

# THE Decoder

THE VOICE OF THE WILSON COMMUNITY



## THE SCIENCE OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

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

## DEAR FRIENDS,

Explicit, multisensory structured literacy instruction, delivered by teachers skilled in this method, enables individuals with dyslexia to steadily and systematically become fluent, independent readers. Nationally and globally, awareness and understanding about the “science of reading” is taking hold.

Spurred in recent years by educators and parents seeking effective, proven solutions for their struggling readers, states across the country are adopting new laws addressing the educational needs of students with dyslexia. That’s fantastic news. But what will it take to make the connection between the new laws and the research-based practices that will help these students learn to read?



Wilson has long been committed to the field of implementation science, the focus of this issue. The discipline brings scientific principles to bear on the implementation of evidence-based programs and practices to the field of education. Putting this discipline into practice can be found in our cover story, *The Science of Successful Program Implementation*, and other articles throughout this issue. We know that there is no “quick fix,” so our work with educators is supported by implementation science.

As more states seek solutions for their students with dyslexia and aim to put into place prevention and early intervention programs, our work is in higher demand than ever. To address this and build our capacity to support educators across the country, we are introducing Virtual Implementation Support. V.I.S. is our online introduction to Foundations® and Just Words®, which is paired with onsite workshops to build knowledge of these multisensory structured literacy programs and their implementations.

We believe in working closely with administrators to encourage strong professional learning. Dr. Siobhan Dennis has recently joined the Wilson team as Director of Administrator Relations to support this effort. In this role, she is powering up a network of building-based administrators to provide peer learning for quality implementation.

We all have a lot to celebrate this year as there has been plenty of student success in our programs. The response we have received from educators delving into the WRS 4<sup>th</sup> edition with their students has been outstanding. Just Words, now in its 10<sup>th</sup> year, provides important instruction for individuals who have mild-to-moderate gaps in their decoding and spelling proficiency. And we are pleased with the interest shown in *Geodes™*, published by Great Minds® in collaboration with Wilson Language Training. These engaging, content building books are aligned with the Foundations scope and sequence.

As always, we encourage you to reach out to us and share your stories — we enjoy hearing from students, parents, and educators alike!

Sincerely,

*Barbara & Ed Wilson*

**On the Cover**

*Students at Copiague Public Schools in New York benefit from the strategic implementation of Wilson® programs within the district.*

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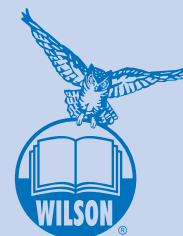
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## MOVING 4<sup>th</sup>

### WRS in the Hands of Teachers



*Helping teachers teach. Connie Steigerwald, left, a Wilson Literacy Advisor and Director of Partner Development, instructs teachers during a recent WRS 4<sup>th</sup> Edition Institute.*

Whether they received their Wilson Reading System® certification many years ago or more recently earned their credentials, educators are embracing the program's fourth edition to enhance their intensive reading instruction for students with a language-based learning disability, such as dyslexia.

Published last year, the fourth edition of WRS (Steps 1-6) includes information gathered from over three decades of research, practice, and experience. Much of the instruction and activities that have long been used in the WRS Level I Certification coursework are now explicitly detailed in the new edition. Updates and enhancements include the Block 3 guidance for fluency and comprehension, a focus on core and academic vocabulary, the inclusion of common prefixes and Latin and Greek base elements, and updated passages in the Student Readers.

"The biggest differences I've noticed between the third and fourth editions are largely related to how much more robust the content is with the new materials," shares Wilson® Credentialed Trainer Lisa Parnello, a literacy specialist for students in grades 2 – 8 at the Sand Hill School in Palo Alto, CA.

"The addition of the Greek and Latin bases has made the biggest impact on my students' success in school," Lisa notes. "The ability to recognize roots and affixes within words is helping students read faster and more accurately, build their vocabulary, and apply these emerging skills in general education classes.

"Students are now able to recognize the meaning of more unfamiliar words because of direct instruction of bases and affixes. The practice with high frequency words in text helps increase their reading fluency."

Additionally, says Lisa, "The new components have helped direct the instruction to ensure more emphasis is put on comprehension skills and vocabulary development."

Bethany West, an elementary school reading specialist in the Canon-McMillan School District in Pennsylvania, shares a similar view.

"The word elements piece, with the prefixes and base elements, has really helped my students understand how words are built and made an easier transition to multisyllabic words. I also appreciate the additional stories in the Student Readers. Since some Steps are stretched over several lessons, it is nice to have a variety of stories to keep the students interested."

Her colleague, April Lowden, also a school reading specialist, described the fourth edition as a "teacher-friendly tool" that benefits educators and students alike.


"The new components certainly have made my instruction more effective, and I feel that the students are able to understand and master concepts a little quicker," she shares. "I am finding that our intensive WRS kids are making more progress due to the instruction of prefixes, suffixes, and word elements."

With the new Block 3 guide, teachers now have additional information at their fingertips to offer more systematic and direct instruction in fluency and comprehension skills. Alisa Farmer, an elementary dyslexia teacher for the Killeen Independent School District in Texas, observes that the updates to the instruction in Block 3 are "having and will continue to have the biggest impact on my students" by enabling them to transfer the skills they are learning to "all of the other reading they do."

Block 3 updates have made a significant impact on fourth grade student Cheryl C.'s fluency. As her Wilson instructor, Tess Hall, notes, "I have seen remarkable progress in Cheryl's reading rate, accuracy, phrasing, and expression. Cheryl is ending the year on grade level for reading."

To date, more than 1,000 educators have participated in hands-on professional learning focused entirely on the new edition. To meet the ongoing interest, WRS 4<sup>th</sup> Edition Institutes are scheduled through December.

