

Monitoring Our Students' Writing Development After Reading Recovery

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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.



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.

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,

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)

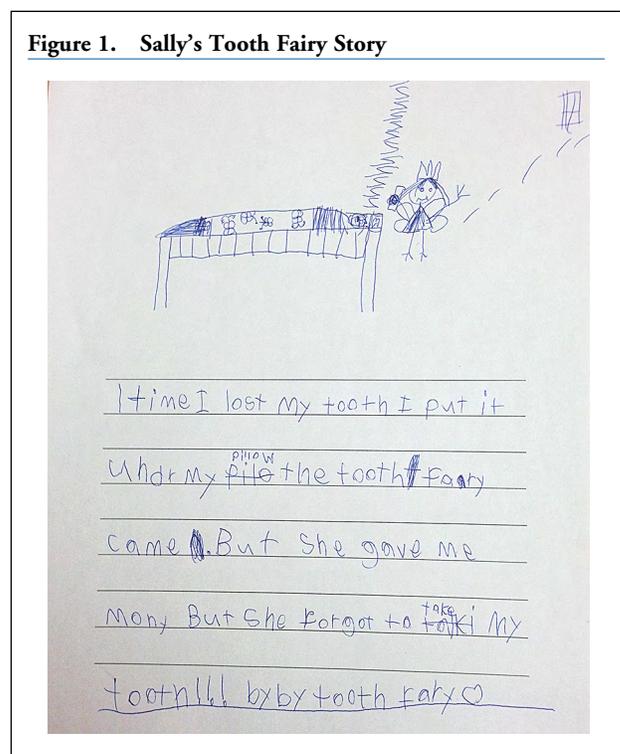
Most of the studies of student progress after Reading Recovery that I reviewed show that literacy gains are sustained at least a year or more after receiving Reading Recovery (Askew & Frasier, 1994; Briggs & Young, 2003; D'Agostino & Murphy, 2004; Gapp, Zalud, & Pietrzak, 2009; Hurry & Holliman, 2009; 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,



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 make corrections. When Sally gets "mixed up" she reads back into her message. She inserts punctuation and completes her message with a personal flourish.

Table 1. Sally's Actions While Writing the Tooth Fairy Story

Writes:	1 time I lost my tooth
Says:	One time I lost my tooth (reading what she has written)
Says and writes:	I put it
Says:	I don't know how to spell <i>under</i>
Writes:	u n d r (on a practice paper)
Says:	under my pillow...pill
Writes:	pilo
Says:	That's how you spell pillow? I don't know. Is Tooth Fairy one word? (talking to me)
Says:	I did two a's, get out of there a (scratches out one letter "a" in fairy)
Says:	under my pillow... (reading what she wrote) Okay, I got mixed up
Says:	came and she gave me money but forgot to take my tooth
Says:	I don't know, maybe I should put 'but'
Says and writes:	she gave me money
Says:	I'm going to make three loud marks
Says:	for for got to take um...I forget
Says:	two i's? (in the word take)
Says:	money but she forgot to take my
Says:	I'm going to make a line here. (draws an additional line)
Says:	I'll say bye bye Tooth Fairy. Oh, oh yeah and I'm going to put a heart.

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 writ-

ing 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.

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.

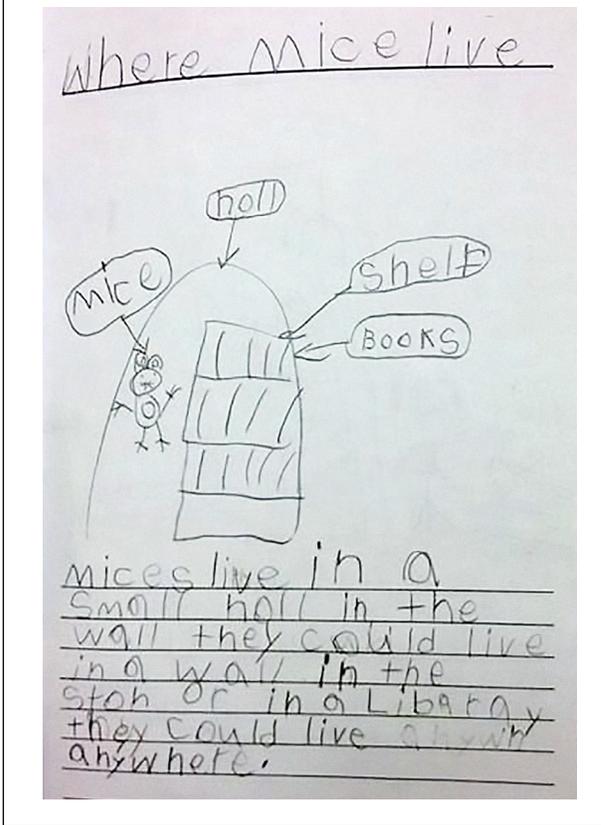
Sally's composing, constructing, and self-monitoring actions

