I shall begin this talk by reporting another's observations of Reading Recovery in a presentation detailing Reading Recovery's influence on everyday classroom practice. It is somewhat strange for me to do this because I am stressing more and more that we have little to share with classroom instruction. Our strength comes from the particular advantages that one-to-one teaching opportunities provide. But we must take notice of how other people see us; therefore, I share the perspective of Professor P. David Pearson, dean of education, University of California, at Berkeley.

Dr. Pearson spoke at this national conference in 2000, the 15th anniversary of Reading Recovery in North America. More recently, he presented a keynote address at the International Reading Recovery Institute held in Auckland, July 2004. In that talk he brought his original points up to date in terms of new global issues and current criticisms. I include extracts from his talks here and refer you to the following Web site for his 2004 speech: www.readingrecovery.ac.nz/institute/.

At the 2000 conference, Dr. Pearson spoke about the enhanced instructional experiences Reading Recovery is able to give to children who are identified as having reading difficulties (Pearson, 2000). “Which children are we talking about?” he asked. He described them as: the “intractable 1% to 2% with neurological difficulty” (and we do indeed take these children for a preference series of lessons); the “hard to distinguish”, the “not responding well”, and “those who would do well if they got the resources.” Most of them learn to read rather well, he said, referencing Vellutino and Scanlon (2002), independent researchers (by which I mean non-Reading Recovery people) whose investigation had confirmed the positive effects of Reading Recovery.

Reading Recovery delivers rich and varied instruction as a diagnostic tool in a balanced program, he said. Even the lowest children make progress. His list of the effective features of the intervention included:

- the instructional support given to learners,
- increased time,
- the kind of tutoring offered,
- engagement in active cognitive processing of print,
- on-line scaffolding by the teacher, and
- learning to read on everyday print.

He reported that we have avoided the following “popular conspiracies,” Dr. Pearson's polite way of referring to the reading wars:

- The Basic Skills Conspiracy. First you have to get the words right
and the facts straight before you can proceed, and you will be tested on knowing these low level skills.

The Celebration Conspiracy. When we are in this frame of mind, we celebrate whatever children can do and fail to assist them in acquiring the basic skills. An astute researcher in New Zealand recently told me in all seriousness that we have a problem in New Zealand. Our teachers are particularly skilled at making children feel good about themselves and their achievements, even when the achievements are below acceptable levels!

The Prior Knowledge Conspiracy. First you must know your letters, sounds, phonics, etc., before you can read books and texts.

The Extra Help Conspiracy. Provide the same old, same old, all over again, retaining children to do this.

Dr. Pearson also applauded Reading Recovery’s teacher preparation by highlighting:

1. how we coach children and demonstrate what we want them to do;
2. how we are explicit when we talk to children;
3. how we support and scaffold; and
4. how we gradually pass control to the learners.

While he observed that Reading Recovery’s curriculum is not so different, Dr. Pearson stressed that the teaching is intense, the support is consistent, the feedback is immediate. Let me provide an Australian example to illustrate the global nature of Dr. Pearson’s observations of our teaching. Jack was a little boy who had many problems with the details in print but a good sense of story and good oral language. His teacher wrote this:

I took responsibility for the item-based elements to give him opportunities to work from his strengths. I felt it was important for him to develop complexity in his writing, so I acted as his memory for spatial concepts like spacing between and within words and the return sweep in most of his lessons. About ten lessons before I discontinued his lessons he announced, “I don’t need you to remind me about the spaces any more, Jo, ‘cos I can do that as well as do the writing.”

In summary, Dr. Pearson reinforced the value of our high quality, professional training for teachers and our Reading Recovery teachers’ superb teaching. (Also see Pearson, 2003.) These are important and helpful observations from a respected reading authority. Perhaps due to such positive reviews, people expect me to be very satisfied, to be walking around beaming! They are puzzled when I say I am not satisfied. My dissatisfaction stems from knowing that for every 1 million children we are able to serve, there are six or seven more in the same age group who need our help but who have no access to it. I also know that the particular time in a child’s life that we work with is the only time teachers can get complete recovery. Any time later will be less effective. So, I remain unsatisfied and concerned.

