As Reading Recovery teachers we are trained to observe the nuances and details of children’s learning. We note the personal connections they make between their lived experiences and novel literacy experiences. We attend to which letters children recognize, what words they can write, and their strategies for solving unknown words. We record their errors in connected text and surmise what these errors might reveal about each child’s approach to reading. We observe each child’s strengths and abilities so we can target instruction to help them and ultimately better serve students.

The concepts teacher leaders and trainers bring to instructional interactions with teachers are grounded in their past experiences both as learners and as teachers. As Lyons explains:

> It may not be easy for the coach to put aside his or her own views and listen for the teacher’s ideas about student/teacher interactions, but it is essential to establishing trust and rapport... conditions necessary for a collaborative relationship. Accepting the teacher’s point of view encourages the teacher to consider others’ point of view. The very act of asking for the teacher’s opinion establishes collaboration. (Lyons, 2002, pp. 109–110)

A teacher’s expressed understandings expose what a teacher values as evidence of a child’s ability or disability with reading. Lyons goes on to explain:

> The coach now has an opportunity to support, add to, clarify the teacher assessment and/or offer an alternative point of view, and an opportunity to use observation and analyses grounded in student performance to help the teacher design and implement a more powerful teaching technique. (Lyons, 2002, p. 110)

As Lyons and Pinnell (2001) remind us, when working with adult learners we must remember that adults bring with them vast amounts of prior knowledge and well-developed skills. They are goal-oriented and highly motivated to learn.

In this paper I will carefully examine the comments, questions, written reflections, and actions of three Reading Recovery teachers-in-training as they participated in a week-long assessment training in-service which commenced their year-long training as Reading Recovery teachers. During this training week the teachers-in-training were introduced to basic theoretical principles that support Reading Recovery, and the assessment materials and procedures that are used to identify children for Reading Recovery services. Specifically, teachers learn to administer, score, and interpret the Observation Survey (Clay, 1993a, 2002). While the teacher leader did not expect Reading Recovery teachers-in-training to have mastered the nuances of individualized assessment and interpretation, her goal was for teachers to correctly administer the assessments and begin to theorize what these assessments might reveal about each child as a reader.

First, I will introduce basic theoretical constructs relative to teacher learning that I will use to make sense of my observations. Then I will describe the data collected and the context in which the training occurred. I will present each of the three case studies...
and explore each teacher’s goals, learning process, and evolving mastery of the Observation Survey. Finally, I will present considerations relevant to teacher leaders and teacher leader trainers who strive to help experienced teachers become adept with Reading Recovery practices and philosophy.

A Theoretical Framework
Bruner (1996) writes about the folk pedagogies that teachers bring to classrooms. According to him, folk pedagogies reflect “deeply ingrained cultural beliefs” and “notions about the nature of the learner’s mind” (p. 46). These theories about children’s learning include the belief that children learn through simple imitation or through didactic presentation of facts. Bruner argues that cognitive psychologists and educators cannot dismiss folk pedagogies as quaint or harmless. He explains that “educational practices are premised on a set of folk beliefs about learners’ minds, some of which may have worked advertently toward or inadvertently against the child’s own welfare” (Bruner, 1996, p. 49–50). For example, teachers of reading who view reading as learning words or learning letters and sounds or view children as receptacles to be filled with isolated skills offer severely restricted understandings of reading. More complex understandings about children’s learning and the ways novel learning builds upon prior knowledge are necessary.

Goodlad (1990) explains that teachers’ own school experiences shape their later beliefs and practices. He explains that teachers adopt instructional models they have experienced and observed, and the stereotypes that teachers have constructed generally remain unchanged by either their own teaching experiences or formal teacher preparation experiences. Clay (1993b) warns Reading Recovery teacher leaders of the continuous challenge they face in confronting teachers’ previous assumptions about student learning and teachers’ tendencies to revert to familiar practices.

Clay and Cazden report “it is possible to interpret features of RR in Vygotskian terms” (Clay & Cazden, 1990, p. 206). Many Reading Recovery researchers (Askew & Fraiser, 1997; Clay & Cazden, 1990; DeFord, 1997; Gaffney & Anderson, 1991; Lyons, Pinnell, & DeFord, 1993) and researchers who have applied meaning-based constructs to classroom instruction (Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998; Rodgers & Rodgers, 2004) have used Vygotskian principles to explain instructional practices.

