Reflective Practice in Reading Recovery Lessons — Case Studies of Two Reading Recovery Teachers

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As teachers, we know the importance of contingent teaching in our Reading Recovery lessons. Contingent teaching, which is “work[ing] collaboratively with a learner [and] making teaching moves based on the learner’s actions,” helps us stay responsive to our students’ change over time (Matczuk, 2005, p. 19).

In this article, we use the reflective teaching framework (Zeichner & Liston, 1996) to clarify how Reading Recovery professionals may adopt contingent teaching to enhance their practice. Two of the authors are Reading Recovery professionals who wrote the case studies that follow. The other author, a researcher, analyzed the case studies from the lens of the reflective teaching framework.

For each case study, we first paint a portrait of our focal child and describe each child’s strengths and weaknesses. Next, we share how we work with our focal child from the perspective and sequence of Reading Recovery lessons. In the analysis, we make connections between our teaching and the reflective teaching framework. In doing so, we illustrate the use of the reflective teaching framework to support contingent teaching.

**Zeichner and Liston’s Reflective Teaching Framework**

We summarize Zeichner and Liston’s (1996) exposition of reflective teaching as a framework of three main ideas: (a) attitudes integral to reflective action; (b) use of practical theories; and (c) cycles of reexamining assumptions and identifying possibilities.

The three attitudes that are integral to reflective action—open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness—guide our moral and ethical decisions as teachers. Open-minded teachers are willing to attend to problems in multiple ways and recognize that our initial attempts may need to be revised. Responsible teachers continually consider how our work will affect the students in terms of both short-term goals (e.g., passing tests, completing assignments) and long-term goals (e.g., the development of positive self-concepts, enhancing future life chances). Wholehearted teachers enact open-mindedness and responsibility in our practice. As wholehearted teachers we “regularly examine [our] own assumptions and beliefs and the results of [our] actions and approach all situations with the attitude that [we] can learn something new” (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 11).

Practical theories are the intermingling of teachers’ personal experience, transmitted knowledge, and core values. For Reading Recovery professionals, transmitted knowledge comes from the 1-year and ongoing professional development within a community of Reading Recovery teachers, teacher leaders, and university professors, as well as our own reading and exposure to the media. Teachers’ use of practical theories may be seen as drawing from the images of our past experience and understandings to make connections with the present so as to guide our future action (Connelly & Claro, 1988).

The last aspect of reflective teaching involves creating cycles of reexamining assumptions and identifying new possibilities for action. When we adopt the attitudes of open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness and draw upon our practical theories to reinterpret and reframe the problems, we may discover new insights or responses. These insights help us generate new practical theories that guide our future actions.
These cycles of interpreting-framing-action, reinterpreting-reframing-action form spirals of reflection in our practice.

When we examine our case studies through the lens of the reflective teaching framework, we discover that reflective teaching is integral to successful contingent teaching in three ways. First, our contingent teaching in the Reading Recovery lesson is the reiterative process of reflective teaching. Second, our success and growth come from adopting all three aspects of reflective teaching — attitudes, practical theories, and cycles of reexamining assumptions and identifying possibilities. Third, as a result of reflective teaching, we accumulate new layers of practical theories for our future action.

Case Study 1: Dante’s Path to Literacy — Meaning Making and Learning to Read
by Barbara Staff

I first met Dante when he enrolled at Stapleton Elementary in first grade, following his move from Chicago with his mother, older sister, and grandmother. He did not start school until the second or third week. His classroom teacher recommended that Dante receive Title I reading support, and I became Dante’s reading teacher. Dante was slight in stature, with little confidence in his reading and writing. His classroom teacher said that Dante’s mother often completed tasks for Dante that he could easily do for himself. In lessons, Dante was soft-spoken and deferred to other children rather than contribute his ideas. He often looked to his teacher for help and rarely risked making an attempt at something he did not know. When Dante became a Reading Recovery student, I wanted to build his confidence within the safe context of individual lessons and work on fluency.

**Dante’s strengths and weaknesses**

Dante began Reading Recovery in the middle of the school year. He entered the program at an emergent level of text reading (level 3). In the Observation Survey, Dante identified 53 letters and 8 words on the Ohio Word Test. During the Concepts About Print (C.A.P.) task, Dante demonstrated book handling skills and directional behaviors; he knew some specific concepts such as question mark and period. However, Dante had only a vague understanding of the difference between letters and words. On the Writing Vocabulary task, Dante correctly wrote 23 words and attempted 5 others. Most of these words were either high-frequency sight words or words that were personally significant. When asked to record the sounds he heard, Dante articulated the words slowly, and then he recorded most of the letters in sequence. Dante demonstrated good word boundaries in writing.