"People have been unbelievably enthusiastic about the institutes," shares Connie Steigerwald, a Wilson Literacy Advisor and Director of Partner Development. "They are so thrilled to be there and are excited to learn about the new information."

For more information about upcoming dates, visit <https://tinyurl.com/WLT-Workshops>. 

## THE SCIENCE OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

### Using Implementation Drivers to Promote Student Success

You've researched high and low, or perhaps even engaged in a lengthy review process, to identify the best literacy program to meet your students' needs. But to achieve the success promised by the program, a carefully designed, deliberate plan to adopt and install the program is critical. Research findings from the field of implementation science can guide the way.

Wilson Language Training takes pride in incorporating the tenets and methodologies of implementation science to support the use of our programs in schools and districts across the country, because implementing an effective program as designed will help maximize student benefits.

Five "Active Implementation Frameworks," identified by Fixsen, et al. (2005) and the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN, 2013), are critical in facilitating student success and sustainability of new initiatives. These include:

- **What: Usable Interventions** – Selecting a program that has demonstrated success and a reasonable expectation that your students will succeed with this new program.
- **Who: Implementation Teams** – Activating a team that has the time, energy, and authority to oversee the implementation of the program.
- **How: Implementation Drivers** – Attending to all three categories of factors that "drive" the success of the implementation of the new program: Staff Competency, Organization, and Leadership (see image at right).
- **How/When: Stages of Implementation** – Recognizing that implementation takes time and certain activities should be planned and expected depending on how far down the path of implementation the organization has gone; acting accordingly.
- **How: Improvement Cycles** – Utilizing a process of review and revision, such as the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle, to guide a continual improvement process.

In this article, we'll focus on the Implementation Drivers framework (see image), highlighting the efforts of the Copiague Public School District (N.Y.) to use these drivers as they implemented Wilson programs over the past eight years.

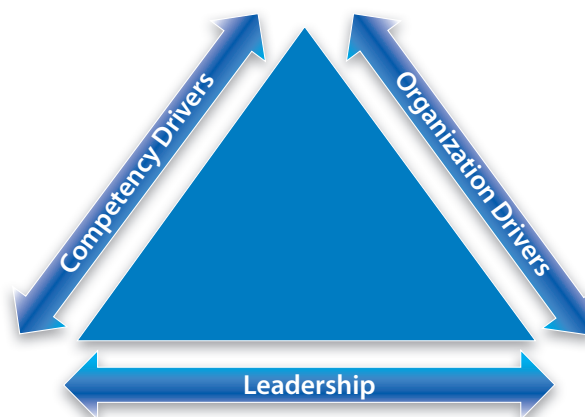
### Wilson® in Copiague Public Schools

Recently, Dr. Kathleen Bannon, Superintendent of Copiague Public Schools in New York, and Stephanie Nosworthy, Special Education Teacher and a Wilson® Credentialed Trainer in Copiague, shared their district's journey from the initial rollout

of Wilson programs to their current efforts to sustain quality implementation of the programs across the district.

The connection with Wilson began several years ago when this diverse Title I district recognized the need for more direct, explicit teaching of word structure at the elementary level for Tier 3 students with dyslexia and other language-based learning disabilities—word work during guided reading lessons was simply not enough. "Our students were in need of a multisensory, systematic method of instruction," Stephanie shares. After researching training options in multisensory structured language education, school officials chose the Wilson Reading System® (WRS).

Following the successful initial implementation of WRS, the district adopted Just Words® as a Tier 2 intervention program as part of its Response to Intervention (RTI) model. As the final component of the district's RTI model, Foundations® was implemented in K-2 across all four elementary schools in 2016.



© 2008, Fixsen, Blase, Duda, Naoom & Van Dyke (adapted)

### Using Staff Competency Drivers

**Competency drivers**, one of three implementation drivers, recognize the important role of supporting staff so they develop the skills and confidence to effectively and consistently use the selected program as intended. Competency drivers include training, coaching, and performance assessment.

Copiague supported staff competency drivers from the initial adoption of Wilson programs, working with Wilson® Credentialed Trainers Mary Alice Foti and Gina Conrad of Building Bridges, a Wilson® Accredited Partner. It began in fall 2011 with the first WRS Introductory Workshop and the district's first WRS Level I cohort for 18 educators, including Superintendent Bannon and Stephanie.

Since then, Copiague teachers have had additional opportunities to participate in WRS Level I and Level II Certification. "We have

had great teacher interest and participation and continue to have new volunteers each year," Stephanie adds. The district now has 26 WRS Level I Certified staff; five teachers currently pursuing Level I certification; nine who have completed additional coursework toward Level II certification; and four WRS Level II Certified staff, including Superintendent Bannon and Stephanie. In 2016, Stephanie successfully completed Wilson's yearlong WRS Trainer Development internship, allowing her to become a Wilson® Credentialed Trainer (W.C.T.). Stephanie can now offer WRS guidance and support and conduct Level I certification for teachers within the district.

With the adoption of Just Words® (at the middle school and four elementary schools) and Foundations® (K-2), all teachers using the programs received initial training through the Introductory Workshops. The district's capacity to support teachers' use of these programs was enhanced by Stephanie's training as a Just Words and Foundations Facilitator and Presenter. Now, she helps Just Words teachers preview Unit concepts, discuss student needs, and review procedures or updates.

To support Foundations teachers, Stephanie meets with the lead teacher in each grade (K-2) once a month to review student data, discuss the needs of specific teachers and/or students, and determine the most appropriate supports and training opportunities for their grade-level teachers. Using this information, she offers training to the lead-teachers, who also serve as school-based literacy coaches, on a specific Foundations-related topic. Those teachers then share this training with their assigned grade level. Depending on the needs of the building that month, Stephanie may also meet with the building administration to discuss the program implementation. She also offers training and support to teachers who are new to the district or any of the Wilson programs, or who have had grade-level changes.