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

Table 2. Writing Activities Observed in Mrs. Zee's Classroom

Form of Writing	Content
Research Report	Research information and write down facts on a chosen topic Report booklet organized with a table of contents and a page for each category containing a subtitle, illustration, and information presented in narrative form
Cereal Box	Planner with six headings Checklist requiring rationales for choices made under the six headings
Journal	How I show kindness
Poem	Acrostic using the word <i>Valentine</i>
Opinion	What you think happened and why in <i>George and Martha: Tons of Fun</i>
Recount and Response	How Pink Shirt Day began What I can do to stop bullying
Table	Inferencing characters' feelings from <i>George and Martha: Back in Town</i>
Recipe	Procedure for making pancakes
Graphic Organizer	Problem and solution narrative Organizing ideas with a partner
Narrative	Independent planning sheet for a problem and solution story Write problem and solution story
Personal Response	I didn't think Earth Day mattered until... If you were in charge of a golden egg where would you hide it and why would you hide it there?
Free Writing	

Figure 2. A Page from Sally's Research Report on Mice



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?

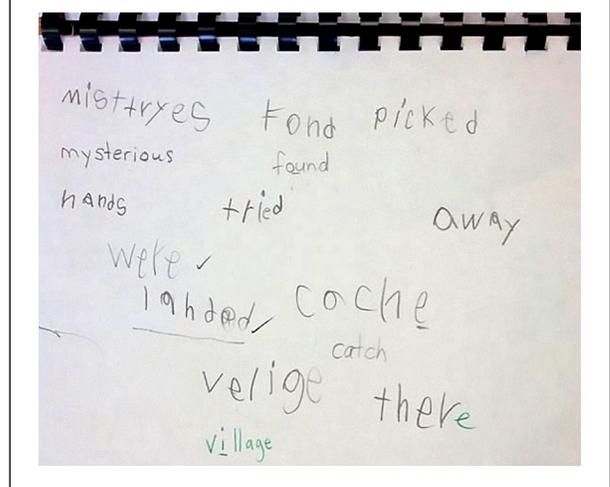
Sally: *girl*

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).

Figure 3. Sally's Spelling Practice Book



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

Table 3. Sally's Observation Survey

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

*Canadian stanines for December Grade 2

Table 4. Sally's Burt Word Reading Test

	Score	EAB	Stanine
Pre-Study	35	7.01–7.07	4
Post-Study	41	7.07–8.01	

*Canadian stanine for December Grade 2

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

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)

Figure 4. A Page from Cam’s Research Report on Fish

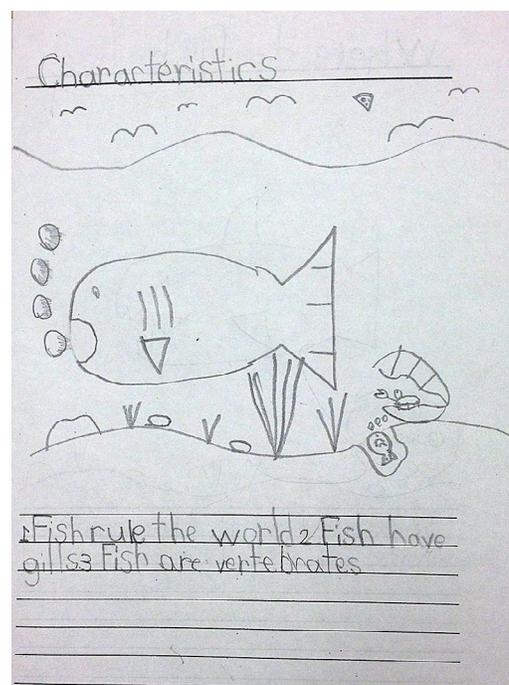
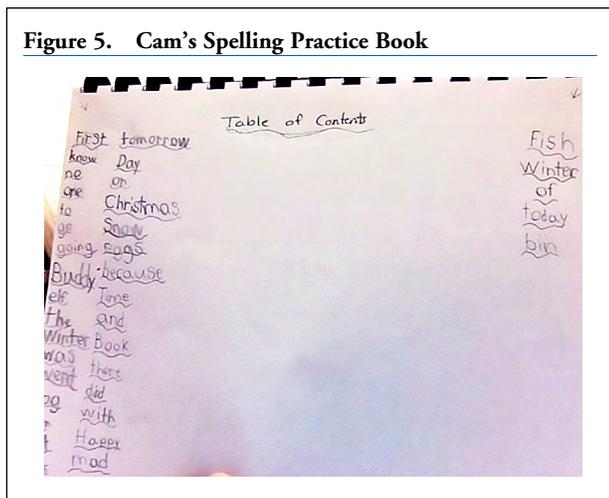


