

Supporting Learning Through Instructional Conversation

Paula Bennet, University of Northern Iowa

Introduction

Language is the mode through which we communicate, and oral language is the foundation for everything that is learned *about* and *through* reading and writing. Children who have fallen behind in literacy achievement must learn at a faster or accelerated rate in order to meet classroom benchmarks and learn alongside their peers. To fully benefit from teaching, children struggling with reading and writing need specific and purposeful instruction. Intentional teaching conversations offer these children opportunities for accelerated learning and the possibility of catching up to their peers. In instructional conversations, the conversational interplay between the teacher and learner is the key to supporting accelerated learning for children who initially struggle with reading and writing.

Vygotsky (1978) stressed the social nature of language that includes attention, memory, and thinking. He stated, “children grow into the intellectual life of those around them” (p. 88). Whether teaching a child individually during a Reading Recovery lesson or in a small literacy group, the most-powerful teaching happens when teachers maximize the potential that lies in the conversations they have with children and in the conversations children have with peers. The responsibility for the conversation lies with the teacher who listens closely in order to provide the appropriate level of assistance so that



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each child successfully accomplishes a task. The teacher responds with temporary scaffolds that help children efficiently take on independent action (Clay, 1991), learn how to solve problems, and make good decisions.

When conversation accompanies productive activity, it provides the path to what Vygotsky referred to as *learning* or the *internalization of concepts* (Moll, 1990). Conversation can help children enjoy a story’s meaning while at the same time encourage and prompt them to discover and work with features of print. In *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals Part Two: Teaching Procedures*, Clay (2005b) reminds us “there are no set teaching sequences” (p. 2), but teach-

ers support accelerated learning by remaining responsive to the unique needs of each child. “It is the learner who accelerates because some things no longer need his attention and are done more easily” (Clay, 2005a, p. 24).

This article explains the basics of effective instructional conversations between teachers and students. It also offers ways to elicit greater child participation during instructional conversations and provides examples of effective conversations that scaffold children’s learning, giving them opportunities for independence, initiative, and discovery while reading and writing.

Instructional Conversations

Conversation is dialogue, an exchange of ideas between two people, and the flow of the conversation often varies with the purpose. The desire to understand and to be understood is innate, and in good conversations participants go back and forth as they negotiate the roles of speaker and listener. Think about the last time you had a simple yet enjoyable conversation. During casual conversations, participants assume either the role of speaker or listener, and the exchange of ideas does not happen if one individual is dominating the conversation or if both participants try to speak or listen at the same time. The role of the speaker is to monitor whether they are being understood by noting the listener's attention, engagement, eye contact, and nonverbal cues, revising the message as needed. The role of the listener is to offer verbal and nonverbal cues that indicate understanding or seek clarification.

Teachers and students engaged in instructional conversations possess the same desire to understand and be understood. Unlike informal conversations, which may not have a particular agenda, instructional conversations require intentionality in order to provide opportunities for focused attention on particular information. Teachers deliberately provide opportunities for collaboration and shared understanding. Additionally, instructional conversations require teacher and student to check in, continually monitoring both verbal and nonverbal cues to confirm they are reaching a shared understanding and that meaning is not being lost (Clay, 1985).

When confusions are not cleared up or language is misunderstood, meaning breaks down. Conversations resulting in confusion happen for a number of reasons. In English, for instance, many words have multiple meanings and when interpreted out of context, confusions lead to misunderstanding. This type of misunderstanding happened after a student had read a story about Little Chimp and the teacher initiated an instructional conversation about the story. The following is an example of how easily a message can be confused and shows the importance of negotiating understanding.

Teacher: What makes you feel safe?

Student: (very expressively) I don't feel safe swinging on the stairs at the park.

Teacher: (having never heard of swinging stairs) Oh, there are stairs you can swing on?

Student: (annoyed) No, I said I *wasn't safe* to swing on them so I just walked down them.

Teacher: Oh, yes I understand, there were stairs you couldn't swing on.

The confusion came about because in the second conversational move, the teacher was using the term *you* collectively to mean people in general. The student assumed she had not listened to him and rephrased what he had said in order to make sure she knew that he didn't feel safe. To communicate that he had been correctly understood, the teacher repeated the child's words emphasizing the word *you* — specifically referring to him.

According to Peter Johnston (2004), teachers use talk as a central tool of their trade, while helping children make sense of “learning, literacy, life, and themselves” (p. 4). He writes that while we use language to provide information, conversations also relay information about the speaker and his or her relationship to the listener. The teacher in the previous example repeated the child's statement in order to ensure he knew his comments were understood and that he had been heard.