Copiague has prioritized high-quality implementation of Wilson programs by ensuring that staff training and support is readily available for new and experienced teachers throughout the year. And the teachers have responded.

"While we continue to fine-tune these procedures, our teachers have shown their commitment to student success by being flexible and cooperative throughout this learning process," Stephanie says.

## Using Organization Drivers

**Organization drivers**, another category of implementation drivers, are features within the organization, such as policies, procedures, and opportunities, that allow the selected program to be implemented as recommended. Examples include: a system to collect, analyze, and use data to inform planning and



instruction, a system that allows teachers to attend professional development to support their use of the selected program, adequate time for instruction each day, and time in the school day to schedule a Tier 2 intervention as recommended.

Copiague uses a variety of organization drivers to promote the successful implementation and sustainability of Wilson's programs across the district.

For example, one of the biggest challenges the district faced was creating a solid block of time for Foundations instruction at its four elementary schools. This required the attention and expertise of building administrators, staff developers, literacy coaches, and teachers. Once the Foundations block was put in place in all K-2 classrooms, procedural challenges, such as switching classrooms, creating new spreadsheets for data collection, and organizing and distributing materials, had to be addressed.

First, the district extended its 30-minute Foundations block to 40 minutes each day, allowing an extra 10 minutes for students to switch classrooms depending on their assigned teacher and Level.

Next, a regular procedure of data collection and analysis was established to organize and plan instruction.

"Our classes are comprised of students working on vastly different levels," Stephanie explains. For first and second grade classes, the Unit Test scores from the first two Foundations Units, as well as student scores from last year, were used to create the groups. Student data is examined after each Unit assessment, and staff members collaborate to determine the best intervention for each student. Their assessment/data folders move with them.

For Just Words classes, schedules vary based on the school, while WRS schedules are based on the needs of the students. Conveniently, WRS teachers can attend meetings with practicum students before or after school.

*continued on next page*

## Using Leadership Drivers

**Leadership drivers**, the final category of drivers that forms the base of the triangle, support the success of the other drivers. Leadership drivers acknowledge the important role of supporting existing leaders and developing new leaders and leadership skills across the organization. Wilson's COMPASS planning process supports leaders in their role of guiding the successful uptake of Wilson's programs.

According to Stephanie, both central-office and building-level administrators at Copiague have demonstrated a strong level of commitment to Wilson programs by providing the resources needed for teachers to succeed. Principals are involved with the implementation, and district and building leaders make sure that, as Stephanie notes, "appropriate materials have been purchased, training opportunities have been provided, and coaching positions have been created so that teachers are supported. The administration has sent a clear message to staff members that Wilson's research-based programs are to be delivered with the highest degree of fidelity. Refresher training for Learning Activities and continuing contact with teachers help our district to maintain high-quality instruction." As a result, teachers recognized the value of this commitment. "They saw the success on the part of the students."



Wilson® Credentialed Trainer Stephanie Nosworthy, right, reviews data for second grade students with Theresa Bennett, one of the Copiague school district's Foundations® lead teachers.

"Having a superintendent who is Wilson certified and has an in-depth understanding of the fundamental aspects of the programs has had a profound effect on all aspects of the implementation process," shares Stephanie. "Dr. Bannon truly understands the importance of developing children's foundational skills in reading

**"A strong, clearly communicated district goal is necessary to ensure that administrators, teachers, and support staff understand the expectations and the value in implementing programs with fidelity."**

and using appropriate interventions with students who require multisensory, direct, and explicit instruction. She has been a part of every decision made throughout the implementation process and continues to work tirelessly with administrators and staff developers to ensure that our programs are both effective and sustainable."

"A strong, clearly communicated district goal is necessary to ensure that administrators, teachers, and support staff understand the expectations and the value in implementing programs with fidelity," says Stephanie.

## Commitment to Implementation

Careful attention to the three implementation drivers has been key to the successful implementation of Wilson programs in Copiague. Developing and continuing to maintain staff capacity at the building and district level on an ongoing basis, ensuring that organizational policies and procedures support rather than detract from implementation, and having leaders who have demonstrated an understanding and commitment to the critical components of implementation with fidelity has truly made a difference.

Stephanie explains that, "As our programs were implemented and systems were changed, needs arose and issues were discovered that had to be discussed and addressed. Collaboration allowed us to identify these needs, formulate solutions, and work together to make changes that would benefit our students. This is an ongoing learning process and we will need to continue to develop training opportunities and program supports to further enhance the quality of instruction and strengthen the implementation of the programs."

*continued on page 15*

## WHAT'S NEW? VIRTUAL IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

Recognizing that limited time and distance are barriers to in-person sessions for many, Wilson is now offering a new service of live, interactive support to districts no matter where they are located.

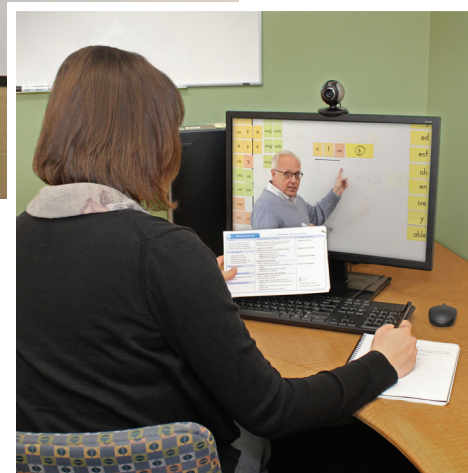
Called Virtual Implementation Support (V.I.S.), this professional learning is geared toward teachers who are new to Foundations® or Just Words® and is delivered over the course of a school year by Wilson Literacy Specialists (LS).