Reading Recovery professionals have adopted the term scaffolding (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) to describe the support Reading Recovery teachers provide to children. This support (i.e., verbal prompts, demonstrations of problematic concepts, and manageable texts) enables children to be successful on tasks that they could not manage independently. Scaffolding during Reading Recovery lessons has a positive effect on children’s reading abilities; as Clay and Cazden report, “we have seen many examples of the child functioning independently, in both reading and writing, where earlier collaboration between teacher and child was necessary” (Clay & Cazden, 1990, p. 219).

Gaffney and Anderson (1991) describe Reading Recovery training as entailing a second tier of scaffolding:

The second level depicts the support necessary to assist an
adult in supporting a child in a manner consistent with the method located on the first tier. In other words, this second level encompasses teacher education. (Gaffney & Anderson, 1991, p. 185)

Through examples of Reading Recovery teacher leaders scaffolding Reading Recovery teachers, Gaffney and Anderson (1991) demonstrate how this support involves supporting and stretching teachers’ hypotheses and insights. As the Reading Recovery teachers in their study demonstrated new understandings, teacher leaders posed questions that required higher levels of thinking and increased understandings of reading processes. These collaborative interactions limit the possibility of oversimplification on the part of teachers and increase teachers’ abilities to think flexibly in response to diverse teaching situations (Gaffney & Anderson, 1991).

While Vygotsky clearly refers to the learning processes of children, Gaffney and Anderson (1991) share my premise that similar processes occur as adults acquire new understandings which involve new ways of talking and thinking. In reference to children, Vygotsky explains,

An interpersonal process is transformed into an intrapersonal one. Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals. (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57)

Reading Recovery teachers-in-training find themselves in novel instructional situations. They are exposed to new instructional strategies and participate in new types of interactions with children and colleagues. They learn new terms and new ways of talking. Teachers-in-training meet weekly with their teacher leader to discuss new concepts and procedures; they collaboratively view and discuss teaching interactions behind-the-glass. They work with children and collegially reflect on these experiences. Teachers-in-training are not only learning new procedures; they are internalizing new “ways of talking, viewing, thinking, believing, interacting, acting, and sometimes writing and reading” (Gee, 1992, p. 104). Gee refers to these ways of being as discourses; teachers-in-training are in the process of acquiring the discourse of Reading Recovery. While initially their learning experiences are social, these social experiences translate into internalized ways of thinking and being. As Vygotsky (1978) maintains, interpersonal learning precedes intrapersonal changes.

The Observational Research Project
My first assignment as a Reading Recovery trainer-in-training was to observe a class of Reading Recovery teachers-in-training as they participated in assessment week training and were introduced to the Observation Survey. The Observation Survey is a set of systematic observations that can be used to identify the literacy concepts young children have mastered, are in the process of mastering, and have yet to master. This set of literacy tasks, detailed in An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement (Clay, 2002), is used to identify students for Reading Recovery services and to monitor children’s progress over time.

For many years I have been close friends with Paula, the teacher leader who taught the Reading Recovery classes I observed. Ten years ago I was a teacher-in-training during Paula’s first year as a Reading Recovery teacher leader.

This year’s Reading Recovery training class was sponsored by the local Board of Cooperative Educational Services and held in a business/apartment complex that houses the Reading Recovery training center and the behind-the-glass facilities. The 5-day training occurred in early August, and eight teachers-in-training from local districts attended. All of the teachers had some experience with one or more of the Observation Survey tasks, although most had learned these procedures in school districts that had put their own “spin” on the assessment procedures.

For this project I focused on three teachers: Ruth, Kate, and Sandy. Paula, the teacher leader, asked me to observe Ruth and Kate, two teachers who had less teaching experience than the others and also less training in instructional practices that align with Reading Recovery philosophy and practice. These practices feature attention to multiple sources of information used by readers, the use of authentic texts, a focus on meaning construction, and the reciprocity of reading and writing. Most recently one of these teachers had been homeschooling her daughter while the
other was working in a school providing academic intervention support (AIS) to children in kindergarten through Grade 4. These teachers had training in a variety of instructional topics including classroom management, differentiated instruction, inclusion classrooms, “special needs” children, and/or dyslexia. Sandy, the third teacher-in-training, was chosen because of her 14 years of primary classroom teaching and her extensive background in teaching strategies that align with Reading Recovery practices and philosophy. All the names of people in this article have been changed.

As an observer of the training class I made careful notes of each focus teacher’s participation in the training sessions. I collected copies of the surveys completed by each teacher-in-training on the first day of the assessment training and their final reflections on the experience. These simple surveys consisted of four open-ended questions related to the teachers’ prior teaching experiences, prior training, and personal and professional goals for becoming Reading Recovery teachers. Finally, I examined the Observation Survey each teacher-in-training administered during assessment week.

