

# THE Decoder

THE VOICE OF THE WILSON COMMUNITY

## FORWARD THINKING: RESPONDING TO DYSLEXIA LEGISLATION

Throughout the country, state officials and school districts are preparing to address new education laws focused on early screening for dyslexia, effective remediation, and professional learning. This is not a problem for districts that are implementing Wilson programs. Recently, several of these districts, including Manasquan Public Schools in New Jersey and the Rocky River City School District in Ohio, shared how Wilson® has helped them build sustainable, in-house professional learning within their districts to reach student achievement goals in a changing educational landscape.

Manasquan and Rocky River both introduced the Wilson Reading System® (WRS) into their districts during the 2008-2009 school year to address the needs of their most challenged students. Since then, Manasquan has expanded its WRS professional learning to teachers in general education classrooms, and has rolled out Foundations® in its pre-k to grade 3 classrooms.

Similarly, Rocky River's in-house Wilson experts are not only well prepared and qualified to instruct and support students with dyslexia, they also offer embedded support to Tier 1, 2, and 3 teachers anytime throughout the year, including summers.

Christin Walsh, a Reading Specialist for Manasquan Public Schools, and Rocky River educators Elizabeth Anderson, Melissa Spangler, and Beth Paul share their thoughts on how "Wilson Works."

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## THE WILSON COMMUNITY ROCKS!

The Wilson community has grown from a small learning center to a country-wide network of amazing educators. There is a strong bond that links Wilson teachers, administrators and our organization together—all believe in the potential of literacy for all, and passionately work toward it every day. Each year, as our Wilson team provides learning for teachers to meet the instructional needs of their students and support for administrators throughout the process, the Wilson community expands. And now, as we step back, we see a Wilson community that we are so proud of—a group of individuals who care so deeply, and get the job done.

To capture some of the common spirit, we asked a dedicated Wilson teacher, a dynamic Wilson Intern Trainer, and a determined Administrator: "What most inspires you about being a part of the Wilson Community?" Here is what they said:

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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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## DEAR FRIENDS,

In this issue of *The Decoder*, we reminisce about our 30-year history in dyslexia education, take a look at the meaningful, effective work currently taking place in Wilson classrooms, and invite you to learn more about what's in store in the months ahead.

We are excited that the Wilson Reading System® 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Steps 1-6, is now available. This could not have been accomplished without the collective knowledge, experience, and efforts of the entire Wilson community. Read on to learn more about what is new and enhanced in the latest edition of WRS.

In the following pages of this issue, you'll read about progress taking place at Syracuse City School District (NY) since the rollout of Wilson programs in this urban district more than a decade ago. You'll learn about our growing community as more states and schools strive to meet legislative changes affecting students with dyslexia. We're pleased to showcase the WRS certification program available at the University of Utah Reading Clinic, a Wilson Accredited Partner, and introduce the initiatives of Boon Philanthropy, a nonprofit organization offering scholarship opportunities for educators.

We offer tips for college-bound teens from a WRS alumna and college graduate, additional perspective on the importance of high-quality WRS instruction, legislative updates, assistive technology advice, and firsthand accounts from parents, students, teachers, and administrators about their experiences with Wilson programs.

Lastly, we would like to share an exciting new development. Response to our summer Conference for Wilson Certified Teachers has been tremendous. Registration for the two-day event was filled to capacity almost immediately by teachers excited to hone their skills. Because we were not able to accommodate all who are interested in attending, we are planning to offer two-day Wilson 4<sup>th</sup> Edition Institutes later this year. Additionally, introductory workshops for the Wilson Reading System, Foundations®, and Just Words®, are planned throughout the year, and the online Wilson Academy is available for 24/7 learning and support.

Our Wilson community is amazing! Educators, parents, students, physicians, philanthropists, and others share a commitment to literacy and education. We're happy to continue on this journey with you!

Sincerely,

*Barbara & Ed Wilson*



## HIGH-QUALITY WRS INSTRUCTION AND WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

Designed for individuals who require the most intensive level of instruction, the Wilson Reading System® (WRS) is appropriate for students with significant difficulty in word-level decoding, automatic word recognition and fluency, and spelling, including students with dyslexia. WRS has its roots in the Orton-Gillingham approach to reading instruction and shares its key principles of multisensory structured language (MSL), also known as structured literacy.

The Wilson Reading System is used in a variety of settings, including: public elementary, middle, and high schools in rural and urban communities throughout the U.S.; international and private schools; specialized learning clinics; university-affiliated schools and centers; community colleges and adult education centers; and correctional facilities. Whether you're a longtime practitioner, recently credentialed, or about to embark in the study of WRS, the new fourth edition will help your students with dyslexia successfully achieve literacy.

"To successfully implement a comprehensive Tier 3 reading intervention such as WRS, educators need to pay special attention to both the content and the principles of instruction, or the 'how,'" explains Deanna Fogarty, Wilson's Senior Program Director, Intensive Intervention Literacy Initiatives. "While the content of instruction is critical, how that content is taught is equally important."

Another, and equally important, consideration is high-quality implementation. The emerging field of implementation science makes clear the necessity of effective implementation processes in order to achieve intended student outcomes. The overriding goal of the Wilson Reading System is to have students independently read grade-level text with ease and understanding. To accomplish this, it is important that WRS is taught as intended. That is, teaching all of the instructional components, following the 10-part lesson plan, using appropriate pacing, and following implementation guidelines. Adhering to the guidelines for one-to-one vs. small-group instruction, lesson scheduling, setting, intensity, pacing, and duration is essential. These fundamental factors for instructional success with WRS are thoroughly detailed in the new, enhanced Instructor Manual.