In this talk, I will share both my observations and concerns. While we have made excellent progress, in the U.S. and globally, we face persistent challenges. I will review issues of implementation and instruction and identify considerations of ongoing investigation by raising questions appropriate for educators in the U.S. context. I have organized my comments around the following needs:

• the need to expand to serve more children,
• the need to rethink our explanations,
• the need to explain what’s special about instruction that is individually designed and individually delivered, and
• the need to address implementation concerns.

I will extend this talk by sharing comments prepared for U.S. audiences of teachers regarding my perspective on instructional links between talking, reading, and writing. I’m entitling this aspect of the talk “Making the Links across Speaking, Writing, and Reading.” Overall, if I am stirring the waters, it is to prompt you to stretch your thinking and to motivate you to continue your good teaching and research.
The Need to Expand to Serve More Children

This year I came to one uncomfortable conclusion. I did you all a disservice when I recommended that education systems target the lowest 20% of the age group in each school. Serving the lowest 20% means that our population is a minority group. We all know how hard it is to keep the majority in any social group interested in helping the minority. We will always have to argue our case, prove ourselves capable, showcase our results, and explain ourselves. I therefore recommend that you set aside a proportion of your professional effort and energies for this advocacy. Provide people with proof of your results.

I am speaking to the teachers in the audience when I say that you have some very fine teacher leaders, site coordinators, and trainers to help you with this work. I also remind you that your daily teaching efforts are an important demonstration. Every child you take through a complete series of lessons is a contribution to continuing this early intervention. Every child you discontinue successfully in less than 20 weeks is a double bonus for us.

begin at slightly higher levels, and it is my guess that success rates would rise and predictions of future progress would be more on target. In other words, it would change the success story, and our personal error rates would probably drop significantly.

I have some evidence that this works well resulting from survey data collected by teacher leaders in Auckland. In New Zealand, Decile One schools are the high need schools with low resources (in the low-earning urban areas), and Decile Ten schools have high resources and lower needs. The teacher leaders' survey uncovered a surprise. Schools in the top deciles—8, 9, and 10—were providing, at their own cost, for early intervention assistance to between 20–30% of their lowest achievers in the age group. That result surprised and delighted me.

Why were good schools investing in early intervention? They must have understood that to succeed with the activities of those high-performing schools, their lowest children had to make a good start up the literacy learning ladder in their first-grade year. The best schools in Auckland had the greatest depth of provision.

Reading Recovery must not get trapped in a concept of “serving children from low socio-economic groups” and only when funded by federal money! Globally, we see many successful Reading Recovery interventions that are not funded by political policies.

Reading Recovery works for any low-scoring child in any school. We must work to sustain Reading Recovery and to expand our coverage at the district level. This is not someone else’s responsibility: Sustaining implementations requires the efforts of all Reading Recovery professionals. We have sound rationales for each guideline we have written. You must be sure that you explain to outsiders why it is necessary to do this and not that. Teacher leaders, you know how you studied for your oral exams! Pass some of that expertise to your continuing professional development classes so that your teachers can reply with conviction to the questions posed by the public.

To show that your expertise and comments may have far reaching impact, let me share this story. The governor of one state in the U.S. was in New Zealand on business. A colleague in his touring group was the husband of a teacher leader in that state, and he explained Reading Recovery to the governor. In the governor’s speech to a New Zealand audience, he said, “The greatest import that we have received from New Zealand is Reading Recovery. And because of this program, thousands of U.S. children have succeeded in reading.” I am sure the New Zealand businessmen had no idea what he was talking about, but every little bit of good publicity helps.

