

President's Message

Lessons Learned Inform the Future

RRCNA President Karen Scott



Reading Recovery® has been helping struggling readers for 35 years, and it has been my privilege to participate in the Reading Recovery and comprehensive literacy community for more than 25 years. This wonderful community has impacted me both professionally and personally. One of my Reading Recovery mentors, Linda Dorn said it well:

Literacy learning is complex — not only for our children, but for us as well. As teachers, we are constantly learning and experiencing transitions that reflect our new understanding. The children in our classrooms need us to work together as a team to support them on their pathway to literacy. Systemic change lies in our understanding of how our children learn and in our ability to problem-solve with colleagues who work with our children, who share our common experiences, and who speak our language of literacy. (Dorn & Jones, 2012, p. 181)

Recently, my work with improvement science and the Reading Recovery Hub has reminded me that as we learn and understand, we grow. I suspect Marie Clay would have been front and center. Working with the Hub is truly one of the highlights of my professional career. Almost 20 years ago, Gay Su Pinnell and Carol Lyons asked themselves: “What if we could create more and better ways

for teachers to learn from their own teaching? What if we could provide high-quality, ongoing professional development and coaching for literacy teachers that result in improving their students’ achievement?” (Pinnell & Lyons, 2001, back cover). Learning requires ownership, self-regulation, problem solving, and reflection. The Hub work represents this.

Often the question I ask of others is: Are we a learned community or a learning community? Reading Recovery and comprehensive literacy are about learning. Our theories are tentative. Our focus is about how we can inform our teaching.

Marie Clay reminded us in *Early Detection of Reading Difficulties* (1979) that we must have systematic observation: observe individual progress, observe reading behavior, observe during our assessment. Our work continues to honor this practice.

The system of learning requires all of us—teachers, teacher leaders, all educators, and the children—to work

together to help struggling readers. Together, we help them discover the joy of reading and the wonderful days, and weeks, and years of reading that lie ahead for them.

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And I always try to remember that we don’t work alone, but in collaboration using conversation to support our work in an environment of reflection and responsiveness. It is about how we study the needs of the child that changes the trajectory of success for the young learner and for the teacher. Our collaboration creates a social community with a shared responsibility for student learning. When the child is successful, the teacher is successful, and the school is successful. And then we have succeeded.

The opportunity to collaborate with many individuals in the Reading Recovery network continues to enhance my professional and personal life. Look around you. How many friends have you made in this network? We share a common focus. We know that our work makes a difference. If we dialogue you will often hear me talk about the impact that Linda Dorn made on me professionally and personally. Her unconditional support and love supported

me in the many transitions I have made in life. Dorn (2015) told us that “minds of educators can be changed only through authentic mutual experiences grounded in relevant events” (p. 6). Collaboration allows me to question, observe, and network. We are better in our work because of our collaboration.

Less than 30 years ago, Meichenbaum and Biemiller (1998) wrote:

What will it take to change the way students are taught? What will it take to close the learning gap? We don’t need to overwhelm teachers with a long list of new methods to try. Rather we believe what is needed is a theoretical model that explicates the teaching and learning process; a model that will allow the integration of multiple teaching methods, and that will challenge educators to rethink their efforts. (p. 59)

It is critical for all of us to remember that every child is different. They learn at a different pace, they come from different backgrounds, and they have different interests. Marie Clay

(2014) said it best: “If children are to achieve common outcomes after two-three years in school it will be necessary to recognize that they enter school having learned different things in different ways in different cultures and communities” (p. 1).

Reading Recovery and comprehensive literacy have truly made me look at children in a wonderful way — recognizing their strengths and knowing that we have the knowledge and power to change their learning. We don’t have a “one size fits all.” Rather, we tailor instruction to the specific child. We change the child’s future. It is about the child. This truly adds to the joy of our work.

The challenge for us for the next 35 years is to honor our legacy and continue to be the learning community that collaborates and honors the uniqueness of each child. We can change the trajectory. It is about us offering the positive message to others that can transform the future.

The question we all should ask is, “Why not Reading Recovery? Why not comprehensive literacy?” Our expectations must be high for all

learners including ourselves. Let us continue to hold ourselves accountable for high levels of performance. It is about children and their future.

References

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- Dorn, L. J. (2015). Meaningful change: Wisdom from seeing the whole. In L. J. Dorn, S. Forbes, M. A. Poparad, & B. Schubert (Eds.). *Changing minds, changing schools, changing systems: A comprehensive literacy design for school improvement*. Los Angeles: Hameray Publishing Group.
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- Meichenbaum, D., & Biemi, A. (1998). *Nurturing independent learners: Helping students take charge of their learning*. Newton, MA: Brookline Books.
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RRCNA Board of Directors Election Results

We are pleased to share results of the recent election for terms beginning July 1, 2020.



Vice President
Maeghan McCormick
Jackson County Schools
Jackson, MI



Secretary
Mary Lou Petters
Charleston County
School District
Ravenel, SC



Teacher
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Sarasota, FL



Teacher Leader
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Saint Mary’s College
Sumner, IA
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