

THE Decoder

THE VOICE OF THE WILSON COMMUNITY



IN THIS ISSUE

WHAT'S WORKING IN WATERFORD? WILSON!

Years before Connecticut passed dyslexia legislation, the coastal community of Waterford was well ahead of the curve.

Like other school districts in the state and throughout the country, the Waterford Public School District has long embedded Wilson's Foundations®, Just Words®, and Wilson Reading System® into its English language arts program. With each passing year, the district embraced new ways to enhance its commitment to multisensory structured language, professional development, and the 2,535 PK-12 students it serves.

"We're a district that has gone from using Wilson to living it," shares Jeanne Morgan, a district SPED leader and newly certified Wilson® Credentialed Trainer.

The district's use of Just Words and WRS in the early 2000s for Tier 2 and Tier 3 literacy interventions grew a few years later to include Foundations K-3 for Tier 1 instruction in its three elementary schools. More recently, a dozen teachers became WRS Level I Certified to further build the district's capacity and knowledge base in MSL instruction, with plans in the works for additional professional learning for a new cohort of teachers.

Read on to learn how Waterford built its capacity, and what's ahead for this model district.

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THE **Decoder**
THE VOICE OF THE WILSON COMMUNITY

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.

Share how Wilson works!

Submit your letters, pictures, or articles to be considered for publication in **The Decoder**.

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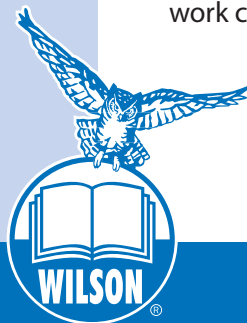
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WILSON LANGUAGE TRAINING
47 OLD WEBSTER ROAD
OXFORD, MA 01540

800.899.8454
www.wilsonlanguage.com



DEAR FRIENDS,

National awareness about reading instruction and dyslexia continues to expand. Greater understanding of the instructional keys that can unlock the world for those who struggle to read is spreading coast-to-coast. From the classrooms and administrative offices of public schools to the legislative chambers in states throughout the country, change is happening.

Parent advocates, educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders are part of this movement. And, thousands of Wilson educators in cities and towns of all sizes are right there with them. Collectively, we are making an impact.

As the International Dyslexia Association's annual conference takes place in Connecticut this year, we decided to look at the great work going on in school districts throughout the Nutmeg State in this Fall/Winter issue of *The Decoder*. Connecticut is among the states taking a lead in enacting meaningful legislation that addresses the learning needs of students while empowering educators through professional learning.

In preparation for this school year, we had the opportunity, during our two-day conference in Boston in July, to gather with more than 400 educators from around the country to explore the new Wilson Reading System® 4th Edition materials.

Due to the overwhelming response, we have planned a number of WRS 4th Edition Institutes this fall for teachers who were unable to attend the conference. In addition to professional learning in WRS, Wilson Language Training continues to offer introductory workshops in Foundations® and Just Words® for educators eager to use these multisensory structured language programs in Tier 1 and Tier 2 settings.

We are excited to announce new collaborations with Great Minds and The Alliance for Accreditation and Certification of Dyslexia Specialists, and Wilson® Accredited Partners in the states of California, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Readers will find advice on accessibility and Universal Design for Learning (UDL), updates on WRS credentialing, and information about our long-standing higher education partnership with Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia.

So, whether you're new to the Wilson community or have been with us since the beginning, we appreciate the outpouring of well wishes we have received during our yearlong 30th anniversary celebration. As this milestone year comes to an end, we look forward to beginning another new decade with such a talented and dedicated team of educators. We are proud to work collectively in support of literacy for all!

Sincerely,

Barbara & Ed Wilson



PREPARING 21ST CENTURY TEACHERS FOR 21ST CENTURY LEARNERS

In 2008, St. Joseph's University (SJU) in Philadelphia embedded the Wilson Reading System® into its online graduate programs in special education. Over the past decade, many educators from Pennsylvania and beyond have selected this academic option to advance their professional goals.

SJU's collaboration with Wilson was spearheaded by Cathy Spinelli, former chair of the university's special education department. The university offers four distinct master's degree options in special education that include WRS certification.

"Most of our graduate students are employed teachers," explains Dr. Samuel B. Slike, director of the university's Special Education Online Programs. "We're making it possible for them to take online courses at home, anywhere in the country. That's our world today—synchronized, real-time learning. I am totally convinced it's our future."

For New Jersey educator Stephanie Wilhelm, becoming WRS Certified was a milestone set among milestones. The goal was so important, in fact, that she achieved it while juggling her teaching career and planning her wedding.

"Being a reading specialist and educator in the 21st century, I hold high standards for students to become active members of an ever-changing global community," she shares. "For me, being part of education is not about making a difference; it's about helping others find out how they can make a positive difference for themselves, others, and the society in which we live."

