



THE Decoder

THE VOICE OF THE WILSON COMMUNITY

WIN[®]

WILSON[®] IMPLEMENTATION NETWORK



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The Decoder is published by Wilson Language Training, a leader in multisensory structured language instruction, dedicated to providing educators with the resources needed to help students become fluent, independent readers.

DEAR FRIENDS,

Now that we're well into a new academic year, some of you may find your school environments and schedules moving back to "normal." Others could find it necessary to continue embracing remote or hybrid learning. In each of these scenarios, there's no rest for the weary. Last year's COVID-19-related school closures and online challenges intensified achievement gaps across the country. While some children experienced a full year of learning, many others—approximately three million—weren't as fortunate. In response, Wilson® is committed to supporting you as you get students back on track.



At Wilson, it is clear that we have an important role to play during these challenging times. First, we must level the playing field for younger students who experienced disrupted learning last year. We asked ourselves how we could present the most vulnerable children with the key foundational skills they missed during the pandemic. The answer was a new acceleration program called Foundations Ready to Rise™. Appropriate for either a summer implementation or an intensive boost when returning to school, it targets only the most critical skills so first and second graders can access upcoming content.

Our support for teachers is central to our mission. Wilson Academy® members know the new iteration of the platform has better accessibility across devices, easier navigation, and improved search capabilities. We've also extended a complimentary FUN HUB™ membership for Foundations® teachers who have a Teacher's Manual, recognizing that the year ahead is uncertain.

As always, our dedication to students with dyslexia remains steadfast, and thus we're thrilled to announce the availability of the WRS Advanced Set this fall. There are plenty of updated professional learning opportunities as well. Specifically, WRS Level I and Level II Certification Trainings offer web-based coursework and practicums with access to a robust practicum dashboard for participants and Trainers.

There are many facets to all our endeavors, and it truly requires an "all hands on deck" approach. You'll see this in the following pages—from the state chapters of Decoding Dyslexia that lead and support legislative and advocacy initiatives, to principals who develop their literacy and implementation science knowledge to support teachers, to educators who undergo professional learning to effectively use reading programs with their students.

This issue of *The Decoder* also highlights the commitment of Wilson educators and their resilient students. You'll meet the Academy of Innovation students, who read thousands of pages for a contest; WRS alumnus Calum Bell and his teacher Nanci; Wilson® Dyslexia Practitioner Barbara Engel and student Josephine; Step 12 graduate Mackenzie P. and instructor Amy Geary; and tutor Angela Burton and her daughter and former student Rory. There's Julie Segalla of Massachusetts, who insisted on WRS training to provide her students with necessary reading support, as well as the educators of Madison, CT, who adopted Tier 1 Foundations during a pandemic year to help their youngest readers.

As always, we're inspired by the dedication the Wilson community has shown and will undoubtedly continue to exhibit as we return to our classrooms—in person or otherwise—with refreshed and enthusiastic outlooks.

Sincerely,

Barbara & Ed Wilson

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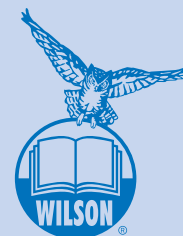
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BUILDING CAPACITY FOR DYSPLEXIA LEGISLATION IMPLEMENTATION

Over the past decade, the Decoding Dyslexia movement has swept across the country with chapters in every state working to improve reading outcomes for children with dyslexia and other reading difficulties. With the goal of providing support for families, founding Decoding Dyslexia parents quickly realized that getting schools to provide help for their children wasn't going to be easy. As a result, they decided to seek assistance from their state legislators. Currently, all but a few states have passed legislation supporting students with dyslexia.

Today, state Decoding Dyslexia chapters continue to focus their legislative advocacy efforts on five key policy goals:

- A universal definition and understanding of “dyslexia” in their state education codes
- Mandatory early screening tests for dyslexia
- Mandatory dyslexia remediation programs, which can be accessed by both general and special education populations
- Mandatory teacher training on dyslexia, its warning signs, and appropriate intervention strategies
- Access to appropriate assistive technologies in the public school setting for students with dyslexia

While many states have passed legislation focused on these five policy goals, implementation of the laws is an important advocacy focus. Without the needed supports for putting new policies and practices into place in schools and classrooms, legislation is unable to meet its objectives. To improve achievement outcomes, Decoding Dyslexia members knew they needed not only the support of legislators, but also the involvement of various stakeholders, such as state departments of education, teachers' unions, school administrators, colleges of education, and other key groups within their states and communities. It's difficult to make changes across the layers of any organization. The same holds true when implementing dyslexia laws. Historically, accountability for carrying out change has been—and continues to be—a major endeavor across all levels of education systems across the United States.

As many states are making gains in their efforts to improve literacy outcomes, one state stands out in charting a different course for supporting legislative accountability. Connecticut's Decoding Dyslexia founder, Allison Quirion, who is also a Specialist in the brainLENS Laboratory at the University of Connecticut, recently provided highlights of the state's journey toward this end. As advocates watched for implementation of the state's legislation (2014–2017) to bring awareness of dyslexia and to push for teacher preparation in the states' higher education institutes/educator preparation programs, the need for a task force to better understand what was happening and not happening across the state arose in 2019.


Members of the task force came to realize that there was no state agency responsible for ensuring legislated improvements in teacher preparation were in place. As a result, they created a list of needed changes and recommendations, which in 2021, translated into House Bill 6517 that required the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to enforce the state's education standards for dyslexia that were passed by the legislature between 2014 and 2017.

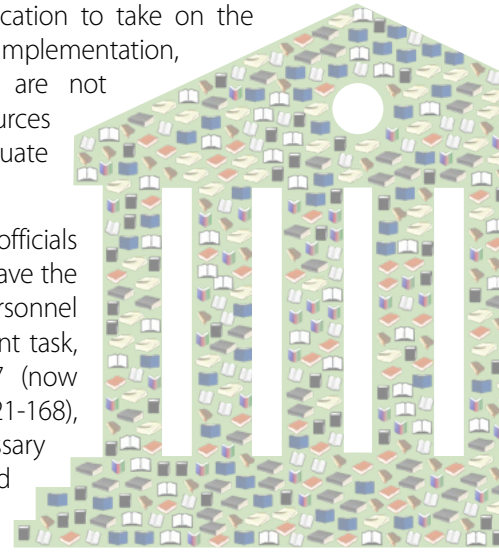
State legislation across the country often calls for a state's department of education to take on the task of accountability for implementation, however these agencies are not usually afforded the resources needed to build adequate capacity to do so.

