WILSON® MILESTONE:
A Quarter Century of Passionate Work in Literacy!

Our students—young and old—continue to be our most vital concern. We think and work with urgency to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to be a successful reader, even the most challenged. We remain dedicated to working with educators who strive to assure literacy for children and adults.

We have long believed that developing evidence-based programs is only the first step in helping teachers teach, students learn, and districts plan and implement change. When it comes to implementation and sustainability, it’s clear by now that the research supports what we’ve been doing at Wilson for the last 25 years. We provide teachers with the professional learning needed (training, coaching, and administrator support) to implement a Wilson program with fidelity. We partner with districts to make programs sustainable over time.

Turn to page 4 for the parallel, inseparable streams of “Wilson at Work” Programs and Professional Learning.

continued on page 4

AUTHENTIC AND RIGOROUS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING:
Required for Teaching Wilson® Programs

At Wilson we know that when the Wilson Reading System®, Fundations®, Just Words®, and Fluency® are delivered with fidelity by a qualified teacher or tutor, they work. However, we also know that if not taught with fidelity, the instruction may not be effective, and it is the student who will suffer.

As a result, we consider teacher training as critical as program development. It is our way of assuring the integrity of the program and its implementation in the way it was designed. Our focus on implementation—and the principles of implementation science—demonstrates our overwhelming commitment to improving student achievement.

The Wilson Reading System was first published in 1988—25 years ago. The first Wilson certification program was developed one year later. Since we’re celebrating the 25th anniversary of WRS, we thought we would outline our certification models for that program.

continued on page 3
Dear Friends,

Wow! Where did the time go? The Wilson Reading System was published 25 years ago, and we’re stopping (for a moment) to reflect and celebrate with this issue of The Decoder (first published in 1989). In truth, however, there is no time to rest as we’re as busy as we’ve ever been.

We have traveled extensively this year, visiting schools and talking to district leaders, and Barbara has given presentations at conferences and district meetings. We are mission-driven to increase awareness and understanding of what it takes to teach reading so that children—and struggling readers of all ages—experience success.

This issue is focused on the Wilson Reading System (WRS), our first and core program (initially published in 1988), developed to help people with dyslexia. The two lead articles illustrate the importance of evidence-based curriculum materials and comprehensive, professional learning implementation models. Many of our stories are in the voices of students and teachers relating their experiences with WRS.

As in the past three newsletters, we continue to write about Implementation Science. Here we focus on coaching, an important component of implementation, one that’s necessary to be able to teach a program as it was meant to be taught. The article outlines the practices we follow at Wilson, accompanied by a wonderful discussion on coaching between Shari Barr, a Wilson Literacy Specialist, and April Padalino, a Fundations Facilitator who works with Shari.

Some of you have contributed stories to this issue, and we thank you. We encourage all of you to send us your stories. We love nothing more than to hear about your—and your students’—proud accomplishments!

In reflecting on the past 25 years and reading the submitted stories, we can’t help but be ever grateful to our Wilson Trainer teams, who dedicate their professional lives to helping teachers succeed.

Sincerely,

Barbara and Ed Wilson

P.S. If you are reading this newsletter online, we hope you will click the links in the Editor’s Notes at the bottom of many articles. These links take you to supplemental resources, including photos, letters, and even a handwritten card.
AUTHENTIC AND RIGOROUS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: REQUIRED FOR TEACHING WILSON® PROGRAMS

Becoming a WRS Certified Teacher

We strongly recommend that students needing intense remediation with the Wilson Reading System® (WRS) receive instruction from a Wilson® certified teacher. Only WRS Level I or Level II certified individuals can represent themselves as Wilson certified teachers.

Level I Certification

- WRS Introductory Workshop (3 days) (1 Graduate Credit)
  - Introduction to Multisensory Structured Language Instruction
- Level I Certification (9 Graduate Credits)
  - Online Certification Course (Steps 1–6)
  - Supervised Student Practicum and Implementation Meetings

Duration: 12 months

The WRS Level I certification process is rigorous and intense. Teachers learn how to teach reading and spelling, and how to use diagnostic techniques with students.

In addition to in-depth word study, teachers learn how to teach vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Level I Certification enables teachers to tutor students individually. Graduate credit is available from several academic institutions.

Level II Certification

Prerequisite: WRS Level I Certification

- Level II Certification (10 Graduate Credits)
  - Advanced Strategies for MSL Group Instruction Workshop
  - Advanced Word Study Online Course (Steps 7–12)
  - Supervised WRS Group Mastery Practicum
  - Supervised WRS Steps 7–12 Practicum

Duration: 15 months for each course with practicum (taken simultaneously or consecutively)

WRS Level II Certification is an advanced Wilson certification that prepares teachers to successfully deliver the program to small groups of students as well as teach advanced concepts of language structure. Graduate credit is available upon completion of each course from Fitchburg State University.