Stephanie is an RTI/Reading Specialist in the Southampton Township School District in Burlington County, NJ, which serves 750 students in grades K-8. She's also a Learning Therapist at Cooper University Hospital's Learning Center.


"I believe in the importance of providing all students with access to and experience with a variety of quality resources and teaching," she shares. "The completion of the Wilson Reading System Certification program is a key component in the process of this vision, especially for struggling readers and students with language-based learning disabilities."

Sarah Rhine, a fifth-grade English/language arts teacher with the Carlisle Area School District in Pennsylvania, says the SJU master's degree program and WRS training expanded her understanding of the many components of reading instruction and best practices for implementation.

Two years into her teaching career, she noticed a pattern. "I repeatedly received students who could not read fluently and did not enjoy reading, or who could not decode. This fueled a passion to learn all that I could about reading, especially for those who struggled the most. I was not going to let these students keep slipping by just because I didn't know what to do with

them! I read up on reading disabilities, how children learn to read, and effective methods of instruction and remediation. I started my own literacy binder with articles on research and best practices. This led me to pursue my master's degree in special education, join the International Dyslexia Association, and become certified in the Wilson Reading System."

A marathon runner who volunteers as a coach for the nonprofit organization Girls on the Run, Sarah says she appreciated the convenience of the online format. "It was easy to connect with the professors and other students. It was very accommodating for a full-time teacher."

For more information about SJU's online special education programs with WRS certification, visit <https://online.sju.edu/graduate/masters-special-education/track/wilson-reading-system-certification>. 



Sarah Rhine



Stephanie Wilhelm



GOING "FOURTH" WITH WRS

400+ Wilson educators gather in Boston for Wilson® professional learning



Educators from the country's tiniest towns to its largest cities gathered in Boston this summer for a deep dive into the newly released Wilson Reading System® (WRS) 4th Edition. More than 400 WRS certified teachers and Wilson® Credentialed Trainers (W.C.T.) from public school districts, private schools, reading centers, and other educational settings explored the enhanced Instructor Manual and associated materials in preparation for the upcoming school year.

Held concurrently, the two-day Conference for Wilson® Certified Teachers and the Annual Trainer Meeting featured a variety of general and breakout sessions, along with hands-on practice with Wilson Fidelity Team members, an awards luncheon, and plenty of networking, fun, and camaraderie. Additionally, eight new Wilson Credentialed Trainers and five Wilson® Accredited Partners were recognized.

Teachers engaged in instructional sessions with Barbara Wilson on WRS 4th Edition highlights, a "Systematic Approach to Phonology, Morphology, and Orthography," and "Assessment, Accountability, and Instruction." They also met with self-proclaimed "word-nerd" Deanna Fogarty, Senior Program Director Intensive Intervention Literacy Initiatives, and members of the Wilson Fidelity Team to learn about expanded core and academic vocabulary wordlists, lesson planning, and end-of-step assessment practice.

Sessions for trainers focused on professional learning associated with the new edition, including the updated, three-day WRS Introductory Course, practicum coursework, online instruction, and the Wilson Academy® Intensive Learning Community.

Attendees also met representatives from various academic, literacy, and dyslexia organizations, including The Dyslexia Foundation, Learning Ally, NoticeAbility, Great Minds, and Fitchburg State University, which offers an online master's degree in special education with embedded WRS Level I and Level II Certifications.

Featured speakers Mandy Gilbert, now Principal of the Carroll Lutheran School in Westminster, MD, and her former student, Coley, inspired attendees with their poignant journey that began when Coley was an eighth grader reading at a third-grade level. Coley went on to excel academically in high school, participating in Honors English and Maryland's Black-Eyed Susan reading program.

"Coley and her parents often thank me for what I've done for Coley," she shared. "Really, I need to thank them. Because of Coley, I am a better teacher. I am more patient, more compassionate, more fully engaged. She has been a reminder that a lesson is so much more than a lesson plan." ∞

Graduating WRS Trainer Intern Class of 2018



From left: Instructors Deanna Fogarty and Peggy Landoli-Cole, Christina Zampitella, Lisa Parnello, Jeanne Morgan, Kelli Killion, Gloria Fulgieri, Krista Erikson, Rachael Burg, Ed Wilson, Maureen Blazajeski, Barbara Wilson, and instructor Paula Mariani

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

2018 Scholarship and Award Winners Announced

Two educators were recognized for their achievements in the field of literacy education during the Conference for Wilson® Certified Teachers and Annual Trainer Meeting.



Uri Harel

Uri Harel, K-8 Curriculum Coordinator for Somerville Public Schools in Somerville, MA, is the recipient of the 2018 **Mary Ann Bonneau Administrator Award**.

This award is presented in honor and memory of Mary Ann Bonneau to a school administrator who demonstrates Mary Ann's commitment to helping children with disabilities, and exemplary leadership, hard work, and dedication to the Wilson® mission of achieving literacy for all.

