



In Celebration of the Life and Legacy of Marie M. Clay

As we worked to complete this issue, we received the news of Dr. Marie M. Clay's death. We dedicate this issue as a celebration of her life and legacy. Many of us involved with *Literacy Teaching and Learning* have stood on the shoulders of this giant of early literacy learning and intervention. Countless obituaries have listed her roles as scientist, teacher, writer, researcher; but for us, there is a deeply felt link and loss—she generously offered guidance, support, friendship, and mentoring to so many of us. She was a visionary and the ultimate exemplar of keen intelligence,

insight, and wit, always balanced with humility and respect.

Perhaps most will remember Marie Clay as the founder of Reading Recovery, but her writings and research have changed literacy and education's trajectory. She is among the most frequently cited researchers in the field of literacy. In 1999, a survey conducted with members of the National Reading Conference (NRC)—considered by many to be the most-prestigious literacy research organization in the U.S.—identified scholars who most influenced literacy practices. Marie Clay was recognized as the only scholar who was considered a major influence in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s (NRC Yearbook, 2000). Her work was cited across all three decades as having a significant influence on practice, indicating the high level of recognition of the impact of her work on early literacy. Clearly, her work has contributed in a major way to the heritage and history of literacy research and practice.

Upon receiving the NRC Distinguished Researcher Award in 2003, Marie Clay entitled her paper, "Simply by Sailing in a New Direction: You Could Enlarge the World." While encouraging us to do the same, she did this in countless ways—as a pioneer in conceptualizing emergent literacy, in her emphasis on the importance of writing in early literacy development, and certainly, as the pathfinder in early literacy intervention. Each decade of her work gave us new ideas and understandings; researchers and educators are still "mining" many of them. Here are some of our favorites:

- "systematic observation" of literacy behavior to capture change over time
- "roaming around the known" as a time to observe, encourage the child's strengths and independence, and establish attunement between teacher and learner
- "accelerated learning" to bring each child to a normal trajectory of progress
- "continuous text" reading as the focal task for problem solving and comprehension
- "linking the new to the known" and "building on strengths" so that it is easy for the child to learn
- "following the child" so that reading work and problem solving are within the child's current capabilities
- "valuing approximations" and near misses to support the development of agency and self-control

- “learning to be learning disabled” as a result of overgeneralization of learning disability and dyslexia diagnoses
- “reading and writing as reciprocal processes” with each contributing to learning about print
- “self-extending systems” that propel learning and independence

In her NRC address, Marie Clay acknowledged her perpetual question: “What else is possible?” This question was the impetus for her work on behalf of struggling learners. She championed individual differences, recognized and studied different paths to literacy learning, but most of all, she sought avenues for all to achieve “common outcomes.”

You must forgive a long-term clinician for believing it was imperative to pick up the children who were floundering as I fumbled my way through the debates and controversies. I focused on an outlier group, a minority group, but I have enjoyed sailing in new directions in the company of staunch supporters who have chosen to navigate the same route. (Clay, NRC Yearbook, 2004)

As we dedicate this issue to Marie M. Clay, we challenge literacy researchers and educators to expand upon her legacy by continuing to sail in new directions, always asking, “What else is possible?”

From the Editors

Literacy Teaching and Learning has changed over time. This issue ends our 3-year term as the editorial team for *Literacy Teaching and Learning*. We have learned so much during our tenure, and we very much appreciate the work of our editorial review board. Members have graciously given of their time and assisted us in supporting authors and preparing strong manuscripts.

A new editorial team has been selected and will continue the work of the Clemson team. Members of the new editorial team are Sharan A. Gibson, lead editor, Marva Cappello, and Pamela Ross, all of San Diego State University; Angela Hobsbaum, University of London, England; and Blair Koefoed, The University of Auckland. We look forward to the new perspectives and international influences of these editors.

Sincerely,
 The editors of *Literacy Teaching and Learning*
 Susan King Fullerton, lead editor
 Linda Gambrell
 Kathy Headley