Paula, the teacher leader, had given careful thought to the activities and procedures that constituted assessment week. A range of activities were woven together over the course of the week. These included:

- a pre-survey to obtain the teachers’-in-training self-reported teaching and learning experiences and the goals they brought to Reading Recovery training,
- assigned readings and discussions that involved students referencing texts to support their comments and address their questions,
- explicit presentations of information and procedures,
- sharing of in-service presentations and materials that teachers present to staff in their schools,
- the assembly of the teacher-in-training assessment kits during the first 3 days of the training,
- a video presentation of a Reading Recovery trainer administering each section of the Observation Survey to a child and discussion of each section of the video,
- practice implementing each section of the Observation Survey with a teacher-in-training partner, and collaborative scoring of each section,
- administration of the Observation Survey with a prospective first-grade student from a local summer school program,
- guided scoring and analysis of the Observation Survey,
- guided completion of the Observation Survey summary sheet,
- reflection and feedback on the assessment training experience, and
- an assignment to be completed during the weeks that preceded the start of school: each teacher-in-training was required to learn something new and reflect on what made their own learning easy or difficult.

Via these activities, Paula led her teachers-in-training through a learning spiral that involved “assessing the context, providing the basics, demonstrating the process, establishing the rationales, engaging the learners, trying it out, establishing routines and procedures, coaching for shifts in behavior, and coaching for analysis and reflection” (Lyons & Pinnell, 2001, p. 12).

Throughout the assessment training, Paula responded to the comments and questions voiced by teachers-in-training in a variety of ways. At times she posed questions to the teachers-in-training, sometimes encouraging them to seek answers in the Observation Survey book (Clay, 2002). At other times she would rephrase a teacher’s comment to clarify or to model more specific language that the teachers-in-training would eventually be expected to use. Paula’s responses also involved connecting a student’s comment to a familiar practice, perhaps guided reading, or making an analogy to an everyday experience. Sometimes Paula would share a humorous anecdote or confide one of her more embarrassing moments to illustrate a point. On occasion she would simply offer advice. At other times she would provide a specific example to help the teachers-in-training conceptualize a particular concept or to raise an alternative possibility. When teachers, particularly Ruth and Kate, raised questions related to student affect during assessment—in particular the possibility of supporting children during Observation Survey tasks or being lenient in scoring these tasks—
Paula empathized with teachers’ concerns about the child’s welfare but stressed the importance of obtaining accurate data that would ultimately serve the child.

Participant’s Comments, Questions and Responses
During the 5-day assessment training I observed the class and noted the reactions and responses of the teachers-in-training. The comments, questions, and responses of the focus participants clustered into four categories. These categories are presented below from the highest to the lowest occurrence across the three cases discussed in this paper. Some of these comments were initiated by teachers; other comments were made in response to questions posed by the teacher leader.

Notation, procedures, and scoring: These comments were requests for clarification on notation, procedures, or scoring practices associated with administering the Observation Survey.

Child and/or teacher affect: These comments focused on either the child’s or the teacher’s feelings related to the administration of the Observation Survey and/or Reading Recovery.

“What if...” statements: Teachers-in-training described possible responses that children could have to various Observation Survey tasks and instructional situations. These comments required teachers to project what they were learning into conceivable teaching scenarios, thus moving from the theories and procedures of the Observation Survey toward issues related to application. While several of these “What if...” questions also referenced Reading Recovery procedures, I classified queries as such if teachers referenced situated learning situations and real or prototypical children.

Answer in the text statements: In these situations teachers found answers to questions either posed by the teacher leader or raised by their assessment training experiences in their text, *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Clay, 2002). At times, teachers sought this reference on their own; at other times, they were directed to this resource by the teacher leader.

Each teacher-in-training demonstrated these three behaviors to a different degree. Table 1 captures the percentage of each participant’s recorded responses that fell into each of the identified categories. These numbers, along with the descriptive passages that follow, will be used to make sense of the assessment training experiences of each of these teachers.

The Three Cases: Ruth, Kate, and Sandy
Ruth, Kate, and Sandy all arrived at the Reading Recovery assessment training class with different teaching experiences, different personal experiences with reading, and different goals. Each engaged in the training session differently and left with different insights about the children who were assessed. In the following section I will present each of the three cases, describe their teaching and personal literacy backgrounds, present their stated goals for Reading Recovery training, present my observations of their learning processes, and discuss the insights they gained from the week of training.

