Learning Communities and Leadership: What Teachers Say About Shared Classroom Implementations

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Educational systems differ and at any one time they are changing in different ways depending on their social and educational histories. — Clay, 2000, p. 1

Conversations with school leaders suggest a sincere desire to implement Reading Recovery in their schools. In these conversations, school leaders also express challenges to expand the impact of Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura, due to reductions in personnel and funding resources. These conversations led us to revisit one of the implementation models noted in A Principal’s Guide to Reading Recovery (RRCNA, 2012) — the implementation of the shared classroom model and the valuable role this may play in teacher professional learning. We set out to gather information to learn more about the intricacies of implementing a shared classroom model. Reminded by Clay’s words, “Problem solving the intervention into different education settings is one essential feature of Reading Recovery,” (Clay, 2000, p. 129), the question then becomes: What do school leaders need to consider when implementing a shared classroom model?

The shared classroom model was the preferred model for Reading Recovery teachers in the early years of Reading Recovery in New Zealand (Clay, 1994). From an historical perspective, the decision to implement Reading Recovery utilizing a shared classroom model goes back to the initial study of the intervention.

In New Zealand, the first teachers (in the field trial) were released for full-time Reading Recovery work and they reported that they felt the loss of their classes and the reinforcement received from successful pupils in the classes. The second effect was that the teacher’s colleagues thought that they had been given a soft option, having to teach only one child at a time: teachers were sometimes treated with less respect than they deserved. Since the field trial year most New Zealand teachers have retained their classroom contact and have worked only part-time at Reading Recovery and these problems have not arisen in subsequent years. (Clay, 1994, p. 129)

The loss of access to literacy learning in the classroom and perceptions of isolation from colleagues noted in the initial field trial of Reading Recovery led teachers to employ a shared classroom model.

Over the years, implementation of Reading Recovery in New Zealand moved away from the shared classroom model. This change, however, again resulted in reports of isolation for Reading Recovery professionals as noted in a review of Reading Recovery conducted in 2005 by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

The decreasing number of Reading Recovery teachers with classroom responsibilities may have contributed to changing perceptions of the purpose and nature of Reading Recovery, as something that exists in isolation from classroom practice and from the wider life of the school. (McDowall, 2009, p. 155)

Considering both the historical and more recent accounts of Reading Recovery, shared classroom implementations in New Zealand suggest inclusive support for students, stronger collaboration among teachers, and schoolwide coherence. Clay reminded us that Reading Recovery is a systems intervention and that survival depended on being “cohesive both internally (in terms of theory, training, program design, evaluation) with the host system (i.e., it must be workable, contributing, cost-effective, and a winner with the stakeholders)” (Clay, 1994, p. 130).

Transitioning to the U.S. context, we wanted to learn more about practices that support the “cohesiveness” of the shared classroom model. Shared classroom implementations of Read-
ing Recovery over the last 5 years averaged 9% for Reading Recovery and 24% for Descubriendo la Lectura according to the International Data Evaluation Center (IDEC).

Our own review of the literature regarding the implementation of shared classrooms resulted in very few findings. In a 2004 issue of The Journal of Reading Recovery, Dunn and Wooldridge—two teachers who shared a classroom—described the critical aspects of careful planning, communication, recordkeeping and sharing curricular duties that contributed to their successful experience. They highlighted the positive outcomes of their own professional learning and those of their children in their 6 years of experience in a shared classroom model. The authors emphasized the importance of strong administrative support.

“We recognize that our administration deserves much of the credit for the success of this model” (Dunn & Wooldridge, 2004, p. 29).

By taking time frequently to visit with the teachers, brainstorm, problem solve and encourage their efforts, the principal helped to sustain this implementation.

In a more recent report of effective response to intervention (RTI) implementations (Lose & Best, 2011), shared classrooms were noted as possible models. In one school setting, the first-grade team works together to free up time for one Reading Recovery-trained teacher serving as one of the first-grade classroom teachers to provide Reading Recovery for the children most in need, while the other first-grade teachers absorb an additional four to five students into their classrooms for other content blocks. In another setting, two of three teachers trained in Reading Recovery share classroom teaching responsibilities and the third provides small-group literacy instruction in addition to Reading Recovery.

Still seeking more information about the shared classroom model, we decided to interview a teacher leader within our university training center (UTC) who facilitated Reading Recovery in a district where shared classroom was the initial and predominant implementation model.