When Connecticut's state officials relayed that they did not have the expertise, funding, and personnel to oversee such a significant task, legislators passed HB6517 (now Connecticut's Public Act 21-168), which created the necessary framework, guidance, and accountability to support the implementation of existing dyslexia legislation. The Act established the Office of Dyslexia and Reading Disabilities (The Office) within the CSDE. This Office will:

- *determine compliance verification with existing dyslexia legislation, including educator preparation programs (EPPs) in Connecticut;*
- *develop structured literacy competency targets and in-service models;*
- *review trainings sponsored or endorsed by the CSDE;*
- *provide guidance to EPPs regarding practicum supervisor qualifications; and*
- *update K-3 screening requirements for districts and provide screening implementation guidance.*

Additionally, the Connecticut State Board of Education (SBOE) shall not approve EPPs until The Office verifies compliance and shall not issue certification until The Office verifies compliance in collaboration with the CSDE Talent Office.

Possibly the first of its kind to include dyslexia as a key focus, Connecticut's Office of Dyslexia and Reading Disabilities may serve as a model for other states in building capacity for dyslexia legislation implementation and any other legislation designed to improve student achievement. 



THE PRINCIPAL IMPACT

CULTIVATING A HIGH-QUALITY NETWORK FOR LITERACY LEADERSHIP

What the Research Says About Principals' Impact

School-based leadership is key to the successful implementation of any curriculum. Leaders create the conditions to support organizational direction. They also ensure material needs are met and cultivate a culture of continuous learning and improvement to build success at scale. A building principal's "leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school" (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 5).



Administrators connect virtually during a WIN Prin session

A new report commissioned by the Wallace Foundation, *How Principals Affect Students and Schools: A Systematic Synthesis of Two Decades of Research*, by Grissom et al. (2021), is an in-depth review of research on school leadership. The most recent findings report on the magnitude of effect principals have on student achievement:

Principals' effect is not as large as teachers', on average, but the principal's effect is realized across the school, whereas a teacher's effect is realized in his classroom (Grissom et al., 2021).

Effective principals are defined as those who are skilled in three categories: instruction, people, and organizations. The report finds that effective principals carry out four key behaviors:

1. engage in "high-leverage" instructional activities, such as teacher evaluation and feedback;
2. establish a productive school climate;
3. build collaboration and professional learning communities; and
4. strategically manage personnel and resources.

Principals who consistently participate in these behaviors see more positive outcomes and are considered highly effective and impactful. The authors of the report articulate the phrase, "instructionally focused interactions with teachers" to emphasize that these are behaviors specifically related to instruction and helping teachers improve their practice. The scholars of the report conclude:

"Principals really matter. Indeed, given not just the magnitude but the scope of principal effects, which are felt across a potentially large student body and faculty in a school, it is difficult to envision an investment with a higher ceiling on its potential return than a successful effort to improve principal leadership" (Grissom et al., 2021, p. 43).

Literacy Knowledge and Implementation Science

A key finding of the report is that effective principals orient their practice toward instructionally focused interactions with teachers. This can be difficult if principals do not have the content expertise in early literacy instruction.

Principals who are able to combine their knowledge of effective literacy instruction, a specific early literacy intervention, and leadership application of evidence-based implementation practices can elevate teaching and learning at their schools/district to ensure that all students have equitable access to achieve literacy proficiency. This is because administrators create the conditions that contribute to the growth of teacher skills and confidence through a complementary understanding of the skills, programs, and resources needed to effectively implement a literacy curriculum.

Wilson recognized that we could play a helpful role in developing principals' background knowledge in reading as well as implementation science. In 2018, the Wilson Implementation Network for Principals (WIN Prin) program was launched.

The WIN Prin is designed by principals for principals to explore key conditions that support successful program implementation in the first year of adoption, review research that supports effective reading instruction, and provide guidance on leveraging these practices to maximize student learning and achievement.

Four thoughtfully crafted virtual sessions, conducted throughout the year, are facilitated by former principals with experience in successfully implementing all three Wilson programs, as well as a Literacy Specialist with deep knowledge in the science of reading and Wilson programs. The sessions provide a safe space for leaders to network with peers, embrace their unfinished learning concerning literacy skill development, and discover how to best support implementation. Principals are also enrolled in the Administrator Learning Community, which offers program resources for members to learn independently at their own pace.

A principal explained, “WIN Prin just helped me to better understand what our students are supposed to be learning, what our teachers are supposed to be implementing, and what it is that I’m supposed to be seeing and hearing from both teachers and students in the classroom. I’ve never experienced anything before where the administration has that support like teachers do for a curriculum. Usually, when we adopt something new, we pretty much attach ourselves to what the teachers are learning. But having something specifically designed for administrators is very unique to what we are going through, and I like it, I really like it!”

“Having something specifically designed for administrators is very unique to what we are going through, and I like it, I really like it!”

In addition to the concrete, useful information, the sessions always allow time for collaboration and sharing. “The principals in our community of practice have different levels of experience and background knowledge. The discussions allow participants to share common challenges, collective expertise, and knowledge around potential solutions,” shares Dr. Siobhan Dennis, Director of Administrator Relations and facilitator of the WIN Prin sessions.

The results speak for themselves. Another WIN Prin participant commented, “Next year I think I’ll be a better principal. It has been a lifesaver for me to have these [WIN Prin] meetings and have this level of principal support because then my teachers see I’m developing wisdom too. The training gives us the same

language since there are strategies and techniques that are very specific to Wilson’s [curriculum] and the way that students are taught.”