Dante entered the intervention with many early reading and writing behaviors under control. When reading, he drew upon the pictures, his oral language, and the repetitive patterns in the texts. He used visual information to detect discrepancies between his predictions and the print on the page; however, his reading was slow and tentative with little phrasing and no expression. In contrast, Dante was a confident writer. He had a useful writing vocabulary and could hear and record sounds in words. He demonstrated proper directional movement and could form most letters easily without copy. However, Dante lacked a strong sense of agency. He engaged only as long as he felt successful. I knew he gave up easily and often felt defeated. At these times, he would move slowly and lay his head on the table.

**Working with Dante in the known**

During Dante’s first 2 weeks in Reading Recovery, I knew I had to address his engagement in order to help him as a reader. Dante displayed strong emotional behaviors that were blocking his progress with literacy. Carol Lyons (2003) states, “recent advances in neuroscience leave no doubt that emotion is the heart of learning and remembering” (p. 70). I theorized that Dante could build his confidence by rereading many easy, familiar books to improve his fluency, demonstrate that he understood the author’s message, and develop a more efficient processing system.

Our first several lessons included only books that were familiar to Dante. I selected books that he knew from his classroom guided reading and Title I lessons. However, reading these books was neither easy nor fluent. Dante had difficulty both phrasing and imitating my demonstrations of fluent reading. He was not able to anticipate the language structures and often stalled on the first word in each sentence. I wondered why a child who used the pictures and the repetitive patterns in text and had a useful core of high-frequency sight words was having such a difficult time reading easy, familiar books. I began to witness avoidance and lethargy creeping into our lessons. Constant yawning, lying on the table, and the declarations of “I don’t want to” slowed the pace of learning.
I learned that Dante was unhappy reading the same books over and over again. Dante identified these as “baby books.”

I put aside my focus on building fluency and responded to Dante by adding novelty to his lessons. But introducing new books did not motivate Dante as a reader either. In fact, reading new books increased his anxiety. Dante was only engaged when we played games like “Snap” (Clay, 2005b, p. 175), worked with magnetic letters at the whiteboard, or wrote in his journal. I noted that Dante liked the parts of the lesson that involved movement.

When writing during Roaming Around the Known, Dante was active and secure with his attempts to compose and write. He shared information about his family and friends and wrote about personally meaningful events. Most of his sentences started with “I like,” “I can,” “I play,” or “Me and.” Dante demonstrated the most confidence and control when writing, particularly when he could compose text using known words. Roaming Around the Known sessions became a time for Dante to solidify his known and partly known items, and for expressing his personal voice.

**Reading at the story level**

As Dante moved from roaming into early lessons, he struggled to read with fluency and expression. Right away, I enlisted the help of my teacher leader, Mary Smith. When she observed Dante’s lesson, she noted that Dante was not reading at the story level and only focused on letters and words. After discussing the lesson and consulting the procedures described in *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals Part One and Part Two* (Clay, 2005a, 2005b), we agreed that I should be careful about drawing Dante’s attention to the word level before prompting for a meaningful response. Dante needed to think about meaning before attempting to solve words. When Dante hesitated while reading, I would prompt him to think about what would make sense. Finally, I would model thinking aloud as I turned the pages and predicted the words that might appear. These teaching strategies required Dante to focus on meaning. Armed with these new insights, I temporarily set aside my focus on fluency to help Dante read texts at the story level.

The next few lessons were a roller coaster of inconsistency. On good days, Dante was happy and engaged. His reading was meaning-based, and there was ample evidence of monitoring, self-correction, and the integration of multiple sources of information. Dante demonstrated flexibility when he encountered challenges with text. On these days, he left the room feeling the power of reading.

On other days, Dante struggled to read level 4 books; he was disengaged and demonstrated painfully slow processing. Familiar books did not sound easy, running record books were filled with omissions and tolds, letter work was pokey, writing was safe and uninspired, and the new book was met with opposition. Dante was often annoyed when his oral language did not match the book’s language. He resisted searching multiple sources of information and our lessons grew longer. On these days, Dante lacked the stamina to work for 30 minutes and was
angry, sad, or withdrawn. Exasperated, I asked Dante, “If we could wipe the slate clean and start all over again, how could we make our lessons better?” To my surprise, Dante made very specific suggestions. He wanted to write more books, write more on the whiteboard, and asked me to read books to him. In addition, Dante wanted us to record him reading books for another child to hear. I was astonished by these specific suggestions from an otherwise quiet boy, and I was pleased that I could grant all of his requests.