Becoming a Wilson Trainer or Wilson Literacy Specialist

Official Wilson training is delivered by a credentialed Wilson® Trainer (associated with a school, district, or Wilson Partner) or Wilson® Literacy Specialist (a Wilson employee). The requirements to achieve the status of Wilson Trainer or Literacy Specialist (LS) are significant and typically take three or more years to complete in addition to a full year Trainer internship. Wilson Trainers and Literacy Specialists must have an advanced degree, have substantial experience in the education field, and be proficient in Wilson programs through extensive training.

Reading Endorsements by Arizona Department of Education: K–8, 6–12, or K–12

In 2013, the Arizona Department of Education endorsed Wilson Reading System® Certification as a professional learning program that satisfies Option B of the state licensure for reading or literacy specialists, coaches, and interventionists. WRS Certification satisfies the requirement of a supervised field experience or practicum in reading. It can be applied to licensures for grades K–8, 6–12, and K–12. Wilson is naturally very proud of this significant endorsement of our professional learning program that leads to knowledgeable and effective reading teachers.
**Wilson at Work:**

**Wilson Programs—Launched in 1988**

The original, comprehensive Wilson program is the Wilson Reading System® (WRS), from which others developed: Fundations®, for all younger learners; Fluency®, to increase fluency and comprehension; and Just Words®, for adolescent students who require targeted word study. (Our latest venture was the Second Edition of Fundations, aligned even more strictly than the First Edition to the Common Core State Standards!)

All programs are known for their shared characteristics: scientifically-based, highly explicit, structured, cumulative, and multisensory. And all are based on the premise that the rules of the English language can (and should) be directly taught to students.

Together, the programs form a multi-tiered (RTI) model: Tier 1—Fundations—for the general K–3 classroom, Tier 2—Fundations Double Dose and Just Words—for students at risk, and Tier 3—WRS—for severely challenged students who require a high level of intensity and thoroughness.

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**Wilson at Work:**

**Wilson Professional Learning—Launched in 1989**

In 1989, just one year after WRS was published, Wilson conducted its first Level I Certification program in two public school districts. As the years passed, we created WRS Level II Certification (’95), for teaching small groups and for advanced concepts of language structure.

And this year, we have been rolling out a series of certification programs, for Facilitator of each Fundations level and of Just Words.

Approximately 18,000 teachers have achieved Level I Certification, and almost 1,000 have achieved Level II Certification.

The teachers going through the certification process are taught, coached, observed, and evaluated by Wilson Trainers or Wilson Literacy Specialists. And of course, these Trainers—all experienced Wilson teachers—go through a thorough and rigorous credentialing process.

*Editor’s Note: For more in-depth coverage of Wilson’s Professional Learning programs, see the second article on page 1. [Click here.]*
What Lies Ahead

The heart of Wilson remains its programs and professional learning. One of our ongoing projects is incorporating the tenets of Implementation Science into our processes, so that schools, districts, and organizations can implement Wilson programs with fidelity as well as become sustainable over time. Wilson COMPASS (COMprehensive Plans to Achieve Success and Sustainability) is a driving force in this endeavor.

Another of our ongoing concerns is how to most effectively integrate online learning into our professional learning process, without sacrificing pedagogical quality and trainer involvement. We worked with St. Joseph's University, in Philadelphia, to offer online WRS Certification through its Master's program. This institution was recognized in 2012 as meeting the standards outlined in the International Dyslexia Association's Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading. Now, after further piloting, a web-based practicum will be offered to the wider community of individuals seeking to be certified.

Still Mission Driven

As long as we continue to read about children and adults left behind, we realize that our work is far from complete. Here's hoping we make giant strides in the next 25 years… toward literacy for all!

*These two master’s programs were recognized as meeting the International Dyslexia Association’s Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading.
Coaching is Collaborative. Coaches must establish a relationship of trust with teachers. To do that, they must be free of any hint of supervision, negativity, or superiority. They also actively work to create an atmosphere of trust.

Once trust is established, a spirit of collaboration and partnership can flourish. During the Wilson coaching process, a teacher will bring up an activity or lesson concept that he or she needs help with, naturally leading to modeling and practice. Often the teacher(s) and the Literacy Specialist will want to discuss an issue together (such as the situation of a particular student), exploring details and context as the conversation deepens and a solution is devised.

Coaching focuses on fidelity of program implementation. The cycle to a successful coaching experience is: explicit instruction, modeled instruction, guided practice collaboration, and independent practice. Of course in the real world of teaching, these phases often overlap in a single coaching day.

A series of Wilson coaching visits throughout the year follows this cycle, so that teachers learn to teach Wilson programs as they were intended. A teacher typically has at least four coaching sessions during the school year. Early on, the teachers might watch the Literacy Specialist model the lesson, or lesson part, in a teacher’s classroom. The Literacy Specialist also observes teachers teaching lesson concepts and activities, and provides feedback that’s specific and targeted during a collaborative debrief.