Your daily teaching efforts are an important demonstration. Every child you take through a complete series of lessons is a contribution to continuing this early intervention. Every child you discontinue successfully in less than 20 weeks is a double bonus for us.
The challenges for us are ongoing, and we know that the wheels of fortune turn differently at different times. I thought you might be interested in a letter I received in 1982. I rediscovered it while looking for some historical detail about the development of Reading Recovery. It was a letter from the chief reading advisor to the New Zealand Department (now Ministry) of Education. It read:

Dear Marie,

Thank you very much for the use of these videotapes. Mrs. George Bush showed a great deal of interest when your program was explained to her, and afterwards she spoke about it positively on both Television and Radio NZ.

This all helps in getting our government’s ongoing support.

Regards, Noel

Times change. New advocacy and new explanations are necessary. You have a job to do. We have to be active on behalf of our clientele.

**The Need to Rethink Our Explanations**

I am sorry to tell those of you who have been with us for a long time that our explanations for doing this and not that have to be restated from time to time. Your old explanations are probably not good enough today! They have to be expressed in today’s language and situated in today’s policies and current issues. (Guardians of your guidelines please take note: Get set to ask yourselves ‘Is it time to revise our guidelines?’)

Change is ongoing in Reading Recovery, and we have many examples to share. A partial list includes the following:

- **Cue sources** died several years ago from the disease of misuse by Reading Recovery and other reading professionals. A good concept became unhealthy because of the ways in which it was being interpreted.

- **Strategies** are lingering around the Reading Recovery teaching rooms, but because they mean other things in other educational programmes, we have had to get rid of them. We use the ideas of very intricate circuits in the brain and very complex strategic activities that we can encourage and foster but which we cannot teach. They are intricately complex and they occur so fast that you cannot observe them.

- **Calling ourselves a prereferral intervention** (or whatever the new terminology for this becomes) will win some policy arguments today. This involves no change except that the term has not been used very often in the past but should be used more in the future. It is important when someone is trying to block a child’s admission to Reading Recovery.

- And here’s a change of language you can start right here at this conference and “catch each other out.” Children are not discontinued. (Our critics are right about that!) A lesson series is discontinued because the child no longer needs that extra support.

Did you know that some very clever independent researchers studying Reading Recovery outcomes have actually believed that the **discontinued group** is the group of children we dropped because we were unable to teach them? That is why we have to watch our language and only talk about the series of lessons being discontinued as soon as the child no longer needs the support. Change your language to **discontinuing the lessons**. It will help our cause.

**The Need to Explain What’s Special About Instruction that is Individually Designed and Individually Delivered**

The moment-by-moment nature of your teaching is only possible in individually designed and individually delivered lessons. P. David Pearson talked about that. It is also being described from time to time in the literature, and it places what we do in sharp contrast to any small group or classroom instruction. It is starkly different and particularly effective when the child is hard to teach. As you read about literacy, attend to the arguments about one-to-one teaching allowing things to occur which can never occur in small groups. I will start you off on this search for what is powerful about the moment-by-moment nature of your teaching by reviewing aspects of the Reading Recovery lesson framework, our understanding of teaching for diversity, our theoretical base, and our training of Reading Recovery teachers.

**The Reading Recovery Lesson Framework**

The framework for lessons in Reading Recovery has been mistaken by critics for prescriptive teaching. Each required segment of the lesson is
a task with a scope for a teacher to create a learning opportunity for a particular individual, at a particular moment in time. Our learners are coming to complex learning from different directions. In every lesson a child

- reads familiar books,
- rereads yesterday's book,
- does a few minutes of work with magnetic letters by breaking up words and constructing words,
- composes and writes a story,
- reassembles that story as a puzzle from its parts,
- is introduced to a new reading book, and
- reads that book for the first time.

What occurs in each slot of the lesson is determined by what a specific learner needs at that time. The difficulty, or challenge, increases for each child until the activities are as advanced as those completed by most children in the learner's classroom. It would be possible to use this framework prescriptively, but the Reading Recovery teacher does not do that. She designs the task to provide scope for an individual learner to act.