The online format is well-matched for a variety of schools and districts, including rural districts looking for professional learning and large urban districts expanding support to teachers in schools beyond the district's designated demonstration site with onsite coaching.

"The English language can be very difficult for some students to grasp. Through the Just Words training, I have gained knowledge of strategies and skills to help students with their word study, reading, spelling, and fluency," she shares. "It provided me with ideas on how to reach students through a multisensory approach with a variety of interactive activities. Knowing there was a constant support system was helpful."

As part of Wilson's comprehensive continuum of professional learning, Virtual Implementation Support promotes teachers' understanding of concepts and instructional strategies. Five interactive sessions are scheduled at critical junctures throughout the school year with live 45-minute study group discussions on the upcoming Units and concepts, and opportunities to ask questions and learn practical classroom tips and teaching suggestions. A recorded version of the session is posted so teachers can review the strategies presented in the module. Teachers enrolled in the program also receive "just in time resources." Curated content is shared just when a teacher might find it useful, pointing to resources already available on the program's online Learning Community, such as demonstration videos, classroom organization and tips, printable resources, and much more. A discussion board monitored by an LS provides teachers with the opportunity to have questions answered and share ideas with teachers across the country. One-to-one meetings are available to those enrolled as part of a dedicated cohort with a district.

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"We're looking at the next generation of Wilson® support," shares Mark Foran, Director of Professional Learning for Virtual Implementation. "This lets us engage with more teachers and impact more students to help them become fluent, independent readers."

Following a pilot in several Massachusetts and Connecticut public schools during the 2017-2018 school year, the service launched for 2018-2019. More than 200 educators across Arizona, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, Maryland, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, and Texas participated in Just Words and Foundations Levels K, 1, and 2 Virtual Implementation Support.

For Linnea Fitzgerald, a middle school special education teacher in Westbrook, CT, Just Words was her first experience implementing multisensory structured language instruction. The virtual support over the course of a year served her and her students well, she says.

Virtual Implementation Support is available through our COM-PASS plan process or for individuals. An Introductory Workshop is the required prerequisite for Implementation Support. For more information, contact Wilson's Customer Support Center at 800.899.8454 or email [info@wilsonlanguage.com](mailto:info@wilsonlanguage.com).

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## WHEN IT'S NOT DYSLEXIA: USING JUST WORDS®

### Wilson's Tier 2 Program Turns 10

The 26 letters of the English alphabet can be arranged to create more than 170,000 words. Memorizing them all would be impossible, but if you're a struggling reader without good word-level skills, you may contemplate it.

Students diagnosed with dyslexia require intensive instruction to become proficient readers. But what if it's not dyslexia? What if the problem is mild-to-moderate gaps in decoding and spelling proficiency, and not a significant language-based learning disability? What if students never received strong initial instruction in foundational skills?

Wilson's Tier 2 intervention program Just Words® may be the answer. Developed in 2009, Just Words is a highly explicit, multisensory decoding and spelling program for students in grades 4-12 and adults who have below-average decoding and spelling scores. The program delivers just the word study component of the Wilson Reading System® (WRS) curriculum at an accelerated pace, and aligns with a school or district's Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) or Response to Intervention framework of instruction.

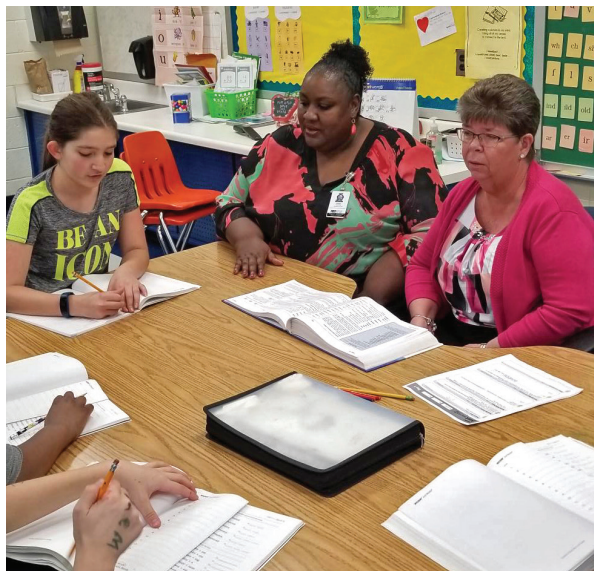
Just Words helps to ensure that students master the necessary foundational literacy skills that allow them to achieve success with more complex, grade-level standards found in states' rigorous college- and career- readiness standards.

**“I have been teaching Just Words for the past nine years and it is without a doubt one of my favorite things to teach.”**

Working with small groups of up to 15 students, teachers cover the six syllable types of the English language, sound-symbol correspondence as related to the syllable patterns, the study of phonetically regular and high frequency irregular words, orthographic (spelling) rules, and morphology patterns of prefixes, roots, and suffixes.

“We've noticed that our students who have received Just Words instruction in grades four and five are better prepared in their

English classes at the middle school level,” says Dwana Cooper, a Wilson® Dyslexia Practitioner (W.D.P.) and Just Words Presenter in the Newport News, VA, public school district. Newport News, which serves approximately 29,000 students, also implements Foundations® and WRS in many of its schools.



*Dwana Cooper, W.D.P., center, SPED Instructional Supervisor in Virginia's Newport News School District, coaches Just Words teachers like Michelle Hill, right.*

Developing credentialed Just Words Facilitators and Presenters who can then support colleagues helps schools and districts move toward fidelity and sustainability of the program. Dwana fills that role in Newport News, where she serves as a Special Education Instructional Supervisor in the district.