One of the keys for students with dyslexia is the amount of application and practice with words in text that are controlled to have only the word structures and high frequency words that have been taught. Controlled decodable text is



critical so that learners have ample opportunity to practice and master their emerging skills. Controlled decodable text helps students achieve word reading accuracy and fluency. It also provides a demonstration of word structure so students begin to see that there is a system to the language and that all words do not need to be memorized. WRS has always been known for its extensive controlled text for younger and older students alike. The fourth edition provides even more controlled text passages for students to master in each substep as they progress with their skills. The passages grow intentionally longer to help students build reading stamina and incorporate high frequency, core, and academic words.

For many WRS teachers, correct pacing through the program is one of the most difficult aspects to learn. It is essential to only move to the next Step when the student masters the current one. Although the pace of advancement will vary throughout the program, all Steps and substeps require multiple lessons. The importance of pacing can't be overstated. As a result, the fourth edition now includes a more comprehensive End-of-Step Assessment to assist with decisions about progression. Students are assessed in phonetic word reading accuracy and automaticity; knowledge of current concepts; high frequency word reading and spelling; independent silent reading and oral reading fluency with controlled passages; and dictation of sounds, words and sentences. Students must reach specific benchmark mastery levels to proceed to the next Step.

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## LONG-SERVING TRAINER MARGARET LOGUE REFLECTS ON DYSLEXIA EDUCATION



Margaret Logue

On a blustery day this past winter, Wilson® Credentialed Trainer (W.C.T.) Margaret Logue drove off to a public elementary school on Martha's Vineyard to observe a lesson in progress.

The opportunity for an in-person visit was a nice change of pace for 91-year-old Margaret. Usually, she Skypes from her island home with educators

pursuing certification in the Wilson Reading System®. But this school is nearby, and the teacher doesn't Skype.

An educator since 1948, Margaret says she entered the teaching profession for a practical reason—it was one of few career options available to women at the time.

Yet she came by her love of teaching naturally. Her father, noted Robert Browning scholar William Clyde DeVane, Ph.D., was an influential Professor of English and Dean at Yale College for four decades. Her mother, Mabel Phillips DeVane, also earned her doctorate.

In 1947, Margaret married law student Edward J. Logue, who later became an attorney, educator, and most notably, an iconic urban planner. For a time in the early 1950s, they lived in New Delhi, India, when Edward served as personal assistant to U.S. Ambassador and former Connecticut Governor Chester Bowles, and Margaret taught at a one-room schoolhouse for Americans. Upon their return, the Logues raised a son and a daughter while also growing their respective careers.

An alumna of Smith College, Margaret taught English and history in the primary grades at several private schools early in her career. In 1970, she began teaching at a private school in New York, and remained there for 12 years. During this time, she earned a master's degree and certificate in Reading and Learning Disabilities from New York University. At the same time, she took a course at Teachers College, Columbia University, in the Orton-Gillingham approach to multisensory, structured language (MSL) instruction.

"Dyslexia was talked about privately then. Some people knew about it, but not many. At one time, it was something that parents were embarrassed about—there being something shameful to admit about your child. Like autism, people are just waking up to the fact that it's something that has been around forever."

Since the 1980s, a growing number of educators, scientists, physicians, and parents have collectively raised national awareness about dyslexia and the effectiveness of MSL instruction in building literacy among students with the neurobiological disability.

"A lot of forces were moving to propel awareness, and there is far more understanding of dyslexia today. It's losing its stigma," she says.

In 1983, with her background in education and MSL instruction, Margaret was appointed Head of School at the Carroll School in Lincoln, MA. She remained at the school for students with dyslexia and language-based disabilities for six years before retiring.


"After a year or so of retirement, I realized I didn't miss administration at all, but I did miss teachers and children," she says. Through her affiliation with the Orton Dyslexia Society (now the International Dyslexia Association), she became acquainted with Barbara Wilson.

The thought of helping teachers learn Wilson's reading program was an exciting prospect, so she contacted Barbara to learn more about the blossoming Wilson Reading System®. Within months, Margaret was back in school—this time as a student—learning the distinctive features of WRS from Barbara Wilson and Trainer Barbara Green. Margaret became a trainer in 1993.

The sequence in which reading concepts are introduced in WRS, the conversational interaction between teacher and student, professional learning opportunities, and the availability of materials for writing lesson plans were among the aspects that appealed to her, she says.

"Wilson was becoming more prominent and reached a part of Massachusetts that I knew best. It was very much alive and big in comparison to other programs because it included having teacher-friendly materials and lesson plans at your fingertips."

As one of Wilson's earliest Trainers, Margaret has instructed a cadre of educators in New England and beyond, benefiting countless students over the past 25 years.

"Any teacher who had Margaret as a trainer for WRS Level I or Level II Certification is extremely fortunate," says Barbara Wilson. "Margaret has a wealth of experience with dyslexia and in the field of reading, and she shares that knowledge with such passion." 