Expertise grows between coaching visits through individual practice, co-teaching with more experienced staff, and engaging in study groups.

Coaching is student-centered. The goal of coaching is not only to improve teachers’ progress toward fidelity of instruction, but also to ensure that all students are progressing towards reading benchmarks. Coaching is, at heart, oriented toward the student.

In the Wilson coaching model, classroom observation centers on the particular needs of students, rather than the strengths and weaknesses of the teacher. The Literacy Specialist reviews with teachers their students’ assessments (along with more “informal” evaluations of student progress) so they can plan modifications in instruction.

Coaches are well trained! It’s fine for the coach to establish trust, but that must be backed up by the coach’s experience and expertise in program implementation and ability to guide teachers to progress in their own achievements. The ability to coach does not fall from trees: it must be explicitly taught, practiced, and—yes—coached.

Literacy Specialists at Wilson have all gone through rigorous certification and are all experienced teachers of Wilson programs. The professional learning process includes explicit instruction on coaching.

Framework for Teaching


Domain 1: Planning and Preparation
Domain 2: Classroom Environment
Domain 3: Instruction
Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities

Editor’s Note: For an expanded outline of these domains, click here.


A Coaching Discussion Between a Wilson® LS and a Fundations® Facilitator

Shari Barr and April Padalino work together as Wilson Literacy Specialist (LS) and Fundations Facilitator. April oversees the Fundations® implementation at St. John the Baptist School in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Shari has been a Wilson LS since 2010, and has been teaching Wilson programs since 2003.

Decoder: Could you discuss how you work together over the course of a year?

Shari Barr: I worked with April’s district on a recommended path for implementation. As a result of our work together—and the teachers’ hard work on their own!—the classrooms have beautiful setups and materials organization, the teachers have a very good grasp of most procedures, and the students are at or near mastery level with procedures and concepts. Toward
the end of the year, I worked with the teachers to deepen their thinking on diagnostic considerations for differentiated instruction and how to think about moving all students from introduction to accuracy to automaticity to fluency.

**April Padalino:** I found the whole past year amazing. It is so different knowing you will meet with the person training you throughout the year. As time went on, I became more and more comfortable with other teachers and with Shari observing me teach. It was exciting to take risks, knowing it was okay to make mistakes and that we would work together to fix them. Every moment was a teachable moment, and people were never judgmental. At each meeting, teachers were willing to share successes and problems and seek advice from each other on how to move forward to make our Fundations program the huge success it became.

**Current thinking on coaching suggests it should be a partnership. Would that characterize your relationship with teachers?**

**Shari:** We do a lot of group thinking with teachers at the Study Group meetings, which take place directly after the classroom visits/coaching. We debrief the lessons, giving the classroom teachers many well-deserved compliments. Then we brainstorm about other things we noticed: students craning their necks to find a Letter-Keyword-Sound poster in the back of the room, a student who was consistently behind the others when building words on the magnetic board, a Level K class whose teacher feared that her students were a little behind in their letter formation mastery.

I’ve been in lots of Fundations classrooms and generally have ideas on how to remedy a situation, and the teachers do too. Together, we can solve even big problems very quickly… and then I add their ideas to my “bag of tricks.” This community problem-solving and idea-sharing is one of the best parts of coaching. It helps create a collegial feeling in the grade-level team and in the school and, I hope, foster a deeper team commitment to the implementation.

**April:** Absolutely. We all definitely felt a commitment to group problem solving, leaving the group with great ideas, and the confidence to help each other when a challenge arises.

**Editor's Note:** To read an expanded version of Shari and April’s conversation along with some practical tips, click here.

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**WILSON PRESENTS AT THE 2013 GLOBAL IMPLEMENTATION CONFERENCE**

In August, Barbara Wilson and Linda Wernikoff, Wilson Senior Education Advisor, presented at the 2nd bi-annual GIC in Washington, DC. The session is titled “Does Good Science Lead to Good Education Practice? Implementation Science Lessons Learned and Applied to Scale Up and Sustain Effective Literacy Instruction.” Barbara and Linda spoke about the alignment of Wilson implementation practices with best practices of Implementation Science.

**Editor's Note:** To see an enlarged version of the Implementation Science poster, click here. To access the NIRN website, click here.
SUCCESS STORIES

FUNDATIONS® AND JUST WORDS® IN ACTION IN OUR NATION’S CAPITAL

There’s nothing that Barbara and Ed enjoy more than visiting students in a Wilson class. They visited two District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) in March 2013: CW Harris Elementary, where they visited Fundations classes in action, and Barnard Elementary, where they visited Just Words classrooms.

Corinne Colgan, Deputy Chief, Literacy and Humanities of DCPS, told us, “The students treated Barbara and Ed Wilson as true celebrities! They asked a ton of questions and crowded around them to get their autographs and express their gratitude. This brought home to me how much the students truly valued what they were learning in this class. They were so proud of their own growth and so thankful that someone had created a course that helped them ‘crack the code’ of reading. It made me proud of our students and honored to have an incredible partnership with Wilson!”

