





“ Educate and inform the whole mass of the people. Enable them to see that it is their interest to preserve peace and order, and they will preserve them. ... An enlightened citizenry is indispensable for the proper functioning of a republic. They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty. ”

—Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 1787

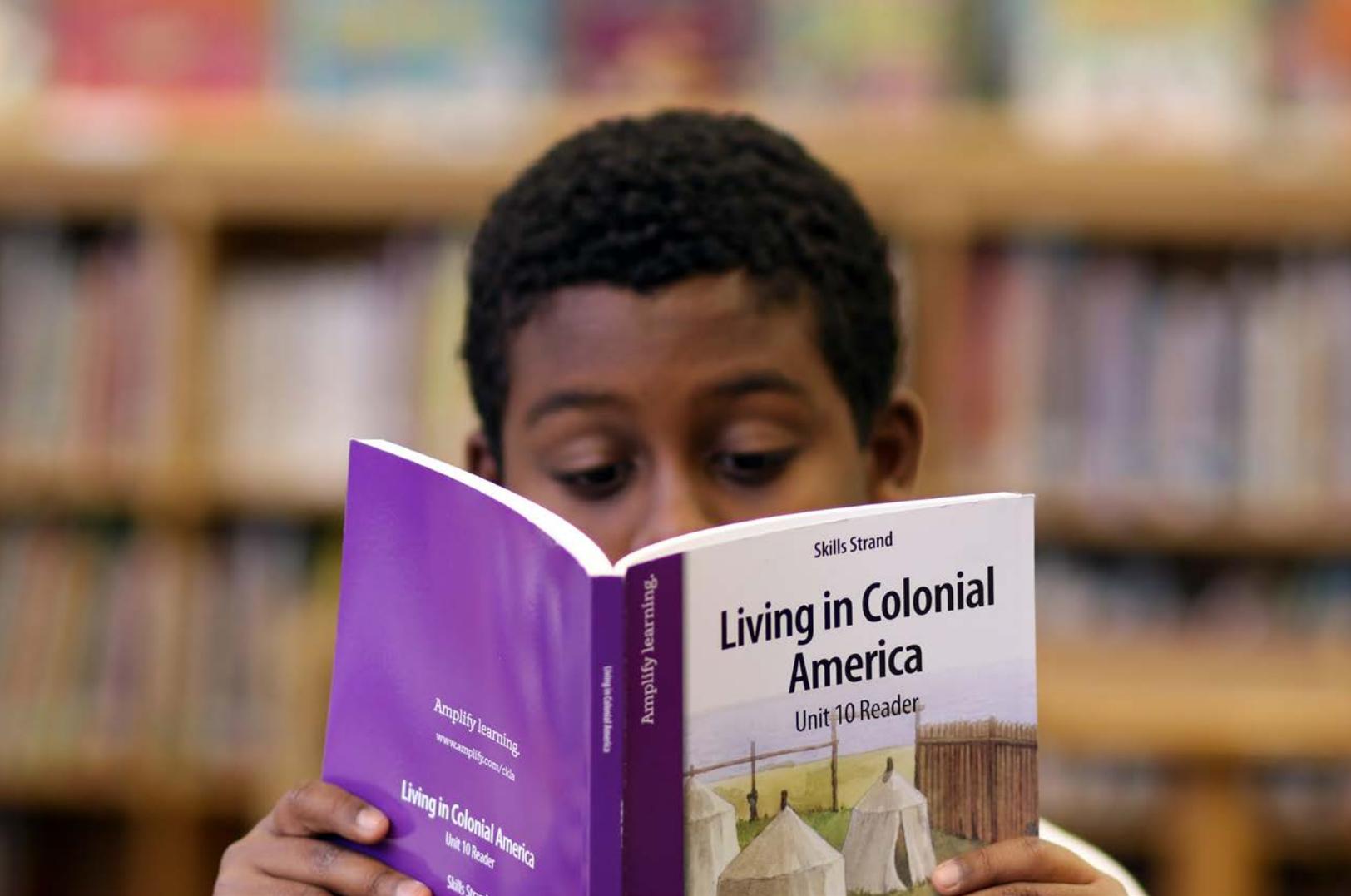


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Dear Friends and Supporters,

In 2016, the Core Knowledge Foundation renewed its efforts to make a knowledge-rich education readily available to all children by providing more free downloadable curriculum resources, as well as easier access to those resources. The foundation was inspired by the release of the latest book by E.D. Hirsch, Jr., *Why Knowledge Matters*, which reinforces the inescapable fact that, in Thomas Jefferson's words, "an enlightened citizenry is indispensable for the proper functioning of a republic."



