

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.

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.

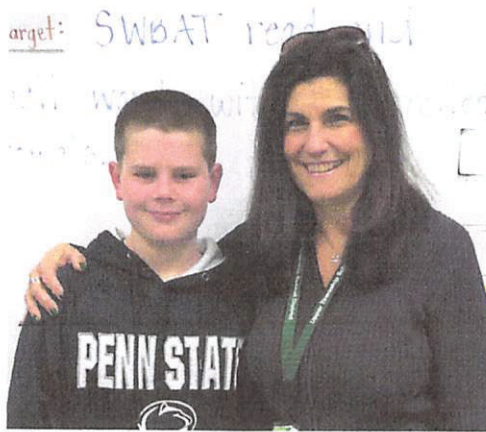
Just Words transformed 11-year-old Kyle W. from a struggling reader into a proficient one, shares his mother, Carole. The instruction he received from Ruth helped him overcome reading

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

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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. 📖