As president of the Reading Recovery Council this past year, I have had the privilege and honor to see and hear about the important work of literacy teachers across the U.S. and Canada. By my estimate, I have personally worked with more than 2,500 in the past school year alone: K-12 classroom teachers, Reading Recovery professionals, literacy coaches, special education and ELL teachers, and administrators — all working hard to increase our understanding of literacy learning. This fact is humbling and led me to some deep reflection on how I got to be the teacher I am today.

Naturally, I went back to my childhood, where I know that my family instilled in me a strong work ethic and planted the belief that we are stronger together than we are as individuals. They also taught me that one of life’s greatest endeavors is to become helpful and useful to others. These priceless lessons remain with me today and guide my every decision.

My mother claims that my passion for learning was there when I was born. As she recalls, I was enthralled with knowledge and knew that there was more to be had at this place called school. My K-12 years were bursting with opportunities and I was in my element. But even if I had magically possessed a passion for learning at birth, it would have died without the constant feeding and support of my family and my K-12 teachers. What I saw in them, the ability to inspire and teach, led to my becoming a teacher myself.

My university years at The Ohio State University continued to be formative, with new and interesting information that I had not yet considered. And a new developing passion emerged — being in love with how children learn to read. As a recent graduate, I felt well-prepared for my first job in Whitehall, Ohio. But, what I didn’t know yet, was how much I didn’t know yet!

During that first year as a first-grade teacher, I implemented a workshop approach to both reading and writing. Though there were no books yet on how to do comprehensive literacy in the primary grades, what I did have was an amazing group of colleagues in Whitehall: Sharon Esswein, Carole Heacock, Alisa Limbers, and Vicki Gartner. Along with the support of Dr. C. Ray Williams at Ohio State, we read, studied, planned, implemented, and revised together, and I learned firsthand the importance of being part of a learning community that forever shaped my path.

It was also during this time that the Reading Recovery teacher at our building, Cheryl Hayes, invited me to watch her work with one of my struggling students. I couldn’t believe what I was seeing — such elegance of prompting; the child in charge and active the whole time; and accelerated growth that I was not able to get alone. I was jealous of her ability and knowledge and begged her to teach me this alchemy. After she laughed at me, which I didn’t understand at the time, she shared a few articles and invited me to come back as often as I liked, a decision I’m sure she later regretted.

Recognizing our genuine desire to improve our literacy teaching, Cheryl invited me and the other teachers in our building to hear Marie Clay speak one day after school when Marie was in Ohio for an extended stay at Ohio State.

I remember the meeting was packed and I was mesmerized, not because Marie was particularly hypnotic or entertaining, but because she was so secure in her own beliefs shaped by research and her experience, and because her message resonated profoundly with me. Marie explained that all children CAN learn if we begin with their strengths, use assessments formatively to guide our next moves, and teach in measured ways using authentic reading and writing tasks. I took this message to heart but realized that enacting it was no simple task.

I wanted to know more about and be trained in Reading Recovery. Admittedly, I limped along across the next decade, grasping what I could of Marie’s work and seeking more information. And that led me back to Columbus.
where I attended my first Reading Recovery conference in 1998. I was overwhelmed by the choices of speakers and topics and though I was a classroom teacher, I routinely ventured into Reading Recovery sessions. I was gobsmacked to learn that I still didn’t know squat.

So, I decided I just couldn’t wait any longer. Within 2 years, I changed jobs and districts, landing myself in a literacy coach position with Solon City Schools where I remain today. Solon is one of the most amazing places to work — where every teacher, administrator, and support person work hard to ensure that every child gets what s/he needs every day. And like my years in Whitehall, I had found another learning community to call home. In 2000, when Solon adopted Reading Recovery, I begged to be trained. And when my assistant superintendent, Debbie Siegel, gave me the go ahead, I felt I was the luckiest boy alive!

