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- Generous donors have contributed 30+ awards up to $500 each to offset the cost of registration for LitCon 2021. Awards will be given to Reading Recovery teachers, teachers-in-training, teacher leaders, university trainers, or administrators who support the implementation of Reading Recovery. More info can be found at www.literacyconference.org.

Discounted early registration pricing ends December 14th!

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Editor’s Corner

Patricia L. Scharer, Editor-in-Chief

More Celebrations!

All last year we celebrated 35 years of Reading Recovery. In this issue, we can continue the party by celebrating the 20th year of The Journal of Reading Recovery! Be sure to look at the feature written by Marsha Studebaker on the history of the journal and the special thanks to Mary Anne Doyle who served as a section editor and editor-in-chief for a total of 14 years. Doyle continues to contribute to JRR by reviewing manuscripts and submitting articles. In this issue, she introduces new intervention status categories. For each, she provides readers with important rationale focused on Clay’s literacy processing theory. In addition, she thoroughly describes key concepts teachers will find helpful when making decisions about discontinuing a child’s program.

Janice Van Dyke then employs literacy processing theory to examine writing in second grade. Readers will get to know Sally and Cam as writers by using close observational data and writing samples. Van Dyke offers excellent questions to keep in mind when analyzing student writing.

Next, we introduce a new feature for JRR — a Distinguished Scholar Series. Each issue will feature the scholarship of someone who is not directly involved in Reading Recovery but whose work can inform what we do every day with students. Ian Wilkinson first presented his work on the power of talk in a keynote address at the 10th International Reading Recovery Institute. Reading Recovery offers a unique opportunity for children and teachers to talk one-to-one to support language development and literacy. Be sure to look at the seven principles on page 38 as you consider how to strengthen interactions with students. Although the principles are not written specifically for Reading Recovery, there are certainly applications to be found. Be sure to talk about this article along with Amy Smith’s president’s message on page 71 in this issue!

In light of the pandemic and adaptations happening in schools today, we decided to answer the question, “Where are they now?” by interviewing a teacher leader to learn where she and her students are now — mostly in front of a computer screen!

Two important research articles follow as Robert Schwartz and Richard Lomax take a closer look at the i3 data by analyzing the Observation Survey data. The effect sizes they found are impressive so be sure to talk over these findings with local administrators. Next, we travel to Scotland as Gillian Gourlay and Sinéad Harmey offer their comparison study of Reading Recovery students and non-Reading Recovery students. Both articles are important to read and have handy to share with critics.

I’m so glad we can continue to celebrate Reading Recovery, even in the midst of social distancing, masks, and Zoom. Please stay safe so you can continue to do important, essential work with students.
How to Submit Articles

Write for The Journal of Reading Recovery

Every Reading Recovery teacher, teacher leader, administrator, site coordinator, and parent has a good story to tell. Please consider sharing your Reading Recovery experiences, ideas, and surprises by writing for The Journal of Reading Recovery (JRR). We need to hear from you because readers have told us they want to hear more about people like themselves—especially those on the front lines working with children.

Blind Peer Review Process

The Journal of Reading Recovery is a peer-reviewed and refereed publication issued twice annually to members of the Reading Recovery Council of North America. All submitted manuscripts will be read by the editors to determine suitability for publication. Authors will receive an acknowledgment when the submission is received and will be notified via email of the editors' decisions.

JRR uses a blind review process allowing only editors and editorial staff to know the names of the authors. The article will be sent to the appropriate section editor who will monitor a peer review process by a team of reviewers. Editors will send authors feedback from reviewers and, if necessary, specific suggestions for revision.

Guidelines for Authors

1. Select a topic of interest to our Reading Recovery audience.
2. Write clearly, concisely, and use an active voice.
3. Be sure the message is clear and has a consistent focus throughout.
4. Include dialogue or samples of children’s work when possible.
5. Articles will be edited to fit space and style requirements; published length ranges from short anecdotes to longer, more technical articles.
6. RRCNA publications follow the style designated by the most-recent edition of the Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association.

Submitting Articles for Publication

All manuscripts, feature items, photos, and original artwork must be submitted electronically (see website for photo and artwork requirements) via email to vfox@readingrecovery.org.

For original manuscripts, please follow the most-recent APA style guidelines. Manuscripts must be double-spaced and should be no more than 30 pages (excluding reference list, tables, and figures). No identification of the author(s) and affiliations should appear anywhere in the manuscript, including running headers and footers. A cover page identifying corresponding and contributing authors, affiliations, and email contacts should accompany the manuscript, as well as an abstract of not more than 250 words.

For questions about or help with the submission process, email vfox@readingrecovery.org.

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Introducing New Intervention Status Categories for Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura Students

Mary Anne Doyle, University of Connecticut

Editor's note: In keeping with Marie Clay’s writings, the author uses male third-person pronouns to refer to students and female third-person pronouns to refer to teachers.

This academic year (2020–2021) Reading Recovery® and Descubriendo la Lectura (DLL) educators are using a new set of exit status terms for categorizing students as they finish their Reading Recovery/DLL lessons. The decision to revise existing status categories was initiated in response to a call for change and resulted from thoughtful deliberations involving extensive evaluation and field testing. The purposes of this article are to report the processes undertaken to identify and adopt the changes; to introduce the new terms and discuss the categories; and to review concepts reflecting Clay’s (2001/2015, 2013, 2016, 2019) theories and recommended practices in relation to exiting Reading Recovery/DLL students from their individual interventions.

The exit status categories used by Reading Recovery/DLL educators represent their appraisals of students’ literacy achievement and performance at the time an individual’s access to lessons ends. The assigned category for those who have had a complete series of lessons represents a general indication of a learner’s abilities, performance, and instructional needs based on systematic observations; however, misinterpretations and confusions have been observed in the use of our terms.

Many have referred to Discontinued children when we have meant the intervention was discontinued successfully due to the learners’ accelerated achievement in literacy to levels commensurate with the average peers in their cohort and in their independence in directing their own learning. We consider these children capable of continuing to acquire literacy as a result of the instruction offered by their classroom teachers without ongoing, special support.

Recommended is the label we have assigned to all who, after a full series of lessons, have not acquired the literacy behaviors and levels of achievement deemed commensurate with those of the average peers in their cohort. They are all below the class average; however, they have also been found to vary widely in both their achievement levels and their instructional needs. Some are deserving of specialists’ assessments and immediate, ongoing specialist support; others have the literacy skills to survive and benefit from the classroom literacy program, albeit with supplementary support most often provided by the classroom teacher.

Reading Recovery/DLL teachers have accommodated for any confusions the labels may have created by working directly with the school literacy teams and classroom teachers to explain each student’s strengths and to advocate for the instructional setting and support needed by the student to ensure ongoing literacy development after Reading Recovery/DLL. Although this process has been effective, Reading Recovery/DLL educators have called for improvements in our practice, i.e., the terms used to label the learner’s exit status category.
The Change Process
During the 2019–2020 academic year, the North American Trainers Group (NATG) responded to the call for change by appointing a task force to explore alternatives and propose modifications. This task force was comprised of eight members with one representative of each of the four NATG standing committees, one DLL trainer, one member of the NATG Executive Committee, one member of the North American Reading Recovery Improvement Science Hub, and a chairperson — a representative set of U.S. trainers:

- Billie Askew, Texas Woman’s University
- Mary Anne Doyle, University of Connecticut
- Annette Torres Elías, Texas Woman’s University
- Salli Forbes, Saint Mary’s College of California
- Mary Lose, Oakland University
- Debra Rich, Saint Mary’s College of California
- James Schnug, The Ohio State University
- K. Journey Swafford, Georgia State University

Task force members studied Marie Clay’s theories, explored the practices of our international Reading Recovery colleagues, and developed alternative terms and categories. Initially, discussions were arranged with individuals who offered important insights. Jeff Brymer-Bashore, director of the International Data Evaluation Center (IDEC), provided perspective and explained that the data collection system could be redesigned to account for alternative and additional terms. Jennifer Flight, trainer, Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery, explained how Canadian Reading Recovery educators have implemented revised labels for exiting Reading Recovery students in Canada. She highlighted both the benefits they observed and challenges they encountered in doing so.

Preliminary suggestions were shared with U.S. trainers, and their input was helpful in refining descriptions and advancing the project. Practicing Reading Recovery/DLL teachers and teacher leaders were invited to review and evaluate the categories, which were defined for them in a descriptive document, and submit their reactions on surveys. These surveys were administered following 20 weeks of school, as the first round of instruction ended (January or February). Those participating in this activity included 101 teachers and teacher leaders from sites affiliated with the training centers at Oakland University in Michigan, Texas Woman’s University, The Ohio State University, and the University of Maine.

Teachers and Teacher Leaders Shared a Range of Advantages for Recommended Changes

- The new categories better represent the Reading Recovery students’ outcomes. I like the emphasis on processing.
- The new terms are meaningful, descriptive, and easy for non-Reading Recovery teachers to understand. I feel I can use these descriptions to share progress with classroom teachers.
- I much prefer ‘Accelerated Progress’ to ‘Discontinued.’ I feel it is much clearer to teachers and says what it means for students.
- ‘Progressed’ was a much-needed category. Clearly categorizes students who have made good progress, but still need extra support.
- Outside peers will better understand the progress our students make.
- These new categories should give the schools a better idea of what type of support (if any) is needed after the Reading Recovery instruction ends.
- This should ensure that students receive a more tailored and appropriate intervention, should they need it, after Reading Recovery.
- ‘Recommended’ becomes a much more serious category. Something more immediately. Immediate action should be taken to help students get back on track.
- Classroom teachers will better understand gaps the student has and how to provide assistance in the classroom.
The evaluative feedback submitted revealed their expectations of a range of advantages for the recommended changes. Their thoughts are displayed in the box on page 6.

The task force completed work in March 2020, submitting the recommended set of six exit status categories for use by both Reading Recovery/DLL teachers to NATG. The U.S. trainers approved the proposed set and determined that their use would become effective this year.

New Exit Status Categories

The new status categories are displayed in Table 1 showing how the new terms/categories align with prior categories.

The category Accelerated Progress: Achieved Intervention Goal replaces the label Discontinued. This exit status category is assigned to students who accelerate to levels of proficiency commensurate with the average students in their first-grade cohort. Because exiting from the intervention occurs as soon as students demonstrate attainment of this goal, this status category is correctly used for all accelerated students completing a full series of lessons (20 weeks of instruction) as well as for those reaching this goal with fewer than 20 weeks of instruction.

In place of a single category for Recommended, teachers now have two alternatives — either Progressed: Monitoring and Support Essential for Ongoing Literacy Progress or Recommended: Additional Evaluation and Ongoing Intervention Essential for Ongoing Literacy Progress. These two categories for students of varying levels of achievement needing ongoing support are to be assigned only at the end of a full series of lessons (i.e., following 20 weeks of instruction).

There are no changes to three categories: Incomplete, Moved, and None of the Above. Our teachers will continue their established practices for assigning students to these categories. Thus, if the access to Reading Recovery/DLL instruction ends before a child has received 20 weeks of instruction, e.g., the academic year ends thwarting the opportunity for a full series of lessons, and the student has not demonstrated accelerated progress, the category of Incomplete is assigned.

The Moved category is used for those Reading Recovery/DLL students who move away from the school before receiving a full series of lessons (20 weeks of instruction). None of the Above is the appropriate category for any Reading Recovery/DLL student removed from lessons due to unusual circumstances with fewer than 20 weeks of instruction. The rare decision to remove a student is made by someone other than the Reading Recovery/DLL teacher, e.g., the child is reassigned to kindergarten at the request of the parents.

To gain understanding of the changes in terms and the introduction of two categories replacing the former Recommended status category, the following discussion presents key concepts that were instructive to the task force.

Applying Clay’s Theory and Practice

As the task force explored and studied alternative status categories, all decisions were considered in light of Marie Clay’s theoretical perspectives. This was important to the task force as the goal was to improve our communication and use of terms, not to modify established practices of Reading Recovery or DLL. Valued sources of both theory and processes related to observing and interpreting literacy behaviors, discontinuing instruction, and making recommendations for the ongoing monitoring of students were our texts: Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals (Clay, 2016) and An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement (Clay, 2013, 2019).

Most importantly, Chapter 7 in Literacy Lessons continues to be the quintessential resource and is recommended to all Reading Recovery/DLL teachers reviewing their decision-making and end-of-intervention practices. The
change in terms for labeling intervention status categories does not change the essential processes described in this chapter.

The task force found the following topics germane to making exit decisions and in identifying and interpreting evidence of progress in literacy:

1. Emphasis on literacy processing
2. Two positive outcomes of Reading Recovery/DLL instruction
3. A full series of lessons
4. Teaching for acceleration

**Emphasis on literacy processing**

"The term *literacy processing* is used for mental activities initiated by the child to problem-solve the puzzle of getting the messages from a text, or putting messages into texts" (Clay, 2019, p. 34). With the goal of scaffolding development of effective literacy processing systems for reading and writing, teachers provide their Reading Recovery/DLL students with “lessons directed to making them constructive — to actively process information, to find and relate information from different sources, to bring it together, construct a decision, and monitor the effectiveness of that decision” (Clay, 2016, p. 129). Thus, in reading and in writing, the student can potentially draw from all his or her current understanding and all his or her language competencies, and visual information, and phonological information, and knowledge of printing conventions, in ways which extend both the searching and linking processes as well as the item knowledge repertoires. Learners pull together necessary information from print in simple ways at first... but as opportunities to read and write accumulate over time, the learner becomes able to quickly and momentarily construct a somewhat complex operating system which might solve the problem. (Clay, 2001/2015, p. 224)

Clay (2013, 2016, 2019) notes that as the student gains processing proficiency from his many opportunities to write personal messages and read materials that both match his strengths and offer appropriate challenge, his oral reading behaviors allow inferences of complex processing strategies and reveal he is able to

- monitor his own reading and writing;
- anticipate a possible syntactic structure;
- search for different kinds of information in word sequences, in longer stretches of meaning, and in sound-letter sequences;
- discover new things for himself;
- cross-check one source of information with another;
- repeat as if to confirm his reading or writing so far;
- use all sources of information together on the first attempt;
- self-correct errors taking the initiative for making decisions or getting words right in every respect; and
- solve new words by these means.

These in-the-head actions are observed becoming more efficient as a result of instruction supporting the constructive learner.

In essence, the reader engages in “assembling perceptual and cognitive working systems needed to complete increasing complex tasks” (Clay, 2001/2015, p. 269–270). When we confirm that the learner is self-reliant with self-monitoring and self-correcting strategies in both reading and writing, we infer that the student is operating in ways that put him on track to become a competent reader and writer with a self-extending system for literacy learning well underway. We are confident that he will manage the instructional demands of his classroom without ongoing, ancillary support, and his reading and writing experiences will be self-tutoring (Clay, 2001/2015, 2016).

Reading Recovery/DLL teachers use daily running records to assess a reader’s literacy processing strategies, including what he knows, what he attends to, how he solves problems, and what he overlooks (Clay, 2013, 2019). The teacher’s daily analyses of the reader’s behaviors and any errors, including her observation of patterns of responses and the occurrence of self-corrections, provide evidence of the reader’s early processing behaviors evolving into more efficient, decision-making, strategic behaviors over time.

At exiting the intervention, the successful student’s levels of reading and writing proficiency are expected to equal those of children making average progress in his class. However, levels of achievement are only one focus of our decision-making and the final, formal assessment. Scores, or the text read at an instructional level, alone do not reveal the learner’s literacy processing strengths. The teacher’s analyses of the student’s oral reading of pas-
As the task force explored and studied alternative status categories, all decisions were considered in light of Marie Clay’s theoretical perspectives. This was important to the task force as the goal was to improve our communication and use of terms, not to modify established practices of Reading Recovery or DLL.

sages of increasing difficulty, as recorded on the running records, are essential. This is because the important confirmation of an effective literacy processing system, or ability to work proficiently and flexibly with information in print, provides evidence that “the learner can continue to learn to read by reading, and to learn to write by writing” (Clay, 2013, 2019, p. 36).

**Two positive outcomes of Reading Recovery/DLL instruction**

Reading Recovery/DLL teachers have the joyful experience of providing our most vulnerable, young learners struggling to acquire early literacy with individualized instruction daily. This is the “intensive care that results in the fastest recovery of a normal trajectory of progress” (Clay, 2016, p. 19) in reading and writing development.

The fast progress, resulting in a level of achievement equivalent to that of an average learner within the child’s cohort, is described as accelerated learning, a goal of Reading Recovery/DLL instruction. This progress for a Reading Recovery/DLL child connotes more than a specified level of achievement. It also indicates that the child has acquired effective processing systems for reading and writing, is capable of independent problem solving, and demonstrates ability to continue making good progress without the individualized support of the Reading Recovery/DLL teacher. The term/category Accelerated Progress: Achieved Intervention Goal reflects these learner accomplishments. Clay (2016) refers to this success as the first positive outcome of the Reading Recovery/DLL intervention.

Reading Recovery/DLL teachers find that all children benefit from the teachers’ intensive, individualized support; however, some children are found deserving of specialized instruction in reading and writing following Reading Recovery/DLL to ensure their ongoing development. For each of these children, the Reading Recovery/DLL teacher has documented observations of performance that provide keys to planning subsequent supports and ongoing instruction. The identification of learners in need of specialized instruction following their opportunity to learn coupled with rich, diagnostic information is the second positive outcome of the Reading Recovery/DLL intervention (Clay, 2016).

Among the students demonstrating the second positive outcome are many who have made substantial gains in reading and writing and do present evidence of effective literacy processing systems under construction. This is revealed in analyses of their oral reading behaviors that show awareness of effective, strategic problem solving, self-monitoring, and self-correcting. However, this reader lacks the proficiency and independence deemed necessary to ensure that the genesis of a self-extending system is secure. This learner will require instructional support and monitoring by his classroom teacher to ensure his ongoing development. The appropriate exit status category for this learner is Progressed: Monitoring and Support Essential for Ongoing Literacy Progress.

There is another, small number of students whose learning does not accelerate in spite of the intensive, individual attention of the Reading Recovery/DLL teacher. They may have struggled to secure foundational literacy skills; they may have demonstrated confusions requiring the teacher to adjust instructional procedures. They will have made limited progress in reading and writing and, after 20 weeks of instruction, remain deserving of ongoing, specialized assessment and instruction. This “help should be made available immediately to ensure that what has been learned so far will not be forgotten” (Clay, 2016, p. 19). At exiting, these students are categorized as Recommended: Additional Evaluation and Ongoing Intervention Essential for Ongoing Literacy Progress.

**A full series of lessons**

Reading Recovery/DLL teachers cannot predict a child’s progress on the basis of observed literacy behaviors at the initiation of lessons. Nor can we predict end-of-intervention status at any specified time during the lesson series,
e.g., after several weeks of instruction. Rather, the teacher follows the child and supports the learner’s path to literacy by building on his strengths and designing “each part of every lesson to target the cutting edge” (Clay, 2016, p. 18) of his learning, adapting learning opportunities for the child as warranted. Therefore, each student’s series of lessons is unique; acceleration rates for individuals vary; and the Reading Recovery/DLL teacher’s decision making at the time of exiting is based on observations of the individual’s progress.

As soon as learners exhibit the independence and proficiencies in reading and writing that suggest ongoing, satisfactory progress in their classrooms without the individual support of the Reading Recovery/DLL teacher, the series of lessons is discontinued irrespective of the number of weeks of lessons completed. However, every Reading Recovery/DLL student is entitled to a full series of lessons, and no Reading Recovery/DLL child is to be exited from the intervention with less than 20 weeks of instruction unless he has reached the intervention goal (Accelerated Progress). This is most essential for any learners exhibiting ongoing confusions and the need for long-term support to secure effective literacy processing systems for reading and writing.

Impacting the number of lessons and weeks of instruction a student requires in Reading Recovery/DLL is his rate of learning and the expectation that all Reading Recovery/DLL students are capable of accelerating their learning in order to catch up with peers. Achieving acceleration takes precedence in Reading Recovery/DLL; therefore, the intervention is not defined by a circumscribed timeline. Reading Recovery/DLL teachers should never extend lessons to 20 weeks unless the child requires this instructional time.

**Teaching for acceleration**

Teaching for the accelerated learning of each Reading Recovery/DLL student is an imperative. Reading Recovery/DLL teachers accept this responsibility and know that to achieve this goal, they must design “a superbly sequenced series of lessons,” (Clay, 2016, p. 20) for each student, never waste learner time, and make expert decisions that allow the child to make leaps forward in achievement (Clay). This not only allows the student to catch up with his peers; but, when a student’s acceleration results in his exiting the intervention with less than 20 weeks of instruction, it allows earlier entry for the next, lowest student. This creates important access to increased learning time for that student, and perhaps access to the intervention for an additional number of students in an academic year.

When acceleration is compromised and a student does not respond in ways that confirm he is making expected progress, the Reading Recovery/DLL teacher must take immediate action. This may include re-examining assessments of the child, critiquing teaching decisions, adjusting instruction, and inviting Reading Recovery/DLL colleagues to engage in problem solving and to observe lessons. These steps, with more specific recommendations, are fully described by Clay (2016) who advises teachers to take action within the first weeks of instruction if observations suggest that acceleration is challenged. (See Chapter 6 of *Literacy Lessons* for a detailed discussion of appropriate teacher actions.) Clay asserts that taking such steps are “usually sufficient to overcome the child’s lack of progress” (p. 168) and allow him to experience accelerated progress going forward. The student will once again be on his way to catching up with his peers and attaining the intervention goal.

Teaching for acceleration is an important instructional goal for all teachers to revisit often. If Reading Recovery/DLL teachers give thoughtful attention to the accelerated learning of all students, they may be able to help most students achieve Accelerated Progress; avoid a tendency to settle for some progress in place of accelerated progress; and avoid increased numbers of students exiting Reading Recovery/DLL in the Progressed category after 20 weeks of instruction.

**Discussion of the Evidence for Making Exit Decisions**

The Reading Recovery/DLL teacher’s important source of guidance for making exit decisions as a student’s individual lessons end is Chapter 7 in *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals* (Clay, 2016). The following discussion highlights key directions from this chapter in order to relate decision-making processes to the three exit status categories discussed above.

The Reading Recovery/DLL teacher’s observations and records of daily lessons, including analyses of daily running records, offer initial indications of the student’s prog-
ress in reading and writing, including behavioral evidence of processing systems for reading and writing. Reading Recovery/DLL teachers also confer with classroom teachers and with this input plan any support and/or specific instruction that will ease their student’s transition to the classroom. For accelerating students who may not need a full series of lessons, teachers summarize their observations on the “Recommendations for Discontinuing the Lesson Series before Final Assessment” sheet which is shared with the classroom teacher and the school literacy team (Clay, 2016). The formal, final assessment is then conducted.

An Observation Survey of Early Achievement (Clay, 2013, 2019) is administered to Reading Recovery students at exiting. DLL students, who are instructed in Spanish, are administered the Instrumento de Observación de los Logros del la Lecto-Ecritura Inicial (Escamilla, Andrade, Basurto, & Ruiz, 1996). These two surveys are parallel in tasks (Clay’s six observation tasks), in administration and scoring standards, and in resulting scores and indicators of progress. Therefore, in the following discussion the term Observation Survey references both instruments.

The Observation Survey is the assessment used for all Reading Recovery/DLL students as their interventions end, before or at 20 weeks of instruction. It serves as a check on the Reading Recovery/DLL teacher’s observations (Clay, 2016). The Observation Survey is a sound, valid assessment and when administered as designed yields reliable evidence for decision making. Thus, intervention status categories are most often confirmed by analyses of the student’s performance on the six tasks: Letter Identification, Concepts About Print, Word Test, Writing Vocabulary, Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words, and Text Reading.

Clay (2013) designed the Observation Survey to allow “an emphasis on the operation or strategic activities that are used in reading and writing rather than test scores or disabilities” (p. 34) alone. Therefore, while scores for each individual task are recorded, the teacher additionally summarizes evidence of the ‘useful’ and ‘problem strategic activity’ (a) with text, (b) with words, and (c) with letters. Before exploring this process further, it is helpful to review understandings of stanine scores, the scores reported for each task.

**Stanine scores**

The six separate tasks of the Observation Survey vary widely in terms of the demands on the student, the conditions of testing (timed vs. not timed), and the resulting raw score point ranges. This is an understandable condition of an observation tool designed to “allow children to work with the complexities of written language” (Clay, 2013, 2019, p. 13) by assessing both items and processes. However, interpretation of performance across tasks on the basis of raw scores is difficult and impractical. For this reason, raw scores on each task have been converted to stanine scores which are easily interpreted and compared.

