Development of Leveled Text Reading Passages in the U.S.

The first pilot study to implement Reading Recovery in the United States was conducted in six Columbus, Ohio public schools in the 1984–1985 academic year. The Ohio State University and the Ohio Department of Education worked together to support this first pilot study. The founder of Reading Recovery, Marie M. Clay and a trainer from New Zealand, Barbara Watson, came to Ohio State to provide the training and to help conduct the research of the pilot study.

In New Zealand, leveled reading materials used in classroom instruction were established as benchmarks of progress in text reading.

The first text passages used in the USA were selected passages from the basal series that was then used in the Columbus Public Schools classrooms: Ginn Reading Program published by Ginn and Company, copyright 1982. Under the guidance of Clay and Watson, narrative story passages of appropriate lengths and story structure episodes were selected. The Ginn publishing company also provided the readability ratings they had used in designing their basal series.

As Reading Recovery was implemented in other school districts and data were collected on student progress in reading, it became necessary to develop standard passages for text

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reading that were independent of classroom instructional materials and were easily available. In 1986 the first attempt to compile a set of independent passages was completed. The majority of the passages in the set were selected and leveled from the paper books published by Scott, Foresman and Company, copyright 1979, 1971. In subsequent years extensive field testing and analyses were completed to establish the reliability of the increments of difficulty for the Scott, Foresman passages.

A trade book, Where’s Spot, by Eric Hill, published by G.P. Putnam’s Sons, copyright 1980, was used for observation of student responses to print below Level 1 in text reading; passages from Level 26 through Level 30 and above continued to be selections from basal series.

The long-term development of the leveled text passages and the standard book introductions for each passage were completed in 1990. These leveled passages continue to serve as a standard way to report text reading progress for data collection and for analyzing progress in reading at many levels: student, classroom, school, district, site, state, and nation.

Beginning in 2005, new United States norms will be used for all tasks of An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement (Clay, 2002). Along with the national stanine groups there are minor refinements in the administration of the text reading passages. The changes will most impact the selection of students for entry into Reading Recovery at the beginning of the school year who are reading below Level 1 on the Leveled Text Reading Passages. Included in this document are the standard procedures and book introductions for administering the Leveled Text Reading Passages.

It is important to note that leveled text reading is not a test. Text reading is one part of the set of literacy tasks included in An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement, (Clay, 2002). The intent is not to test the child but to observe children in a systematic way as they respond to the literacy tasks. The Leveled Text Reading Passages provide a standard way to report data on each student’s progress in reading passages along a gradient of difficulty. The information teachers obtain by administering the Leveled Text Reading Passages helps them analyze a child’s processing and responses to print. The teachers’ observations and analyses help them determine instructional needs and how to foster accelerated progress in reading.

References

About the Cover
Kelvin Do continues to progress in reading and writing on grade level as he enters the third grade at Meadowcreek Elementary School in Gwinnett County, Georgia. Kelvin began his Reading Recovery lessons at Level 0. His lessons were discontinued at week 15, and he was reading at Level 16 at the end of first grade. Jin Yun, his second-grade classroom teacher, says Kelvin learned how much fun writing can be when he composed his first rhyming poem. The teacher wrote the poem on chart paper for the entire class to enjoy for reading together. Kelvin loves silly stories and sharing them with his friends, and he is working on composing more poems to make a book.