The highly lauded Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA),¹ a comprehensive Preschool- Grade 5 English Language Arts program, continues to be available for free download from [EngageNY](#), as well as the new Core Knowledge website. To date, more than 6.7 million files have been downloaded from the two websites during the past 3 ½ years.

In addition, the U.S. Department of Education's Institute for Education Sciences identified the innovative instructional design of the CKLA Listening and Learning Strand worthy of formal research and announced funding for a three-year study of the K-2 read-aloud approach.

In 2016 the Foundation also introduced the [Core Knowledge History and Geography \(CKHG\)](#), beginning with Grades 3-5, and made these resources available as free downloads. Based on a previous (and highly successful) series developed in conjunction with Pearson Learning and originally published in 2002, the new CKHG student texts have been revised and updated under the guidance of recognized subject matter experts in each domain, and enhanced by the addition of engaging new illustrations and photographs.

Our Mission

We work for educational excellence and equity

Our Approach

We offer detailed guidance and resources

Our Curriculum

We publish content-rich materials for students and teachers

¹ <http://www.edreports.org/ela/reports/series/core-knowledge-language-arts-ckla.html>



While work on supporting CKLA and creating CKHG took center stage, the Foundation continued to provide support to educators interested in knowledge-rich schooling throughout the country in the following additional ways:

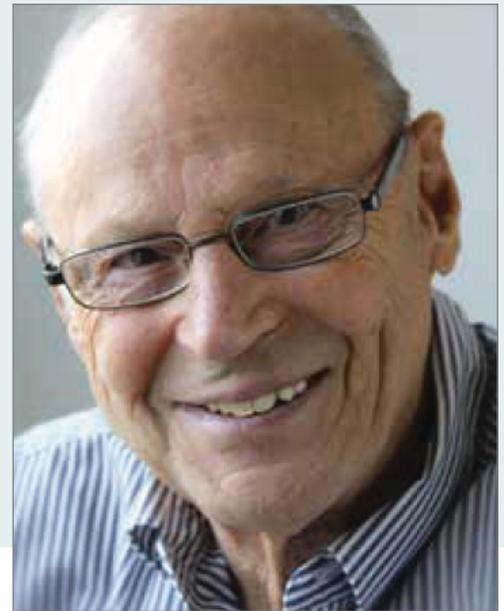
- Created free downloadable Kindergarten and Grade 1 [Core Knowledge Science Maps](#)
- Created free downloadable webinars and professional development for the implementation of the Core Knowledge Sequence and CKLA
- Made onsite Core Knowledge professional development readily available across the country through Core Knowledge Licensed Professionals
- Presented a very well-received National Leadership Institute
- Completed and published, with Random House, updated editions of *What Your Third Grader Needs to Know* and *What Your Fourth Grader Needs to Know*
- Identified three new Schools of Distinction as exemplary models of Core Knowledge implementation and shared the outstanding results of one School of Distinction in particular, The Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy, at the 2016 Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development Conference.

Please read about each of these initiatives in greater detail on the pages that follow.

Sincerely, 

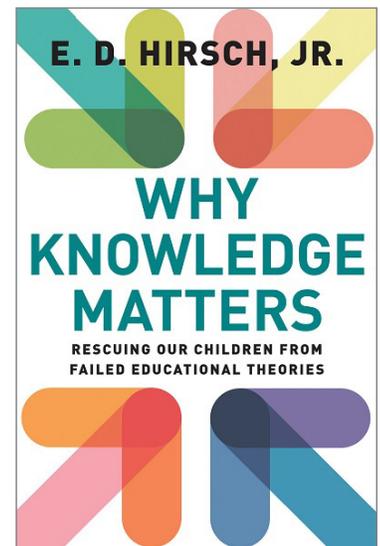
Linda Bevilacqua, President, Core Knowledge Foundation

E.D. Hirsch, Jr.'s latest book, *Why Knowledge Matters: Rescuing Our Children From Failed Educational Theories*, hit the shelves of book stores around the country in September, 2016, right about the same time that teachers and students were headed back to school. Hirsch is the founder of the Core Knowledge Foundation and author of *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (1987), which remained at the top of the New York Times bestseller list for more than six months, followed by *The Schools We Need* (1999), *The Knowledge Deficit* (2006), and *The Making of Americans* (2010).



The ideas that thirty years ago prodded a scholar of English literature from the halls of academe into elementary school classrooms continue to compel E. D. Hirsch, Jr. today. "I am still chiefly motivated by the social injustice of our dominant theories and their unwitting destruction of the American dream," Hirsch affirms in the prologue to *Why Knowledge Matters*, published by Harvard Education Press.

