs

From its inception, the Core Knowledge curriculum was conceived as an essential strategy to address the achievement gap in language and reading between advantaged and disadvantaged children. “Studies of reading comprehension show that knowing something of the topic you’re reading about is the most important variable in comprehension,” observed Core Knowledge founder E.D. Hirsch, Jr. in a Washington Post essay in 2008. “After a child learns to sound out words, comprehension is mostly knowledge,” he wrote.

Despite this connection, Core Knowledge has typically been implemented in elementary schools outside of the language arts or “literacy block,” a 90-minute or longer period devoted to reading, writing, and vocabulary instruction. In order to more powerfully connect content knowledge, language and comprehension, the Foundation began development work on The Core Knowledge Reading (CKR) Program in 2006. A major initiative of the Foundation, the goal of the Reading Program is to develop first-rate curriculum materials for language arts instruction in the critical early elementary grades. By combining exemplary skills and decoding instruction with frequent nonfiction read-alouds to build student background knowledge and language, CKR aims to significantly improve reading achievement in the U.S. and narrow achievement gaps between ethnic and socio-economic groups.

The 2008-2009 school year marks the second year of a pilot test of CKR in seven schools. The Foundation also continued developmental work on the program, revising and developing kindergarten materials and creating first-grade materials for both the “Skills” and “Listening and Learning” strands of the Program.

Early results from the pilot tests are promising. At the end of the 2007-2008 school year, kindergarten teachers from all pilot schools anecdotally reported that based on their own observations of students’ performance, as well as informal and standardized measures of reading achievement used in their school districts, the kindergarten students who used the Core Knowledge Reading materials appeared to be decoding and reading early text at a level that far exceeded students in previous years.

Critical Support for Core Knowledge Reading

The Core Knowledge Foundation is deeply grateful for several major gifts that have made possible the development of the Core Knowledge Reading Program.

Achelis Foundation

Brown Foundation, Inc.

Challenge Foundation

Gleason Foundation

I.A. O'Shaughnessy Foundation

J. F. Maddox Foundation

Louis Calder Foundation

An objective evaluation of 275 kindergarten students, selected randomly from the pilot schools, was conducted by outside evaluators using the Woodcock-Johnson Diagnostic Reading Battery. Results were in line with the Foundation's expectations, with students displaying strong results on word attack and decoding measures, as these are areas in which rapid increases can be achieved as a result of successful, systematic phonics instruction. In many cases the students posted mean standard scores 1-2 standard deviations above the national norm. "These scores are particularly noteworthy given the large percentage of low-income students in the overall pilot sample," said Dr. Matthew Davis, Director, Core Knowledge Reading. "They suggest that the program of instruction laid out in the Skills Strand has been effective in teaching students the mechanics of reading."

Rapid growth in vocabulary and oral comprehension was neither anticipated nor detected. "The evidence we have suggests that the advantages of a coherent, knowledge-based curriculum accumulate over time and are not readily manifested in standardized test results during the early elementary years," noted Dr. Davis.



New York City Pilot Program



A new, more ambitious pilot test of the Core Knowledge Reading Program was launched during the 2008-2009 school year in ten high-risk, low-income elementary schools in New York City. A total of 41 kindergarten classrooms, including special education and English as Second Language students, are participating. Funding for this pilot program was secured by the New York City-based Fund for Public Schools; principal funders include the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, Centerbridge Foundation and Wachovia Bank.

Teachers and administrators from these schools chose to participate in this initiative following a presentation about the proposed pilot by Core Knowledge President Linda Bevilacqua in June 2008. Three days of professional development were provided to over 60 kindergarten teachers, reading coordinators and administrators in New York City in late August. The announcement of the Core Knowledge reading pilot by Chancellor Joel Klein at the beginning of the school year was greeted by much media interest, which will undoubtedly continue as the New York City Department of Education will conduct both pre- and post-testing of students in these pilot schools, as well as students in matching control schools who are using other reading materials.

With the addition of the New York City pilot, the Core Knowledge Foundation is now providing pilot reading materials to 100 classrooms, on two different grade levels, in 17 different schools. The Foundation anticipates the completion of the grade 2 materials in 2010, and will then turn its attention to Phase II of the reading initiative, which includes the conceptualization and development of comprehensive language arts materials for Grades 3-5.