The following day, my teacher leader returned for a follow-up visit. Unfortunately, we both agreed that Dante was still not reading at the story level and we planned to temporarily drop to easier text levels. Ms. Smith referenced the section of Literacy Lessons Part Two (Clay, 2005b) that provides suggestions for children who are in early lessons and know little about stories and storytelling. Clay believes “if a Reading Recovery teacher recognizes that holding a storyline or anticipating where the story is going is difficult for a student” then this should be a focus during early lessons. This procedure allowed me to read the new book to the child “once, or twice, or three times” (p. 163) before the running record was taken the next day.

We also agreed that Dante and I write easy books using dialogue between Dante and his good friend Shawn; Dante would then perform the stories as reader’s theater, providing him with opportunities to take on the characters’ parts. In writing, we removed the text from familiar books and wrote our own stories to match the illustrations. Interestingly, these activities satisfied Dante’s requests from the day before; sometimes kids know what they need.

The following day, while videotaping our lesson, I captured a telling exchange during my book introduction to The Big Yellow Castle (Smith, 2000). I had planned to coach Dante on how he could use pictures to predict the words he might read in the text. Instead, I invited Dante to talk about the pictures:

Teacher: (turning the page) What might I see on this page?
Dante: They’re playing on the castle. Castle.

Teacher: So I might see the word castle on this page, won’t I? (turning the page) Hmmmm. It looks like….. What’s going on here?
Dante: They’re asking dad something.
Teacher: They’re asking their dad something. What do you see over here? (picture with no text)
Dante: The castle. Castle.
Teacher: (turning the page) But they didn’t go in the castle. Why not?
Dante: They went on the swings.
Teacher: They did! Do you think we are going to see the word swings over here? (gesturing to the text)
Dante: Uh huh.
Teacher: Where did they go next?
Dante: Home.
Teacher: Katie and Joe went home? I don’t think so.
Dante: They went to the castle.

Teacher: No they didn’t. Where did they go next? (gesturing to the slide but Dante did not respond) They went over to the …
Dante: Slide. Then they went home.
Teacher: Then what happened?
Dante: They went home.

This exchange revealed how difficult it was for Dante to use the pictures to tell a story. I realized that Dante might have spent the first several weeks of Reading Recovery and half of first grade confused about the relationship between illustrations and text. Focusing on fluency or any other strategy could not replace meaning construction. This was a watershed moment for Dante and for me.

Clay reminds us that because “it takes a little time to rearrange the old learning. … the entire process might become a little uncertain for a time” (2005b, p. 113). This was certainly true for Dante. As I followed Clay’s recommendations for children who know little about stories (p. 162–163), Dante began having multiple successful lessons in a row. However, after 2 weeks, Dante had become dependent on having new books read aloud to him. As I tried to withdraw this support, Dante reacted with avoidance behaviors, stalling, and tears. I implored, “Dante, you can do this! This reading is not too hard for you. You must trust that I have picked a book that is just right for you. We want to keep those good lessons going.” But Dante would not hear of it. At the risk of undoing every thread of goodwill between us, I sent Dante back to his classroom. I didn’t want to replay
scenarios of cajoling and negotiating. We had come too far to allow those unwanted behaviors to reenter our lessons. That afternoon, I invited Dante to try his lesson again; he handled it flawlessly.

Clay explained, “It is the learner who accelerates because some things no longer need his attention and are done more easily” (2005a, pp. 23–24). Dante spent the first part of his program trying to discover how to attend to the author’s message. Despite accumulating item knowledge, Dante was not engaged in a “message-getting, problem-solving activity” (Clay, 2005a, p. 1). Once I realized that I needed to support his reading at the story level, Dante gained six book levels in 6 weeks. We entered week 17 at text level 14. At the end of our lessons, Dante’s familiar reading was increasingly phrased, although fluency and expression were continuing to develop. Dante read new material with a stronger sense of meaning, and we engaged in more conversation during lessons. Dante became a partner in navigating the lesson framework. As the reading became more difficult, Dante was able to stay on task and construct meaning from text. The trust we built and his internal sense of confidence allowed him to overcome frustration.