As teachers reflect on conversations they have with children, they must ask themselves about both their intended, explicit messages and the messages that may have been conveyed implicitly. Instructional conversations provide unspoken opportunities to let children know we have confidence in them and expect them to take initiative to problem solve as independently as possible. We ask ourselves if we have communicated confidence in the child or conversely have taken over tasks too quickly, given too much help, or used too many words. Any of the latter moves have the potential to create a sense of dependence or learned helplessness.

Because learning is social and depends on dialogue (Vygotsky, 1978), we need to understand our role in the *quality* and *quantity* of our interactions with children. Teaching and learning that “proceeds like the everyday conversation” (p. 13) mirrors the way in which children begin learning (Clay, 1998). Even before they can speak, children learn by listening to conversations.

Clay (2005b) provides caution about using too much teacher talk when teachers assume the role of speaker.

When a teacher uses more words than necessary to get a point across, children have to do more in-the-head processing, and they may find it harder to understand and act on the teacher's message. The following conversation is one in which the teacher uses too much talk:

Text "Happy Birthday, Mom!"

Teacher: When it's someone's birthday we say Happy Birthday. The boy is giving his Mom a gift for her birthday so what do you think he is saying to his Mom?

Student: Here is a present.

Teacher: Maybe, but what do we say at the beginning of the Happy Birthday song?

Student: Happy Birthday to you.

A more-efficient use of conversation might have been this:

Teacher: Andy is wishing his Mom a happy birthday as he gives her the gift. He'd say...

Student: I know what he'd say. (Rereading text) Happy Birthday, Mom!

Teachers monitor cues to make sure the child shows signs of understanding. These cues, both verbal and nonverbal, indicate engagement and provide feedback. Nonverbal messages are conveyed without words and are equally important to attend to as verbal communication (Lose, 2008). If evidence of confusion seems likely, the teacher needs to check what part is confusing the child and modify the message.

As listeners, it is important to attend to what is being said, decide if the meaning has been compromised, and seek clarification if confused. Some children must be taught how to recognize when they do not understand someone's message, and they have to be taught how to use strategies for seeking clarification or ask for additional information. Children who find this easier are provided with more opportunities to negotiate shared meanings (Clay, 1998).

The links between language, conversation, and thought provide listening opportunities for teachers to attend carefully to what a child is saying or attempting to say:

- We recognize and value the prior knowledge and background that children bring to bear on instructional conversations.
- We provide opportunities for children to continue to develop their oral language vocabularies and structures.
- We assume the responsibility for guiding the discourse. Clay wrote, "conversation in the company of an adult [is] the best tutorial situation in which to raise the child's language functioning to a high level" (1991, p. 70).
- We provide cues to signal that a message is being understood (or as in the earlier example, being misunderstood).
- We seek clarification if something is unclear. "Being sensitive to the learner's thinking allows the teacher to draw the child's attention to things overlooked, to new aspects of the task, or to other possible interpretations" (Clay, 1998, p. 13).

Features of Instructional Conversations

A natural and effective instructional conversation involves teacher and student weaving together spoken language in a way that allows for a discourse followed by a desired action. Unfortunately, in many classrooms, teachers do most of the talking. A teacher loses children when ignoring their thinking, meaning, or understanding (Clay, 1998). Good classroom conversations help children learn about themselves in relation to learning. Effective instructional conversations have several consistent features, six of which are described here.

Natural conversation

Natural conversations have a flow to them. Sometimes likened to cocktail party conversations, individuals switch effortlessly between the role of speaker and listener. One person does not ask a steady stream of questions while the other answers. It is easy for instructors to fall into the trap of questioning, eliciting a response, and then evaluating the response (Johnston, 2004). The following is an example of one such conversation that takes the child off task by focusing on the word *lake*.

Text He went to the river to swim.

Student: He went to the ... (pausing at the word *river*) lake?

Teacher: What letter do you hear at the beginning of *lake*?

Student: *k*

Teacher: Is that right? (slowly articulates l-ake)

Student: yes

Teacher: l- you would expect to see l- at the beginning of lake. What do you see?

Student: *r*

A more-productive instructional conversation might have been this:

Student: He went to the ...
(pausing at the word *river*) lake?

Teacher: *Lake* makes sense, but does it look right?

Student: *River!* He went to the *river* to swim.