Stanine scores are standard scores derived by redistributing the raw scores for any test/task across the normal curve in 9 groups. Stanine scores range from 1 (the lowest score) to 9 (the highest score) and the mean stanine score is 5. One advantage of the stanine scores is that they allow teachers to interpret a child’s results in comparison to an appropriate random sample, that is, children in the same age or grade cohort. This reveals how a student fares in comparison to his age group, or grade level. In addition, because all scores are placed on the same scale, scores from the different types of tasks can be compared. Consideration of the highs and lows of the student’s performance profile, composed of the stanine scores for the six tasks, provides a guide for both selecting and exiting Reading Recovery/DLL students and for planning instruction. Finally, stanine scores resulting from multiple administrations of the Observation Survey can be compared allowing interpretations of a learner’s progress over time.

Clay (2013, 2019) has suggested the anticipated, perhaps temporary, literacy progress that may be observed among students within four discrete groups defined by ranges of stanine scores. For the purposes of our decision making, the task force adapted these ranges creating the following four progress groups. Generally, students with stanine scores in the range

- 5–6 are able to participate successfully in literacy activities expected of the average learners in the grade cohort;
- 7–9 are ready for more complex tasks and challenges that are beyond those expected of average learners in the grade cohort;
• 3–4 are challenged by activities expected of an average learner in the grade cohort and will require very specific teacher support; and
• 1–2 are struggling with literacy tasks and deserve intensive, specialists’ support in order to make progress.

Examining the Evidence
Reading Recovery/DLL teachers have multiple sources of data to synthesize as they consider the learner’s progress in Reading Recovery/DLL lessons. As detailed in Chapter 7 of Literacy Lessons, these include their daily interactions and observational records (lesson records and running records) which detail the learner’s path to literacy and changes in writing and reading proficiencies over time, observations of the child engaged in classroom activities, and classroom teachers’ reports of progress and needs. The final appraisal of the child’s progress, including anecdotal and assessment data, and the determination of a child’s exit status are also discussed with and agreed to by the school’s literacy team. The following explanations are presented to help with the process of examining the data, evaluating the student’s performance, and determining his intervention status category. This discussion is organized in relation to the three exit status categories: Accelerated Progress, Progressed, and Recommended.

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EVIDENCE

**Accelerated Progress: Achieved Intervention Goal**

At exiting, the learner achieving the Accelerated Progress intervention goal exhibits effective processing systems for reading and writing at levels of proficiency that suggest he is able to participate successfully in the classroom literacy program with peers of average achievement levels. He is considered able to solve challenges in reading and writing independently, discover new things for himself, and continue to strengthen and extend his literacy processing systems without individual support (Clay, 2016). Important evidence of current achievement levels and behaviors indicative of effective literacy processing is revealed on the Observation Survey. The student’s performance on the tasks assessing items of information as well as analyses of behaviors recorded during oral reading of passages of increasing difficulty provide evaluative data. In addition to the results of Observation Survey testing, the Reading Recovery/DLL teacher’s daily lesson records and observations of the student in the classroom are additional sources of evidence.

**Observation Survey stanine scores.** Students achieving the goal of acceleration are expected to achieve stanine scores of 5 or higher on most, if not all, of the Observation Survey tasks. (Remember, a stanine score of 5 is the mean score attained by the random sample, indicative of average performance). However, interpretations of text reading levels require additional considerations. For example, “the exit level will need to be matched to the rising levels of proficient readers as the school year progresses” (Clay, 2016, p. 189) and also equal the text level used for the instruction of peers making average progress. In some schools, that level may exceed the level found at stanine 5. Most importantly, the student must have been afforded sufficient opportunities to read higher text levels in order to consolidate processing proficiencies on longer and more complex texts. For these reasons, the instruc-
tional text level recommended by Clay (2016) for the Accelerated Progress student about to exit the intervention is level 16.

While teachers may elect lower exiting levels for reasons that are defensible for their contexts, Clay’s caution regarding exiting students at lower reading levels is critically important. “Reading Recovery children who exit at low levels face a high risk of not maintaining good progress. If a child’s lessons series is discontinued at or below Level 12 one cannot be confident about his subsequent progress” (Clay, 2016, p. 189). There is no, one fixed text level that will guarantee success (Clay, 2016); therefore, the exiting decision is made with many factors in mind and important among these are the reader’s processing strengths.

**Literacy processing behaviors in reading and writing.** The literacy processing behaviors required for meeting the goal of acceleration are the independent, successful problem-solving strategies applied by the student in writing personal messages and in reading texts on the Observation Survey. The Reading Recovery/DLL teacher must confirm that the student will continue to make progress in literacy benefiting from the classroom program without ongoing individual support.

The running records of texts, in particular texts read at an instructional level, yield behavioral evidence of the student’s processing. Analysis of the oral reading allows inferences of how the student works with information in print (meaning, structure, visual) and reveals evidence of behaviors that signal effective processing while reading for meaning. Such behaviors include anticipating, linking, searching, cross-checking, monitoring, confirming, evaluating, and self-correcting. The oral reading sounds successful and fluent, and the student understands what he is reading.

To examine processing during writing, the Reading Recovery/DLL teacher refers to observations gleaned during authentic writing experiences. In writing stories during daily lessons, the student will compose messages that are increasingly longer, more varied, and more complex (in comparison to his writing in the earliest lessons). He will write known words quickly, solve unknown words he wants to write in a variety of ways, discover new things in writing, and show increasing independence in both composing and in recording his personal stories.

**Informal, anecdotal evidence.** Additional indicators of the student’s proficiency may include observations made during daily lessons. The Accelerated Progress student takes initiative, orienting himself to new tasks and texts, makes new discoveries in reading and in writing, persists at difficulty, and knows when to seek help. The classroom teacher’s observations are an additional source of evidence of the student’s performance and success and are important to record.

**Classroom setting following intervention, ongoing monitoring.** The Accelerated Progress student is expected to continue making progress in literacy that matches the development of the average learners engaged in the classroom literacy program supported by the classroom teacher’s ongoing instruction. This instruction offers opportunities to engage with appropriately leveled materials with guided support, to read engaging texts independently, and to write personal stories frequently. The classroom teacher’s observations of ongoing progress will confirm that the student demonstrates (a) success in reading texts of increasing difficulty with 90% accuracy; (b) successful literacy processing behaviors and independent problem solving in reading and writing; (c) increasingly longer, varied, and more complex writing samples; (d) an expanding reading vocabulary; (e) an expanding writing vocabulary; and (f) motivation to pursue literacy tasks. While it is anticipated that the school literacy team will be helpful in supporting the child’s transition, the classroom teacher is asked to ensure the conditions of instruction.

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**EVIDENCE**

**Progressed: Monitoring and Supplemental Help Essential for Ongoing Literacy Progress**

This exit status category includes students who after a full series of Reading Recovery/DLL lessons, i.e., 20 weeks of instruction, have not reached the rigorous standards of Accelerated Progress. This category is a positive outcome of the intervention.

The students achieving this exit status category have made measurable progress in reading and writing; however, they have not attained levels of achievement matching those of their average peers. They demonstrate awareness of effective literacy strategies for reading and writing; however, they require ongoing instructional support to strengthen efficient and independent problem solving. Their current
strengths and proficiencies, considered under construction, do not meet the rigorous level demanded to ensure ongoing development without continued, additional instructional assistance. Monitoring and supplemental help are essential for ongoing literacy progress.

**Observation Survey stanine scores.** Students categorized Progressed achieve stanine scores of 3–4 on most Observation Survey tasks. A range of stanine scores may also be found and reveal higher stanines in several specific tasks, including assessments of item knowledge (e.g., Letter Identification). A stanine score below average is observed on the Text Reading task. The specific text reading level read at an instructional level (90% accuracy) may be level 8, 10, or higher with evidence of literacy processing behaviors under construction. An additional consideration in assigning the category is the rising levels of readers as the school year progresses (Clay, 2016).

**Literacy processing behaviors in reading and writing.** Analyses of the running records of the Observation Survey texts yield evidence indicative of literacy processing behaviors under construction. At the instructional level, the student reads for meaning and attends to all information sources in text (meaning, structure, visual); however, limitations are noted. For example, the reader’s use of visual information may be limited to the initial letter, or he is unable to scan and analyze multisyllabic words successfully. Processing behaviors inferred from oral reading may include anticipating, linking, searching, cross-checking, monitoring, confirming, and self-correcting; however, he may exhibit inconsistencies and he does not exhibit the independent problem-solving strategies required of a reader approaching an average level of achievement.

Writing strengths and needs will vary widely among students categorized as Progressed. The primary source of evidence of the student’s writing behaviors is the observations made by the Reading Recovery/DLL teacher during the writing component of daily lessons. Evidence revealing the student’s composing strengths, word-solving strategies, and independence in writing is found by examining teacher notes of the student’s behaviors, including attempts to record words and all successful, independent solving, as well as the length and complexity of the messages.

**Informal, anecdotal evidence.** The Reading Recovery/DLL teacher’s observations of the Progressed student in the classroom offer evidence of the child’s level of independence in the classroom setting; indication of the child’s ability to engage in the literacy activities offered in the classroom; and direction for planning the type and amount of essential support needed to ensure his ongoing literacy progress. The classroom teacher’s assessment and awareness of the child’s instructional needs are critical.

**Classroom setting following intervention, ongoing monitoring.** The Progressed student’s progress is contingent upon (a) daily instruction in literacy materials approaching, but below, text levels in the average range of challenge for the grade and (b) supplementary help. Depending on the Reading Recovery/DLL teacher’s final assessment, this help may be provided by the classroom teacher who gives the student additional assistance with reading and writing tasks. Or, the supplementary help may involve a literacy specialist who is available to work with the student in a small group for a specified amount of time. The Reading Recovery/DLL teacher may also support the student by creating occasional opportunities to read and/or write together focused on specific objectives, i.e., increasing fluency in reading.

The classroom teacher’s observations will provide evidence of the student’s continuing development by attending to evidence of growing proficiency: reading increasingly challenging texts at 90% accuracy in instructional settings; demonstrating more proficient literacy processing behaviors in all text reading; and problem-solving challenges independently in reading and in writing. Evidence of expanding reading and writing vocabularies and the composition of longer, more varied, more-complex stories will also be observed. The student will persist and take initiative, work at difficulty with increasing independence and success, and demonstrate motivation to read and write.

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**RECOMMENDED: ADDITIONAL EVALUATION AND ONGOING INTERVENTION ESSENTIAL FOR ONGOING LITERACY PROGRESS**

This exit status category is assigned to the small number of children for whom immediate, additional evaluation and ongoing intervention are essential to ensure literacy progress as lessons end. All sources of evidence reveal that the student has found it hard to accelerate even though the Reading Recovery/DLL teacher has adjusted instruction to overcome the learner’s challenges to making progress.
Observation Survey stanine scores. Students categorized Recommended achieve stanine scores of 1–2 on most Observation Survey tasks. A range of stanine scores may be found and reveal higher stanines on several specific tasks (e.g., Letter Identification). A stanine score well below average is observed on the Text Reading task. The specific text reading level read at an instructional level (90% accuracy) may range from 0–7 with limited evidence of effective literacy processing behaviors.

Literacy processing behaviors in reading and writing. Depending on the level of text read with 90% accuracy, analyses of the running records accompanying texts on the Observation Survey yield observations of rudimentary literacy processing behaviors. Although variations will be observed among this group of learners, many will apply what they know demonstrating control of directionality, one-to-one matching, and locating known words (even if a small set). Evidence of the learner's control of foundational learning may additionally reveal monitoring, searching, evaluating, and self-correcting on the basis of these early behaviors. The reader may have some awareness of information sources in print (meaning, structure, visual); but, he will not demonstrate proficient processing or effective problem-solving strategies in the independent, testing context.

The source of evidence for judging the student’s message writing (composing and recording) is found in records of observations made by the Reading Recovery/DLL teacher during the writing component of daily lessons. Attention to the student's compositions (noting length and variety), use of basic concepts of print (directionality, spatial layout), letter formations, use of the working page to analyze sounds in words, and success solving words using a range of strategies leads to identification of both achievements and instructional needs.

Informal, anecdotal evidence. Evidence confirming the need for immediate, specialist assessment and intervention is suggested by the student's performance and interactions in the classroom setting. A wide range of individual behaviors are expected, and we cannot provide a comprehensive list here. Often, the student will make progress in the Reading Recovery/DLL setting; but, he will not make progress in the classroom. The classroom teacher may report that he appears to find learning tasks confusing, is unable to follow directions independently, appears insecure in taking actions, and requires repeated exposure to acquire any new learning. All observations suggest the need for immediate evaluation and intervention beyond the classroom to enable the child to continue to make progress in literacy.

Classroom setting following intervention, ongoing monitoring. The instructional planning for the Recommended student requires the attention of the Reading Recovery/DLL teacher, the classroom teacher, and the school’s literacy team. With the diagnostic information gathered during 20 weeks of individualized teaching, coupled with his performance on the Observation Survey, the Reading Recovery/DLL teacher provides essential information for this planning. These recommendations for literacy instruction are augmented by additional, specialist's evaluations and an ongoing intervention is planned. For some learners and if available, Clay’s Literacy Lessons™ intervention may be the recommended intervention as this will continue individual instruction focused on literacy processing.

Ongoing Monitoring of Progress: Needed by All Reading Recovery/DLL Students

The ongoing monitoring of the progress of every exiting student is a responsibility of every Reading Recovery/DLL teacher. For each individual, the “transition to only classroom support must be made in such a manner that progress continues” (Clay, 2016, p. 186). Thus, for all students, even for those reaching Accelerated Progress status, “[i]t is very important for the school to arrange to monitor progress in some regular way” (Clay, 2016, p. 192).

At the student’s exiting, the plan should be established and indicate how the school literacy team, the classroom teacher, and the Reading Recovery/DLL teacher are to contribute to monitoring the student’s progress and take action in response to any challenges to the student’s ongoing success in literacy. Clay (2016) offers a range of actions that Reading Recovery/DLL may take to support students, including

- scheduling a few individual lessons with the Reading Recovery/DLL teacher to check on progress or focus on an observed need;
• providing occasional, individual sessions with the Reading Recovery/DLL teacher to revisit familiar learning and bolster the child’s confidence and motivation; and

• assessing oral reading every two weeks on texts used for classroom instruction and discussing these running records with the classroom teacher. (Clay, p. 192)

Monitoring of all exited students may also lead to the need for additional support for the student by the classroom teacher. Possibilities include

• providing additional support with new tasks or routines;

• assisting with directions for completing tasks and making expectations clear;

• focusing daily instruction on the child’s strengths in literacy processing; and

• ensuring that instruction occurs at the appropriate level with focus on supporting the learner’s ongoing construction of complex literacy processing systems.

Finally, the monitoring of Recommended students, who require intensive intervention beyond the classroom, will involve all those who support the student with coordination by the school literacy team.

Summary
In summary, the new intervention status categories offer descriptive labels that the task force suggests represent an improvement in our Reading Recovery/DLL practice. It is our sincere hope that Reading Recovery and DLL professionals will find the new exit status categories beneficial in their work and in their communications with classroom teachers, administrators, and parents.

References


Monitoring Our Students’ Writing Development After Reading Recovery

Janice Van Dyke, Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery

Author’s note: All names are pseudonyms.

Introduction
Do you know how writing is being taught in your former Reading Recovery® students’ Grade 2 classrooms? This question is a version of a question that Marie Clay asks Reading Recovery teachers at the beginning of Chapter 2 in Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals (2016). Clay warns that every writing curriculum has its “risk areas” (p. 26), because every classroom program stresses some facets of the writing process and gives less attention to others. Consequently, for some former Reading Recovery students who have completed a series of Reading Recovery lessons with accelerated progress, what is emphasized and what gets less attention in their Grade 2 classroom could have an impact on their continued writing development.

Clay (2016) describes the conditions for keeping students on track after Reading Recovery as “good classroom instruction, a constructive, well-motivated child and consistent monitoring of progress by the school team” (p. 186). In preparation for ending a student’s lesson series, Reading Recovery teachers are guided to talk with the classroom teacher about a child’s writing performance in Reading Recovery and in the classroom. This includes observing the child during classroom writing activities and preparing them to participate in a particular curriculum. This guidance should not be limited to our Reading Recovery students’ Grade 1 classrooms; it also applies to our former Reading Recovery students in Grade 2 classrooms.

Study and Reflection with a Colleague

Review Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals (2016), Chapter 7, pages 186–188 with a Grade 2 former Reading Recovery student in mind.

1. What do you know about how writing is taught in your former Reading Recovery student’s Grade 2 classroom?

2. What evidence do you have that your student is an active, well-motivated writer?

In this article, I examine writing development after Reading Recovery from a literacy processing perspective. I tell the stories of two former Reading Recovery students now in Grade 2, Sally and Cam, who completed their Reading Recovery lessons with accelerated progress in Grade 1. Sally’s story is an example of a former Reading Recovery student whose progress continued in Grade 2 with good classroom instruction and a well-motivated child (Clay, 2016). Cam’s story is an example of a former Reading Recovery student who needed an individualized monitoring plan in Grade 2 to recover a path to progress. Their stories come from a larger collective case study of writing development after Reading Recovery (Van Dyke,
Teaching

2019). I begin with a brief overview of the study to give context to Sally’s and Cam’s stories, and I invite you to engage in opportunities for study and reflection on your current practices and on ways to observe and interpret a child’s writing development in a classroom setting.

A Study of Former Reading Recovery Students as Developing Writers in the Classroom

My study of children’s writing development after Reading Recovery was guided by the following questions:

1. In what ways do the literacy behaviors of children who made accelerated progress in Reading Recovery continue to develop while creating written text in Grade 2 classrooms?

2. In what ways does the classroom context influence the written language development of former Reading Recovery students in Grade 2 classrooms who made accelerated progress?

The study was inspired by a lack of research on writing development after Reading Recovery, and by Clay’s (2001) recommendation for research into classroom learning in the year after completing Reading Recovery lessons that could inform Reading Recovery practices. As she explained:

It is not difficult to find evidence in existing research for this conclusion: Reading Recovery children who have been successful in Reading Recovery make variable progress in the subsequent school year in classrooms and then annually show more consistent progress as they move up through their school programmes. The tentativeness of the early success and the consistency of the later progress are trends to be carefully documented and explained. (p. 280)

Most of the studies of student progress after Reading Recovery that I reviewed show that literacy gains are sustained at least a year or more after receiving Reading Recovery (Askew & Frasier, 1994; Briggs & Young, 2003; D’Agostino & Murphy, 2004; Gapp, Zalud, & Pietrzak, 2009; Hurry & Holliman, 2009; May, Sirinides, Gray, & Goldsworthy, 2016; Rowe, 1995). Although Reading Recovery’s impact in the short term has been described as unequivocal, for some students who made accelerated progress in Reading Recovery, the early intervention alone may not be sufficient without careful, ongoing monitoring to identify problems with literacy processing, motivation, and engagement (Jesson & Limbrick, 2014). Recommendations for further research suggest a focus on classroom learning to explore the literacy behavior of former Reading Recovery students in the classroom context (Askew & Frasier, 1994; Gapp, Zalud, & Pietrzak 2009).

Sally and Cam were two of the four participants in my study. They were recruited from one school in a school district in Ontario that implements Reading Recovery. Students eligible for selection

- made accelerated progress in Reading Recovery,
- were currently in their Grade 2 year,
- were in a regular classroom setting, and
- were English speaking.

Sally and Cam were students in Mrs. Zee’s Grade 2 classroom. From the beginning of January to the end of May, I was a researcher participant in Mrs. Zee’s classroom — observing and recording Sally’s and Cam’s writing behavior during independent writing time. I collected the corresponding writing samples as well as an on-demand writing sample at the middle and end of my time in the classroom. (See Figure 1 for Sally’s mid-point on-demand sample.) I interviewed the students about their writing after completing the on-demand writing sample,

Figure 1. Sally’s Tooth Fairy Story
and I interviewed Mrs. Zee at the beginning and end of my time in her classroom. As a researcher participant in the study, I also had many informal conversations with Mrs. Zee and brief interactions with the students. I did not have access to Sally’s and Cam’s Grade 1 Reading Recovery records or reports. At the beginning and end of my time in Mrs. Zee’s classroom, I administered An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement (Clay, 2013, 2019) and the Burt Word Reading Test (New Zealand Council for Educational Research, [NZCER], 1981). I also took running records of the students’ classroom guided reading text in March and April. These assessments gave me additional information on the students’ overall literacy development.

Looking at Writing Development Through a Literacy Processing Lens

If a student’s writing bears the characteristics of the classroom and the curriculum in which they participate (Bazerman, 2016; Clay, 2016), then progress in writing should be assessed in more than one way. In Sally and Cam’s classroom, Mrs. Zee used student writing as a way to measure progress against the specific expectations of the Grade 2 curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2006) which were

- developing and organizing content,
- using knowledge of form and style in writing,
- applying knowledge of language conventions and presenting written work effectively, and
- reflecting on writing skills and strategies.

To examine writing development through a literacy processing lens, the focus is on process — how a child engages in the act of writing a message. Observable behaviors while writing signal changes in processes such as perceiving, linking, and decision making (Clay, 2001). My observations provided descriptions of processing supported by writing samples.

When reviewing a child’s progress in preparation for discontinuing lessons, Clay (2016) guides Reading Recovery teachers to assess progress in writing with the following questions in mind:

1. How independent is the child in composing, using many ways of solving to get to new words, monitoring, and revising what he has done?

2. Does he know when he needs help?

3. Will he know how to get help?

(p. 191)

Finding answers to these questions requires observation of a student’s writing behavior during the act of writing in their classroom followed by some analysis and interpretation of those behaviors in discussion with the classroom teacher. To illustrate how Clay’s questions can be helpful in observing and interpreting a child’s writing development after Reading Recovery, I invite you to study and reflect on Sally’s Tooth Fairy story and my observations of Sally’s writing behavior.

Study and Reflection with a Colleague:

Figure 1 is an on-demand writing sample from Sally. Table 1 (on page 20) is my observation of Sally in the process of writing.

1. Study Figure 1: Sally’s Tooth Fairy story. What do you learn from this writing sample about Sally as a writer?

2. Now, study Table 1: Sally’s Actions While Writing the Tooth Fairy Story. Using Clay’s questions from page 191, what else do you learn about Sally as a developing writer?

In your examination of Sally’s Tooth Fairy story (Figure 1), you may have noted her ability to give voice to her ideas in an organized way. You may also have assessed Sally’s control of the practical aspects of message production (Clay, 2016) — for example, her control of directional rules, spatial layout, letter knowledge, word knowledge, message clarity, and use of punctuation.

Sally’s actions while writing her message (Table 1) show how she engaged in the writing of her message. From an observational record of her actions, we learn that Sally can write multiple words at a time. She reads back in her message and says aloud some of what she writes down. Sally asks for help (for example, under), but then goes on to problem solve on her own. She articulates syllables in a multisyllable word (pill in pillow and for got), makes decisions, and self-monitors at the word level, asking if she has the correct spelling. She checks her spelling and makes corrections. When Sally gets “mixed up” she reads back into her message. She inserts punctuation and completes her message with a personal flourish.
After Sally finished her message, I interviewed her by inviting her talk about her writing (Reid & Reid, 2008). From our conversation I gained further insight into her decision making. Sally told me that she was trying to “make sense with the picture.” She demonstrated her awareness of an audience for her message with the deliberate inclusion of humor when she said, “If little kids were gonna read my writing I would say, ‘bye bye Tooth Fairy’ ‘cause that would be funny.” Observing Sally write her message showed me how she gave attention to spelling and her awareness that there was a specific way to spell a word (Sipe, 1998). This was confirmed when she said in her interview, “I want to work on spelling and printing.” I use Sally’s writing to illustrate how analysis of a writing sample alone does not capture the dynamic nature of a child’s writing behavior (Kaye, 2006). As presented below in Sally’s and Cam’s stories as developing writers in their Grade 2 classroom, observing a child’s actions while writing provides additional evidence if they are on track to becoming competent writers whose writing improves every time they write (Clay, 2016).

### Observing During Independent Writing Time in Mrs. Zee’s Classroom

Writing activities in Mrs. Zee’s classroom were scheduled in the first block of the morning. Most writing activities were assigned by Mrs. Zee (see Table 2), covered different genres, and were developed around the specific expectations in writing for Grade 2 (Ministry of Education, 2006). Some writing activities continued over several days.

