

A Holistic Approach to Early Grade Literacy: Analyzing the Benefits of the Wilson Reading System Integration

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Abstract:

This comprehensive study explores the integration of the Wilson Reading System (WRS) into early grade literacy programs, focusing on its impact, implications, and challenges within educational settings. Through an integrative literature review encompassing diverse scholarly works and research findings, the study highlights the effectiveness of the WRS in enhancing students' literacy skills, particularly in phonological awareness, decoding, and reading fluency. Additionally, the review emphasizes the transformative implications of the WRS's multisensory approach for instructional practices, promoting inclusive and engaging learning environments that cater to diverse learning styles. However, the study also identifies critical challenges in WRS implementation, including resource intensity and the importance of cultural responsiveness in addressing students' diverse linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds. The findings underscore

the need for strategic resource allocation, comprehensive professional development, and culturally sensitive instructional practices to ensure the successful integration of the WRS and the creation of an inclusive and equitable learning environment. This study provides valuable insights for educators and policymakers seeking to enhance early grade literacy education and foster a supportive and empowering learning environment for all students.

Keywords: Wilson Reading System, early grade literacy, structured literacy programs, multisensory approach, phonological awareness, decoding skills

Introduction:

Early grade literacy is a critical factor in shaping a child's educational trajectory and future success (McDermott, 2023). With an emphasis on foundational skills, the approach to early literacy education has witnessed significant developments over the years. One such approach gaining momentum is the integration of the Wilson Reading System (WRS) into early grade literacy programs. The WRS, a structured literacy program designed to specifically target individuals with language-based learning disabilities, has shown promising results in improving reading and writing abilities (Suarez, 2023). By examining the benefits of integrating the WRS into early grade literacy, this research aims to shed light on the efficacy of a holistic approach to fostering strong literacy skills from an early age.

Literacy development during the early grades serves as the cornerstone for a child's cognitive and intellectual growth. It not only facilitates their academic progress but also plays a pivotal role in their socio-emotional development. However, the challenges associated with ensuring comprehensive literacy skills among young learners persist. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a significant portion of students in the United States continue to struggle with fundamental reading and writing skills, underscoring the need for effective and evidence-based interventions in early literacy education (Young, 2023).

The Wilson Reading System, developed by Barbara A. Wilson, has garnered attention for its systematic and multisensory approach to literacy instruction (Smith, 2023). The program incorporates structured and sequential learning activities that aim to strengthen phonological awareness, decoding, encoding, and comprehension skills. Initially intended for individuals with dyslexia and other learning disabilities, the WRS has gradually been integrated into mainstream educational settings to support all learners, emphasizing its potential in early grade literacy education.

Recent studies have highlighted the positive impacts of the WRS on students' literacy development. Research by Victoria (2023) found that the systematic and explicit nature of the WRS positively influenced the reading fluency and comprehension abilities of struggling readers in early grades. Similarly, a study conducted by McDermott (2023) demonstrated that the integration of the WRS in early literacy programs led to improved student engagement and motivation, thereby fostering a more positive attitude towards reading and writing.

In the context of a holistic approach to early grade literacy, the integration of the WRS is not limited to addressing specific learning disabilities but also encompasses a broader spectrum of

learners with varying literacy needs. By focusing on building a strong foundation in phonemic awareness, decoding skills, and comprehension strategies, the WRS aims to create a conducive learning environment that supports the diverse literacy requirements of young learners.

This research seeks to investigate the multifaceted benefits of integrating the Wilson Reading System into early grade literacy programs. By examining the impact of the WRS on students' reading proficiency, cognitive development, and overall academic achievement, this study aims to provide insights into the potential of a comprehensive approach to early grade literacy that fosters inclusivity and equitable educational outcomes for all learners. Understanding the implications of such integration can pave the way for informed decision-making in curriculum design and instructional practices, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of early grade literacy education and its long-term effects on academic success and personal growth.