The tasks in the Reading Recovery lessons provide scope for performance at easy to difficult levels. The tasks can be harder because the teacher shares any part of the task to support the learner's participation, and sometimes the teacher completes some part of the task. These can be analyzed for the aspects of literacy learning that they foster. Two examples illustrate this.

1. At the beginning of each lesson, children reread familiar texts that still present processing challenges to the learner. Comprehension of messages is best assessed on this material as fluent reading aids comprehension. Rereading familiar texts allows for greatly increased volume of reading, and that is hard to achieve for beginning readers who find the task difficult.

2. A second example occurs in the writing segment of the lesson for which children compose a short message. This is where the teacher shares the complex task so that the whole message gets written. Inevitably in writing, the child must construct words letter by letter, and work with phonemic awareness, orthographic awareness, known words, and new words. The teacher can allow the child to take risks and attempt new things with teacher support, working by analogy from what he already knows.

Each day, the teacher observes the learner completing tasks of increasing difficulty. She slows the child down momentarily, asking him to look and think again, and then she prompts him to fine-tune his decision-making. Her theory is that this learning is complex: at any one time, on any given day, the individual learner's challenge will be idiosyncratic. Therefore, her task is to elicit effective performance that could lead to vague awareness. Over time, the learner may become able to verbalize what he does because it is familiar.

Reading Recovery lessons are individually designed by teachers who have additional training over and above their classroom expertise. They have a wide range of alternatives for working with the limited response repertoires of the children. They can start at lower levels than the classroom teacher, pursue a difficulty longer, and carry the child to higher levels than the classroom teacher would think of doing. Individually designed lessons allow the child's learning to occur at a faster rate than that of his classmates, producing the necessary accelerated progress needed to catch up to the average cohort.

The teacher's daily records of the child's responses demonstrate the idiosyncratic paths to success and can be used by a school's Reading Recovery team to track the effectiveness of the lesson series so far. The records are also available for research analysis.

An additional aspect of individually designed, individually delivered lessons is that the teacher is teaching with diversity in mind. Reading Recovery teachers have an expectation for and an understanding of diversity.

**Teaching with Diversity in Mind**

People expect human variability and divergence from normality when it comes to such attributes as sporting prowess, high intelligence, or giftedness in art, music, or figure skating. We accept differences in personal attributes like looks, physique, reaction time, need for sleep, visual perception, auditory perception, sight, hearing, muscle power, and singing ability. In spite of these expectations, we still grossly underestimate how
different each child’s history of learning opportunities has been prior to Grade 1.

Education has typically responded to diverse learners by slowing down the pace of learning and simplifying the content, but diverse learners do have to learn complex things. In literacy learning, this means helping individuals in different ways to perform the complex activities so that they move up a steep gradient of difficulty being continually successful. And, one of the things we need to know is what successful learners learn to do as they move up a gradient of difficulty in texts. That will tell us what shifts diverse students need to make.

Reading Recovery teachers
• find each learner’s starting point,
• observe how children work on easy tasks when things go well,
• respond to children’s initiatives,
• interact with their thinking,
• observe how they work on novel things,
• applaud what is correct in a partially-correct response, and
• identify strengths as firm ground on which to build.

When you are teaching four, five, or six Reading Recovery children (you do not have to limit yourself to four), these adjustments would be realized differently for each pupil, and the emphases in tomorrow’s lesson will arise out of today’s observations of the child’s current literacy behaviors.

**Theoretical Underpinnings and Reading Recovery Teacher Training**
To teach effectively, Reading Recovery teachers draw upon five large bodies of theory:

1. theory about psychological competencies needed for effective performance (both language learning and perceptual learning which is learned from demonstrations and not through telling);
2. theory about the influence of social contexts on learning and the quality of teacher-learner interactions;
3. theory about processing or strategic activities;
4. theory about designing instruction for diverse learners; and
5. theory about implementing effective programs in education systems.