The WIN Prin network is currently available to any principal who has teachers enrolled in either a Foundations® or Just Words® Virtual Implementation Support professional learning program via a

COMPASS plan. Because of the success of the network, Wilson is piloting a WIN Prin focusing on the implementation of the Wilson Reading System® (WRS) in the 2021-22 school year. ↪

Grissom, J. A., Egalite, A. J., & Lindsay, C. A. (2021). *How principals affect students and schools: A systematic synthesis of two decades of research* [Research report]. The Wallace Foundation. <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/How-Principals-Affect-Students-and-Schools.pdf>

Leithwood, K., Louis, K. S., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning* [Executive summary]. The Wallace Foundation. <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/How-Leadership-Influences-Student-Learning.pdf>

KEY PRINCIPLES OF INSTRUCTION SHARED WITH PRINCIPALS

Principals collaborate with Wilson facilitators as part of the Wilson Implementation Network for Principals (WIN PRIN). Here are some helpful tips shared during their sessions:

1. Focus on logistics during the early stages of Wilson program implementation—and celebrate the small successes.
2. Explore strategies, such as creating instructional routines and using pacing guidelines and program guides to support teachers.
3. Expand knowledge about the science of reading (SOR) and literacy development. This helps with understanding the “why” of the program.
4. Develop a shared understanding of content with staff as well as the ability to communicate using a common language. This leads to meaningful conversations and feedback.
5. Create systems and processes for monitoring implementation and fidelity, including data collection, pacing, and principal walkthroughs.
6. Prioritize the 30-minute Foundations® block in the master schedule to ensure all students have access to instruction.
7. Get involved with intervention strategies for Tiers 2 and 3.

WIN[®]
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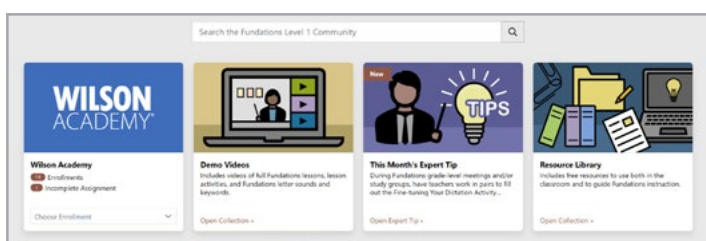
WHAT'S NEW FOR YOU? TECHNOLOGY, PROGRAMS, AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Exciting Resources, Offerings, and Enhancements

New and Improved Wilson Academy® is here!

The online Academy has a vibrant new look, is more accessible on all kinds of devices, offers easier navigation, provides better discoverability of resources, and delivers robust search capabilities within the program Communities.

Wilson Academy is your home base and your go-to for professional learning courses and transcripts, while our program Learning Communities provide extensive teacher resources that include video demonstrations; lesson planning guidance; expert tips; and more.



Membership in the Wilson Academy and the program Learning Communities is currently complimentary with the purchase of a program manual.

If you haven't done so already, enter the code located in the front of your manual and explore wonderful resources to support your instruction.

ACCELERATED LEARNING

Reading Students for Success

Last spring, as many districts were figuring out how to address a year of interrupted learning, we were determining how we could best help. In response, Wilson® launched the Foundations Ready to Rise™ program that could be implemented either during the summer or at the beginning of the school year. This 20-day accelerated program targets key skills that prepare students for a successful school year ahead.

An acceleration strategy does not reteach skills. Instead, acceleration focuses on what must be learned to tackle upcoming grade-level material within the context of current learning. Dr. David Steiner, Executive Director of Johns Hopkins Institute of Education Policy, describes acceleration programs as those that look to the academic year ahead by identifying key skills needed for success—not cover all past content.

To learn more, read: *Steiner & Wilson: Case Study – Some Tough Questions, and Some Answers, About Fighting COVID Slide While Accelerating Student Learning.* Published on the74million.org site: <https://tinyurl.com/S-and-W-Case-Study>

Extending Access to the FUN HUB™

Recognizing that challenges still exist, we are continuing to support Foundations® teachers by extending complimentary membership in the FUN HUB for the 2021-2022 school year. If you find yourself teaching Foundations remotely, the FUN HUB has you covered with the following resources!

- Foundations InterActivities—an interactive teaching tool with Sound Cards and Foundations materials to help teachers deliver lessons online
- Video demos to introduce new concepts and for small-group instruction
- Guidance and support for families, including video-based home tutorials



PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TIP!

Did you ever wonder how best to introduce a skill? Remember, with the FUN HUB, you have an extensive video library of our expert Literacy Specialists demonstrating each new concept.

Access to the FUN HUB is provided via your Wilson Academy membership. ↻



WRS STEPS 7-12 IS SHIPPING/AVAILABLE THIS FALL

The eagerly awaited Fourth Edition of WRS Steps 7-12 provides in-depth word study with more complex word structures, instruction in the r-controlled and double vowel syllable types with sound options, and the study of additional final stable syllable patterns.

Students will continue their exciting study of morphology, learning Greek and additional Latin word elements. They will learn that Greek combining forms are linked to make a type of compound word (e.g., atmosphere) and are sometimes joined together with a connecting vowel (e.g., phonograph). New prefixes and many more suffixes will be introduced.

The study of suffixes will now include the formation of complex words by combining a Latin base with a suffix (e.g., victory) and advanced spelling rules when a suffix is added to a word.

A comprehensive Block 3 Guide is included in the WRS Steps 7-12 Manual. Block 3 focuses on fluency and comprehension by

having students apply their word-level skills to connected text. In the Upper Steps, that ultimately includes the application of all reading and writing strategies to grade-level content. The Guide explicitly walks teachers through how to address text types and tasks, fluency, and students' progression through the Secondary and Proficient Phases of instruction.

In the Upper Steps, work in Block 3 extends to writing a summary sentence, completing a graphic organizer, making linear notes, and/or writing about topics.

"We recognize that teachers have been waiting patiently for Fourth Edition Steps 7-12 materials," acknowledged Vice President of Curriculum and Professional Learning Deanna Fogarty. "We have truly put our soul and love into the details and know teachers will feel it was worth the wait. I am very excited for students with dyslexia to benefit from this evidence-based curriculum and instruction. They deserve no less."



WRS Advanced Set (Steps 7-12), from left to right:
Instructor Manual, Dictation Book, Student Notebook, Student Dictation Notebook, End-of-Step Assessment Set, Word Cards, High Frequency Word Cards, Word Element & Syllable Cards, and WRS Student Readers 7-12

NEW! WRS PRACTICUM DASHBOARDS

Teachers engaged in our Wilson Reading System® Certification Trainings (Level I and Level II) were treated to an enhanced platform experience beginning in August. Components were added to improve our support, including:

- robust modules with Just-in-Time Resources (JITRs), such as videos, documents, links, and forms;
- opportunities to attend a virtual, live Start-Up Session, and Implementation Meetings, throughout the year with a Wilson® Credentialed Trainer; and
- an easy scheduling tool to book practicum observations with their Trainer.