Literature Review:

Early grade literacy serves as the foundation for future academic success and personal development. As educators and researchers continue to explore effective strategies to enhance literacy skills among young learners, the integration of the Wilson Reading System (WRS) has emerged as a promising approach to addressing diverse literacy needs. This literature review provides an overview of existing research and literature on the benefits and implications of integrating the WRS into early grade literacy programs. By examining various studies and scholarly works, this review aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the WRS on literacy development, instructional practices, and student outcomes.

The theoretical underpinnings of the Wilson Reading System lie in the Orton-Gillingham approach, emphasizing a structured, systematic, and multisensory instructional method. According to the International Dyslexia Association (IDA), the Orton-Gillingham approach is rooted in the principles of explicit, sequential, and cumulative instruction, catering to the specific needs of learners with dyslexia and other reading difficulties. The WRS, an offshoot of this approach, incorporates phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension components, enabling educators to provide tailored instruction that addresses the diverse learning profiles of early grade students (Smith, 2023).

Research Supporting the Effectiveness of the Wilson Reading System

A study conducted by Hollands, et al. (2023) assessed the efficacy of the Wilson Reading System in improving reading skills among first-grade students. The researchers implemented a quasi-experimental design, incorporating pre- and post-assessments to evaluate the impact of the WRS on students' phonemic awareness, decoding, and reading fluency. The results indicated a significant improvement in the literacy skills of students who received WRS instruction, emphasizing the program's potential to foster foundational reading abilities in the early grades.

Furthermore, Garcia (2023) conducted a longitudinal study examining the long-term effects of the WRS on students' reading comprehension and writing proficiency. The study, spanning three years and involving a diverse group of second-grade students, highlighted the sustained benefits of the WRS integration in promoting not only reading fluency but also higher-order cognitive skills, such

as critical thinking and analytical reasoning. The findings underscored the role of the WRS in nurturing a comprehensive approach to literacy education that extends beyond basic reading skills to encompass advanced comprehension and composition abilities.

In a systematic review by Pack (2023), the researchers synthesized existing literature on the efficacy of structured literacy programs, including the WRS, in supporting students with dyslexia and other reading difficulties. The review highlighted the consistent evidence supporting the WRS's effectiveness in enhancing phonological awareness, decoding skills, and overall reading proficiency among individuals with learning disabilities. Additionally, the review emphasized the adaptable nature of the WRS, making it a valuable resource for educators catering to a diverse range of literacy needs in the classroom.

Implications for Instructional Practices and Pedagogical Approaches

The integration of the Wilson Reading System into early grade literacy programs has significant implications for instructional practices and pedagogical approaches. As highlighted by Sitten (2020), the multisensory nature of the WRS facilitates a more inclusive and differentiated learning environment, accommodating students with varying learning styles and preferences. The integration of tactile, auditory, and visual elements in WRS instruction promotes active engagement and participation, fostering a deeper understanding of foundational literacy concepts among young learners.

Moreover, the work of McDermott (2023) emphasized the role of teacher training and professional development in maximizing the benefits of the WRS integration. The study underscored the importance of providing educators with comprehensive training in implementing the WRS effectively, ensuring fidelity to the program's principles and strategies. By equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills, educational institutions can create a supportive ecosystem that promotes the successful integration of the WRS into early grade literacy curricula.

Despite the positive outcomes associated with the integration of the Wilson Reading System, several challenges and limitations have been identified in the literature. A study by Spear-Swerling and Cheesman (2012) highlighted the resource-intensive nature of WRS implementation, emphasizing the need for adequate funding and institutional support to sustain long-term integration efforts. The researchers emphasized the importance of allocating sufficient resources for teacher training, instructional materials, and ongoing program evaluation, thereby ensuring the successful and continued implementation of the WRS in early grade literacy programs.

Furthermore, a systematic analysis conducted by McDermott (2023) revealed the importance of considering cultural and linguistic diversity when implementing the WRS in diverse educational settings. The researchers emphasized the need for culturally responsive instructional practices that take into account students' linguistic backgrounds and socio-cultural contexts, thereby fostering an inclusive learning environment that accommodates the diverse needs of a multicultural student population.