Core Knowledge Schools

K–8 Schools

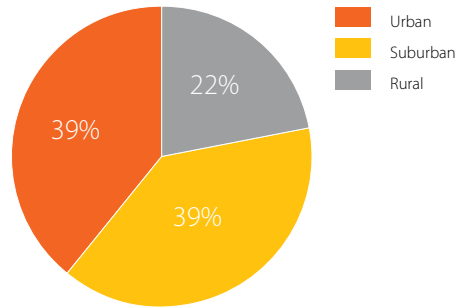
A Curriculum Movement Gathers Momentum

The Core Knowledge movement continues to grow. In 2008, 42 additional elementary schools joined the ranks of Core Knowledge schools. Even more significantly, nine more schools earned the designation of “Official” Core Knowledge schools. Each new Official school was recognized and celebrated at the 2008 Core Knowledge Annual Conference in Anaheim, California in November:

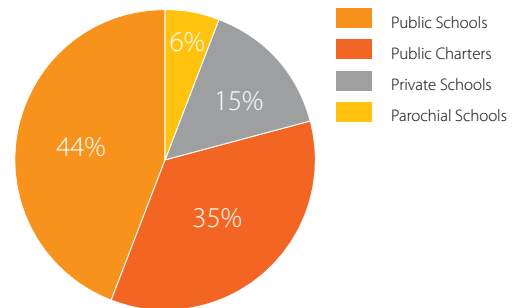
- Northeast Academy Charter School, Denver, Colorado
- Kinard Core Knowledge Junior High School, Fort Collins, Colorado
- Crown Pointe Academy, Westminster, Colorado
- Coronado Elementary, Hobbs, New Mexico
- P.S. 7, Brooklyn, New York
- P.S. 108K, Brooklyn, New York
- P.S. 96, Ozone Park, New York
- R.N. Harris Integrated Arts/Core Knowledge Magnet School, Durham, North Carolina
- George Washington Academy, St. George, Utah

Official Core Knowledge schools are those that are implementing at least 80% of the *Core Knowledge Sequence* in all grades and have completed all recommended professional development to achieve Official School status. With the nine new schools there are now 85 Official Core Knowledge Schools in 29 states. In addition, there are 41 “Visitation Schools,” which implement 100% of the *Core Knowledge Sequence* at a particularly high level of achievement and proficiency. The Core Knowledge Foundation regularly encourages schools new to Core Knowledge to visit these schools to see the curriculum implemented at its best.

School Settings



Types of Schools



With a total nationwide network of over 1,067* diverse schools in 46 states, maintaining accurate, up-to-date data on implementation of the Core Knowledge curriculum has been a persistent and long-standing challenge. In 2008, our Schools Department debuted a revised online “school profile form” to simplify the process of gathering and maintaining data on Core Knowledge Schools. All schools are being asked to complete a school profile form and update their implementation information at least once a year, including schools listed as “Friends of Core Knowledge.” While full implementation of the curriculum is not necessary for “Friend” status, the Foundation encourages such schools to move toward the 80% implementation level required to be eligible to apply for recognition as an “Official” Core Knowledge school.

State Alignments

In 2003, the Core Knowledge Foundation set itself the strategic task of aligning the *Core Knowledge Sequence* with the learning standards of all fifty states. As of 2008, we are now more than halfway to that goal: the Schools Department has now completed 26 state alignments. Alignments for South Carolina and Delaware were revised in 2008, and completed for Missouri, Maryland, New Jersey, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Connecticut.

In completing state alignments, every attempt is made to keep subject matter at the grade level specified in the *Core Knowledge Sequence*, which is designed to eliminate gaps and repetitions in student learning. Topics covered in the *Sequence* are only moved when the content is explicitly listed in state standards under a different grade. While the curricular content in science, history, geography and the humanities detailed in the *Core Knowledge Sequence* is typically far more rigorous, specific and detailed than most state standards, “having strong alignments between state standards and the Core Knowledge curriculum is really important,” noted Katie Hill, Director of K-8 Professional Development. “It enables schools to meet and exceed their state standards,” she said.