I was trained by a fantastic teacher leader, Libbie Larrabee, but was not at all prepared for how transformative that training would be. Now, instead of being in love with how children learned, I also became interested in how adults learn, grow, and change. I still wanted more knowledge and after just a few years, I found myself looking at the possibility of becoming a teacher leader who could help make transformations happen for children and adults alike. Fortunately, I received an RRCNA scholarship, funded by Hameray Publishing, for training and returned to Ohio State for more learning. I am forever grateful to Ray and Christine Yuen for what their generosity has done for me and for the other 20 teacher leaders their funds have helped since 2009. In the past 7 years, I’ve helped 75 more teachers make the transformation to become Reading Recovery professionals.

And now, after all this reflection and time, three things are remarkably clear to me:

Firstly, we need to expand our offering of Reading Recovery training to more people, a feeling shared by many within RRCNA. Now, beyond the official training model, there are options for classroom, special education, and ELL teachers at most university training sites to get access to the theories, principles, and procedures of Reading Recovery.

Secondly, literacy teaching is complex and requires continual study. As new and diverse problems crop up across our school settings, more research and refinement is needed to help Reading Recovery and classroom teachers as they support and teach learners. We must continue to look for answers, even when that means working in new and diverse ways.

And lastly, our best tool for dealing with this complexity and change is our ability to socially construct knowledge with colleagues. So, we must continue to grow and strengthen our professional learning communities with university partnerships and engage in cross-building, district, and site endeavors using available technologies to expand and capitalize from our learning network.

I hope you are as proud of your personal journey, as I am proud of the journey that led me to become a teacher, coach, Reading Recovery teacher and teacher leader, and president of RRCNA. As my leadership duties in this role come to an end, I know that my journey is not even close to being over. I still have more to learn, think about, and try, and I’m grateful that I will have your company as our journeys continue together.
Executive Director’s Message

Thank You for Your Partnership

RRCNA Executive Director Jady Johnson

For 16 years, I’ve had the privilege of leading the Reading Recovery Council. I’ve learned so much and had the honor of representing and advocating for the most effective reading intervention in the world! At the end of August, I am retiring and turning this work over to the next executive director who will have the benefit of working with a strong and talented staff team. They, along with others I’ve worked with during my time with RRCNA, have been not only colleagues, but wonderful friends!

The work has been the most challenging of my career, and has been extraordinarily meaningful. Though our Reading Recovery community crosses state and national boundaries, we are united by a commitment to literacy excellence and a shared knowledge of what works!

Please know that I admire and respect the work you do. You are a unique network of professionals working together to achieve remarkable things! No one knows better than you how important literacy is to students, their families, their futures, and to our collective future. Who hasn’t been amazed to watch the behind-the-glass teaching experience? Who can forget seeing a skillful teacher bring success to a struggling reader? What other reading program has the wealth of data and research that Reading Recovery has?

The field of literacy instruction is crowded and competitive. Controversy, especially in the field of beginning reading, has challenged us to be stronger in what we know and how we communicate it to others. I am proud to have worked with you on successful communications and outreach initiatives through the years. RRCNA has focused on building collaboration with respected literacy experts, organizations, school districts, and universities that share similar values and priorities. We have built bridges with school principals and administrators, federal and state education agencies, and others focused on helping children to read on grade level.

In addition to advocacy and outreach, RRCNA provides members with resources and a forum for professional learning and leadership development. Your Board of Directors and I have worked to be sure that this membership association meets the highest standards in nonprofit governance, management, fundraising, human resources, and operations. Since 2008, RRCNA has earned and maintained accreditation from the Ohio Association of Nonprofit Organizations under the national Standards for Excellence Institute® Ethics and Accountability Code for the Nonprofit Sector.

For all of you who are part of the great work RRCNA supports, I say thank you! Whether you are a teacher, teacher leader, trainer, administrator, publisher, or partner, know that you are valued. You have been generous in all the ways that matter, giving your time, sharing your experiences, and donating to support our important mission. I admire your dedication and commitment to children, teachers, and schools. And I am confident that this shared work will continue as the Board and a new executive lead the Council into the future.