The integration of the Wilson Reading System into early grade literacy programs has demonstrated promising results in enhancing students' literacy skills, fostering inclusive instructional practices,

and promoting a comprehensive approach to literacy education. Supported by a strong theoretical framework rooted in the Orton-Gillingham approach, the WRS has emerged as a valuable resource for educators seeking to address the diverse literacy needs of young learners. While challenges related to resource allocation and cultural responsiveness persist, the existing research underscores the importance of ongoing professional development, institutional support, and a holistic understanding of students' individual learning profiles in maximizing the benefits of the WRS integration. By acknowledging the implications and limitations outlined in the literature, educators and policymakers can develop informed strategies that prioritize the holistic development of early grade literacy, thereby laying a solid foundation for students' academic success and personal growth.

Methodology:

The research employed an integrative literature review approach to comprehensively analyze the existing body of scholarly works and research findings pertaining to the integration of the Wilson Reading System (WRS) into early grade literacy programs. This approach allowed for the synthesis of diverse sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, empirical studies, systematic reviews, and theoretical frameworks, thereby facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the benefits, challenges, and implications associated with the WRS integration.

The literature search was conducted using various academic databases, including PubMed, ERIC, JSTOR, and Google Scholar, with a focus on identifying relevant studies published between 2010 and 2023. The search terms included "Wilson Reading System," "early grade literacy," "literacy development," "structured literacy programs," and "multisensory instructional approaches," among others, to ensure a comprehensive and exhaustive review of the literature.

Inclusion criteria were established to select studies that specifically addressed the integration of the WRS into early grade literacy education, encompassing diverse student populations, instructional practices, and educational contexts. Studies focusing on the impact of the WRS on students' reading proficiency, phonological awareness, decoding skills, and overall literacy development were prioritized to capture the multifaceted benefits of the program.

The initial search yielded a substantial number of articles and research papers, which were screened based on their relevance, quality, and alignment with the research objectives. A systematic approach was employed to evaluate the methodological rigor, theoretical frameworks, and key findings of each selected study, enabling the identification of common themes, trends, and discrepancies within the literature.

Data extraction and synthesis were conducted to categorize the literature based on key themes, including the theoretical foundations of the WRS, its effectiveness in improving literacy skills, implications for instructional practices, challenges in implementation, and considerations for diverse student populations. The synthesis process involved a rigorous analysis of the synthesized data to identify recurring patterns, theoretical frameworks, and overarching insights that informed the subsequent discussion and analysis in the literature review.

The integrative literature review provided a comprehensive overview of the research landscape surrounding the integration of the Wilson Reading System into early grade literacy programs, facilitating a nuanced understanding of the program's impact on literacy development, instructional strategies, and student outcomes. By synthesizing diverse perspectives and empirical evidence, the study aimed to contribute to the existing knowledge base on effective literacy interventions and instructional approaches, thereby informing educational practices and policies geared towards promoting holistic literacy education and inclusive learning environments for young learners.

Findings and Discussion:

The integrative literature review on the integration of the Wilson Reading System (WRS) into early grade literacy programs revealed several key findings that underscore the program's efficacy, implications for instructional practices, and challenges in implementation. The synthesis of diverse scholarly works and research findings provided insights into the multifaceted benefits and considerations associated with the WRS integration, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of its impact on early grade literacy education.

Theme 1: Effectiveness of the Wilson Reading System

The integrative literature review consistently underscored the remarkable effectiveness of the Wilson Reading System (WRS) in enhancing early grade literacy skills. The findings revealed that the structured and systematic approach of the WRS significantly contributed to improving crucial aspects of literacy, including phonological awareness, decoding skills, and reading fluency (Kilag, et al., 2023). Particularly noteworthy was the program's impact on students with dyslexia and other learning difficulties, indicating a substantial enhancement in their overall literacy proficiency, thereby addressing the specific needs of this vulnerable student group (Spear-Swerling & Cheesman, 2012). This highlighted the WRS's pivotal role in fostering a supportive learning environment that caters to diverse learning profiles and facilitates equitable access to quality literacy education.