“As we prepare our students to be college-, career-, and citizen-ready, it is our job to find strategies and ways to meet the unique needs of diverse learners,” says Dwana, who was recently appointed to the Virginia Branch International Dyslexia Association's board of directors. “With Just Words, teachers do not have to find ways to get data on

their students' progress. There are data points embedded in the program. The program is teacher-friendly and designed so that you are immediately aware of trouble spots for students.

“Our students are excited about their progress. At the end of the year, at our culminating literacy event, students share how their Just Words instruction has helped them as readers.”

Ruth Welch, a Reading and Language Arts Interventionist in her New Jersey public school district, instructs fourth graders in Just Words.

“I have been teaching Just Words for the past nine years and it is without a doubt one of my favorite things to teach. I love seeing my students being able to crack the code of the English language. I am in awe of their understanding of the terminology and their ability to verbalize their understanding of what they have learned.”

Ruth, a Wilson® Dyslexia Practitioner (W.D.P.), also chairs her school's Intervention and Referral Services, and teaches Foundations Level 3 and WRS in the 2,100-student, K-8 district.

Just Words transformed 11-year-old Kyle W. from a struggling reader into a proficient one, shares his mother, Carole. The instruction he received from Ruth helped him overcome reading

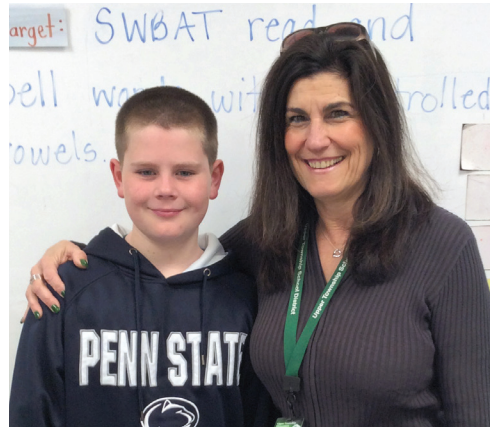


difficulties that had progressed during his early elementary education.

"Kyle started to enjoy going to Ms. Welch's class pretty quickly," Carole shares. "He began to build confidence, his spelling improved, and he started looking forward to taking his reading level tests because he knew he would be moving up every time. He finally felt successful with reading."

By mastering the foundational skills through Just Words®, Kyle, currently a 5th grader, can now independently find figurative language or even identify conflict in text and complete his writing assignments without assistance. Carole says, "He is proud of his reading and enjoys picking out books from the library. He has continued to improve his reading levels this year as well. Kyle is really bothered when he gets a bad score on something because his expectations are that he WILL do well, and he is disappointed when he doesn't. He used to just expect to do poorly."

During Back to School Night at the start of the 2018-2019 school year, Kyle filled out a list of his best subjects and identified reading




*New Jersey educator Ruth Welch, W.D.P., with Kyle, one of her Just Words graduates.*

as a strength. "Up until this point, math was the only subject he had ever said he was good at. It was a great moment. We were really happy for him to have gained enough confidence to consider reading a strength."

Carole's tips for parents?

"Nothing is an instant fix. There are certainly backslides and stumbling blocks, but stay consistent and look for ways to help your child build confidence. It also helps to find books that they'll feel successful with. Kyle loves graphic novels. Even though he's not always allowed to

read them for assigned reading time, he keeps one for pleasure reading. He also likes superhero comics and his newest selections have been sports-themed historical fiction. It is awesome that he wants to read on his own, outside of assigned reading."

As for Kyle, he shares this advice for other students who struggle with reading, "Don't give up. Sound out the words. Find things you are interested in to read about. Try graphic novels." 



Just Words is a highly explicit, multisensory decoding and spelling program that is just the word study component of the Wilson Reading System® (WRS) delivered at an ac-

celerated pace to students in grades 4-12 and adults.

The program is designed to be implemented for 45 minutes daily (five days per week) as a Tier 2 intervention in a yearlong curriculum; or three days per week, in which case it would be completed over one and a half years.

Just Words instruction includes many aspects of reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. However, the program is not intended to be a comprehensive program in these areas. The program should supplement a core English Language Arts curriculum, not replace it.


### **Student Identification and Placement**

It is critical to appropriately identify students for Just Words instruction. Students who benefit from this targeted intervention

have mild-to-moderate word-level deficits, such as gaps in decoding and spelling skills.

We advise that screening be conducted in the spring to schedule placement for fall classes. Screening and placement assessments can be done using district reading scores, the Test of Silent Word Reading Fluency 2 (TOSWRF2), or the Word Identification and Spelling Test (WIST).

### **Teacher Support**

Participation in a Just Words Introductory Workshop automatically enrolls educators in the online Intervention Learning Community for Just Words on Wilson Academy®. There, teachers receive ongoing support through the Just Words InterActivities whiteboard application, lesson planning tools, animated demonstrations, printable teaching aids, monthly expert tips, and a discussion board monitored by Wilson Literacy Specialists. Schools and districts may pursue additional professional learning offerings, including the online Virtual Implementation Support program (page 7), the development of a demonstration site with onsite coaching from Wilson Literacy Specialists, and sustainability plans with the development of Just Words Facilitators and Presenters. 

## SAILING BEYOND THE A, B, SEAS



WRS Grad Tegan C.

While feeling at ease on a boat came naturally for Tegan C., who grew up in a coastal community on New York's Long Island, feeling at ease with a book did not.

After years of struggling to read, Tegan was diagnosed with dyslexia in fourth grade, and it was recommended that she receive intense instruction in multisensory structured language education.