Ruth: Helping Readers
Develop Confidence
Ruth came to Reading Recovery training and her current district position after home schooling her daughter for 6 years. Prior to that she taught a primary learning disabilities class for 2 years, worked in an extended day kindergarten, and substitute taught. Although she has not recently taken any college classes she has participated in a range of staff development in-services including

| Table 1. Focus Participants’ Categories of Comments, Questions, and Responses |
|---------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Notation/Procedures/Scoring     | Ruth   | Kate   | Sandy  |
|                                 | 36%    | 52%    | 53%    |
| Child/Teacher Affect           | 27%    | 44%    | 0      |
| “What if...”                   | 18%    | 4%     | 26%    |
| Answer In the Text             | 18%    | 0      | 21%    |
| Total Number of Comments, Questions, and Responses | 11    | 23    | 19    |
Ruth described teaching children to read as achieving a “fine balance” between helping the child move ahead and frustrating the child. Her concern with not pushing children to achieve may reflect her personal experiences with learning to read.

“Elements of Instruction,” “Classroom Management,” “Differentiated Instruction” and “Inclusion.” Although she stated she has not taken any workshops “specific to reading instruction,” she mentioned attending sessions on balanced literacy, the “Primary Literacy Assessment,” phonemic awareness, and guided reading. She had used the Observation Survey with children when she taught in the primary learning disabilities class.

Ruth learned to read in a parochial school in a class of 48 students. She does not remember learning phonics but does remember that she struggled with reading. She suspects she was one of the “20% who were not quite ready developmentally” when she entered school and believes she could have benefited from “more practice and a slower pace.” According to Ruth, her daughter also struggles with reading and this experience has left her daughter feeling “not smart and not capable.” Ruth reports that her daughter is slowly gaining confidence.

Ruth had two personal goals for Reading Recovery training. She wanted to be able to assess children who are having difficulty in order to “provide instruction and practice” that will encourage the child and help the child to become “more confident which will foster more learning.” She also wanted to learn more about writing with young children: how to get them started, how to help them “look at” what they have written, and how to show them strategies that build upon the skills they already have. Perhaps because of her own challenge with learning to read and the challenges faced by her daughter, the themes of helping children to feel confident as readers and writers recurred throughout her writing and class comments.

Of the three teachers I observed, Ruth appeared to be the most thoughtful and contemplative. She often observed and listened closely to her classmates. Sometimes she would look back through notes or search her Observation Survey book for answers to questions that were raised by the teacher leader or by the experience. Her class comments and my observations of her interactions with children often reflected her concern with helping children to develop confidence. Her interactions are filled with supportive comments, including “Good try” and “Oh, wonderful job!” Ruth’s interest in children and their affective response to reading instruction and the assessment experience are reflected in a comment made during the final training session when she referenced a section of the Observation Survey book in which Clay discusses the importance of having children practice the appropriate skills and procedures without being rushed to learn literacy. Ruth described teaching children to read as achieving a “fine balance” between helping the child move ahead and frustrating the child.

Ruth’s concern with not pushing children to achieve may reflect her personal experiences with learning to read and those of her daughter. Although Ruth made fewer comments than Kate concerning children’s affective responses to the testing situation, the intensity of the comments she made in class and in her writing clearly indicate the child’s sense of success was a major consideration for Ruth.

As was true for all three focus teachers, many of Ruth’s comments and questions focused on testing procedures and the correct notation for recording children’s reading and writing behaviors. Only one of her comments referenced a hypothetical “what if...” assessment situation. Ruth asked whether a child is using meaning and syntax if he merely switches the adjective in a sentence (i.e., purple is changed to blue). This query also reflects her interest in mastering procedures, notation, and analysis of the sources of information children use as they read.

After the teachers-in-training had an opportunity to administer the Observation Survey to students, the teacher leader had each student reflect in writing on the Observation Survey and what they had learned during the assessment week. Ruth commented on each of the tasks by comparing what she had learned during the training week to her prior experiences with the Observation Survey; she noted the differences between the observation tasks as they are implemented in her school (by non-Reading Recovery teachers) and her current training.

Throughout her reflections, Ruth continued to be sensitive to children’s affective responses to the testing
situation. In describing a student’s response to reading *Stones* (Clay, 1979), Ruth wrote, “She smiled when completing the task. I am glad that she enjoyed the experience. She was not in the least frustrated by it. I will be observing others during this task to see their reactions.” In reference to the Hearing Sounds in Words task, Ruth reported, “This was difficult for my student but she willingly tried.” In her reflection on the running record portion of the survey, Ruth wrote “Being in this position [that] I am in, gives me a unique perspective on how children feel when learning new material.” Affect and the child’s feelings were central to Ruth’s observations and experiences and may reflect her and her daughter’s struggles with learning to read. Ruth’s sensitivity to children and their affective response to instruction and assessment is a strength that Ruth will bring to her Reading Recovery students.