Mrs. Zee’s classroom was organized so that students had their own desk space arranged in groups of four to six. Desks were positioned so that the students had a clear view of a large whiteboard which spanned most of one side of the room. Desk groupings were organized so that the students could move easily around the room and have direct access to common spaces and materials, such as paper. During the last month of my time in Mrs. Zee’s classroom, she made a significant change in how the students used the classroom space. Desks were rearranged for small groupings, in pairs, and individually with no assigned seating. During independent writing time the students could choose the workspace they wanted. A round table without chairs was also available for those who wanted to stand as they wrote.

Chart work was generally displayed on an easel located next to the class gathering space. The charts were used in classroom writing lessons as a tool to support instruction and make thinking visible for later reference. Chart work and whiteboard displays provided a record of student ideas, an example of a type of writing, a list of the expectations for a specific piece of writing, a way to start a message, or a record of a coconstructed piece of writing.

It was in this context that I observed and recorded Sally’s and Cam’s writing behavior during 20 independent writing episodes. While observing, I used my laptop to take descriptive notes of the student’s actions while writing. The resulting detailed descriptions of how the students went about a writing activity—that included interactions with Mrs. Zee, classmates and others—allowed me to reconstruct the chain of events after the activity (Frank, 1999) and form interpretations that over time created a profile of a developing writer.

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Getting to Know Sally
At the beginning of my time in Mrs. Zee’s classroom, Sally’s performance on the Observation Survey (Clay, 2013, 2019) and Burt Word Reading Test (NZCR, 1981) placed her within Grade 2 range (Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery, 2017) and provided evidence that she should be able to cope with the requirements of a Grade 2 classroom writing program (see Table 3 and Table 4). Sally had a positive view of herself as a writer. During our first interview she said that as a writer she wanted to learn “more about animals and more about nature.” Writing had a purpose in her world. It gave her a way of expressing herself (“each week I write about something different”) and a feeling of independence (“it makes me feel nice ‘cause I really get to do it”).

Sally writing in the classroom
During my first classroom observations Sally was researching a report titled *Mice* — a topic that fit with her interest in animals. She found interesting facts about mice and then, working from her research notes, organized those facts under topic subheadings such as what mice like to eat and where mice live (see Figure 2). Each page included an illustration.

During subsequent observations Sally wrote a fiction problem and solution story called *The Flying Book*, which was planned using a graphic organizer and developed over several writing times. In Sally’s story Emma, Lilly, and Jack found a mysterious flying book. During free writing opportunities Sally wrote a poem about the things she liked with a twist at the end. A retell titled *My Weekend* highlighted her brother’s birthday, and in *Money Tree*, Sally wakes up to a tree full of money in her yard.

Sally’s composing, constructing, and self-monitoring actions
*Composing actions* in the context of my study were any observable behaviors that could be interpreted as contributing to the creation of an idea for a message and all the details that supported or expanded that message (Clay, 2016; Spandel, 2012). Sally’s actions that I interpreted as composing actions were commenting, drawing before

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<td>Poem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recount and Response</td>
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<td>Table</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recipe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graphic Organizer</td>
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<td>Narrative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Response</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Free Writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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writing, generating ideas, looking up, moving her pencil, planning, talking about an idea while writing, and talking to herself while writing. (See Table 7 for exemplars.) Standing out as her most common composing actions were looking up and talking to herself while writing. Sally’s ability to compose a variety of messages on a variety of topics in different genres was confirmed by Mrs. Zee. She identified idea generation and voice as areas of strength.

A constructing action was any action that was observed during the recorded expression of ideas (Clay, 1991). The constructing actions that I observed while Sally was writing were asking how to spell a word, copying a sentence starter, copying a word, drawing after writing, indicating she was finished, inserting quotation marks, looking in her practice spelling book, making mouth movements, recording a cluster of letters, recording letter by letter, saying a word out loud, spelling a word orally, writing more than one word at a time, and writing a single word at a time. (See Table 7 for exemplars.) The pattern of Sally’s constructing actions indicated that she was able to express her ideas in whole words and phrases more often than by recording units smaller than a word. However, she also showed the flexibility to engage in more laborious actions to solve an unknown word by drawing on her knowledge of word parts. Sally often used her spelling practice book as a resource for problem solving an unknown word (see Figure 3). The expectation was that she would trial a word on her own, then get feedback on her trial unless she was satisfied with the word. In the following interaction with me, Sally knew the word she trialed was spelled correctly.

Sally: (writing in her spelling practice book)

Janice: Which word did you try in your practice book?
Sally: girl
Janice: Did you get it?
Sally: Yes.

Self-monitoring actions were interpreted as any actions that were focused on previously written text. Reading aloud text and erasing to make changes in text as it was being written (Boocock, McNaughton, & Parr, 2003) were Sally’s most commonly observed self-monitoring actions. Over time, I became more specific in capturing erasing actions and started to note if Sally was erasing a letter, word, or multiple words. Other self-monitoring actions I noted were looking back into the text and moving her pencil along the text (see Table 7 for exemplars). Sally’s erasing actions showed her attention to letters, words, and spacing, which have been described in the literature as “surface level features” (Matsumara, Patthey-Chavez, Valdés, & Garnier, 2002).
**Monitoring Sally as a developing writer**

Sally was able to independently manage the writing activities in her Grade 2 classroom without a formal monitoring plan. She composed different types of messages and used writing as a form of personal expression accessible to an audience. She had different ways of solving new words, with spelling, punctuation and letter formation her biggest challenges. Sally’s self-monitoring actions appeared to be mainly directed toward the surface features of text, such as letter formation and spelling. Letter formation and use of lowercase were not fully mastered, and she was aware of this as a goal for improvement.

Sally knew when she needed help and how to get that help. She independently used her spelling practice book (see Figure 3) to try out words. She asked for help from Mrs. Zee and other adults, primarily to check on her spelling. She also knew how to use classroom resources, such as chart work, to support composing and constructing her messages. Her interactions with classmates during writing were minimal, and she did not appear to be inspired by the ideas of others. Sally’s writing development was supported by Mrs. Zee who prompted her thinking and pushed her toward greater independence and ever higher expectations. According to Clay’s (2016) guiding questions, Sally was progressing well as a developing writer in her Grade 2 classroom. This informal assessment was confirmed by Sally’s end-of-study scores on the Observation Survey and Burt Word Reading Test (see Tables 3 & 4).

**Getting to Know Cam**

Cam was cooperative but apprehensive during my first administration of the Observation Survey and Burt Word Reading Test. (See Table 5 and Table 6 on page 28.) To ensure he was at ease we worked through the tasks in short sessions over several days. Cam did not take an active problem-solving approach on text reading. When encountering an unknown word, he did not engage in problem solving or appeal for help. After telling Cam the word, he often repeated it and then carried on reading. His performance on the Word Reading task of the Observation Survey and on the Burt Word Reading Test indicated that his reading vocabulary was not sufficient to support the challenges of Grade 2 text level.

Cam did take an active problem-solving approach on the writing tasks of the Observation Survey. He was able to generate words, with one word helping him to think of another, and he formed letters easily and legibly. However, he wrote only 34 words in the Writing Vocabulary task and had trouble with vowels on the Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words task. Cam expressed his confidence as a writer telling me in our first interview that he was “getting very good” which made him feel good. He also told me that he wanted to learn “how to write very long words.” These findings were confirmed by Mrs. Zee who said that Cam’s progress in reading was sliding since the beginning of the school year and that writing was a relative strength.

**Cam writing in the classroom**

When writing activities were open ended, Cam drew on his experiences and interests. He designed a cereal which he called *Rock Star*. It was gluten free and had an outer space connection to the stars. He wrote a narrative problem and solution story titled *The Statue That Was Alive*. Mike and Kevin were the main characters who appeared in other stories. Mike was in Cam’s *Ghost Spirit* story plan, and Kevin was a main character in his tornado story. Cam’s stories contained action, conflict, and problems to be overcome with great bravery and ingenuity. Statues, zombies, and ghosts came to life. They needed to be cut down with swords and axes or caged. Tornadoes were

---

**Table 3. Sally’s Observation Survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Pre-Study Score</th>
<th>Pre-Study Stanine</th>
<th>End-of-Study Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter Identification</td>
<td>54/54</td>
<td>54/54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concepts About Print</td>
<td>21/24</td>
<td>24/24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Reading</td>
<td>14/15</td>
<td>15/15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing and Recording</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sounds in Words</td>
<td>36/37</td>
<td>37/37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Vocabulary</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Reading</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Canadian stanines for December Grade 2

**Table 4. Sally’s Burt Word Reading Test**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>EAB</th>
<th>Stanine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Study</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>7.01–7.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Study</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>7.07–8.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Canadian stanine for December Grade 2
managed by being “just a bad dream,” until the third chapter when they became real. What to do during a real tornado stimulated conversation with classmates that may have inspired a safe ending for Kevin and his family down in the basement. There were always safe endings to Cam’s stories.

**Cam’s composing, constructing, and self-monitoring actions**

Cam’s actions while writing which I interpreted as composing actions were drawing, generating ideas, inventing detail not written, looking up, pencil movements, planning, talking about ideas during writing, and talking to himself while writing (see Table 7 for exemplars). Early in my classroom observations Cam was working on a research report titled *Fish*. From a beautifully illustrated book about fish, Cam copied information on characteristics of fish, where fish live, and what they eat. He then added detailed illustrations (see Figure 4).

The requirements of report writing highlighted Cam’s strengths as a writer. He loved to express his ideas through drawing and construct text from words he could find in a classroom resource. Cam appeared to enjoy writing this report, but I was concerned about his writing development. Cam put the most interesting details about fish into the illustrations rather than the text, and he relied on an external resource rather than his own internal resources for solving words. As Mrs. Zee explained, Cam wanted to use the words he could recall:

Cam tends to just want to use the sight words that he has in reading and in writing, but the pool isn’t getting much bigger. So, he’s really getting hung up. He will still try, which is good, but a lot of times I’m asking him what he’s written. I find a lot of times when a Grade 2 student can’t spell a word they can sound it out phonetically. His tends to be more a jumble of letters. He’ll get maybe the beginning and the end; the middle is just kind of a mix. He knows a vowel has to go in so he throws in some vowels. Vowels are his biggest challenge.

Cam’s reliance on external supports to construct a message was evident in how he wanted to use his spelling practice book. After finishing an assigned writing activity, I observed Cam take his free writing time to copy a word from a chart into his spelling practice book and put a line under it. Rather than use his spelling practice book the way it was intended—to trial words and get feedback from Mrs. Zee—he used it to build a repository of words he could access when writing (see Figure 5). Using his spelling practice book this way was potentially helpful. However, at moments of problem solving, I never observed Cam find and use any words he needed from this resource.

Cam engaged in a variety of self-monitoring actions. Some actions appeared to be focused on conventions, clarity, and length: adding to the body of a message, commenting on message length, and erasing a letter cluster or letter. Reading quietly and reading aloud, finger pointing, pencil pointing or moving his pencil along the text were actions that indicated he was reading back into his message (see Table 7 for exemplars of these actions). On one occasion I observed Cam stop writing, look at the beginning of his message, and start to read. Suddenly he stopped reading and continued writing his message. Curious about this behavior I asked,

**Janice:** Why did you reread?

**Cam:** I was looking for the word *out*.

**Janice:** Did you find it?

**Cam:** There (points to the word *out* on the first line of his message).
Reading back into his message may have resulted in going over content, but on this occasion Cam read back to find a word.

**Monitoring Cam as a developing writer**
Cam’s performance on the first administration of the Observation Survey and my early observations of his writing behavior while writing his report about fish were evidence that he required an increase in attention from the classroom teacher to facilitate change in the trajectory of his progress (Clay, 2016). Mrs. Zee and I came up with an individualized monitoring plan for Cam directed toward strengthening Cam’s composing and constructing processes during independent writing.

**Supporting Cam’s composing processes in writing**
Mrs. Zee said that Cam had trouble getting started, particularly on teacher assigned writing activities in which he had to put his own ideas into a message. Insight into what would help him get started came in the first month of the study after observing him write a recount of the origin of Pink T-shirt Day (an antibullying event in Ontario schools; see Figure 6). The students in Mrs. Zee’s class watched a video and discussed the event. Mrs. Zee wrote on chart paper how they might start a recount as well as some key words, such as the names of the main characters. What follows are my observations of how Cam used the chart work to get started on his recount.

Mrs. Zee: Some of you are writing such great detail. Remember the boys who helped were Travis Price and David Shepherd.

Cam: Looks ahead in his journal
Turns the page
Turns back
Looks around the class
Taps his pencil on his book
Writes looking at the top of his page continues writing word after word
Shakes his pencil and rocks back and forth as he looks at his page
Looks at his pink bracelet
Looks at his writing (appears to be reading)
Continues writing (forms letters quickly and neatly)
 Stops writing after three words
Continues word after word
Looks up (appears to be thinking)
Moves his pencil across the last two lines of text (reads what he has written)

Writes the next word, smiles, and keeps writing

Pauses mid-word than continues onto the end of sixth line

Looks up, looks down, looks up, looks down, keeps writing

Mrs. Zee: Need any other word spelled for you?

Cam: Shakes his head

Mrs. Zee: No, doing good?

Once Cam got started using the chart information, he was able to independently compose, construct and self-monitor his message.

My observations of how Cam used the chart work to get started on teacher-assigned writing activities informed his individualized monitoring plan. Mrs. Zee would ensure that any chart work related to a writing activity was accessible. She would then check in with Cam, as noted in the following observation:

Mrs. Zee: If you're stuck thinking about a kindness thing, the chart is here.

Cam: Looks over at the chart and begins to write

Lightly bangs his fist on his desk

Erases

Looks back at the chart

Smiles

Mrs. Zee also supported Cam in getting started by giving him an opening phrase — a technique that Reading Recovery teachers also use.

Mrs. Zee: So how can we start it?

Cam: I don't really know.

Mrs. Zee: If we start with, One day …

On another occasion Mrs. Zee supported Cam to get started on a problem and solution story by inviting him to orally compose. Cam was able to give voice to his idea, and in so doing he recast it in a more complex and clear way.

Changes in Cam’s composing actions

During my last month in Mrs. Zee’s classroom the students were able to free write during independent writing time. Over several writing episodes Cam wrote a chapter story about a tornado. It was during this time that changes in Cam’s composing actions were most evident. He did not use drawing to express his ideas. The detail went into his message. There were no external supports from a story starter or a chart of key words to assist in getting started.

Cam approached the writing with confidence saying, “I love free write, I love free write” as he found a place to write in the classroom. He chose to sit among a grouping of four students and interacted with them about his ideas telling them, “Grandma’s only in the dream. [She] got sucked up ’cause she was rescuing a baby.” What follows is the second chapter of *The Tornado*, with Kevin, Gramee, and the baby (see Figure 7).

One day Kevin went to bed and Kevin woke up and looked out his window. Then he saw a TORNADO but there were 2 tornadoes and he ran to wake up his Gramee and his Gramee woke up and she said, ‘Is that a tornado?’ Yes. ‘Let’s go to the underground base outside.’ They ran across the lawn and once they got [to] the underground base then Kevin’s Gramee heard a baby say, ‘Waaaaa!’ Then his Gramee went out of the base and she got sucked up into the tornado and she said, ‘Aaaaaaaa I’m being sucked up in the TORNADO!’ Kevin’s Gramee felt so bad that she didn’t get the baby. Then Kevin said, ‘Noooooo oo’ and he woke up and said, ‘It was just like the other dream.’ Then he said, ‘Whew’ that Gramee is alive!
During the course of my observations I noticed how Cam would look up without a focus. This I interpreted as a composing action. Cam’s looking up behavior reminded me of a swimmer coming up for air, for example, from my observational notes, “looks up, looks down, looks up, looks down, keeps writing.” While writing the third chapter of *The Tornado* I asked Cam about looking up.

Janice: When you look up are you looking at something or thinking?

Cam: Thinking

Janice: What is your idea?

Cam: He woke the parents.

Janice: What did they do?

Cam: Go to the basement.

**Supporting Cam’s constructing processes in writing**

Cam needed to learn how to draw on his internal resources for problem solving words and build confidence in exercising this action. However, copying from external sources remained a common constructing action for Cam during the first 3 months of my time in his classroom. I observed him copy words letter by letter, letter clusters, words, and sentence starters. He also found words he needed by looking back at a previous message, and, as noted for his report on fish, copying from a book. Although I did not observe him using his spelling practice book to find a word, I did observe him looking in his idea book for a word.

Cam: I know how to write Zombies. It’s in my idea book.

Mrs. Zee: Let me fix that in your idea book.

Cam could not always read the words he copied. On one occasion he asked a classmate to tell him what he had written. During my second month in Mrs. Zee’s classroom, the class was doing procedural writing on how to make pancakes. I observed Cam copy, ‘measure 250 mL of pancake mix,’ from the whiteboard. He then asked a classmate, “What is it?” After learning what he had written, he drew a corresponding illustration.

As Cam became more independent and confident in starting his messages, he also became less reliant on external sources of support for constructing his written messages. Writing multiple words in one go and writing single words were his most frequent constructing actions. In the following example, Mrs. Zee helped Cam to organize his ideas in writing a problem and solution story titled *The Statue That Was Alive*, and then encouraged him to write down those ideas.

Mrs. Zee: One day when Mike and Kevin were bringing wood into the house the statue came alive. Write that sentence down.

Cam: Moves his chair beside Mrs. Zee, writes One day

Mrs. Zee: Looks at Cam

Cam: Writes Mike

**Changes in Cam’s constructing actions**

Further evidence of change in Cam’s constructing actions came from a chronological analysis of my observations. When examined over time, most occurrences of problem-solving actions that drew on internal resources occurred in the last 2 months of the study. Examples of those actions are making mouth movements, recording letter by letter, letter clusters, saying a word before writing it, and spelling orally. These actions indicate that he was taking a problem-solving approach to constructing words that he
needed in a message. This problem-solving approach and a growing confidence in his own resources were evident in writing his tornado story (Figure 7) when I heard him say, “I know how to write baby, I’m not that dumb.” He then said baby out loud before writing it. During the same writing episode Cam consulted with a classmate as follows:

Cam: How do you write gramme? I want to know. Is it g r a m m e (spells)? No, what does it say? (articulates) gr a…gr and…

Classmate: Grandma

Over the course of the study Cam became less reliant on copying from charts and engaged in more word-solving actions. Along with this change came the realization that he could take a problem-solving approach to constructing his messages rather than rely on his memory.

**Stopping the Slide and Recovering Progress**

At the end of the study, changes in Cam’s writing development were evident on a number of fronts. (See Tables 5 and 6). In the first administration of the Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words task of the Observation Survey (Clay, 2013, 2019), all of Cam’s errors were on vowel sounds at the beginning and middle of words. Before beginning this task he asked, “What if I don’t know?” — another example of how he relied on memory rather than problem solving. In the second administration (at the end of the study) he recorded all the correct vowels and self-corrected caming for coming.

On the Writing Vocabulary task Cam wrote 48 words on the end-of-study administration. He was able to generate words along the following categories: words that start with the same letter or digraph (and, am, at, is, it, love, like, look, the, they, this, that, there), rhyming words (will, hill, school, pool, we, he), words that change by adding a letter (you, your), or by changing a letter (run, ran), and number words (six, ten).

Cam’s performance on the first administration of the Observation Survey showed that he also needed to become an active problem solver on text reading that was at his instructional level, which was lower than his classroom guided reading group level. Since there was no other student at his instructional level, Mrs. Zee said that she would teach him one-to-one. We selected text at level 12 and decided on what Cam needed to learn how to do in the next few weeks in order to become a more active and independent reader. While Mrs. Zee did the teaching, I took running records at three points during the course of the study and shared them with Mrs. Zee. By the end of the study, Cam had moved up four reading levels and was a more independent problem solver.

Some former Reading Recovery students need a temporary increase in attention from the classroom teacher to facilitate change beyond Reading Recovery (Clay, 2016). For other children, “a refresher course of individual instruction for a short period would be most helpful for a child who has begun to slip behind his classmates” (Clay, 2016, p. 193). Cam was one of those students. Over the course of the study he received individual reading instruction from Mrs. Zee at a level at which he could feel that he was progressing. By moving him down to a lower text level he became a more independent problem solver. As Mrs. Zee described in our final interview,

[Cam] seems happy to be reading and writing in class, so that’s good. And, he wants to do it on his own too. It’s not just I’m sitting at the front and giving them ideas but they’re doing the writing. If anything, it’s the opposite, he’s the one writing it all down. So that’s a big change, a change in confidence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5. Cam’s Observation Survey</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
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<tr>
<td>Letter Identification</td>
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<tr>
<td>Concepts About Print</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hearing and Recording Sounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing Vocabulary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Text Reading</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Canadian stanines for December Grade 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6. Cam’s Burt Word Reading Test</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Score</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Study</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Canadian stanine for December Grade 2
Word and word part processing in reading and applying spelling knowledge and punctuation in writing were challenges that led Mrs. Zee to assess Cam's reading and writing development as comparable:

"I would say it’s more at par, I don’t think he’s stronger. If you ignore all the spelling, he’d be a stronger writer than a reader. Because some of the sounds are not even close makes him more on par. Then again, he’s made a lot of progress."

Mrs. Zee assessed Cam to be at grade level in generating ideas and organizing his messages. Creating a message with a beginning, middle, and end was close to grade level. She went on to say that Cam was showing "more willingness to write independently…he’s excited to write, which I think is a change from the beginning of the year."

Cam expressed his confidence and motivation to write in our final interview. He thought that he was, "getting better at it, and I really like making stories.” He went on to say that making stories made him feel, "really happy and I like to show people it, and I like to make chapter stories.” When I asked Cam what he wanted to learn next as a writer he replied that he wanted to “start making really, really big chapters” and "get more like better at writing words.” He concluded our conversation by telling me that he loved making his tornado story. Through writing, Cam voiced his ideas and expressed his creativity. He became a risk-taker (Fletcher, 2017), initially through art and text and over time through text alone. Cam changed from relying on external resources, such as charts and books, to find words he could copy, to drawing from his internal resources for problem solving unknown words.

**Monitoring Classroom Progress in Writing**

The findings of this study reinforce the importance of a planned approach to helping students who lag to get back on track after Reading Recovery. Sally’s writing development tells the story of a former Reading Recovery student who is well on her way to becoming an independent writer. Cam’s story is of a student whose progress by the middle of Grade 2 is lagging. However, with an individualized monitoring plan informed by observation and supported by Mrs. Zee, that trajectory was changing by the end of the study.

The guidelines for monitoring the writing development of former Reading Recovery students from a literacy processing perspective are less detailed. The recommendation is for Reading Recovery and classroom teachers to discuss a student’s progress by “talking over his recent work” (Clay, 2016, p. 192). If progress in writing has not continued, a student “might need a little extra help to lift the number of high frequency words he can write, or to assist in getting more ideas into his stories” (Clay, p. 193). I propose that the most productive conversations between Reading Recovery teachers and classroom teachers about what a student knows how to do as a developing writer requires observation of a student under focus in the classroom during independent writing. A study of writing samples alone will not give insight into how a student went about a writing task. Teachers need to observe student behavior looking for evidence of the composing, constructing, and self-monitoring actions that are essential to independent writing. Classroom observation will also show how a student makes use of resources for help during opportunities for independent writing. Observational notes interpreted from a literacy processing perspective, along with writing samples, can lead to conversations between Reading Recovery and classroom teachers about how a student is able to mobilize resources to make decisions while writing as well as the content of their writing.

Along with your observational notes, a starting point for collaborative conversations may be around the following questions:

1. What are some of the changes you have seen in (Student’s) writing?
2. What are some of the sources of help that (Student) uses during writing activities?
3. What aspects of (Student’s) writing meet the expectations for Grade 2?
4. What is (Student) finding challenging?
5. How does (Student’s) reading compare with his or her writing?
6. How would you describe (Student’s) motivation to engage in classroom writing activities?

After completing my observations of the case study students’ writing behavior, I analyzed my observational notes looking for behaviors that could be interpreted as processing actions. Sally, Cam, and the other case study students engaged in a number of different actions while writing messages. I categorized those actions as composing, constructing and self-monitoring actions. As noted above, a composing action I defined as any observable behaviors that could be interpreted as contributing to the creation of...
of an idea for a message and all the details that supported or expanded that message (Clay, 2001; Spandel, 2012). Constructing actions were any actions observed during the recorded expression of ideas (Clay, 1991), and self-monitoring actions were actions focused on previously written text (Boocock, McNaughton, & Parr, 2003).