Tegan's mother, Colleen, a former educator, consulted with peers and researched Orton-Gillingham based methods. She then worked with administrators to provide Tegan with explicit instruction from an educator certified in the Wilson Reading System® (WRS). Wilson® Dyslexia Practitioners Diana Leone and Barbara Christensen helped Tegan advance through all 12 Steps of WRS.

"When I started WRS, it was eye-opening that there was something out there that could help me," recalls Tegan. Initially, the lessons were challenging, she says. However, as she progressed, she developed the skills she needed to be a fluent reader.

As subject matter in her classes became more complex, Tegan augmented these skills with assistive technology, such as speech-to-text software, and resources found through Learning



Photo by: OSEARCH

Tegan aboard her internship in 2018.

Ally™ and Bookshare®. By sophomore year, Tegan had earned a permanent place on her high school's honor roll and began navigating toward a career in marine biology. After graduating in 2019, she will continue the shark research internship with the South Fork Natural History Museum and Nature Center, and in September, she will begin pursuing a bachelor's degree in marine biology.

Tegan's parents acknowledge that while their daughter's path to literacy proficiency has not been easy, the journey was definitely worthwhile. "Her teachers and the Wilson® program really helped Tegan flourish to become a good reader," shares Colleen. "She is giving other families hope and we are so truly proud of her." 🌿

## WRS GRAD'S 'NEVER GIVE UP' SPIRIT LEADS TO COLLEGE

Wilson® Credentialed Trainer (W.C.T.) Penny Moldofsky, Director of the Literacy Institute at the Woodlynde School in Strafford, PA, recently shared an update about a persevering former student:

*Many notice the student who completes the program in two or three years, but Robby is truly a star of Wilson because he persisted through many years of hard work. Robby came to me in fourth grade, convinced that he would never read. Every word he encountered was a frustrating experience, but together we persisted through his senior year.*

*However, Robby excelled in many other areas. Each day he organized the classroom with the eye of an engineer. Whether he was teaching me how to figure out technology, or building a podium for Wilson classes, Robby would get the job done well without seeking praise. When Robby mastered*



Penny Moldofsky, W.C.T., and Robby W. at his 2018 graduation.

Photo by Shira Yudelkoff

*all the concepts through Step 12, he quietly confided, "I thought I couldn't do it—but I did."*

*As his confidence grew, he took risks in public speaking so he could share his experiences. At the end of his junior year, Robby was selected for a Student Council Leadership Program because of his outstanding qualities of honesty, commitment, service, and cooperation.*

*Now completing his first year at Pennsylvania College of Technology in Williamsport, PA, Robby is working on becoming a landscape designer, using his visual-spatial strengths, organizational skills, and intuitive understanding of natural features.*

*He continues to employ this "never give up" spirit as he meets the challenges of college and prepares to share his talents with the world. 🌿*

## AINSLEY'S ADVANTAGE

### Recipient of national IDA award advocates for dyslexia awareness and law reform



*Ainsley Proctor with Barbara and Ed Wilson and Christine Fagan at the IDA Conference, 2018.*

If you asked Ainsley Proctor when she was in elementary school what she thought about her dyslexia, she likely would have responded with a resounding “Ugh!” Today, however, the question elicits a passionate response from the poised dyslexia advocate, now completing her sophomore year in high school.

“Growing up, I viewed dyslexia as a disadvantage. Every day I would say, ‘I wish I never had this stupid thing.’ Now I wouldn’t change my dyslexia for the world,” Ainsley shared last fall during the International Dyslexia Association’s (IDA) annual conference, where she was awarded the organization’s Remy Johnston Certificate of Merit. “Without dyslexia, I never would have developed the grit to get through tasks that don’t come easily, or the determination that drives me to succeed. At this point in my life, my dyslexia works as a strength for me.”

The Virginia Beach teen said she was honored to be recognized for her efforts. Presented by the IDA in memory of college student Remy Johnston, the award recognizes a young role model with dyslexia who demonstrates perseverance, resilience, excellence, and community contribution.

Diagnosed with dyslexia in second grade, Ainsley began after-school tutoring in the Wilson Reading System® (WRS) with certified Wilson® Dyslexia Practitioner (W.D.P.) Christine Fagan.

“I remember the day I met Mrs. Fagan so distinctly,” Ainsley recalled. “Our first lesson started with very basic letters and picture

clues to help me learn the sounds. I remember leaving this lesson thinking that it wasn’t that terrible. As the days and weeks and months went by, I learned more and more. My reading fluency improved, and I got better at comprehending as I read. My lessons were fun and interactive. I learned reading strategies I had never used before, like sound tapping and dividing syllables. I was so happy I finally learned to read, and it was finally all making sense.”

Prior to WRS instruction, Ainsley struggled with self-esteem, shared Christine. “Through many years of hard work and self-discovery, she completed all 12 Steps and blossomed into a self-confident teenager, and a reader!”

Among numerous activities, Ainsley has advocated for dyslexia awareness before her school district’s board of education and as her platform topic while participating in regional scholarship pageants. She lobbied the Virginia General Assembly for better dyslexia laws, and went on to serve as a Virginia Senate State Page. She currently serves on the Virginia Beach School Board’s Special Education Advisory Committee and attends Decoding Dyslexia meetings. Ainsley co-taught a half-day seminar on dyslexia in 2017 for faculty at the school where Christine teaches.

“Not only did Christine Fagan teach me to overcome my dyslexia, but she also taught me to see my dyslexia as a gift,” Ainsley said. “With her constant

support and my hard work, I was able to embrace it and be proud of something that used to hold me back.”

