

Hannah Fuchs: Wilson Reading System Graduate

by Jennifer Fuchs and Bev Menken

Before Wilson, I felt as though we were shooting darts at the educational dartboard. We kept hitting all around the bull's eye, but we could never hit the mark. It seemed like we were on the right track, yet we couldn't pull it all together. At first, we used tactile learning and a syllabication workbook to learn syllable types, but to no avail. In the meantime, Hannah's level of frustration rose as we would take one step forward and two steps back. Frustration soon gave way to tears and cries of "I'm stupid."



Bev Menken, Hannah Fuchs, and Jennifer Fuchs

A friend suggested that I contact Beverly Menken and learn about the Wilson Reading System (WRS). With some hesitation, I contacted Bev. When Hannah and I had our first meeting with Bev, she gave Hannah the WADE test to assess her skill level. Bev was very patient and encouraging which is exactly what Hannah needed. At the time, she was just shy of 12 years old and was struggling with vowels and the endless possibilities of their sounds. Up to this point, the "kid spelling" in her journal rarely included vowels. After the results of the WADE test, Hannah became even more upset. My husband and I decided to invest our time and money in the WRS.

We spent a little over five years taking part in once-a-week tutoring sessions with Bev. Hannah and I also completed two lessons a week at home. We began the program at Level One with the most basic closed syllable—which we could now understand because the rules were clearly explained. From there, each level progressed logically and increased Hannah's knowledge and confidence. In the beginning, the spelling portion of each lesson was particularly difficult for Hannah. Gradually, however, she began to lock the sounds and syllables into her memory; with perseverance her spelling improved greatly. She started to fill her mental toolbox with skills such as tapping, syllabication, recognizing keyword patterns, and using a spell checker. Now she can work her way through almost any spelling dilemma. Additionally, she can usually recognize when a word is misspelled and use her tools to correct the error. Her ability to read fluently is strong and her sisters are dazzled by her knowledge of syllables and phonemes. Hannah impresses them by explaining why a word is pronounced a certain way! Needless to say, the completion of the Wilson program has been a momentous occasion in our house.

Wherever Hannah's future takes her, we know she has the skills to succeed. She is leaning toward a future in education and tutoring because she knows the frustration of feeling helpless. However, with the right tools, she realized that she is truly an intelligent person and can succeed at learning. Throughout this process, Hannah has also developed compassion and understanding for others who struggle to learn. We are thankful for our tutor and for Wilson. The teamwork resulted in success that seemed impossible just a few short years ago.