We also decided to survey teachers within our UTC who actively work in shared classroom implementations. A request for participation in the survey was distributed through teacher leaders to teachers across the network. Survey Monkey was used to collect responses to six open-ended questions regarding specific experiences with Reading Recovery and/or Descubriendo la Lectura in a shared classroom implementation (see questions at end of article). Fifty-two teachers responded to the survey.

Table 1 shows the number of years teaching using a shared classroom model; approximately half of the teachers for 3 years or less and half for 4 or more years.

The interview and the survey responses provided us with valuable insights into actual shared classroom implementations in our context.

Returning to Clay’s statement about internal and external cohesiveness, we revisited the question: What do school leaders need to know when implementing the shared classroom model? Two elements appeared consistently from all respondents. First was the value of professional learning that they shared as part of their participation in Reading Recovery. Second was the importance of shared and supportive leadership.

Interestingly, these responses reminded us of the Standards for Professional Learning outlined by Learning Forward (www.learningforward.org), the national professional development organization. Specifically, the Standards for Professional Learning state that learning communities and leadership are essential components of high-quality professional learning in schools that excel (Learning Forward, 2011; Lieberman & Miller, 2011; Wahlstrom & York-Barr, 2011). Responses also aligned with the four basic principles of professional learning found in a study of teacher development in the United States and abroad conducted by Linda Darling-Hammond and colleagues (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). The four broad areas include the importance of professional develop-

Table 1. Years Teaching Using a Shared Classroom Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Years</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
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<tr>
<td>1–3</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>4–6</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>7–9</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>10–14</td>
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1 Averages were determined using the Reading Recovery Statistical Abstract for the U.S. and the Descubriendo la Lectura Statistical Abstract for the U.S. for the years 2007–2008 through 2011–2012, Table S7b Teachers’ Other Roles. Teachers classified as classroom teacher or bilingual classroom teacher were considered shared classroom teachers for these computations, and percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number.
Implementation

Development that is intensive, ongoing and connected to practice; focused on student learning of a specific content with hands-on work; provided within a comprehensive school reform effort; and in a context of collaboration and shared decision making. For our discussion, we will focus on two major areas — learning communities and leadership.

Learning Communities
Teachers in the survey reported the overwhelming benefits of professional learning communities afforded by the shared knowledge of Reading Recovery theory and practice and the opportunities to extend these understandings into classroom teaching when supporting other children who struggle. Learning communities are “ongoing groups… who meet regularly for the purposes of increasing their own learning and that of their students” (Lieberman & Miller, 2008, p. 2). In the survey data, teachers reported participation in three different types of learning communities beyond their Reading Recovery community — grade-level teams, teacher partnerships, and classroom learning communities.

Grade-level teams
The teacher leader emphasized that one of the biggest benefits from the shared classroom model in her district was that the Reading Recovery teachers are “full members of the grade-level team” and “work more closely and easily with the other first-grade (as well as the kindergarten and second-grade) teachers than when they are just one of the ‘extra’ staff who pull kids out for various reasons.” Reading Recovery-trained teachers have significant knowledge and expertise that can be shared in their schools. Several shared classroom teachers appreciated the opportunity to share knowledge learned from Reading Recovery training with their grade-level team and with their classroom students. One teacher stated, “teachers look to us to be available and answer questions” about literacy learning. Teachers in a shared classroom model can build similar strategies in both places, as well as share strategies and teaching styles with each other. One teacher commented that she and her partner had been working together for 7 years and had developed a “fabulous working relationship” and that they were able to be “flexible with ideas.” Another teacher stated, “It’s nice to have two teachers that are on the same page with what is going on in the classroom … makes transitions for the students a lot easier … and for the teachers, too!” Another teacher agreed and noted, “My partner teacher and I are very supportive of one another and we lean on each other a lot.” Some teachers also identified this model as being helpful in dealing with student behavior concerns and with parent communication. Participating in a shared classroom model allows partner teachers to learn, teach, and support each other as well as be a part of a grade-level team.

Classroom learning community
The classroom learning community is enhanced in a shared classroom implementation because students benefit from each classroom teachers’ specialized literacy learning. Several teachers mentioned that the things they learned in watching the progress
Implementation

of their Reading Recovery students made them better teachers of reading in general and gave them ideas and strategies to help their other struggling readers. One teacher said,

I have a lot of extra training in how kids learn … and all this carries over into the classroom. It helps me really think through how I am going to teach something and it also helps me when I am thinking about how to reteach something. … Also, [my partner] now teaches the math/science/social studies part of the day, and she has such a clear understanding of how kids learn — which has totally carried over to her teaching of these subjects.