Later that spring, Barbara presented to principals and administrators of all DC schools on the importance of securing foundational skills for reading and writing success.

Kevin Loves Wilson!

When Barbara visited Barnard Elementary School, sixth-grader Kevin Flores went right up to her to tell her how much he loved Just Words. He told Barbara that he could not read before, but now because of Just Words, he can. He also wondered if his photograph with Just Words could be published in The Decoder. Here you go, Kevin!

Editor’s Note: To see an enlarged version of Kevin’s handwritten card and an additional photo, click here.
“EDUCATION FOR EVERYONE”
A Teacher’s Perspective on Just Words®

In 2012, Mary Addeo began her eighth year as a special education teacher at Bruton High School in York County, VA. She had been hired at Bruton to teach the Wilson Reading System®, and then two years ago, the school incorporated Just Words®. Mary says, “It’s a wonderful intervention for students who require less intensive instruction in a shorter period of time.”

“It is not a ‘magic’ cure for a reading disability, but it does provide effective strategies that the student can use to compensate for a reading deficit,” Mary points out. “If the student utilizes these skills, with time and practice their ability to read will improve. It is very gratifying to see students gain confidence as they progress through this program. It takes some of the mystery out of learning how to read. Students begin to believe that this is something that they are capable of achieving.”

Her Just Words class is kept small. “A comfortable atmosphere is important for students as they work to improve a deficit that has been embarrassing to them,” Mary says. “I try to create a place where the students find acceptance and want to participate. It is awesome to see students experience a sense of accomplishment at the end of the year when the program is completed. School can feel like a difficult place for a student with a learning disability. I think that’s why I’ve enjoyed reading instruction, because every new concept mastered is a reason to celebrate.”

“One of the miracles of teaching is that every year is a new beginning,” Mary says. “Unlike other professions, you have a chance to start over equipped with new knowledge, ideas, and renewed enthusiasm. Each student brings a different dynamic to the classroom and a new challenge to the teacher.”

Editor’s Note: This article was sent to us by Dorothy Elizabeth Crockett, Ph.D., Instructional Specialist, York County School Division, Yorktown, VA. This is an edited version of an article from Williamsburg’s Next Door Neighbors, written by Brandy Centolanza, located at www.magazine.williamsburgneighbors.com, in Archives, 2012 Issues, September, pages 13–14. To read the full article on the Next Door Neighbors website, click here.

ONE OF THE BIGGEST IMPACTS IN MY LIFE EVER
By Nicholas Garbarino, Sixth Grade, St. Bernadette School, Northborough, MA

The person who has influenced me is Mrs. Connor. Mrs. Connor is a Reading Resource Teacher. I have dyslexia so it’s hard for me to read. Mrs. Connor uses the Wilson Reading System. Wilson has steps that teach you sounds that help you read. Mrs. Connor and I have been working together since fourth grade.

Mrs. Connor and the Wilson Reading System have had a huge impact on me. I am on book nine step 9.4. She has helped me to be able to be a grade above my grade level in reading, which is a big step for me. It was hard for me to get this far. But Mrs. Connor believed in me, and that’s what made me believe in myself.

Before I started working with Mrs. Connor I had trouble reading. But now with Mrs. Connor’s help I am able to read better. Before I met Mrs. Connor I mixed up letters. It was hard for me because I saw everyone reading books, and I wanted to, but I couldn’t. But now I can read all the books that they can because of Mrs. Connor.

Editor’s Note: To read Nick’s entire essay, click here.

A Word from Nick’s Reading Resource Teacher, Nancy K. Connor

Nick is a sixth-grade boy here at the St. Bernadette School. He was diagnosed with dyslexia when he was in second grade, and I have been working with him in the Wilson Reading System for almost three years. I’m sending you [Wilson] this piece that he wrote for an essay contest held in the diocese of Worcester about his experience working with me learning to read with the WRS and the major impact it has had on his life. I was struck by Nick’s honesty about his struggles in reading and his urgent desire to succeed. Now he is aware of the incredible progress he has made; you can hear it in the joy in his words. I feel deeply touched and honored that Nick wrote about his Wilson triumph, which, as we all know, will serve him well for the rest of his life.
I'm Richard Fusaro, a 7th grader at Wappingers Junior High. I came from a small family, just my mom, my dad and my brother Joe. My favorite hobbies are baseball, football, basketball, and reading. I always loved baseball and football, but reading and basketball were different stories. I started basketball in fourth grade because my best friend Tom was involved. Now my dad can’t even keep me off the court.

Reading went the same way. At first I wasn’t able to read anything. If I tried reading a really fast book it would take me an hour.

I started Wilson in fourth grade with my teacher Mrs. Burday. After every time we met I would get a candy. Then in 5th grade I got moved to Mrs. Brusco, my new instructor. I went all the way up to now.