Some actions were unique to one student. Other actions were observed across cases, such as looking up in an unfocused way (a composing action), writing multiple words (a constructing action), or reading back into a message (a self-monitoring action). The students appeared to mobilize internal resources, such as when they were recording a word or word part. They also drew on external resources in the classroom community such as copying text from a chart or asking a classmate for help with spelling. By the end of the study, student independent action pointed to a level of control of the writing process that allowed them to engage in a variety of writing activities in the classroom, which included seeking help when needed.

Table 7 is a collection of those actions and an exemplar for each. This framework for observing independent classroom writing is only a starting point for interpreting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composing Action</th>
<th>Exemplar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Draws</td>
<td>Creates a message through art or drawing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks at an illustration</td>
<td>Looks at art from a book or illustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talks about an idea while drawing</td>
<td>Talks to another about a message in drawing or art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generates ideas</td>
<td>Talks to another about an idea for a message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plans</td>
<td>Makes decisions on the content of a message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talks about an idea during writing</td>
<td>Solicited or spontaneous talk during writing about a message idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>Remarks that indicate how the composing is going</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicates thinking</td>
<td>Tells someone he/she is thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks up</td>
<td>Looks up with no particular focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes word writing movements</td>
<td>Makes word writing movements across a page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes pencil movements</td>
<td>Tapping, poking, manipulating a pencil in an unconscious way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talks to self while writing</td>
<td>Oral composing of any part of a message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invents detail not written</td>
<td>Oral composing of detail that is not encoded</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructing Action</th>
<th>Exemplar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Looks around the room</td>
<td>Looks for something in the classroom related to writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks how to spell</td>
<td>Asks for help with the spelling of a specific word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks in a practice spelling book</td>
<td>Looks for a word already written in a personal spelling practice book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks in an idea book</td>
<td>Looks for a word already written in a personal idea book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks in a planner</td>
<td>Looks in a planner for assigned writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks in a previous message</td>
<td>Looks at a message written prior to today’s writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copies letter by letter</td>
<td>Copies a word from a classroom resource into a message and looks at the resource before recording letter by letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copies letter cluster</td>
<td>Copies a cluster of letters in a word from a classroom resource into a message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copies a word</td>
<td>Copies an entire word from a classroom resource into a message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copies a sentence starter</td>
<td>Copies a sentence starter to an assigned task into a message from a classroom resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulates a phoneme</td>
<td>Makes a distinct sound of a phoneme in speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulates a cluster</td>
<td>Makes a distinct sound of a group of two or more letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulates a word</td>
<td>Slow pronunciation of a word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covers eyes</td>
<td>Covers eyes to support visualization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes mouth movements</td>
<td>Makes mouth movements with no distinct sound while writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
processing actions developed from a small number of students in one school. I invite you to take a literacy processing approach to observing children writing in the classroom. Record exactly what you see them doing as they are doing it.

Then, using Table 7, interpret those actions, include additional actions, and share your observations with classroom teachers. In so doing you may be supporting other teachers to view writing development through a literacy processing lens.

Table 7. Writing Activites Observed in Mrs. Zee’s Classroom CONTINUED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructing Action</th>
<th>Exemplar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Records letter by letter</td>
<td>Deliberate recording of a word or word part one letter at a time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Records cluster of letters</td>
<td>Deliberate recording of two or more letters in a word without pause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Says word aloud</td>
<td>Says word aloud before or while writing into text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spells orally</td>
<td>Spells a word out loud that is recorded in a message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writes a single word</td>
<td>Fluent production of a single word without pausing regardless of accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writes multiple words</td>
<td>Fluent production of two or more words without pausing regardless of accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inserts period/full stop</td>
<td>Adds a period/full stop into a message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inserts quotation marks</td>
<td>Adds quotation marks into a message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inserts exclamation mark</td>
<td>Adds an exclamation mark into a message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draws after writing</td>
<td>Creates a drawing following a written message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicates finished</td>
<td>Verbal indication a message is complete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Monitoring Action</th>
<th>Exemplar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal indication</td>
<td>Comments on message production, e.g., “Oops, I forgot something.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonverbal indication</td>
<td>Action indicates noticing something, e.g., shakes head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erasing actions</td>
<td>Erases a letter, letter cluster, word, multiple words in a message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicates reading back</td>
<td>Eye movement indicates looking back into a message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks back into text</td>
<td>Gaze or page turning indicates looking back into a message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finger points</td>
<td>Finger points to a word in a message or finger points word by word while reading a message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moves pencil along text</td>
<td>Moves pencil along a message while reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pencil points</td>
<td>Uses a pencil to point to words in a message while reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reads aloud</td>
<td>Reads a message or part of a message out loud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrects letter spacing</td>
<td>Corrects spacing between letters in a word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrects letter</td>
<td>Makes a correction to the formation of a letter in a word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrects a word</td>
<td>Makes a correction to some part of a word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adds to message</td>
<td>Adds a word or words into previously written text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traces a letter</td>
<td>Traces over a letter already written into text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses finger for spacing</td>
<td>Uses finger to measure spaces between words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counts lines of text</td>
<td>Uses pencil or finger to count the number of lines in a message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments on length</td>
<td>Makes a verbal comment about the length of a message, e.g., “look how much I did”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


About the Author

Dr. Janice Van Dyke is a Reading Recovery trainer with the Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery in Ontario, Canada. She has worked as a subject teacher and classroom teacher, special education teacher, Reading Recovery teacher, teacher leader, and trainer in national and international contexts. Janice’s post graduate studies and research interests focus on child development, particularly the concurrent development of language and literacy and young children’s writing development.
Teaching then can be likened to a conversation in which you listen to the speaker carefully before you reply.

— Clay, 1985, p. 6

Just over 50 years ago, James Britton (1969) published his now famous essay entitled, “Talking to Learn.” At the time, Britton was a professor of English at the Institute of Education, University of London (now University College London), and his seminal work on language, literature, and writing was making a major contribution to thinking about education in England, the United States, and other countries. Many educators associate Britton with the prescient phrase “reading and writing float on a sea of talk” (e.g., Myhill, Jones, & Wilson, 2016, p. 23; see Britton, 1972, p. 52). At the time, Britton, along with other language luminaries such as Douglas Barnes and Harold Rosen, had recently participated in the 1966 Anglo-American conference on the teaching of English known as the Dartmouth Seminar. Following close on the heels of that conference, Britton’s 1969 essay was one of the first major publications to draw attention to the importance of talk for developing students’ thinking and learning.

In this article, with apologies to James Britton, I humbly offer a 50-year update on “Talking to Learn — Talking to Learn 2.0.” I use Britton’s essay as a vehicle to take stock of the latest theory and empirical evidence on the power of talk for nurturing students’ literate futures. I organize my essay in three major parts. First, I revisit Britton’s essay and ask, What did we know then about talk and learning? Second, I ask, What do we know now? Third, I look into a somewhat murky crystal ball and ask, What does the future hold for talk and learning? I conclude by considering what the recent work on dialogic pedagogy means for literacy learning and teaching.

What Did We Know Then?

So, what did we know then about talk and learning? Just over 50 years ago, Britton (1969) was trying to discern how we know when learning happens, “what learning looked like” (p. 81). Eschewing numbers from test scores, he assumed that “glimpses of it [learning] are to be found, first, in what people say to each other” (p. 82).

To that end, he closely analyzed transcripts of conversations among high school students, sometimes just among themselves and sometimes with a teacher present. In his essay, we see a group of girls sharing stories about their parents and growing up in their families; another group of girls talking together to translate English into Latin; two other girls
Talking, with their teacher this time, also about their parents; a group of boys engaged in an argument with their English teacher about the value of education; and a class of boys talking about a science experiment with their teacher. For each transcript, Britton essentially asked, “Is anything (in the way of learning) happening here?”

His orientation towards talk seems to have owed allegiance to both cognitive and sociocultural theories of learning. He argued that, in conversation, a less expert student could benefit from having things explained to them by a more expert peer. Conversely, he made clear that a more expert student might benefit from explaining things to a less expert student. Presumably, cognitive rehearsal and cognitive restructuring would help explain these benefits (cf. Webb, 1995). Nonetheless, he fully subscribed to a sociocultural view of learning that would align with Vygotsky’s (1962, 1978) theories. Through talk, Britton argued, students can arrive at an understanding that extends beyond what each alone is capable of — using talk to jointly construct knowledge and understanding (what Mercer, 2000, now refers to as interthinking). Britton saw talk as a means to an end rather than an end in itself.

Britton was not entirely transparent on what he looked for in the transcripts for glimpses of learning, but he identified at least two markers of productive talk. One was making generalizations to explain events (e.g., “I think that’s a good thing … to have a row [a verbal fight] is good … it gets it out of your system,” “I think this signifies that whatever might happen between you and your parents, no matter what … they are there … and it means something, you know, just that they’re there, even”). A second was discussion of alternative possibilities. We see this in the class discussion of a science experiment where the teacher seeks explanations for why copper turns a different color when exposed to a flame. For example:

- **Teacher:** Well, what about it then, A…?
- **Student A:** Well, sir, it got … with something in the copper.
- **Teacher:** Well, where do you think it’s coming from, this black powder?
- **Student A:** From the flame.
- **Teacher:** From the flame? … something coming out of the flame? … See if you can think up something … You think it’s coming out of the flame. Do you think it’s coming out of the flame?
- **Student B:** I think it’s coming out of the copper, sir.
- **Teacher:** You think it’s coming out of the copper? Well, B … see if you can think of things you could do … another experiment which would show which of you’s correct.

(Britton, 1969, p. 112)

Britton also distinguished between different types of talk. He described *expressive speech* as a relaxed, self-revealing type of talk where speakers share their feelings and explore different ideas. He described the language of scientific hypotheses as a spare, more specific type of talk used in scientific activity (i.e., experimentation). This type of talk is used to help perform the mental operations that accompany hypothesis testing. He described *referential speech* as a type of talk that designates things more accurately and more explicitly. It could include the language of reasoning and argument.

Britton clearly privileged expressive speech and the language of scientific hypotheses over referential speech as tools for learning. He argued, connecting to Vygotsky (1978), that expressive speech served as a bridge by which the learner progresses from an understanding of common-sense concepts to an understanding of more-objective, scientific concepts. Echoing Rosenblatt’s (1978) personal response theory, he argued that by making a personal connection to ideas, the learner is able to engage in deeper analysis of them and that the learner’s prior knowledge and experience play a vital role in shaping the way the learner understands new and less familiar information. For Britton, expressive speech was more accessible and develops earlier, whereas the language of scientific hypotheses was more rarefied and develops later.

He was quite dismissive of the value of argument for learning, at least of the level of argument he thought the students he studied were capable of. He noted that students of this age and ability might not yet have the capabilities to engage in productive argument. Moreover, even if they were capable of such an argument, it might not lead to learning in the moment. Whereas expressive speech is more likely to be productive at the time of speaking, he noted that argument might not be productive until afterwards.
Britton had relatively little to say about the role of the teacher in promoting productive talk. For talk to be productive, he noted, teachers need to provide a safe, supportive atmosphere for students to be able to share their ideas and learn from each other. He also heralded Wood, Bruner, and Ross’s (1976) notion of scaffolding, stating that teachers need to “enter into the talk at the right moment and in the right way” (p. 101).

What Do We Know Now?
Having established some of the essential understandings from Britton’s (1969) seminal essay, I now turn to the present day — “Talking to Learn 2.0.” Moving forward 50-plus years, what do we know now? In the following, I identify four topical areas in which we have made considerable progress. I base these areas on a broad array of theory and empirical research that shows substantial convergence of ideas among scholars of dialogic pedagogy, and I include examples from my own work to illustrate the essential understandings.

Better understanding of what productive talk looks like
Whereas Britton (1969) was not entirely sure what productive talk looked (well “sounded”) like, today we have a much better understanding of its essential features. One of the key features of productive talk is that students have more control over the flow of talk and, hence, more agency in the construction of knowledge and understanding. If the teacher is present, typically, this agency is enacted by teachers asking authentic questions that have no prespecified answer and follow-up questions that build on students’ responses or ‘uptake’ (Nystrand, 1997; Nystrand, Wu, Gamoran, Zeiser, & Long, 2003). This might also be enacted by the teacher asking questions that elicit high-level thinking, defined as generalization, analysis, or speculation (Nystrand, 1997) and, in discussions about text, questions that elicit extratextual connections. These questions about extratextual connections include questions that prompt students to make connections to their own lives or feelings (affective), to other texts or media (intertextual), and to knowledge or understanding established by the group in prior discussions (shared-knowledge; Allington & Johnston, 2002; Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003; Bloome & Egan-Robinson, 1993; Edwards & Mercer, 1987; Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2003). Of course, students can, and usually do, ask these sorts of questions; but, when teachers ask them, they signal to students that they are being listened to, that their ideas are being valued, and that they are shaping the direction of the talk.

Examples of some of these moves can be seen in Figure 1 (see page 36). The excerpt comes from a Quality Talk discussion (Wilkinson, Soter, & Murphy, 2010) among fourth graders in Ohio. The students were discussing a story they had just read called Victor by James Howe (1995). The story is about a young boy named Cody who is incapacitated, lying in a coma in a hospital bed. To pass the time, because he can’t move his head, Cody creates an imaginary world which he calls “the land above,” inspired by the ceiling tiles in the hospital. During his stay in hospital, a mysterious man named Victor comes to visit Cody. He pulls up a chair next to Cody’s bed and tells Cody stories about what his life will be like when he comes out of the coma and he grows up. The teacher and students were trying to understand, Who is Victor?

Notice how the students largely had control of the talk. Most of the contributions came from students and there were several consecutive exchanges among students with only brief, occasional comments from the teacher. Notice, too, that the students had responsibility for constructing their understanding and interpretation of the story. They asked questions, managed turn taking, and evaluated each other’s answers. We cannot see in the excerpt, but the students did not raise their hands to speak. They conversed with each other much as adults do, waiting for a space to talk and building on each other’s ideas.

Another key feature of productive talk is students engaging in individual and collective reasoning. Students give long, elaborated explanations for their thinking (Chinn, O’Donnell, & Jinks, 2000; Webb, 1989) and engage in extended episodes of exploratory talk (Mercer, 1995, 2000). We also see examples of these in the above excerpt. Students were reasoning individually—justifying their ideas and making their thinking public—and they were also reasoning collectively. Following the teacher’s question (Can you tell me why you think so?) is an episode of exploratory talk. The students offered alternative perspectives about Victor, challenging and counterchallenging each other’s ideas constructively, all the while giving reasons and evidence from the text to support their ideas. Keywords such as I think, I don’t think, so,
maybe, because, how, why, and could are good indicators that students are engaged in reasoning (Wegerif & Mercer, 1997; Wegerif, Mercer & Dawes, 1999).

These features of productive talk are particular to classroom discussions about text and it must be remembered that the function talk serves is conditioned by context and culture—be it the culture of the classroom, school, or wider society (Alexander, 2001, 2020; Wells, 1999). “It is culture that gives talk the power that it has and, at the same time, it is talk that constitutes the culture” (Kim & Wilkinson, 2019, p. 83). Nonetheless, there is considerable consensus among scholars of dialogic pedagogy as to the indicators of productive talk. Conceptual analysis of a broad range of perspectives on dialogic pedagogy (Kim & Wilkinson) and recent empirical work (Howe, Hennessy, Mercer, Vrikki, & Wheatley, 2019) confirms that such indicators include open-ended questions that elicit extended, thoughtful responses; elaborated responses from individual students; and responses that are built upon and form a coherent line of inquiry.

Better understanding of the benefits of talk for learning
Not surprisingly, we now have a much better understanding of the benefits of talk for student learning. As noted earlier, Britton did not examine any measures of learning. Rather, he analyzed transcripts of conversations for glimpses of learning. Over the past 50 years, especially recently, a considerable body of evidence has amassed that converges on the conclusion that particular patterns of classroom discourse have positive, and sizeable, impacts on students’ academic achievement and reasoning. What is surprising is how large and durable the gains seem to be. In this section, I summarize some of the major studies.

Project Challenge involved a 4-year math intervention conducted from 1998–2003 in one of the lowest-performing school districts in Massachusetts (Chapin & O’Connor, 2012; O’Connor, Michaels, & Chapin, 2015). Each year, the researchers worked with a new cohort of 100 fourth-grade students and engaged them in a variety of math activities. Classroom discussion was not originally part of the intervention but it quickly became a signa-

Figure 1. Excerpt from Quality Talk Discussion Among Fourth Graders

Michelle: I think Victor’s an angel.
Teacher: You think Victor’s an angel? Can you tell me why you think so?
[Authentic question, uptake, question that elicits high-level thinking]
Michelle: Because he, well maybe he comes from like the land above, and that’s where he’s talking to him. And that’s why maybe Cody can’t see Victor ‘cause he’s from the land above and he’s talking to him from up there.
[Elaborated explanation]
Nancy: Maybe he’s just a figure, but he always has this thing on his face that he doesn’t have…
Matt: But he, Cody kept saying “three tiles up, two to the left.”
Teacher: That was interesting.
Andrew: You mean “three tiles down, two to the left.”
Nancy: Yeah, he was talking about the ceiling.
Sam: He thought it was a real place where people lived and stuff, but he said the funny thing about it was, he never gave them a name.
Andrew: And also, the reason why I don’t think Victor was in the land above, well how could he be talking from the land above because remember when Cody said he could hear him, hear the screeching on the floor from when Victor was pulling up a chair to keep Cody company.
[Elaborated explanation]
Teacher: So that’s. Are you saying that’s evidence? [Uptake]
Andrew: Yeah.
Teacher: Interesting.
Andrew: So how could he be from the land above? I mean he could be from the land above, but how could he be talking from the land above?
[Authentic question, uptake, question that elicits high-level thinking]
Matt: But how do you know people can’t travel from and to [the] land above?
[Uptake]
Nancy: This isn’t realistic. This isn’t like nonfiction, so anything can happen.

ture feature. After 1 year in the program, results showed that 57% of students scored Advanced or Proficient on the state math test, compared with only 38% in the state overall. After 3 years, 82% of students scored Advanced or Proficient, compared to only 40% in the state overall. These results held up in a more tightly controlled post hoc comparison. Even more interesting was the finding that the benefits lasted beyond the first year in the program and that they transferred to the students’ performance on the state English Language Arts test. Various activities were involved in Project Challenge but the one which many of the participating teachers reported was the biggest factor contributing to students’ gains was the intensive use of classroom talk.

A more recent study conducted in England (Jay et al., 2017) had a more exclusive focus on classroom talk. In a large-scale randomized control trial, the researchers compared an approach called dialogic teaching with business-as-usual instruction. Seventy-six schools and almost 5,000 Year 5 students participated. Teachers in the dialogic teaching program learned to use different types of talk for particular purposes, not the least of which was to have students discuss, reason, argue, and explain (Alexander, 2018). Results showed that after only 20 weeks in the program, students who participated were 2 months ahead of their control group peers on national assessments in English, math, and science.

A study by Topping and Trickey (2007a) provided data on the effects of another talk-based pedagogy on students’ reasoning. They studied a variant of Philosophy for Children (P4C), an approach to discussion developed by Matthew Lipman (2003), designed to promote critical, creative, and caring thinking among students. The study was conducted in a Local Educational Authority in Scotland with 177 10-year-olds in seven classes in six schools. After participating in discussions for just 1 hour per week over 16 months, using texts developed to teach basic philosophical concepts, the students showed substantial gains on the Cognitive Abilities Test (Lohman, Thorndike, & Hagen, 1993), a measure of verbal, nonverbal, and quantitative reasoning, compared to those in a business-as-usual control (Topping & Trickey, 2007a). In a follow-up study 2 years later, they found that these gains persisted after the students had moved to high school (Topping & Trickey, 2007b).

Fair et al. (2015a) sought to replicate the Topping and Trickey (2007a, 2007b) findings in a low-income, middle school in Texas. They used the same outcome measure as the Scottish study, and the same version of P4C, but for a shorter duration (6 months). Here, 186 seventh-grade students participated in the discussions in their language arts classes for 1 hour per week. At the end of the program, results showed substantial gains in reasoning relative to a control group (Fair et al., 2015a). Again, when students were followed up three years later, Fair et al. (2015b) found that the gains had persisted. Tellingly, eighth graders who participated in only 4–10 weeks of discussions showed no such gains.

These results of individual studies are reflected in findings from several meta-analyses. Some years ago, my colleagues and I conducted a meta-analysis synthesizing results of 42 quantitative studies of the effects of different approaches to conducting text-based discussion on reading comprehension (Murphy, Wilkinson, Soter, Hennessey, & Alexander, 2009). We found some approaches were effective at promoting students’ literal and inferential comprehension, producing effect sizes as large as 0.80 in experimental group comparisons; some were also effective at promoting students’ critical thinking, reasoning, and argumentation about text, producing effect sizes as large as 0.40 in group comparisons. Interestingly, the approaches showed greater effects for students of below-average ability than for students of average or above-average ability. In a follow-up meta-analysis, limited to studies of discussion that provided evidence of transfer to new texts and interpretive tasks (Wilkinson, Murphy, & Binici, 2015), we again found mostly positive effects, ranging from –0.09 for comprehension monitoring to 0.93 for writing a reflective essay. Hattie’s (2018) updated synthesis of 1,500 meta-analyses of factors relating to student achievement shows classroom discussion has an effect size of 0.82. Many of the effect sizes reported in these studies would be considered medium to large by conventional standards (Cohen, 1969) and those with standardized achievement outcomes might be regarded as quite large by recent empirical benchmarks (Kraft, 2020).

These findings would surely make Britton proud. Talk-based pedagogy is no educational panacea but there are enough studies producing sufficiently positive results, conducted in a variety of educational contexts, to make us appreciate the powerful
potential of talk for student learning. What is most encouraging is how large the benefits for students can be, that they can be sustained for 2 or 3 years, and that they can even transfer from one subject area to another. Especially encouraging is that the benefits of such pedagogy are especially apparent for students whom, for whatever reason, might be educationally disadvantaged (e.g., Gorard, Siddiqui, & See, 2017). Talking to learn seems to open up space for all students to benefit.

**Better understanding of what teachers need to do (and how to support them)**

We now have a much better understanding of what teachers need to do to promote productive talk, and how we can support them. As noted earlier, Britton (1969) had little to say about the role of the teacher in promoting talking to learn, though, it must be said, this was not his focus. Current understandings about how to promote productive talk are perhaps best embodied in five principles of dialogic teaching described by Alexander (2017):

- **collective:** teachers and children address learning tasks together, whether as a group or as a class, rather than in isolation;
- **reciprocal:** teachers and children listen to each other, share ideas and consider alternative viewpoints;
- **supportive:** children articulate their ideas freely, without fear of embarrassment over ‘wrong’ answers; and they help each other to reach common understandings;
- **cumulative:** teachers and children build on their own and each other’s ideas and chain them into coherent lines of thinking and enquiry;
- **purposeful:** teachers plan and facilitate dialogic teaching with particular educational goals in view. (p. 38)

The first three principles relate to the more social aspects of learning and establish the collaborative culture or ethos of the classroom for talking to learn. Interestingly, they resonate with Britton’s thinking. He also noted that, for talk to be productive, teachers need to provide a safe, supportive atmosphere for students to be able to share their ideas and learn from each other.

The last two principles relate to the more cognitive aspects of learning. They are more challenging to implement as they require contingent responsiveness on the part of the teacher. They require the teacher to (a) monitor the quality of students’ talk at any point in time, (b) understand what the talk should look like to achieve the desired outcome, and (c) scaffold students’ talk towards that outcome. This again resonates with Britton’s (1969) call for teachers to “enter into the talk at the right moment and in the right way” (p. 101).

To these more cognitively oriented principles can be added two other principles of dialogic teaching from Lefstein (2010):

- **critical:** participants identify and investigate open questions and points of contention within the group; and
- **meaningful:** participants relate the topic of discussion to their own horizons of meaning, and bring those horizons to bear upon one another (and the curricular content) in developing new understandings. (p. 177)

The critical principle reflects the importance Lefstein and other scholars of dialogic pedagogy attach to having students interrogate the issue at hand and engage in argument. The meaningful principle reflects an epistemic commitment on the part of the teacher and students towards the affordances of talk for the meaningful exchange of ideas and for learning.