According to Hirsch, "American teachers (along with their students) are . . . being blamed for intellectual failings that permeate the system within which they must work." The real problem, he says, lies in "failed educational theories," in particular, the mistaken notions that:



- Early education should be appropriate to the child's age and nature, as part of a natural developmental process.
- Early education should be individualized as far as possible—to follow the learning styles and interests of each developing student.
- The unifying aim of education is to develop critical thinking and other general skills.

These ideas, while attractive, are misguided, Hirsch contends. Rather, he says, "the unifying aim of early schooling" should be to impart "communal knowledge"—that is, "the enabling knowledge that is possessed by the most successful adults in the wider society," the shared body of knowledge taken for granted by literate writers and speakers.



“The key task facing our elementary schools,” Hirsch urges, “is to shift from the goal of self-realization to the goal of community—from child-centeredness to community-centeredness. No sensible person would disparage either goal. But the emphasis must shift decisively for the sake of the community and the individual child.”

Throughout the book, Hirsch identifies and analyzes specific obstacles to the embrace of communal knowledge as the central goal of schooling. He notes the pernicious pressure of high-stakes tests that drive teachers to focus instruction on skills in language arts and math while crowding out history, geography, science, literature, and the arts. He objects to the “scapegoating” of teachers subjected to “value-added” evaluations of their effectiveness. He explores shortcomings in implementation of the Common Core language arts standards. He documents a recent dramatic decline in French educational achievement, when that nation’s schools shifted from “community-centered and knowledge-centered” to “child-centered and skills-centered”—in other words, when the French “Americanized” their school system.

If schools are to impart necessary communal knowledge, says Hirsch, then they need to follow a coherent, cumulative, and content-specific curriculum. One model of such a curriculum is the Core Knowledge Sequence ([freely available online from the Foundation](#)). Hirsch openly welcomes other models. He explains that the Core Knowledge Sequence “has always been offered as just one exemplification” of the “general communal principle... that every child in a democracy should have access to that shared, enabling knowledge and language.”

Whatever the specific curricular model, Hirsch compellingly makes the case in his new book that “only a well-rounded, knowledge-specific curriculum can impart needed knowledge to all children and overcome inequality of opportunity.”



The Spread of CKLA™

With over 6.7 million [free downloads of CKLA files](#), 2016 saw large-scale CKLA implementations by districts across the country that downloaded and printed the comprehensive ELA program, such as the Duvall County Public Schools in Florida and Milwaukee Public Schools in Wisconsin.

In addition, in 2016 the commercial edition of CKLA, available for purchase through the Foundation's partner, Amplify Learning, has been purchased by schools serving more than 500,000 students in elementary classrooms through the country. Over 7,500 classrooms and teachers in New York and over 3,500 classrooms and teachers in Louisiana reported using CKLA, in addition to well over 1,000 classrooms and teachers in each of the following states: California, Colorado, Oregon, and Washington.



6.7 million
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500,000
students

used in
more than
12,000
classrooms
in 2016, and
growing

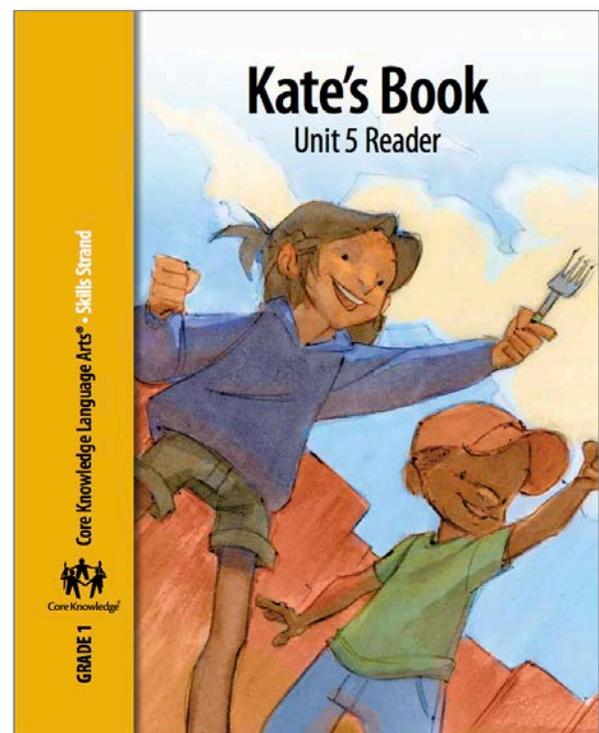
A Sign of Student Engagement with CKLA: Letters To Kate

How can reading be taught in a way that interests and excites young students? CKLA's Skills Strand addresses this challenge head-on, by publishing student readers that have engaging stories—written by children's authors—and appropriate "decodability." At each level, the texts are carefully constructed using only the spellings that students have been taught to sound out as part of their phonics lessons, plus a handful of deliberately introduced "tricky words."