The powerful professional learning during Reading Recovery training was mentioned in many of the teachers’ responses. For example, one teacher reported, “Everything that I have learned has carried over to my struggling classroom students. The knowledge gained in Reading Recovery is … strategically used to support reading and writing in the classroom.” Many teachers commented on how their Reading Recovery training, which includes ongoing practice and supervision, benefited their classroom students with “expert knowledge of responsive teaching” in all subject areas.

Benefits to Reading Recovery students

Each teacher’s Reading Recovery students also benefit from shared classroom teacher partnerships and classroom learning communities. One teacher stated, “I know what my Reading Recovery students can really do and I expect that from them in the classroom.” The teacher leader stated a major benefit of shared classrooms:

[T]he transfer into the classroom is easier for the students, and the Reading Recovery teachers are better able to tell when a child is ready to discontinue, because the Reading Recovery teachers are totally aware of what is going on in the classrooms at any given time — what they are reading and studying in the classroom, what the average and good students sound like on any specific date, what they’ve had and are expected to be able to do in spelling and phonics in their classes, what the other students’ writing looks like at any given time, whether there are books in the Reading Recovery collection that fit with things that the classes are doing, etc.

The teacher leader stated that this was a large part of the reason her district encouraged schools to continue with the shared classroom model, although the original reason was financial. She also reported that outcome data was not affected by whether a teacher was in a shared classroom model, as outcomes were similar to other models. “It can be a very strong model when it works well,” she said.

We learned through our investigation into implementation of the shared classroom model that teachers implementing this model participate in learning communities that benefit their grade-level teams, their partner teacher, their classroom students, and their Reading Recovery students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Benefits of Shared Classroom Model</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Part of grade-level team — in the loop</td>
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<td>• Divide classroom subjects so more focused classroom preparation</td>
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<td>• Division of classroom responsibilities</td>
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<td>• Know what an “average” student does</td>
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<td>• Know what Reading Recovery students should be doing back in the classroom, and vice versa</td>
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<td>• Best of both worlds — whole group and one-to-one</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Collaboration with partner available when learning Reading Recovery and when planning classroom instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Partner to share strategies and expertise</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reading Recovery training carries over into classroom instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Extra person available when dealing with challenging students (academic or behavior)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Know what is going on in the classroom and when Reading Recovery students are ready to return</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Teachers often have specific expertise that can help more students (math, science, etc.)</td>
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<td>• Students are exposed to a variety of teaching styles/strategies</td>
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<td>• All students benefit from expert reading and writing teachers, not just the lowest students</td>
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<td>• Struggling students benefit from two pairs of eyes problem solving for solutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Benefit from teachers’ expertise in close observation and working from students strengths</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reading Recovery students have a teacher familiar with classroom context</td>
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</table>
“When rooted in the everyday life of a school, learning communities can be sustained” (Lieberman & Miller, 2011, p. 20). Table 2 provides a summary of the benefits professional learning communities provided in a shared classroom implementation.

**Leadership**

School leadership plays an important role in the success of the shared classroom model by providing support and structure. Successful shared classroom implementations of Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura involve schoolwide conversations and shared decision making in order to promote cohesiveness across the system.

The decision to implement a shared classroom model involves conversations across school teams. School teams meet early in the spring and summer prior to implementation to address issues of time, responsibilities, and space that impact the total school when planning for one-to-one instruction. One survey participant commented that “the school principal/staff need to be supportive of those persons trying to help the most-needy students by leaving their own classrooms to accomplish this task.”

Implementation should be a total school decision. School teams consider responsibilities of shared classroom teachers and how these fit in with the structure of the school. Survey data suggest that school leaders share a culture of learning that builds capacity. Leaders in schools with successful implementations value time for conversations about data and collective practice. Leaders are persistent in working to remove obstacles that may arise as the implementation is beginning and are flexible enough to adjust when challenges arise.

Teachers recognized leaders who share their understanding of observing and working from the point of strengths.

**Schedules/Time**

One important conversation for grade-level teams and shared classroom partnerships is to work out schedules that free up time for one-to-one instruction. Following are a few examples of how teachers surveyed reported their day. The major considerations in these decisions seem to be lunch times and specials times for the grade level. Of the wide variety of schedules noted, the most-frequent schedule involved Teacher 1 providing Reading Recovery in the morning and Teacher 2 providing Reading Recovery in the afternoon (Figure 1). A second combination (Figure 2) might have the first Reading Recovery teacher providing lessons in the morning and the second teacher working with Reading Recovery students both before and after lunch. In schools that have multiple first-grade classrooms, first-grade students could be distributed between the other first-grade teachers to allow time for one-to-one teaching. A third alternative involves the use of a third teacher in a part-time role (Figure 3).