Encouraging teachers to embrace the principles of dialogic teaching has been a challenging endeavor (Hennessy & Davies, 2020). It requires not only a substantial change in teachers’ discourse practices but also a shift in their knowledge and beliefs about teaching, about knowledge, and about the role of talk in learning and its potential benefit for students (see Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991; Windschitl, 2002).

Some success has been achieved in helping teachers implement the more socially oriented principles (Hennessy & Davies, 2020). Teacher professional development efforts aimed at fostering more dialogic pedagogy have shown that teachers can make progress towards more open discussion, giving students more control over the talk and allowing them to share and elaborate on each other’s ideas. Studies of such efforts show increases in teachers’ use of open-ended, authentic questions, uptake, questions that prompt high-level thinking, and questions that prompt students to build on each other’s ideas (e.g., Chinn, Anderson, & Wagger, 2001; Michaels & O’Connor, 2015; Sedova, Sedlacke, & Svaricek, 2016).
However, professional development efforts have shown only limited success in encouraging teachers to embrace the more cognitively oriented principles, especially the cumulative and critical principles. Teachers struggle with helping students to chain their comments into a coherent line of inquiry and to critically evaluate competing claims (Hennessy & Davies, 2020). Encouraging students to provide reasons and evidence to support their claims is achievable, but and a particular type of talk called inquiry dialogue. Following Walton (1998), inquiry dialogue is a type of talk where participants work together towards the goal of reaching the most reasonable conclusion to a contestable question. Students are expected to defend their own positions when warranted, to critically examine the positions of others, and to give up or qualify their viewpoints in the face of previously overlooked evidence or faulty reasoning (Gregory, 2007).

One program that has shown some success in this regard was a recent research and professional development effort conducted by me and my colleague, Alina Reznitskaya. Our aim was to help elementary school teachers develop expertise in facilitating discussions about text to promote argumentation (Wilkinson et al., 2017). Over the course of a school year, we provided intensive and sustained professional development by means of multiple workshops, study group meetings, and individual coaching sessions. Teachers learned about concepts and principles of dialogic teaching, argumentation, and a particular type of talk called inquiry dialogue. Following Walton (1998), inquiry dialogue is a type of talk where participants work together towards the goal of reaching the most reasonable conclusion to a contestable question. Students are expected to defend their own positions when warranted, to critically examine the positions of others, and to give up or qualify their viewpoints in the face of previously overlooked evidence or faulty reasoning (Gregory, 2007).

The ART is an observational rating scale designed to examine the quality of teacher facilitation and student argumentation in elementary language arts classrooms. It embodies key criteria of quality argumentation each connected to set of talk moves. In our professional development program, we used the ART to structure coaching sessions around specific argumentation criteria and talk moves, thus helping teachers to “develop an ear” for the quality of argumentation during discussion. During coaching, for example, the teacher and the discourse coach would use the ART to assess the quality of arguments in students’ talk and then consider the opportunities (taken or missed) to use a particular talk move. Because teachers’ facilitation practices needed to be contingent on the quality of students’ arguments, they were best learned by teachers when they were situated in the context of student talk during inquiry dialogue. The ART helped foster contingent responsivity on the part of teachers.

**Better understanding of different talk for different purposes**

Britton recognized that there were different types of talk and he privileged some—expressive and hypothesis testing talk—over another—referential talk—as far as promoting learning was concerned. Today, we have a more nuanced understanding of talk and how different types of talk serve different purposes.

One of the principles of dialogic teaching promulgated by Alexander (2017) is the idea that teachers have a repertoire of approaches for organizing interaction and engaging in talk, and that they are able to strategically draw from this repertoire to meet educational goals for their students. Different types of talk include both teaching talk (e.g., rote, recitation, discussion) and learning talk, the latter being the discourse practices we want students to acquire (e.g., to narrate, to explain, to argue). Although all types
of talk serve a purpose, Alexander and others involved in dialogic pedagogy privilege discussion and dialogue. According to Alexander, discussion and dialogue “have by far the greatest cognitive potential” (Alexander, 2017, p. 31) and are “the forms of talk which are most in line with prevailing thinking on children’s learning” (Alexander, 2008, p. 103). Discussion and dialogue afford students greater agency in the construction of their knowledge and understanding, and are more likely to advance students’ thinking on a given topic or idea.

Even within the broad classes of talk referred to as discussion and dialogue, different talk serves different purposes, at least for teachers of literacy. In a forthcoming book (Wilkinson & Bourdage, in press), my colleague and I provide a menu of approaches for conducting classroom discussion about text that teachers can use to foster high-level thinking and comprehension. We organize the book by the different goals talk can serve, vis-à-vis discussion to promote

- Personal response
- Knowledge building
- Argumentation

These goals correspond in large measure to different stances or orientation towards the text. Discussions that promote personal response privilege an aesthetic (Rosenblatt, 1978) or expressive (Jakobson, 1987) stance toward the text. The focus is on the lived-through experience of the text during reading — the “associations, feelings, attitudes, and ideas” (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 25) that the words in the text arouse. Discussions that promote knowledge building privilege an efferent stance (Rosenblatt) toward the text. The focus is on “the ideas, information, directions, conclusions to be retained, used, or acted on after the reading event” (Rosenblatt, p. 27). And discussions that promote argumentation privilege a critical-analytic stance (Wade, Thompson, & Watkins, 1994) toward the text. The focus is on a more critical reading of the text in search of the underlying arguments, assumptions, worldviews, or beliefs.

Different ways of conducting discussion promote different types of talk, and that talk encourages different ways of thinking about or orientations towards the text. Of course, while a particular approach to discussion might privilege one goal or stance, other goals or stances can still be operating, albeit below the surface. Nonetheless, unlike in Britton’s day, we are now in a position to realize that different kinds of talk serve different purposes and our role as teachers is to use talk purposefully to accomplish the goals we have for our students.

What Does the Future Hold for Talk and Learning?

Having established where we are now with talk and learning, what of the future? In this section, I try to predict what’s coming next — “Talking to Learn 3.0” if you like. I base my predictions on emerging, yet still inchoate developments in the field of dialogic pedagogy.

Automated analysis of classroom discourse

One of the most intriguing innovations is the ongoing development of technological systems to automate the analysis of classroom discourse. Based on research identifying features of classroom discourse that are productive for student learning, computer scientists and computational linguists are collaborating with educational researchers to develop speech recognition and analysis techniques for coding classroom discourse. Using natural language processing and machine learning methods with large data, these systems are able to learn how to identify various features of talk that are predictive of student learning.

There are already several commercial apps being marketed for analysis of classroom discourse. These include Visible Classroom (https://visibleclassroom.com), based on Hattie’s (2009) ‘Visible Learning’ work, and TeachFX (https://teachfx.com). Another is the Language Environment Analysis system (LENA; Ford, Baer, Xu, Yapanel, & Gray, 2008) originally designed to record and analyze the language environment of young children in home and early childhood settings. LENA has recently been adapted to identify aspects of classroom discourse in elementary school classrooms (Wang, Pan, Miller, & Cortina, 2014). These systems provide diagnostic information about basic features of classroom interaction such as amount of teacher talk, student talk, whole-class discussion, and student-led group work.

There is evidence, at least with math classrooms, that providing teachers with automated feedback on such basic features can enhance their discourse practices (Wang, Miller, & Cortina, 2013) and improve student achievement (Wayne, Garet, Wellington, & Chiang, 2018).

More sophisticated systems for automated coding of more nuanced features of classroom discourse are in development. These research efforts
are targeting discourse in specific disciplines. In English Language Arts (ELA), Amanda Godley and colleagues are developing Discussion Tracker (Godley & Olshefski, 2019; Olshefski, Lugini, Singh, Litman, & Godley, 2020), a computer-based system that automatically codes features of students’ collaborative argumentation in high school ELA classrooms. Their focus is on three features of student talk: argument moves (e.g., claims, evidence, reasoning); content specificity; and collaboration (e.g., extending or challenging others’ ideas). In related work, Sidney D’Mello, Sean Kelly, and colleagues are developing Cyber-Enabled Teacher Analytics to analyse teachers’ talk in ELA classrooms (Kelly, Olney, Donnelly, Nystrand, & D’Mello, 2017). Drawing on the work of Nystrand (1997), they seek to automate the coding of teachers’ use of open-ended questions, uptake, discussion, and disciplinary language.

In science, Amy Hogan and colleagues are using ClassInSight, a computer-vision system, to help middle and high school teachers improve the quality of their classroom discussion (https://www.hcii.cmu.edu/research/classinsight). Using sensors to record speech and gesture, the system transforms these data into analytics about classroom discussions. Teachers view graphic representations of their classroom talk in an app immediately following a lesson. The goal is to provide teachers with a visual representation of their classroom discourse to promote reflection and teacher learning.

Finally, in math, Tamara Sumner and colleagues are developing TalkBack (Suresh, Sumner, Jacobs, Polan, & Ward, 2019). This project uses deep learning models to detect teachers’ and students’ use of talk moves based on the Accountable Talk framework (Michaels, O’Connor, & Resnick, 2008; O’Connor, Michaels, & Chapin, 2015). Currently, they are developing a model to classify the talk moves based on transcribed audio from teacher and student classroom interactions in math classrooms. The long-term goal is to incorporate this model into a larger application that will enable teachers to upload video through a web-based interface and obtain personalized feedback on their classroom discussions.

All of these systems have the goal of providing teachers with feedback on their classroom talk to promote reflection on their practice. Early results indicate that fully automated analysis of classroom discourse is feasible and can be achieved, at least for now, with moderate degrees of reliability; most research programs report agreement between the system and human coders in the range of 65–77%. It is likely that higher levels of agreement, with a broader range of discourse features, will be achieved in the not too distant future. The power of these systems is their capacity to promote teacher reflection as a catalyst to enhance their discourse practices.

More dialogic pedagogy with very young children

Increasingly, educators are turning their attention to talking in early childhood settings and asking what can be achieved with younger children, and what the pedagogy might look like. Britton’s (1969) analyses focused on students in secondary school. He seemed to have had some reservations about whether younger students would be capable of engaging in productive argument and similar talk for learning. Today, the majority of the work with dialogic pedagogy is conducted with students in upper elementary school, aged 10–12. In the future, I expect to see more deliberative use of dialogic pedagogy with children in the early years.

Glimpses of what this might look like are readily found in findings from the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) Project in Britain (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2004). In this project, the researchers followed 3,000 children as they moved from preschool to school and identified sustained shared thinking as the interaction that best supported children’s learning. They defined sustained shared thinking as occurring when “two or more individuals ‘work together’ in an intellectual way to solve a problem, clarify a concept, evaluate an activity, extend a narra-
Both parties must contribute to the thinking and it must develop and extend the thinking” (p. 36). They noted that this was most likely to occur when children were engaged in one-to-one interaction with an adult or peer partner and during focused group work.

A recent observational study by Vezzani (2019) also sought to identify the conversational contexts in preschool that might be most productive for student learning. Recording 44 conversations in four schools around Reggio Emilia, Italy with children aged 3–5 years, Vezzani found two conversational contexts stood out as most promising. One, not surprisingly, was a narrative context where the teacher engaged children in a conversation following the viewing of a short film, book reading, or oral storytelling. The other was a shared knowledge context where the teacher sought to elicit knowledge the children had constructed together from a prior story or experience. In both situations, teachers asked lots of open questions, and children offered longer, more complex utterances and engaged in frequent child-initiated interactions.

Van der Veen, de Mey, Van Kruistum, and Van Oers (2017) developed and tested an intervention specifically designed to promote productive talk in early childhood classrooms. Called MODEL2TALK and based on Michaels and O’Connor’s (2012, 2015) talk moves, they implemented it over 6 weeks with children aged 4–6 in the Netherlands. The intervention was design to support teachers in opening up space for children to talk and think together. By way of example, the following excerpt comes from a class of preschoolers who were talking about ladybugs after watching a short video:

Dex: Look, I saw that red part [the part that shields the wings] when it was going to fly.

Dana: And then—that was actually. I think he means that it’s protection for his wings. Not for itself.

Bo: But also for itself a little bit.

Dex: Yea, that’s also what I meant.

Teacher: But, um, um—Dana, were you saying that it gives protection for its …?

Dana: Um, um—[wings]. For his wings [yeah]. Because otherwise it will damage its wings and then, he won’t be able to fly very well.

Achmed: Like a butterfly [yeah].

Dana: No, because a butterfly has its own wings, but a ladybug goes like … If you look very carefully—his wings—that red thing goes up like this.

Teacher: Yeah.

Dex: Yeah, that’s what I meant.

(Van der Veen et al., 2017, p. 689)

Notice how the children built on each other’s responses, gave reasons for their ideas (“Because …”) and disagreed with each other, again giving reasons (“No, because …”). The teacher spoke only twice in this episode. At the conclusion of the intervention, results showed that the children had made substantial gains in their oral communicative competence compared to children in a comparison condition who participated in more highly structured discussions. Curiously, the children did not make greater gains in their subject matter knowledge (about animals). Presumably, in this case, the content was well covered in the more structured conversations in the comparison condition.

How young can we go? White’s (2016) provocative exploration of dialogic pedagogy in the early years suggests that even children under 2 years old can participate in learning dialogues with others. Similarly, developmental studies suggest that very young children can engage in and benefit from rich discussion. Between 18 and 24 months of age, research has shown that children can use sentences to argue with their parents and siblings (Kuczynski & Kochanska, 1990; Perlman & Ross, 2005). Conversational turn taking at this age is highly predictive of children’s cognitive outcomes 10 years later (Gilkerson et al., 2018). At 36 months of age, children are able to produce reasons to justify their positions (Stein & Bernas, 1999). Even more advanced elements of argumentation, such as challenges and rebuttals, can be found in the talk of preschool children (Eisenberg & Garvey, 1981). The promises (and perhaps perils!) of immersing very young children in deliberative discourse have yet to be realized.
Digital technologies to augment dialogic pedagogy

Increasingly also, we are seeing the use of digital technologies with dialogic pedagogy. Some, such as interactive whiteboards, are not specifically intended to promote talk but have affordances for talk (Warwick, Mercer, Kershner, & Staarman, 2010), whereas others, such as Talk Factory (http://talkfactory.uk) and Talkwall (https://talkwall.uio.no/#) are designed specifically to capitalize on the power of talk for learning. Talk Factory is an online tool and app designed to support productive discussion in the classroom. It enables teacher and students to track their use of ground rules for exploratory talk (e.g. give reasons, invite others to talk) and thereby enables students to monitor and review the quality of their talk (Kerawalla, 2015; Kerawalla, Petrou, & Scanlon, 2013). Talkwall is a web-based microblogging tool designed for dialogic pedagogy. It enables students to post their ideas to a shared “wall” where they can edit and rearrange their contributions as discussion evolves (Cook, Warwick, Vrikki, Major, & Wegerif, 2019). Students’ contributions are made visible to all so they can extend their own ideas and build on those of others.

Digital technologies alone are unlikely to have direct effects on learning or associated skills (McNaughton, Rosedale, Jesson, Hoda, & Teng, 2018) but they offer affordances for talking to learn in at least two ways. Because these technologies help make students’ thinking visible, they open up “dialogic spaces” for learning, problem solving, and creativity (Wegerif & Major, 2019). A dialogic space is a shared space of reflection and exploration of new ideas that is opened up “when two or more incommensurate perspectives are held together in the creative tension of a dialogue” (Wegerif & Yang, 2011, p. 312). The relation of difference is fundamental to the creation of a dialogic space as it is the difference or tension between perspectives that gives rise to meaning and the generation of new ideas — without difference there can be no meaning and no true dialogue (Wegerif, 2010). It is argued that certain digital technologies create a shared space for representing students’ thinking and that, within this shared space, students can manipulate their ideas “so different perspectives can interact and new learning can occur” (Wegerif & Major, p. 113).

Relatedly, such technologies give students more agency. As mentioned in the beginning of this article, one of the key features of dialogic pedagogy is that it affords students more agency over their construction of knowledge and understanding. Digital technologies can support this process (Omland & Rodnes, 2020). By displaying students’ contributions to the class, and using the contributions as a basis for further discussion, students realize that their ideas matter and that they can actually influence the direction of a lesson. Omland and Rodnes documented how one teacher’s use of Talkwall served as a powerful form of uptake of students’ utterances. By making students’ contributions the focus of joint attention and allowing them to influence the lesson, the teacher positioned the students as important sources of knowledge whose ideas had the power to shape new knowledge and understandings.

Such technologies are in their infancy and we have yet to realize their full potential as a means of supporting talking to learn. More important than the specific digital technologies, of course, are advances in our theoretical understanding of how they support dialogic pedagogy and how we can capitalize on their affordances for using talk as a resource for advancing students’ knowledge and understanding. As the saying goes, “watch this space.”

What Does This Mean for Literacy Learning and Teaching?

Scholarship on dialogic pedagogy reminds us of several important lessons about literacy learning and teaching. First, of course, it reaffirms the extraordinary power of talk for learning, possibly in ways that Britton and his contemporaries could not have fully imagined 50 years ago. Research on various pedagogies for enacting talking to learn has provided compelling evidence of their positive impact on students’ content knowledge, reading comprehension, and reasoning, and other aspects of literate thinking. The benefits have often been shown to be large and to maintain well beyond the time of initial engagement with the discourse. There are even indications that the benefits transfer from one content area to another (e.g., math to English Language Arts). It can now be taken as a given that particular patterns of talk have a powerful, positive impact on students’ learning and development.

Second, and perhaps less well understood, is the idea that different talk serves different purposes. As seen
from recent work, as well as from Britton’s early work, there are a number of options available to us when it comes to engaging students in talk. Discussion has its purpose if we want to further students’ thinking, understanding, and learning (Alexander, 2017). Dialogue has its purpose if we want to scaffold students’ think-

When children’s voices are valued, when they are given space to engage deeply with their own and others’ ideas, they can demonstrate a level of competence that far exceeds what one might conventionally expect.

ing (Bruner, 1978, 1995). Even recitation has its purpose if we want to recap with students what they have covered or assess their knowledge and understanding (Mercer, 1995). The important point to keep in mind is that different kinds of talk serve different purposes, and our role as teachers is to use talk purposefully to accomplish the goals we have for our students. For literacy, in particular, different types of talk encourage different ways of thinking about and orientations towards text.

Third, scholarship in dialogic pedagogy underscores the important role of context and culture in which they are used (Alexander, 2018). What is said before and after, and the wider classroom and school culture, matters to how language functions. In some situations, for example, a teacher question might prompt only a brief response from students; in others, where there is a culture of respect for different ideas and students feel supported in interrogating those ideas, the same question might elicit a more elaborated response and an extended series of student-student interchanges. Even a closed question or a didactic statement can be viewed as dialogic if it is “in service of a dialogic teacher stance” (Boyd & Markarian, 2011, p. 518). Dialogic pedagogy foregrounds the close relationship between talk and culture. Attending to the interconnection between the two, and not just talk, is necessary to foster productive contexts for furthering students’ thinking, learning, and problem solving (Kim & Wilkinson, 2019).

I began this article with a quotation from Marie Clay (1985): “Teaching then can be likened to a conversation in which you listen to the speaker carefully before you reply” (p. 6). In this statement, Marie is proposing conversation as one model of good teaching (see Clay, 1998). What is so interesting about this statement is its dialogic quality. On the one hand, it can be taken metaphorically or analogically. On the other hand, from the perspective of talking to learn, it can be taken literally. Either way, it embodies one of the fundamental principles of dialogic teaching and of teaching generally — reciprocity, the need for reciprocal sharing of ideas and consideration of alternative viewpoints between students and between teacher and student. Dialogic pedagogy offers “a powerful way of giving authority to, and demonstrating respect for, children’s ideas” (Jenkins & Lyle, 2010, p. 464). When children’s voices are valued, when they are given space to engage deeply with their own and others’ ideas, they can demonstrate a level of competence that far exceeds what one might conventionally expect. Good teaching is “teaching with the reciprocity of conversations in mind” (Clay, 1998, p. 34).

References


About the Cover

Robert enjoys life with an infectious smile and is always looking for ways to help others. He worked hard and made great gains during Reading Recovery, and his lessons were discontinued after 15 weeks. His parents saw huge changes in both his reading and writing, reporting that he was more confident and wanted to read beyond his required reading — our ultimate goal! Now in sixth grade, Robert continues to be successful in school. He likes to read fantasy (*The Last Kids on Earth*), fiction (*Dogman Series*) and nonfiction (*I Survive*). In addition to reading, he enjoys hanging out with friends outside of school and playing video games — good experience for his plan to make video games when he grows up.
Where Are They Now?

An Interview with Peggy Phillips, Lexington County School District One

Typically on this page, we share pictures and success stories of children who experienced Reading Recovery and are now in high school, college, or beyond. However, the current answer to the question, “Where are they now?” is that we are in the midst of a pandemic which has pressed Reading Recovery teachers to find creative ways to teach their students from a distance.

So this time, we feature an interview with Peggy Phillips, a Reading Recovery teacher leader from South Carolina, to learn about how she and her teachers have been supporting their students via distance learning.

Where were you and your students at the beginning of the pandemic?

We had just gotten into our second round of students and had finished Roaming when we had to go into quarantine. We left on Wednesday for a long weekend and we got notice Sunday night we would not be returning to school. We spent the first week taking time to figure out what we could do and to connect with parents. Although I was able to stay in contact regularly with all of my Reading Recovery students, two of my students were going to be consistently available to connect virtually so I focused on what I could do to support their learning.

How did your planning go?

I knew about Zoom from previous Reading Recovery training so I was comfortable using that platform. I started by scouring the Internet for books we could use electronically. Thankfully, we were able to get a 30-day free subscription for PM eCollection from Cengage. We were even able to mask words and teach analogies by sharing the screen with students. Later, Clemson was able to buy 100 licenses for a year that teachers could use. That way, we could also give each child their own account so they could read the books on their own. We also signed up for the free subscription of Literacy Footprints Digital Reader from Pioneer Valley Books when it was launched. In order to continue to provide a variety of texts, we also used document cameras to share texts from our personal collections.
What barriers did you experience?
When we left, we didn’t know that we wouldn’t be able to get back into the building for several weeks so we used what we could until we could get access. Some of the teachers used their phone as a doc camera by positioning it between two cans of soup! When we finally got back into the building, we gathered up all our supplies and put book collections together for each child with many easy books for independent reading, dry erase boards, and markers. The school scheduled a pick-up day to get new materials every few weeks. Although we knew the books may not ever return due to COVID concerns, we sent them anyway! If parents couldn’t pick up materials, teachers left packages in mailboxes or on doorsteps. We had to get books in kids’ hands! We also had several families that did not have devices or Internet access. We had to get very creative with ways to connect with these families, oftentimes connecting over the phone to hear the child read or the parents would text pictures of student writing.

How did you handle the writing portion of the lesson?
The student would write on their whiteboard or paper and hold it up to the camera. We used the interactive whiteboard in Zoom to share the pen. We also used Jamboard, which is part of Google Suite, to do letter work, word work, and the cut-up sentence. We could click on sticky notes with each word of the cut-up sentence and move them around. For some, we could give the student control of the screen to move the words around and make it interactive. Unfortunately, students were connecting with different devices which created a challenge with functionality.

What did you learn from this experience?
I knew the teachers and parents I worked with were amazing, but this experience has shown me their resilience and tremendous growth mindset. We built very strong relationships with our families. We were excited when we saw that parents were taking on Reading Recovery language as they listened to their child read. Our experiences teaching at a distance then influenced the design of Summer Reading Camp for rising third and fourth graders. This year, teachers worked with children individually rather than in groups. They met fewer times, but the data showed that students grew significantly more than students did in the past. It has been truly a learning experience for all of us! The Reading Recovery family—in Lexington District One, South Carolina, and across the nation—is definitely Stronger Together!
The North American Reading Recovery Improvement Science Hub is a professional learning community of stakeholders coordinating Reading Recovery’s improvement efforts.

WHAT IS IMPROVEMENT SCIENCE?
Improvement science is a disciplined approach for identifying problems of practice, exploring potential change ideas, testing these ideas rigorously, and evaluating the improvement. These are low-impact changes to standard processes that are thoughtfully designed to have the potential for high-leverage change in a short period of time.

ENGGAGING THE NETWORK IN IMPROVEMENT WORK
The goal, going forward is to extend the use of improvement science methodology through the community by developing network capabilities. The Hub will offer professional learning opportunities to engage the broader network so that we can all learn to improve our practice.