Children participate in intensive code practice by reading stories they decode and enjoy, without encountering untaught spelling patterns or exceptions to phonics rules that might otherwise discourage and confuse them. This ensures that if teachers follow the CKLA program and introduce the stories at the correct time, the stories will be one hundred percent decodable for young students.

Kate's Book, the Unit 5 CKLA Reader for first graders, typifies this approach to teaching reading and to sparking young readers' enthusiasm. Each year, first grade teachers from across the country ask their students to read this student reader, which is framed as the creation of nine-year-old Kate. In the book, Kate, who narrates, describes a summer visit to the American West, where she stays with her grandmother, Nan, and becomes friends with a boy named Max. Kate explores a cave, goes camping, hears a tale about an outlaw from the old West, unearths a dinosaur bone with Max, and enjoys a moment of TV fame for the discovery.

At the end of the reader, Kate invites students to write a letter to her. Many teachers take advantage of this opportunity to further students' literacy skills by asking their students to write letters to Kate. The teachers then send these letters to the Core Knowledge Foundation. Foundation staff members write back to the students, in Kate's voice.



The following are examples of some of the letters to Kate that the Foundation has received; permission to quote the letters has been granted by the students' parents. The letters, and use of phonetic spelling, often showcase the children's developing literacy skills.

Karensa Derstine, a first grade teacher in Mayfield, New York, forwarded letters from her students. One of her students, Ryan, praised "The Visit," a chapter about camping, and wrote:

Dear Kate,

I liked the visit the best. I liked it when you guys hung the food up in a tree. I liked it because I never saw people hang food in a tree before. When you guys were in the tent and you heard a clatter I was happy because it reminded me of my Dad. This is the best book that I ever read!

After the Foundation replied to Ryan, his teacher responded, "Thank you for writing back to my class and me. The kids thought it was great to hear back."

"My students were so excited to see an address we could write to in the back of the book," said Michelle Ramos, a first grade teacher from La Mirada, California. "They all want to know if Kate is real and would she write back to us. I told them to write a letter to see what would happen and they did."

Indeed, the letters written by Ramos's students show an enthusiasm that CKLA teachers hope to inspire in all their students, along with a love of reading and the skills to keep that enthusiasm alive for a lifetime.



More letters to Kate from Core Knowledge students...

Dear Kate,

I love your book. It is full of great adventures and pictures (sic). I'll make a book full of my adventures. I love your stories. I love to read.

From your pen pal,
Eliana

Dear Kate,

I really thought your adventure was cool. Your book was cool. Did you have fun at the camp? Were you scared to talk on TV? The coin that you found was awesome. Were you scared of Jack's tale? Were you surprised when you found a t-rex bone? Did you have fun at your summer with Nan?

Love,
Emily

Dear Kate,

I like your book. You were very adventurous the summer you spent with Nan. My favorite part of the story is when you and Max found the t-rex bone with forks. Were you scared of the cameras? Was it fun on TV? Why was Max scared? I like when you got together with Max because it was cool when you found the other bones.

Love,
Hagan

Dear Kate,

Are you alive? How long did it take you to finish the book? How are you? I like your books!!! Show me a real picture of you. Are you still friends with Max? Are you famous? Did you make the book?

David

IES Evaluation of CKLA Listening and Learning

In a first of its kind study, researcher Sonia Cabell (formerly at the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning at the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education, now at Florida State University) received a 3.3 million dollar grant from the Institute of Education Sciences to test the Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) Listening and Learning read-aloud program. The researchers will follow children from kindergarten entry to second grade and will investigate the effects of the reading curriculum on their vocabulary skills, listening comprehension, domain knowledge, and ultimately reading comprehension at the end of second grade.

More than 1400 children in 48 schools will participate in the study. The researchers will randomly select 10 children per classroom and measure their listening comprehension, vocabulary, and domain knowledge in kindergarten, first, and second grades, and their reading comprehension at the end of second grade.

The project started in the summer of 2016, and has focused on recruiting potential schools to participate in the program. Schools will then begin implementing the program in the fall of 2017. The Core Knowledge Foundation has also provided professional development to the UVA and IES team, including producing an overview session of the CKLA program. Co-investigators include Thomas White and Marcia Invernizzi of the University of Virginia and James Kim of Harvard University.

“There has not been a multi-year (K-2) study of the effects of building knowledge through reading aloud, and it’s absolutely needed. This study could have a huge impact on instruction in the primary grades.”

