

The Journal of Reading Recovery®

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Setting Sail and Staying the Course

Allyson Matczuk

What Is Possible Through Widespread Teacher Leader Collaboration?

*Lorianne R. Fitzgerald, Jamie Lipp,
Meg Formolo, Christy Germany, Katy Honish,
Shanna Robinson, and Cheri Slinger*

Teachers and Children Learning With and From Each Other: What Is Possible With Literacy Lessons?

Mary Ann Poparad

Equity and Excellence Now

Douglas Reeves



IDEC ANNUAL EVALUATION REPORT 2019-2020

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Patricia L. Scharer, Editor-in-Chief



Courageous Actions

Readers will discover several themes in this issue of *The Journal of Reading Recovery* — the influence of close observation on teaching, moral issues of equity and excellence, and the resilience of Reading Recovery professionals. Allyson Matczuk uses Clay's "setting sail" metaphor to challenge Reading Recovery teachers to use every observation of difficulties early in lessons to design the most effective lessons. Examples of Jason's book graph, running records, and close observations in writing provide insights into planning precision teaching moves needed to accelerate learning. Similarly, Mary Ann Poparad writes about the power of Literacy Lessons for special populations. Poparad argues that careful observation of student reading and writing behaviors during Literacy Lessons not only supports student learning but also increases teachers' professional knowledge and expertise.

As part of our ongoing Distinguished Scholars Series, Douglas Reeves explores the multiple meanings of equity and excellence. The five examples he uses are, indeed, somewhat removed from primary students, but will resonate with Reading Recovery professionals who feel the urgency to support struggling students but are met with opposition. For example, Reeves argues that the path to Advanced Placement courses begin with young children as learning gaps will grow larger every year. When discussing homework, Reeves notes four characteristics of effective practice, each of which is found in every Reading Recovery lesson. His article aligns issues found in Reading Recovery to those throughout the education system. Reeves concludes with a charge for educators that we "need courageous action now" (p. 26).

Finally, this issue celebrates the resilience of Reading Recovery teachers despite a life-altering pandemic. Lorianne Fitzgerald and her colleagues describe their collaboration across multiple universities to provide as many resources as possible to teachers using Zoom or distance-learning platforms when school started in 2019. Their work, individually and collectively, enabled many teachers to sustain high-quality lessons, even at a distance. The success of Reading Recovery teachers in fall 2019, is further described by Susan Mauck and Jeffrey Brymer-Bashore in the IDEC report. And in Canada, Stephanie Cecchina had the opportunity to work with Jake, a rising second grader whose participation in Reading Recovery had been interrupted by the global pandemic. Within 10 weeks, Jake progressed from being a reluctant writer reading at level 5 to a confident writer, willing to take risks, and reading level 27. The opportunity to work with Jake came about because of the creativity of the district, collaboration with parents, and the talents of his teacher. Courageous actions, indeed!

Happy Reading!

Patricia L. Scharer

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We ensure the competencies necessary for a literate and productive future for children learning to read and write.

Mission

We construct collaborative partnerships to change the trajectory of literacy achievement by:

- *implementing Reading Recovery® in English, Spanish, or French as an essential, research-based early literacy intervention within a comprehensive literacy system*
- *expanding the application of literacy processing theory through Literacy Lessons™ with special education students and English learners*
- *delivering expert teaching that is equitable and responsive to children's strengths and needs*
- *providing sustained, specialized professional development focused on continuous improvement and literacy leadership*
- *advancing the development of knowledge and practice based on research, data, and the theoretical framework that has underpinned Reading Recovery® since its founding.*

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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.

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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.
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Setting Sail and Staying the Course

Allyson Matczuk, *Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery*

Author's note: All teacher and children's names are pseudonyms. All citations of Clay's work in this article, unless otherwise noted, refer to Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals (2nd ed.), published in 2016.

*Simply by sailing in a new direction,
one could enlarge the world.*

— Allan Curnow

The sailing metaphor is widely used in literature about the life and accomplishments of Dame Marie Clay.

As a distinguished New Zealand educator, Clay employed the words of New Zealand poet Allan Curnow, and the metaphor of Curnow's 1911 poem, "Simply by Sailing in a New Direction," as her statement. She insisted that we must continually be in search of answers in the world of Reading Recovery® educators (Fullerton et al., 2007). This article is written to clarify and remind Reading Recovery teachers why they need to pay attention to signs of difficulties early in a child's lesson series, consider why ignoring them could lead to perilous results, and see how Clay's words of wisdom in *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals* point us in the right direction.