Note that the conversation, although brief, is focused on problem solving in a very natural way. The teacher interacts just enough to allow the child to take initiative to consider visual information along with meaning and make a self-correction.

Negotiated shared meaning

Effective teacher communicators, acting as both the speaker and the listener, understand that they do not necessarily know what the child is thinking. They check in from time to time, asking for and providing feedback. Checking in enhances the opportunity for shared knowing. It sometimes requires the teacher to ask for a response that enhances the level of understanding, as in this conversation that helped the student compose a message during the writing segment of the Reading Recovery lesson.

Teacher: You really had fun at your Valentine party, didn't you?

Student: Yeah.

Teacher: What was your favorite part of your Valentine party?

Student: When it was done.

Teacher: When it was done? Why?

Student: Because when it was done – everybody gave valentines – and when it was done you get to open them.

Checking on confusions and negotiating a shared meaning is important because it provides an opportunity for teacher and student to have a better understanding of each other's intended message. Clay (1998) noted that "almost any adult can talk with children in ways that teach" and "anyone who can converse with a child can foster language development" (p. 13). A teaching conversation is most effective when it mimics the give and take and clarification seeking in everyday conversation.

Built on oral language strengths

Oral language is the basic tool of communication that teachers and children share. Almost all children come to school with language, and whether or not their first language is the language of instruction, we as teachers help them make sense of their world. It is most critical for teachers to value the unique language development of each child and honor their differences (Lindfords, 1991). Each child enters formal schooling desiring to understand and to be understood. Clay (1998) writes that children often enter school with fewer opportunities to converse with adults than they do at home. She goes on to state that, "It is only when we know our children well and listen closely to their use of language that we can get inside the child's frame of reference and support the child's next forward moves" (p. 10).

We are reminded that children who are learning the language of school need to experience one-on-one conversation with adults more frequently. Clay instructs teachers to "talk to the ones who are least able to talk to you. Talk when the going is hard. Listen when the child wants to talk to you. Reply, and extend the conversation" (1998, p. 11).

Teachers who pay attention to a child's utterances encourage them to talk more and ask questions that call for them to converse. The following conversation with a student in Reading Recovery shows how the teacher drew the child into conversation.

Teacher: Little Chimp climbed back up the tree. Do you like to climb up in trees?

Student: I tried to climb a tree once but I couldn't get up in it. Everyone else was getting up in it but I couldn't.

Teacher: (with a puzzled look) Everyone else?

Student: Even the adults were getting up. I couldn't though. My mommy helped me up. She helped me get up in the tree.

Reflection of what is important to the child

Teachers are able to personalize the learning when they employ wait time, active listening, and intentional responding. Clay (1998) reminds us that personalizing learning is important because "of how diverse the literacy foundations are from child to child" (p. 4). When working with children, following the child's discov-

eries sometimes requires the teacher to 'let go' of a preplanned agenda. When children are noticing and making connections, teachers need to recognize what the children are doing and build on these discoveries.

Text Today is Mom's birthday.

Student: Today is my Mom's birthday. (Student stops and furrows brow.)

Teacher: (after a short pause) What did you notice?

Student: Something's not right. Oh, I know! (Rereading) Today is Mom's birthday.

The teacher's actions honored the child's thinking and followed his lead. She intentionally waited before responding, allowing him time to notice his error. Observing his furrowed brow, she asked "What did you notice?" which let him know that it is important to notice when something is amiss. It honored his work to that point, including his self-monitoring, and he was able to self-correct the error on his own.

Concise, focused teacher language

By using questions and prompts that negotiate problem solving, teachers help children construct their own understandings. Keeping questions clear, to the point, and focused on actions helps children to extend their thinking. Clay (2005b) calls for teachers to use clear and memorable examples when questioning and prompting for problem solving. The following conversation is concise and clear.

Text "Come on, Little Chimp," said Mother Chimp. "Come up the tree."

Student: Come on, Little Chimp, said Ma— mo—

Teacher: What would make sense? (pointing to the larger chimp in the illustration)

Student: Mother Chimp. Come on, Little Chimp, said Mother Chimp (looks up as if finished).

Teacher: (no response)

Student: (looks back down and reads as if noticing additional text) Come up the tree.