## THE WILSON COMMUNITY ROCKS!

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### Director, Department of Response to Intervention, Dyslexia and At Risk, Round Rock, TX



Kimberly Berry-Corie

explicit teaching guidelines and targeted learning strategies align with Round Rock's vision for intervention. We value Wilson's continued commitment to both teacher support and professional learning. Our teachers find the lesson frameworks, as well as the additional online support offered by Wilson, such integral and valuable tools in guiding their students' learning.

### Wilson Intern Trainer, Gordon College, MA



Krista Erikson

time in second grade, he received Foundations instruction, which was exactly what he needed to become a successful reader. Being a special education teacher, I was prompted by his success to pursue the WRS Level I Certification, and my Reading Specialist license through Gordon College, one of Wilson's Higher Education Partners.

Seeing the impact Wilson instruction had on my students, I continued with the training in order to receive my WRS Level II Certification. Last year, I began teaching in the

**We are part of the Wilson community because** Round Rock ISD believes that every child deserves success in literacy! We chose to use the Wilson Reading System® because we truly believe the systematic, multisensory approach to reading and spelling positively and powerfully impact our students' ability to succeed and often excel in both of these areas. The

Graduate Reading Specialist Program at Gordon, which was accredited by the IDA in 2014. Through the Gordon/Wilson partnership, I am now interning to be a Wilson Trainer.

I love being a part of the Gordon College and Wilson communities because I feel so strongly in the missions of both organizations. Both organizations desire to see more teachers learn the concepts and methodologies that reach all learners, including the most struggling readers.

My son, who is now a junior in college, laughs when he says, "Mom, it's ironic that you couldn't teach me to read and now you teach teachers how to teach reading!" Thank you Wilson!

### WRS Teacher, Carroll Lutheran School, Westminster, MD



Coley R. and Mandy Gilbert

**My student, Coley, and I are part of the Wilson community because** the Wilson program and our time together gave her the opportunity to trade fear and frustration for power and knowledge. The explicit instruction

paired with a safe place to practice her new skills led to life-changing growth and success. Coley went from hiding the fact that she couldn't read to reading for pleasure. The proof was in a photo that her mom took. Coley was on the couch, mesmerized by the novel we had started reading together. Her mom cried because she had never seen her daughter choose to read. When she sent the photo to me late that evening, I was teary-eyed, too. Coley had come so far! After working through all twelve Steps of the Wilson Reading Program, Coley morphed from the 8th grader reading at a 3rd grade level to a confident high school junior who was invited to take Honors English. Her dreams of college and a career are within reach now. 🌱

## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING STRATEGIES FROM SUSTAINABLE SYRACUSE

In 2008, the Syracuse City School District (SCSD) in central New York entered into the world of Wilson® with great hopes and expectations as well as a solid plan for consistent, in-district training that would allow educators to provide expert instruction and improve student outcomes.

Since then, the district of 21,700 students and 1,750 teachers “has maintained high-quality Wilson professional learning that is ongoing, job embedded, and focused on strengthening teacher practice and student learning,” shares Francine Grannell, the district’s Director of Professional Development.

“We have built the capacity and sustainability to support this type of professional learning through multiple in-district Wilson Trainers and Presenters. The professional learning structures that we have used for over a decade in partnership with Wilson align to best practices in the field.”

The extent of professional growth and student achievement did not happen by chance. It began with a carefully developed succession plan to build sustainability, capacity, and best practices for the district’s multi-tiered system of supports, explains Francine, the district’s former Assistant Director of Special Education and the 2012 recipient of Wilson’s Mary Ann Bonneau Award for exceptional leadership and dedication to literacy.

When the 37-school district rolled out the Wilson Reading System® (WRS), Foundations®, and Just Words®, it followed Wilson’s recommended guidelines, which included incorporating the tenets of implementation science into its literacy plan. In the first year, the district’s K-12 special education teachers were introduced to WRS and Foundations through introductory workshops that prepared them to recognize the signs of dyslexia and common reading problems and learn the fundamentals of Wilson’s multisensory structured language (MSL) instruction.

Linda Mulvey was instrumental in identifying the need for effective programs for students with language-based learning disabilities and bringing Wilson Language Training® (WLT) programs to the district when she served as Assistant Director of Special Education. Now Chief Academic Officer, she and the district’s leadership continue to support the programs and professional learning, says Francine. Irastina Reid, the current Assistant Director of Special Education, is leading the department to ensure that students have access and opportunity to instructional programs that will best fit their specific needs.




*Wilson educators at Syracuse City School District include: Jennifer Cimilluca, Irastina Reid, Maureen Sweeney, Francine Grannell, and Carla Pittarelli*

“Being immersed within the continued progression of WLT’s highly effective model of professional learning has resulted in significant improvements in student achievement and teacher practice,” Francine says. The district has developed multiple Foundations and Just Words Presenters and Facilitators, 64 WRS Level I and six Level II certified instructors, and three Wilson Credentialed Trainers (W.C.T.) – Francine, Karen Boyle, and Carla Pittarelli. Kate Curtin will complete her internship in 2019, becoming the fourth trainer.

Carla, the district’s full-time Wilson Support Specialist, shares, “Teachers feel a whole shift in their teaching because now there’s the whole pedagogy around how the program is taught. They report that their Wilson training makes them better teachers because it helps train them to diagnostically teach.”