IMPROVEMENT TEAMS
With the goal of supporting collaboration among University Training Centers, Regional Institutes, and Training Sites the HUB is initiating a learning process for orienting improvement teams across the network. The teams will trial a series of modules designed to introduce improvement science tools and processes so that they can participate in improvement work based on a shared theory of improvement. The modules will be assessed through PDSA cycles and provide valuable information to support growth and development of the improvement capacity in our community.

PLAN DO STUDY ACT CYCLES
The improvement theory developed by the Hub is about strengthening instructional decisions. PDSA cycles have been designed with this in mind. Change ideas have been trialed through a series of small adaptations based on what we have learned from the data collected. Teachers, teacher leaders, and trainers across Canada and the United States, have enthusiastically participated in subsequent PDSA iterations.

WHAT’S NEXT?
- The Hub has begun to explore communication mechanisms that will bring the network together in learning to improve. We will continue to help members of the community develop a deeper understanding of improvement science. Look for upcoming conference sessions, webinars, and journal articles.

INTERESTED IN MORE INFO?

With support of the North American Trainers Group, the Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery, the Foundation for Struggling Readers, The Ohio State University Project Advisory Board, and the Reading Recovery Council of North America.

Editors’ Note:
Evidence for Action: A Secondary Analysis of the Reading Recovery Scale-Up

Robert M. Schwartz, Oakland University
Richard G. Lomax, The Ohio State University

Purpose
As the world prepares to examine the results of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) to judge the safety and effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines, the education community should refocus on what research has shown to be effective literacy practices. The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) highest evidence level is “the independent evaluation of a fully-developed education intervention with prior evidence of efficacy, when implemented by the end user under routine conditions” (IES, 2016, p. 5). The May, Sirinides, Gray, and Goldsworthy (2016) evaluation of the Reading Recovery® i3 scale-up provides this type of high-quality evidence.

Both the amount of evidence and the size of the effects shown in the May et al. (2016) evaluation were impressive. The final evaluation report combined data from four independent RCTs conducted in different schools across the 4-year scale-up. These studies included 3,444 matched pairs of low performing first-grade students from 1,122 schools. The 12– to 20–week Reading Recovery intervention produced effects that were 4.6 times larger than studies using similar outcome measures and 3.5 times the average effect of Title I interventions (May et al.; Schwartz, 2016).

The current analysis extends their findings in two ways. First, we examined the intervention’s effects on the six subscales of An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement (Clay, 2013). The May et al. (2016) analysis only reported gains on the Observation Survey Total Score and Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) Word Reading and Comprehension subscales. The Observation Survey subscales provide information on components of the reading process that Reading Recovery teachers use to guide instructional decisions. These subscales have previously been reported in the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) intervention report (2013) to assess their beginning reading domains:

- Alphabetics: Letter Identification, Word Test
- Reading Fluency: Text Reading Level

Second, we conducted a subgroup analysis for those students whose entry Observation Survey Total Scores predicted a severe reading difficulty at the end of first grade (D’Agostino, Rodgers, & Mauck, 2018). The May et al. (2016) report includes a subgroup analysis showing that English learners show as strong growth as the total sample. We conducted this subgroup analysis to address a persistent claim that the Reading Recovery intervention is not effective for the most at-risk beginning readers (Chapman, Greaney, & Tunmer, 2015; Cook, Rodes, & Lipsitz, 2017; Reynolds & Wheldall, 2007; Schwartz, Hobsbaum, Briggs, & Scull, 2009). For example, Reynolds and Wheldall claim that while Reading Recovery “works for many students, it has not demonstrated that it works for the students who are most at-risk of failing to learn to read” (p. 213). Our analysis tested whether the intervention is effective for students predicted to be classified as reading disabled based on the screening scores (D’Agostino, Rodgers, & Mauck; National Center for Intensive Intervention (NCII; 2018).

Methods
The May et al. (2016) data includes four large, independent samples of students taught by different teachers from different schools during each of the 4 years of the scale-up. In total 3,444 pairs of first-grade students were matched on the fall Observation Survey Text Reading Level measure and then randomly assigned to the treatment or control condition. Given this large sample size, almost any difference in scores between the treatment and control groups are likely to be statistically significant.

Therefore, in our secondary analysis we present descriptive statistics and Hedges’ $d$ effect size calculations consistent with WWC procedures (WWC, 2018, p. 13). “For the WWC, effect sizes of 0.25 standard deviations or larger are considered to be substantively important. Effect sizes at least this large are interpreted as a qualified positive
Research

(or negative) effect, even though they may not reach statistical significance in a given study” (p. 14). Effect sizes greater than 0.80 are generally considered large.

The six Observation Survey subscales are described in Clay’s An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement (2013). The appendices include U.S. norms for these measures at the beginning, middle, and end of first grade as well as reliability studies and correlation among the subscales. (Also see International Data Evaluation Center [IDEC] publications for the latest versions.)

The Letter Identification (LI) subscale has a maximum score of 54. Children are asked to identify upper- and lowercase letters by providing either the letter name, its sound, or a word beginning with that letter. Two formats of the lowercase a and g are included in the task.

The Word Test (WT) subscale has a maximum score of 20. Children are asked to read one of three different lists of high-frequency words available for multiple administrations of the task.

The Concepts About Print (C.A.P.) subscale has a maximum score of 24. Children are asked to respond to probe questions during the reading of one of four books designed for this task.

The Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words (HRSW) subscale has a maximum score of 37. Children are asked to listen to and try to represent the sounds in one of five sentences designed for this task. One point is given for each sound represented by an appropriate letter.

The Writing Vocabulary (WV) subscale has no set maximum score. Children are asked to write all the words they know in 10 minutes.

The Text Reading Level (TRL) subscale has a maximum score of 30. A score of 20 demonstrates an ability to read second-grade material with 90% accuracy with reasonable fluency. The analysis for the TRL measure is calculated for both raw scores and scale scores. The scale scores provide an interval measure that is more appropriate for calculations of effect size (D’Agostino, Rodgers, & Mauck, 2018).

Results

Observation Survey subscale analysis
Table 1 shows pre-test means, post-test means, standard deviations, and effect size calculations for the treatment (T) and control (C) groups on the Observation Survey subscales pooled across the 4-year i3 study (n = 3,439 per group). After the intervention, the comparison of the treatment to control groups shows medium to large effects on each of the Observation Survey subscales. These results were replicated in each of the four independent RCTs conducted in the 4-year scale-up evaluation (Appendix, Tables 1A to 6A).

Subgroup analysis: Students predicted to need intensive intervention
Table 2 shows pre-test means, post-test means, standard deviations, and effect size calculations for ITBS and Observation Survey measures pooled across the 4-year i3 study for students predicted to need intensive intervention (Observation Survey Fall Total Score < 419; n = 2,712 per group). After the intervention the comparison of the treatment to control groups shows medium to large effects on each of Observation Survey and ITBS subscales. These results were replicated in each of the four independent RCTs conducted in the 4-year scale-up evaluation. (See Schwartz & Lomax, 2018, Appendix, Tables 7A to 12A.)

Conclusions

In a recent blog (Soldner, 2020), the commissioner of the IES National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance described the current state of educational research:

There are currently 10,677 individual studies in the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) database. Of those, only about 11 percent meet the WWC’s internal validity standards. Among them, only 445 have at least one statistically significant positive finding. Because the WWC doesn’t consider results from studies that don’t have strong internal validity, it isn’t quite as simple as saying “only about 4 percent of things work in education.” Instead, we’re left with “89 percent of things aren’t tested rigorously enough to have confidence about whether they work, and when tested rigorously, only about 38 percent do.” Between the “file drawer” problem that plagues research generally and our own review of the results from IES efficacy trials, we have reason to believe the true efficacy rate of “what works” in education is much lower.

The May et al. (2016) research is a rare exception to the dismal efficacy rate. Not only does the research meet WWC rigorous standards, but it does so with multiple
Table 1. Pre-Test Means, Post-Test Means, Standard Deviations, and Effect Size Calculations for the Treatment (T) and Control (C) Groups on the Observation Survey (OS) Subscales Pooled Across the 4-Year i3 Study (n = 3,439 per group)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OS Measure</th>
<th>Letter ID</th>
<th>Word Test</th>
<th>C.A.P.</th>
<th>HRSW</th>
<th>WV</th>
<th>TRL Scale Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment/Control</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>T</td>
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<td>(Standard Deviation)</td>
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<td>(3.0)</td>
<td>(3.5)</td>
<td>(3.6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-Test Mean</td>
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<td>14.7</td>
<td>10.3</td>
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<td>15.7</td>
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<td>(4.9)</td>
<td>(4.6)</td>
<td>(5.3)</td>
<td>(3.2)</td>
<td>(3.3)</td>
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<td>+0.80</td>
<td>+0.60</td>
<td>+0.87</td>
<td>+0.99</td>
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replications under routine conditions. The extension of these findings to the Observation Survey subscales illustrates some of the core components that need to work together as a teacher helps a child build a literacy processing system. The large effects on these subscales reflect the accelerated growth that most Reading Recovery students are able to make during the intervention as they establish a system that can continue to improve with good classroom instruction.

The current WWC Reading Recovery intervention report (2013) does not include the evidence from the four RCTs included in the May et al. (2016) independent evaluation. WWC has, however, conducted a single study review of this research and found the research to meet their criteria.

Table 2. Pre-Test Means, Post-Test Means, Standard Deviations, and Effect Size Calculations for ITBS and Observation Survey (OS) Measures Pooled Across the 4-Year i3 Study for Students Predicted to Need Intensive Intervention (OS Fall Total Score < 419, n = 2,712 per group)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OS Measure</th>
<th>Letter ID</th>
<th>Word Test</th>
<th>C.A.P.</th>
<th>HRSW</th>
<th>WV</th>
<th>TRL</th>
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</thead>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>C</td>
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<td>Pre-Test Mean</td>
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<td>11.1</td>
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<td>(2.4)</td>
<td>(2.3)</td>
<td>(3.4)</td>
<td>(3.5)</td>
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<td>Post-Test Mean</td>
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<td>(5.0)</td>
<td>(4.7)</td>
<td>(5.1)</td>
<td>(3.2)</td>
<td>(3.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect Size</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OS Measure</th>
<th>ITBS Total Score</th>
<th>ITBS Word Comprehension</th>
<th>OS TRL Scale Score</th>
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<td>Pre-Test Mean</td>
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<td>(71.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Test Mean</td>
<td>490.7</td>
<td>444.9</td>
<td>139.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Standard Deviation)</td>
<td>(44.2)</td>
<td>(47.3)</td>
<td>(9.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect Size</td>
<td>+1.00</td>
<td>+1.46</td>
<td>+0.48</td>
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</table>
without reservations. If this evidence and the current secondary analysis were included in the WWC intervention report, Reading Recovery would be rated as showing positive results in all four beginning reading domains (Schwartz, 2018).

The subgroup analysis counters the claim that the intervention is not effective for the lowest-performing first-grade readers. The NCII 2018 review shows that the fall Observation Survey Total Score meets their criteria for an effective literacy screening tool. All of the students in the subgroup analysis fall below the cut point that predicts a severe reading disability at the end of first grade. Despite these low entry scores, the effect sizes shown in Table 2 are as large or larger than those for the total sample. Many of these initially low-performing students are now at grade level after the Reading Recovery intervention.

The May et al. (2016) evaluation and this secondary analysis provide a model for educational effectiveness evidence and research-based early literacy interventions. The replication of substantial effects on the ITBS, the Observation Survey subscales, and with subgroups of English learners (May et al.) and the lowest-performing students demonstrates and underscores the ability of the Reading Recovery network to partner with teachers, principals, and district personnel to implement an effective early intervention. If we are as serious in serving the literacy needs of all students as we are in maintaining their health, then this is the type of evidence we need.

References


Appendix: Tables by Year for Full Group and Subgroup Predicted to Need Intensive Intervention

### Table 1A. Effect Size Calculations for Text Reading Level (TRL) Raw Scores Across the 4-Year i3 Study

<table>
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<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>855</td>
<td>1430</td>
<td>1430</td>
<td>3439</td>
<td>3439</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TRL Pre-Test**
- Mean:
  - 2011–12: 1.0
  - 2012–13: 1.0
  - 2013–14: 1.0
  - 2014–15: 1.1
- Standard Deviation:
  - 2011–12: 1.3
  - 2012–13: 1.2
  - 2013–14: 1.1
  - 2014–15: 1.2

**TRL Post-Test**
- Mean:
  - 2011–12: 10.6
  - 2012–13: 10.3
  - 2013–14: 10.4
  - 2014–15: 10.5
- Standard Deviation:
  - 2011–12: 4.8
  - 2012–13: 3.7
  - 2013–14: 4.2
  - 2014–15: 4.0

**TRL Pre-Test Scale Score**
- Mean:
  - 2011–12: 304.4
  - 2012–13: 302.2
  - 2013–14: 300.4
  - 2014–15: 308.1
- Standard Deviation:
  - 2011–12: 74.9
  - 2012–13: 75.4
  - 2013–14: 75.3
  - 2014–15: 75.5

**TRL Post-Test Scale Score**
- Mean:
  - 2011–12: 492.0
  - 2012–13: 488.7
  - 2013–14: 489.5
  - 2014–15: 489.6
- Standard Deviation:
  - 2011–12: 39.5
  - 2012–13: 46.5
  - 2013–14: 44.7
  - 2014–15: 44.5

**TRL Pre-Test Scale Score Effect Size**
- Mean:
  - 2011–12: +1.46
  - 2012–13: +1.24
  - 2013–14: +1.28
  - 2014–15: +1.33
- Standard Deviation:
  - 2011–12: +0.88
  - 2012–13: +0.83
  - 2013–14: +0.81
  - 2014–15: +0.84

### Table 2A. Effect Size Calculations for Letter Identification (LI) Scores Across the 4-Year i3 Study

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<td>855</td>
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<td>1430</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LI Pre-Test**
- Mean:
  - 2011–12: 46.7
  - 2012–13: 46.6
  - 2013–14: 46.4
  - 2014–15: 46.0
- Standard Deviation:
  - 2011–12: 6.7
  - 2012–13: 7.2
  - 2013–14: 7.5
  - 2014–15: 8.5

**LI Post-Test**
- Mean:
  - 2011–12: 52.4
  - 2012–13: 51.4
  - 2013–14: 52.3
  - 2014–15: 51.0
- Standard Deviation:
  - 2011–12: 2.6
  - 2012–13: 4.6
  - 2013–14: 4.6
  - 2014–15: 4.7

**Effect Size**
- Mean:
  - 2011–12: +0.22
  - 2012–13: +0.28
  - 2013–14: +0.29
  - 2014–15: +0.27
- Standard Deviation:
  - 2011–12: +0.26

### Table 3A. Effect Size Calculations for Word Test (WT) Scores Across the 4-Year i3 Study

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<td>1430</td>
<td>1430</td>
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</table>

**WT Pre-Test**
- Mean:
  - 2011–12: 3.0
  - 2012–13: 3.1
  - 2013–14: 3.0
  - 2014–15: 3.3
- Standard Deviation:
  - 2011–12: 3.1
  - 2012–13: 2.8
  - 2013–14: 3.0
  - 2014–15: 3.0

**WT Post-Test**
- Mean:
  - 2011–12: 14.7
  - 2012–13: 14.9
  - 2013–14: 14.8
  - 2014–15: 14.6
- Standard Deviation:
  - 2011–12: 4.4
  - 2012–13: 4.9
  - 2013–14: 4.5
  - 2014–15: 4.6

**Effect Size**
- Mean:
  - 2011–12: +0.88
  - 2012–13: +0.82
  - 2013–14: +0.81
  - 2014–15: +0.87
Table 4A. Effect Size Calculations for Concepts About Print (C.A.P.) Scores Across the 4-Year i3 Study

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<tr>
<td>C.A.P. Pre-Test Mean</td>
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Table 5A. Effect Size Calculations for Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words (HRSW) Scores Across the 4-Year i3 Study

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<td>(4.8)</td>
<td>(7.9)</td>
<td>(4.9)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>+0.52</td>
<td>+0.51</td>
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Table 6A. Effect Size Calculations for Writing Vocabulary (WV) Scores Across the 4-Year i3 Study

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<td>(13.3)</td>
<td>(14.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect Size</td>
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<td>+0.85</td>
<td>+0.90</td>
<td>+0.97</td>
<td>+0.91</td>
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</table>
About the Authors

Dr. Robert Schwartz is an emeritus professor in the Department of Reading and Language Arts at Oakland University in Rochester, MI. He is a past president of and former research consultant for the Reading Recovery Council of North America. His research interests include self-monitoring in beginning reading, early literacy intervention, research design, and professional development for literacy teachers. In the What Works Clearinghouse 2007 review of 887 studies from 153 beginning reading programs, Dr. Schwartz’s Reading Recovery research was one of only 27 studies that met WWC’s standards without reservations. He can be reached at rschwart@oakland.edu.

Dr. Richard Lomax is the former director of research for Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura and professor emeritus of educational studies at The Ohio State University, where he was previously associate dean for research and administration in the College of Education and Human Ecology. His research primarily focuses on multivariate analysis and models of literacy acquisition. He has published textbooks and in diverse journals including Reading Research Quarterly, Parenting: Science and Practice, Understanding Statistics: Statistical Issues in Psychology, Education and the Social Sciences, Violence Against Women, Journal of Early Adolescence, The Journal of Negro Education, International Journal of Computer Science in Sport, and International Journal of Sports Medicine. Named an AERA Fellow, he has served as a Fulbright Scholar on three different occasions; worked on numerous funded projects; and received several teaching, research, service, and book awards.
A Reading Recovery Comparison Study: Supporting a New Implementation in Scotland

Gillian Gourlay, East Renfrewshire Council, Glasgow, Scotland
Sinéad Harmey, University College London Institute of Education, United Kingdom

Reading Recovery® is a short-term, early literacy intervention for the lowest-achieving children in literacy (see Clay, 2016 for a full description). The intervention involves the close observation of a child, in a one-to-one tutorial situation, thinking about what that child needs to be able to do next and what they need to change in the way they are reading and writing in order to achieve success (Douëtil, 2005). It is expected that when the Reading Recovery intervention is put in place, children will reach age expected levels after about 12–20 weeks of instruction (Clay 1985; cited in Clay, 2015). Burroughs-Lange and Douëtil (2007) suggested that schools could have the power to enable almost every child to read and write at age-expected levels if they were to provide them with access to Reading Recovery after 1 year of formal schooling.

Reading Recovery has been implemented across the world. In Europe, Reading Recovery is implemented in England, Ireland, the Channel Islands, Denmark, Malta, and Scotland. Reading Recovery had been implemented in Scotland around about 1997 but, due to unforeseen circumstances, had to stop around about 2001 (Douëtil, Hobsbaum & Maidment, 2013). Therefore, Reading Recovery is relatively new to the context. Within recent years in Scotland there has been an emphasis on providing equity in education as part of The Scottish Attainment Challenge (Scottish Government, 2018a). Schools are provided with Pupil Equity Funding (PEF; Scottish Education Council, 2018) for children who are entitled to free school meals, but they must be able to show the impact that their spending has had on attainment. Three authorities decided to invest in Reading Recovery as an evidence-based intervention to support young children’s literacy learning. Consequently, in 2017–2018, three educators from Scotland undertook the yearlong master’s level program of study to become accredited as Reading Recovery teacher leaders. Reading Recovery is now in its third year in three authorities in Scotland and its first year in three further authorities. Given the importance of demonstrating the impact of government spending on pupils’ literacy achievement, the purpose of this article is to (a) describe the results of a year-long comparison study conducted during the second year of the implementation of Reading Recovery in two districts in Scotland and (b) demonstrate how the results have been used to promote the implementation of Reading Recovery in the district. Implications for practice are discussed in terms of how the results of the study were communicated at local level and what further research could be carried out to confirm the long-term effects of the intervention.

Background

There is no shortage of research on Reading Recovery; it is one of the most widely researched interventions (D’Agostino & Harmey, 2016) and, according to Cunningham and Allington (1994; cited in Lyons, 2003), no other programme “has ever come close to achieving the results demonstrated by Reading Recovery” (p. 2). Bodman (2019) explained that Reading Recovery data are collected and analyzed annually and from this, the short-term impact is evident, with just over 8 out of 10 children reaching age-expected levels by the end of the intervention.

D’Agostino and Harmey (2016) carried out an international meta-analytic review of comparison groups in the United States and other nations that were implementing the Reading Recovery intervention. They found that Reading Recovery had a positive effect on literacy achievement. A What Works Clearinghouse (WWC; 2013) intervention report
also claimed that Reading Recovery has “positive effects on general reading achievement and alphabetics as well as potentially positive effects on reading fluency and comprehension for beginning readers” (p. 1). If the intervention report were updated to include findings from the recent final report on the i3 scale up of Reading Recovery (May, Sirinides, Gray, & Goldsworthy, 2016), the WWC ratings would include positive findings in all four beginning reading outcome domains (Schwartz, 2018).

When addressing the issue of sustainability, D’Agostino & Harmey (2016) identified short-term gains for Reading Recovery children but argued that there was a lack of follow-up studies to confidently report on the long-term effects of the intervention, suggesting that long-term effects need to be further investigated. Chapman and Tunmer (2019) suggested that “Reading Recovery is of some benefit for some students, at least in the short term” (p. 259). They also questioned whether all children who receive the intervention make gains and whether any long-term gains are evident. A recent comparison study in England (Burroughs-Lange & Douëtil, 2007) however, found that children who received Reading Recovery made significant gains in all areas compared to a comparison group who did not have Reading Recovery in their school. A 10-year follow-up study on this research found that the initial substantial effects of Reading Recovery were sustained long-term (Hurry & Fridkin, 2018). The Reading Recovery group had “significantly higher overall GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) point scores than the comparison group” (Hurry & Fridkin, p. 2).

Given the relative newness of Reading Recovery to Scotland, none of the research cited in this section was conducted in the Scottish context. While empirical evidence at international and national levels is crucial, if innovations are to embed at local level it is vitally important to have local data. Schildkamp (2019) argued that data use can lead to school improvement but that the data must be contextualized and speak to the stakeholders who collected the data.

**Measuring literacy achievement in Reading Recovery**

As readers of *The Journal of Reading Recovery* will know, within Reading Recovery there are a series of initial observation tasks, taken from Clay’s (2013) *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement*. These tasks are designed to identify the lowest-performing children and provide valuable information about their strengths and difficulties in literacy learning (Clay, 2016). This check takes place after a child’s first year in formal education, around the age of 6 (Clay, 2016). After administering the tasks with children in the age band, the lowest-performing children are selected to be a part of the intervention (Clay, 2016).

The tasks within the Observation Survey are designed to be similar to tasks that children are involved in within the classroom and include Letter Identification, Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words, Writing Vocabulary, Word Reading, Concepts About Print, and an assessment of reading continuous text using a running record (Clay, 2013). Clay suggested that the tasks used within the Observation Survey aim to provide Reading Recovery teachers with information that will improve instruction by involving them in the detailed observation of individual children, which then allows them the opportunity to create a series of lessons that start with what the child already knows. It is argued, however, that the tasks are “closely aligned to skills taught in Reading Recovery and are considered inherent to the treatment” (Slavin, Lake, Davis, & Madden, 2011, p. 6). In other words, the suggestion might be that they do not yield objective achievement data. Certainly, the Observation Survey test measures have larger effect sizes than treatment-independent test measures; but, D’Agostino and Harmey (2016) suggested that this may indicate that the Observation Survey is more sensitive to change. This may explain the results of Slavin and colleagues on their research on the achievement outcomes of alternative approaches for struggling readers, as they did not include studies which used Observation Survey measures for assessment. They found that although the outcomes for Reading Recovery were positive, they were not as positive as may have been expected (Slavin et al., 2011). Thus, within the United Kingdom, the British Ability Scale Word Reading Test 3 (BAS 3; Elliott & Smith, 2011) is used as an external measure to assess a child’s word reading age.