Uri began his career as a K-5 teacher in Vermont. After 10 years in the classroom, he served as principal of Veterans Elementary School in Saugus, MA, for five years. To support the school's Foundations® teachers and deepen his own understanding of structured literacy instruction, he obtained his Wilson Reading System® Level I Certification with a group of his teachers.

He joined Somerville in 2011 and works across the district's eight elementary schools, which provide Foundations® (K-3) in Tier 1 general education classrooms and Tier 2 intervention classes. He supervises reading, special education, ELL, and classroom teachers, supports the district's elementary school principals in overseeing WRS and Foundations in their schools, and continues to tutor.

Since 2014, he has arranged for 40 Somerville teachers to earn WRS Level I Certification. Currently, he and 12 district teachers are pursuing WRS Level II Certification.



Michelle Manning

The **Sharon Parks Memorial Scholarship** for WRS Level II was presented to Michelle Manning, a teacher at the Springfield Literacy Center, a K-1 public elementary school within the Springfield School District in Delaware County, PA. The scholarship recognizes exemplary dedication to the Wilson mission of helping students become fluent, independent readers. It is given in honor and memory of Sharon, an

enthusiastic and conscientious Wilson Trainer, and her commitment to help all students achieve literacy. Her husband, Bill, extended the family's appreciation and congratulations during the award ceremony.

Michelle has used Foundations in kindergarten and first-grade classrooms since 2010. She pursued WRS Level I Certification through the Reading Specialist Certification program at Drexel University to build upon her knowledge of the reading process. She was recognized for excellence during her practicum and subsequent work with struggling readers at Drexel's summer reading program with Philadelphia school children. Most recently, Michelle taught in Drexel's special education program.



James Montanari

Congratulations to Salisbury Elementary School Principal James Montanari on being named **Outstanding Principal of the Year** by the Massachusetts PTA. The well-deserved award recognizes Jim's leadership and vision at the Pre K-6 school, which is part of the Triton Regional School District and located in Salisbury, MA.

Under Jim's leadership, Salisbury Elementary School (SES) became a member of the Wilson® Implementation Network due to its commitment to using the principles of implementation science to improve literacy outcomes.

Building upon its success using WRS for Tier 3 instruction, SES introduced Foundations for its Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction in 2008. The following year, the Title 1 school began the full rollout of Foundations in grades K-3, applying grant funding for professional learning.

The award "was a very nice, unexpected honor, and a true reflection of the SES learning community," says Jim, who recently opened SES as a Wilson facilitation site for instructional rounds for principals. In November, he plans to host other Wilson principals, facilitated by Siobhan Dennis, WLT's newly hired Director of Administrator Relations, for a morning of professional development.

Additionally, SES third grade teacher Lisa Bissell, a Foundations educator, received the **Outstanding Teacher of the Year** award. The two educators were recognized during the organization's 108th annual convention in May. 🌿

WHAT'S WORKING IN WATERFORD? WILSON! *(continued from page 1)*

Getting Started

As Waterford's reading specialist 18 years ago, Jeanne Morgan recognized that some students were entering middle school lacking foundational reading skills. After searching for instructional options to better meet their needs, she became WRS Level I Certified in 2000 and began offering explicit instruction to students with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities. She went on to complete WRS Level II Certification as well as training in Just Words® to further assist struggling readers on their path to reading fluency.

In 2005, following a yearlong pilot, Craig Powers, Waterford Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, brought Foundations® to the district's three elementary schools for core decoding and encoding early literacy instruction, with every K-3 teacher receiving training.

"Early intervention with proper instruction is key," he explains. "Since we know that approximately 15 to 20 percent of all students have dyslexia or symptoms, it is essential that multisensory structured literacy be part of the Tier 1 classroom environment to ensure that all students are exposed to this type of instruction. Structured literacy is essential for students with dyslexia, but research shows that it benefits all students."

According to Powers, having all teachers in grades PK-3 using Foundations with fidelity and consistency has helped strengthen instruction within the schools. It has also created a strong connection between what is taught in the Tier 1 environment and the Tier 2 and 3 special education environment. The consistency in instruction and terminology as students progress to higher grades allows students to focus on the content they are studying, rather than adapt to new methods of instruction.

A Wilson® implementation team, which included Literacy Advisors Barbara Miller and Karen DeBari, and Literacy Specialists Bonnie O'Shields and Sally Scott, played a key role in helping the district build internal capacity and sustainability.

"We really made a district-wide commitment," shares Director of Special Services Kathy Vallone. "By starting with younger students, we try to catch any

issues or concerns that might be happening early, and provide support and services as soon as possible. Some students in middle and high school, though fewer, really require an intensive program. And, in the end, we see students who are able to use the skills they've learned and access materials from the general education classrooms."