Christine, who earned her WRS certification in 1995 with Wilson® Trainers and mentors Kimberly Gillingham and Linda Felle, is also a member of the Virginia Branch IDA. Most recently, she and Ainsley participated in a panel presentation about dyslexia at the branch conference, “Navigating Dyslexia,” in March.

“With the support of her amazing family, friends, and many supportive teachers along the way, Ainsley found her gifts,” Christine shared in nominating Ainsley for the national IDA award. “She never let dyslexia limit what she could accomplish. Ainsley has worked through the challenges of dyslexia to not only achieve her own personal goals, but also to serve and help others who face similar challenges.”

“Not only did Christine Fagan teach me to overcome my dyslexia, but she also taught me to see my dyslexia as a gift. With her constant support and my hard work, I was able to embrace it and be proud of something that used to hold me back.”

## THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

**You have an Assistive Technology plan in place for your student, but it's not working. Why isn't it working and what can you do?**



There are a variety of reasons why a tool may not be working for your student learner. Year to year, and sometimes semester to semester, classroom environments change. The student may also change; a student's body changes, brain development continues, and challenging skills may become easier. Thus, a new tool may need to be found or perhaps the tool is no longer needed. The bottom line is that the

Assistive Technology (AT) plan for your student will need to be altered and/or enhanced over time.

So, what can you do to help your learner? Start with reviewing the SETT framework with your student's team. As covered in the Volume 21 Spring/Summer Decoder, SETT stands for Student, Environment, Task, Tool (some experts also add Trials and Training to this acronym). Your student's team may include a homeroom teacher, guidance counselor, occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech and language pathologist, reading specialist, school psychologist, specific subject teacher(s), or outside personnel.

When meeting to discuss the SETT framework, be sure to ask the following questions with the team (and the student when applicable):

- **What is working or not working and when? (An important question to ask the student.)**
- **Was there adequate training on how to use the tool? Tip: Checking with the vendor that makes the tool often can provide guidelines for adequate training.**
- **Did this training include adults that support the student both at home and at school?**
- **Has the learning environment changed?**
- **Is there any new training needed?**



These questions should help guide you and the learner's team in either altering a current piece of AT or determining if new AT is needed.

In addition to collecting input on the tool or the trainings involved, it's also important to ask about the data. Has data been collected on the effectiveness and use of the tool? Or, looking ahead, who is going to collect data on the use and effectiveness of the new tool(s)? These are important questions to ask, as the need for monitoring the suitability of the tool is essential. Data should be collected on the use of the tool in multiple settings and at different times of the day.

One resource is titled "Assistive Technology Plan," created by Sara Menzel. This form simply documents what the tool is, what IEP goal it addresses, the dates it was used, and a rating scale of overall effectiveness. The tool uses a 1-3 scale with 1 being totally ineffective, 2 being somewhat effective, and 3 being totally effective (meaning that it helped meet the IEP goal). It can be downloaded from the Quality Indicators for Assistive Technology (QIAT) website at: <https://qiat.org/resource-bank.html>.

No matter what the outcome of your meeting with the student's team, it's important to ask when the team will meet again to see how the changes are working. Advocating for your student may be challenging at times, but striving for frequent, transparent, and honest conversations with your student's team will establish a strong and productive working relationship that will serve your student well in the long run. Keep asking questions and insist on frequent data collection, even if all is well. 🌀

*This article was written by Nanci Shepardson, Wilson Language Training's Senior Educational Technologist.*



## POWERING UP A PRINCIPAL NETWORK



Dr. Siobhan Dennis

**D**r. Siobhan Dennis is Director of Administrator Relations at Wilson Language Training®. In her role, Siobhan draws on 20 years of experience in education and leadership as she focuses on expanding the Principal Network (a branch of the Wilson® Implementation Network). In this issue, we sat down with Siobhan to talk about her efforts.

### What is a Principal Network and what is its purpose?

Our Principal Network of practice is designed to bring together building-based administrators, all of whom are implementing Wilson® programs, to stimulate and enable meaningful, collaborative learning, build trust, increase leadership capacity, and build confidence and effectiveness. We draw on implementation research and personal experiences to discover the immense value of networks for engaging with peers who face school challenges. Participants develop a deeper understanding of Wilson programs and of the importance of being a literacy leader, as well as use the network as a mechanism of support. Equally important, they find that their involvement can have a direct and positive impact on the schools they lead.

Overall, the purpose of the network is to elevate principals' capacity and knowledge as literacy leaders to support the implementation of Wilson programs.

### What are some of the greatest challenges school leaders face regarding literacy instruction within their schools, and how can a network help?

School-based leaders are faced with increasing demands and challenges, including the opportunity gap. Many students are entering school with limited vocabulary, background knowledge, and school readiness – all foundational skills for developing early literacy. Many schools are also underfunded and understaffed to meet these challenges, requiring principals to creatively problem-solve, maximize their existing resources, and adopt new practices. Schools also struggle to implement research-based programs with the support needed to maintain fidelity. Acting as the thought partner, I see one of my roles as facilitating the discussion of how to bring research about improving teaching and learning into practice.

School leadership is second only to teacher effectiveness in affecting student learning. Peer networks have the potential to help principals gain confidence in working collaboratively with teachers. Developing collective principal collegiality and trust can be a powerful tool.

Research across the decades has confirmed that effective school leadership is associated with better outcomes for students and schools. A high-quality school leader affects dozens of teachers and hundreds or thousands of students. It is a pivotal role.