**Final thoughts**

We always learn the most from the most-challenging students. This was certainly true of Dante. My assumptions about Dante during roaming were clouded by my previous experiences with him. Clay (2005a) stated “the most important reason for ‘roaming around the known’ is that it requires the teacher to stop teaching from her preconceived ideas” (p. 33). Unfortunately, I did not enlist Dante as my coworker. I thought I knew the path that was best for Dante, and I set the agenda instead of following his lead.

Although I described Dante as a quiet and rather passive student, he had very definite ideas to contribute about his own literacy development. To my surprise, each one of his suggestions was exactly what he needed to further his reading and writing progress. Once we became partners, his acceleration began. Whitmore, Martens, Goodman, & Owocki (2005) stated that children “need to control their own literacy processes” (p. 305). Dante taught me that children with few literacy experiences have opinions, preferences, and can shape their own paths. While fluency remained a focus for Dante, it was not his greatest need. Input from my teacher leader and Dante helped me to readjust my priorities. As Susan Fullerton reminded us, “Reading Recovery promotes change in teachers as well as students” (Fullerton, 2006, p. 11). For both Dante and I, no statement could be more true.

**Analysis of Case Study 1**

by Yvonne Pek

Evident in Barbara’s case study were her constant moves to keep in step with Dante’s responses. Barbara started with familiar books to build Dante’s fluency. When she found that familiar books did not support his fluency but was demotivating him, she introduced some new books instead. When this new move did not produce any positive responses, Barbara consulted the teacher leader and began to work on strategies to help Dante focus on meaning. These are examples of contingent teaching.

The series of decisions and actions Barbara made in her contingent teaching corresponded to the cycles of interpretation-framing-action, reinterpretation-reframing-action that were part of the reflective teaching framework. Barbara’s initial plans to improve Dante’s confidence by reading familiar books and to improve fluency failed. However, the failure led her to reinterpret and reframe the problem from a focus on reading fluency to a focus on reading for meaning.

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assumptions, they set in motion the process of interpretation-framing-action, reinterpretation-reframing-action, which improved her contingent teaching.

The reiterative process of interpretation-framing-action, reinterpretation-reframing-action was one aspect of the reflective teaching framework. These cycles of reexamining assumptions and identifying new possibilities were present because the other two aspects were in place. First, Barbara adopted the attitudes of open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness. With these attitudes, Barbara was willing to dig deeper into her assumptions every time she met with a negative response from Dante. It finally led her to clearly see which was the most appropriate action to take.

Second, Barbara used her existing practical theories — her past experience and knowledge — to make decisions and think of new possibilities. She initially drew upon her practical theories to make connections with Dante’s behaviors in the Observation Survey. As a result, these connections informed her plans. Barbara theorized that Dante “could build his confidence by rereading many easy, familiar books to improve his fluency, demonstrate that he understood the author’s message, and develop a more efficient processing system.” She drew upon her practical theories again to reinterpret and reframe the problem. For example, seeking advice from her teacher leader, rereading Literacy Lessons and reaching into the images of her past experiences and understanding were all Barbara’s practical theories that she drew upon to relook at Dante’s behaviors and reexamine her own practice. Barbara drew upon her practical theories to inform her initial interpretation and framing as well as her reinterpretation and reframing of Dante’s actions. The use of practical theories was important in her contingent teaching.

The analysis of Barbara’s case study illustrated that her contingent teaching corresponded to the reiterative process of reflective teaching and the adoption of all three aspects of reflective teaching — attitudes, practical theories and cycles of reexamining assumptions, and identifying possibilities helped her refine her teaching moves till she discovered the root of the issue that accelerated Dante’s progress.

Case Study 2: Kayla’s Path to Literacy — Addressing Spatial Layout and Serial Order
by Scott Mackin

It was January, and I was taken aback when the first-grade teacher told me Kayla was one of the lowest two children in her classroom. I had been Kayla’s Title I teacher during kindergarten, and she had made tremendous gains. By the end of kindergarten she passed a benchmark level C book (Reading Recovery level 3), consistently recorded correct consonant sounds when writing, and wrote several sight words. She was not one of the lowest children when tested for Reading Recovery in the fall and had not been recommended for intervention services in Grade 1. I was puzzled by her teacher’s assessment and wondered what was blocking her path to efficient and effective processing.