2021 WILSON® SUMMER CONFERENCES

A Roundup of Who Attended, What Happened, and What's to Come

The 2021 Wilson Summer Conferences were a big success! Provided for the first time ever in a virtual format, the event was attended by nearly 1,000 educators. It was a chance to learn new things, gain practical tips, and have plenty of fun, too!

A Welcoming Virtual Format

This year, the Wilson Summer Conferences included three separate conferences:

- WRS Certified Teacher Conference
- Wilson Trainer Meeting
- Foundations® Conference



Participants joined the festivities by logging onto a dedicated conference website that they could explore at their leisure, and through which they attended presentations and connected with colleagues and other attendees. Complete with an exhibit hall and sections dedicated to recognitions and awards, success stories, fun and games, and a discussion board, the interactive nature of the setup kept everyone involved and entertained.

Impactful and Timely Themes


Both the WRS Certified Teacher Conference and the Wilson Trainer Meeting shared the same theme: *Reading and Dyslexia—Making Connections that Matter*. The Foundations Conference theme, *Success Begins with Foundational Skills for All Students*, was particularly meaningful given last year's school closures and sometimes fragmented instruction, which often led to interrupted foundational literacy skills instruction. Both themes were designed to be thought-provoking and help attendees deepen their literacy knowledge.

Engaging and Informative Speakers

The agenda was jam-packed with educational experts and their presentations did not disappoint. Susan Brady, Ph.D.; Eric Tridas, M.D., FAAP; Laurie Cutting, Ph.D.; Nadine Gaab, Ph.D.; and Barbara Wilson provided expert insights into varied literacy topics while participants listened from the comfort of their homes and interacted with each other via the online chat.

At the WRS Certified Teacher Conference and Wilson Trainer Meeting, the Wilson Fidelity Team hosted sessions that dove deep into WRS instruction and teacher support, including Steps 7-12. And, at the Foundations Conference, these team members

were equally riveting and enlightening when speaking about accelerating learning for struggling students and planning optimal Foundations lessons for student mastery and growth. The Foundations Conference also had a panel of school leaders who shared their successful Foundations journeys and the knowledge they've gained along the way.

The Wilson Summer Conferences garnered overwhelmingly positive feedback from attendees as they discovered interesting implications for their work as educators. Wilson is looking forward to more successful events in the coming years, so save the dates! In 2022, the Wilson Trainer Meeting returns to the beautiful Seaport Hotel in Boston, MA on July 19-20. Then in July 2023, the Wilson Summer Conferences for WRS Certified Teachers, Wilson® Credentialed Trainers, and Foundations teachers will be hosted in Boston with an online option planned. Specific event dates and venue for 2023 will be announced soon. And, if you didn't have a chance to attend this year, but still want to see what all the excitement is about, check out this fun video compilation of the festivities <https://www.wilsonlanguage.com/professional-learning/events/>. 

A CHANGE OF TUNE

After overcoming the challenges of dyslexia and a turbulent academic journey, Wilson Reading System® (WRS) alumnus and multi-instrumentalist Calum Bell is striking a chord in Boston's Celtic music scene.

The son of professional performers, Calum grew up to a soundtrack of lively traditional Irish and Scottish tunes and ballads, set in a historic 18th century Massachusetts inn where the Marquis de Lafayette is said to have danced on the 80-foot ballroom floor. Here, some of the most prominent musicians in the genre gathered to perform, and an annual fiddle camp drew an impressive crowd each summer.

In contrast to these idyllic moments, Calum struggled with reading, writing, and math from his earliest school days. He recalls years of feeling angry and frustrated by school and the various ways he experienced it.

As his parents sought help for their son, Calum attended an independent school for kindergarten, followed by another independent school, before trying homeschooling and a public charter school. He remembers feeling embarrassed as he watched friends and peers advance in their studies and grade levels.

His difficulties with focus and high energy led Calum to be incorrectly classified as having behavioral issues. With his learning disabilities not properly identified nor addressed to meet his specific needs, disciplinary measures, such as withholding recess, only backfired.

When Calum was 11, his mother learned of a tutoring option and reached out to Nanci Shepardson, a Wilson® Dyslexia Practitioner. Working one-on-one, beginning at Step 1.1, Nanci led him through the explicit, cumulative, and multisensory word-level study of the complex English language.

During this time, Calum was formally diagnosed by a neuropsychologist with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and severe dyslexia, the true root of his challenges.

"Nanci made learning really fun and she integrated technology into it, which was exciting. I think the biggest thing, though, is she believed the diagnosis and understood if I couldn't sit still it wasn't because I didn't care, it was because it was hard. Her tutoring was a contrast from all the other schools. She was the first teacher to believe the whole situation, which was really helpful for me."

At 16, Calum entered a dual enrollment program at his local community college, simultaneously earning high school and college credits in Gateway to College, a national program for at-risk teenagers who are disengaged from traditional school settings. Homework, studying, reading, writing, and taking tests on a variety of subjects took backstage to his art. With regular gigs in Boston, at events, schools, and other venues, he withdrew after a year and a half, obtained his high school equivalency diploma, and went full time into his chosen field.

Since his first performance at age seven with his family's band, Calum has gone on to learn 15 instruments, predominantly by ear and without instruction, in all five main types: wind, string, percussion, keyboard, and brass. Of these, he plays many at the professional level, including fiddle, flute, banjo, guitar, piano, bodhran (Irish drum), and bagpipes of all types. He and his mother also perform as the duo Celtic Bells through the organization Young Audiences of Massachusetts, including most recently at a virtual St. Patrick's Day event held by the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

"Calum's story is one of perseverance and grit," shares Nanci, now Wilson's Senior Educational Technologist. "After every lesson we had together, he would look me in the eye and say, 'Thank you for teaching me today.' It never got old. He has a tremendous gift, and he's finally come into his own."

"I'm really not a school person, and as a 21 year old, I can safely say that's okay," Calum shares. "Kids who are like me

find themselves lost and parents feel hopeless. It's very important for me to say, 'If school is challenging for you, don't give up hope. There's more to life than school. But learning to read is essential! You can't do anything without reading.'"