Praise focused on actions

Many teachers purposely use praise to motivate children. Too often in one-to-one and small-group interventions children are told "good job" when in fact they did not meet expectations. Johnston (2004) explains that directing praise at "their effort (You worked hard at that) or their intellect (You are so smart)" (p. 39) is equally not useful in changing a child's actions. He states that drawing attention to success, decision making, and strategic actions increases a child's understanding that effective action leads to desired results. One such conversation occurred during writing when the child used an analogy to write the word *some*.

Student: (noticing that *some* is like *come*) It looks the same.

Teacher: It **does** look the same. What did you have to change to make *some*?

Student: I changed the *C*. This part is the same (circling -ome).

Teacher: You are right, that worked!

Good instructional conversations help children learn about themselves in relation to learning. Reiterating Johnston's (2004) view, talk is the primary tool of a teacher's trade. We use praise to change a child's thinking about decision making and performance. According to Henderlong and Lepper (2002), praise results in perceptions of competence. Teachers can build competence by using praise in a natural and authentic way. Praise can focus on success and provide needed links between action and desired results. Bandura (1997) refers to this as *self-efficacy*: the belief that actions lead to preferred outcomes. People with more positive self-efficacy beliefs are inclined to persevere in the face of difficulty, work at alternative solutions to problems, and give up less frequently.

Benefits of Instructional Conversations

Natural instructional conversations focus on children's actions and allow for language and meaning to be constructed and negotiated. Focusing conversation around a child's specific literacy behaviors and responding appropriately personalizes the interaction. This personalization helps focus on the child's unique learning and language needs. By using intentional and specific conversational

moves, teachers aid in their students' language development (Van Dyke, 2006), which is important for both reading and writing. According to Clay (2005b), there is no quick way to extend language, but the conversations that happen around reading and writing provide the best opportunity.

Instructional conversations that are efficient and clear provide opportunities for a child to bridge language and thinking (Vygotsky, 1978; Anderson, 1999). Too much teacher talk can confuse a child. It requires him to process too much information and sometimes interferes with the processing of print. As children think, speak, read, and write, they are seeking to make meaning of their world (Johnston, 2004; Clay, 2004; Lindfors 1999).

Another benefit of good instructional conversations is that teacher talk offers children opportunities to 'try on' different identities. Children can be nudged toward constructive identities that promote independence — the notion that they are the problem solvers. This sense of agency is important to their sense of well-being because it helps them identify as good decision makers. Children who doubt their competence believe problem solving is outside of their abilities. They have low expectations, give up easily when confused, and do not identify as readers. They disengage and become passive. On the other hand, children who have confidence work harder and are known to try various attempts to solve what they do not know. They show more interest and perceive themselves as readers. They concentrate harder when faced with difficult tasks, plan better, and have more-focused attention (Johnston, 2004).



When children view themselves as learners and discoverers, they are encouraged to make discoveries and link new learning to prior knowledge.

Talking with children in ways that help them think about what they are doing encourages their strategic thinking. When teachers use intentional conversations about strategic processing it helps children monitor, make decisions, and respond to print actively. They make new discoveries, search for relationships, and link new information to old information (Clay, 2005b).

Eliciting Child Participation

During an instructional conversation, children have opportunities to talk, uncover confusions, negotiate meaning, and extend their thinking. Some children, however, are reluctant to participate in talking with their teacher. There are many reasons for this that are outside the scope of this article, but providing opportunities for children to participate in conversation takes intentionality.

Children need

- wait time,
- invitations into conversation,
- interactions around what is known by both teacher and child, and
- a sense that what they have to say is meaningful.

Wait time

In order to be able to contribute during a teaching conversation, some children need more time to search for meaning or think of related information. Ideas do not always come quickly, so children need varying amounts of wait time from the teacher (Clay, 1998). This added time allows children to construct ideas in their head, search for ways to logically compose them, and evaluate the intended meaning. Johnston (2004) writes that children need to ask both "What do I know about this?" and "What do I know that this is like?" (p. 46). Making meaningful connections to what

is known is the premise for learning. Although some children can make links quickly, others need varying amounts of wait time before they can be expected to contribute.

Invitations into conversation

Sometimes children need to be invited into conversation by helping them make connections to what they know or have experienced. Teachers let go of personal agendas and ask questions that open a conversation. Open invitations include asking children questions like, “What did you notice?” or “What does that remind you of?” and “What else could it be?” These questions are removed from right-or-wrong thinking and encourage links and connections to prior learning.

Interactions around what is known

When children view themselves as learners and discoverers, they are encouraged to make discoveries and link new learning to prior knowledge. They come to know what they have to say is meaningful and not going to be evaluated as right or wrong. Clay (1998) tells us that children bring knowledge with them to the conversation. Adults often make the error of bypassing the child’s thinking in an attempt to thrust new knowledge on the child.