* Data includes preschools

Middle School Initiatives

In 2008, the Schools department entered into a partnership with Mackin Library Media, an educational materials firm based in Burnsville, Minnesota. Working closely with the Foundation, Mackin has developed middle school resource sets to serve the needs of teachers using the Core Knowledge curriculum in grades six to eight. Mackin's Middle School Sets include a carefully researched array of titles that provide complete coverage of content in each subject area of the *Core Knowledge Sequence*. Middle School Sets include:


- Background titles for each topic to help students and teachers understand the "big idea" and "bottom line" of content.
- Professional resource titles to help teachers with concept development and lesson planning to support instruction.
- Beautifully and cleverly illustrated classroom titles chosen to appeal to middle school students.
- Audio and DVD resources selected to correspond directly to specific content in the *Core Knowledge Sequence*.

The Foundation is further supporting middle schools utilizing the *Core Knowledge Sequence* through professional development adapted to the middle school level. "One of our goals is to build upon the rich content knowledge taught in the early grades," said Gerald Terrell, Executive Vice President of the Foundation. "The Core Knowledge Foundation has attempted to combine the elementary school's concern for the whole child with the secondary school's emphasis on achievement in content areas," he observed.

Enhancing Implementation

Faithful implementation of the Core Knowledge curriculum is vital to success in individual schools. To help teachers and administrators reap the maximum benefit from Core Knowledge, the Schools Department conducted well over 250 elementary school workshops and training sessions in 2008. In addition, the *Differentiated Instruction Workshop*, *Implementation Analysis*, and *Core Knowledge Overview* presentations have been significantly revised and upgraded. These revised versions will be used in K-8 professional development.

Core Knowledge Foundation staff and consultants conducted dozens of school visits in 2008 to assist in implementation, including visits to New York City, Florida, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Alexandria, Richmond, and Washington,



Faithful implementation of Core Knowledge in the classroom has a direct bearing on student achievement”

DC. In addition, the Foundation continued its work to create four Core Knowledge schools in Helena and West Helena, Arkansas, under a grant from Southern Banc Corp. Each school has completed three years of implementation.

The Schools Department is currently developing an improved observation form to be used to enhance the fidelity of implementation of the *Core Knowledge Sequence*. Intended for use in classroom observations

during official visits and follow-up visits—not for evaluating individual teachers—the form will also be used as a classroom observation instrument for school administrators to determine the quality of Core Knowledge implementation in their schools. “Faithful implementation of Core Knowledge in the classroom has a direct bearing on student achievement,” noted Gerald Terrell.

In 2008, work began to complete an online version of the Core Knowledge *Day-by-Day Planner*, a planning tool to support teachers in implementing the *Core Knowledge Sequence*. Currently available on the Core Knowledge website in

a demonstration version, the planner is scheduled to be available for use during the 2009-10 school year. “Having access to the *Day-by-Day Planner* online will help teachers to manage their lesson plans online, collaborate and share resources with other teachers, and access their data from any computer with an Internet connection,” said Katie Hill. “For years, teachers have asked for the planner to have more flexibility. This will be a major convenience and time-saver for Core Knowledge teachers,” she concluded.

Professional Development

The Core Knowledge Schools Department maintains an active schedule of training for teachers and administrators. Professional development workshops offered by Foundation staff and consultants includes a Core Knowledge Overview, Teaching Core Knowledge, Implementation Analysis, Differentiated Instruction. The number of workshops held by the Foundation increased more than 15% in 2008.

Core Knowledge Workshops

2005: 234	2006: 218
2007: 229	2008: 264

Core Knowledge Schools

	Total	Friends	Official	Visitation
K-8	768	641	85	42
PreK	299	292	-	7

Core Knowledge Schools in the News

Success stories at local Core Knowledge schools continue to be a staple of local newspaper and television news coverage. In May 2008, *Education Week* published a major article on New Holland Core Knowledge Academy, a “Visitation School” in Gainesville, Georgia. The story focused on the success of the Core Knowledge curriculum in raising academic achievement particularly among low-income and minority students.



“While many schools have narrowed the curriculum since Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, doubling up on reading and math instruction to prepare students for crucial tests in those subjects, this school has embraced a far broader course of study” wrote Education Week’s Kathleen Kennedy Manzo. “Each day, its students tackle a rich and rigorous sequence of lessons in history, science, and the arts, as well as mathematics and reading/language arts.”