—Sonia Cabell, Lead Investigator



[Core Knowledge History and Geography \(CKHG\)](#) is a comprehensive program in world and American history and geography, integrating topics in civics and the arts. Available for free download, the program helps students build knowledge of the diverse civilizations, cultures, and concepts specified in the Core Knowledge Sequence.

CKHG™ was developed with instructional design principles that systematically and coherently build knowledge within and across grades. Through the CKHG program, students learn new information by linking it to knowledge they already have. With a structured curriculum, CKHG students also receive efficient word learning through lessons that focus on specific topics, such as the Middle Ages and the American Revolution.

CKHG components include:

Student Readers

Richly illustrated and engagingly written

Teacher Guides

With detailed lesson plans, activity page masters, additional activities, and assessments

Timeline Cards

Visual aids to reinforce big ideas, chronology, and context

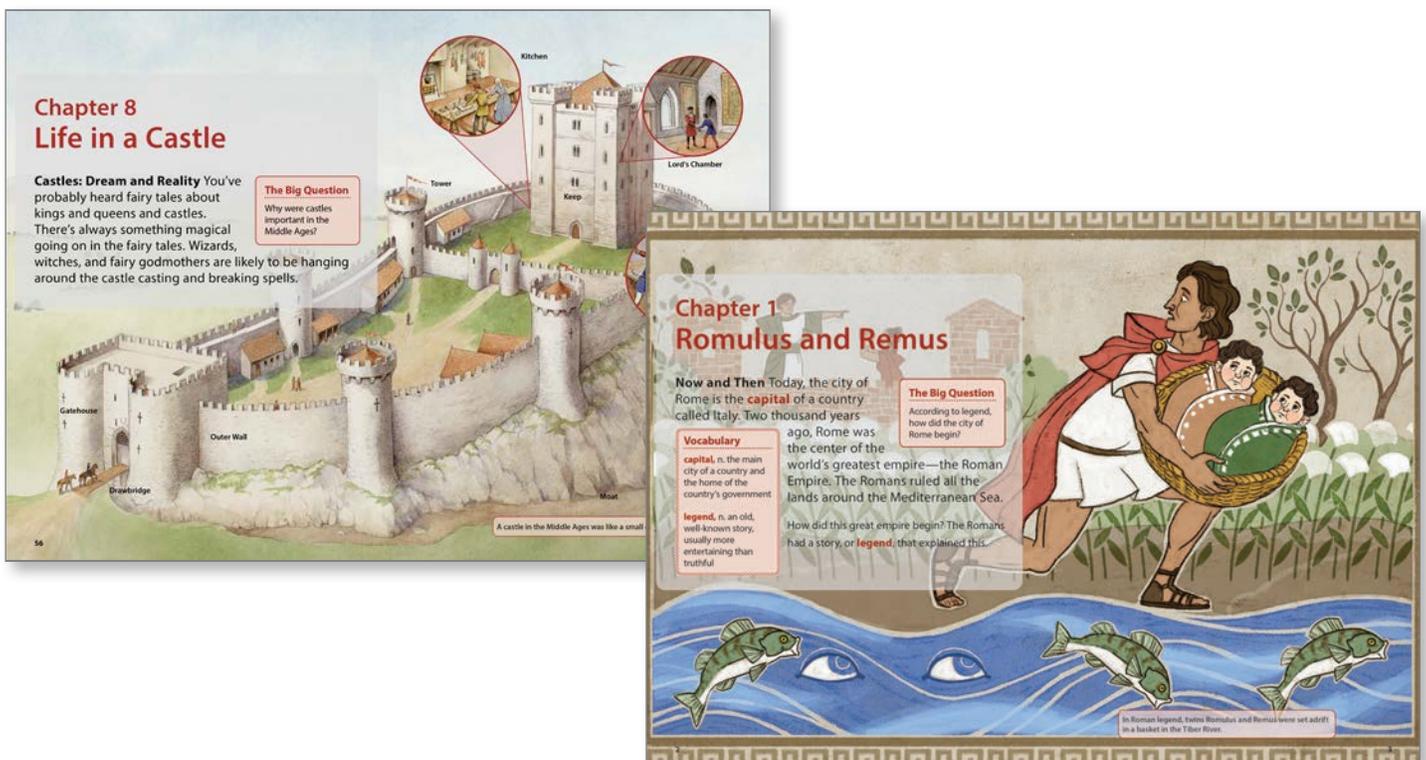
CKHG also incorporates read-alouds to support oral language skills that underlie and parallel reading and writing skills.