As I retire, I will take with me great memories. More importantly, I will keep with me close friends and colleagues — and hold with me all the kindnesses and support so many of you have extended over the years. I thank you for your trust and your partnership!
2018-19 Teacher Leader Scholars

MaryRuth Books
MaryRuth Books offers instructional, clever books that provide reading practice using photos and illustrations to facilitate word recognition and engage the young reader. MaryRuth Books is the proud publisher of the Danny series of children’s books that not only provide reading practice but also support the development of a lifelong love of reading. MaryRuth Books provided one $15,000 teacher leader scholarship. Mallory Turner (left), Effingham County Schools, Springfield, GA, is pictured with donor Mia Coulton.

Pioneer Valley Books
Pioneer Valley Books is dedicated to producing the highest-quality books for early literacy learners. Their books have been carefully written to support students in gaining control over early reading behaviors and in becoming strategic in their approach to print. Pioneer Valley Books provided one $15,000 teacher leader scholarship. Mary Vreeman (right), Hillsborough County Public Schools, Tampa, FL, is pictured with donor Michele Dufresne.

Private Donor
A Private Donor contributed $30,000 to fund two teacher leader scholarships. The recipients are Katherine Herring (left), Chesterfield County School District, Chesterfield, SC, and Michelle Brown, Branson School District, Branson, MO.
Hameray Publishing Group and the Yuen Family Foundation

Hameray Publishing Group/Yuen Family Foundation is dedicated to publishing innovative literacy materials for today’s educators by combining a sound research-based approach with cutting edge classroom solutions. The Yuen Family Foundation—a private charitable organization—in conjunction with Hameray Publishing Group contributed $30,000 to fund two teacher leader scholarships. Donors Ray and Christine Yuen are pictured with Peggy Phillips (second from left) Lexington School District One, Lexington, SC, and Rachel Chappell, Sarasota County Schools, Sarasota, FL.

Many Thanks to Hameray Publishing and Kaleidoscope Series Authors

Over the last 8 years, Hameray Publishing Group and the authors of its Kaleidoscope Collection have donated sales revenue and royalties totaling $80,768 to RRCNA. These leveled readers were written by a group of experienced Reading Recovery teachers, teacher leaders, literacy coaches, and reading specialists — all members of RRCNA. Each year at the National Conference, Hameray President Kevin Yuen and his parents, Ray and Christine Yuen, have presented a check to RRCNA Executive Director Jady Johnson. Many thanks are extended to the authors listed below and to the Yuens!

Three $15,000 Teacher Leader Training Scholarships are available for the 2019–2020 training year.

Our continued thanks to Hameray Publishing Group/Yuen Family Foundation, MaryRuth Books, and Pioneer Valley Books for each offering one scholarship.

Go to RRCNA Grants and Scholarships webpage for details and application.

Apply by May 31
2019 National Conference Scholars

Tenyo Family Foundation offered 10 grants. Founded by the late Sophie Tenyo, the foundation supports charitable, religious, scientific, literary, and educational endeavors for the public welfare and well-being of mankind. Recipients are (top row, left-to-right) Nancy Lane, LaRue County Schools, Hodgenville, KY; Briare Wynn, York Region District School Board, Aurora, Ontario, Canada; Sandy Meyer, Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD, Dallas, TX; (second row, left-to-right) Janine Stutt, York Region District School Board, Aurora, Ontario, Canada; Mary Jane Pelletier, Maine School Administrative District #54, Norridgewock, ME; Kellie Kelly, LaRue County Schools, Hodgenville, KY; Jessica Bach, Southern Boone County Schools, Ashland, MO; Wendy Benson, San Juan Unified School District, Citrus Heights, CA; and Michelle Ruggie, Clover School District, Clover, SC. Not pictured: Lori Evans, Cleveland Metro School District, Cleveland, OH.