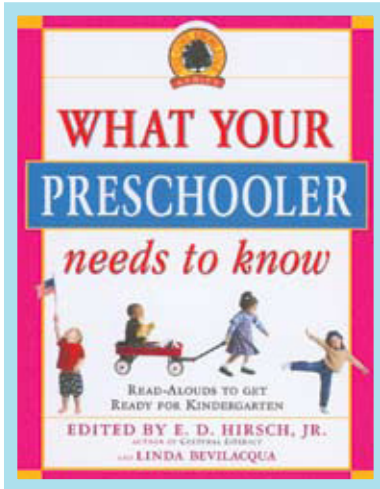
“Instead of having students write the perennial paper about what they did on Christmas vacation, they will write about Benjamin Franklin or westward expansion or ancient China,” said Principal Jill Goforth. “This curriculum does expose our children to a lot of information, not just skills.”

New Holland has made adequate yearly progress each year under NCLB, with some 85 percent of students meeting benchmarks on state tests in math and reading. “No small feat for this K-5 public school of 640 students—two-thirds of them Hispanic, and 24 percent African-American. Nine in 10 of the students are considered poor, and 27 percent are English-language learners,” Education Week concluded.



Core Knowledge Preschool

A Strong Beginning



2008 was a watershed year for Core Knowledge Preschool. In May, Delta Trade Paperbacks published *What Your Preschooler Needs to Know*, the most recent book in the Core Knowledge series, which now has over 3.5 million copies in print. Edited by E.D. Hirsch, Jr. and Linda Bevilacqua, *What Your Preschooler Needs to Know* features dozens of beautifully illustrated stories to be enjoyed by children and foster their curiosity and knowledge about the world around them. “The best way to help a child succeed in school and life is to read to them, starting at an early age,” observed Core Knowledge Early Childhood Program Director Alice Wiggins. “It builds vocabulary and literacy skills, sparks the imagination, and promotes school readiness.” *What Your Preschooler Needs to Know* features 200 full-color illustrated pages, complete with read-aloud fables, rhymes, poems, and songs, as well as non-fiction selections in history, science, math, and art.

In addition, a pair of companion activity books were published by the Core Knowledge Foundation—one for ages 3-4; a second for ages 4-5. Together, the two volumes feature 50 weeks of activities addressing writing, sound discrimination, counting, pattern and shape recognition, story telling, the five senses, animal habitats, and much more. The activities are designed to prepare children for a happy, productive start in school.

2008 was also a fruitful year for implementation of the Core Knowledge preschool curriculum across the country. With a burgeoning awareness of the value of early childhood education among educators, parents and policymakers, implementation of the Core Knowledge preschool curriculum continues to be a promising route for the Foundation to serve its mission of promoting greater excellence and fairness in education. At present, nearly 25,000 children in 43 states benefit from the *Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence*, which like the K-8 curriculum, explicitly specifies the competencies and knowledge in which all children should share.

Core Knowledge Preschool Implementation

Total number of Core Knowledge preschool classrooms: **1520**

Total number of Core Knowledge preschool centers: **373**

Core Knowledge Preschool centers that are also using the K-8 Sequence: **90**

Number of Core Knowledge preschool centers located in public schools: **90**

Approximate number of children served: **23,349**

Public/State funded preschool centers: **90**

Head Start agencies/centers: **20**

Private/Parochial preschool centers: **134**

Grant funded Preschool Programs: **28**



For 2009, the Foundation is developing a checklist to assist teachers in their classroom implementation of the *Preschool Sequence* and to assist program administration staff in doing classroom observations—a precursor to granting “Official School” status to schools using the *Core Knowledge Preschool Sequence*. This important tool will align with the National Association for Education of Young Children’s guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices, individual state standards and other established early childhood education “best practices” in the classroom. The Foundation is simultaneously working on revisions to the *Preschool Sequence* and developing a *Preschool Teacher Handbook*, to add to our current roster of handbooks for kindergarten through the 5th grade. The *Preschool Handbook* is scheduled to be available in early summer 2009.