In addition to a solid theoretical background, Reading Recovery teachers need a vast repertoire of alternative teaching moves. What they do calls for more training than that required for quality classroom teaching. Faced with a puzzling pupil, teachers brainstorm possible ways to work with a child maintaining a peak level of flexibility, a byword of Reading Recovery instruction. Teachers need to be tentative in their judgments and must easily and quickly change the emphases of the instruction in response to interactions with learners. Gradually, the teacher will offer less help as the learner locates more of the information in print and takes on more of the processing and problem solving. The reader shifts from meaningful acts to cognitive awareness of how these things can work together, and most important, how to use new learning from this task in another context.

Outsiders (non-Reading Recovery persons) have observed the changes in the teachers’ responses to children across lesson components. One set of researchers documented changes in the nature of teachers’ scaffolding on the basis of text familiarity (Wong, Groth, and O’Flahavan, 1994). They noted that during the students’ rereading of familiar texts, teachers were less directive. In contrast, during the students’ reading of new texts, teachers increased their modeling and prompting, and they extended discussions of the story. More specifically, they modeled fluent reading, their prompts directed students to attend
to appropriate cues (visual, structural, meaning), and in discussions about the new books they confirmed that readers understood the story line and concepts.

In summary, Reading Recovery encourages networks of teachers, schools, teacher leaders, and trainers to critique and support each other’s problem solving. The search for solutions has no end. The problem solving supports the effectiveness of our individually designed, individually delivered lessons that are so powerful and necessary for Reading Recovery students.

The Need to Address Implementation Concerns

How you implement Reading Recovery is important for the success of children being taught. Reading Recovery in the U.S. has provided a magnificent example to the rest of the world in the management of huge, diverse, geographically dispersed communities working together. For example, it is implemented in huge schools with six or more Grade 1 classes. Every Reading Recovery teacher participates in testing children coming in and going out, and sending results to a central processing site.

Your education systems know, within a miraculously short time, how well their system has performed in the preceding year in time to make adjustments for even better results the next year. The United Kingdom’s site is following your model. The New Zealand site has a much slower turnaround but is processing data nationally. And, it is my hope that more countries will have this kind of annual monitoring with fast turn around in a few years.

I have come to two important conclusions after 40 years of work in this area.

1. About the children. I am very impressed with how diverse children in different countries are able to learn in Reading Recovery. The instructional support we designed appears to have the necessary flexibility (and tentativeness) to be adapted to new children anywhere we have tried it. In the future, new applications can and should be researched and developed.

2. About different systems. On the other hand, I expect that how different countries put the early intervention into their schools and their administrative culture must be allowed to vary. So as Reading Recovery is implemented in different countries or even in different states and provinces, implementation differences are to be expected.

In this discussion, I am going to pose three questions about implementations in the U.S. that I believe set limits to your success. I do not offer you any solutions. It is for me to outline the problem, but it is for your professionals to explore some possible answers. These questions focus on your summer break, incomplete programs, and comparisons of first- and second-round children.

How can educators accommodate for a long summer break?
The phenomenon of a long summer break occurs in one other country, Canada. How do breaks in instruction tend to affect learning? Preschool teachers realize that young learners may seem to know something today that can be gone completely in a few days. Even though their learning moves forward, past things are easily forgotten. Take preschoolers away from some second language context, for example, and they will lose that language in a matter of weeks.

When children begin to learn in school, most of them will have consolidated the introduction to reading and writing before the summer break occurs. But for some children the summer vacation is long enough to break the connections almost completely between kindergarten achievements and what they need to bring to their work in Grade 1.

In my original research sample, 75% of New Zealand children did not lose literacy achievements over a 6-week summer vacation but the lowest 25% did! I do not know how you could take out insurance against the loss of kindergarten gains, but different things have been tried. This is not a top priority, but I point to some inefficiencies here and find it a question to be pursued.

How can Reading Recovery teachers ensure complete series of lessons for all Reading Recovery students?

Ensuring that Reading Recovery children complete their series of lessons is a challenge across the world. Some teachers have tried a range of alternatives to avoid large numbers of incomplete lesson series, including:

• increasing the average number of lessons per week,
• using the whole school year,
Reading Recovery encourages networks of teachers, schools, teacher leaders, and trainers to critique and support each other’s problem solving.