Now I’m finished with Wilson and I can write by myself like this. I can also read full books and novels. I’m also currently reading at my local church. Wilson helped me so much I’m now an A plus student. Now I finally love and enjoy reading. Four years of Wilson paid off.

Wilson was challenging at first. Then once I got the hang of it, it was easier. It felt weird at first doing Wilson because I didn’t know what a suffix was, a bonus letter, or any other rule. I wasn’t even sure about capital and lower case letters. I had no idea what I was doing. Now I know what all the rules are from Step 1.1 to 6.1 and I can read! Wilson means learning to me. Wilson has helped me in class and in writing assignments as well as science and reading in my class. Wilson helped me learn football plays because I can read the play list. I can now figure out the name of the move because I can read it. Wilson rocks!

One day in the forest of Greenwood there was a bunch of bears. The bears were all walking looking for somebody to scare. The scariest bear would become the bear ruler. The bears would always pick on one bear because he was really nice. He would always help out the other animals but no good ever came out of it.

Wilson from Austin’s perspective (as told to Misty)

I was convinced that Wilson was the program for him and I was determined that he was going to read. You see, his mother had been diagnosed with stage four cancer during this practicum year, and she asked me to promise to help her little boy read. That was a promise I could not break. Now in fourth grade, Austin has been soaring.

I have fallen in love with how the Wilson Reading System lights up the reading tunnel of struggling readers. In the words of Austin, Wilson Rocks!
FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE (OF READING)

Viktoriya’s Journey

Imagine a child who did not have the opportunity to go to school until she was 10 years old, and has recently moved to America. Now imagine that it is not only her first time in school, but she has had very little exposure to the English language!

Viktoriya, born in Russia in 1999, was adopted and brought to North Carolina in 2010, where she first began her formal education. All students come from varied situations; however, according to her teacher Hallie Harding, “Viktoriya came with such an extraordinary history and has seamlessly joined her family, embraced her school, and learned a brand new language.”

With the love of her parents and the structure and support she receives at Noble Academy in Greensboro, NC, Viktoriya now flourishes in all aspects of her life. Her inner strength and burgeoning confidence have allowed her to quickly progress through the Wilson Reading System® program.

Hallie continued, “I am overjoyed to have the pleasure of working with Viktoriya as I complete my Level I Wilson Certification. The program has definitely contributed to the success we experience together on a daily basis and will be an integral component in enabling Viktoriya to reach her maximum potential.”

Viktoriya has now taken on a love of reading! Everywhere she walks you can see a book tucked beneath her arm!

A lot of hard work and a few dance parties: Sarah and Jayden are forever bonded by their challenging but fun Wilson Reading System experience.

TWO LIVES, ONE WILSON EXPERIENCE

By Sarah Hinds, Special Education teacher

The 2012–13 school year was my first at Paris Elementary in Taylors, SC. When I began Wilson Reading System® certification that fall, fourth grader Jayden became my practicum student. A bright, kind young man with impeccable manners, Jayden was also shy. His lack of reading confidence manifested in his schoolwork and peer interactions.

At first, Jayden had trouble with b and d, short vowel sounds, and tapping words. His fall Measures of Academic Progress® (MAP) and AIMSWEB scores showed a student reading at an early third-grade level. Jayden struggled with classwork and had to retake many failed tests. He cried in the mornings, dreading returning to his regular education class. But Jayden persevered and around the holidays, things changed. Jayden’s skills accelerated, he read three- and four-syllable words, and his vocabulary expanded. Best of all, Jayden smiled more.

MAP testing began again in March. In preparation, Jayden and I discussed his progress, had dance parties, and reviewed test-taking skills. Jayden worked on the MAP for two hours—he scored 222. According to last year’s norms, that’s a ninth-grade level! On AIMSWEB, Jayden went from reading 51 words per minute with four errors to 91 words per minute with one error. Jayden’s progress also shows when he walks with his chin up, says he’s smart, and speaks assuredly to others.

Had we not worked together, I think Jayden could have fallen through the cracks, but instead, he learned to read and believe in himself. Our partnership reignited my passion for working with students with disabilities, making me more knowledgeable about how reading is taught.

There aren’t words to convey what this experience has done for us, so I’ll quote Jayden when Wilson Literacy Specialist Bonnie O’Shields thanked him for being a Wilson student. “No,” said Jayden, “thank you!”
THREE WRS GRADS OVERCOME ADVERSITY TO BECOME SUCCESSFUL READERS AND CITIZENS

As long as I can remember I have struggled with reading. Now I am in the 8th grade and can read better than ever! It took me a mere 3 years to complete the whole Wilson Reading System® and it wasn’t easy but my hard work and dedication paid off in the end. When I come across words in my Science textbook, I am now able to break them into syllables and decode them. I am also able to understand what I am reading because of Wilson. I can also read faster and more accurately since my years in the Wilson Reading Program have paid off. I started this program 3 summers ago during summer school with Kerri Thiel and then during the regular school year I worked with Patty Regnier and Francie Weekes. Patty was my main Wilson teacher until she became sick and passed away of cancer, which pushed me to finish the program and dedicate my hard work to her. I wouldn’t be the fluent, accurate, and confident reader that I am today without the Wilson Reading System. Thank you Wilson!!