Ruth is beginning to recognize and make sense of the many subtleties the Observation Survey reveals about a child’s reading processes. She is starting to gain more awareness of the information revealed by each subtest. Her experiences in training have allowed her to consider further: (a) distinctions between letter confusions and unknown letters and the importance of noting a child’s partially known (e.g., the value of knowing a correct sound for a letter /m/ even if the letter name *m* is unknown); (b) insights gained from examining all attempts for additional indications of the learner’s strengths. For example, incorrect responses may give evidence of the learner’s awareness of visual information, especially if observed over the range of subtests (e.g., *cat* read for *can* on the Word Test and miscues in text reading revealing attention to the initial letter of the word); (c) understandings of the text and/or reading conditions that allow a child to demonstrate awareness and control of early behaviors. When her student attempted to finger-point on C.A.P, Ruth found that as she slowed her reading with pauses between words, the child was able to control one-to-one matching. Gaining awareness of how to analyze and interpret a learner’s performance on the Observation Survey begins during the assessment training. Ruth’s powers of observation and interpretation will continue to strengthen as she continues to assess students and apply her new learning.

**Kate: Mastering Procedures and Notation**

Kate has been providing AIS services to children in kindergarten through fourth grade for the past 6 years. Her district has drawn heavily upon *Strategies that Work* by Harvey and Goudvis (2000). Kate attended a workshop last summer focused on the ideas in this book along with a general introduction to balanced literacy. This past summer her district provided guided reading workshops along with a review of balanced literacy.

Prior to these experiences, Kate had participated in several in-service trainings that focused on children with special needs. She was trained on the Wilson Program (O’Connor & Wilson, 1995) and took a course offered by the local Masonic Lodge on dyslexia. Kate completed her master’s degree in 1981; she began a doctorate in 1987 but did not complete it.

Kate’s family moved six times between her kindergarten and 12th-grade years. She describes learning to read as very painful, explaining the “words [and] sounds were hard to make sense of.” While visiting her grandmother during the summer between seventh and eighth grade, Kate began to read the books that her mother had read as a child. She explains, “For the first time I saw the images the words painted” and she wishes her teachers had taught her to visualize as she read and the “steps” for comprehension. She reports having close friends who are “slow readers” and family members who only “read from necessity.”

Kate hoped that Reading Recovery training would enable her to help children be successful readers despite “all the distractions” that characterize classrooms. Her ultimate goal is to prepare children to become lifelong readers.
like most of her questions during the 5-day training, this question also referenced scoring and procedures. Her concern with procedures appears to be associated with her desire to teach reading correctly, unlike her own teacher who she reports failed to provide her with the reading strategies she needed.

Kate made the point that children often make reading errors that reflect their home language. She explained the importance of telling them the way they talk at home is “OK” but that when reading they should use “book language.” A couple of times during the training Kate questioned the concepts being discussed. Following the teacher leader’s extensive discussion about children’s uses of various sources of information (meaning, syntax or visual information), Kate and her partner discussed the following substitutions made by a student:

me too can I

So

Kate asked her partner, Darlene, “Why did he do this?” Darlene pointed out that earlier in the text the student had read the same words correctly. Kate asked, “Was he inventing?” Together, they agreed the pictures might have suggested there were two people talking to each other. Darlene suggested the child was using meaning and syntax to read the page. The conversation continued:

Kate: But not syntax. This is the hardest part for me.

Darlene: And there’s gray areas, too.

Kate: But it’s not visual.

Darlene: Not at all.

Kate: I think it’s just his initial response.

Kate and Darlene are engaged in collaborative problem solving, hypothesis building and risk taking. Kate opens this interaction with a genuine question, “Why is he doing this?” and together Kate and Darlene explore possibilities. During the first week of Reading Recovery training teachers are not expected to have mastered the nuances of running record analysis, yet Kate and Darlene are already working to make sense of this child’s reading attempt. Unlike Ruth and Sandy, Kate did not refer to the Observation Survey book during class.