Rose Mary Estice Memorial Fund was established in memory of Rose Mary Estice, one of the original Reading Recovery teachers trained at The Ohio State University in 1984–85. An ardent supporter, Rose Mary provided leadership during the early days of RRCNA and continued to serve in many capacities throughout her career. The recipient is Abby Chrismer, Buckeye Valley Local Schools, Delaware, OH.

Teacher Leader Professional Development Grant was funded by the generosity of teacher leaders and trainers during the 2018 Teacher Leader Institute. The recipient is Michele Barnes, San Juan Unified School District, Citrus Heights, CA.

Watch your email and the website for 2020 grant opportunities!
Private Donors provided a total of 12 grants. Recipients are (top row, left-to-right) Carolyn Pridemore, Southern Boone R1, Ashland, MO; Anaese Cravens, Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, KY; Elvi Cabrone, Vancouver School District #39, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; Lynn Newmyer, Rochester Community Schools, Rochester Hills, MI; Nicole Harrison, Vancouver School District #39, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; and Gretchen Gerhardt, Halifax Regional Centre for Education, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada; (second row, left-to-right) Jennifer Wicklow, Fargo Public Schools, Fargo, ND; Brittani Hoesche, Lincoln Public Schools, Lincoln, NE; Lisa Greif, Mount Vernon Community School District, Mount Vernon, IA; Jodi Kerns, Northwest Area Iowa Education Agency, Sioux City, IA; Wendy Rodrigues, New Haven Unified School District, Union City, CA; and Amy Traylor, Graham Local School District, St. Paris, OH.

KEEP BOOKS is designed as a school/home program that addresses the need for inexpensive but interesting books for young children to read at home. Rebecca Fritz (left), Fayette County School District, Lexington, KY, is pictured with donor representative Marsha Levering.

Debby Wood Professional Development Grant was established in memory of Debby Wood, teacher leader in Prince George’s County, MD. Sheila Bieler (right), Prince George’s County Public Schools, Hyattsville, MD, is pictured with donor representative Tiffany Garner.
Pioneer Valley Books offered 4 grants. Pictured (left-to-right) is donor Michele Dufresne with Trisha Warner, McLean County Unit District No. 5, Normal, IL; Jennifer Lewis, Graham Local School District, Saint Paris, OH; Lonydea Todd, Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, KY; and Cortney Pratorius, Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD, Dallas, TX.

RR Books offers a variety of fiction and nonfiction leveled books specifically designed for beginning readers with a goal of providing quality, affordable books for young children. Valerie Gillombardo, Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Cleveland, OH, is pictured with donor Matt Bonnell (right).

SongLake Books hand selects and organizes books from a variety of companies into leveled book sets for guided reading and Reading Recovery. Collections include a wide variety of fiction and nonfiction genres, are culturally diverse and gender fair, and especially target at-risk readers. Andrea LeFever, Sarasota County Schools, Sarasota, FL, is pictured with donor Sarah English (right).
Dr. Julie Olson Literacy Professional Development Grant was established in honor of Dr. Julie Olson, retired director of ISD 196 elementary education and Reading Recovery site coordinator, to honor her commitment and passion for Reading Recovery, literacy and learning. Becky Dirksen, ISD 196, Rosemount, MN, is pictured with donor representatives Teresa Douglas (left) and Kendra Tlusty (right).

Blueberry Hill Books are carefully designed to enhance a child’s strategic thinking and develop comprehension skills. Recurring characters inhabit stories filled with humor and excitement in the leveled storybooks. Trudy Puckett, Willard Public Schools, Springfield, MO, is pictured with donor Patricia Harrison (right).

