

President's Message

Are You Up for the Challenge?

RRCNA President Craig Dougherty



Reading Recovery has once again been proven to be an effective intervention for struggling readers, as evidenced by the recently released final i3 evaluation by the project's external evaluators. The Consortium for Policy Research in Education found that Reading Recovery students (those who need reading intervention) had 130% more growth than the national average growth of first graders in the scale-up study. The gains made through Reading Recovery intervention are significant. Now where do we go from here?

While there is irrefutable research that Reading Recovery is effective, we still see our numbers declining. What really needs to occur (and I mentioned this in the fall issue of this journal) is for us to look beyond the children that we directly serve one-to-one. We all know that most Reading Recovery teachers work with 8–10 Reading Recovery students across a school year, and that 4 times as many other children benefit each school year from their expertise. We know that Reading Recovery-trained professionals are among the best-trained staff in the school. Yet, Reading Recovery is seen as too expensive, and principals are focused on what works best for the entire student body. It's time for us to take charge of that schoolwide narrative and provide school principals and superintendents reasons to appreciate the power of Reading Recovery. We're not just

talking about the power illustrated in the i3 evaluation. We are talking about what Reading Recovery-trained teachers and teacher leaders can do to change the narrative related to whole-school transformation.

At our February National Conference, we heard from Dr. Anthony Muhammad who is one of the most highly skilled educators of our time. He pressed us to rethink how schools look at learning, teaching, and school culture: Are we a culture that systematically ensures that all children learn at high levels through collaborative teams, or do we continue to rely on the individual teacher to figure out what to do with a class of 25 students?

Reading Recovery can be that change agent to affect the entire school through the professional learning community (PLC) process. Educational researcher John Hattie conducted a meta-analysis of hundreds of studies to ascertain what instructional practices and strategies had the greatest impact on student learning. He determined that an effect size of 0.4 or higher indicated a practice that had significant influence on student achievement. An effect size of 0.4 meant that a student would gain about 1 year of learning growth in 1 year of time. For example, one high-leverage practice—timely and specific feedback—had one of the higher effect sizes at .75 (Hattie,

Visible Learning for Teachers, 2012). In comparison, Hattie reported later that the impact of “collective teacher efficacy” on student learning was 1.57 (Hattie, *Festival of Education in New Zealand*, 2014).

One would be hard pressed to find any approach that is more effective in ensuring high levels of learning for all students than establishing and strengthening professional collaboration through PLCs. A schoolwide system of support for continuous school improvement that has, as its cornerstone, a focus on implementation. The continuation of effective PLCs in every Reading Recovery school would have a profound impact on learning across the country. Reading Recovery can, and should be, that catalyst for transformation.

Principals and superintendents are looking for models that impact the whole school, while increasing student proficiency in reading and writing. Reading Recovery needs to be at the forefront of schoolwide impact. Implementing Reading Recovery as part of a whole-school comprehensive model must be pursued with the same rigor, passion, and excellence that scaled up Reading Recovery from 1984–2001, when 150,000 children were served annually. I urge all Reading Recovery stakeholders to take on this challenge and create new life for Reading Recovery!