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**Table 2: Summary of Benefits Professional Learning Communities Provided in a Shared Classroom Implementation**

- Leadership
  - School leadership plays an important role in the success of the shared classroom model by providing support and structure.
  - Successful shared classroom implementations involve schoolwide conversations and shared decision making.
  - The decision to implement a shared classroom model involves conversations across school teams.
  - School teams meet early in the spring and summer prior to implementation to address issues of time, responsibilities, and space.
  - The major considerations in these decisions seem to be lunch times and specials times for the grade level.
  - Of the wide variety of schedules noted, the most-frequent schedule involved Teacher 1 providing Reading Recovery in the morning and Teacher 2 providing Reading Recovery in the afternoon.
  - A second combination might have the first Reading Recovery teacher providing lessons in the morning and the second teacher working with Reading Recovery students both before and after lunch.
  - In schools that have multiple first-grade classrooms, first-grade students could be distributed between other first-grade teachers to allow time for one-to-one teaching.
  - A third alternative involves the use of a third teacher in a part-time role.

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**Figures:**

- **Figure 1. Scenario Using Two Reading Recovery Teachers**
  - **Teacher 1**: Reading Recovery (7:35 am to 11:00 am)
  - **Teacher 2**: Language Arts / Reading (1:00 pm to 3:00 pm)
  - **Lunch / Specials**: 11:00 am to 1:00 pm
  - **Math / Science / Social Studies**: 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

- **Figure 2. Scenario Using Reading Recovery and Classroom Teachers**
  - **Teacher 1**: Reading Recovery (3 students) (7:50 am to 8:10 am)
  - **Other Teacher**: Writing, Social Studies (8:10 am to 9:40 am)
  - **Reading Spelling Math Lunch Specials**: 9:45 am to 2:30 pm
  - **Reading Recovery (1 student)**: 2:30 pm to 3:00 pm

- **Figure 3. Scenario Using Third Teacher in Part-Time Role**
  - **Teacher 1**: Out 1 Hour for Reading Recovery
  - **Other Teacher**: Covers Class for 1 Hour
  - **Specials Teacher**: Class Out 1 Hour for PE / Computers
Grade-level teams also play an important leadership role in a shared classroom model implementation. There are variations in the implementation of shared classrooms reported in our survey based on the needs of the school. Most teachers share a first-grade classroom, but there are schools where a kindergarten or second-grade classroom are shared. Also, most teachers are in a situation where two Reading Recovery teachers share the same group of students and divide the responsibilities for teaching grade-level content between each other. The grade-level team and team partnership discuss responsibilities for content area assignments working from the expertise of the individual teachers while factoring in grade-level considerations. The most-common division of content reported one teacher responsible for English language arts and the other teacher taking a combination of math, science, and/or social studies. A few teachers added additional content like health, phonics, word wall, or technology to their other content, and some teachers reported combining social studies with English language arts. Some schools utilize an additional part-time teacher for shared classroom instruction. Figure 4 describes various ways that teaching responsibilities are shared in some unique circumstances.

Several survey teachers appreciated the opportunity this gave them for more-focused preparation on specific content areas rather than having responsibilities for all content.

### Structure

Regardless of what schedule is adopted, creating a structure that allows time for teachers to plan together as a group and individually, communicate about classroom responsibilities, and collaborate about related student achievement is essential. Specifically, survey data suggest that school leaders provide ways to redistribute duties for teachers in the shared classroom setting. Teachers consistently report requests for decision makers to consider them as one teacher when assigning duties because of the additional planning it takes to do both Reading Recovery and classroom lessons. "Administrators really need to be understanding of the fact that Reading Recovery has a lot of paperwork," one teacher commented.

Survey teachers emphasize that "not only are Reading Recovery teachers doing lessons and planning for the classroom part, we are also doing individualized lesson plans for four students every day." Protecting planning time is an important role of leadership at all levels in a shared classroom implementation.