To support its professional development redesign, SCSD also belongs to two communities of practice: AASA, The School Superintendents Association; and Learning Forward, whose Standards for Professional Learning guide the district in the design, development, implementation, and evaluation of professional learning. The structures for professional learning that Wilson has developed for each of its programs align to the Standards for Professional Learning, which ensures quality of experience and outcomes for educators and students in Syracuse.

“Wilson offers a progressive approach to professional learning, which allows educators to deepen their content knowledge and pedagogy over time,” Francine says. “We have moved toward professional learning as the continuous, sustained, and focused engagement of educators in learning to refine, expand, and improve their knowledge, skills, dispositions, and practices.” 

## DYSLEXIA ACROSS GENERATIONS

The signs were subtle at first, beginning in preschool and into kindergarten. Roxanna P. noticed her son, Matteo, was having trouble reciting the alphabet, spelling his name correctly, and learning the days of the week. Despite being assured he was “doing fine,” Roxanna’s concern grew.

When her good-natured first-grader started coming home from school angry and frustrated, Roxanna recognized what she was seeing. Glimpses of her own childhood.

“I knew deep down inside he was not fine,” she recalls. “He was struggling like I had, and I said ‘I’m not going to let this happen.’”

Research shows that if a parent, grandparent, or sibling is dyslexic, a struggling reader carries the same genetic trait as well.

“Due to the hereditary nature of dyslexia, family history is one of the strongest risk factors for developing dyslexia,” write Massachusetts researchers Ola Ozernov-Palchik of Tufts University and Dr. Nadine Gaab of Boston Children’s Hospital and Harvard Medical School in their 2016 publication, *Tackling the ‘Dyslexia Paradox’: Reading Brain and Behavior for Early Markers of Developmental Dyslexia*.

Fortunately, advances in medical and academic research is changing how children with dyslexia learn from one generation to the next.

Shy as a child, Roxanna was doubly challenged when her formal education began. She was an English language learner and was identified as having a language-based reading disorder. She repeated second grade and was placed on an education plan.

As she grew older, Roxanna kept her reading challenges hidden from her parents and friends. She explains that she managed to push her way through middle and high school largely through memorization and work-arounds. After graduating from high school, she earned an associate’s degree in early childhood education, and then continued on for a bachelor’s degree in ECE and Spanish.

Her professors picked up on her innate ability in the classroom as well as her literacy challenges. After earning her bachelor’s degree but repeatedly failing the teachers’ licensing test, she stole away to a neuropsychologist’s office to have her suspicions confirmed: she is dyslexic.

With her reading challenge finally identified, Roxanna had a better understanding of how to manage it. She went on to earn a master’s degree in elementary education curriculum and instruction, and has been a Spanish teacher at public and charter schools for 18 years.



Roxanna and Matteo

Roxanna’s journey helped her help her son, who is enrolled in the same parochial school she attended as a child and also was held back in second grade due to his learning difficulties. However, early recognition of Matteo’s disability through the school’s use of Foundations®, coupled with prompt remediation with the Wilson Reading System® (WRS) after he was diagnosed with dyslexia, has been a major difference between their childhood experiences.

“With WRS, he began making improvements,” Roxanna says. “He was getting all of his words. Spelling lists became easier, orally and written, and sentence structures were getting so much better. You could see him blossom. He was more confident and wasn’t as shy.”

After one year of WRS instruction, Matteo jumped to reading at grade level. This spring, he completed third grade, as well as Step 6 of WRS. He supplements his reading with the Learning Ally audiobook program, and has become a voracious reader.

“It makes me feel so relieved that he receives support and that there are programs like Wilson to help these kids succeed,” Roxanna says.

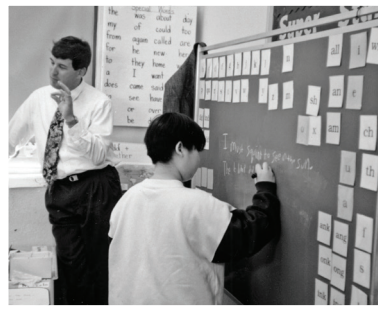
For 10-year-old Matteo, WRS has provided a solid understanding of the rules and quirks of the English language, while also demystifying what it means to have dyslexia.

“I learn differently. But, everyone learns differently.” 



Starting in the 1980s members of the Wilson community began to serve on committees and boards of both national and state branches of the International Dyslexia Association. In the following decade, Barbara and Ed helped found the International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council (IMSLEC) and the Academy of Orton Gillingham Practitioners and Educators (AOGPE).

Over the next 30 years, Wilson remained dedicated to the field of dyslexia research and professional learning standards.



The first edition of the Wilson Reading System® (WRS) was published in 1988 to help teach individuals with language-based learning disabilities how to read.

Now, countless students have learned to read using WRS, including more than 30,000 practicum students.



Barbara conducted her first WRS Level I Certification in 1989. Over 25,000 teachers became certified in WRS Level I, as Dyslexia Practitioners. Later, WRS Level II Certification is developed to help prepare Dyslexia Therapists for small-group intervention.

An in-depth model of professional learning launched in 1989. Since then, teachers have learned about dyslexia at Wilson workshops in all 50 states and 10 countries.

## DEDICATED TO DYSLEXIA:

In 2018, WRS 4th Edition (Steps 1-6) is published, building on over 30 years of proven success with individuals with dyslexia. (Steps 7-12 coming early 2019.)

Our dedication to dyslexia went from the classroom to Congress. In 2015, Barbara testified in front of a congressional committee in support of the READ Act.

