

A Message from RRCNA

Jady Johnson, Executive Director

The Reading Recovery Council of North America is honored and proud to publish this journal as a tribute to Marie Clay and her work. We are a membership organization with collective understanding and shared goals and are also individuals who have been touched by her life and her work. She has enabled each of us to make deeper, more meaningful contributions to this world.



Always eager to share experiences with Reading Recovery professionals, Marie Clay signed copies of Literacy Lessons for hundreds of admirers at the 2006 National Conference, one of many RRCNA-sponsored events she attended.

Marie also knew that theories of beginning reading instruction had polarized the reading community for decades and frequently wrote and spoke about that subject. (See page 69, “Child Development,” reprinted in this journal.)

Understanding the roots of the reading wars and the ebb and flow of the phonics-first philosophy did not make Marie Clay complacent because she knew there was much at stake for children’s futures. RRCNA leadership kept her informed over the past few years as the struggle to defend Reading Recovery in the U.S. led to a federal investigation of the U.S. Department of Education’s Reading First program. New Zealand colleagues reported that even in the last month of her life, she was pleased when she heard that after 3 years of consideration, USDE’s What Works Clearinghouse awarded high marks for Reading Recovery’s effectiveness.

Though we miss her physical presence, the power of her research and scholarship will live for decades not only through Reading Recovery, but also in *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals*. RRCNA is proud to have played a role in supporting the professionals who carry out Marie Clay’s work.

Marie Clay supported RRCNA’s work and was an honorary member since the early days of our organization. Though she lived an ocean and a day away, she managed to be quite involved. She was present at a surprising number of RRCNA-sponsored events, spending much of her time with the Reading Recovery professionals who carried out her work. I observed on a number of occasions the sense of anticipation as teachers waited in line for Marie to sign one of her books and their joy at having a brief exchange of experiences.

Marie clearly understood the role that organizations could play in implementing a large-scale innovation like Reading Recovery. Her commitment to the work of professional organizations was an ongoing, significant part of her career, culminating in her presidency of the International Reading Association (1992–1993). She valued the important support professional organizations offer to educators at all levels.

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