

# Editor's Corner

Mary Anne Doyle, Editor-in-Chief

Challenges to Reading Recovery educators are ever-present. Many relate to maintaining strong and growing implementations. Others arise from those who have limited understandings of the complexities of literacy learning and literacy processing theory, effective literacy instruction for the hardest-to-teach learners, and the power of early intervention.



In considering the range of challenges resulting from forces of change and growth, Clay (2005) has advised us of the need to be well prepared to explain what's special about instruction that is individually designed and individually delivered, to communicate the sound rationales for instructional and assessment procedures, and to embrace complexity. Furthermore, she realized that because times and attitudes change, old explanations must be revisited to ensure they are "expressed in today's language and situated in today's policies and current issues" (p. 4). The authors contributing to this issue create a basis for enhancing understandings and explanations so key to preparing us to meet current challenges with effective responses.

Our first article, authored by Billie Askew, asks what's so important about theory? Actually, Reading Recovery educators have a response to this question, as we understand that our assessment and instructional procedures are substantiated by Clay's theoretical perspectives grounded in meticulous research. The rich discussions offered by Askew provide clear explanations of Clay's journey as a researcher investigating and charting new discoveries. Most importantly, this review of literacy processing theory in relation to observing and teaching highlights key understandings to revisit and secure in order to be well prepared to effectively communicate rationales for all aspects of our early intervention. Strong implementations are built on strong rationales.

Jill Baker and Kathleen Brown offer an enlightening discussion of the work undertaken by administrators and teachers in a large urban district committed to supporting their Reading Recovery implementation and extending its influence to create and support a comprehensive literacy program. Their story details how they based actions on sound rationales by considering theories of effective leadership, literacy development, early intervention, professional development, continuous improvement, and accountability. Of special interest is their effective collaborations involving central office administrators, building principals, the teacher leader, Reading Recovery teachers, and classroom teachers in a well-conceived plan of system development and change. Their goals for a comprehensive literacy system took multiple years to accomplish, they have tackled multiple challenges, and their work is ongoing. The authors present an impressive demonstration of the power of shared commitment for the benefit of all children and offer implementation and planning strategies for others to replicate.

Even when our districts have well-developed models of literacy education accommodating all learners, educational policies mandated by state legislators create new challenges. A recent development for many has come in the form of laws and new state policies regarding dyslexia. Rachael Gabriel describes recent trends in dyslexia legislation observed nationally, discusses the dyslexia agenda, and examines its implications for educators of students with reading difficulties. This is of important concern to Reading Recovery. Therefore, Gabriel's recommendation—that Reading Recovery educators address how and why Reading Recovery is a viable option for dyslexic learners by detailing its alignment with the criteria for dyslexia programs—is our newest challenge.

In an article reflecting on Clay's (2005) advice regarding the need to express Reading Recovery theory and practice accounting for today's language, policies, and current issues, I review Clay's theory and related instruction to examine both the alignment and the differences observed between Reading Recovery (and Literacy Lessons) and dyslexia-specific instructional approaches. Clearly reinforced by this article is the appropriateness of Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons teachers serving any students identified for instruction who may be labeled, or considered, dyslexic.

Two authors present research-based evidence of effectiveness. First, Richard Lomax reports the 2016-2017 summary evaluation of Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura (DLL) implementations and shares a separate research brief examining whether successful Reading Recovery and DLL interventions result in fewer children needing to receive special education services after discontinuing. The results of these evaluations are positive: Students demonstrated outstanding literacy success following interventions; and, the number of discontinued students needing special education services following their interventions decreased substantially. An additional source of evidence is offered by Robert Schwartz. By applying What Works Clearinghouse procedures to the most recent research-based evidence, he concludes that Reading Recovery is "the only early literacy intervention with sufficient scientific evidence to justify adoption for the most at-risk beginning readers" (p. 64).

In summary, our authors offer valuable discussions highlighting literacy theory, effective implementation strategies, and current policy issues. We present this issue as a source of appropriate and persuasive content for your reflection. Following Clay's advice, revisit your understandings, refresh your explanations, and respond to new challenges with confidence.

Clay, M. M. (2005). Stirring the waters yet again. *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 4(3), 1–10.

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