-Wallace Foundation Study as reported in the RAND Report (2019)



### What are some examples of resources or tips that you provide?

Our discussions and activities vary based on the specific needs and expertise of the participants. For example, principals may analyze an article on the power of collaborative practice for school leaders or high-quality curriculum, and then engage in a discussion using a shared protocol. Or, participants may have facilitated discussions on a wide array of topics such as:

- Identifying and discussing resources available for leaders on the Wilson Academy® Administrator Learning Community (ALC)
- Using data to address student needs
- Maximizing school-based resources to leverage impact through effective and creative scheduling
- Discussing the science of reading
- Engaging parents to become partners in early literacy development
- Selecting and evaluating assistive technology resources
- Reviewing the key features of Foundations® K-3, Just Words®, and Wilson Reading System®

The goal is to empower network participants with the tools and understanding of research-based literacy practice so they can support effective teaching practices and high-quality curriculum in their school communities. 

For more information about the Principal Network, or to become part of this professional learning community for school leaders, please email Siobhan Dennis at [sdennis@wilsonlanguage.com](mailto:sdennis@wilsonlanguage.com).

## GEODES™: A NEW COLLECTION OF ACCESSIBLE, KNOWLEDGE-BUILDING BOOKS

"One important implication for practice is that educators should be alerted to the possibility that first-grade students of today might be facing more demands than ever in core reading program exposure. If our findings are borne out in further studies, educators might make a concerted effort to supplement core reading programs with additional texts that provide considerable repetition of word meanings, sight words, and core orthographic patterns (in meaningful contexts)" (Fitzgerald et al., p. 25).

*Geodes*™ are developed to address this need. All students need the opportunity to integrate their learning of vocabulary and content knowledge with the practice of applying decoding skills through texts about science, history, and the arts.





Published by Great Minds® in association with Wilson Language Training®, *Geodes*™ were created as a library of readable texts, thoughtfully conceived and carefully developed to offer new and emerging readers a valuable reading experience.

and decode pre-taught phonetic concepts and high frequency words in rich, knowledge-building, authentic texts.

Each book is at least 80% decodable as aligned with the scope and sequence of Foundations®. And, with appropriate teacher support such as direct instruction in vocabulary, content knowledge, and context, and by maintaining a focus on a single topic across a set of books to build schema, these texts become more accessible for a reader than the decodability score would represent. Vocabulary is built throughout the module and the teacher resource identifies selected words for direct vocabulary instruction.

*Geodes*™ align with Great Minds' English language arts curriculum *Wit and Wisdom*™ but are designed for use in any classroom regardless of curriculum. *Geodes*™ can be used interactively between students and their teacher at the end of Foundations lessons, during the guided or shared reading block, or in small-

**Geodes™ Level 1**

 <p><b>Module 1: A World of Books</b></p> <p>Students explore the power of books shared across time and culture.</p>	 <p><b>Module 2: Creature Features</b></p> <p>Students explore intriguing animal traits and behaviors and are introduced to people who study animals.</p>	 <p><b>Module 3: Powerful Forces</b></p> <p>Students explore how wind affects life on earth and how its energy can be used to generate power.</p>	 <p><b>Module 4: Cinderella Stories</b></p> <p>Students explore countries and cultures through the lens of an enduring tale.</p>
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"Each *Geodes*™ book is a gem," says Lynne Munson, founder and CEO of Great Minds. "Students learn about topics as far-flung and fascinating as Icelandic winters, the origins of the Bolshoi ballet, the Badlands, and how to measure the strength of the wind—all while practicing their phonics."

"All too often, books for emerging readers fail to provide the practice needed, while also lacking interest, complexity, beauty, and other qualities likely to compel readers of any age. We wanted to provide students the opportunity for a rich and rewarding reading experience while practicing the very decoding skills they are learning in the classroom," says Wilson President and Co-founder Barbara Wilson.

The rich topics of the *Geodes*™ text are designed to bolster background knowledge and vocabulary. Through these informational, literary, and literary nonfiction books, young readers are given the opportunity to practice and develop their reading prosody and comprehension skills as they encounter

group interventions. Currently, Level 1 books (64 titles) are available. Level 2 books will be available for the 2019-2020 school year and Level K books for the 2020-2021 school year.

Creating *Geodes*™ "...tapped into our two organizations' core strengths. Wilson Language Training's expertise in foundational reading skills instruction and Great Minds' experience at building students' knowledge is a strong combination. We could not be prouder of the result," notes Barbara Wilson.

To learn more about *Geodes*™, visit the Wilson website at: [wilsonlanguage.com/geodes](http://wilsonlanguage.com/geodes). 

Great Minds® is the publisher of Eureka Math®, Wit & Wisdom™, Alexandria Plan™, and PhD Science™.

Fitzgerald, J., Elmore, J., Relyea, J. E., Hiebert, E. H., & Stenner, A. J. (2016). Has first-grade core reading program text complexity changed across six decades? *Reading Research Quarterly*, 51(1), pp.7-28

**THE SCIENCE OF SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION** *(continued from page 6)*

**Interested in knowing more?**

**Make "It" Happen: Using Implementation Science with Wilson® Programs** - <https://tinyurl.com/mih-wilson>

**National Implementation Research Network (NIRN)** - <https://nirn.fpg.unc.edu>

**Citations:**

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**“Although...policies and new laws provide a critical foundation for the advancement of services for students with dyslexia, they are only effective if they are grounded in evidence-based findings and put into practice.”**

-IDA *Perspectives*, Fall 2018

Barbara A. Wilson and Michelle A. Duda served as theme editors for the International Dyslexia Association’s Fall 2018 issue of *Perspectives on Language and Literacy*, focusing on the Art and Science of Implementation.


The issue contains best practices in effectively implementing reading intervention programs to achieve literacy goals, the essential tools and resources needed to accomplish this, bridging the gap from evidence-based policy to practice, and how to build Multi-tiered Systems of Support within a district. To access *Perspectives*, visit <https://dyslexiaida.org/perspectives>. 

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