Geri Stone Memorial Fund was established by family members and friends in memory of Geri Stone’s leadership and work as a Michigan Reading Recovery teacher leader. Grants and scholarships are awarded to Reading Recovery professionals to help offset the cost of training, professional development, school supplies and projects, and other literacy efforts. Recipients (pictured clockwise starting at the top) are Carla Ginn, Trimble County School District, Milton, KY; Julie Maderer, Elba Central School District, Elba, NY; Lois Bailey, South Adams Schools, Berne, IN; Jaime Dawson, Spartanburg District 3, Spartanburg, SC; and Nancy Radley, Shelburne Community School, Shelburne, VT. Not pictured: Cynthia Craft, San Diego County Office of Education, San Diego, CA.
Annual Membership Meeting — Where Laughs and Little Books Abound!

After a full day of National Conference sessions, hundreds of members gathered to relax, enjoy a snack, and learn more about the work of RRCNA.

Featured at the annual membership meeting on February 11 was a guided tour of the RRCNA e-Learning Center by Membership Committee Chair Hollyanna Bates. As always, the dynamic duo of Pat Scharer and Maryann McBride provided entertainment during the annual door prize drawing. This year, 30 lucky attendees left with prizes and, thanks to the generosity of our exhibitors, everyone left with free little books and a smile. If you’re planning to attend the 2020 National Conference, this is one event you won’t want to miss. We hope to see you there!


RRCNA Board of Directors Election Results
We are pleased to share results of the recent election for terms beginning July 1, 2019.

Vice President
Leslie McBane
South-Western City Schools
Columbus, OH

Secretary
Mary Lou Petters
Charleston County School District
Ravenel, SC

Teacher Representative
Debbie Baker
Woodford County Schools
Versailles, KY

Site Coordinator Representative
Steven Foreman
Zanesville City Schools
Zanesville, OH

Site Coordinator Representative
Laura Kingsley
Sarasota County Schools
Sarasota, FL

Trainer Representative
Lori Taylor
University of Maine
Orono, ME

DLL Representative
Carmen Lipscomb
Denton ISD
Denton, TX

Nancy Farmer, a Reading Recovery teacher from Goshen, KY, displays her MaryRuth Books gift basket with a winning smile.
Manitoba Celebrates a Quarter Century

The Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery (CIRR) and the Manitoba Reading Recovery team marked 25 years of Reading Recovery implementation in the province of Manitoba with a series of April events and celebrations.

More than 360 educators gathered for the Canadian National Reading Recovery and Early Literacy Conference held in Winnipeg. During the conference, current and past Reading Recovery trainers, teacher leaders, and teachers joined CIRR Board members and friends of Reading Recovery in Manitoba for a gala evening celebration.

One highlight of this event was the opportunity to hear from a former Reading Recovery student from the very first cohort of students in Manitoba. Dr. Bola Famuyide, now the owner of her own dental practice in Winnipeg, spoke about the impact of Reading Recovery on her life. She offered her deep appreciation to everyone who brought Reading Recovery to Manitoba and the continued support of other students needing literacy assistance.

The Manitoba Reading Recovery team was presented with a certificate acknowledging 25 years of dedication and support. More than 50,000 students have received Reading Recovery lessons in Manitoba over the last quarter century.

We Appreciate Your Generosity

National Conference attendees opened their hearts and wallets in February, donating $8,900 to the Reading Recovery Fund. A matching gift from the M. Trika Smith-Burke bequest brought the total to $17,800. Providing updates during the general sessions, RRCNA Development Committee Chair Annie Opat encouraged attendees to make their gifts. The Reading Recovery Fund allows the Council to continue supporting education policy, adequate school funding, meaningful professional development, and outreach to decision makers. We thank our generous donors as we continue our United in Literacy Success campaign.
Reading Recovery teacher leaders from across the country nominate individuals to receive this prestigious award. It is given annually to individuals not trained in Reading Recovery who have displayed a strong commitment to expand and maintain its high standards, and who made significant contributions to implementation beyond the local level. This year, the Excellence in Literacy Leadership Award was presented to two individuals during the opening general session of the National Conference.