Meaningful interactions

Children will participate in instructional conversations if they believe what they have to say is meaningful. Teachers stimulate a sense of meaningfulness when they recognize and genuinely value children’s ideas and comments. One way to show a child’s comments are meaningful is to reflect back to the child what was understood.

Student: And I had trouble with this (pointing to the words *water bottle*).

Teacher: Yes, *water bottle* – you had to make a decision and you figured it right out.

Student: I did.

This purposeful reflecting signals that the child’s message was meaningful and understood. It can also be used when there is a need for clarification but, nevertheless, the reflection indicates that the message was important enough to warrant explaining.

Oral language is the basis for literacy learning; therefore, quality conversations between teacher and child foster accelerated learning. Support is provided through instructional conversations that create opportunities for and reinforce independent problem solving. The next section situates instructional conversations within the framework of Reading Recovery lessons to illustrate the ways these conversations can support students’ strategic activity in reading and in writing.

Instructional Conversations During Familiar Reading, Writing, and New Book Reading

Teachers working in Reading Recovery have excellent opportunities to support children’s accelerated learning while the student reads easy and familiar text, when writing messages, and during the reading of new material with support.

Janice Van Dyke (2006), in her article “When Conversations Go Well,” reminds us that we encourage

children to participate in conversation when we talk about their experiences and interests. By probing, summarizing, paraphrasing, or restating what the child says, teachers help children make links between their ideas and their oral message. The following is an example of a teacher helping an English learner express himself.

Teacher: In this book the family decides to go on a picnic. You remember what a picnic is, from *Little Dinosaur*... What does it look like Dad is doing here?

Child: sandwiches

Teacher: (probing) What is he **doing** though?

Child: making

Teacher: (restating the idea as a complete sentence) Yeah. He’s making some sandwiches.

Child: He’s making sandwiches.

Teachers help children extend their control of oral language by talking in ways that help them create links between thinking and their message. Clay (2005b) tells us, “We know something has changed in the child’s language when we hear him (or her) construct part of a sentence in a new way” (p. 51).

Supporting learning during familiar reading

Familiar reading material allows children to practice problem solving, read fluently on material that is partially known, and talk about what the story meant to them (Clay, 2005b). It is an opportunity for children to integrate all they know about a text as they control the reading. There are many

opportunities for conversation that accelerates learning during the reading of familiar text.

Talking with children about familiar books before or after the reading helps them become even more familiar with the nuances, the vocabulary, and particular sentence structures within stories. It is not productive to interrupt familiar reading. After the reading, teachers can encourage children to talk about particular events or solutions in the story. Teachers encourage conversation by asking open-ended questions or statements that require a child to compose in her head. For example, in the little story *Baby Bear Goes Fishing*, a teacher may ask “Why do you think Baby Bear is big enough to go fishing?” or “What do you think may happen the next time Father Bear goes fishing?”

These types of conversations encourage children to think and talk about what they are reading. It encourages them to experience reading as a message-getting activity, not a word-reading task. Some of the most-enjoyable and memorable conversations I have had with children were about a story, poem, or other text.

When children control the reading of familiar material, they experience the opportunity to discover new things because their attention is free to attend to features of the text they have yet to notice (Clay, 2005b). The teacher must be careful not to draw the child off task by conversing *during* the familiar text reading. Children need to be reading as independently as possible. This is enhanced when they are reading interesting texts fluently while problem solving. Teachers who do stop the reading when it becomes slow or

when there is an error only prime the child to be on guard and wait for interruptions.

Supporting learning during writing
Writing provides a learner with opportunities to carefully attend to print, make discoveries, and analyze specific features of letters and words. Writing requires children to initiate ideas in their minds, construct a message that makes sense from their ideas, and record the message in a way that a reader can understand. To ensure learning, teachers might need to support students with any of these processes. Children need varying levels of scaffolding when coming up with ideas, when transferring ideas into a message, and when recording the message.

Attentive teachers ask pertinent questions that help a child formulate ideas. Clay (2005b) recommends that the teacher start a “conversation, guided by all you know about this child” (p. 55). Conversations need to be interesting and constructive. This is not the time to ask a list of closed questions, but instead to encourage the child to verbally articulate ideas. Begin the writing portion of a lesson by talking with the child about a book or experience. Teachers begin conversations by asking questions like these:

- Can you tell me more about what happened when your class went out to the garden this morning?”
- You were absent yesterday. What kept you from coming to school?
- You said it was funny that the spider wanted to eat all of the bugs. What do you do when you see a spider?

