

JULIE HASTINGS, PARK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT, UTAH

Early Adopter Finds *Geodes*® Align Perfectly with Research

The first thing teachers notice and love about *Geodes*® is the quality of the materials. “The texture of the books. The illustrations. These feel good and are so visually pleasing,” says Julie Hastings, an elementary literacy specialist for the Park City School District in Utah.

Their appreciation for the early literacy materials goes well beyond the book covers, however. The educators also recognize how closely aligned *Geodes* are with the research about how young children learn to read and write.

“We look at the research based on the science of reading, and we go point by point. ‘Yep, yep, yep.’ *Geodes* meet the intention of the researchers’ design,” Hastings says.



Julie Hastings

DISTRICT PROFILE

Four elementary schools
4,780 students

Adopted *Foundations*® in
2016–2017 school year

Adopted *Geodes* Level 1 in
2018–2019 school year

Adopted *Geodes* Level 2 in
2019–2020 school year

FOCUS ON EARLY LITERACY

The district’s journey to *Geodes* began in the 2016–2017 school year when it adopted *Foundations*® from Wilson Language Training as part of a broader early literacy initiative. The goals were to provide effective reading instruction for all students, increase teachers’ awareness of why some students struggle to read, and identify striving readers early and provide appropriate interventions.

“That heightened awareness of how students learn to read helped us realize what we had been missing. It was clear that our previous curriculum did not include adequate systematic and explicit phonics and phonemic awareness instruction,” Hastings recalls.

Foundations® is a structured literacy program for Grades K–3 that supplements students’ core instruction and provides a systematic approach to comprehensively build foundational skills as well as spelling and handwriting.

When Barbara Wilson, cofounder and president of Wilson Language Training, announced that her company was collaborating with Great Minds® to develop a content-rich early literacy library of engaging controlled texts, Hastings jumped at the chance to begin using *Geodes* for Park City’s Level 1 students in the 2018–2019 school year. (Great Minds is the organization that publishes *Geodes*, along with *Wit & Wisdom*®, *Eureka Math*®, and *PhD Science*™.) “Once teachers became aware of *Geodes* and how they aligned with *Foundations*®, they wanted to be at the front of the line for adoption,” Hastings recalls. Park City went on to adopt the Level 2 materials in 2019–2020.

Geodes align with the scope and sequence of *Foundations*® in providing substantial decoding practice. In addition, they build essential knowledge and help students acquire important vocabulary words. That’s key because research shows that strong content knowledge and robust vocabulary are necessary for mastering complex text.

CONFIDENT AND ENGAGED STUDENTS

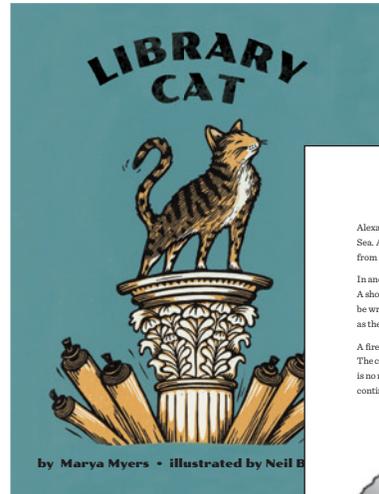
The impact has been immediate. “Students are a lot more confident and much more apt to read and reread,” Hastings says. Each text supports students in applying the phonics knowledge they have learned in class. Students also find the *Geodes* materials so relatable and relevant that they want teachers to read the More page at the back of the books—a paragraph or two of fascinating information that enriches the book’s story.

Initially, some teachers weren’t sure whether to use the *Geodes* materials as part of whole group instruction (along with Foundations®) or to fill skills deficits for students with learning gaps. “They quickly found out that *Geodes* are good for both,” Hastings says. Teachers appreciate how closely aligned the *Geodes* materials are with Foundations®. “Teachers have expressed how much easier it is to be thoughtful when choosing the most appropriate text for each student,” she says.

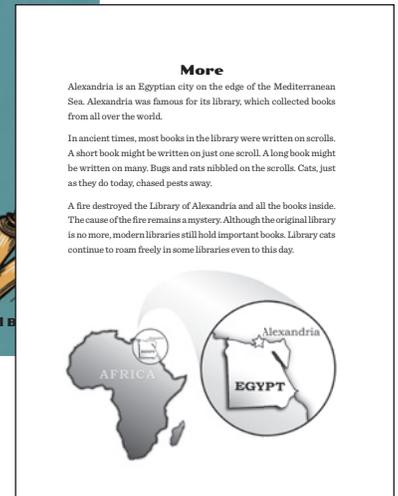
Many Grade 3 teachers are using *Geodes* to help striving students catch up. “They love that the kids no longer miss out on comprehension instruction while they’re also focusing on accuracy and fluency,” Hastings says.

Hastings is now counting on teachers who have used the materials for the past two years to take the lead in helping their colleagues make the transition to this content-rich instruction.

“Implementation matters and buy-in from teachers is key. When they understand *why* we need to shift our instruction in this way, that’s all it takes,” Hastings says—that and the joy of seeing their students become confident, competent, and curious readers and learners.



A sample *More* page from *Library Cat* in *Level One, Module One*.



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