Maintaining Momentum

"One of the things that we have really committed ourselves to is building the capacity of our staff," shares Superintendent Thomas W. Giard, III. "We know that we need highly trained teachers. One strategy is getting teachers trained in Wilson Level I Certification." While it's an investment of finances and time, he says, "the benefits to students in the long run are something that our entire team believes in."

During the last school year, nine special educators and three general education teachers became certified in WRS Level I, joining the existing WRS team in the district. This past year, Jeanne completed a yearlong internship to become a Wilson® Credentialed Trainer, and is now certified to train fellow educators in WRS.

During the 2019-20 school year, the 12 WRS Level I Certified educators will pursue their Level II certification with Jeanne as their trainer.

Waterford teachers enthusiastically embraced the Wilson programs, and support from administrators is strong, shares Jeanne, who serves as vice president of the nonprofit Dyslexia Society of Connecticut.



Waterford educators who recently became WRS Level I Certified include, from left, Erika Bassett, reading specialist and interventionist, and special educators Julie Dignazio, Melanie Wettlaufer, and Kay Parulis.



Sue Tonucci, first grade teacher, with Foundations students

“Our teachers say it has changed their whole outlook on teaching reading—understanding the science behind reading and the importance of that systematic, direct instruction with fidelity. They have witnessed first-hand the transformation that happens with kids when they are taught using this modality, this program.”

Teacher-led initiatives have included dyslexia awareness events, demonstrations, and presentations for colleagues, parents, and the district’s board of education.

Parents, too, say the results have been remarkable.

“The special reading services my daughter, Alexis, received through her Just Words® class not only improved her reading, but gave her the confidence to be excited to learn,” shares parent Shannon M. “She received the tools she needed to not only navigate through an educational world not designed for her, but to excel in ways far beyond our imagination. She entered middle school a hardworking, mediocre student. She’s leaving as an honor student, entering high school with the confidence and abilities to tackle multiple advanced classes and to explore new subject areas.”

To further support literacy goals, administrators subscribe to Learning Ally and provide free access to the organization’s resources and accommodations for all students. Access to assistive technology enables students to keep up with their peers in general education classes while they build their literacy skills through explicit instruction.

Responding to New Dyslexia Laws

Prompted by the advocacy of parents and educators, Connecticut has enacted a trio of dyslexia laws since 2015,

requiring: dyslexia assessment for K-3 students, effective instruction for those who need it, and teacher training in structured literacy. The laws require assessment in early readers to measure phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills to identify students at risk of dyslexia or other reading-related learning disabilities.

The legislation, passed under Governor Dannel P. Malloy, who has dyslexia, helped Waterford hone its professional development strategy in recent years, district administrators say.

“The goals and the impetus behind the legislation, in my view, are two-fold,” shares Superintendent Giard. “The first is to make sure every teacher has a basic working knowledge around the issue of dyslexia and other reading challenges. We’re all teachers of reading, and we need to have an understanding of the challenges these learners face.”

“And the second piece was really forcing districts to have a plan. A major part of our plan is implementing the various aspects of the Wilson® programs. This has provided us a system, a plan, and an approach that is cohesive from K through 12. When you look at the legislation, which states that you better have a plan to educate these students, we have been for a very long time and we’re further enhancing it with the WRS certification.”

Tours of the Waterford Public School district will be available during the 2018 International Dyslexia Association Conference.

WILSON Reading System® & just words®

Waterford students who participate in Wilson Reading System® and Just Words® instruction make significant gains in literacy skills. At the end of the 2017-18 school year:

- **71%** who entered 6th grade at below basic reading level completed at or above grade level (40th percentile or higher) after 1-2 years of instruction.
- **86%** who entered 6th grade at below basic reading level completed 8th grade at or above grade level (50th percentile or higher).
- **78%** of 8th graders with dyslexia who completed 2-3 years of intensive instruction entered high school this fall taking honors-level classes.

Wilson works[®] Connecticut

State Stats at a Glance:

PK-12 Public School Population: 535,025

School Districts: 206

Public Schools/Programs: 1,493

Special Education Status: 79,256

Full-time Equivalent Certified Staff: 52,416

(Source: CT State Department of Education)

Wilson[®] certified professionals teach in small towns and large cities throughout Connecticut, the setting for this year's International Dyslexia Association conference.

The country's third smallest state geographically is home to the Yale Center for Dyslexia and Creativity and the Haskins Laboratories at Yale University. Influenced by the advocacy of the nonprofit organizations Decoding Dyslexia-Connecticut and the Dyslexia Society of Connecticut, the state has enacted several dyslexia laws since 2015 to support teacher knowledge and improve learning outcomes for students.

Many communities are introducing Wilson's multisensory structured literacy programs this year, while others have long implemented them to provide emerging and struggling readers with explicit instruction while building in-district capacity and sustainability.

Here is a sampling of communities around Connecticut using Wilson.

New Britain

Student Pop. 10,145

New Britain schools will soon have their own Wilson[®] Credentialed Trainer and a team of 10 WRS Level I Certified teachers. Instructional Coach Allison Galin began a yearlong trainer internship this summer as part of the district's plan to build sustainability.