- Last weekend you were going to take your puppy to dog training class. What are you helping him learn?

During a short but genuine conversation before writing, it may be necessary for the teacher to summarize, rephrase, or ask additional questions to help a child expand the message. This leads to the second part of the process of writing, which is composition. After the ideas have been expressed orally, the teacher might ask, “How would you like to write that down?” or “What would you like to write first?” Helping a child construct a message from the conversation allows the child to take ownership of the story. While talking with a child during an individual lesson or during a writing conference, listen carefully to the ideas and help the child compose a sentence or message that captures the most-important part. By scaffolding the connection between ideas and thoughts and oral language, teachers help children construct a message that can then be written down. Teachers support children’s oral language so they will speak and write more-complex sentences. These short but powerful conversations help children link their spoken language to their writing.

Supporting learning before, during, and after reading new material

In order to support learning during the reading of new text, teachers begin by carefully choosing a book that the child can read successfully with some assistance, one that will help expand the reader’s strategic thinking and behaviors. A child needs to read fluently enough to retain the meaning of the story while solving unknown text independently.



When children control the reading of familiar material, they experience the opportunity to discover new things because their attention is free to attend to features of the text they have yet to notice (Clay, 2005b).

Before children read the book, teachers engage them in a conversation about the story. They help them understand the plot and become familiar with book language and unfamiliar vocabulary. Children are engaged in and interacting with a book during this new book conversation (Clay, 2005b; Cazden, 2005).

Clay provides explicit and differentiated instructions for the kind of teaching conversation we have with children after the first reading (see the section “Teaching after the first reading” on pp. 95–96 of *Literacy Lessons Part Two*). Unlike the talk before the reading, this specialized instruction helps children make links to help themselves in the future. The language needs to be clear, helping the child attend to problem solving.

Text So the shoemaker’s wife stitched all day.

Child: So the shoemaker’s wife *sewed* all day – no – *stitched* all day.

Teacher: (returning to this page after the first reading) On this page you said, “So the shoemaker’s wife *sewed* all day – no, *stitched* all day.” Nice checking!

Child: I knew it was *stitched* because it starts like *stop*.

Teachers discuss successful problem solving and convey the message that noticing and problem solving lead to effective reading. They choose only one or two teaching points—specifically based on the current reading—

that will help scaffold the child to more-complex texts. What teachers attend to should change over time as children develop more-sophisticated problem-solving behaviors.

After the first reading, teachers and children have a brief conversation about the book in order to reinforce that the meaning of the whole story is important (Clay, 2005b). This conversation allows the child to attend to the message of the story and helps the teacher know what the child understands and what connections she is making. This conversation also fosters the child’s connection to the story in future readings.

Conclusion

Teachers facilitate accelerated learning when they teach conversationally, listening and responding intentionally. The learning potential lies in the conversation between child and teacher, which can provide efficient scaffolding for problem solving and decision making. Lessons for struggling readers and writers must promote accelerated learning in order to help them catch up to their classroom peers. The teachers most effective in closing the learning gap are intentional about *what* they talk about and *how* they talk, and they are skillful in eliciting conversation from the learner.

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About the Author



Dr. Paula Bennet is an assistant professor at the University of Northern Iowa. Her research interests are directed at helping teachers improve their practice. Currently she works with teachers and teacher coaches to help better meet the literacy needs of all children.

About the Cover

When Jackson began his Reading Recovery lessons during the 2013–14 school year at Clara Love Elementary in Justin, TX, he was reading at Level 0. When his lessons were discontinued, he was reading at a Level 14 and at year-end at Level 22 — above average for first grade. Jackson said he enjoyed coming to Reading Recovery class every day, reading a variety of books that he chose on his current level for practice. “I was one of those people who read levels 1 to 20 and got a medal,” he said. He also wanted to read chapter books.

Now in second grade, Jackson said he gets to read any type of book from his class library. His favorites are *I Survived* and *The Pizza the Size of the Sun*. He also enjoys doing some cool things, especially during science class. He practiced making ice melt and did a project with a cookie, and then got to eat it.

Jackson likes to play football and tag and hangs out on the monkey bars during recess. He wants to be some kind of engineer when he grows up — one that builds new transportation and/or toys or perhaps fixes robots and cars.