- chasing up more absentees, more assiduously,
- moving children more expertly through the lowest book levels,
- being more confident about moving children through higher book levels by teaching better at higher levels, and
- having backup staff available for staffing emergencies.

In every other country, including Canada, those children who do not complete a lesson series before their first-grade year ends are carried over and complete their series of lessons in second grade. Therefore every child who starts Reading Recovery and stays available in the same school gets a full series of lessons, the expected 12 to 20 weeks. Discontinuing the lesson series in second grade complies with our valid and thorough criteria. We decide a child’s lesson series will be discontinued after we have analyzed all records of a particular child’s literacy behaviours during lessons, and we have independently described the child’s current profile on the Observation Survey tests (Clay, 2002). We expect that the child will be equally strong in reading and writing.

When Reading Recovery began in the U.S., we could not plan for carrying children over into the next year for a variety of reasons. Today, we find that in exceptional cases a small number of U.S. schools have done this successfully. More importantly, I refer you to our four other participating countries where Reading Recovery teachers carry over students routinely for a valid demonstration of this practice. I therefore wonder if this carryover practice could be instituted more broadly here.

As in the other countries, this will necessitate thinking through and planning for adjustments. Accommodations may need to be made in the training of new teachers assigned children who at the beginning of second grade are well into their programs. You will want to engage classroom teachers and administrators in appropriate planning, and you will want to consider the need to take children to higher levels to get to average second-grade work (but that problem is already dealt with in the four other countries). It also means revising data collection and reporting procedures, ultimately not insurmountable tasks.

The opportunity to provide all children complete series of lessons will affect your data positively. Currently, I find that you have too many children with incomplete programs. I do realize that we can get comfortable with a proportion of children with incomplete programs. I do realize that we can get comfortable with a proportion of children with incomplete series of lessons. The pie diagram becomes familiar and expected. However, when some education systems, with superb support and great administrators, reduce the incomplete series slice of the pie chart to a thin slither, we have to take notice! It is interesting to follow the progress of some sites where this is happening.

So as I look at the pie charts displaying your annual results, I am dissatisfied with the numbers that may be labeled “non-completers” (a term creeping into the reports of non-Reading Recovery people that I find disconcerting), and I want you to be dissatisfied, too. They are clouding the issue of how good you are and how successful your children are. Therefore, I challenge you to continue pursuing alternatives to ensure a complete series of lessons for all Reading Recovery children including the opportunity to carry over children with incomplete programs at the end of first grade to the second grade.

Why do U.S. Reading Recovery teachers discuss observed differences between their first- and second-round learners?

A third brainteaser often referred to in discussions is the way you talk so glibly about first-round and second-round children. Why is it only in the U.S. that Reading Recovery teachers talk about how different the teaching is for these two groups? You seem to be convinced that you teach differently in first round than you do in second round. Perhaps you shouldn’t. This issue calls for careful investigations addressing questions such as:

- What are the differences between these two intakes?
- What causes the differences?
- Why does this not surface as a challenge in other countries?

I would like to see several sound research analyses of these differences, and the interpretations should account for why we do not find teachers making this distinction in other countries.

Teaching
I am not talking here about a matter of right or wrong. I have some genuine questions that could be studied and analyzed. We—all Reading Recovery professionals—would be the richer for knowing why these differences occur. I rather suspect that we would learn more if we did a comparative study across two or more countries—Canada and the U.S., for example, or the U.K. and the U.S. We are brilliantly set up to do cross-country comparisons. Why not do them?

I will now shift from posing questions to answering questions! These relate to my suggestions for making links across speaking, writing, and reading.

Making the Links Across Speaking, Writing, and Reading

During my current visit to U.S. sites, I have been asked to discuss the talking, reading, and writing article I wrote for The Journal of Reading Recovery (Clay, 2004). In particular, I have been asked to trace the links to other things I have written. On the one hand, I am concerned that people will think that I am just republishing old ideas. But truthfully, there is nothing new for me in that article—it is a highway I have always traveled. If you see me as a reading person, then you may be asking, “When did she move into writing, and now is she bringing oral language into the discussion?”