In 2015, Wilson and its 17 Accredited Partners received accreditation from the International Dyslexia Association, recognizing that WRS certifications align with the IDA's Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading.







The Trainer Development program was created in 1996.

Over 200,000 teachers have been trained in Wilson programs by Wilson On-call, In-District, and Partner Trainers.

In 2001, WRS became available for college credit. Later, Wilson collaborated with colleges and universities to incorporate WRS Certification. To date, we have 7 higher education partners enabling teachers to learn about dyslexia and appropriate instruction.



To instruct our younger readers, Foundations® was published in 2002 as a prevention and early intervention program.

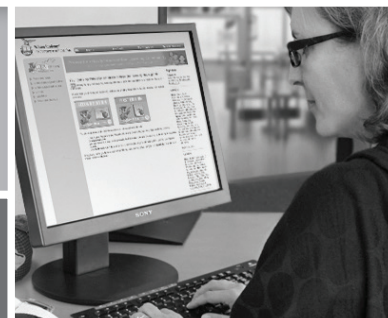
Wilson Academy was created in 2003 to better support instruction of all 3 Wilson programs. Academy Learning Communities have over 80,000 active members.

## A REFLECTION ON OUR 30 YEARS IN THE FIELD

To best guide teachers' instruction in reading, Wilson has provided over 16,000 workshops in Foundations, Just Words, and the Wilson Reading System, helping achieve literacy for all.

Wilson embraced implementation science and the Comprehensive Plan for Sustainability and Success (COMPASS) in 2011.

Wilson published Just Words® in 2009 to assist students and adults with literacy challenges that don't require intensive intervention.



## SCHOLARSHIPS FOR TEACHERS IN MSL INSTRUCTION

# Boon

Committed to Professional Learning

Time and again, we hear our Wilson® credentialed teachers describe the sense of awe they feel when the letters on a page first come alive to their struggling readers through multisensory structured language (MSL) instruction.

“Research and practice demonstrates the importance of teacher knowledge in explicit MSL instruction and that it benefits all students,” says Henry Sinclair Sherrill, a co-founder of Boon Philanthropy.

Boon, a 501(c)(3) public charity founded in 2016 by Mr. Sherrill and Sebastian J. Scripps, aims to reduce the national reading crisis by providing funds that allow dedicated educators to develop knowledge and skills in MSL instruction to help all learners become strong readers. Boon’s Orton National Scholarship Fund will help pay for teachers in grades 1-12 to receive this training in 17 states nationwide.


Boon’s core benefactors recently have pledged \$100,000 to match dollar-for-dollar all contributions made between \$5 to \$1,000, with 100% of all gifts to be distributed to four designated teacher training organizations. These organizations are the International Multisensory Structured Language Education Council (IMSLEC), the Academic Language Therapy Association (ALTA), and the Academy of Orton-Gillingham Practitioners and Educators (AOGPE), and selected nonprofit Wilson® Accredited Partners.

The plan is to grant and raise funds every year in perpetuity for this objective.

Earlier this year, Boon awarded its first round of Orton National Scholarships to the four training organizations to provide MSL training at no cost to teachers. Two nonprofit Wilson Accredited Partners, the Newgrange School in New Jersey and the Churchill Center and School in Missouri, were among the recipients of pilot grants that were used to provide training for teachers seeking WRS Level I Certification. Looking ahead, Boon also plans to award grants directly to higher education institutions to provide MSL instruction to education majors seeking undergraduate and graduate degrees.

We encourage members of our Wilson community to contribute to Boon’s visionary Orton National Scholarship Fund to help a new wave of teachers, and their students, benefit from MSL instruction. By supporting teachers in this way, donors can increase the impact of their personal gifts and improve our nation’s literacy. Contributors become a part of Boon’s national mission to help all students reach their reading potential, including students with dyslexia and other learning disabilities.

Individuals interested in applying for Boon’s Orton National Scholarship Fund will do so directly through the training organizations. We will continue to keep our Wilson community apprised of scholarship opportunities as they develop.

For more information about Boon and its mission, or to make a tax-deductible donation to support scholarships, visit <http://www.boonphilanthropy.org> 


## HIGH QUALITY WRS INSTRUCTION AND WHY IT’S IMPORTANT

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To reach the goal of student independence, teachers help students learn how to achieve and monitor their own decoding accuracy and comprehension using a gradual release of responsibility model. Gradual release of responsibility takes time and commitment, as it does not happen overnight. It requires not only proficient teaching of word structure, but also expert instruction with the WRS “Block 3,” which targets fluency and comprehension.

Block 3 has been part of the Wilson lesson plan since its first publication in 1988, and teachers who complete our certifications learn how to comprehensively and

systematically do this work with their students.

To provide further direction for our WRS practitioners, we have added a comprehensive Block 3 guide for systematic and thorough fluency and comprehension in our new fourth edition Instructor Manual. We believe teachers will find this an extremely helpful tool to deliver instruction as intended. With this, teachers will be even more prepared to provide high-quality instruction to the benefit of the many students who will master their reading challenges with WRS. 

## FORWARD THINKING: RESPONDING TO DYSLEXIA LEGISLATION

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### How is Wilson helping your district meet new education laws in your state?