When Kate was invited to reflect on the Observation Survey and the training experience, she reported, “The first five tasks of the Observational Survey are fairly straightforward. They are given at a comfortable pace. Task number six, the running record is my big challenge.” As Clay reports, “learning to take a running record can unsettle teachers” (Clay, 1993a, p. 24). Kate is concerned because the system she learned in graduate school still dominates the way she marks errors even though she has “sat through several workshops on how to mark errors.” She is concerned about increasing her speed and accuracy and about “correctly analyzing why errors are made.” It appears that concerns about correct procedures and notation dominated her assessment week experience; this may be in part due to the emphasis that is placed on learning the standardized assessment procedures during assessment training.

Like Ruth’s, many of Kate’s comments often focused on the child’s and/or the teacher’s affective response to instruction and assessment. This may reflect Kate’s initial frustration with learning to read. For example, when watching a video of a Reading Recovery trainer administering the Observation Survey, Kate noticed that although the child seemed very concerned about her writing, the Reading Recovery trainer provided “good reinforcement” often making comments to the child such as “Aren’t you smart?”

These comments were echoed in her own interactions when Kate administered the Observation Survey to a student in a local summer school program. While administering the Observation Survey, Kate praised her student and provided positive feedback. Comments such as “Nice job!” and “OK! Thank you!” peppered her interaction. When the child went to write his word list she invited him to choose his favorite colored marker.

Like Ruth, Kate is beginning to attend to the nuances of information that the Observation Survey provides. While she noticed her student was unable to spell on during the Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words task but had been able to write on during the Writing Vocabulary task, she failed to notice what had supported her student with the word on during the earlier task. During the Writing Vocabulary task, the student had written on immediately after writing no; and he had commented aloud, “You switch it around.” It appeared this student only knew on in relation to no. Earlier, on the Writing Vocabulary task, the child attempted to write the word dad but reversed both the ds to write bab. Shortly after
this Kate prompted the student to write *dog*.

**Kate:** How about *dog*?

**Child:** [Child spells to himself] *D - A - D* [As he went to write the *d* he asked] This way or that way? The same as *dad*?

**Kate:** *Dad or dog.* [Apparently Kate assumed the child was asking about the letter *d.*]

**Child:** *Dad or dog.* [The child then wrote *dAd for dog.*]

This error raises some very interesting questions about the child's evolving theory that perhaps different words can be spelled the same way as well as clear evidence of a *b/d* confusion. None of this was highlighted in Kate’s Observation Survey summary. As the notation and the procedures for administering the Observation Survey become more routine, I suspect she will better attend to the nuances of children’s reading and writing and become more adept at using this information to construct learning experiences that will support young readers.

**Sandy: Honing Her Skills**

Sandy has been a first- and second-grade teacher for the past 14 years. She has “looped” with her classes three times and has taught five inclusion classes. She completed her master’s degree in 1993. Since then she has participated in a range of literacy in-services about the writing process, guided reading, and literature study. These appear to have given her a definition of literacy that is consonant with Reading Recovery philosophy and practices. Sandy learned to read in kindergarten and does not remember learning to read being a “big deal.” She loved reading the basal reader in first grade and happily completed the accompanying worksheet pages. In second grade, she remembers trade books that students could take home. Sandy reports that reading “was never hard for me and in elementary school [I] enjoyed it” however, “by high school, [I] lost interest.” Sandy explains her daughter experienced difficulties with reading at the end of first grade. She reports it was “very heartbreaking for her as well as me.” Medication for ADHD and vision therapy for a visual tracking difficulty seem to be helping, and Sandy reports her daughter is returning to school in September feeling “confident and successful.”

Sandy hopes that Reading Recovery training will help her “hone her skills.” She wants to be “more observant and proactive in prompting kids before they have the opportunity to repeatedly practice poor habits.” Her goal is to help children feel “independent and in control of their learning” and to know how and when to push children to the next level. Sandy explains, “I know there is more to know than what I know—so I want to gain that information!”

Sandy’s goals are specifically focused on her own abilities as a teacher and how this Reading Recovery experience will enhance those skills.

Throughout Reading Recovery assessment training, Sandy was always active. She was making notes, consulting her Observation Survey book, and making clarifying comments to her partner. She referred to the Observation Survey book both when invited to search the text by the teacher leader and when questions arose during the sessions. She raised several “What if . . .” questions over the course of the 5 days:

**Sandy:** If the child calls the *g* a *p* is the *p* really secure?

**Sandy:** If the child says *zero* for the letter *o* is that a confusion, or unknown because *zero* is not a letter?

**Sandy:** Is it OK to repeat the question if a child did not hear or attend to what you said?

**Sandy:** So the child can actually have more errors than there are words on the page.

While many of these relate to scoring, procedures and/or notation, Sandy’s questions demonstrate she is actively thinking about children’s possible responses. Her questions explore the limits of children’s responses and raise anomalies that question and clarify established protocols and procedures.