Fairfield

Student Pop. 10,027

Since 2017, 43 educators have obtained WRS Level I Certification as part of a three-year professional learning initiative. This year, a new cohort of 30 teachers will begin WRS Level I training.



WRS

WRS

New Canaan

Student Pop. 4,260

Building upon the successful rollout of Foundations[®] K-2 over the past two years, New Canaan is expanding the Tier 1 literacy program to third grade this year.



Greenwich



WRS

Darien

Student Pop. 4,828

The successful implementation of Foundations[®] K-3 has led to a cohort of 30 educators beginning the WRS Level I Introductory Course this year.

Stafford

Student Pop. 1,526
Foundations® is rolling out this year in Pre-K, kindergarten, and first grade classrooms.



Windsor Locks

Tolland

Waterbury

Student Pop. 19,001

Implementation of Foundations® with fidelity in K-3 classrooms includes in-person coaching sessions with Wilson Literacy Advisor Karen DeBari to discuss strategy, proper techniques, and student outcomes.



Foundations teacher Greg Homewood & Karen DeBari

Key

Towns using:



Foundations®



Just Words®



Wilson Reading System®

North Branford

Student Pop. 1,842

Implementing Foundations® K-3 with coaching sessions and Facilitator training in each grade level has led to district sustainability.

Meriden

Norwich

WRS

Griswold

New Haven

Student Pop. 21,981

Crosstraining in Foundations® and WRS for educators within the district's special education, general education, bilingual, and literacy departments is a key component of New Haven's noteworthy literacy education program.



*Literacy coach Lynn Kelly & student
(Photo courtesy of the New Haven Independent)*

Westbrook

Student Pop. 767

Following virtual mentoring training in Just Words® with several neighboring districts last year, Westbrook is spearheading a WRS Level I cohort of 20 educators with nearby districts.

*Westbrook teacher
Linnea Fitzgerald*



RIISING NINTH GRADERS READY FOR NEXT CHAPTER

In mid-June, seven teens just a summer away from their first year of high school reflected on a common bond: At Clark Lane Middle School in Waterford, CT, they truly learned how to read.



Heading to high school: Waterford WRS and Just Words students, with their teacher, Wilson Credentialed Trainer Jeanne Morgan, front row, second from left, began high school this year with strong literacy skills.

Madelyn (Maddy), Ariana (Ari), Alexis (Lexi), Samantha (Sam), Shayna, Kiera, and Anna are among the students whose middle school years included multisensory structured language instruction with Jeanne Morgan, a Waterford Public Schools' Special Education Leader/Teaching Assistant Principal, and a newly certified Wilson® Credentialed Trainer.

Whether the students' general education literary assignments required tackling the weighty themes of S.E. Hinton's perennial Y.A. favorite, *The Outsiders*, or Herman Melville's 19th-century classic, *Moby-Dick*, the teens shared how the in-depth, systematic study of language honed their literacy skills and prepared them for freshman year.

For instance, Maddy rose from the 39th to 70th percentile in state aptitude tests during three years of Tier 2 intervention with Just Words® beginning in the sixth grade. Her classmates, Lexi and Ari, jumped from 27th to 71st and 25th to 67th respectively. Anna, who was diagnosed with dyslexia in third grade, Sam, Shayna, and Kiera became notably more fluent readers at Clark Lane by working through the steps of the Wilson Reading System® (WRS).

Principal James Sachs says the students are well-versed on their learning challenges. This helps them understand their unique learning needs and explain to others what it means to have dyslexia or another language-based disability, and how to overcome the barriers to literacy.

It reaches the point, shares Sam, that WRS and Just Words students know more about the English language than most people, due to their comprehensive examination of letters and the sounds they make.

"Not a lot of people know about schwa." 🌀



HATS OFF TO TEENAGE COLLEGE GRAD



Chris Annino

Christopher Annino has not let dyslexia slow his pace. Within a decade, the 16-year-old has gone from self-proclaimed "kindergarten dropout" to college graduate.

Diagnosed with dyslexia following a challenging start in elementary school, Chris was homeschooled throughout his childhood. After completing the Wilson Reading System® at age 13, the North

Stonington, CT teen went on to tackle college courses at his local community college. This spring, the aspiring engineer earned an Associate of Science in construction technology from Three Rivers Community College.

Chris learned at an early age to embrace his strengths and channel his passion, knowledge, and inspiration in the hope of helping other students with dyslexia. Over the past several years, he has shared his story with many different audiences, including fellow students, parents, and educators.

"Before we heard about dyslexia, I had been very frustrated learning how to read and spell," he shares. "We tried many methods and nothing worked. Thankfully, my parents connected with a Wilson-trained educator, Jeanne Morgan, who taught me how to read step-by-step through the Wilson Reading System."