Calum now enjoys reading nonfiction books, including books on music loaned to him by renowned musicians. He's also considering enrolling in a music conservatory to expand his knowledge.

Calum treated our Wilson Summer Conference attendees to a live jam session. To watch a recording of Calum playing a traditional Irish tune on multiple instruments, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/calumreel>. 🎵



*Wilson Reading System® (WRS) alumnus
and multi-instrumentalist Calum Bell*

HIGH SCHOOL BOUND

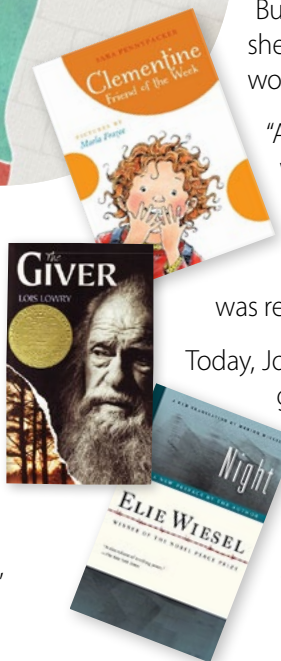
Wilson Reading System® (WRS) Student Ready to Read This Fall

Wilson® Dyslexia Practitioner Barbara Engel of New York was a classroom teacher for 30 years. Now retired, she's a WRS tutor who has helped numerous students learn to read over the years. One of Barbara's current students, Josephine, began her WRS lessons in fourth grade.

Over the years, Josephine worked with other tutors and experienced some success but remained years behind grade level. As a result, although highly intelligent and eager to learn, Josephine had few reading, writing, and spelling skills when she first began meeting with Barbara. Understandably, she found the inability to decode and encode extremely frustrating and overcoming these challenges seemed impossible.

Despite these negative feelings toward reading, Josephine was a dedicated student, and her parents consistently brought her to tutoring lessons each week.

"At end of each our sessions, I read aloud a chapter from a novel," shares Barbara. "We started with the *Clementine* series. I'll never forget the excitement Josephine felt when she finally gained the skills and confidence to begin reading to me!"



And read she can—even difficult texts don't stop Josephine. She and Barbara still meet and enjoy reading with each other.

"She's now entering high school, and thanks to Wilson, has already read grade-level assigned books such as *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, and *Night* by Elie Weisel."

But Josephine isn't just reading in school—she's able to put her skills to work in the real world too.

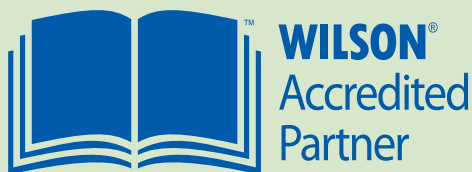
"At her confirmation ceremony recently, she was the only student to volunteer to read a passage in front of the group," says Barbara proudly. "She was so happy she was able to complete the reading, plus her family was rewarded with front row seats!"

Today, Josephine reads fluently and her spelling has greatly improved as well. Best of all, she's confident in her abilities and ready to tackle the complex novels and textbooks that will be assigned throughout her high school career. Wilson wishes Josephine the best of luck in the academic year ahead! 🌱

STUDENT SHOUTOUT

Academy of Innovation (AI) Students Place High In National Reading Contest

Wilson Reading System® (WRS) and Just Words® students at Academy of Innovation (AI), a Wilson® Accredited Partner in Gainesville, GA, recently celebrated a major accomplishment. The school for children with dyslexia and other learning challenges came in eighth in a national reading contest sponsored by Learning Ally™.



AI students read a total of 29,948 pages during a seven-week period. AI is a small school with an enrollment of 38, while other competing schools had much larger enrollments. AI students read daily, both in and out of school, to achieve this award-winning goal. Wilson congratulates AI's dedicated students! We're so proud of their impressive achievement. 🌱



A STEADFAST SCHOLAR

Connecticut teenager Mackenzie P. is celebrating two academic milestones this year: She graduated from eighth grade and earned her Wilson Reading System® (WRS) Step 12 Certificate of Completion. Her WRS instructor, Wilson® Dyslexia Therapist (W.D.T.) Amy Geary, recently shared Mackenzie's inspiring story.

Dear Wilson,

My student Mackenzie was identified as having dyslexia when she was in second grade. She was extremely reserved and when asked to read aloud, she did so haltingly. Additionally, her writing was full of errors. Although a variety of approaches and instructional programs were used to remediate her reading difficulties throughout the elementary years, Mackenzie continued to struggle.

When Mackenzie transitioned to middle school, her individualized education program (IEP) team provided WRS instruction. Lessons began immediately, which meant Mackenzie had to give up a portion of her summer to attend tutoring sessions. To put it mildly, she was not happy. Although she was always polite, her demeanor was somber whenever she walked into the classroom.

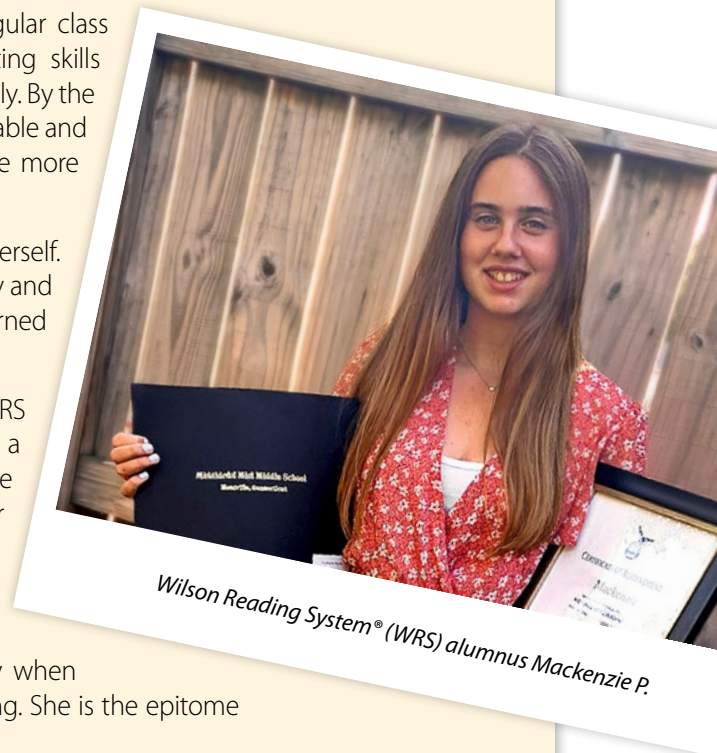
That fall, Mackenzie's WRS instruction became part of her regular class schedule. Within a couple of months, her reading and writing skills improved and she was reading words more accurately and fluently. By the end of her first year, she could read longer passages, both decodable and non-controlled. Her spelling improved and her writing became more elaborate.

