

## ACCREDITED PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:

# SANDHILLS SCHOOL: Where Bright Students with Dyslexia Thrive

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From the moment a Sandhills student walks under the towering statue of a Buck, aptly named “Lean on Me,” at the front of our school, they know they have found a place where they belong. Here, learning differences are not just understood—they’re celebrated. Nestled on a sprawling 20-acre campus, Sandhills offers students more than just a classroom; it offers a community where their learning style is embraced, and their potential is unlocked.

At Sandhills, students learn in dynamic and engaging ways that go far beyond traditional teaching methods. On any given day, you might find students reading aloud in the treehouse, solving quadratic equations in sidewalk chalk on the pathways, or creating charcoal in the firepit for ancient cave art projects. The fully stocked “Carl’s Pond” serves as an outdoor classroom for hands-on ecology lessons, and our expansive fields host competitive sports and joyful tailgates, reinforcing a sense of belonging and school spirit.

Our rigorous, college-preparatory curriculum challenges students academically while embracing their unique learning styles. At Sandhills, the Orton-Gillingham Approach is not confined to daily Language Training; it extends across all subject areas, where OG principles are seamlessly integrated into lessons, and morphology is woven into instruction. This multisensory, individualized approach allows students to grasp complex concepts, master the tools they need, and gain authentic success in every classroom.

“As Erika Senneseth, M.Ed, Head of School, says, ‘Everyone here is speaking the same language, and that is literacy through Orton-Gillingham.’ This philosophy shapes not just our language lessons but every facet of our academic program.” Teacher Liz Hedgepath, M.A.T., adds, “At Sandhills, Orton-Gillingham is not just a class; it’s the concept of the whole school.”

Founded by parents as a haven for bright students struggling with traditional instruction, Sandhills has always been more than just a school. It’s a place where students are seen, understood, and equipped to succeed. Guided by only three Heads of School since our founding, Sandhills demonstrates a steady and committed leadership. Families relocate from other states, and we draw students from over 20 zip codes, all seeking the unique learning environment Sandhills provides.



Allison Jeffcoat, A/OGA, engages students in a multisensory phonogram drill, bringing learning to life through touch, sound, and sight.

Orton-Gillingham Fellow, Anne Vickers, M.Ed., carries forward a legacy that traces back to June Orton herself. Anne works full-time on campus, providing invaluable daily support to our teachers and ensuring every student receives the individualized instruction they need. We have ten Associate-level practitioners on staff and one Fellow-in-Training,

Jessica Smith, who work alongside Anne to provide expert guidance in OG instruction. All Sandhills School teachers receive the Associate level course, and many choose to work toward higher levels of certification, mentored along the way to paths of greater Orton-Gillingham expertise.

Our training programs emphasize the importance of understanding each student’s psycho-educational evaluation. This evaluation provides essential insights into each student’s cognitive and learning profile, allowing us to tailor instruction to meet their unique needs. Each year, we partner with parents to develop a personalized “blueprint” for every student, outlining their strengths, areas for growth, and specific strategies customized to their learning style. This holistic approach ensures that every student is supported in a way that honors their personal journey and sets them up for success.

Sandhills students start every day knowing they are part of something special. Whether they’re engaging in multisensory language lessons, mastering executive function skills, or

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discovering new talents through clubs and extracurricular activities, they are surrounded by peers who learn similarly and teachers who believe in their potential. Our middle and high school students enjoy a full array of varsity sports and clubs, ensuring they don't miss out on the experiences that make school life fulfilling. Unlike many students with learning differences who might miss recess or fun activities to complete classwork, Sandhills students enjoy a typical school experience enriched by small class sizes and personalized attention.

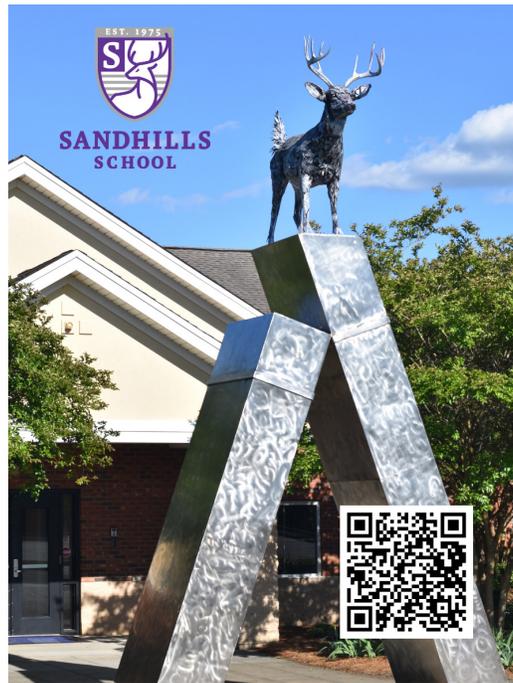
Sandhills School not only supports its students but also draws top educators from around the country, eager to work in an environment dedicated to excellence in dyslexia education. Last year, we hosted a lunch and learn for South Carolina Orton-Gillingham Fellows and sent 7 teachers and staff to the Annual OGA Conference in Atlanta to further enrich our professional community. The school's dedication to training reaches far outside our campus; we offer opportunities for educators to earn Classroom Educator and Associate-level certifications, nurturing the next generation of OG practitioners. Our commitment to dyslexia awareness goes

beyond the classroom. Each year, we host a parent night with speakers who are leaders in their fields, such as best-selling author Dr. Michael Thompson and renowned psychologist Dr. Peg Dawson. We also celebrate our unique history during our annual Founders Day, reflecting on our past, present, and future as we approach our 50th anniversary in 2025.

At Sandhills, success is not just about academic achievement—it's about preparing students for life. Our graduates have a 100% acceptance rate into the colleges of their choice, with many earning merit-based accolades such as the prestigious Palmetto Fellows Scholarship. We are now seeing a new generation of alumni returning to Sandhills as parents, entrusting their children's education to the place that transformed their own lives.

Sandhills School is more than just a place to learn; it's a place where bright students with dyslexia are empowered

to thrive. If you're ever in the area, we would love to welcome you to our campus. Please give us a call to schedule a tour and see firsthand the impact of the magic of Sandhills School. 



Zach Keiffer, Class of 2023 Salutatorian and Palmetto Fellow Scholarship Recipient began his Sandhills journey in the 3rd grade.



Gabielle Kennedy, A/OGA, leads a group of young students through math word problems, using interactive steps to find their solutions