Written by Dante Sylvester, 8th grade student, and submitted by his 4th Grade Teacher, Kerri Thiel, Greybull Elementary, Greybull, WY

My son Thomas was my Level I practicum student. Tom was born 13 weeks premature and weighed only two pounds. The doctors were certain he would require special attention throughout his life and prepared us for some rough roads ahead. Tom suffered a grade three brain bleed at birth. As he grew he was diagnosed with a learning disability as well as ADHD. He also has an episodic stutter. When I first attended a Wilson workshop I kept thinking of how this program could benefit him. Tom struggled with reading and was falling further and further behind in school. His struggle with reading began to affect his self-esteem. I was also a little concerned with his stutter as to whether or not he would be able to physically produce the sounds when needed for my observations, but we persevered. Tom’s tenacity ultimately made him the perfect Wilson student. When we finished Step 4.2, Tom wanted to keep going. When asked why, he said, “because reading is fun.” Eventually Tom went through all twelve steps successfully. When he graduated high school two years ago he had earned a Regents diploma. This past May he graduated from SUNY Purchase with a B.A. degree in Arts Management.

Written by Tom King about his son and WRS Practicum Student, Thomas, Graduate of the State University of New York, Purchase, NY

In 2009, I started the 9th grade at the Hallen School in New Rochelle, NY. I couldn’t read. I was very shy and scared about reading out loud. The school was just beginning to use the Wilson Reading System®. I was chosen to be a practicum student to work with my speech teacher, Ms. Petti. We started on [step] one. We worked 3 times per week. Little by little my reading level started to increase.

Being part of the Wilson Reading Program gave me so much hope. Since the Wilson Program started at my school, I am proud to say I was the first student to complete it successfully. Now I have all the skills I need to succeed in life. If it wasn’t for the Wilson System, I wouldn’t have a job or have received my driver’s license on time. Also, without Wilson, I wouldn’t have passed all of my NYS Regents Exams. I am not going to lie, I did have doubts when I was younger that I would never pass the Regents Tests, but I did it! I passed them and I am going to graduate from the Hallen School with an Academic diploma. So thank you Wilson! It’s because of your program that I am going to graduate. That’s not the end. I want to push myself and see how far I can go with my reading. I want to fulfill my dreams of being a police dog trainer. That’s what I really want to do with my life.

Written by Thomas Toledo, 12th Grade Student, Hallen School, New Rochelle, NY
Wilson Welcomes our Most Recent Wilson® Accredited Partners:

- University of Utah/University of Utah Reading Clinic, Salt Lake City, UT
- The Newgrange School of Princeton, Inc., Princeton, NJ

To achieve this status, both organizations met our standards for excellence in the delivery of Wilson® professional learning and business practices. Each Partner may provide Wilson professional learning programs for Fundations®, Just Words®, and the Wilson Reading System® for which they are credentialed. To see a complete list of Wilson Accredited Partners, go to wilsonlanguage.com.

College and University Update

Wilson collaborates with colleges and universities to provide Wilson certification and graduate credit in their Master's programs. Gordon College, in Wenham, MA, is the latest college to successfully launch its initial WRS Level I Certification cohort as part of its Master's program.

Publication Arises from the Extraordinary Brain Symposium

In June 2013, Barbara and Ed went to Estonia to attend the 13th Extraordinary Brain Symposium, which focused on reading comprehension. The symposium was sponsored by The Dyslexia Foundation, under the leadership of its founder, Will Baker.

The symposium resulted in the following publication: *Unraveling Reading Comprehension: Behavioral, Neurobiological, and Genetic Components (Extraordinary Brain series)*, edited by Brett Miller, Ph.D., Laurie Cutting, Ph.D., and Peggy McCardle, Ph.D. MPH., published by Paul H. Brookes Publishing in 2013. *(Editor's Note: To read more about this symposium in the Autumn 2012 issue of The Decoder (Vol. 19, No. 1), click here.)*

"Unraveling Reading Comprehension set[s] the gold standard for translational science of basic research into educational practice for reading comprehension." (Virginia W. Berninger, *Professor and Director of the NICHD-funded Center for OWLs 2013-05-20*) (review from amazon.com)

New Dyslexia Law Passes with the Help of Wilson Student Samantha Ravelli

In August 2013, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie signed the "Dyslexia" bill into law. The law requires the State Board of Education to incorporate the International Dyslexia Association’s definition of dyslexia into special education regulations, which will help students with dyslexia get the help they so badly need. A Wilson student, Samantha Ravelli, joined with many others, including concerned educators and parents from Decoding Dyslexia, to spearhead the effort that led to the law. *(Editor's Note: To read more about Samantha and her mother’s efforts in the online version of the Autumn 2009 issue of The Decoder (Vol. 16, No. 1), click here.)*

Fundations® Second Edition Alignment with Common Core State Standards

“Our state is fully implementing the CCSS this year, and teachers all over the state were involved in trainings this summer. I was so excited when I began getting texts, emails, and phone calls from teachers I’ve worked with who were at the trainings, saying, ‘This is Wilson!’ My teachers were so far ahead of the other teachers, and didn’t feel nearly as overwhelmed as they did. Thank you Wilson!”