To continue the sailing metaphor, we look at one Reading Recovery teacher, Jill, and her student, Jason. They have just set sail in September of first grade.

Teacher: pointing to "d" on the Letter Identification task in *An Observation Survey of*

Early Literacy Achievement (Clay, 2019) followed her initial request for Jason to identify the letter in some way with the question, "Do you know a word that starts with that letter?"

Jason: It looks lots like "b" and "p" but it's different.

Teacher: Hmmmm?

Jason: But I can't remember its name so I'm just going to say "bed."

It would be well within reason for any Reading Recovery teacher to think that Jason knew about the lowercase letter "d" in ways that were related and partially correct. It would be erroneous to assume his way of thinking was not helpful and partially incorrect. Jason was not awarded a point on the Letter Identification task. However, Jill noted that he did know something about that letter and could distinguish it from other letters. As cognitive psychologist, Steven Pinker (1999) would say, the "fingerprints of learning" were all over Jason's response.

Although most of his results on the initial Observation Survey assessment showed scores primarily in Stanines 1 and 2, the quality of the near misses and half-right responses showed that Jason had the beginnings of a literacy processing system and that he used what he knew to help himself.

However, his processing system was in formation and not yet sufficiently developed to permit accuracy, flu-

ency, or flexibility when reading and writing even the simplest of texts.

As Jason's lessons moved to the end of the Roaming Around the Known period, Jill began to notice more about his partially right responses. Her notes indicated Jason was satisfied and proud of those almost-right responses for which Jill had praised him. However, he was reluctant to engage in the searching and checking approaches Jill promoted. He created his own rationales for his substitutions, which were adequate to satisfy him, and ignored discrepancies even when the teacher drew attention to them, as it would have upset his logic. The lessons learned by the teacher were significant about Jason as a learner. He was fine with "good enough" and did not wish to upset his equilibrium.

Reading Recovery is a short-term intervention. Its design gets students on the right track and moving on a journey. Days can fly by—always the wind at the back sail for child and teacher—when everything is going well. The teacher tunes into the child's developing literacy processing system and establishes the best ways to adapt teaching for individuals. The child's learning accelerates and at the end of every lesson, the child leaves feeling they have traveled, and made changes in their thinking. The child's brain recognizes their learning and that things are going well.

Both Reading Recovery teacher and child know when sailing conditions are poor. The struggle to shift the

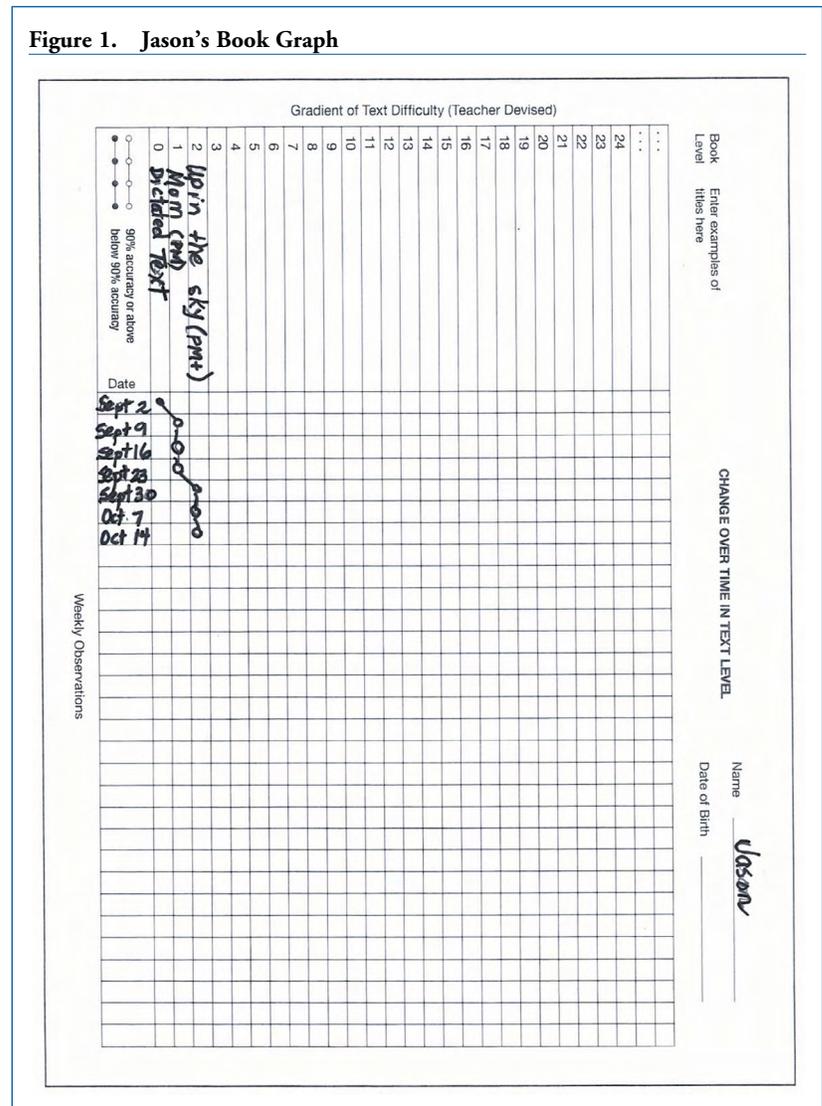
child’s thinking is borne by both individuals, and effects of struggle are cyclic in nature. That is to say, if the cognitive demands on the child are too high, requiring multiple futile attempts to problem solve, negative emotional factors arise and further interfere with thinking. If one considers a time when they were late to an appointment at a new location and the map being used was not helping, it is quite likely that they were feeling some anxiety and making impetuous decisions that were leading to dead ends and incorrect locations (and possibly blaming the map for the predicament). This negative emotional response will lead some to give up on attending the event altogether. Some students feel lost in the reading or writing process and are unable to activate their personal literacy processing effectively. The cycle of emotion, motivation, and cognition (see Figure 2) spirals negatively. A noticing teacher can be most helpful by intervening to provide support and success. When cognitive demands are “just right,” the result is a positive emotional response and motivation to try to solve the next puzzle.