This improvement was evident to everyone, including herself. Mackenzie's demeanor changed from shy and downcast to lively and cheerful. As she progressed through the program, she quickly learned WRS procedures and strategies.

To further develop her literacy skills, Mackenzie continued WRS instruction year-round. Even though the past year required a hybrid schedule consisting of remote and in-person classes, she continued to be an active learner. She remained steadfast in her goals: to do her best and complete the entire program.

When I think about Mackenzie's reading abilities when we first met compared to where they are today, I am in awe of her. As a Wilson® Dyslexia Therapist, I know Wilson works—especially when students actively participate and take ownership of their learning. She is the epitome of an active learner.

I believe Mackenzie's reading and writing skills have improved because of her inner drive to work through her struggles. It is to her credit that she started her middle school years with WRS Step 1 and has ended them completing Step 12. She is truly an inspiration!



Wilson Reading System® (WRS) alumnus Mackenzie P.

Thank you for sharing Mackenzie's story, Amy. Wilson wishes her all the best in the school year ahead. 🌱

JOURNEY TO SUCCESS

Mother-Daughter Duo Sees Wilson Reading System® (WRS) Pay Off

Angela Burton is a Wilson® Dyslexia Practitioner who works as a tutor in Chapel Hill, NC. She began her Wilson journey when her youngest daughter Rory, now a young adult, was diagnosed with dyslexia at age six.

“Rory always had an issue with rhyming, remembering her alphabet, and remembering how to spell common words like red,” shared Angela. “She really didn’t want anything to do with learning letter sounds or reading. She said her brain wasn’t like the other kids when it came to reading and remembering. That’s when my husband and I knew we had to find out what was going on, so we had Rory privately evaluated.”

Despite this disclosure to her parents, Rory was good at hiding her reading issues at school. She used memorization and picture clues so that she appeared to read. However, once the diagnosis was in, there was no hiding any longer.

Thankfully, Rory had an educational therapist who recommended Orton-Gillingham or WRS tutoring. Unfortunately, there weren’t any certified WRS Level I tutors in the immediate area, so Angela stepped up to the plate for her daughter—she took a foundations of reading course and purchased WRS Steps 1-12 materials. While looking for an available WRS Introductory Course, the dedicated mom began studying the WRS Instructor Manual.

Rory’s educational therapist also had a couple of suggestions for Angela—join the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) and take classes on the structure of the English language through a local volunteer organization. Around this time, Angela wrote and maintained a reading grant for Rory’s school through the North Carolina State Improvement Project. As luck would have it, the Department of Education offered a WRS Introductory Course, which she attended. With that, Angela’s WRS journey was officially underway and lessons with Rory soon began.

Of course, having her daughter as a WRS student had its challenges.

“Let’s just say Rory wasn’t very happy about spending so much time with her mom,” says Angela. “However, she made progress quickly and realized she needed the tutoring. We also made a deal: Rory would earn a dollar a session with the understanding that she had to save her money for something fun that also would involve her sister.”

For Angela, the experience was a bit different.



Rory Burton, former WRS student, recently earned her doctorate in physical therapy from St. Francis University.

“I enjoyed it because I could see the difference it was making with Rory’s ability to read. There were a few tears and a lot of hand holding, but the experience proved to her that putting in work and sticking with something pays off.”

Rory finished Step 12 of the program the summer before fifth grade. In addition to helping her learn to read, Wilson provided her with a strong work ethic that was evident when she put in time to complete projects and study for tests. Rory also learned how to set goals and break down information so that it made sense to her. But it didn’t stop there—this dedication carried over into swimming where she worked hard with her coaches.

By age 11, Rory wanted to be both a physical therapist (PT) and college swimmer. With some research, she

discovered accelerated physical therapy programs that allowed students to finish an undergraduate degree in health sciences in just three years and then also receive their doctorate in three years.

“There were a handful of these three plus three programs in the Northeast that also offered Division I swimming,” Angela explains. “Rory ended up attending St. Francis University in Loretto, PA. She received a four-year athletic scholarship, which included her first year of PT school!”

In the end, WRS taught Rory to dig deeper into knowledge and this paid off in her selection of a university and maintaining the requirements of a rigorous academic program. It sustained her through college and PT school. Now, Rory has her doctorate in physical therapy and is studying for her PT boards. She began working as a physical therapist in late August. Congratulations, Rory! 🎉

THE ROADS THAT LEAD TO WILSON®

Students' Needs Inspire Teacher to Earn Level I Certification

Special educator Julie Segalla of Reading, MA, always wanted to work with children. When she was a child herself, she loved playing school—especially when she got to be the teacher.

"I took a roundabout route to end up in my current role," explains Julie. "While an undergraduate majoring in elementary and special education at Providence College, I realized I was better suited to small groups of students. Soon after, I also became interested in speech-language pathology, as I could still work in a school setting but with small groups of students."



This led Julie's path to change slightly, but her goal remained the same—to help children. As a result, she switched her major to social science, which had three concentrations: linguistics, psychology, and sociology. After earning her bachelor's degree, she went on to pursue a master's degree in communication disorders from Emerson College. With a solid education under her belt, Julie was able to realize her goal.

"I worked in public elementary schools as a speech-language pathologist for 15 years," she says. "During this time, I had two sons. One struggled to read despite being raised in a literature-rich environment. I loved reading as a child, so it bothered me that my son was having such a different experience. That's when I began working toward a reading specialist license to better understand what he and other struggling readers were going through and how to help them."

After obtaining the necessary license, and while working in a new district, Julie was asked to leave her role as a speech-language pathologist to become a language-based classroom teacher. For Julie, this put her back on the path she was always meant to be on.

"This was a dream come true! I became a language-based classroom teacher and earned my special education teacher certification. I taught reading comprehension, math, writing, social studies, and science."