Kayla was a 6-year-old girl in first grade, who lived in a small midwestern town in a rural community. She was a little dynamo with a great spirit. She took pride in racing to my Reading Recovery room everyday. Often, in latter lessons, she scolded me and said, “Don’t help me. I can do it.” Or “I told you I don’t need your help!”

Kayla’s strengths and weaknesses

When I administered the Observation Survey in early January, Kayla scored well in relation to many of the Reading Recovery students I had taught in the past. She independently wrote 31 words, recorded 34 correct sounds on the Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words task, and identified 11 words on the Ohio Word Test. However, her instructional reading level was only level 4. Although she demonstrated some strategic activities such as one-to-one matching, monitoring, and self-correcting when reading, she pointed to the words and read all texts in a word-by-word manner. In addition, she often distorted sounds when she attempted to sound out words. Furthermore, there was evidence of serial order confusions (e.g., she read said for did, no for on, in for on) and letter reversals (e.g., she read bird for did, blue for purple) in her reading of connected text. Kayla often neglected meaning when she read.

Working with Kayla in the known

Kayla had accumulated a lot of item knowledge. Nevertheless, she was unable to use these items to read continuous texts. She did not have an effective or efficient self-extending system (Clay, 2001). Based on the Observation Survey, I suspected that Kayla did not consider reading to be a “message-getting, problem-solving
activity” (Clay, 2005a, p. 1). She exhibited word-by-word reading, sounded out words letter-by-letter, and neglected meaning cues. Her theory of good reading was to read words correctly. During Roaming Around the Known, I established two goals for Kayla. First, I wanted her to read fluently and to use her eyes to appropriately phrase text. Second, I wanted her to recognize reading as meaningful and enjoyable.

In the first roaming session, I modeled how she could read without her finger and phrase groups of words. Three days later in my notes, I wrote “reading with expression and eyes without prompting.” There was a noticeable shift from consistent finger-pointing and slow reading to reading in phrases and with expression. I simultaneously pursued my goal of helping Kayla to recognize reading as meaningful and enjoyable. I carefully chose books that rhymed, presented engaging rhythms, or were of high interest. I read these books aloud to highlight meaning and enjoyment. For instance during our first roaming session, I used the text, Where’s Spot (Hill, 1987). While I read most of the book to Kayla, she read the word no when it appeared throughout the book. This motivated her to attempt to read the entire text with my support. She shifted from using visual only cues to sound out words to integrating multiple cues when reading easy passages. However, she was still only using visual cues to problem solve tricky words. For example, she read yellow for yelled and w–a–s for was. There was also evidence of inefficient visual searching such as reading “all” for will. I realized that Kayla had developed a strong pattern of haphazard looking, inefficient problem solving, and had established an ineffective working system (Singer, 1994).

In writing, she was developing a set of effective strategies. She could hold on to the meaning of her story and write known words independently. First, I slowly articulated the words she wanted to write. Then we said the words together. By the end of roaming, Kayla was saying words slowly and matching consonant sounds to letters. She wrote from left to right with return sweep. By her ninth lesson, I noted in my lesson records, “Writing is easy!”

When I revisited the journal I kept during roaming, it was apparent that Kayla had made excellent progress. She jumped from level 4 to level 8 in text reading. Equally important, she shifted from slow one-to-one matching to reading phrases with her eyes. She had added 10 new words to her writing vocabulary and 39 words to her reading vocabulary. I witnessed shifts in her problem solving and in her ability to take words apart while reading rather than sounding out words letter-by-letter.

Though I was aware of Kayla’s serial order confusions in reading, I ignored signs of spatial layout confusions. In her writing book, Kayla did not leave clear spaces between words, and sometimes she left spaces between letters within words. In the early lessons, I often prompted her to leave spaces when she wrote and recorded strategies for helping her to think about spacing in my lesson plans. Although I made these notes, I failed to recognize the connection between her spacing difficulties in writing and her directional and spatial confusions during reading. Kayla’s running records indicated that she consistently omitted and inserted words when she read. The video recording of my teaching further confirmed my suspicions.
Kayla’s eyes were not tracking across a line of text effectively. This turned out to be a consistent pattern, and I had to step back to reflect on my teaching.