### Responsibilities

In addition to school team decisions and grade-level considerations, the Reading Recovery professionals sharing classroom responsibilities need time to work out the logistics of their roles. Survey teachers noted that decisions about classroom responsibilities and how they will be divided are important, as well as decisions about things like who is responsible for which parts of the report card, who assigns homework and checks folders, who takes care of other required paperwork specific to that school, who calls or meet with parents, who handles assessments and reports, who covers which duties, etc.

Some survey teachers do their planning for the other part of the day together, and some do it separately. Several survey teachers addressed the importance of approaching classroom management and student behavior in a similar manner.

The teacher leader mentioned that the first year can be challenging in a shared classroom implementation because of these partnership decisions/adjustments. "After the first year they’ve kind of figured out how they’re going to do things so that the kids are getting something consistent throughout the day, but the first year they have to figure all that out," she noted. "Once they got the routine down a lot of them really really liked it — liked to do it that way.” Also, several survey teachers felt this model provided them with "the best of both worlds" — the opportunity for one-to-one teaching and participation in regular class instruction.

### Figure 4. Unique Shared Classroom Situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading / Writing (Reading Recovery teacher)</th>
<th>Math / Science / Social Studies (part-time teacher)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading / Spelling / Math (Reading Recovery teacher)</td>
<td>Writing / Social Studies / Science (split between other first-grade teachers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonics (one teacher)</td>
<td>Math / Social Studies / Science (Reading Recovery teacher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Language Arts (another teacher)</td>
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</table>
Space
School teams also need to consider available space. Survey teachers report two scenarios with regards to space: sharing classroom space in some schools and having separate classrooms in others. Many survey teachers mention that if a room is shared, it should be “spacious enough to accommodate two teachers and all the students and supplies needed to have a day run smoothly” with areas for two teachers’ desks, shelves, etc., so “we don’t trip over each other.” This may require a larger classroom. Teachers also mention that if a classroom is shared then “resources such as supplies and work space must be clear to both teachers in the room.” Many teachers mention that the ideal would be separate classrooms, as long as these rooms were not “two hallways away.” No matter which way is chosen, consideration should be given to where the Reading Recovery lesson will take place and whether each teacher keeps her own Reading Recovery library and other resources so teachers can effectively function in each role. The teacher leader commented that “some of them kept separate book sets so they always knew which ones were on the shelf and which ones were out and some of them just pooled their books — however these two people can work together.”

Selecting teaching partners
Leadership discussions about who will train occur among school teams and teachers in working through what makes an effective partnership. Survey teachers pointed out several characteristics that aid in creating effective shared classroom partnerships. Many characteristics reported in the survey data are referred to in the guidelines for the selection of teachers in A Principal’s Guide to Reading Recovery (RRCNA, 2012). Characteristics include voluntary application, adaptability/flexibility, and strong communication skills. These are important for all Reading Recovery teachers, but because shared classroom teachers partner in learning on a daily basis, these characteristics are even more crucial for success.

Many survey teachers commented that partner teachers need to have similar philosophies about learning and teaching and have similar management styles. Compatible personalities, having a great deal in common, being friends, and being able to get along and come to agreements were also mentioned. Several survey teachers identified being organized, hard-working, having a positive attitude, learning to forgive, and being patient with each other as important, as well as being a good manager of time. The decision about teachers who will fill these roles is a critical one, and characteristics that promote flexibility/adaptability can set conditions for effective implementation of the shared classroom model.

Survey teachers reported the importance of choice in making decisions to train. These Reading Recovery professionals realize that being willing and able to adapt to working with a partner as well as to the challenges of new learning is critical in a shared classroom implementation. The teacher leader also noted the importance of choice in effective teacher partnerships. “If they decided together to go into this they seemed to work it out, otherwise there were challenges.” In fact, she stated that most teachers really liked this model after the first year and really missed having a partner if they went back to the regular classroom.

The most-often mentioned teacher characteristic by survey participants was flexibility. Survey teachers felt that shared classroom teachers benefit from a willingness to adapt, compromise, and learn as they go. They also mentioned the importance of teamwork. Shared classroom teachers are team players, work well together, and are collaborative. They are cooperative and supportive and “step up to the plate to help each other out.” Many survey teachers commented that partner teachers need to have similar philosophies about learning and teaching and have similar management styles. Compatible personalities, having a great deal in common, being friends, and being able to get along and come to agreements were also mentioned. Several survey teachers identified being organized, hard-working, having a positive attitude, learning to forgive, and being patient with each other as important, as well as being a good manager of time. The decision about teachers who will fill these roles is a critical one, and characteristics that promote flexibility/adaptability can set conditions for effective implementation of the shared classroom model.