However, most of the scientifically based reading instruction was taught by a special education teacher who was also a speech-language pathologist. When she retired from the district two years ago, Julie had the opportunity to fill her role.

"I agreed to take on the role as reading tutor for the language-based program with the caveat that I had to become Wilson Reading System® (WRS) certified. I knew from my mentors and colleagues that WRS was what my students and I needed."

Thanks to that persistence, Julie earned her WRS Level I Certification from Gordon College and will soon begin her group practicum toward Level II Certification as well. As a reading tutor for students in grades 3-6 within the language-based program, she works with approximately 12 students a year, either individually or in small groups.

"My students benefit from the highly structured format of WRS," says Julie. "The focus on fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension is also critical. WRS has high criteria levels for accuracy and automaticity at the single-word level, as well as for rate and fluency in connected text. These are necessary for students to become fluent. I feel the only way students are going to enjoy reading is if they can read with fluency, and WRS makes that possible." ∞



Special educator Julie Segalla

"I knew from my mentors and colleagues that WRS was what my students and I needed."



Calling All Teachers!

Do you have a story you would like to share about your Wilson student or graduate?
Email us at: stories@wilsonlanguage.com

FUNDATIONS® IS MEANINGFUL & MULTISENSORY IN MADISON

A year ago, following several months of remote learning, social distancing, and pandemic-related challenges and uncertainty, educators in Madison, CT, met via Zoom to plan for an unpredictable school year ahead. The spring 2020 disruption of critical foundational literacy instruction for emerging readers was at the forefront.

To remedy this, elementary school literacy coaches, teachers, principals, and other administrators made a bold decision for a pandemic year. Noting the success of Foundations® as a Tier 2 intervention in their district, the educators rolled out the multisensory structured literacy program as a Tier 1 curriculum in grades K-3 to support the overarching English language arts program.



Foundations teacher Lindsay Ciccone taps out a word with one of her first graders.

"At the conclusion of the 2019-20 school year, we reflected on the experience of our students during the 60 days of distance learning. Of immediate concern was the limited way our youngest students were able to access the development of reading skills," explains Assistant Superintendent Gail Dahling-Hench.

"As we looked to start the new year, we knew that our Tier 2 intervention, Foundations, provided a multisensory approach that would be applicable for learners both in person and at a distance. In addition, the individual student packets would be safe for the engagement of all learners without sharing materials. We decided to make an immediate implementation plan to ensure that our youngest students wouldn't lose any more time learning foundational reading skills."

Despite summertime professional learning already having been allotted to introduce new protocols, technology, and state-mandated training due to the pandemic, teachers and literacy coaches Lisa Caldwell, Erin Chester, Celina DaSilva, and Michelle Horn stepped up to learn and implement Foundations as well.

That decision led to virtual training and support with Wilson® Literacy Specialist Pam Swan, who presented grade-specific Foundations Virtual Launch Workshops and ongoing Virtual Implementation Support (VIS). In addition to providing explicit instruction to the teachers, Pam walked them through the resources available in Wilson Academy® and the FUN HUB™, including videos introducing each new concept.

VIS is professional learning geared toward Foundations teachers in their first year of program implementation and it "was instrumental in providing the greatest success" not only for teachers, but for students, shares Lisa.

Last fall, schools reopened for the 2020-21 school year with a hybrid model—students attended in person as well as online with livestreamed lessons. Initially, the district rolled out Foundations in grades one and two.


"We were concerned about how challenging it would be to have a new program in such a disrupted year, so we prioritized grades one and two," Gail says. "Due to the high-quality training and implementation in those grades, our teachers in K and 3 requested training and implementation in the same year!"

"We couldn't have felt more supported when it came to our training with Pam," says Celina. "She understood our needs and provided us with the most accurate and usable information."

Added first grade teacher Drew Sellitti, "Foundations provides the sequencing, structure, and predictability that allowed our students to be the most successful through a pandemic year. The online, interactive resources and tools allowed us to seamlessly transition from in-person to remote learning when it was necessary. Even in those instances, the predictable structure that Foundations provides simplified the planning process and allowed me to focus more on instruction of skills."

"Although we were all new to virtual teaching and learning, Wilson worked with us to make sure that training was meaningful and valuable," Gail says. And the results have been impressive.

"Foundations has given my first graders the confidence to look at a multisyllabic word, break it into its parts, and then look for recognizable chunks like blends, glued sounds, and v-e patterns," shares first grade teacher Lindsay Ciccone. "When I look back on the growth my students have made this year, I think what I'm most impressed by is the sophistication with which six- and seven-year-olds can talk about a word!"

In the coming school year, the district of 2,500 students will build out its Foundations K-3 implementation and add the Foundations Pre-K program and training. 

2021 SCHOLARSHIP AND AWARD RECIPIENTS

Mary Ann Bonneau Administrator Award

The Mary Ann Bonneau Administrator Award is presented to an educator who demonstrates exemplary leadership and dedication to the Wilson® mission of achieving literacy for all. Established in 2005, it's awarded annually in memory of Massachusetts educator Mary Ann Bonneau, who worked for more than 30 years in the Worcester Public Schools.

This year, Wilson recognized two individuals:

- Grace M. Lani, Canon-McMillan School District, PA
- Dena Mortensen, Waterbury Public Schools, CT

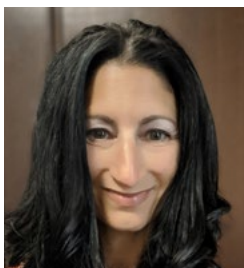


Grace M. Lani taught at public, independent, and charter schools before transitioning to administrative roles. At Canon-McMillan School District, she concurrently oversaw two elementary schools. During that time, one of those schools, Wylandville Elementary, received the U.S. Department of Education's National Blue Ribbon School designation.

In her current role as Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Grace is responsible for curricular programming and instructional strategies, as well as ensuring that district staff comply with national, state, and local policies and initiatives.

Grace has gone above and beyond to support teachers' understanding of the science of reading as well as their use of Wilson® programs with fidelity, shares Makenzie Buhman, the district's Wilson® Credentialed Trainer. Her commitment to students and staff has allowed the district to build its capacity and sustainability for effective reading instruction.

Additionally, Grace has supported the implementation of Foundations® in the district's elementary schools, development of a Wilson® In-District Trainer, and WRS Level I Certification for 26 interventionists.