Jill was a sensitive observer, and she could see that they were not sailing in the right direction. She knew that sometimes, if a child’s literacy processing is more elusive to tune into and a teacher is uncertain how to adapt teaching appropriately, time may drag on, her note-taking suffers, and acceleration is not evident. Jason’s weekly book graph (Figure 1) told her something was not right.

If the child is finding their journey to be in the doldrums or in a tempest (see shaded insert), it is our job, as specially trained teachers to find the right way to teach this child, to always be in search of another way. This is what Clay advocated. Askew (2007) stated, “Marie’s perpetual

state of inquiry had a profound effect on me. At first, it was not always comfortable ...I had to abandon some ‘safe havens’ and be open to new ways of thinking, asking new questions of my own. What a gift she gave me—both professionally and personally” (p. 89).

Figure 1. Jason’s Book Graph



The **doldrums** is a colloquial expression derived from historical maritime usage, in which it refers to those parts of the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean affected by a low-pressure area around the equator where the prevailing winds are calm. The doldrums are also noted for calm periods when the winds disappear altogether, trapping sail-powered boats for periods of days or weeks. There is a way out of the slump by rowing the boat. A **tempest** is a violent windy storm.

Sensitive Observation and New Thinking

There must be times when the teacher stops teaching and becomes an observer, a time when she must drop all her pre-suppositions about a child, and when she listens very carefully and records very precisely what that particular child can in fact do (Clay, p. 12).

As Jason's response to the lowercase letter "d" showed, flexibility in thinking while examining something familiar helped. A teacher shifting perspectives and adjusting teaching practice to support the idiosyncratic processing of the individual child will achieve acceleration. The child's processing challenges will be invisible, but there will be clues in what the child does and says, so recording precisely and analyzing carefully is critical.

What are some overt signals that all is not well from the child's perspective?

- The child is reluctant to come to lessons.
- The child complains that things may be hard.
- There are signs of tension (twirling hair, stretching, yawning, wiggling, diversionary talk, difficulty engaging, touching objects on the table, falling off the chair) during parts of the lesson.
- The child seems to easily revert to old ways of thinking.
- The child is not able to demonstrate what was taught in the last lesson.

During professional development sessions, teacher leaders guide teachers to look at Clay's literacy processing theory and the teaching

procedures outlined in her texts to guide possible ways to work with individuals. The aim of this article is to urge inquiry and to provide some ideas about looking at evidence differently.

Does the child's book graph have plateaus or mountains and valleys? Does a child's learning seem to take two steps forward and one step back? Is the child's Writing Vocabulary chart mostly blank? Is the running record analysis the same day after day? Do lesson records look like the teacher is in a state of confusion or is there an overabundance of blank space? Is more time spent worrying rather than celebrating?