—Received August 2013 from Susan Elrod, Wilson Literacy Specialist, Blount County, Tennessee

The first edition of Fundations® was strongly aligned to the CCSS. The second edition, published in the summer of 2012, retained those components aligned to the Core, and includes significant updates so it now thoroughly and specifically addresses the Foundational Standards, and provides mastery instruction for many goals in the Reading, Writing, and Language Standards as well. It provides specific, measurable learning objectives which are aligned to CCSS. Also, Wilson certified teachers are well trained to do close reading with a Wilson lesson with their Comprehension S.O.S.™ work.

In the past year and a half, Barbara Wilson has delivered three Keynote Talks for statewide conferences of the International Dyslexia Association (Georgia, New Jersey, and Ohio). These all addressed the theme of the Common Core State Standards and their impact on students with dyslexia. See an interview with Barbara on the Wilson website to hear some of her thoughts on this topic. *(Editor's Note: To read the specifics of the Fundations/CCSS alignment on Fundations.com, click here. The Fundations/CCSS alignment is also available in the online Prevention Learning Community of Wilson Academy®, available to those with access to this online learning community.)*
**2013 WILSON® ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

**Learning, Connecting, and Sharing**

The 2013 Annual Conference for Wilson Level I and II Certified teachers was held July 9–10 in Providence, RI. In his keynote presentation, “Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Close Reading But Were Afraid to Ask,” Dr. Tim Shanahan (pictured) explored the strategy known as “close reading,” which has been given new attention by the Common Core State Standards. As he explained, “Close reading is synonymous with deep or analytical or critical reading. It is a strategy for asking and investigating important questions in the universe of the text, a text which should be worthy of this scrutiny.” Dr. Shanahan is the Distinguished Professor of Urban Education at the University of Illinois at Chicago where he is Director of the UIC Center for Literacy.

Barbara Wilson’s presentation, “Comprehension Step-by-Step,” on one facet of the Common Core State Standards, the Staircase of Text Complexity, gave a step-by-step model for teaching diverse students to comprehend text. Dr. Timothy Odegard, Wilson’s Director of Research and Evaluation, is a developmental cognitive neuroscientist specializing in the area of dyslexia. Dr. Odegard presented “Dyslexia and the Brain,” about the importance of taking a developmental perspective on understanding how to teach individuals who struggle to read as the result of having developmental dyslexia.

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### 16th Annual Conference for WRS Certified Teachers

**Dates:** Wednesday, July 9–Thursday, July 10, 2014

Attendees must be WRS Level I or Level II Certified.

**Conference Registration Fee:** $349

**Location:** Omni Hotel, Providence, RI. To reserve a hotel room at the discount rate of $149, call: 800-843-6664 (mention the Wilson Conference) or visit the Omni Hotel website (conference code: 070414WILSONLAN). This rate is available for July 5–12, 2014.

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### WILSON LITERACY SPECIALIST IN THE SPOTLIGHT

**Barbara McDonald**

**Profile:** I was a reading teacher for the department of special education in a Maine high school when I became WRS Level I certified. The tremendously positive impact of that training on my teaching led me to pursue further training, and I became a Wilson Trainer in 1996. I joined the Literacy Specialist Team in 2009. As an LS I worked primarily with Broward County, Florida, Washington DC, and the Special School District of Missouri. I have an M.Ed. in Special Education from Boston University, and an M.S. Ed. in Literacy Education from the University of Southern Maine.

**On the Literacy Specialist program:** The LSs’ primary role is to develop teacher proficiency with Wilson programs. As we know from implementation science, their success depends on the support of school administrators as well as the district leadership team. The Wilson Literacy Advisors’ ongoing work with districts in developing district plans phased over several years is crucial to the effectiveness of the LSs’ work.

**On coaching:** Once teachers trust that our coaching is student centered and that we are there to help them learn how to implement the program effectively rather than to critique or evaluate them, they are much more likely to be open to our presence in their classrooms. So it is critical to establish that relationship from the start. One of the ways we do that is to schedule the first coaching visit early in the school year to guide basic components such as materials management, as the student manipulatives are a cornerstone of our programs and an aspect of our instruction new to many teachers. We also want to empower teachers with resources they can use between coaching visits, such as study groups, Activity Cue Cards, and the Wilson Academy Learning Communities. Developing and certifying school-based Wilson Facilitators is also key to supporting teachers between coaching visits as well as sustaining program implementation over time.