Focused on student engagement, CKHG uses interactive reading supports to foster learning of words and concepts in context. Additionally, teachers are able to provide timely feedback and explanations to students through daily and end-of-unit formative assessments included in the CKHG materials. These assessments require students to apply and share the knowledge learned in the materials in formats such as oral and written presentations.

The CKHG program, which focuses on specific geography and history topics, also integrates topics from civics and the arts. In order to supplement the CKHG materials, additional optional activities are incorporated into the materials, such as online links to cross-curricular connections in literature and the arts, virtual field trips, interactive games, and videos. In developing the content, the Core Knowledge Foundation worked closely with notable subject matter experts to ensure current and accurate content.

Used in their recommended sequence, CKHG materials can form the basis of an engaging Social Studies program that builds historical and geographical knowledge and skills grade by grade. CKHG can also be used to integrate content-rich nonfiction into Reading/Language Arts lessons. CKHG objectives are correlated with the Common Core English Language Arts standards, which call for increased reading of nonfiction informational texts. CKHG allows for an interdisciplinary approach to reading that provides rich, meaningful, and sustained engagement with informational texts organized in a coherent sequence.



Teachers already using CKLA can benefit from using CKHG as well, for these reasons:

- To fill in gaps: CKLA explores many, but not all, of the history topics specified in the Core Knowledge Sequence. By adding CKHG, teachers can help students get a broader, stronger grounding in history and geography.
- To enrich the Language Arts program: CKHG offers many [additional activities](#), including virtual field trips, online videos, literature and art connections, and more.
- To reinforce learning: Between the two sets of instructional materials (CKLA and CKHG), there is some intentional overlap in topics, but in each series students read completely different texts. Reading different texts on the same topics during the language arts and social studies blocks can give students repeated exposure to domain vocabulary.

See these [sample pacing guides](#) for suggestions on how to use CKLA and CKHG together.



During 2016, a total of eight CKHG units were completed and posted online. Despite the fact that for the first six months of the year only one unit was posted online, a total of 12,435 CKHG files were downloaded in 2016. When fully completed in 2017, thirty Grade 3-5 CKHG units will be available online for free download.

Helping our Teachers Teach

The Core Knowledge Foundation's efforts to close the knowledge and achievement gaps consistently reaffirm that extensive professional training and ongoing support make all the difference for teachers interested in using a content-rich curriculum.

To ensure that schools choosing to work with CKLA or the CK Sequence get the training and support they need, the Core Knowledge Foundation has highlighted the development of professional training and teacher resources in 2016:

CKLA Implementation Guide

The Foundation, based on years of working to provide professional support to teachers, pulled its training and implementation materials together into a single free online publication called the [P-5 CKLA Implementation Guide](#). This guide is a resource for any Preschool–5 teacher interested in using CKLA, from teachers just starting out to those well-versed in the program. The guide has four main sections for teachers and administrators:

- 1 Learn about CKLA
- 2 Plan implementation of CKLA
- 3 Teach CKLA, with a deep understanding; and
- 4 Enhance CKLA lessons.

Resources included in the guide include links to EngageNY turnkey professional development kits, curriculum materials, videos, alignments, parent and third-party resources, webinars, and more. In 2016, users viewed and/or downloaded the complete CKLA Implementation Guide more than 700 times. Teachers and coaches have sent emails thanking the Foundation for the resources and acknowledging how helpful they are.



CK Sequence Implementation Guide

With feedback from teachers, the Foundation has developed an array of resources to support implementation of the Core Knowledge Sequence. The [P-5 CK Sequence Implementation Guide](#) includes many free resources, most of which were specifically designed to support and strengthen implementation of the Core Knowledge Sequence. The contents of the guide include links to turnkey professional development kits, video presentations, related reading resources for educators, tools and templates for planning and instruction, and alignments to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).

Core Knowledge Licensed Professionals

As former Core Knowledge National Consultants, the independent Core Knowledge Licensed Professionals (CKLPs) have a great deal of relevant and practical experience and knowledge. These individuals have been licensed by CKF to provide on-site support (such as Core Knowledge workshops and diagnostic visits). Schools contract directly with these individuals to arrange professional development opportunities. While the Foundation is not involved with scheduling or contracting training, we continue to support Licensed Professionals by hosting winter, spring, and fall office hours, sharing updates around current CKF initiatives, and answering questions via email/phone.



Throughout 2016, in addition to the training resources provided by the Foundation, Curriculum Specialist Christina Erland also responded regularly by phone and email to queries from teachers and administrators across the country. Erland says, “There are peak times of the year, particularly in the late fall and summer months, where I will respond to multiple emails and calls daily. Some districts contact me regularly. Their questions are often multi-faceted.”