"Learning to read with dyslexia is the hardest thing I have ever done so far in my life. It is also the most worthwhile. Dyslexia taught me to be resilient and work through the challenges that life presents." 🌀

INSPIRED BY EMPATHY

Despite her own learning challenges in reading and math as a child, Evan Lefton knew she wanted to become a teacher after being inspired by a patient middle school teacher who recognized and encouraged her talent in writing.

“As a child with a learning difference, I grew up in a time where there was one method, three oral reading groups (mine being the lowest), and many teachers who did not understand or have the patience for a ‘slow reader,’” she shared. “This was excruciatingly painful and embarrassing as a young girl, but it also lit my fire. I knew at an early age that I wanted to become a teacher, and I made a promise that I would NEVER let another child feel the humiliation that I experienced.”

Evan fulfilled her goal of becoming a special educator, then upped her teaching game in 1999 by becoming certified in the Wilson Reading System® (WRS).

Most recently, she taught for 12 years at the Churchill Center and School in St. Louis, MO, before retiring in 2017. She continues to tutor struggling readers.

“Back when I was learning Wilson, we were creating our own workbooks and using cookie sheets to house our magnetic tiles. For the first time in my life, I learned our language. I mean really learned it. I got answers to confusing questions that I never even knew had answers: ‘Oh! So this is why s says /z/!’ I couldn’t wait to open the eyes of my students, as mine had been opened. There was now a system in tandem with my compassion,” she said.

“Wilson is a game changer, a confidence builder, a magical and brilliant gift for any human learning our language. But the biggest gift is that it gives struggling readers their first sense of competence and a good feeling about themselves. It builds their self-esteem, and some of these kids have never felt that—ever. It’s amazing to see that happen.”

Cara Boliantz, a reading tutor in Ohio, and Christina Farrell, a special education teacher at a public school district in Illinois, shared similar experiences.

“When I was in elementary school, I was diagnosed with dyslexia,” said Cara, a Wilson® Dyslexia Practitioner who earned her WRS Level I Certification in 2016. “My mother fought long and hard for some type of phonics program to be taught at my public school. I eventually was taught the Wilson Reading System (WRS). Years later, I am now a Wilson certified tutor! I get the opportunity to teach students that deal with the same issues I live with every day. It brings me so much joy to encourage my kids with their self-esteem and enforce perseverance.”

When you’ve experienced the same struggles as your students, you can relate to their frustration and the vulnerability they feel revealing their reading weakness, said Christina, who is currently pursuing her WRS Level I Certification.

“During my introductory Wilson course, the trainer explained that one’s ability to read and write is not an indicator of intelligence. This was a game-changer for me. It confirmed what

I had always suspected about my own learning and the learning of my students,” Christina said.

“I became a special education teacher because I know the loneliness, self-esteem issues, and generalized anxiety that are associated with being a ‘poor learner.’ From day one of working with my practicum student, I was convinced that this style of learning is THE WAY to rebuild confidence and gain access to a world that feels utterly inaccessible. I am overjoyed with the progress I have seen in my students, but the psychological changes I have seen in myself have been nothing short of miraculous. WRS is a passion for me, and I am honored to have the privilege of sharing this gift with as many students as I can.”



Evan Lefton, Christina Farrell with student Jarrett, and Cara Boliantz

EXPERIENCE THE BENEFITS OF A WILSON PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIAL

Wilson Language Training values the importance of ongoing development in the field of reading instruction. To further recognize hard-earned knowledge, expertise, and commitment to continuing one's education, Wilson offers two types of professional credentials for Wilson Reading System® (WRS) Certified Instructors.



A Wilson® Dyslexia Practitioner (W.D.P.) credential is available to individuals who have completed WRS Level I Certification. This credential recognizes individuals as prepared to diagnostically teach students identified with a language-based learning disability, such as dyslexia, at the beginning levels of encoding and reading.



A Wilson® Dyslexia Therapist (W.D.T.) credential is available to individuals who have completed WRS Level II Certification. This credential recognizes individuals as prepared to diagnostically teach students identified with a language-based learning disability, such as dyslexia, at advanced levels of encoding and reading in small-group settings.



WRS certifications are highly recognized and sought after in the field of literacy education. The Wilson® Professional Credential underscores distinctive skills in WRS multisensory structured language education (MSLE) and reflects Wilson's high standards of practice.

Additional benefits include:

- Placement in the Wilson® Directory of WRS Certified Professionals, which is provided by request to individuals who are seeking tutoring services from a WRS Certified Teacher
- Use of the letters W.D.P. or W.D.T. and corresponding logo following their name to represent this important credential
- Advance notification of upcoming conferences, workshops, webinars, and other training events

Claiming and Renewing Your Credential

If you are eligible to receive a Wilson® Professional Credential, you will need to acknowledge this in our system. If you have not already done so, simply log in to your Wilson Academy® account, click on the "Claim My Credential" button, and follow the easy, step-by-step instructions to complete the process. There is no fee required to initially claim a credential, which lasts for five years.