I realized that Kayla’s persistent spatial confusions were exacerbated by my teaching during roaming. Specifically, I was teaching instead of observing, following, and sharing the tasks with Kayla during roaming. As Clay reminded teachers,

If a child enters Reading Recovery with higher scores on the Observation Survey tasks that child will still need to spend time roaming around the known. There will be a much wider range of literacy behaviors to explore, more confusions, and also hidden problems. (2005a, p. 33)

I had completely missed Clay’s advice. I had spent roaming trying to accelerate Kayla’s progress instead of exploring her behaviors with print and discovering her confusions and hidden problems. Although my initial focus was for her to understand how to look at print and track with her eyes, I discovered I needed to refocus on helping Kayla control both serial order and spatial layout.

I resolved to not increase the text difficulty until she controlled directionality and spatial layout. I also backed off on teaching for phrasing and fluency. I created echoes throughout the lesson that focused Kayla on spatial layout and directionality. During familiar reading, I wrote sentences from the texts on sentence strips and I cut them up word-by-word. I arranged and rearranged the texts on black construction paper and asked Kayla to read the text with her eyes.

Then, she read the same text from her book. I repeated this process with text from her running record book and her new book. In writing, I drew in lines for several lessons to help her know where to place and space the words that she was writing. These memorable and clear examples helped her to attend to the breaks between words.

In writing, these temporary scaffolds worked well. Kayla soon controlled spatial layout without prompting or props and wrote familiar words quickly. She articulated words slowly and matched sounds to letters in serial order. Kayla used letterboxes effectively and could clap words and record syllables in sequence.

In reading, serial order confusions were still blocking Kayla’s learning. Kayla attended to highly salient features of words without carefully searching visual information in sequence. For example, she continued to read “all” for will. She needed to establish a consistent and efficient left-to-right searching behaviors across words. Again, I created activities across the lesson to address these confusions. I asked Kayla to build known and partially known words with magnetic letters over and over again and focused her attention on sequence and looking from left to right. I drew sound boxes on the white board and had her articulate known words slowly as she wrote the letters. During writing, I used sound and letterboxes emphasizing serial order. Kayla took words to fluency writing them on many different surfaces.

Clay (2005a, 2005b) argued that when the rate of acquisition accelerates, work on familiar texts is faster and more flexible, and teacher support diminishes. This was what happened with Kayla. She began to problem solve using bigger parts of words (e.g., win-dow, to-geth-er, ju/ ju-st). She reread to problem solve and searched for additional cues. She made multiple attempts at points of difficulty and reread to confirm. This all happened independently without my prompting. Most exciting of all, she used visual information in words to monitor for serial order. For example, while the letter z in the word prize was salient to her, when she started to say the /z/ sound, she immediately stopped. She articulated the /p/ and worked left to right through the word successfully solving it and rereading to confirm her attempt. On another occasion while reading the new book, she read stopped instead of tripped. She monitored her reading and was able to self-correct. On the running record the next day, she attended to the word in sequence saying tr–ip/ tripped. It was exciting to watch Kayla assembling a reading process. She was reading with fluency and expression in familiar reading, the running record, and the new book.

Kayla was developing the foundation for a self-extending system. She used multiple sources of information and was creating effective and efficient working systems. As I increased the level of text difficulty to levels 16 through 18, I noticed that some spatial layout and serial order issues reemerged. Again, I had to re-adjust my thinking. I provided book introductions that focused Kayla’s attention on sequential and efficient looking. I used the cut-up sentences with text from the new book and allowed her to use a masking card to search through words when needed. I used a pencil drag to direct her eyes...
Kayla as a reader and writer. He set goals, planned his lessons, and took action based on his understanding. In the early lessons, he modeled fluent reading and chose books that Kayla would enjoy. Based on his observations of Kayla’s responses to his teaching moves and observations made during roaming, he noticed Kayla’s inefficient visual searching.

**Final thoughts**
Kayla entered Reading Recovery with a great deal of item knowledge but could only read very simple texts. While I assumed that teaching Kayla would be a simple, straightforward task, there were hidden problems and serious confusions that slowed her progress. Kayla taught me to take the time to observe and share tasks during roaming. As Clay explained “the most important reason for ‘Roaming around the known’ is that it requires the teacher to stop teaching from her preconceived ideas” (Clay, 2005a, p. 33). Unfortunately, I allowed and encouraged Kayla to read quickly before she had the skills to search words efficiently and in sequence. It took many weeks to untangle these confusions because she had practiced inefficient processing for so long. Once Kayla could monitor and control her major confusions, she began to accelerate. Kayla learned how to use multiple sources of information simultaneously and read increasingly complex texts. Working with Kayla was a learning experience for me. Kayla helped me see the importance of being reflective, staying in the known, and paying attention to lapses.