Moreover, the literature review demonstrated that the WRS's comprehensive approach went beyond basic reading skills, extending to the development of advanced comprehension abilities and critical thinking among young learners (Kilag, et al., 2023). The program's emphasis on fostering a deep understanding of reading materials and encouraging analytical reasoning contributed to nurturing a holistic approach to literacy education. By strengthening students' cognitive abilities and encouraging higher-order thinking, the WRS not only facilitated immediate literacy improvement but also laid a strong foundation for their long-term academic success and personal growth, reflecting the program's multifaceted impact on early grade literacy development.

The consistent evidence presented in the literature review suggested that the WRS's success could be attributed to its tailored and structured approach, enabling educators to address individual learning needs effectively. By providing a framework that emphasizes the building blocks of literacy in a progressive and targeted manner, the WRS proved to be a valuable resource for educators seeking to enhance students' foundational literacy skills and promote a lifelong love for reading and learning (Pack, 2023). The findings, therefore, underscored the instrumental role of the WRS in fostering a solid literacy foundation that empowers students to become proficient

readers and critical thinkers, thereby laying the groundwork for their academic and personal achievements in the future.

Theme 2: Implications for Instructional Practices

The integrative literature review highlighted the profound implications of the Wilson Reading System's (WRS) multisensory approach for instructional practices in early grade literacy education. The findings consistently emphasized the transformative impact of integrating tactile, auditory, and visual elements within the instructional framework, fostering an inclusive and dynamic learning environment that caters to diverse learning styles and preferences (Eberhart & Vitek, 2023). By incorporating a range of sensory modalities, the WRS facilitated active student engagement, promoted interactive participation, and enhanced overall learning outcomes, thereby reinforcing its pivotal role in nurturing a stimulating and enriching educational experience for young learners.

The literature review further accentuated the critical importance of comprehensive teacher training and professional development in ensuring the successful integration of the WRS into instructional practices (Kilag, et al., 2023). Educators equipped with in-depth knowledge and specialized skills were better positioned to implement the WRS effectively, delivering tailored and evidence-based literacy instruction that met the diverse learning needs of their students. Through comprehensive training programs and ongoing professional development initiatives, educators were able to cultivate a supportive learning ecosystem that prioritized the holistic development of early grade literacy skills, emphasizing the essential role of teachers in fostering a nurturing and empowering educational environment.

Moreover, the literature review demonstrated that the WRS's multisensory approach not only enhanced students' literacy skills but also fostered a positive attitude towards learning, contributing to a more engaging and motivating educational experience (Sowma, 2023). By incorporating interactive and experiential learning activities, the WRS not only promoted a deeper understanding of literacy concepts but also instilled a sense of confidence and enthusiasm among students, encouraging a lifelong passion for reading and learning. The findings, therefore, highlighted the transformative power of the WRS's instructional practices in shaping students' educational journeys, emphasizing the program's role in fostering a supportive and empowering learning environment that nurtures students' academic growth and personal development.

The literature review underscored the transformative impact of the WRS's multisensory approach on instructional practices in early grade literacy education. By emphasizing the importance of comprehensive teacher training and professional development, the findings highlighted the critical role of educators in delivering effective and engaging literacy instruction, thereby fostering a nurturing and inclusive learning ecosystem that promotes students' holistic development and lifelong learning.

Theme 3: Challenges in Implementation

The integrative literature review brought to light several critical challenges and considerations associated with the integration of the Wilson Reading System (WRS) into early grade literacy

programs, shedding light on the complexities of implementing this structured literacy approach. Foremost among the identified challenges was the resource-intensive nature of WRS implementation, which emerged as a significant obstacle in ensuring the sustainable and effective integration of the program within educational settings (Kilag, et al., 2023). The review emphasized the critical need for sufficient funding, instructional materials, and ongoing program evaluation to support the long-term implementation of the WRS, highlighting the importance of strategic resource allocation and management in facilitating the successful integration and continuity of the program.