**Study Purpose and Research Questions**

It is important to continue to collect data on the efficacy of Reading Recovery, particularly at local level and to use a variety of measures to measure efficacy. At a local level, A Curriculum for Excellence (ACfE) was introduced into the Scottish Education system in 2010. This was “designed to achieve a transforma-
tion in education in Scotland by providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum” (Education Scotland, 2019). Through ACFE there is a national approach taken to improve the well-being of children and young people. This is known as Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC; Education Scotland, 2017). The GIRFEC approach believes in the use of early intervention to support children and “puts the best interests of the child at the heart of decision making” (Education Scotland, 2017). Recent figures show that many children in Scotland are not achieving age-expected levels in literacy and these figures appear to increase as children get older. For example, in 2017–2018, 19% of children were not achieving age-expected levels in reading by the end of Primary (P) 1, their first year in formal education. In the same year, there were 21% of children not achieving age-expected levels in reading at the end of P7, their final year in primary education (Scottish Government, 2018b). These figures confirm the suggestion that most students continue to make progress but many of those who are falling behind continue to do so over time and the gap continues to widen (Clay, 2016).

As described in the introduction to this article, within recent years in Scottish Education there has been a big emphasis on providing equity in education as part of The Scottish Attainment Challenge (Scottish Government, 2018a). Schools are provided with Pupil Equity Funding (PEF; Scottish Education Council, 2018) for children designated as in poverty but must demonstrate impact on achievement. Reading Recovery was viewed as potentially helpful in providing the solution to ensuring that PEF is spent with a view to achieving equity in education. The Reading Recovery intervention allows for attainment to be tracked and impact to be seen; however, there are no comparison studies within the Scottish context which look at this early literacy intervention. It is imperative, therefore, to conduct this type of research within the Scottish context. It should be noted that this was a small-scale exploratory study which would provide schools and local authorities with preliminary information that could help to inform them on the effectiveness of Reading Recovery as an early literacy intervention that could be implemented as a way of addressing the poverty related attainment gap in Scottish schools.

The research questions:

1. Is there a significant improvement in literacy scores for the group who received Reading Recovery in autumn of P2 and does this continue to improve over time?

2. Is there a significant difference in literacy scores between the Reading Recovery group, who received Reading Recovery in autumn of P2, and a low comparison group, who did not receive Reading Recovery in the autumn of P2, in initial assessments and after the Reading Recovery intervention?

Method

Participants

The selection of participants was “logically influenced by the research questions and the research design” (Ogier, 2002, p. 49). To ensure the study was reliable and valid, a large sample group was offered the opportunity to participate in the study. This sample was taken from the population, which included all schools with teachers who were part of initial professional development (IPD) groups for one teacher leader. After ethical clearance was obtained for this study, each of these schools was invited to be a part of the research; provided consent was gained from head teachers, Reading Recovery teachers, parents, and the children themselves. During recruitment, schools and teachers were approached.

<table>
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<th>School Codes</th>
<th>SIMD Decile</th>
<th>Total Number of Pupil Participants</th>
<th>Number of RR Participants (PEF Eligible)</th>
<th>Number of TNI Participants (PEF Eligible)</th>
<th>Number of TNI Pupils Who Became Part of Cohort 2</th>
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SIMD = Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation; PEF = Pupil Equity Funding
Written informed consent was obtained from head teachers, teachers, and parents. After consent was received from parents, the children were also asked to consent to being a part of the study.

From a possible 17 schools, 8 volunteered to be a part of the study. After parental and child consent was received, there were a total of 46 children included in the study. Table 1 shows the breakdown of participants from each school, showing how many were receiving Reading Recovery during the study (RR) and how many were tested-not-instructed (TNI; screened for Reading Recovery but did not receive the intervention).

**Context**

Each of the schools involved in the study were invited to take part due to the fact that they currently had a member of staff participating in IPD training. IPD is a year-long training program which requires teachers to attend fortnightly (every other week) sessions with the outcome being that they become an accredited Reading Recovery teacher. Seven of the eight schools involved within the study had one Reading Recovery teacher being trained within an IPD group, and one school had two teachers participating in IPD training.

Schools in Scotland are ranked 1–10 on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), with 1 being schools in the most-deprived areas and 10 being schools in the most-affluent areas. The eight schools involved are all described as being multidenominational schools. These schools span two local authorities and four of them—schools B, H, K and N—are located within deciles 1–3 (see Table 1) on the SIMD, which ranks them as being within a highly deprived area (Scottish Government, 2017). From these schools, 18 children out of the 22 involved in the study were eligible for PEF. One school—school G—is located in decile 5 on the SIMD, suggesting this is an area of moderate deprivation. School G had no participants that were eligible for PEF. The final three schools—C, I and L—are located within deciles 9 and 10, suggesting they are in more-affluent areas. Although school I is located within an area classed as affluent, the catchment of this school takes in children within decile 3 (classed as highly deprived) and decile 4 (described as being moderately deprived). This school had 4 participants that were eligible for PEF.

**Measures**

There were four tests used to assess the progress of the children during this study. Two of these came from the Observation Survey: running records and Writing Vocabulary. The third test is the British Abilities Scale 3 (BAS3) Word Reading Test (Elliott & Smith, 2011) which is commonly used as an assessment tool in Reading Recovery. A Single Word Reading Test (SWRT; GL Education, 2019) was used at the final test time as an external measure. This test was only carried out at Time 3 due to issues surrounding personnel and time constraints. Using this test as an external measure at time point 3 would provide an appropriate comparison without placing any undue stress on the participants.

A running record is an assessment of oral reading of continuous text. Teachers are trained in carrying out running records to ensure that there is a standard way of recording the behaviors that occur as the child reads (Clay, 2013). This ensures the reliability of this measure as reading levels are “obtained according to common practice” (p. 59). The Writing Vocabulary test is a timed text production task, measuring a child’s ability to produce accurately spelled words. This test is deemed as more reliable than a spelling test which is constrained to a particular set of words and cannot be “generalised to the writing of words outside the set of words” (Clay, p. 115). The BAS3 Word Reading Test assesses a child’s word reading ability. Rasch scaling is adopted, allowing the examiner to minimize the number of items to be administered, depending on the child’s responses, which means the test is completed quickly (Swinson, 2013), not putting any undue stress on the child. The results of this test are standardized on a sample of almost 1,500 British children, including children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds (Swinson). The SWRT provides a measure of a child’s word reading skills and contributes to an assessment of reading achievement by providing a reading age (Foster, 2007). This test is designed to monitor a child’s word reading skills and, according to Foster, is fully standardized providing standard age scores and reading ages.

**Data collection and analysis**

The test data were collected at three points in time throughout the study. These time points were August 2018, January 2019, and March 2019. All Reading Recovery and TNI children were assessed at these time points within a 2-week window to ensure results provided a reliable comparative estimate. These tests were carried out with both Reading
Recovery and TNI children and were compared using an independent samples t-test. This would test the significance of the difference between the scores (Ogier, 2002) of the Reading Recovery and TNI children. At time point 3, The TNI group was split further as 12 of these 22 children became part of Reading Recovery cohort 2 (RR2), beginning Reading Recovery in the spring of P2. Essentially, the lowest-performing children were removed from the TNI group (leaving 10 children who at two points in time were identified as experiencing difficulties but were not the lowest in the age cohort. This group is labeled the TNI group). Therefore, the most meaningful results were the comparison of the TNI group and the Reading Recovery group at Time 2.

Findings

Change over time in literacy achievement (Reading Recovery group)

To investigate the first research question, all test results were entered into SPSS statistical software (version 25) and an independent samples t-test was conducted to examine the data. Table 2 shows the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) on each of the tests carried out by the Reading Recovery group at three points in time. Means are presented and converted to reading ages which are reported in years and months. The mean book level on entry to the Reading Recovery intervention was 1.83 (SD = 2.46), which equates to a reading age of between 4:0 and 5:0 years. This increased to a mean level of 15.67 (SD = 3.42) at point 2, which equates to a reading age of between approximately 6:0 and 6:6. At Time 3, this continued to increase further to a mean level of 17 (SD = 4.66), equating to a reading age of between 6:6 and 7:0.

A similar pattern can be seen with the mean number of words written during the Writing Vocabulary test. These scores were compared against stanine tables (Clay, 2013), where an average stanine band for these ages would be 4 or 5. A score of 6.83 at Time 1 equates to a stanine of 1 for both age bands, which is significantly below average. A score of 35 at Time 3 would equate to a stanine of 6 for the lower age band and 5 for the higher age band, suggesting that the children had made progress which helped them to reach average levels or above. Using the BAS3 conversion tables (Elliot & Smith, 2011), the mean score at Time 1 (M = 5.21, SD = 4.03) equates to a word reading age of 5:4. By Time 3 this had increased to a word reading age of 6:4 (M = 30.88, SD = 10.97), showing a gain of 1 year.

Comparison of literacy scores between Reading Recovery and TNI groups

To ascertain if there was a significant difference in literacy scores between both groups in initial assessments, an independent samples t-test was used to examine data gathered from initial assessments. Table 3 shows the means and standard deviations of both the Reading Recovery and TNI groups on the initial assessments at Time 1. The mean for the initial assessment of book level was 1.83 (SD = 2.46) for the group receiving Reading Recovery and 2.86 (SD = 3.59) for the TNI group. The mean scores for the writing vocabulary initial assessment for the Reading Recovery group was 6.83 (SD = 4.31) and 8.82 (SD = 7.08) for the TNI group. On the BAS3 Word Reading Test the mean was 5.21 (SD = 4.03) for the Reading Recovery group and 7.91 (SD = 7.35) for the TNI group.

A ‘p’ value of less the 0.05 would mean that a difference in means is statistically significant (Robson & McCartan, 2016). The results revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in the mean scores of the two groups in initial tests on book levels (t(44) = −1.14, p = 0.26), writing vocabulary (t(44) = −1.16, p = 0.25) or the BAS3 word

| Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of RR Group on All Assessments |
|-----------------|---------|-------|--------|-------|
|                  | N       | Mean  | Standard Deviation | Standard Error Mean |
| Book Level       |         |       |                    |                    |
| Time 1           | 24      | 1.83  | 2.46               | 0.50               |
| Time 2           | 24      | 15.67 | 3.42               | 0.70               |
| Time 3           | 24      | 17.00 | 4.66               | 0.95               |
| Writing Vocabulary |          |       |                    |                    |
| Time 1           | 24      | 6.83  | 4.31               | 0.88               |
| Time 2           | 24      | 32.83 | 11.54              | 2.36               |
| Time 3           | 24      | 35.00 | 8.88               | 1.81               |
| BAS3             |         |       |                    |                    |
| Time 1           | 24      | 5.21  | 4.03               | 0.82               |
| Time 2           | 24      | 27.25 | 10.94              | 2.23               |
| Time 3           | 24      | 30.88 | 10.97              | 2.24               |
reading test \( t(44) = -1.56, p = 0.13 \). When comparing the standard deviations of both groups it can be seen that TNI group have larger SDs on all test results compared to the Reading Recovery group. This means there is more of a variation in scores for the TNI group.

In order to determine whether the means of the Reading Recovery and TNI group change over time, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare assessment results at two further points in time. Table 4 shows the means of each of the three tests at two further points in time. The effectiveness of the Reading Recovery intervention is best reflected by the comparison of the Reading Recovery and TNI group at Time 2, since by Time 3, 12 of the 22 children in the TNI group had begun to receive Reading Recovery lessons.

**Book Level.** At Time 2, book level had increased to a mean of 15.67 \((SD = 3.42)\) for the Reading Recovery group and 8.55 \((SD = 7.20)\) for the TNI group, equating to approximate reading ages of 6:6 and 5:6 respectively. Again, the results revealed that this difference in levels was statistically significant; \( t(44) = 2.59; p < 0.01 \). The gains for the Reading Recovery group between Time 2—the end of the intervention period—and Time 3 shows continued growth in their classroom context by children who completed the Reading Recovery intervention. A comparison of change over time in book level, for both the Reading Recovery and TNI groups, can be seen in Figure 1.

**Writing Vocabulary.** At the second time point the Reading Recovery group increased their number of words written in 10 minutes to a

| Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations of RR Group and TNI Groups on Initial Assessments |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                                               | N     | Mean   | Standard Deviation | Standard Error Mean |
| **Book Level**                                |       |        |                    |                    |
| RR                                            | 24    | 1.83   | 2.46               | .50                |
| TNI                                           | 22    | 2.86   | 3.59               | .77                |
| **Writing Vocabulary**                        |       |        |                    |                    |
| RR                                            | 24    | 6.83   | 4.31               | .88                |
| TNI                                           | 22    | 8.82   | 7.08               | 1.51               |
| **BAS3**                                      |       |        |                    |                    |
| RR                                            | 24    | 5.21   | 4.03               | .82                |
| TNI                                           | 22    | 7.91   | 7.35               | 1.57               |

| Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations of RR and TNI Groups at Time 2 and Time 3 |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
|                                               | N     | Mean   | Standard Deviation | Standard Error Mean |
| **Time 2**                                    |       |        |                    |                    |
| **Book Level**                                |       |        |                    |                    |
| RR                                            | 24    | 15.67  | 3.42               | .70                |
| TNI                                           | 22    | 8.55   | 7.20               | 1.54               |
| **Writing Vocabulary**                        |       |        |                    |                    |
| RR                                            | 24    | 32.83  | 11.54              | 2.36               |
| TNI                                           | 22    | 21.00  | 11.17              | 2.38               |
| **BAS3**                                      |       |        |                    |                    |
| RR                                            | 24    | 27.25  | 10.94              | 2.23               |
| TNI                                           | 22    | 18.00  | 13.63              | 2.91               |
| **Time 3**                                    |       |        |                    |                    |
| **Book Level**                                |       |        |                    |                    |
| RR                                            | 24    | 17.00  | 4.66               | .95                |
| TNI                                           | 22    | 12.68  | 6.58               | 1.40               |
| **Writing Vocabulary**                        |       |        |                    |                    |
| RR                                            | 24    | 35.00  | 8.88               | 1.81               |
| TNI                                           | 22    | 27.14  | 14.05              | 2.99               |
| **BAS3**                                      |       |        |                    |                    |
| RR                                            | 24    | 30.88  | 10.97              | 2.24               |
| TNI                                           | 22    | 25.00  | 14.38              | 3.07               |
| **SWRT**                                      |       |        |                    |                    |
| RR                                            | 24    | 17.54  | 6.56               | 1.34               |
| TNI                                           | 22    | 13.55  | 8.18               | 3.27               |
mean score of 32.83 ($SD = 11.54$). The mean score for the TNI group was 21 ($SD = 11.17$). This difference in results was again, statistically significant; ($t_{(44)} = 3.53; p < 0.01$). By final assessment (Time 3) the mean number of words written was 35 ($SD = 8.88$) for the Reading Recovery group and 27.14 ($SD = 14.05$) for the TNI group. The mean scores at Time 3 equate to a stanine of 5 or 6 for the Reading Recovery group and 4 or 5 for the TNI group. This difference in results was found to be statistically significant; ($t_{(44)} = 2.29; p = 0.03$).

Change over time in results from the Writing Vocabulary test from Time 1 to Time 3 can be seen in Figure 2.

**BAS3 Word Reading Test.** At Time 2 the mean scores of the BAS3 test had increased to 27.25 ($SD = 10.94$) for the Reading Recovery group and 18 ($SD = 13.63$) for the TNI group. The results revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the scores of the two groups; ($t_{(44)} = 2.55; p < 0.01$). By Time 3 there was a further increase in

Mean Book Level

Time 1  Time 2  Time 3

Reading Recovery  Tested-Not-Instructed

Figure 1. Change Over Time — Book Level

The BAS3 test results of both groups are compared in Figure 3, where change over time can be observed.

**Word Reading.** At the final time point, the SWRT was conducted as an external measure with both groups. Table 4 shows that the mean score in the SWRT test was 17.54 ($SD = 6.56$) for the Reading Recovery group and 13.55 ($SD = 8.18$) for the TNI group. Using the SWRT conversion tables this equates to a reading age of 6:6 for the Reading Recovery group and between 6:0 and 6:3 for the TNI group. The difference in the results for this test, however, was not found to be statistically significant ($t_{(44)} = 1.84, p = 0.07$).

The Time 2 assessment captures the progress of the Reading Recovery group across the intervention period. At this point the lowest-performing students in the TNI group entered the intervention. As can be seen in Table 5, the children remaining in

Mean Number of Words Written in 10 Minutes

Time 1  Time 2  Time 3

Reading Recovery  Tested-Not-Instructed

Figure 2. Change Over Time — Writing Vocabulary
the TNI group score about the same as the initial Reading Recovery group at Time 3, indicating that the TNI students have been able to make progress in their classroom context. The slightly larger standard deviations for the TNI group indicate larger variation in scores for this group than the Reading Recovery or second cohort of Reading Recovery groups. This suggests that some low-performing students remain in the TNI group. Schools might further examine this variation to ensure that sufficient Reading Recovery services are available to support all students who are not able to make progress with the classroom-based literacy instruction.

Discussion

*Improvement in literacy scores of the Reading Recovery group to age-expected levels*

It was found that the mean levels on all three test measures of literacy had increased at each time point. This is evidence that the Reading Recovery group made gains in literacy which continued over time. As children who are part of the Reading Recovery intervention are around the age of 6 years old (Clay, 2016), it can be concluded that this group of children have reached age-expected levels, as a book level of approximately 16 at Time 2 equates to a reading age of between 6:0 and 6:6. The group then continued to make progress after the intervention had finished to a reading age of between 6:6 and 7:0. This is in line with many studies which claim that accessing Reading Recovery can enable almost every child to read and write at age-expected levels (Clay, 1991; Bodman, 2019; Burroughs-Lange & Douetil, 2007; Cunningham & Allington, 1994 cited in Lyons, 2003; D’Agostino & Harmey, 2016; Hurry & Fridkin, 2018; Schmitt, Askew, Fountas, Lyons, & Pinnell, 2005). It demonstrates that the investment in Reading Recovery was having a direct positive impact on the children selected as required by the PEF.

### Figure 3. Change Over Time — BAS3 Word Reading Test

![Change Over Time — BAS3 Word Reading Test](image)

### Table 5. Means and Standard Deviations of TNI, RR, and RR2 Groups at Time 3

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funding guidelines. As suggested in the introduction, this information can help to inform head teachers on the effectiveness of the intervention and provides empirical context specific evidence that implementing the intervention can help to address the poverty related attainment gap in Scottish schools.

**Higher gains in literacy for the Reading Recovery group**

An independent samples t-test was used to compare results of the Reading Recovery group, who received Reading Recovery in autumn of P2, and the TNI group who did not. When the results were analyzed it was noticed that, as expected, the TNI group had higher mean scores at Time 1. This would explain why this group was not selected to receive Reading Recovery at this time, as Clay (2016) explains that Reading Recovery targets the lowest-performing children. This counters Chapman and Tunmer’s (2019) claim that the pupils who are accepted into the program are not actually the lowest performing and that the selection process is manipulated to make results look better. By Time 2 the group who received Reading Recovery made statistically significant gains in all areas compared to the TNI group and outperformed them on all three tests. It has been suggested that Reading Recovery provides short-term gains for those that are part of the intervention (Bodman 2019; Burroughs-Lange & Douetil, 2007; D’Agostino & Harmey, 2016; Reynolds, Wheldall, & Madelaine, 2009; What Works Clearinghouse, 2013) and this is evident in these results.

We argue that this study makes a strong case for the need for Reading Recovery in this area. Had there been enough places, many of TNI group would certainly have qualified for Reading Recovery given that the average book level for this group was well below average and that their average reading age was 5 years 7 months. This was confirmed by the fact that 12 of the 22 children went on to be selected for Reading Recovery later in the school year (RR2 group in Table 5). This implies that they did not profit from other or mainstream instruction in the interim. These findings provide useful feedback to schools and authorities about what full implementation of Reading Recovery might look like and, in this case, for fulfilling the aims of the Getting it Right for Every Child Policy (Education Scotland, 2017) which aims to provide early intervention to those in need. Tracking children who are not initially selected for Reading Recovery on the first round is important for comparative purposes and provides useful data on literacy achievement across the whole age cohort.

By time point 3, both the Reading Recovery and TNI group made further progress but the Reading Recovery group continued to outperform the TNI group, and the differences between the results of book level and the writing vocabulary test were statistically significant. Although the Reading Recovery group had higher mean scores on the external measures, the results were not statistically significant. One could argue that the tasks of the Observation Survey (Clay, 2013) were more sensitive to small changes in literacy learning or, as Slavin et al. (2011) argued, perhaps the tasks pick up changes because the tasks are close to the instruction they received. However, we agree with D’Agostino and Harmey’s (2016) argument that the oral reading of books as per the running record and the writing of words are similar to classroom instruction in general.

The TNI group was found to have the highest mean scores on the BAS3 Word Reading Test. However, this group was reduced from 22 to 10 as the lowest-attaining children were now in Reading Recovery. The TNI group results also demonstrated a large standard deviation (SD = 16.66) suggesting greater variation in the scores compared to the Reading Recovery group.

**Limitations**

This study had a small sample size which limits the inferences that can be made from the study. Given that half of the TNI group entered the Reading Recovery intervention mid-year, it was difficult to compare across groups at Time 3. The gold standard for comparing across groups would be to randomly assign students to treatment or control conditions but this was not possible. Nevertheless, we suggest it was worthwhile to conduct some comparison of these naturally occurring groups to start to build preliminary data on the efficacy of Reading Recovery in this context.

Another limitation is the short time span of this study. This was a relatively short amount of time within the context of a new implementation given an exploratory investigation. In future, it would be useful to conduct a longer, more comprehensive study with a larger sample and, if possible, random assignment.

**Implications for policy**

In this section we discuss some implications for practice. To start, however, it is important to reflect...
on why preliminary studies like this are so important as a way to continue to build the evidence base for Reading Recovery as it moves into different contexts. As stated at the beginning of the article, the Scottish Government has focused on achieving equity in education through the Scottish Attainment Challenge. This places a clear focus on accelerating learning through “targeted improvement activity in literacy” (Education Scotland, 2020). As a result of this policy and the targeted funding that was available to local authorities to invest in early intervention, Reading Recovery was introduced as one of the approaches to early intervention. As with any investment, it is incumbent on schools and authorities to demonstrate that the intervention is indeed reducing the gap.

This small-scale exploratory study has clearly demonstrated that, for the children in this study, accelerated learning was achieved and the gap, in terms of literacy attainment, was closed. This was evident in two ways. First, the children who were identified as the lowest attaining in literacy at the beginning of the year were, 5 months later, achieving age-expected levels as measured at Time 2. Second, of the 22 children who were identified as experiencing difficulties but were not the lowest in September testing, 12 went on to enter Reading Recovery later in the year, meaning ordinary classroom instruction did not help them catch up. Thus, the use of Reading Recovery as one of the targeted improvement strategies by these local authorities was a good decision.

This study, though small, provides preliminary results of efficacy in the Scottish context. Bryk (2015) argues that starting small allows organizations to make sure the contextual structures work well together. What is needed now, however, is continued collection of school, local, and national level data at the time of intervention and over time as the children progress through school. Indeed, continued evaluation with more robust designs would continue to permit a nuanced examination of the variation of achievement in results. This allows the story of the efficacy of the intervention to be told and identification of unexpected results — both elements contribute to “achieving better outcomes more reliably at scale” (Bryk, p. 471).

**Implications for practice**
In this section, we share two practical ways the results of the study have been shared at a local level. This was done via (a) The Scottish Learning Festival, and (b) Poster.

**Scottish Learning Festival (SLF).**
The SLF is the annual conference and exhibition for educational practitioners across Scotland. The results of the study were communicated through the use of a poster by the lead author at an exhibit at this event. The results were of interest to many teachers, head teachers, and literacy leads from across Scotland. Due to the busy nature of the exhibition there was little time to communicate much in detail; however, it allowed for contact details to be passed on for anyone of interest so that meetings could be set up to share the results of the study and information about Reading Recovery in more detail.

**Poster.** The poster used by the lead author was adapted to provide more detail on the study and the results (contact the lead author to request a copy of the poster). This was very useful for sharing with head teachers and literacy leads from different local authorities at meetings for those who had shown an interest in possibly having Reading Recovery within their schools. Some of these meetings came about as a result of the SLF. It was much easier to communicate the results within a smaller more intimate setting as this provided a better environment for questions to be asked of the data and for explanations to be given. The graphs on the poster seemed to generate the most interest to these professionals and even more so when the book levels graph was explained in terms of reading ages. This tended to be met with astonishment. The fact that the data were obtained in Scotland has certainly made it more relevant and convincing to professionals within Scotland who are looking for ways to spend PEF money with a view to closing the attainment gap. Reading Recovery meets the criteria for PEF as it is clear to see the impact that the intervention has on attainment, making it a worthy investment for head teachers. Many of the head teachers and literacy leads felt that Reading Recovery could provide the solution to ensuring that PEF is spent with a view to achieving equity in education. They were excited that Reading Recovery would not only achieve equity in education, but that the results suggest long-lasting impact for the children who are targeted and clearly shows that the poverty related attainment gap can be closed.