**Christin:** It would be naïve to say that the new legislation adopted by New Jersey in 2014 had no bearing on why we decided to take on a more systematic implementation of literacy programs at Manasquan. The staff wanted to refine their instructional practices to best meet the needs of the different learners in their classrooms. The law just brought in more of a focus on what we should be doing to help students in classrooms who display potential indicators of dyslexia. Another positive to having a Tier 1 general education program like Foundations® is that all students have access to proper early literacy instruction.

**Liz, Melissa & Beth:** One hundred percent of the students in Rocky River have passed Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee due to the use of Foundations and a balanced literacy approach. Foundations is helping us recognize students who require Tier 2 intervention in grades K-3. We have been able to identify students who are at risk for reading difficulties using the Foundations Unit Tests. Students not meeting the 80% benchmark on Unit Tests along with other district criteria receive Foundations targeted intervention lessons.


### How will the Wilson Reading System® (WRS) help your district address the needs of students in need of Tier 3 intervention and students with dyslexia?

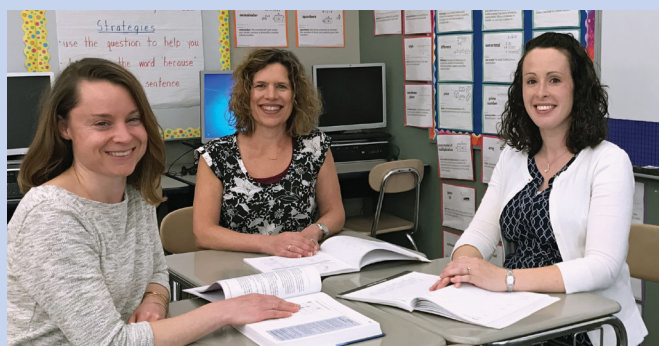
**Christin:** WRS has already given students with reading difficulties in our district access to a literate life. Having so many certified WRS teachers within the district and building has really allowed us to address the needs of the students that are not able to learn to read with the general education curriculum. We currently have students receiving Wilson Reading System instruction from grades 2 through high school.

**Liz, Melissa & Beth:** Students with dyslexia or a language-based learning disability need individual or small group help so that they can move forward at their own pace. They also need a great deal of structured practice and immediate, corrective feedback to develop automatic word recognition skills. WRS provides structured literacy instruction to Rocky River students in need of Tier 3 intervention and those with dyslexia. Our Wilson students in grades 2-12 receive explicit, systematic, and cumulative instruction three to five times per week in an individual or small-group setting.


### What advantages have Wilson programs, workshops, and coaching given your district in addressing district and state educational goals?

**Christin:** The coaching is the fundamental piece in order to maintain the programs and be sure that they are being run with fidelity. Having highly trained and qualified staff delivering proper diagnostic instruction to students has made the difference and ensured success with the programs.

**Liz, Melissa & Beth:** Early identification and intervention with students who show the warning signs of dyslexia or a language-based learning disability are critically important for success later on. Wilson programs, workshops, and coaching provide Rocky River with the resources to help identify students in grades K-3 who are behind in reading, and provide the necessary remediation for students in need of Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention. We are able to follow the RTI framework using all Wilson programs in Rocky River, providing research-based instruction in Tier 1 (Foundations), Tier 2 (Foundations and Just Words®) and Tier 3 (WRS) to promote reading success at all levels of learning. 



Using Wilson's new Virtual Mentoring for professional learning, Westbrook (CT) School District Special Educators Rebecca Lyon, Shannon Cost, and Linnea Fitzgerald, and colleagues from neighboring school districts, are participating in a Just Words pilot program this academic year in response to Connecticut's new dyslexia legislation laws.

Following the success of this program, Westbrook and surrounding communities will again combine resources to bring the Wilson Reading System to their districts this fall. Read more about their initiative at: [www.wilsonlanguage.com/stories-news](http://www.wilsonlanguage.com/stories-news). 

## ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY



Nanci Shephardson

Many of our Wilson students can benefit from Assistive Technology (AT). We sat down with Wilson Senior Educational Technologist Nanci Shephardson to learn more about AT and how to get the proper tools in place.


**What is AT?** Assistive Technology is, as cited in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), “any item, piece of equipment or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of children with disabilities.”

**What does the law require?** The IDEA requires that the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team consider AT needs in the development of every IEP for a student.

**Who pays for AT?** The IDEA law states that the school district is responsible for paying for Assistive Technology tools that have been written into the IEP, for use in school and home, if needed.

**How do I get AT for my student?** According to the IDEA, a written request from a parent for an Assistive Technology Assessment can be made once an IEP or 504 has been written, or it can be requested during an IEP or 504 team meeting ([www.gpat.org](http://www.gpat.org)).

**How do you choose the right tool?** Use the SETT framework (J. Zabala). First, make sure to consider the strengths and challenges of the **student**. Next, ask what is the **environment** the student is being asked to work in? Third, what are the **tasks** that the student must accomplish? Lastly, with the first three being paramount, choose a **tool** or **tools** to facilitate access to grade-level curriculum. Make sure to establish who will be training the student and/or teacher on how to use the tool(s). Always try to get a free trial of a tool before it is purchased (K. Janowski).

**What happens after AT is put in place?** It is essential to have a plan in place to evaluate the effectiveness of a tool or tools. Determine who is charge of collecting data, who will maintain the technology, and what to do if a tool is lost or broken. 