There is a cycle (Figure 2) at play that is affecting progress. When a child does not achieve sufficient successes in day-to-day reading and writing, it is possible that an emotional element of fear (along with a fight, flight, or freeze response) can lead to a lack of self-assurance which is difficult to replace with a positive emotional response. Negative emotional responding must be overcome, and an even greater amount of positive emo-

tional responding must be achieved to improve motivation. Even neutral emotional responding is not enough. That is not to say teachers should give false praise, but rather the child's brain will reward itself when problem solving is successful because they can self-monitor their reading and writing; they know how and where to search for further information; and they self-correct errors because they can. Positive emotional responses prove to be motivational when the child encounters new problems so that they willingly engage in some or all problem solving on their own or with the right kind of support from the teacher. Successful reading and writing work changes the way the child thinks about problem solving new challenges and about themselves as a reader and a writer, not struggling with insurmountable challenges. This cycle is true for both children and their teachers. A negative cycle is certainly defeating for the learner, but a teacher's perspective of their own efficacy can also lead to a fight, flight, or freeze response.

What is called for is self-reflection. Teachers must look thoughtfully and

Figure 2. Emotion-Motivation-Cognition Cycle

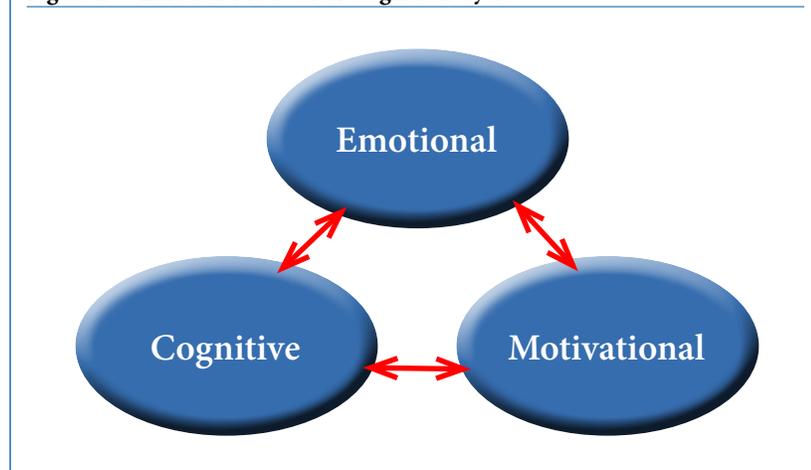


Figure 3. Questions to Guide Teaching

Instead of Thinking ...	Try Thinking (Growth Mindset)
He is not motivated to do this.	How can I design lessons for him?
He is not ready for this.	What do my lesson records show?
There must be something else happening.	How can I make sure he feels he belongs to the reading and writing community and I'm on his side?
I cannot help him in 20 weeks. He needs to be referred to a specialist.	What can he do independently? What are his strengths?
He cannot remember from one day to the next.	How can I arrange for success?
I have tried everything and nothing works.	What is the next easiest thing for him to learn? Did any part of it work? Where can I learn more? What else can I read? With whom can I talk? How can I make the learning more memorable for him? What will it take to capture his brain's attention?

thoroughly at their own teaching and think in different ways about how individual children respond. If the way a teacher has been thinking is not working, then it is essential that the evidence be tipped on its head and examined differently. It is only by shifting our own perspectives and adjusting teaching practice (see Figure 3) to support the idiosyncratic processing of the individual child that one will meet the challenges.

Asking for help from colleagues is expected and welcome. A growth mindset benefits an adaptive teacher who thinks in innovative ways.

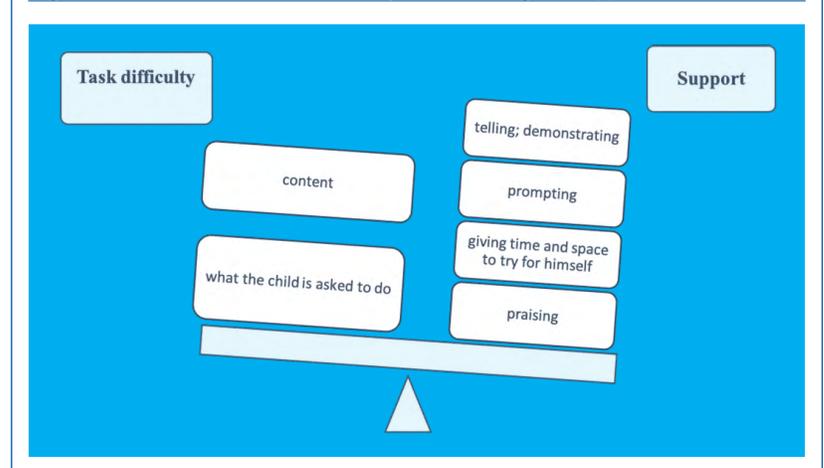
Teachers can control some elements of the learning context in which the child finds himself. Keeping in mind David Wood's (2003) perspectives on contingent teaching to organize our thoughts, we can consider three aspects: *domain contingency*, *instructional contingency*, and *temporal contingency*. Domain contingency refers to *what* is being taught — what literacy processing is being fostered and what degree of difficulty the