Figure 5. Cam's Spelling Practice Book

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

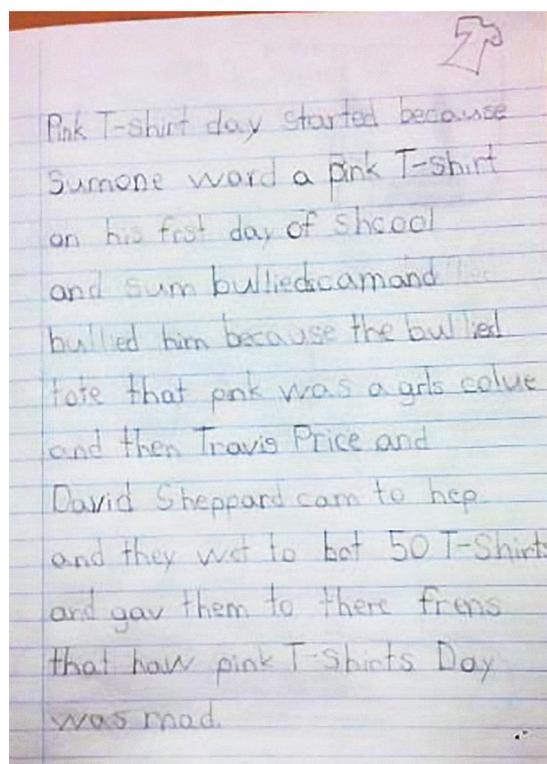
Cam's performance on the first administration of the Observation Survey and my early observations of his writing behavior while writing his report about fish were evidence that he required an increase in attention from the classroom teacher to facilitate change in the trajectory of his progress (Clay, 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)

Figure 6. Cam's Pink T-Shirt Day Recount

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.

Cam: Um...Mike tried to close the door but he went through the door. Um...Mike closed the door on the ghost.

Mrs. Zee: Great! Write it down.

Cam: Begins writing

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 class-

room. 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*

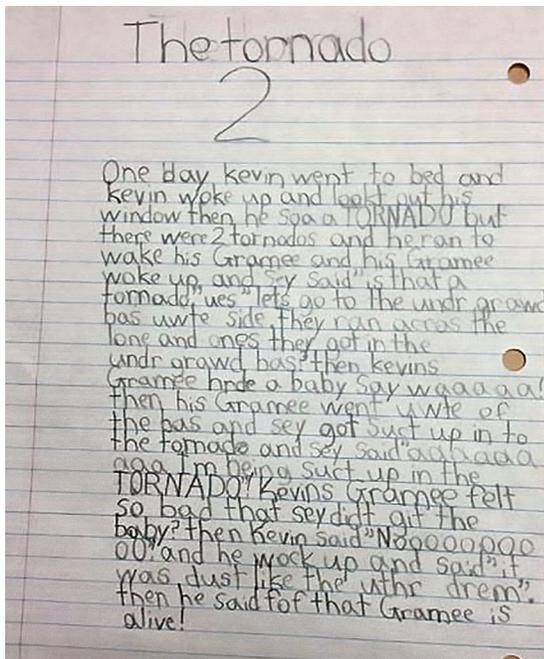
Mrs. Zee: Looks at Cam

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

Figure 7. Cam's Tornado Story: Chapter 2



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 *coming* 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

Table 5. Cam’s Observation Survey

Task	Pre-Study Score	Pre-Study Stanine	End-of-Study Score
Letter Identification	54/54		54/54
Concepts About Print	21/24		22/24
Word Reading	8/15		14/15
Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words	34/37		37/37
Writing Vocabulary	34	4	48
Text Reading	14	2	16

*Canadian stanines for December Grade 2

Table 6. Cam’s Burt Word Reading Test

	Score	EAB	Stanine
Pre-Study	20	5.10–6.04	2
Post-Study	24	6.02–6.08	

*Canadian stanine for December Grade 2

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.