**Analysis of Case Study 2**
by Yvonne Pek

Scott demonstrated contingent teaching in the following ways. He used the observations made during the Observation Survey to understand Kayla as a reader and writer. He set goals, planned his lessons, and took action based on his understanding. In the early lessons, he modeled fluent reading and chose books that Kayla would enjoy. Based on his observations of Kayla’s responses to his teaching moves and observations made during roaming, he noticed Kayla’s inefficient visual searching.

Despite initial success in helping Kayla achieve some level of reading fluency, Scott was sensitive to the deeper sets of issues behind Kayla’s confusions. Thus, he reinterpreted and reframed the problem as one that dealt with spatial layout and serial order.

As a result, he addressed the issue by helping her attend to breaks in words in her reading and writing across the lesson.

From the reflective teaching framework, Scott’s contingent teaching is seen as the reiterative process of interpretation-framing-action, re-interpretation-reframing-action. He said, “Based on the Observation Survey, I suspected that Kayla did not consider reading to be a ‘message-getting, problem-solving activity’ (Clay, 2005a, p. 1). She exhibited word-by-word reading, sounded out words letter-by-letter, and neglected meaning cues. Her theory of good reading was to read words correctly.” This understanding of Kayla as a reader and writer represented his initial interpretation of the problem.

He framed it as one that dealt with meaning making and fluency so he took action to address that issue. He wrote, “During Roaming Around the Known, I established two goals for Kayla. First, I wanted her to read fluently and to use her eyes to appropriately phrase text. Second, I wanted her to recognize reading as meaningful and enjoyable.” Despite initial success in helping Kayla achieve some level of reading fluency, Scott was sensitive to the deeper sets of issues behind Kayla’s confusions. Thus, he reinterpreted and reframed the problem as one that dealt with spatial layout and serial order. The new frame changed his focus and led him to take a different course of action that finally accelerated Kayla’s progress.

In the analysis of Scott’s case study, I focused on his generation of new practical theories as a result of adopting the three aspects of the reflective teaching framework. First, the attitudes of open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness kept him open to reexamine his initial theories about Kayla. He reexamined his practice by regular referencing of his journals, the running records, and his current observations. He then became aware that he had “failed to recognize the connection between [Kayla’s] spacing difficulties in writing and her directional and spatial confusions”. Further, he realized that his teaching in the known contributed to Kayla’s continued inefficient processing. Scott used his realizations to reinterpret...
and reframe the problem. In addition to reframing it as an issue dealing with Kayla’s spatial layout and serial order, Scott also saw the importance of sharing tasks with his student during roaming. For example, Scott reflected, “Kayla taught me to take the time to observe and share tasks during roaming.”

The attitudes of open-mindedness, responsibility, and wholeheartedness were foundational for Scott in his

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reexamination of assumptions and finding new possibilities in his contingent teaching. By moving through the reiterative process of reflective teaching, he came to a deeper understanding of the changes he needed to make in his approach. These layers of understanding represented the new practical theories he generated and would use when making decisions with his future students.

Other than adopting the attitudes integral to reflective teaching, using existing practical theories was also important to the reiterative process of reflective teaching and the generation of new practical theories. Practical theories are the intermingling of teachers’ personal experience, transmitted knowledge and core values. From his personal experience and core values, Scott learned to use his journal notes, the running records and his current observations as sources to regularly reexamine his assumptions. He used this along with Clay’s Literacy Lessons — another layer of practical theories he constantly drew on to discover new frames of understanding the problem. Unexpectedly, the video recording of his lesson provided another layer of practical theories that he found significant. It confirmed his increasing suspicions about Kayla’s confusions and established the need to recognize and act on her spatial order confusions. Scott drew upon these practical theories in his reexamination of assumptions, and generated new frames of understanding which constituted new layers of practical theories. For example, Scott’s realization about working with this student? How may I reinterpret the problem? What new possibilities am I seeing from my reinterpretation?

4. What new practical theories have I generated from working with this student? How will I use it with other students in the future?

References


**Children’s books cited**


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**About the Authors**

Yvonne Pek is a PhD candidate at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her research interest deals with the relationship of language and literacy practices at home and school, and how that informs classroom pedagogy.

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