Sandy was also the one who made a specific personal connection to the material presented. She connected her own daughter’s visual tracking difficulties to the young readers that Reading Recovery teachers encounter. Finally, Sandy and her partner worked together to discretely identify a procedure for determining students’ self-correction rate, when the procedure presented by the teacher leader proved cumbersome and confusing.

Sandy’s reflections on her training week experience took the form of a bulleted list covering a page and a half of her journal. Like Ruth and Kate, Sandy reflected on her prior experiences with assessment and how the assessment procedures used in her district compared to the Observation Survey. She reported that her district uses a Bowdlerized version of the Observation Survey which includes: a word list of 100 words, the Concepts
About Print assessment and a running record. The majority of her reflections include insights she gained through the training experience. She listed

• how important specific language is for validity and reliability,
• helped solidify educational/reading terms,
• specifics of subtests—refer to Observation Survey when unsure,
• I am just filled with excitement to learn this new job, and
• look forward to being a better analyzer of data from [the] Observation Survey.

When Sandy administered the Observation Survey to a student, she was very successful in responding to the child yet kept the assessment moving. When the child attempted to write words that Sandy had not prompted her to write on the Writing Vocabulary task, Sandy supported the child's attempts. When the child asked to draw a picture during the Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words task, Sandy suggested she could do that after the assessments were complete. Clearly, Sandy is not indifferent to children's affect and feelings; however, unlike Ruth and Kate, Sandy's class comments and her written reflections did not center on affect. She is focused on the child's literacy learning.

Sandy recorded numerous comments on each page notating insights and patterns across the child's responses. On the Word Test she noted the student had difficulty with words that began with *th*, read all words that started with a *w* as *white*, and consistently attempted to use beginning letters to read words. On the Concepts About Print assessment, the right column of the paper was filled with comments.

The student's Writing Vocabulary sheet and the Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words page were filled with comments that illuminated the child's attempts; she described the child's letter formation, responses to prompting, use of punctuation, an attempt to copy environmental print, letter sequences, and use of space, a hesitancy to write beyond the first letter of words, the child's comments about the markers, and connections the child made between the words she was attempting to write and a familiar story. Although Sandy noticed patterns on each assessment, she was not as adept at seeing patterns across assessments. Several insights into children's processing across assessments that were not evident yet to Sandy were

• the student's consistent attempt to write the *ing* ending on words,
• the student's consistent spelling of *me* as *mo*,
• the student's awkward attempts at forming the letter *k* which was produced like the letter *h* with a downward slash at the top,
• the student's automatic and correct response when asked to locate *no* during the Concepts About Print task but her writing of *on* during the Writing Vocabulary assessment, and
• her use of *s* and sometimes *mp* as space fillers when confronted with spelling difficult words.

Thus, Sandy is becoming adept at making many insights based on a child's responses to each survey task, but is less adept at making connections across subtests.

Like the teachers described by Linda Wold (2002), Sandy demonstrated the qualities of a reflective practitioner who was willing to explore children's understandings of reading and writing by asking questions, conferring with colleagues and searching professional texts. She believes she will learn through her participation in Reading Recovery training and that this learning will inform her work with students.

Learning From Teachers' Comments, Questions and Responses

The three case studies presented in this paper present intriguing and informative insights about teacher learning. Ruth, Kate, and Sandy all bring different strengths and experiences to Reading Recovery training. They all expressed legitimate goals and have particular interests in becoming Reading Recovery teachers. All three participants regularly raised issues related to notation, procedures, and scoring. Ruth and Kate were particularly concerned about children's affective responses to assessment and learning situations. Ruth and Kate are highly sensitive to the need to attend to children's feelings and responses while implementing Reading Recovery procedures and practices; they strive to be sensitive to the child's feelings while following defined administration guidelines. Sandy did not voice these concerns. Although her interactions with the child she assessed clearly suggest she has a high degree of sensitivity to children and their...
feelings, Sandy is focused on observing children for clues that can inform her instruction. She is focused on the child’s learning process, taking copious notes, searching through the Observation Survey book to answer questions, and asking numerous “What if. . .” questions.

Sandy appears to be well on her way to mastering the language of Reading Recovery. She worries about children having opportunities “to repeatedly practice poor habits” and strives to develop students who are “independent and in control of their learning.” Sandy applauds the use of “specific language” with students. She questions whether letters are “really secure” and seeks to be a “better analyzer of data.” Sandy’s ways of talking clearly align with the discourse of Reading Recovery.