Renewing the credential requires the accumulation of Wilson-approved continuing education hours. During each five-year renewal cycle, WRS credentialed educators must earn 50 Wilson® Professional Learning Credits by successfully completing approved continuing education activities and coursework. The cost to renew your Wilson Professional Credential for another five years is \$150 at the time of renewal.

After attending or completing a WLT-approved event, course, or activity, you will be responsible for obtaining a certificate of attendance or completion. In 2019, you will receive additional step-by-step instructions on how to access the system and manage your credential activities. In the meantime, please hold on to any supporting documentation and any acknowledgement of completion that confirm the completion of your continued education activities.

For more information about claiming, maintaining, and renewing your Wilson Professional Credential, please visit Wilson Academy® or email us at: registrarservices@wilsonlanguage.com.

ACCESSIBILITY AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING



Equality



Equity



Accessibility



Nanci Shepardson,
Senior Educational
Technologist


Do you notice the differences between the three scenarios above? In the first scenario, each child gets exactly the same support. The second scenario demonstrates how each child gets what is needed to access the ball game. The third scenario presents a thought-provoking concept: Why don't we make things accessible for all from the beginning? Herein lies the bedrock of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

According to CAST (www.udlguidelines.cast.org), UDL diminishes barriers and amplifies learning for all students.

Teachers that apply UDL principles to their teaching provide multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression. CAST defines UDL as "a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn" (tinyurl.com/ydxuba4j). Students have multiple options for how to gain information, how to process the content, and how to show understanding and mastery of the material. As illustrated by the scenario above, "UDL aims to change the design of the environment rather than to change the learner. When environments are intentionally designed to reduce barriers, all learners can engage in rigorous, meaningful learning" (tinyurl.com/yb2xz5jk).

Embedded in the concept of UDL is the essential right to accessibility. Accessibility can mean many different things, but when we think about education, accessibility applies to teaching environments, materials, and strategies. The days of handing every student the same worksheet are over.

Now that same worksheet can be scanned by an app and read to the student. Another student may need to leave answers orally using a dictation app, while another may use a translation app to have the content read in a native language. Our classrooms are full of diverse learners, and by making the content accessible to all learners, students can show what they know in a multitude of ways.

Teachers may initially be overwhelmed by the thought of making all content, materials, and environments accessible, which is why developing content with accessibility in mind is essential. 

Here are a few resources to get started:

CAST: www.cast.org

Understood: tinyurl.com/ybxr6oep

National Center on Universal Design for Learning:
www.udlcenter.org

Accessible Documents: tinyurl.com/m686b3n

UDL Resource:
[/lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2_TEAL_UDL.pdf](http://lincs.ed.gov/sites/default/files/2_TEAL_UDL.pdf)

Google Accessibility: www.google.com/accessibility/

Apple Accessibility: www.apple.com/accessibility/

Microsoft Accessibility: tinyurl.com/ycw54hkh

the Alliance

for Accreditation and Certification
of Dyslexia Specialists



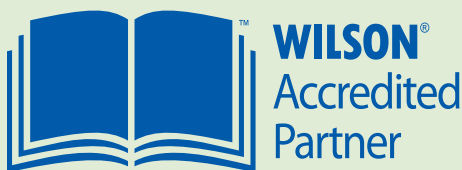
Over the last several years, Wilson Language Training (WLT) has met once or twice a year with other major organizations who are similarly dedicated to the important role of the teacher in the success of students with dyslexia: the Academic Language Therapy Association (ALTA), the International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council (IMSLEC), and the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators (AOGPE). The result of the collaboration was WLT's decision to officially join with these groups as a member of The Alliance for Accreditation and Certification of Dyslexia Specialists. The Alliance now comprises WLT, ALTA, IMSLEC, and AOGPE.

For more than 25 years, these member organizations have provided the highest levels of teacher preparation and training for individuals who work with students with dyslexia. Recognizing that individuals diagnosed with dyslexia require specialized and diagnostic instruction from a highly trained specialist, the Alliance provides a united association of organizations focused on the accreditation of Multisensory Structured Language Education training courses and the certification of graduates of those courses utilizing deeply established and effective processes to certify and/or accredit courses that meet rigorous standards. ALTA, AOGPE, and WLT certify individuals who have met course standards and

demonstrated a level of competency, including completion of a practicum mentored by a highly qualified instructor who has also achieved the highest levels of training. AOGPE, IMSLEC, and WLT accredit training programs, institutions, and organizations that uphold those high standards of training and instruction, including a required intensive practicum supervised by a highly qualified individual.

Due to the efforts of Decoding Dyslexia chapters, and heightened awareness for state and federal legislators and policymakers, more states have issued guidelines, handbooks, or regulations regarding public school strategies and services for students with dyslexia. Increasingly, parents and districts are seeking clear information to guide them to high-quality preparatory programs and professional development in order to prepare teachers to effectively instruct students with dyslexia. The Alliance can be a key source of this information.