task requires (i.e., text level and story being composed). Instructional contingency refers to *how* it is being taught — what kind of verbal and non-verbal support and how much support is given to ensure the child is successful. Temporal contingency refers to the timing of the support — when in the lesson the support is given and the rhythm of the interactions between child and teacher (Wood, 2003; Lose, 2007; Matczuk & Straw, 2005). Tutoring will work

when these three aspects of instruction are in balance and supporting each other.

The important factor is the balance between what the child is being asked to do and the kind of support being offered (see Figure 4) so that the success is achieved in a stable state of equilibrium. Another way to think of this is that the child will be working with the teacher in his *zone of proximal development* (Vygotsky,

Figure 4. Balance of Task Difficulty and Contingent Support



1980) and will have many opportunities in the lesson to work in his *zone of actual development* to reinforce his current competencies. That is, the literacy processing the teacher supports in the lesson will be on the cutting edge of the child's current competencies.

Clay recommends several actions that teachers can take to ensure this balance can occur and inform the instructional side of the balance. From day-to-day lessons and week-to-week reflections, teachers need to be able to

- find each learner's starting point,
- observe how children work on easy tasks when things go well,
- respond to children's initiatives and interact with their thinking,
- observe how they work on novel things,
- applaud what is correct in a partially correct response, and
- identify strengths as firm ground on which to build. (Clay, p. 213)

Concern 1: Behaviors Signal Lapses in the Establishment of an Early Literacy Processing System

When a teacher is unsure about their interpretation of the child's reading as captured in running records or feels they have lost sight of today's starting point, or if their own note-taking needs some attention, talking with a teacher leader or a colleague will help. A teacher might want to look at the child's original Observation Survey and consider not only the aspects

where the child succeeded, but also where the partially correct response or the confusions lie.

Investigate records of reading

Jill reviewed Jason's book graph (see Figure 1) and his running records (see Figure 5).

While it had only been a few weeks, time was marching on while Jason's progress and spirits languished. Jill knew it was up to her to sort through this problem. As she reviewed Jason's running records, she saw that he stopped taking action when he came

to a problem or made an error in text. He used some information but not enough. There was only one attempt made, and while he seemed to be cross-checking on information in some way, it did not result in his taking action to search further or make multiple attempts. The lesson record should have sufficient notes to allow a teacher to reflect; a child who is finding the learning confusing may also have a teacher who is confused about what to record.

Clay has advocated that, for children who enter with low scores, it is

Figure 5. Jason's Running Record of The Merry-Go-Round

RUNNING RECORD SHEET										
Name <u>Jason</u>		Date <u>Oct 3</u>		D. of B. _____		Age _____ yrs _____ mths				
School _____			Recorder _____							
Text Titles	Errors Running Words	Error Ratio	Accuracy Rate	Self-correction Ratio						
Easy _____		1: _____	% _____	1: _____						
Instructional _____		1: _____	% _____	1: _____						
Hard _____		1: _____	% _____	1: _____						
Directional movement _____										
Analysis of Errors and Self-corrections										
Information used or neglected (Meaning (M), Structure or Syntax (S), Visual (V))										
Easy _____										
Instructional _____										
Hard _____										
Cross-checking on Information (Note that this behaviour changes over time)										
Page	(PM, S)	Level	3	Title	Count		Analysis of Errors and Self-corrections			
					E	SC	E MSV	SC MSV		
2.	✓	home	✓	The Merry-go-Round	1		MSV	MSV		
									Corre here	James
									said Dad	
									✓ home	✓
4.	✓	over	✓	The Merry-go-Round	1		MSV	MSV		
									Corre here	Kate
									✓ home	✓
	✓	here	✓							
	✓	✓	✓							
	✓	✓	✓							
	✓	✓	✓							
	Look at	James								
	Names is up	on	✓							
			✓							
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important to pay attention to the Concepts About Print task (Clay, 2019, pp. 133–135.) The [reading and writing] emphases in tomorrow’s lesson will arise out of today’s observations (Clay, 2016, p. 214), which must be adequately recorded to allow the teacher to have crystal clear observations and to make superb decisions. Jill found that when she looked at Jason’s responses in Concepts About Print, he had knowledge about the concept of “first” but not “last” whether it was about words or the story. This was also noted in Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words, where he was able to record the first letter of words but did not record any other sounds even when his slow articulation showed an ability to say words correctly and slowly.