**Conclusion**
All children included in the study made gains in their literacy levels, though the Reading Recovery intervention yielded more positive
effects. The children who received the Reading Recovery intervention reached age-expected levels by the end of the intervention and they continued to make gains greater than those of the children who did not receive Reading Recovery. It would seem that the three authorities who decided to invest in Reading Recovery within Scotland made a good decision as the short-term effects of Reading Recovery can be seen clearly through the results of this study. Whether the children in this study continue to make gains in the long term remains to be found. This study has highlighted the gains made by the Reading Recovery group in comparison to a group of children who did not receive Reading Recovery. Within the Scottish context, and in general, there are a lack of comparison studies in this area and what is now needed is further research implemented over a longer period of time and perhaps the initiation of gathering and studying longitudinal data. This would provide a stronger, evidence-based conclusion of the importance and efficacy of the decision to implement Reading Recovery. This study has highlighted the importance of early intervention. It has proved Reading Recovery to be an effective way of helping children to reach age-expected levels in both reading and writing. The rigorous assessment format within Reading Recovery allows for attainment to be tracked and therefore impact to be seen clearly. With all schools working to close the attainment gap, it seems that Reading Recovery is an investment worth making and it can help schools meet the demands set forth by PEF and the goal of equity in education for all our students.

References


In March 2020, the world abruptly catapulted from fast-paced and noisy to still and quiet. As I struggled to make sense of my new environment, devoid of familiar sounds and voices, I recalled a long-forgotten memory of an evening at a friend’s house. Sitting on her back porch, I listened to the symphony of night sounds made by tree frogs, crickets, and owls. As I heard the animals and insects communicate, I realized the most prevalent sounds from my house, which is parallel to Interstate 75, were different. Later that night, I sat on my own porch and listened carefully. In the stillness between passing trucks and cars, I heard the night sounds clearly. When I shifted my focus away from the traffic and began to listen with intention, I realized that I could hear them, once again. Why? What was it about the interstate noise that captured my attention so singularly? Perhaps, it was simply louder, more insistent, more omnipresent. I wonder, now, if this analogy applies to the noise of our school lives. Although the sounds of school are many and varied, do we give more attention to the loudest, most insistent; namely standards, policies, protocols, assessments, and the myriad of other tasks on our insurmountable to-do lists? More importantly, is it possible that the less audible, less insistent sounds obscured by this noise are the stories and, within them, the needs of our children?

COVID-19 abruptly changed the way we engaged with our children. Much like the experience on my friend’s porch, we suddenly had a different perspective, one with new sounds, not dominated by the literal and figurative noise of school. For the first time, school was situated within the child’s world; we entered their space, their home, their life. This unfamiliar context left us confused and anxious about how to teach our children. As we searched for an island of certainty, we kept returning to conversation with children as a critical instructional process. Over and over teachers recounted how in this space, they were giving children more time to talk, and they were spending much more time listening. Dr. Clay (1998) suggested, “Too often school becomes a place where children write language down and teachers do the talking” (p. 28). As our teachers reflected, together, they acknowledged that too often, we talk and children listen. Even when we are side by side. But in the virtual space, authentic, multidirectional, and extended conversations with children became elevated in priority. When teachers began to listen to their children in an open, less goal-directed way, they realized how much they were learning about them, and they gained insight into their identity as people and learners. They found children who rarely talked at school suddenly eager to share their thoughts and ideas. Dr. Clay (2004) reminds us that for many children, school is a “confronting” environment from which they withdraw and “remain very quiet” (p. 8). It stands to reason that learning from the security of their homes contributed to their willingness to talk a little more, in a louder voice. Perhaps this willingness also derived from the fact that our teachers simply gave their children more opportunity to be heard. And in doing so, gave them confidence and agency to tell their stories.

Children were not the only ones who needed us during this crisis. Parents shared virtual spaces with their children; we needed to see and hear them, too. For the first time, it was the parent sitting beside their child, while we, the teachers, were the ones at a distance. Parents became our partners, giving us a rare opportunity to talk and listen to one another. Our conversations generated new insights into how we, as teachers, inadvertently neglect parents as essential members of our team. Far too often, we allow the pace and noise of school life to limit our contact with parents.
our contact with parents. Moreover, when we do contact them, we dictate the terms and boundaries of the communication, sometimes resulting in exchanges that are unidirectional. In essence, we talk, and parents listen. Is it possible that school can become a “confronting” environment, for parents as well, rendering them silent, mirroring the experience of their children (Clay, 1998)? But, just as they had with children, teachers began to communicate with parents in more informal, prolonged, and authentic ways. As we engaged in genuine conversation with children and parents, they began to share their stories with us. And us with them. We began to listen to each other. And our collective stories fostered multidirectional, reciprocal, and mutual understanding. It is sobering to realize that those stories were always there, but maybe, like still, we began to listen to these stories of struggle, disenfranchisement, and injustice with greater focus and intention. And, we realized, these stories are those of our children, parents, and communities. Charlotte Huck (1999) reminds us, “Every person’s life is a story” (p. 113). And many are less audible, even silenced by the noise, so we must listen intently in order to hear them. These stories are neither distant nor separate from our work, even if they differ from, or conflict with, our own world views. If we ignore them, or worse, allow them to be muted, we are limiting what is possible for the children and families we serve.

We have learned a great deal about our children, our work, our communities, and ourselves from this experience. What matters, now, is what we do with that learning. As we move back into the noise, do we carry what we’ve learned forward, or do we leave it all behind? Had I simply listened to the night sounds from my friend’s porch and left them there, I would have robbed myself of the opportunity to hear them from my house. Instead, when I returned to my own space with a new perspective, I was able to tune out the more insistent noises and, once again, hear the sounds that were the soundtrack of my childhood in Eastern Kentucky. Those sounds were always there, in my backyard, but I had stopped listening for them. As an education community, we cannot stop listening. We must be vigilant, listening carefully for the softer voices, those that are muted by the cacophony of school noise. Because ultimately, those voices tell the stories of our collective humanity.

**References**


JRR Begins 20th Year

Marsha Studebaker, former RRCNA Director of Communications

In The Beginning …

As The Journal of Reading Recovery begins its 20th year of publication, most readers may be surprised to learn that in the beginning, there was controversy. The idea was so controversial, in fact, that a small RRCNA committee meeting attracted more than 30 people to hear results of member research about whether the Council should establish a Reading Recovery practitioner’s journal. After all, we already had multiple newsletters and a research journal:

- **The Running Record**, a review of Reading Recovery theory and practice for the teaching community, launched in October 1988. Mary Fried was editor for 8 years until Judith Neal took over in 1996.
- **Network News**, for the teacher leader and trainer community, also launched in 1988, with Mary Fried and OSU colleagues serving as editorial staff.
- **Council Connections** debuted in the spring of 1995, soon after RRCNA was incorporated, with Janet Bufalino as editor.
- **Literacy, Teaching and Learning**, an international scholarly research journal, launched in 1994, with Adria Klein and Stanley Swartz as editors.

Should teachers and teacher leaders have the same information? Would school administrators have time to read teaching information? And, most importantly, who would review and edit articles to ensure fidelity to Marie Clay’s work? University training centers had been entrusted with that responsibility. How could RRCNA, with no Reading Recovery-trained staff, ensure accuracy and fidelity?

The meeting adjourned with a recommendation that the decision be referred to the RRCNA Board of Trustees. **Council Connections** notes in the spring 2001 issue that the board deferred a proposal to “combine all 3 newsletters into one quarterly publication until consultation with NATG” at its February 2001 meeting. Then weeks of behind the scenes discussion began.

Not everyone was convinced, but eventually the concept of The Journal of Reading Recovery was approved, and the semi-annual publication launched in the fall of 2001.

To this day, I believe seeing the prototype journal with an actual Reading Recovery student on the cover is what tipped the scale in favor. Since that very first issue, the students, families, and teachers in their “Where Are They Now” and “Parent Voices” stories have been a living reminder of Reading Recovery’s success in North America!

Many editorial meetings occurred over dinner when editors could relax and talk about what they were seeing in the field, and where clarification might be helpful. I marveled at the degree of consensus they shared when articles were out for editorial review. Editors were constantly on the lookout for anything that might be misinterpreted!

Watching the editorial teams work over my 15 years as RRCNA communications director, I admired their shared knowledge, their respect for each other, and their loyalty.
to teachers and children. They were thoroughly grounded in Marie Clay’s research, and each had experienced the wonder of seeing children and teachers learning behind the glass. They were eager to help their colleagues support children who were having great difficulty with reading and writing. When I retired, I had no qualms about leaving the JRR staff responsibility with Vicki Fox, who has continued to support the editorial team even after her own retirement.

Mary Anne Doyle played a key role in the creation of JRR and on the editorial team from the beginning. As the original editor of the teaching section, she had responsibility for securing articles, overseeing their review, and working with authors to edit those accepted for publication. She knew the needs of teachers and teacher leaders. And, she was trusted to make content decisions based on years of experience and a deep knowledge of research.

Mary Anne is the longest-serving editor to date, with 9 years as editor-in-chief and 5 years editing the teaching section. She is loved, respected, and trusted throughout the Reading Recovery community. I am grateful to have worked with Mary Anne, the entire editorial team, and the Reading Recovery community. The Journal of Reading Recovery is proof of the excellence of your work!

In Tribute to Dr. Mary Anne Doyle

RRCNA wishes to thank all the Reading Recovery trainers who have served as editors and editorial review board members for the past 19 years. A special thanks goes to Dr. Mary Anne Doyle who has played a pivotal role on the editorial team for 14 years and as an editorial reviewer and author since the first issue through today.

Mary Anne’s work as editor was guided by the desire to help JRR readers delve into Clay’s contributions to literacy teaching and learning and deepen their understandings of Reading Recovery theory and practice. The main criterion for accepting articles for publication in the teaching section was the grounding in Clay’s theory of literacy processing.

Mary Anne served as JRR editor-in-chief while also performing a range of significant leadership roles on behalf of Reading Recovery, including chair of the International Reading Recovery Trainers Organization Executive Board and president of the Reading Recovery Council of North America.

In fall 2007, Mary Anne led the effort to produce an issue of the journal in tribute to Marie Clay, following her passing earlier that year. This issue not only provided a fitting tribute, but was successful in creating an archive of seminal pieces that Dr. Clay had written; many requiring special permission to reprint. Mary Anne was uniquely equipped with the knowledge to guide the editorial team and produce a truly international issue, a powerful tribute to Marie Clay’s influence around the world.

In addition to her work for JRR, Mary Anne has also undertaken many additional high-profile editor roles with distinction, including consulting editor of the Marie M. Clay Literacy Trust and area editor for The Journal of Literacy Research. She has also contributed numerous books, scholarly articles, and book chapters, including her 2019 chapter, “Marie M. Clay’s Theoretical Perspective: A Literacy Processing Theory,” in the 7th edition of Theoretical Models and Processes of Literacy.
Journal Editors Share Reflections

Judith Chibante Neal
In those early years, every issue was a ‘pioneer’ effort, and each of us as editors did our creative and intellectual best to meet the evolving needs of our readership. Mary Anne was a steadying influence simply by her faithful work for each issue. But I could also say that of each one of us. After all, we were all Reading Recovery practitioners!

Salli Forbes
I was the implementation section editor when Mary Anne Doyle was editor of the teaching section and also during the first few years she was editor-in-chief of The Journal of Reading Recovery. From the beginning, Mary Anne contributed to a clear vision of what the journal could be. She grasped the importance of including outstanding articles in all of the sections and presenting Reading Recovery in a highly professional, informative format. As the teaching section editor, she worked tirelessly to solicit submissions which would contribute to the knowledge and skills of the teachers and teacher leaders in the Reading Recovery network. She was extremely collaborative in working with the other section editors. When Mary Anne became the editor-in-chief, she carried the vision of the journal forward and created a collaborative working environment with the section editors. She listened sensitively to the section editors’ ideas and encouraged us to support each other’s work. All section editors met with her on a regular basis to discuss ideas and work through challenges. Mary Anne’s contributions to The Journal of Reading Recovery are immeasurable and have provided the Reading Recovery community with an outstanding journal that we treasure and admire.

Robert Schwartz
A community needs communication. Mary Anne fostered the Reading Recovery community by her extraordinary efforts to bring us the highest quality information on teaching, implementation, and research. She polished these communications through a rigorous review and revision process. Her decades of dedication have enriched all of our lives by providing the stimulus for so much discussion and learning.

Connie Briggs
Mary Anne Doyle is the person you want as a colleague and friend. It has been my privilege to work with her on many special Reading Recovery projects over the years and as a member of the IRRTO Board of Directors. Someone who doesn’t know Mary Anne may first see her kindness and quiet demeanor, which is admirable. However, there is so much more to this woman once you get to know her. Mary Anne is a solid academic, an incredible writer, and a strategic thinker. As a leader, she is collegial, organized, professional, and straightforward (which I appreciate). She is highly respected as a contributing member of the NATG and IRRTO membership because of her wisdom and her ability to get things done. Mary Anne Doyle is someone you can count on, and I am blessed to count her as a colleague and friend.

Patricia Scharer
Reading Recovery professionals have learned much during the tenure of Dr. Mary Anne Doyle as editor of The Journal of Reading Recovery. First, we learned about professionalism. Mary Anne approached every element of JRR work with dedication and talent. Under her guidance, the publication emerged from a newsletter to a scholarly journal. She understood the importance of supporting Reading Recovery by providing access to a range of well-written articles about teaching, implementation, and research. We have also learned about the power of collaboration. I first worked as a section editor under her editorship and watched first-hand how she set up contexts for generating ideas which would influence the journal. Some of our favorite contexts would be dinner the night before the conference in the little room at the Hyatt or meeting at a restaurant after an NATG meeting. These times deepened our friendships and strengthened our comradery resulting in a consistently high-quality journal. Finally, she is a model for dedicating time and effort for Reading Recovery. Editing the journal was not the only national and international work she has led; the list of responsibilities she has had is long but each was completed with both enthusiasm and kindness. I’m appreciative of each of these gifts she has given to all of us, especially now that I serve as editor-in-chief of the journal. I only hope I can serve in ways that honor her efforts and continue her legacy.

Anne Simpson
The Journal of Reading Recovery continues to be an exemplary source of ongoing professional learning for Reading Recovery teachers, teacher leaders, site coordinators, and university trainers. An editor’s role is critical in setting the vision and attending closely to the details to ensure...
the relevance and content validity of each manuscript. The consistent quality and usefulness of each publication in the journal reflects Mary Anne Doyle’s expertise and commitment to Reading Recovery in addition to her deep understanding of Clay’s theoretical perspectives. Having served as a section editor for the journal and a trainer who relies on the journal as a resource for in-training and ongoing training classes, I want to express my deepest appreciation and admiration for Mary Anne’s leadership as editor of the journal. What a gift of learning she has provided for us all and the children we serve!

Mary Lose
It has been my honor to work as a section editor since 2011 for The Journal of Reading Recovery, and for most of those years with Dr. Mary Anne Doyle. My memories of Mary Anne’s contributions to the success of JRR include not only her skill as a gifted editor but also her interactions with me as a member of the editorial team. Mary Anne always focused on bringing out the very best in every author’s work. She would often take a modest piece of writing, polish it to bring forward its gems, while always staying true to the writer’s voice and message. She ensured that every issue of JRR would reflect Marie Clay’s theory and wisdom, be a trusted resource for readers, and deliver the very best in Reading Recovery teaching, research, and implementation. Mary Anne devoted extraordinary time and effort to the quality of every issue and always expressed gratitude to her editorial team for their work, even though, in my experience, the quality of each issue was the direct result of her meticulous editing and thoughtful guidance to the editorial team. Indeed, RRCNA members rate JRR as their most highly coveted member benefit, a fact that I believe can be attributed to Mary Anne’s editorial leadership. On a personal note, Mary Anne is an esteemed colleague who is always a joy to work with. I am forever grateful to Mary Anne Doyle for her legacy and lasting contributions to the success of JRR.

Eva Konstantellou
I was fortunate to serve as teaching section editor for The Journal of Reading Recovery for 6 years under editor-in-chief Mary Anne Doyle. When Mary Anne had asked me to assume this role, I was a bit reluctant that I would be succeeding her as teaching section editor for the first 5 years of the journal. As a relatively new trainer I was in awe of her many accomplishments in so many aspects of Reading Recovery; hers were very big shoes to fill. However, I was also very intrigued by the prospect of joining a talented group of colleagues on the editorial team to support Reading Recovery through the dissemination of the writings of talented authors. I consider the 6 years I worked with Mary Anne on JRR as among the most rewarding of my professional career in Reading Recovery. Soliciting manuscripts, working with reviewers, participating in meetings and conference calls, editing a few manuscripts simultaneously — it was busy and hard work and yet it all seemed manageable because we had an editor who was genuine, kind, flexible, tentative, a good listener, and above all, respectful of her colleagues’ professional judgment. How lucky were we on the editorial team to confer regularly with someone who was so dedicated to the preservation of the integrity and quality of Clay’s work! I came out of my 6-year service on JRR a better thinker and a better trainer, largely because of the conditions for learning and collaborative inquiry that Mary Anne had established as editor-in-chief.
Betsy Kaye
I am enormously grateful for Mary Anne Doyle’s countless contributions to our international Reading Recovery network! Year after year, RRCNA member surveys reveal that our members highly value The Journal of Reading Recovery, and Mary Anne Doyle’s leadership has been a critical factor in the journal’s success. Her vast knowledge of Reading Recovery ensures that the journal addresses important issues related to our implementation and teaching practice in addition to pertinent research and policy in the field. As a journal reader, I have always appreciated the quality and relevance of the articles. As a former section editor, I appreciated Mary Anne’s planning, guidance, and thoughtful feedback. I respect her high standards for excellence and appreciate that she has tirelessly served the Reading Recovery community in a way that continues to positively impact our work with children, teachers, and the broader educational community.

Lori Taylor
When I was invited by Mary Anne Doyle to serve as a section editor on the journal, I immediately agreed. You don’t say no to someone you have idolized for years. As a “new kid on the block” among Reading Recovery trainers, however, I was a bit intimidated with the weight of the task and assured by Mary Anne that there would be support. As editor-in-chief, she warmly welcomed me to the team, providing guidance and trust as she mentored me. Thank you, Mary Anne, for both your kindness and dedication to the journal, colleagues, and children of Reading Recovery.

Jim Schnug
I always looked forward to our editorial meetings two or three times each year, when Mary Anne presided over a cacophony of ideas, pitches, and subject matter that she expertly shepherded toward a final issue.

Mary Ann Poparad
Anything I put into words seems too minimal to tribute the great mind and professional contributions of Mary Anne Doyle. To me she is an outstanding example, writer, communicator, mentor, and most of all, a trusted colleague. In the brief time I served as a section editor, she supported, encouraged, nudged, and guided us to our best possible selves in all aspects of our work.

Vicki Fox
Thoughtful, considerate, mindful, supportive, caring, collaborative, influential, dedicated, persistent, giving, admired, gently persuasive, fun … all describe Mary Anne Doyle. Her willingness to share her wisdom and vast knowledge has—in so many ways—given support to me, to this journal, to RRCNA, and to the broader Reading Recovery community. She is a talented and gracious leader, and a truly wonderful person. I am blessed to have shared this journey with her as a trusted guide and to call her my friend. Mary Anne is, indeed, a bright spot in my Reading Recovery adventure!

Support the Foundation for Struggling Readers with a Facebook Fundraiser
Launch a fundraiser for your birthday, in memory or honor of someone, or for any special occasion. You’ll be able to set a goal, keep track of your progress, thank your supporters, and share the news on your timeline. Facebook covers all fees for nonprofits, so 100% of your tax-deductible donation goes to RRCNA’s Foundation for Struggling Readers.
Teacher Leader Awards
Support Training for 3

Three teacher leaders are in training thanks to generous donations to the Linda Dorn Reading Recovery Legacy Fund. These awards are funded to school districts that have demonstrated a commitment to Reading Recovery and selected a suitable teacher leader candidate.

Union County Schools, Union, SC
Crystal Bryant brings 25 years of teaching to her training as a teacher leader and has a master’s degree in literacy from Converse College. Crystal is looking forward to explaining professional development to teachers in Union County Schools and reimplementing Reading Recovery in the district. Crystal is training at Clemson University.

District 47, Crystal Lake, IL
Kerin Kuechel brings 17 years of teaching experience to her training as a teacher leader and has a master’s degree in reading from Concordia University. District 47 has been fully implemented since 1992 and serves students in both Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura. Kerin looks forward to continuing to be an advocate for Reading Recovery and providing professional development to other literacy professionals in her district. Kerin is training at National Louis University.

District 196 Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan, Rosemount, MN
Nicole Tschohl brings 24 years of teaching experience and a master’s degree in education from the College of St. Catherine. She has a strong passion for teaching children of all backgrounds and is looking forward to bringing in stakeholders to observe the impact of Reading Recovery in action. Nicole is training at National Louis University.
Professional Development Awards Help Fund LitCon 2021 Registration

Generous donors have contributed over 30 awards of up to $500 each to help offset the cost of registration for LitCon 2021. Awards will be given to Reading Recovery teachers, teachers-in-training, teacher leaders, university trainers, or administrators who support the implementation of Reading Recovery. Applicants must be current members of RRCNA to qualify. More information can be found on the RRCNA website under Foundation for Struggling Readers.

Geri Stone Memorial Fund awards will also be awarded to help offset the cost of attendance, teaching supplies, and more.

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Visit smile.amazon.com, sign in to your regular Amazon account, and designate RRCNA as the charitable organization you’d like to support.

The Amazon Smile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from your eligible AmazonSmile purchases every time you shop!

Remember to Smile!
From the archives ...  

Declaration of Independence  
We want our Reading Recovery students to be independent, and I think that my student Liza is well on her way. She was having difficulty with the word looked so we studied it, took it apart, practiced saying it together, until she was ready to try it again in her book. The sentence was, “He looked and looked and looked.” Because I believed she still needed support, as soon as she began reading, I read along with her. Immediately she swung her head around, looked me in the eye, and said, “Hey! I’m reading here!”  
— Tricia Toft, 2012

Thoughts About Reading  
David rocked in his chair as he read one day. I placed my hand on his shoulder to steady him. When he finished the text, I queried, “What do we need to think about when reading?” Without skipping a beat, David responded, “That it makes sense, looks right, and you have to sit still.”  
— Pamela, 2011

Using His Own Strategies  
In reading the new book, one of my students came to an unknown word. Rather than using the desired strategies while reading the running record book he asked, “Can I read it in my head ‘cause my mouth is tired?”  
— Carolyn Coons, 2014

Our readers say The Last Word column in The Journal of Reading Recovery is one of their favorite things to read. We need more of your great Reading Recovery stories. Please share in an email to vfox@readingrecovery.org.

Partners in Excellence — Our Associate Members

RRCNA offers a special associate membership level to companies that provide the books, assessment materials, and resources you need for your lessons and classrooms. Our associate members support Reading Recovery through generous sponsorships, grants, donations, and by participating in Reading Recovery and early literacy conferences throughout North America.
The premier K-8 literacy conference is now virtual! What does that mean for you? More! More content. More opportunity. And more access than ever to literacy best practices that will advance our field, enhance our skills, and mobilize our community to assist struggling readers!

Fast Facts about LitCon 2021

- At a reduced cost from our in-person conference, and without additional costs for travel and lodging, LitCon 2021 makes the most of your professional development dollars!
- More than 100 hours of literacy-rich content has been designed to work around educators’ busy schedules. Live and recorded sessions – plus a month of access to catch up with any can’t-miss content – means LitCon 2021 will allow wider access to even more educators and literacy advocates around the world!
- New group registration (coming late Fall 2020) makes it easier than ever to bring your entire literacy team. And our Buy 5, Get 1 Free pricing means up to 3 from your building can attend at no cost!
- Generous donors have contributed 30+ awards up to $500 each to offset the cost of registration for LitCon 2021. Awards will be given to Reading Recovery teachers, teachers-in-training, teacher leaders, university trainers, or administrators who support the implementation of Reading Recovery. More info can be found at www.literacyconference.org.

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