What is the biggest challenge for schools working with CKLA or with the CK Sequence?

Schools can feel a bit overwhelmed by the process of familiarizing themselves with the core of the program and with how to provide their teachers with enough ongoing support and coaching, particularly in the first year of implementation. Erland says, however, that with the tools provided by the Foundation and its support team, CKLA schools can move forward confidently with implementation.

“We work with school coaches and leaders who take it upon themselves to learn everything about CKLA, who take full advantage of our professional development tools, now easy to find in our CKLA Implementation Resources Guide. First-year nerves are quickly dispelled, and confidence builds, as does competence in the CKLA approach. It’s a pleasure to work with our CKLA schools and to watch their programs take flight.”

**Christina Erland,
Core Knowledge Schools Support & Curriculum Specialist**



The Core Knowledge Foundation is fortunate to have tens of thousands of dedicated educators across the country committed to helping children build strong foundations of knowledge. Thanks to them, the Core Knowledge name is identified with an excellent and equitable education. While most schools using Core Knowledge materials are happy to be active members of our knowledge-building community, a handful aspire to lead. These schools have embraced all aspects of Core Knowledge’s research base, philosophy, and instructional model—and they’ve applied to the Foundation to have their extraordinary accomplishments recognized. These are our Schools of Distinction as of 2016.

Bryant School of Arts and Innovation • **Riverside, CA**
Grayhawk Elementary School • **Scottsdale, AZ**
Liberty Common Elementary School • **Fort Collins, CO**
Lyles-Crouch Traditional Academy • **Alexandria, VA**
Millard Core Knowledge Academy at Willa Cather Elementary • **Omaha, NE**
Peach Hill Academy • **Moorpark, CA**
Snowy Range Academy • **Laramie, WY**
Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy – CFA • **Forest City, NC**
Urban Pathways K-5 College Charter School • **Pittsburgh, PA**



Since the publication of the prior Annual Report, we are proud to have added three more Schools of Distinction.

[Lyles-Crouch Traditional Academy](#)

in Alexandria, Virginia, earned special recognition for outstanding content integration across the subject areas and effective teaching practices. During the analysis visit led by representatives of Core Knowledge, the Lyles-Crouch teachers consistently demonstrated the power of content integration in planning and implementation. In-depth use of CKLA in the early grades has helped promote this cross-curricular collaboration.

The music program in particular consistently integrates other subject areas with the arts. A clear focus on engaging and meaningful teaching strategies also brings the content to life at Lyles-Crouch.

The leadership team is comprised of steadfast champions for Core Knowledge, including Dr. Patricia Zissios, Principal; Alison Meadows, Assistant Principal; and Nancy Maslyn, Grade 2 Teacher and Curriculum Coordinator. As a result of their strong and focused leadership, the staff, the community, and the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) district have all become ardent advocates of Core Knowledge.

