Executive Director’s Message

Guide Promotes Whole School Benefits of Reading Recovery

RRCNA Executive Director Jady Johnson

Spring has officially arrived after a long and snowy winter! The familiar seasonal change is particularly welcome this year. In your schools and districts, spring means that your seasonal planning cycle is also in process. As you collaborate with administrators to consider your work in 2014–2015, please introduce them to our newest publication, Promising Literacy for Every Child: Reading Recovery and a Comprehensive Literacy System.

This publication offers practical guidance on how Reading Recovery-trained teachers can build and strengthen professional learning communities in their schools. We know administrators will value the guide because it offers a range of planning tools that can be adapted to the needs of your school. You can read more about this guide on page 32 of this issue, “Tools Help Guide Journey to Comprehensive Literacy System.”

The authors of this guide are well known in the Reading Recovery and literacy community — Billie J. Askew, Gay Su Pinnell, and Patricia Scharer. Interviewers and writers for the case studies added rich detail about how a comprehensive literacy system evolved in four different sites across the country. Thanks also go to Peter Johnston, Linda Dorn, Salli Forbes, Jason Hillman, and Janice Van Dyke who interviewed administrators and Reading Recovery teacher leaders at South-Western City Schools in Ohio, Ozark R-VI School District in Missouri, Fort Bend ISD in Texas, and Meadowlark Elementary in Wyoming.

Although the guide may seem to break new ground, it is more evolutionary than revolutionary. Many successful schools have extended the knowledge and skills of their Reading Recovery teachers to work with classroom teachers and others in their school. In our 2010 interviews with school superintendents, many said their Reading Recovery-trained teachers’ deep knowledge had a direct impact on improved classroom instruction. RRCNA captured this idea in the “whole school benefits” content on the Reading Recovery Works website. In a video there, Kentucky Principal Gerry Brooks discusses his belief in Reading Recovery’s broader school impact.

We all need to promote understanding of this broader potential among school curriculum decision makers. That is why this new guide is so important. When Reading Recovery’s foundational principles are applied throughout the school, the success of students, teachers, and the whole school increases.

“I would love to have had this guide back in 2005 — well, earlier actually,” said Jason Hillman (left) as he and Patricia Scharer prepared for shooting a brief video describing RRCNA’s newest publication. Meadowlark Elementary, where Hillman was principal, had a dramatic turnaround from a failing school in 2005 to Blue Ribbon School Award winner in 2012. “Although they called us the ‘Meadowlark Miracle,’ we knew it wasn’t a miracle, but a lot of hard work,” Hillman said. You can see the video and order the new guide on the RRCNA website.