Quality literacy instruction is not simply and clearly defined by experts who have studied the reading and writing processes and have identified clear and specific practices that are generally accepted and will lead to literacy gains for all children. Literacy instruction is a highly contested field that resounds with powerful voices. The interests of publishers, politicians, and popular wisdom all descend upon literacy educators. In recent years the National Reading Panel Report (National Reading Panel, 2000) and No Child Left Behind legislation have entered the conversation about reading instruction armed with political authority and colossal capabilities to publicize and legitimize their position. Thus Sandy’s learning is not only a process of internalizing concepts consonant with a particular philosophy about reading instruction; Sandy’s learning requires a thoughtful and deliberate dismissal of competing voices, promises, and positions. As Bakhtin explains, the word is not neutral; “it exists in other people’s mouths, in other people’s contexts, serving other people’s intentions” (Bakhtin, in Morris, 1994, p. 78). Assuming the words of another means rejecting the words of yet another.

Gee defines discourses as involving particular “ways of talking, viewing, thinking, believing, interacting, acting, and sometimes writing and reading” (Gee, 1992, p. 104). Sandy is in the process of internalizing the discourse of Reading Recovery. We can hear this in her way of talking and read this in her way of writing. In learning the words of Reading Recovery from people who share the philosophies that support Reading Recovery, Sandy is beginning to internalize Reading Recovery ways of thinking in much the same way Vygotsky describes the transformation of interpersonal processes into intrapersonal processes for children (Vygotsky, 1978).

This understanding about secret lives of words is also relevant when we
Consider the perspectives that Ruth and Kate bring to Reading Recovery training. Their concern for the affective experiences of children and the dangers of moving children into academic tasks too quickly is a discourse that has a long history in education. In the 18th century, Jean Jacques Rousseau maintained that young children must be protected from unfavorable influences and allowed to develop naturally in accordance with nature. In the following century, Friedrich Froebel compared children to plants which need only a favorable environment to grow and develop.

Every day in school we hear adages that espouse “building children’s self-esteem,” “teaching the whole child” and “putting children first.” In the popular media the ideal teacher of young children is portrayed as nurturing and maternal. Our discourses of “developmentally appropriate instruction” privilege a child’s emotional well-being over any threat to a child’s self-confidence. While certainly this is a discourse educators would not want to abandon, Vygotskian perspectives suggest there is a zone of proximal development in which teachers and students interact around tasks that stretch the child’s competence without leading to frustration. I suspect the protective stance expressed by Ruth and Kate toward children is a result of the tensions between these two discourses.

Reading Recovery training requires teachers to challenge many discourses about reading instruction. Discourses that are grounded in phonics first, sounding out words, reading readiness, and storybook reading as the primary means to reading success will all be challenged by Reading Recovery philosophy and practices.

Even the teachers’ attention to notation, procedures, and scoring reflects their confrontation with particular ways of being, talking, and valuing (Gee, 1990) that are required by an organization confronted with social, economic, and political pressure to maintain and assure a high level of consistency and reliability. Reading Recovery is constantly threatened by theoretical and practical dissolution, and attention to policy and procedure has been a safeguard against the dilution and diffusion of the intervention.

Conclusions
Throughout the assessment training week teachers-in-training were provided with social experiences that began to apprentice them into the discourse of Reading Recovery. As Sandy’s case illustrates, these initially interpersonal experiences will eventually become intrapersonal (Vygotsky, 1978) as teachers-in-training take on new ways of thinking about literacy learning and new ways of being literacy teachers and assume the discourse of Reading Recovery.

Thus, becoming a Reading Recovery teacher involves more than learning a set of procedures and practices; it involves becoming a member of a discourse community that shares a common set of beliefs and practices. However, we cannot lose sight of the fact that Ruth, Kate, and Sandy came to Reading Recovery with very different understandings of how children bring to Reading Recovery lessons; I suggest these insights apply equally well to Reading Recovery teachers. I have used brackets to indicate where I have changed Clay’s words to capture the learning processes of teachers:

The [teacher] works on [her] own theories of how things work in language learning and changes those theories in the face of conflicting evidence. What I like about observation is that I can watch the [teacher] at work, see something of the focus of [her] attention, watch [her] search for clues and for confirmation. I can watch her solve a problem, sometimes showing [her] delight in a new discovery. (Adapted from Clay, 1993a, p. 2)

May we delight in our own discoveries.
References


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