The results of his Writing Vocabulary task showed that he recorded familiar words correctly (and quickly according to the teacher’s notes); but his attempts for other words (names of his brothers) showed that he recorded only the first letter or two correctly and completed the word incorrectly — or did not attempt to complete the word.

Laying out lesson records, running records, charts of Writing Vocabulary, Reading Vocabulary, and Change Over Time in Text Reading can provide oversight of all the evidence. Looking at them objectively and reflecting on what daily lesson records show can help to identify trends and mismatches:

- A flat line or plateau on the text reading graph, especially at Levels 3 and 4 is identified.
- Notes about the child’s hand movement (even a slight hesitation) when writing or

pointing while reading has been observed to show possible directional confusion in pointing or writing.

- Whether or not there has been minimal growth in a Reading and Writing Vocabulary, words are added slowly beyond the first 2 weeks of lessons.
- The running records may show that high-frequency words are confounding the child. For example, confusions about “the” and “a” or “can” and “come.”
- Observations during reading show that the child may be cross-checking on information but fails to search for or use more information. Clay suggests it is an “early behaviour” and “tentative” in nature and that it “occurs when the child is not satisfied with his response for some reason” signaled by making another attempt, or looking back, or pausing to think” (Clay, p. 136), or simply frowning of the brow.
- The reading or writing vocabulary charts are limited or have many two-letter words, or lots of partially known words.
- Visual analysis of words recorded on the daily lesson record and the running record do not consistently show a left-to-right analysis.
- Child’s attempts on the working page show lapses in directional movement possibly even at the letter level.
- A small reading and writing vocabulary means that the

child has very little to link new learning to. It also means that the child has very few secure footholds in print to help him to check on himself.

Take action

Clay addresses issues surrounding early processing learning for this important development in the child’s literacy processing. A shaky foundation leads to assembly problems down the line and they are difficult to sort out the longer they are practiced. Some clear, crisp teaching is essential! While some key ideas are posed here, taking time to go to the pages indicated in Clay’s work to read more and talk with colleagues can have positive results.

The teaching should not start where the teacher is but where the child is (Clay, p. 29)! We all lean toward our personal habits of ways to begin the first 10 lessons; however, since the child’s processing system and body of known information is idiosyncratic, no two children will have identical lessons designed for them.

Being sensitive to the child’s thinking allows the teacher to draw his attention to many things (Clay, p. 31). This is why we need to go beyond the items of knowledge a child knows and think about how he responds in a teaching situation and the way he works out a problem.

The child needs to feel in control of what you ask him to do (Clay, p. 32). Some apparently confident children feel they are in control even when they make many errors, while others are more anxious and, if asked to do something, they may show limited confidence or be hesitant to try or may resist any coaxing by the teacher.

Listen carefully to what the child says and the connections he is making when attempting to hear and record the sounds in words or when taking words apart in reading (Clay, p. 32). Jason's thinking was evident in the first example of identifying the letter "d." Not every child provides a window to their thinking.

Even the more competent readers will benefit from hearing how story reading should sound as part of 'roaming around the known' (Clay, p. 33). It is a search for common understanding of teacher expectations. Does the child know what the teacher expects when she asks him to "put it all together and make it sound like talking"?

You will have found some texts that the child can read at 90% accuracy or above (Clay, p. 33). This is where teachers can notice what the child notices in the text and it is also where things that may not have captured the child's attention can be pointed out. This is also how the teacher discovers how to support the individual on new text, for a brief period.

Your lesson record as you move into instruction ... will have a brief note about what you did and how the child responded (Clay, p. 35). Information that reflects what you asked the child to do and how you asked them to do it helps if you are able to note how the child responded to your demonstration or your prompt to think and take action.

The progress of a child ... [d]epends on the teacher knowing when to slow up and attend to detail and how soon to call for quick responding (Clay, p. 41). Engagement of the child by writing little stories that include their name,

their activities, and their interests, plus many movement or kinesthetic approaches to learning words, have great payoff in engaging the child in constructing foundational concepts about print in the earliest days of lessons.

It is advisable to crystalize current thinking by putting the plan in writing and reviewing it after the next three to five lessons (Clay, pp. 211–214). This may result in updates to the initial predictions of progress. Consider what was written in the comments section of the lesson records and changes since the last predictions of progress ("...will need to learn how to ... in order to ... And I will need to pay special attention to ..."). Did lessons in the child's "known" help him to secure the existing foundations? Were observations of the child's responses recorded in enough detail? Are there observable behaviors that show where readings in *Literacy Lessons* and the suggestions made by a colleague or teacher leader have been incorporated into instruction and resulted in a change? If not, what should the teacher do? Is there more to say about that here?