## ASK A LITERACY ADVISOR



Anne Treadwell


Wilson’s Literacy Advisors (LAs) play an essential role with districts in the implementation of our programs. Below, Senior Literacy Advisor Anne Treadwell shares how she and her fellow LAs guide districts and schools through the process of selecting and implementing appropriate programs that meet their students’ needs.

**What is the role of a Literacy Advisor and how do they help ensure Wilson programs are taught with fidelity?**

Working within geographic regions, LAs help district officials understand the purposes of and differences between our tiered programs. By thoroughly explaining our programs, and the requirements needed to implement them with fidelity (as intended), we ensure that districts truly understand the methodology and expectations of each program. Once a program is selected and a COMPASS

educational plan is developed, LAs work with district administrators, principals, and the Wilson Literacy Specialist assigned to the district during the life of the plan. We demonstrate to principals and their schools’ instructional leaders best practices for successfully monitoring the implementation of the program.

**What are some key factors to a successful implementation of Wilson programs in a school district?**

Clear and continuous communication before and during the implementation of Foundations®, Just Words®, and the Wilson Reading System® plans is a key factor to student success. LAs remain in constant communication with the Literacy Specialist assigned to the plan to receive progress feedback. LAs also have open conversations with the district point of contact, building principals, and instructional leaders, which is critical in working collaboratively to troubleshoot situations, such as scheduling issues, administrative support, and above all, ensure the fidelity of the program for student success. 

## LEGISLATION ENHANCING STATE DYSLEXIA GUIDELINES

The tide is starting to turn: currently, 42 states have dyslexia-specific laws and thankfully, more and more of them are not only passing these laws, but also providing funding, structure, and guidance for implementing them. In the past, the word dyslexia could not be formally used in so many districts where Wilson prepared teachers to teach students with dyslexia. That is all changing.

Several state departments of education have designated dyslexia specialists to help facilitate the implementation of new laws. In addition, advisory boards made up of parents, teachers, district administrators, reading specialists, and higher education faculty, among others, have been appointed to provide stakeholder input. This diverse group of individuals is invested in guiding change to improve learning outcomes for struggling readers.


In many states, guidance documents are being created and disseminated to help in these efforts. New Jersey, New Hampshire, Arizona, Tennessee, and California are among the states that released handbooks or resource guides in 2017 to assist districts and schools as they work to put evidence-based practices in place.

California's guidance document, for example, provides a broad spectrum of information for assisting in the improvement of services and outcomes for students with dyslexia. This information includes: the neuroscience of dyslexia, screening, teacher professional learning, effective practices for teaching students with dyslexia, and questions and answers for parents and teachers, among other topics.

New resource guidelines and handbooks show states are working toward improving services for students with dyslexia in districts and schools. While state dyslexia laws may or may not require district adoption of dyslexia guidelines, state handbooks can serve as a useful tool for guiding implementation of effective policies and practices to improve learning outcomes for students with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities.

Implementation will be the key to truly impacting student outcomes. Without the science of implementation, the science of reading will not be achieved in classrooms. The importance of this is outlined in a White Paper for Literate Nation by Barbara Wilson and Michelle Duda titled "Using Implementation Science to Close the Policy to Practice Gap."

Hopefully, as states go forward, diligent attention to the critical aspects of implementation will result in both the increased knowledge and skill of educators and the

organizational components necessary for the delivery of essential instruction. With that, ultimately, positive outcomes for students with dyslexia can be achieved. 

— Vicki Myers, Senior Legislative and Outreach Liaison

### Resources

International Dyslexia Association Legislative Map  
<https://dyslexiaida.org>

National Center for Improving Literacy Legislative Resources  
<https://improvingliteracy.org>

California Dyslexia Guidelines  
<https://www.cde.ca.gov>

A Literate Nation White Paper: Using Implementation Science to Close the Policy to Practice Gap  
<https://www.wilsonlanguage.com>


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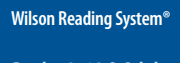
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## UNIVERSITY OF UTAH READING CLINIC

In Utah, Michele Blake, Grace Craig, and Holly Dean are three in three million.

The trio of educators at the University of Utah Reading Clinic (UURC) are Wilson® Credentialed Trainers (W.C.T.) in the expansive state of three million residents. Together with UURC Director Dr. Kathleen Brown and other Wilson-trained professionals at the clinic, they are providing intensive multisensory structured language (MSL) instruction to teachers and students from the majestic mountain ranges to the vast desert regions.

Established by the state's legislature in 1999 and housed within the university's College of Education, the UURC provides assessment and intervention services to Utah children in grades K-12 as well as professional development for Utah educators. The clinic adopted the Wilson Reading System® (WRS) for its intensive Tier 3 instruction in 2003 and became a Wilson® Accredited Partner in 2007.

"Utah had a black hole for kids with dyslexia until this century. Just a handful of people in the state had structured language Tier 3 training," shares Kathleen.

Michele, Grace, and, most recently, Holly, went on to complete the rigorous internship to become WRS Trainers, allowing them to provide WRS instruction to districts throughout the state. So far, approximately 300 educators have received WRS training through the UURC at its location in Murray, on-site at a dozen school districts, and online. Twelve of the clinic's staff instructors, as well as several hourly tutors, have become WRS Level I certified.

"Now that we are serving districts, we're seeing many that aren't centered here in the Salt Lake Valley," says Michele. "We're doing quite a bit for those who are far away. We're overwhelmed by how many educators want the Wilson training."