Mary Grassi  
*Title I Director*  
*Cambridge Public School District*  
*Cambridge, Massachusetts*

During her 40 year-career in Cambridge, Mary Grassi has worked as a substitute teacher, classroom teacher, Title I reading specialist, and Title I curriculum coordinator. She has been integral to the development and growth of Reading Recovery in the Cambridge area for the past 25 years. As site coordinator for five school districts, her efforts have helped create a strong model that allows for layers of intervention in response to literacy needs of all children.

Mary connects with other Title I directors across the state, working to ensure financing is available to support training and ongoing professional development for Reading Recovery teaching and implementation. She is a founding member of the Reading Recovery Council of Massachusetts and serves in a variety of roles at the district and state level, receiving numerous awards in her tenure.

“Mary Grassi is a tireless advocate for Reading Recovery,” said Teacher Leader Karen Tlili who, along with Teacher Leader Maureen Bobbin, nominated Mary. “She knows that having access to Reading Recovery is essential for the children who need it most, and she works to maintain...
and extend implementation. She sits on the networking committee of the state council, focusing on recruiting new districts and increasing awareness across the state.”

Cambridge Public School District serves about 7,100 students who speak more than 70 languages; about 28 percent speak a first language other than English.

**Dr. Karen J. Scott**
*Executive Director of Elementary Learning*
*Ozark School District*
*Ozark, Missouri*

For more than 4 decades, Dr. Karen J. Scott has provided progressive leadership to Missouri school districts and shared her passion for Reading Recovery with literacy professionals across the country. As a classroom teacher, college professor, elementary language arts coordinator, federal programs director, site coordinator, and in other roles, her focus has been on literacy instruction.

Dr. Scott has worked to expand the implementation and strengthen the literacy programs in districts across southwest Missouri — first introducing Reading Recovery in Springfield in 1991. Since becoming site coordinator in 2009, she has guided the Ozark School District to become a model of comprehensive literacy, with Reading Recovery-trained professionals sharing their knowledge to benefit the whole school. Her impact is evidenced through mentoring, coaching, conference presentations, advocacy, recognition by her peers, and more — at the local, state, and national levels. Dr. Scott currently serves on the board of directors and is president-elect of the Reading Recovery Council of North America.

“I cannot think of a person who has a greater love for literacy learning than Karen Scott. Her passion for and support of Reading Recovery is evident to anyone she meets,” said Teacher Leader Linda Fugate who nominated Dr. Scott. “Her tireless efforts at the local, state, and national levels have made a tremendous impact on student learning.”

Ozark School District serves about 5,800 K-12 students. With a focus on individual paths of instruction, the district annually reviews and revises a Comprehensive School Improvement Plan comprised of six student-driven goals.
National Reading Recovery & K-6 Literacy Conference

Four days of professional development sparked the enthusiasm of more than 2,700 educators who shared their passion for learning and literacy instruction.

Keynote Speaker C. C. Bates (above left) kicked off the Conference on Sunday with a look at being intentional in our teaching and professional lives.

Lucy Calkins helped us sift through the clutter and hold fast to what matters most in her Monday keynote. Pictured with Lucy (center) are Jeff Williams, RRCNA president and chair of the 2019 National Conference, and Jady Johnson, RRCNA executive director.

Sharing her love of fantasy, Gail Carson Levine (above right) guided us through her world of dragons and fairies in Tuesday’s keynote.

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Jenny McFerlin
@JennyMcFerlin

#ncbus supports teachers in expanding thinking and practice...this conference is about growing teachers and this is what will impact the reading and writing lives of children. #teachersaredecisionmakers #investingtoteachers #literacy

Carla Castator
@cjreads

Hamilton City School District Reading Recovery teachers came to represent! I could not have asked for a better group to begin my career as a Teacher Leader! @rcna.org #ncbus #readingrecoveryworks

For the 34th year, speakers and sessions provided high-impact professional development for all attendees, delivering an important balance of theory and practice.

Dr. Cathy Toll helped administrators and coaches develop strategies and explore partnerships for effective literacy instruction in the day-long Leadership Institute.