In late 2008, the Core Knowledge Preschool Department and the K-8 Department merged to become one unit called the Schools Department. “This allows us to create and support an even more cohesive curriculum, especially for schools that offer Preschool,” observed Gerald Terrell, Executive Vice President of the Core Knowledge Foundation. “This will encourage schools to implement Core Knowledge from Preschool to grade 8, and allow us to develop unique professional development opportunities for those schools,” he said.

Publication Sales

2008 was a solid year for the Publication Sales department of the Core Knowledge Foundation, which is responsible for operations pertaining to the sales of Core Knowledge publications. A new series of music CDs debuted last year, produced by Naxos of America, to help teachers introduce students to the music masterpieces that are part of our shared cultural heritage and an integral part of the *Core Knowledge Sequence*. Total sales of books, CDs, teacher support materials, and other products generates approximately 45% of the funding needed to sustain the Core Knowledge Foundation operationally each year.



To aid in the sales and distribution of Core Knowledge materials to schools, teachers and parents, a number of internal service improvements were implemented by Melanie Jones, who joined the Foundation as Director of Publication Sales in January 2008. Enhanced integration of our online bookstore's electronic commerce software with UPS shipping has led to improved customer service, accounting and data management functions. Core Knowledge also became an official Department of Defense vendor in 2008, which enables any Defense Department office, including approximately 100 military base schools worldwide, to purchase education materials directly from the Foundation.

New initiatives underway for 2009 include an agreement to sell Core Knowledge books, CDs and other educational materials on Amazon.com. "This will help make several of our publications more visible," Jones notes, including products like the Core Knowledge preschool activity books, teacher handbooks and *Grace*

Abounding, an anthology of African-American literature, music and art. While parents and educators are frequently aware of the Core Knowledge series *What Your... Grader Needs to Know*, they are often unaware of the broad range of publications available from Core Knowledge. The department hopes to implement initiatives this year that are geared towards building awareness of Core Knowledge publications within public libraries as well.

Another major focus of activity is the redesign and relaunch of the Core Knowledge website, tentatively slated for Summer 2009. The new website will include a new look and feel and enhanced navigation, making it easier for teachers, administrators, parents, education policymakers and others to find information on the website.

Core Knowledge Conference

"I love attending the Core Knowledge conferences because I come back with great ideas," noted one enthusiastic educator participating in last year's gathering in Anaheim, California. "What I love the most is that teachers present and give realistic examples." Such feedback is typical from teachers and administrators participating in the annual Core Knowledge conference—with nine out of ten attendees reporting the four-day forum met or exceeded their expectations.

The 2008 Core Knowledge National Conference was held in November at the Anaheim Marriott Hotel in Anaheim, California. Despite a shaky economy and uncertainty surrounding school budgets nationwide, over 1,000 participants from nearly 300 schools, including two dozen non-Core Knowledge schools, participated in the four-day gathering.

Conference highlights included a keynote address from Dr. Ruby Payne, whose 1995 book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, has sold over one million copies and provides insight for educators and others into what Payne calls "the hidden rules and mindsets of economic class" in the U.S. In direct response to past attendee surveys, the 2008 conference also featured expanded workshop offerings, including a doubling of the number of workshops on the opening day of the conference, and a full day of units presented by teachers in Core Knowledge schools—a valuable resource for new teachers in Core Knowledge schools.

"I look forward to attending the conference next year and hope that Core Knowledge becomes a curriculum that is used in more and more schools and districts nationwide!" one teacher noted on her evaluation form following last year's conference. The 18th Core Knowledge National Conference is scheduled from November 19-21, 2009 at the Renaissance Sea World Hotel in Orlando, Florida.

I love attending the Core Knowledge conferences because I come back with great ideas"

What Participants Say About the Core Knowledge Conference

89% of conference attendees reported on an evaluation survey that the Core Knowledge National Conference "met or exceeded" their expectations.

65% rate it "better than most" or the "best educational conference" they have attended.

42% of attendees have taught for over 10 years

61% of respondents were first-time Core Knowledge conference attendees

2008 Financial Summary

For many nonprofit organizations, the state of the economy in 2008 presented one of the stiffest management challenges in memory. The effects of the recession continue to be felt as state and local education budgets come under enormous pressure. Intense competition for a diminishing pool of philanthropic dollars has led to an unprecedented level of uncertainty among nonprofits. In keeping with our traditional emphasis on careful financial management, the Foundation has taken a number of steps to ensure its financial stability.

