

ANN KING, DIRECTOR OF LEARNING SUPPORT, HILLBROOK SCHOOL, LOS GATOS, CALIFORNIA

Geodes® Help Striving Students Cross the Bridge to Learning

In *Geodes*®, Ann King has finally found what she’s been after for the last 15 years for her students with dyslexia: a set of texts they can read that are actually interesting.

“I get tingles when I read with my students now,” says King, director of learning at Hillbrook School near San Jose, California. “These books help them cross that bridge to learning. Reading used to be a fight. Now it’s something students can do, that they understand, and that they find interesting.”

Created by Great Minds® in collaboration with Wilson Language Training, *Geodes* are early literacy texts that combine phonics practice, engaging content, and art. *Geodes* align with the scope and sequence of Wilson Language Training’s Foundations®, a structured literacy program for Grades K–3 that supplements core instruction and provides a systematic approach to comprehensively teach foundational skills as well as spelling and handwriting.

Hillbrook is an independent school with roughly 400 students in Grades Junior Kindergarten–8. Before joining Hillbrook 13 years ago, King taught for two years in Greenwich, Connecticut, at the Eagle School, which specializes in educating students with learning differences.

From day one of her teaching career, King has been frustrated by the poor quality of reading materials for students with dyslexia.

“We had some decodable material, but it was so incredibly boring,” she says.

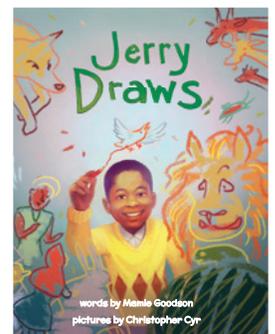
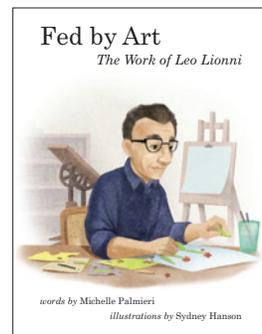
For years, King and her colleagues did their best to cobble together their own resources. But they came to realize how challenging the work of developing a coherent reading curriculum is.

“You need deep knowledge of what kids know,” she says. “You need to know what skills they need. You need to know the sequence of sound-spelling instruction. And you need to be able to craft sentences by using only that sequence. That’s very hard to do.”

The literacy experts who designed *Geodes* have done all that careful research. But books such as *Fed by Art: The Work of Leo Lionni* and *Jerry Draws* not only support reading skill development; they captivate students too.



Ann King



“I get tingles when I read with my students now. These books help them cross that bridge to learning. Reading used to be a fight. Now it’s something they can do, that they understand, and that they find interesting.”

— Ann King, Director of Learning Support

“You can see the magic in their faces,” King says, referring to the students’ reactions to the books. “These kids have been frustrated for so long.”

Before Hillbrook closed and shifted to remote learning because of the pandemic, King was using *Geodes* books in her small groups of one to four students.

Now that Californians are sheltering in place at home, she is using Google Meet to teach children individually. She appreciates that Great Minds’ *Knowledge on the Go™* video series has committed to sharing *Geodes* books for free online.

Meanwhile, King is exploring how to share more *Geodes* in her online instruction during the pandemic.

“I may just hold them up to the computer screen and read them one page at a time,” she says.

The good news: King’s students continue to make progress through a combination of direct instruction, which lends itself to online learning, and engaging materials.

“I can’t say enough about *Geodes*,” she says. “I finally found something that’s been missing for these kids.” That’s a set of books they can read that are actually interesting.



The word wall on King’s wall at home, which she uses during online instruction.