Furthermore, the literature review underscored the significance of cultural responsiveness in WRS implementation, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and accommodating students' diverse linguistic backgrounds and socio-cultural contexts within the instructional framework (Garcia, 2023). The review highlighted the need for educators to adopt culturally sensitive and inclusive instructional practices that acknowledge and respect the cultural diversity of the student population, thereby fostering an inclusive and equitable learning environment that celebrates and values students' unique identities and experiences. By emphasizing the critical role of cultural responsiveness in WRS implementation, the findings underscored the importance of promoting cultural awareness and sensitivity among educators, enabling them to create a supportive and nurturing learning ecosystem that respects and embraces students' cultural backgrounds and linguistic diversity.

Moreover, the literature review revealed the need for comprehensive professional development initiatives aimed at equipping educators with the necessary knowledge and skills to address the diverse challenges associated with WRS implementation (Galiano, 2023). The findings highlighted the importance of providing educators with ongoing training and support to navigate the complexities of WRS integration, emphasizing the need for tailored professional development programs that address the specific challenges and considerations inherent in implementing a structured literacy approach within diverse educational contexts. By emphasizing the critical role of professional development in supporting educators, the review emphasized the importance of investing in the continuous growth and development of educators, thereby enabling them to effectively overcome the challenges associated with WRS implementation and create a supportive and inclusive learning environment that prioritizes students' holistic development and well-being.

The literature review highlighted the critical challenges and considerations associated with the integration of the Wilson Reading System into early grade literacy programs, emphasizing the need for strategic resource allocation, cultural responsiveness, and comprehensive professional development initiatives aimed at supporting educators in effectively implementing the program within diverse educational settings. By acknowledging these challenges and considerations, educational stakeholders can develop informed strategies and initiatives that facilitate the successful integration and sustainability of the WRS, thereby fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment that promotes students' holistic development and academic success.

The findings of the integrative literature review underscored the value of the Wilson Reading System in fostering comprehensive literacy development and inclusive instructional practices within early grade literacy programs. By addressing the diverse literacy needs of students and emphasizing the role of educators in delivering effective and culturally responsive instruction, the

findings contribute to the ongoing discourse on evidence-based literacy interventions and instructional approaches, thereby informing educational policies and practices aimed at promoting equitable and holistic literacy education for all learners.

Conclusion:

The integrative literature review on the integration of the Wilson Reading System (WRS) into early grade literacy programs highlighted the multifaceted impact of the program on literacy development, instructional practices, and educational outcomes. The findings underscored the effectiveness of the WRS in enhancing students' phonological awareness, decoding skills, and overall literacy proficiency, particularly among those with dyslexia and other learning difficulties. Furthermore, the WRS was found to foster advanced comprehension abilities and critical thinking, emphasizing its role in nurturing holistic literacy development and laying a strong foundation for students' academic success and personal growth.

The review emphasized the transformative implications of the WRS's multisensory approach for instructional practices, highlighting its role in creating inclusive and engaging learning environments that cater to diverse learning styles and preferences. The integration of tactile, auditory, and visual elements within the instructional framework not only enhanced student engagement and participation but also fostered a positive attitude towards learning, thereby promoting a lifelong passion for reading and education.

However, the review also identified critical challenges and considerations associated with WRS implementation, including the resource-intensive nature of the program and the importance of cultural responsiveness in addressing students' diverse linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds. These challenges emphasized the need for strategic resource allocation, comprehensive professional development initiatives, and culturally sensitive instructional practices to support educators in effectively implementing the WRS and creating an inclusive and equitable learning environment for all students.

In light of these findings, the study underscores the significance of informed decision-making, strategic planning, and comprehensive support mechanisms in facilitating the successful integration and sustainability of the WRS within early grade literacy programs. By acknowledging the program's strengths, addressing its challenges, and prioritizing the holistic development of students' literacy skills, educators and policymakers can foster a supportive and empowering learning environment that promotes students' academic achievement and personal growth. The insights gleaned from this review contribute to the ongoing discourse on evidence-based literacy interventions and instructional approaches, thereby informing educational policies and practices aimed at promoting inclusive and equitable early grade literacy education for all learners.

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