Concern 2: Progress in Writing is Slow

Reading Recovery teacher leaders showed that observations of lessons and conversations with teachers had revealed a growing concern about a child who is not making progress in writing, particularly in the first 5 to 10 weeks of their lesson series. When a child has a writing vocabulary that is limited, slow to grow, or lacks variety in the words, the resulting conditions for the learner can be uncertain. Such a situation is likely to be ripe for the writing of the

daily story to be slow and laborious, leading to a tendency to go overtime in the lessons and a lack of positive responses from the child leading to a lack of motivation to participate.

Teachers have reported the writing portion of the lesson to be more difficult than the reading portion to record notes. While we note all that we can, it is also possible to view the child's writing booklet and use the page for teaching and trials to fill in some blanks. Putting those observations in writing on the daily lesson record help to review progress effectively, particularly when used in conjunction with the day's written story. Teachers devise ways to note the trends for an individual child that may indicate the following:

- Having a brief conversation leading to the composing of a story is difficult. The child may be reticent or gregarious or have difficulty engaging in a serve-and-return conversation. It helps to put your observations into words to describe an individual's conversation.
- Stories being written are very short with a pattern that is repeated again and again. Despite a teacher's attempts to shape the composition, any suggestion is rejected by the child.
- There are errors on words that were worked on together in the last few lessons. Perhaps efforts to add to the child's writing vocabulary were not sufficient or the word being added was not the right one. It is very difficult to add some little words

such as “but,” since there is not a clear meaning to the word. It is much easier to add a word that is meaningful to this 6-year-old, such as “dog.”

- There is work to be done on every word in the story. If the teacher has given up on sharing the pen as the child writes, there may be too much for the child to work on in order to record an interesting story.
- There is a battle with the clock to get the story completed. This situation leads to stealing time from the first reading of the new book or having the lesson go beyond 30 minutes.

The writing portion of the lesson is as important as the reading portion of the lesson, though it sometimes suffers from neglect. The three tasks

of the Observation Survey that are most highly correlated are Writing Vocabulary, Instructional Text Level, and Word Reading (Clay, 2013, pp. 172–173). One must understand that easy-to-write words that occur often in sentences provide a scaffold for the message, leaving the writer’s attention free to work at constructing less-familiar words in both reading and writing.

Jill had found that Jason easily engaged in conversation, and the serve-and-return communication was relaxed. By reviewing records in Lessons 12 to 16, she was able to see the signs that all may not be well. Table 1 is a weekly sample of the stories Jason composed. He had reduced his delightful conversations into very simple, truncated messages that contained words he knew and almost knew. When compared with the longest utterance, there is a noticeable difference!

Investigate records of writing

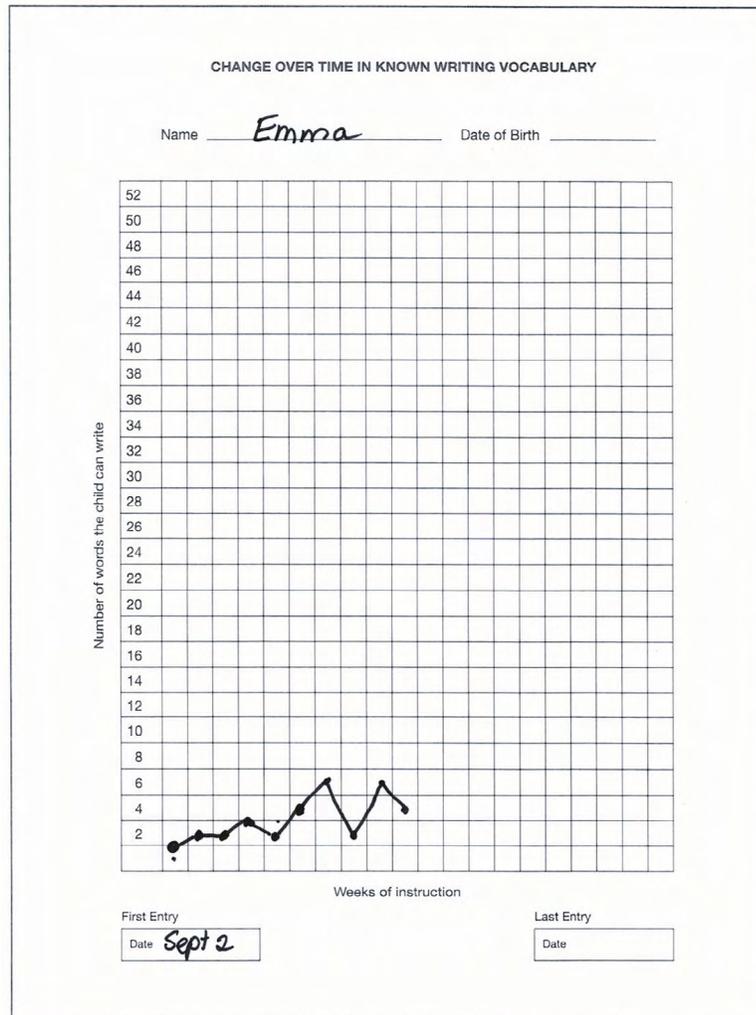
Once again, take time to go to the pages indicated in *Literacy Lessons* to read more and then talk with colleagues about what you have read. One idea is to mark the date of a colleague or teacher leader visit to observe a lesson right onto the weekly records so that you might notice a shift in the child’s learning directly connected to the visit. The Change Over Time in Writing Vocabulary for Emma (Figure 6) includes a star where the teacher had a visit from a colleague.