The teachers surveyed also reported the importance of being effective communicators. Partners share information about the daily positives and negatives in the classroom as well as communicate with the grade-level team and the school administration on an ongoing basis. The teacher leader emphasized the importance of meeting together for at least a few minutes every day — as well as planning ways to communicate with each other in other ways as important in shared classroom partnerships.

School/grade-level teams must consider decisions regarding time, responsibilities, space, and selecting teaching partners carefully. Many
challenges can be averted in a shared classroom implementation with timely conversations by the school/grade-level team involving support and structure. One teacher commented, “Leadership is key to successful implementations of the shared classroom model.”

Responding to Challenges
Implementing a shared classroom model is not without challenges as we learned from the teachers’ surveys. The first year can be particularly challenging as teachers work out schedules and learn to problem solve the unexpected. Teachers reported “leaving each other many sticky notes” as a common way to survive. All Reading Recovery teachers, regardless of the model of implementation, find the new learning in Reading Recovery challenging at times.

A second challenge is planning for classroom instruction and Reading Recovery at the same time. Several reported it’s like wearing two hats. Teachers indicated that one way to lessen this issue was to be familiar with the grade-level classroom curriculum prior to moving into a shared classroom model. Changing grade levels while taking on new learning in Reading Recovery isn’t a good idea. Also, planning for Reading Recovery lesson plans cannot be done ahead like classroom plans; time is necessary every day for planning individualized instruction.

Teachers shared solutions such as intentionally setting aside time each afternoon to reflect on lesson notes and records. Many reported that lesson planning for Reading Recovery often became an evening activity. A third challenge involves recognizing that teaching partners may differ in ways of planning and responding to tasks. Recognizing each other’s strengths and needs contributes to effective teamwork. The teachers noted that sometimes it is important to simply discuss personal preferences and needs to define a system of working together. One teacher may prefer to stay late to plan while another prefers early morning planning. Discussing these differences and needs can contribute to successful working relationships.

Finally, every teacher reported issues with time. Extra meetings, a fire drill that lasts longer than usual, or accommodating special programs can impact Reading Recovery teachers in any implementation. Teachers in shared classroom implementations reported the importance of being organized—and at the same time—flexible. Missed lessons challenge the success of a child’s progress in Reading Recovery but can be even more challenging to make up when teaching in a shared classroom model. Solutions may involve giving up planning time during the day to make up lessons while the class is at specials or with another teacher.

Despite the challenges, 95% of surveyed teachers had positive comments about their shared classroom experience, and all provided insightful responses to our survey questions. One teacher commented, “It is a demanding job, but highly rewarding.” Other teachers made similar comments like, “I feel that having a shared classroom is a great thing” and “Reading Recovery has been a great asset to my overall growth as both a classroom teacher and Reading Recovery teacher! It has afforded me great hands-on practice and the ability to impart knowledge that allows students to grow in learning.”

Conclusion
Implementing Reading Recovery in a shared classroom setting embeds powerful professional learning communities within the school setting. Teachers’ enhanced expertise facilitates student learning in classrooms and provides students most in need of early intervention with the individual instruction they need to accelerate their literacy learning.

Implementing Reading Recovery within a shared classroom model creates strong professional learning communities that mirror the high standards schools seek for intensive, ongoing professional development that is data driven and job embedded. To effectively implement a shared classroom model, leadership that provides both support and structure is needed. Decisions about schedules, teaching responsibilities, space, and assignments require collaboration across the school level. This leadership contributes to the internal and external cohesiveness Clay calls for in the effective implementation of Reading Recovery.

Authors’ note: The authors would like to thank Joli Lee, a retired teacher leader, who graciously shared her experiences with shared classrooms in her district, and all of the shared classroom teachers who were willing to take time out of their very busy schedules to respond to our survey and share their unique insights. Their perceptive responses provided much needed information about implementation of the shared classroom model in the U.S.
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Survey questions
1. How many years have you worked as a Reading Recovery teacher in a shared classroom implementation?
2. Describe how your shared classroom implementation works (assignments, division of day, what your classroom students are doing while you aren’t there, etc.).
3. How do you schedule the time needed to do your Reading Recovery lessons and the analysis of daily records? Please elaborate.
4. Describe what contributes to the effectiveness of the shared classroom implementation. Please be specific.
5. What recommendations would you make to improve your shared classroom implementation?
6. What advice do you have for a school beginning to use a shared classroom model for the first time?