I wish to respond as Spot would: No! No! No! I am a developmental psychologist; I study the child not the separate subjects of the curriculum. I have been deeply involved in all three aspects of language learning since the 1950s. In fact, my first scientific publication after my Ph.D. was a study of oral language learning in three different language groups (Clay, 1971). It was published as a monograph by the Society of Child Development and was considered a highly reputable, scientific work. I was very proud of it.

That study led to the Record of Oral Language assessment tool for teachers (see Clay, Gill, Glynn, McNaughton, & Salmon, 1983). Recently, I have been recommending that Reading Recovery teachers use that assessment to place their clients in three language groups— an advanced, an average, or a needs oral language enrichment group.

Knowing this detail about the individual child will help you to think about the match or mismatch of the child’s syntax with the complexity of the sentences in the books you are selecting for him to read.

My article was written for classroom teachers and Reading Recovery teachers. It is especially helpful to think more about the impact of the arbitrary rules of the written code on the young learner in early lessons. To think more about the impact of the arbitrary rules of the written code on the young learner in early lessons, you must observe carefully how the child deals with the following four demands:

1. The pesky squiggle code and the demands of learning 52 symbols, of distinguishing letters from non-letters, and of distinguishing words from non-words.
2. The demands of the open book and its confusing options: The child must master a particular directional approach to print, make decisions about which hand to use, which page to start on, where on the page to begin (the top or bottom of the page, the left or right side), and where to go next.
3. The demands of limiting eye-scan for attending to
print: This is a new task that differs from the familiar acts of visually scanning the world in any order and insists on attending with new precision.

4. The demands of order: Children have to learn what “first” and “last” mean in the context of the printed page, and applied variously to letters, or words, or lines, or messages. In particular, the order of letters in a word—left to right—matters.

But the biggest tease of all is that children come to these dilemmas by different paths, so teachers of beginning literacy must become astute observers of early diversity. Four children would probably start at different places on each of these imperatives! They will take different tracks through the forest! And their first teacher will need to know how to help them negotiate the forest no matter where they enter it. What we need is the opportunity for a child to have his particular confusions untangled by a noticing teacher before he gets too far down the track into that forest!

To Conclude: Why Was She Stirring the Waters?
What we have done together has been exciting. Turn any page of RRCNA’s journals and you will find new ideas to consider, new avenues to explore, new questions to ask. Many have helped to build your fantastic enterprise, and therefore as you meet retiring, or retired, Reading Recovery professionals compliment them for their work. But as you listen to the research, read the new reports, and marvel at how far we have come, remember my challenges of how much we have to learn!

I ask you, more importantly, to consider how you are going to clearly explain anything you hear at this convention to those out there who do not understand what you are trying to achieve.

Last month, a friend of many years introduced me to her friend as a person who has done—“What is it you do?” she asked. And then she answered her own question, beaming at me, “Remedial reading, that’s it, isn’t it?”

I could have replied, “Well, yes, that is what I did back in the 1950s, but we have a better answer to the problem now.” Realizing that, I suggest to you that we do not want to return to historic, traditional, and less effective solutions just because they are easier to deliver.

A Plea for Your Help to Keep This a Global Enterprise
Reading Recovery has developed good infrastructure for running its global affairs. Change may not be required! However, if change is necessary, Reading Recovery globally must be involved. We all have to understand how and why this is so. And the simplest way to capture our interdependence globally is to say that good news in one country is good news in another country, and today’s news travels fast.

We need your enthusiasm, your clarity, your vigilance, your advocacy, and your diplomacy. You need to be persistent, persistent, and sustained in your efforts. Early intervention and prevention need your attention.

We know you have the qualities it takes to do these things, and we sincerely hope you will direct your efforts every day towards great outcomes for the children we serve.

References