The first board meeting with WLT as an official Alliance member was held in the spring of 2018. Five individuals from WLT have been named to the board of directors: Deanna Fogarty, Mary-Janet McCafferty, Nanci Shepardson, Connie Steigerwald, and Paul Tortolani. For more information, visit www.allianceaccreditation.org.



WILSON ACCREDITED PARTNERS RECOGNIZED

Wilson® Accredited Partners play a vital role in providing professional learning opportunities to educators and school districts across the country. During the 2018 Trainer Meeting in July, four newly Accredited Partners were welcomed and one Accredited Partner was recognized for achieving reaccreditation. With these additions, Wilson now has relationships with 23 Partners nationally.

Welcome New Partners:

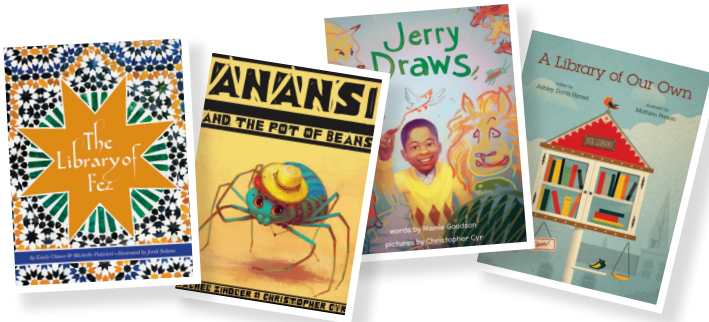
- **Montgomery County Intermediate Unit**
Norristown, PA
- **Leslie Shankman School Corporation/Hyde Park Day School**
Chicago, Northfield, and Lemont, IL
- **Children's Health Council/Sand Hill School**
Palo Alto, CA
- **The Banyan School**
Fairfield, NJ

Congratulations Reaccredited Partner:

- **Woodlynde School/Literacy Institute**
Strafford, PA

INTRODUCING THE GEODES READABLE LIBRARY

Crack one open and discover the treasure inside



Great Minds® and Wilson Language Training have collaborated to create a new collection of accessible, knowledge-building books for emerging and developing readers. The *Geodes Readable Library*™ combines carefully selected words with highly engaging content to create an authentic reading experience, empowering students to apply decoding skills while building knowledge about important ideas.

“In Wilson, we found a collaborator who shares our dedication to creating instructional materials that are uncompromisingly committed to high expectations for all students and are crafted with care and beauty,” shares Lynne Munson, CEO of Great Minds. “By tapping into the core strengths of both organizations, we are offering, in *Geodes Readables*, a resource that redefines how rich knowledge can be shared with the youngest students.”

Rooted in the belief that children are capable of reading to learn *while* learning to read, *Geodes Readables* are crafted with three foundational principles in mind: accessibility, engagement, and knowledge building.

Designed to be highly readable for emergent and developing readers, each book is at least 80 percent decodable, as aligned to the scope and sequence of Wilson's *Foundations*® program.

Geodes Readables provide young readers with opportunities to encounter familiar phonetic concepts and sight words in authentic text, building student confidence and promoting reading independence.

The *Geodes Readable Library* honors the natural curiosity of children by allowing them to engage with a variety of compelling literary and informational books. Beautiful illustrations and photographs enrich and expand on the text, while phonetic concepts are gradually integrated across the sets of books.

The varied content areas help children build background knowledge and vocabulary. Grounded in the content of Great Minds' English language arts curriculum, *Wit & Wisdom*®, each level of grade-appropriate books contains 4 modules, 16 books per module, for a total of 64 titles centered around engaging subjects and incorporating a variety of genres and perspectives.

Geodes Readables will be available at the Wilson Online Store, <https://store.wilsonlanguage.com>, later this year. 🌿





WILSON Reading System® 4th Edition Institutes



WILSON PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Denver, CO 11/8-9 • Chicago Area 11/15-16 • Columbus, OH 12/3-4

Presented by members of the Wilson Fidelity Team, the two-day Institute is designed exclusively for Wilson Reading System Level I and Level II Certified Teachers.

Session topics include:

- An Overview of the Wilson Reading System® 4th Edition
- A Systematic & Integrated Approach to Teaching Phonology, Morphology, and Orthography
- The Study of Word Elements
- Fourth Edition Materials Tour
- WRS Instructor Manual and Lesson Plan Practice
- Vocabulary and Wilson Words in the 4th Edition
- Assessment, Accountability, and Instruction
- End-of-Step Assessment Lesson Practice

Seats will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis, so we encourage you to register early to reserve your place. Tuition is \$449 and includes all institute handouts as well as continental breakfast and lunch each day.

[Visit wilsonlanguage.com for details!](http://wilsonlanguage.com)