“Like the schools with whom we work, the Foundation is experiencing the impact of the overall economic downturn,” noted Linda Bevilacqua, the Foundation’s President. “We are tightening our belts, looking for innovative, cost-effective ways that we can continue to provide Core Knowledge schools with the support and resources they need,” she added.

Net Foundation assets totaled \$5.8 million at the end of 2008, down from \$7.7 million a year earlier. The unrestricted asset balance (operating funds) remained steady at the end of 2008 at approximately \$4M as 12/31/08, down from \$4.3M at 12/31/07. The restricted asset balance (grant funds) equaled \$800K at 12/31/08 down from \$2M at 12/31/07. In 2008, total operating expense activity equaled \$5.4M, compared to \$4.7M in 2007. Cash flows remain stable and sufficient to meet the day-to-day needs of the Foundation.

In addition, the Foundation’s restricted endowment stood at approximately \$1 million dollars as of December 31, 2008. There were no expenditures against this fund in 2008; however there were unrealized losses to the market value of this fund, which was down from \$1.3 million at the end of 2007.

While the economic outlook is challenging, sales of Core Knowledge publications and materials remained strong in 2008 (see Publication Sales, page 17). “This is an encouraging testament to the strength of our educational mission and vision, and how highly it is prized among educators,” Linda Bevilacqua observed.

Donor Recognition

The Core Knowledge Foundation gratefully acknowledges the support of our many friends and benefactors. The information contained in this report covers the period January 1, 2008 through December 31, 2008. We thank each and every donor for their generosity.

Reading Program Grants

Louis Calder Foundation
Challenge Foundation
I. A. O'Shaughnessy Foundation

Preschool Grants

The Abell Foundation
Joseph Meyerhoff Fund

K-8 Grants

Southern Financial Partners

Unrestricted Gifts

Anonymous	Wade Hawkins
John and Karen Ballen	Maine Community Foundation
Patricia Bennett	Vernon and Paula Michel
Classical Charter School Association	Shutz Foundation
Classical Schools	Louisa Dwight Spencer
Community Foundation, Memphis	David Steiner
Pryce Davis	Suntrust Bank
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New Faces at the Foundation

Melanie Jones, Director of Publication Sales

As the Director of Publication Sales, Melanie manages the Foundation's staff and operations involved with sales of Core Knowledge publications, the online bookstore, customer call center, warehouse management, inventory maintenance, and reprint activities. She also oversees all information technology, including the Foundation's website; she is currently managing the redesign of the Foundation's website.

Melanie joined the Foundation in January 2008. Prior to joining Core Knowledge, she spent 13 years at the University of Virginia's Darden School, as a marketing case-writer and research associate. She also spent three years implementing and managing the operations for Darden's new Executive MBA Program. Melanie studied computer information systems and general studies at Piedmont Virginia Community College.

Robert Pondiscio, Communications Director

Robert Pondiscio brings over 25 years of media, communications and classroom experience to his role as the Foundation's Communications Director. Robert launched the popular Core Knowledge Blog in December 2007; he also writes and edits Common Knowledge, the Foundation's weekly online newsletter. Prior to joining the Foundation, Robert taught 5th grade in the South Bronx for several years under the aegis of the New York City Teaching Fellows. It was there, he notes, "I learned first-hand how badly the lack of Core Knowledge impacted even my most capable students."

Prior to becoming a teacher, Robert was the Communications Director for BusinessWeek magazine. He also served for many years as the Public Affairs Director for TIME. The author of several non-fiction books for young readers, he lives in New York City with his wife and daughter.

Souzanne Wright, Vice President

Souzanne A. Wright returned to the Core Knowledge Foundation in 2008 as Vice President, Liaison. In her current role, she is responsible for developing the Listening and Learning Strand of the Core Knowledge Reading Program. She is also a part of the executive management team that oversees ongoing Foundation activities.

From 2001 to 2006, Souzanne worked on the development of several publications at the Foundation and was the editor of the Teacher Handbook series. Ms. Wright, a former elementary school teacher, is a graduate of Emory University and did postgraduate work at the University of Virginia.

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