**It’s not all serious:** During a fall Fundations® demonstration lesson in a kindergarten classroom. I was reviewing with the students the names of the writing grid lines. When I pointed to the bottom line, a hand shot up and the boy proudly declared, “That’s the ringworm line!” When the seven teachers in the room burst out laughing, he was delighted with the response, but had no idea what was funny.

**Favorite book on literacy:** My favorite book about struggling readers is “Overcoming Dyslexia” by Sally Shaywitz. I have recommended it to countless parents for its very clear, practical, and hopeful treatment of a topic they often find daunting.
HARD WORK AND DETERMINATION LEAD TO “YES I CAN” AWARD

In 2013, John Carson Morris received the Council for Exceptional Children Yes I Can! Award in the Academics category. An essay he wrote in 2012, called A Way Out of This Spinning World, begins: “Hello, my name is John Carson Morris, but I go by Carson. I was diagnosed with profound dyslexia when I was six years old; now I am eighteen.”

Carson began the Wilson Reading System® in 2009 as the Wilson Level I certification practicum student of Hui Angela Du. He was a ninth grader at Suncoast Community High School, in Riviera Beach, Florida. Angela described Carson’s extraordinary sense of purpose: “On top of his heavy school work, on top of his every day football and baseball practices, on top of his school club meetings, Carson never missed one single lesson we scheduled in 10 months.” In that time, he also went from a fourth-grade to a ninth-grade reading level.

Angela wrote to Wilson in 2012 about Carson’s accomplishments; he had just received Honorable Mention for a Remy Johnston Certificate of Merit, awarded by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA). So when he won the CEC award, we wanted to celebrate with Carson. Two of Wilson’s Literacy Advisors, Anne Treadwell and Ruth Stern, presented him with accolades and gifts at the Wilson® exhibit booth at CEC’s annual convention in San Antonio.

Carson advises someone who has just been diagnosed with dyslexia: “It will just take some hard work and determination, but you will get to a point in your life when you find yourself always reading.”

Postscript from Ms. Du (fall, 2013): Carson is now studying aeronautical engineering with an academic scholarship at Auburn University in Alabama. Before going off to college, Carson completed WRS Substep 10.3; we intend to finish the remaining steps during his college breaks.

Editor’s Note: To read Carson’s essay, as well as a letter about Carson by Hui Angela Du, click here.

SARAH VDOKAKES, ACADEMIC INTERVENTION TEACHER, AWARDED SHARON PARKS MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Sarah Vdokakes has been teaching at P.S. 102 (the Jacques Cartier School) in East Harlem, NY, for 22 years; she was first introduced to Wilson® at a WRS workshop eight years ago. Sarah achieved her Level I Certification in 2012 under the guidance of her Wilson Trainer, Maura Basile, an Achievement Coach with the school’s network, Children’s First Network 607.

Sarah’s dedication to her students and her passion for teaching led Maura to nominate her for this scholarship. “Sarah has been instrumental in guiding teachers to teach with fidelity,” says Maura. For her part, Sarah says, “I consider myself extremely fortunate to have been trained by Ms. Basile and another Wilson trainer, Ms. Self, who made this journey of learning both informative and enjoyable.”

Sarah is also a Fundations® Facilitator for Levels K–2 for her school, provides Tier 2 intervention with Fundations Double Dosing, and after attending a Just Words® workshop, she now teaches that as well. “This school year I can honestly say my entire schedule was consumed with Wilson. I loved every minute of it as I saw my students grow by leaps and bounds!”

Sarah received her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Elementary Education and her Master’s of Science in Elementary Education, both from Hunter College of the City University of New York.
CELEBRATING 25 YEARS…

Early Members of the Wilson Community

The first full-time employee, before WLT was even incorporated, was Barbara’s mother Janet O’Connor-Wilson, Barbara’s life-long inspiration, who served Wilson well as Executive Director and Board Member.

“\textit{The course of my life changed when I met Barbara Wilson. With the Wilson Reading System, I’ve never had a student I couldn’t help. I’m so passionate about Wilson... To this day, I eat, drink, and sleep it!”}

—ANN HAMEL-WEBSTER, Special Educator, Reading Specialist, and Private Wilson Tutor since 1989

Robin Carlo, Wilson Intervention Literacy Leader. Robin has worked as a Wilson trainer since 1991 and is currently a Board Member; she oversees the Fundations® Demonstration Site in Worcester, MA.

Wilson’s First Mascot: Barney the Beagle.

For his twenty years of service, Tony Pepin recently received the very first Wilson Language Training® Service Award. Starting with Wilson as a high school student who assembled orders, Tony went on to become Director of Operations, advancing to the position of Senior Director of Technology. Since his first day, his response to even the most difficult situation was, “Not a problem.” As Barbara and Ed said, “We would not be where we are today without Tony!”

For more information on the Wilson Language Training® Service Award, please visit www.wilsonlanguage.com.