



Understanding Dyscalculia, Reducing Math Anxiety, and the NILD Math Approach

NILD Canada's 2026 Annual Conference

Workshop Synopsis & Speaker Bios

Session I: Thinking Beyond Numbers: Integrating Feuerstein's Cognitive Functions in Math

Presenter: Dr. Lorri Wilke

In this presentation, we will explore how Feuerstein's 28 cognitive functions can be purposefully integrated into math mediation to strengthen students' thinking and problem-solving skills. By targeting functions such as comparison, selective relevant cues, and hypothetical reasoning, teachers can guide learners to approach math concepts more flexibly and deeply. Attendees will gain practical strategies for embedding these cognitive tools into math lessons, fostering both mathematical understanding and broader cognitive development.



Dr. Lorri Wilke M.Ed., PCET, C/SLDS, is a dedicated professionally certified educational therapist with over 35 years of education experience in the Chicago suburbs. As a Feuerstein trainer, NILD instructor, and certified Structured Literacy/Dyslexia Specialist, Lorri specializes in supporting struggling learners, including those with dyslexia, dysgraphia, ADHD, and more. Lorri has just completed a Ph.D. in Reading, Language, and Literacy, and is committed to advancing her expertise. Through her private practice, she works to empower students with skills and habits that foster academic success and, ultimately, lifelong learning. Lorri's passion lies in making a positive impact on the lives of learners by unlocking their full potential through customized educational interventions.

Session II: Early Numeracy: Cognitive Factors and Math Anxiety

Presenter: Dr. Daniel Ansari

For over 20 years, my research team and I have been seeking to better understand the early foundations of math learning. Inspired by research on reading, we have been trying to find the equivalent of phonological awareness in early math learning. In this session, I will describe key results and insights from these efforts, discuss pitfalls and failings, and look ahead to the future and outline new challenges. Moreover, I will discuss how we move from research to

application, with a particular focus on early numeracy screening. I will discuss the value of early numeracy screening in creating more equitable early math education and the use of screeners to monitor progress and identify early signs of learning difficulties. In addition to this, I will also discuss how math anxiety impacts math learning.

Session III: Understanding Dyscalculia

Presenter: Dr. Daniel Ansari

Around 5% of school-aged children present with persistent difficulties learning numerical and mathematical concepts and skills (Developmental Dyscalculia). Despite the well-known consequences of poor numerical and mathematical skills, research into the symptoms and causes of Developmental Dyscalculia significantly lag progress in the scientific study of the typical and atypical development of reading and literacy skills (Developmental Dyslexia). In this session, I will discuss what is known about Developmental Dyscalculia by drawing on research from Cognitive Psychology and Cognitive Neuroscience. I will discuss problems associated with how children with Developmental Dyscalculia are diagnosed and show that there is no evidence pointing to a single cause of Developmental Dyscalculia. Moreover, I will discuss how Developmental Dyscalculia relate to other learning challenges, such as Developmental Dyslexia.



Dr. Daniel Ansari is a Professor and Canada Research Chair in Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience & Learning at Western University. Dr. Ansari and his team in the Numerical Cognition Laboratory explore how children develop numerical and mathematical skills and why some children struggle to acquire mathematical skills and knowledge. Dr. Ansari and his team are committed to bridging between the Science of Learning and K-12

Classrooms. Dr. Ansari is a Fellow of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR). In 2026 he won the Pickering Award for Distinguished Contributions to Developmental Psychology in Canada.

Session IV: NILD Educational Therapy in Action

Presenter: Lindsey Koppert, OCT, PCET

Take part in a dynamic, condensed live demonstration with Lindsey and one of her educational therapy students. Observe the meaningful connection, insight and intentional mediation that is shown as Lindsey models the five-core essential educational therapy techniques specifically the Math Block technique.

After the demonstration, join a live Q&A to dive deeper into the methods of mediating Math to create great Math thinkers in therapy room and classroom.



Lindsey Koppert OCT, PCET – Lindsey Koppert is a Professionally Certified Educational Therapist and Ontario Certified Teacher. She is deeply passionate about helping children who struggle to learn, believing that all students, no matter what struggle they have or label they've been given, are capable of learning – because God has designed our brains with the ability to change! Lindsey started Crossroads Educational Center in 2011 and continues to bring hope and help to struggling learners. She is a lifelong learner and has trained in several modalities to help meet the complex needs of her clients. She has a special love for math and for helping her clients have positive math experiences. She is married to Dan and together they have two teenage children and a handful of pets. In her free time, she enjoys walking, collecting books, gardening, and puzzling.

Session IV: Search & Teach in Action

Presenter: Kelly Cooper-Galessiere, Search & Teach Instructor, PCET

Observe a live demonstration with Kelly and a primary-aged student using the Search & Teach© program geared for children from K-2. *“The strength of SEARCH & TEACH is in early intervention. This twofold approach offers educators an effective tool for catching learning disorders at the beginning of a child’s academic career, before the downward spiral of failure begins.”* Rosa Hagin, Ph.D. (founder).

After the demonstration, Kelly will offer a Q&A time to answer questions about both the Search and Teach© and how it will positively impact the life of a child early in their academic years.



Kelly Cooper-Galessiere Search & Teach© Provider, PCET – Kelly Cooper-Galessiere was a classroom teacher in the primary-junior divisions for 15 years before following her passion to support students with learning differences and train as an NILD Educational Therapist and Search and Teach© provider. She is an Ontario Certified Teacher and is honoured to serve as the Head of the Resource Department and coordinator of The Learning Centre at Unionville College in Unionville, Ontario.

Session V: Building Stronger Mathematical Thinkers Through NILD and Rx 4 Math

Presenter: Mary-Lou Maclean, Executive Director, NILD Canada, PCET

This workshop is designed to strengthen mathematical connections as you work with students in NILD Educational Therapy or the Rx for Math program. Participants will learn how to become more effective mediators by guiding meaningful math discussions, fostering perseverance through productive struggle, and cultivating positive math mindsets. The focus is on developing confident, resilient students who think deeply and authentically about mathematics.



Mary-Lou Maclean – Executive Director, NILD Canada. Mary-Lou’s passion is helping struggling learners reach their full potential. For over twenty-five years, she has worked in the field of education, teaching high school, college and working as an Educational Therapist. After training to become an Educational Therapist through NILD Canada, Mary-Lou continued to work with many students for over fourteen years in the school setting as well as a private therapist. Her second passion is training educators and parents to work with students who learn differently, and she became an instructor with NILD Canada, teaching in their summer graduate program. She is now Executive Director for NILD Canada (National Institute for Learning Development-Canada). She continues to teach, instruct and travels to conferences across Canada.