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 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 7. Composing, Constructing, and Self-Monitoring Actions

Composing Action	Exemplar
Draws	Creates a message through art or drawing
Looks at an illustration	Looks at art from a book or illustration
Talks about an idea while drawing	Talks to another about a message in drawing or art
Generates ideas	Talks to another about an idea for a message
Plans	Makes decisions on the content of a message
Talks about an idea during writing	Solicited or spontaneous talk during writing about a message idea
Comments	Remarks that indicate how the composing is going
Indicates thinking	Tells someone he/she is thinking
Looks up	Looks up with no particular focus
Makes word writing movements	Makes word writing movements across a page
Makes pencil movements	Tapping, poking, manipulating a pencil in an unconscious way
Talks to self while writing	Oral composing of any part of a message
Invents detail not written	Oral composing of detail that is not encoded
Constructing Action	Exemplar
Looks around the room	Looks for something in the classroom related to writing
Asks how to spell	Asks for help with the spelling of a specific word
Looks in a practice spelling book	Looks for a word already written in a personal spelling practice book
Looks in an idea book	Looks for a word already written in a personal idea book
Looks in a planner	Looks in a planner for assigned writing
Looks in a previous message	Looks at a message written prior to today's writing
Copies letter by letter	Copies a word from a classroom resource into a message and looks at the resource before recording letter by letter
Copies letter cluster	Copies a cluster of letters in a word from a classroom resource into a message
Copies a word	Copies an entire word from a classroom resource into a message
Copies a sentence starter	Copies a sentence starter to an assigned task into a message from a classroom resource
Articulates a phoneme	Makes a distinct sound of a phoneme in speech
Articulates a cluster	Makes a distinct sound of a group of two or more letters
Articulates a word	Slow pronunciation of a word
Covers eyes	Covers eyes to support visualization
Makes mouth movements	Makes mouth movements with no distinct sound while writing

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.

Study and Reflection with a Colleague

Return to Table 1 and analyze Sally's actions as composing, constructing, and self-monitoring actions using Table 7.

Observe a student who is near the end of their series of Reading Recovery lessons in the classroom during independent writing. Record their behavior in full while writing. Compare your findings with Table 7. What does your student need to learn how to do in order to become a more independent writer?

Table 7. Composing, Constructing, and Self-Monitoring Actions CONTINUED

Constructing Action	Exemplar
Records letter by letter	Deliberate recording of a word or word part one letter at a time
Records cluster of letters	Deliberate recording of two or more letters in a word without pause
Says word aloud	Says word aloud before or while writing into text
Spells orally	Spells a word out loud that is recorded in a message
Writes a single word	Fluent production of a single word without pausing regardless of accuracy
Writes multiple words	Fluent production of two or more words without pausing regardless of accuracy
Inserts period/full stop	Adds a period/full stop into a message
Inserts quotation marks	Adds quotation marks into a message
Inserts exclamation mark	Adds an exclamation mark into a message
Draws after writing	Creates a drawing following a written message
Indicates finished	Verbal indication a message is complete
Self-Monitoring Action	Exemplar
Verbal indication	Comments on message production, e.g., "Oops, I forgot something."
Nonverbal indication	Action indicates noticing something, e.g., shakes head
Erasing actions	Erases a letter, letter cluster, word, multiple words in a message
Indicates reading back	Eye movement indicates looking back into a message
Looks back into text	Gaze or page turning indicates looking back into a message
Finger points	Finger points to a word in a message or finger points word by word while reading a message
Moves pencil along text	Moves pencil along a message while reading
Pencil points	Uses a pencil to point to words in a message while reading
Reads aloud	Reads a message or part of a message out loud
Corrects letter spacing	Corrects spacing between letters in a word
Corrects letter	Makes a correction to the formation of a letter in a word
Corrects a word	Makes a correction to some part of a word
Adds to message	Adds a word or words into previously written text
Traces a letter	Traces over a letter already written into text
Uses finger for spacing	Uses finger to measure spaces between words
Counts lines of text	Uses pencil or finger to count the number of lines in a message
Comments on length	Makes a verbal comment about the length of a message, e.g., "look how much I did"

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