Dena Mortensen began her education career as a classroom teacher 21 years ago. She eventually became a reading teacher, literacy coach, vice principal, and adjunct reading professor before serving students and colleagues in a supervisory role.

As Elementary Reading and Language Arts Supervisor for Waterbury Public Schools, Dena advocates for all staff and students and works tirelessly to provide the district with effective reading and language arts curricula, strategies, and resources.

Dena is passionate about teaching children how to read and supporting teachers who do this important work. Recognizing the district's need for a research-based spelling and reading program, she introduced educators, students, and families to Foundations in 2014. Since then, the program has expanded to K-3 classrooms and several Pre-K classrooms.

Following the successful implementation of Foundations, Dena is now preparing to bring Wilson Reading System® (WRS) Level I Certification to more than 15 educators in the district. This will ensure students in need of intensive Tier 3 intervention will receive effective instruction.

Sharon Parks Memorial Scholarship

The Sharon Parks Memorial Scholarship for WRS Level II Training is awarded annually to an individual who demonstrates exemplary dedication to the Wilson® mission of helping students become fluent, independent readers. Sharon Parks was a devoted and enthusiastic Wilson Trainer. This scholarship is awarded annually in her honor.



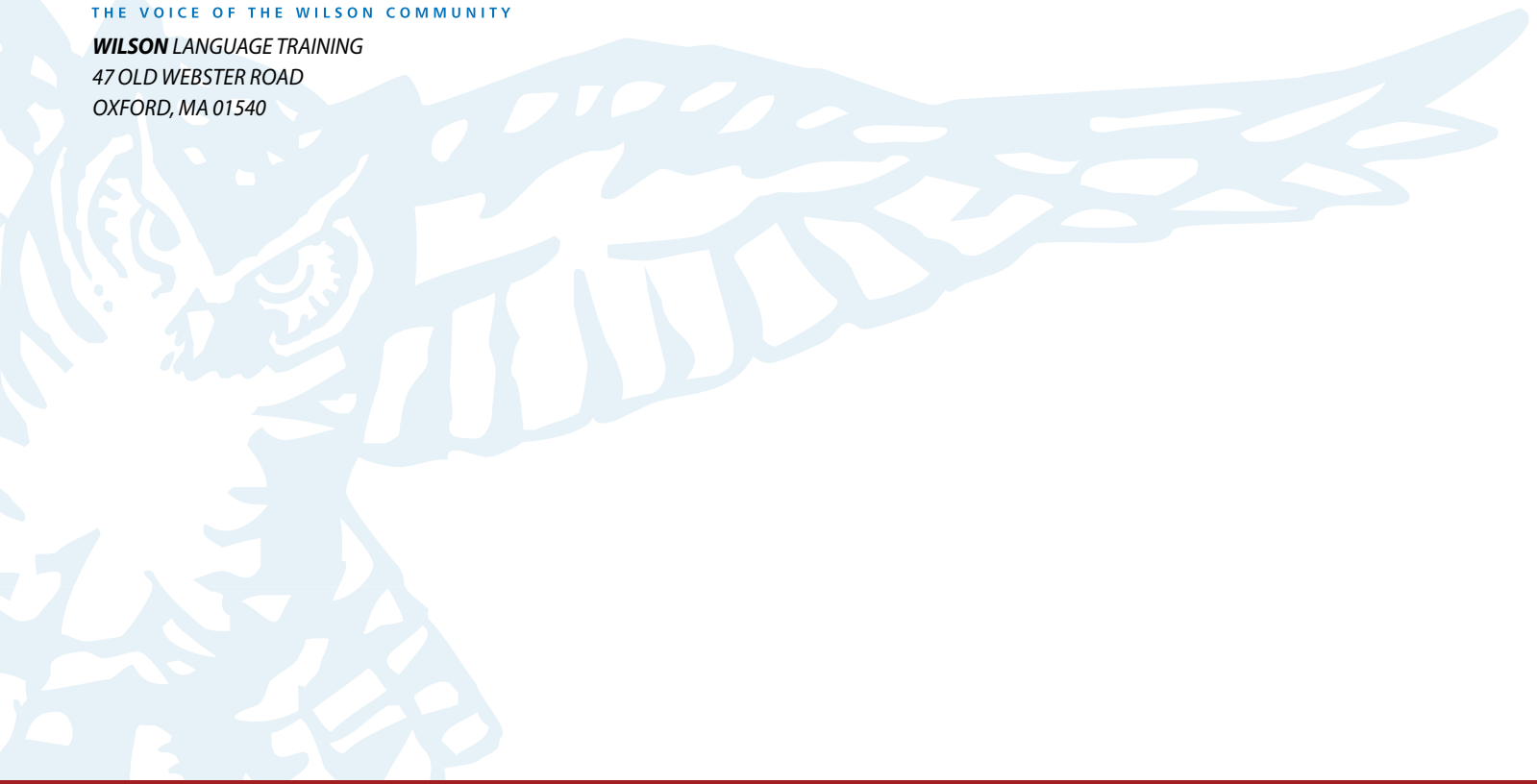
The 2021 recipient of the Sharon Parks Memorial Scholarship for WRS® Level II Training is **Sari Hussey**, a 20-year special education teacher at Hillsborough Township Public Schools in Hillsborough, NJ.

Sari is dedicated to helping students discover their strengths and find success in both academic and social areas. A credentialed Wilson® Dyslexia Practitioner, she has taught WRS to struggling readers since 2005. She has taught in inclusive, resource, and self-contained settings in grades one through six.

Sari was instrumental in developing a protocol and framework for implementing WRS in Hillsborough, says the district's Wilson® Credentialed Trainer, Cushla Rullo. Working collaboratively with Cushla and the director and supervisors of the district's Special Services team, Sari spearheaded this initiative which has been received and utilized with excitement throughout the district and has helped provide students with Wilson services.

During the pandemic, Sari worked with Cushla to reach out to the district's 20 WRS teachers to plan and implement remote learning instruction. The pair met regularly and guided Wilson colleagues with remote teaching as needed.

Congratulations to all our deserving and hard-working award recipients! 🎉



Celebrate National Dyslexia Awareness Month!



Thank you for all you do—all year long!
To learn more about dyslexia:
www.wilsonlanguage.com/dyslexia