The state's per capita expenditure for students is routinely ranked among the bottom three in the country, which leaves many districts strapped for professional development funding, Kathleen explains. Scholarships awarded through the generosity of benefactors help support the professional

learning programs for Utah educators. For instance, the George S. and Dolores Dore Eccles Foundation and the Crawford Family Foundation provide scholarships for educators seeking WRS Level I Certification.

"There is a chasm between the need and what's provided for teacher professional development, and the scholarships help us bridge that chasm," Kathleen explains.


Jennifer Smith, a Literacy Coach with the Iron County School District 250 miles away in southwestern Utah, has enjoyed the benefits of the online learning format, which includes real-time lessons with her WRS instructors via technology. Supported with the scholarships, she and three others in her district completed WRS Level I Certification last year.

Jennifer, who is now pursuing WRS Level II Certification, is noticing the progress in her students. Within a year of instruction, her practicum student went from reading below to reading above grade level.

"I'm noticing changes in his reading, and in his confidence. It has given him so much self-esteem."

Educator Amy Warren works with struggling readers at McPolin Elementary School within the Park City School District, which recently rolled out Foundations in its elementary schools. She completed her WRS Level I Certification and is now pursuing WRS Level II Certification and a master's degree in reading and literacy at the university.

"The WRS training has given me a systematic approach to reading instruction. It has given me a clear plan of what to teach and how to teach it. The way the program is designed also gives me the opportunity to make sure that students achieve mastery of a concept before moving on in the program. Before, I did not have such a clear-cut plan, nor a way to progress monitor to ensure students were ready to move on," she says.

"I am very thankful for the opportunities the UURC and Wilson have given me. Although I feel I have just begun my journey through the world of literacy and reading instruction, I also am empowered and excited to continue on this path." 



*UURC's Wilson Credentialed Trainers: Holly Dean, Michele Blake, and Grace Craig*

## TRANSITIONING FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE



Photo by Becky Weidenkopf

Kelly Ettinger

In high school, Kelly mentored fellow students and shared her experiences and the importance of self-advocacy with her peers, their tutors, and parents.

“My parents were very up front with me from the beginning. They explained to me, ‘You have ADHD and dyslexia, and it’s not bad or good—just different.’ They were very positive about it, so it was never a negative thing to be dyslexic, or ADHD, or to have tutors, because they were so open and so positive. Then I was really open and really positive, and I just carried that.”

Kelly went on to graduate in 2017 from Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, PA, with a bachelor’s degree in English Literature. This fall, she plans to pursue a master’s degree at the University of Northern Colorado and ultimately become a teacher.

Below are five of Kelly’s favorite tips for college-bound teens with learning differences.

### **Tip 1: Know the procedures and policies of the school’s disability services**

Whether you are just starting to look at colleges or about to begin your first year, it is important to know how the disability services office at your school functions. This is the place to learn how to apply for accommodations, how professors are notified about accommodation plans, and whether you’ll need to notify disability services to reserve a computer or schedule accommodations for an exam in advance. Get to know who runs the disability services office, who you should contact if any issues arise, and who handles day-to-day affairs.

### **Tip 2: Advocate for yourself**

Advocating for yourself is extremely important. Take the time to meet with all your teachers at the beginning of each semester. Not only is it great to develop a connection with your professor or Teaching Assistant (TA) early on, but it is an opportunity to have a one-to-one chat with your professor.

You can discuss your disability, your needs in the classroom, what your professor could help you with, ask any questions you may have about the course, and see if your professor has any questions about how best to help you. Throughout the semester, do not hesitate to talk to a professor or TA if you need help with assignments, have questions about the class, or want advice on what you can do to improve. Professors and TAs are there to help you learn.


### **Tip 3: Utilize the tools at your disposal**

Nowadays, most schools provide a plethora of services to help their students with their coursework. Make sure to look up which services your school offers to students and use them. Whether it is tutoring, peer review at a writing center, or individual meetings with a librarian to discuss a research project, take advantage of the services at your disposal. Many professors or TAs will even look over outlines, drafts, and proposals before a final paper or presentation is due.

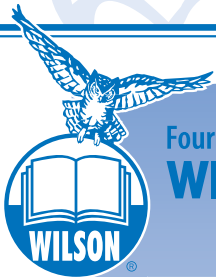
### **Tip 4: Review your work**

College is very busy, and it becomes tempting to just finish an assignment hastily and turn it in. Do not hand in work unedited. Practice your presentations a few times. Read papers aloud to uncover mistakes you might have missed. Having a tutor or a professor look at the early stages of an assignment or draft is great, but even having a friend or roommate look over your work will provide a fresh pair of eyes to give constructive feedback. If possible, always try to finish an assignment a day or two before it’s due so you can edit it after taking some time away from it. Sometimes our mistakes are right in front of us, but oversaturation in an assignment can blind us to them.

### **Tip 5: Time management**

Giving yourself enough time to put your best effort into your work is extremely important in college. At the start of each semester, mark the due dates of major assignments on your calendar, as well as the date you want to start working on them. Give yourself a little wiggle room to work on large assignments. Work on big papers and projects a few weeks in advance so you aren’t rushing at the last minute. If you have a bunch of assignments due the same week, see if you can plan to finish an assignment early or ask your professor for an extension (if you ask well in advance, they are much more likely to give you an extension). Create a study and homework schedule for the week on Sunday or find a homework routine that works for you regularly. 

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