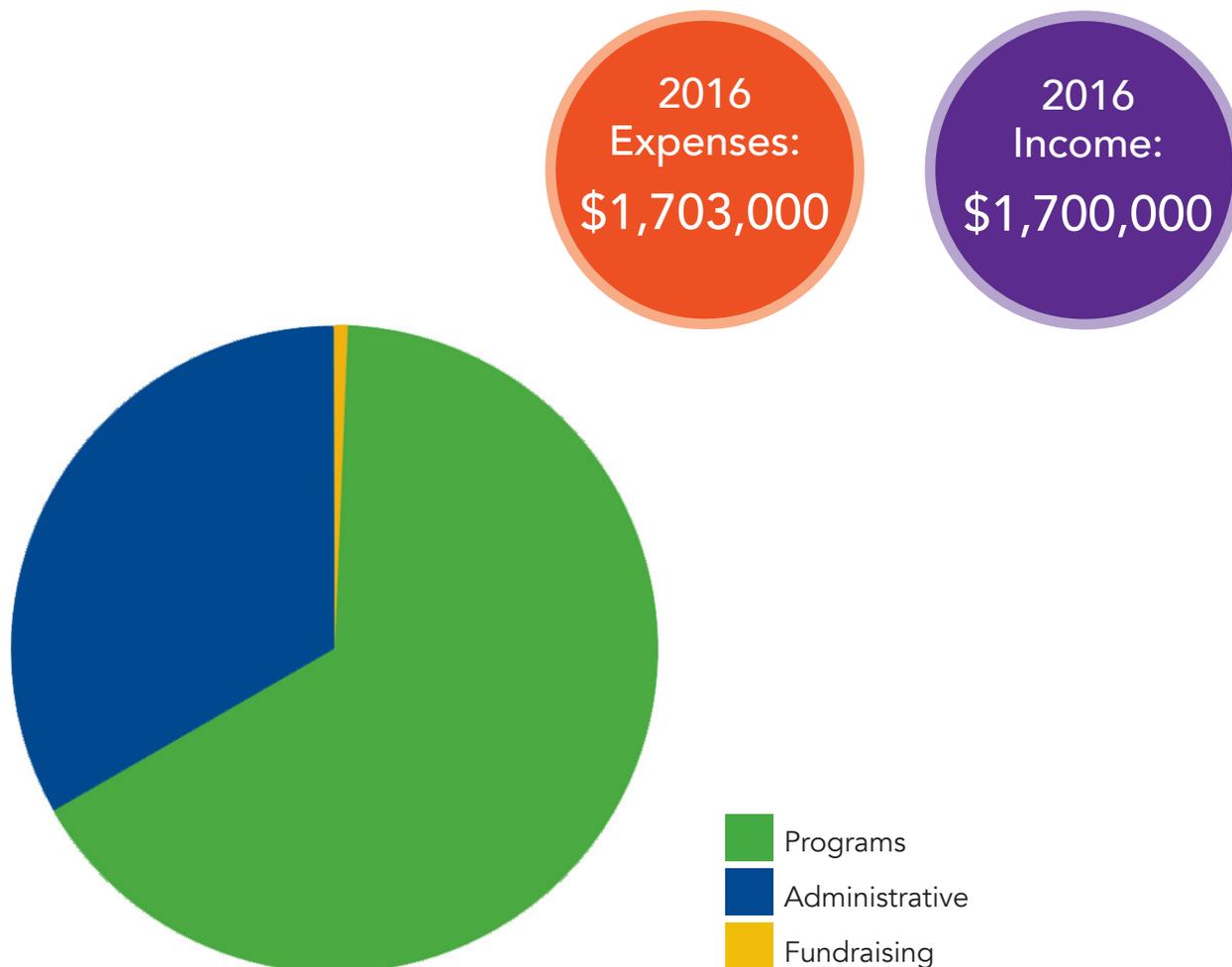


[Millard Core Academy](#) at Willa Cather Elementary in Omaha, Nebraska, earned special recognition for outstanding collaborative planning and implementation of the Core Knowledge Language Arts Listening & Learning Strand in the primary grades. Using an exemplary set of curriculum plans and maps, the teachers at the Millard Core Academy are dedicated to vertical and cross-curricular planning to enrich their students' learning. The Academy's approach to literacy instruction also closely aligns to the Core Knowledge approach. Teachers masterfully use the Spalding/Writing Road to Reading program as well as Shurley English in K–5. Although only certain grades use the CKLA Listening & Learning strand, the entire staff demonstrated understanding of knowledge-rich language instruction through domain immersion and use of the CK Sequence. Led by Dr. Paula Peal, Principal, and greatly supported by the Millard Public School District, the teachers are making a real difference for their students. Pleased with the results at Willa Cather Elementary, the Millard Public School District is opening another Core Academy at a sister school.

[Urban Pathways K5 College Charter School](#) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, earned special recognition for outstanding implementation of Core Knowledge Language Arts and collaborative planning. The staff at Urban Pathways has dedicated their time to collaborate in planning a comprehensive approach to the Core Knowledge Sequence, including full implementation of the CKLA program K–5. During the analysis visit, teachers consistently modeled domain vocabulary and engaged students to use key terms and phrases in meaningful contexts. Led by Kim Fitzgerald, Principal, and Rachel Bodenlos, Grade 3 Teacher and Core Knowledge Coordinator, the educators at Urban Pathways are working hard to close knowledge and achievement gaps.

Net Foundation Assets remained consistent from the previous year, with approximately \$6.1 million at the end of 2016. The unrestricted asset balance (operating funds) totaled \$3.5 million, down from \$4 million a year earlier. The Foundation's unrestricted endowment has increased to approximately \$2.2 million as of the close of 2016, a result of market value adjustments. There were no expenditures against this fund during the year. The restricted asset balance totaled \$386,108 at the end of 2016.

In 2016, total income equaled approximately \$1.7 million, almost matching total expenses, which exceeded income by a minor difference of just over \$3000. Of the total expense for 2016, Program and Supporting Service expenses comprised 66%, administrative expenses 33%, and fundraising expenses totaled 1%. End of year 2016 cash flow has increased about \$430,000 over 2015 cash flow, which reflects the Foundation's heightened need in 2016 due to new product development.



For more information on the Foundation's financial history and current status, see [GuideStar](#) and the Foundation's 2016 [audited financials](#).

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