Throughout a lesson series, teacher support (*instructional contingency*) and task difficulty (*domain contingency*) must be adjusted. Knowing when to make adjustments relies on careful observation and a review of notes taken about the current processing the child engages in making words more familiar in writing. Decisions must be made moment by moment but can be informed by recent observations.

- In selecting the words that will be written by the child and those that will be written by the teacher, even if you say very early on, “Watch me write that word,” you might also enlist the child’s participation saying something like, “an ‘e’ is needed here. Can you make one?” (Clay, p. 82). You invited this contribution because you are certain that the child can do this without effort.
- Clay states that “Children’s partly right and partly wrong actions or comments are unexpected, and cry out for explanation, making us ask, ‘Why did she or he do or say

Table 1. Weekly Sample of Stories/Messages Composed

Date	Message	Longest Utterance
Sept. 10 Lesson 1	I am six. I am tall.	I love to come to school, as soon as I turned six my mom said I could go every day and meet my friends and do things that I like to do and even have my lunch at school but my brother can’t because he’s too little.
Sept. 17 Lesson 4	I like to play Xbox.	My family has an Xbox and I play when my brothers aren’t home to bug me.
Sept. 24 Lesson 12	Me and mom like to play Xbox.	So we came home and my dad said he was too busy to play with us but my mom always plays with us and she lets us go inside and go outside and find our toys and sometimes my little brother tells on me and I get in trouble but I don’t care cuz I can play Xbox and I even beat my mom.
Oct. 1 Lesson 16	Me and Todd and Mom like to play Xbox.	

Figure 6. Emma's Change Over Time in Writing Vocabulary

that?" (Clay, p. 37). As the example of Jason working out the letter "d" showed, he had reasoned a likely response based on his own knowledge and experience plus an anticipation of what the teacher was asking.

- Consider the development of awareness about Concepts About Print. Does the child know a difference between a letter and a word? Does he or she use the word in oral language on a regular basis?

Sometimes we try to teach our highly frequent words instead of the child's high-frequency words. It is of little use to teach a child to write the word "am" when it is rarely used in their oral language at the present time.

- Teachers provide scaffolds for increasing awareness. Use your lesson records to check on what you are scaffolding as well as how you are scaffolding this learning for this child.

Remember that these are 6-year-old children and that it is developmental. Awareness develops over time when opportunities and experiences contribute. But we also know that instruction leads development. Teachers must decide how to do this and design opportunities that arrange for the child to succeed. Maintaining a watchful stance allows for teaching on the leading edge of development.

When considering phonemic awareness (which has to do with the sounds one hears, not the letters one sees), most children entering their first year of schooling are not conscious that sentences are made up of individual words, let alone that words can be segmented into phonemes. However, most are aware of this a year later (Clay, 2019, p. 49). This is the result of learning opportunities and a teacher who knows there is more to be developed than just knowing the names of letters and a corresponding sound. In describing the progress of a child's increasing control over aspects of learning, Clay (2014) points out the following progression:

- The children are becoming aware, they are attending.
- They consolidate awareness (and reinforce what is known).
- Awareness opens up in new ways, so the child sees aspects that he has never seen before.
- New awareness, interest, and actions are awakened.
- Awareness expands and the teacher checks it out in another place and on another day. (p. 64)

Take action

“The art is to expose the child to opportunities to deal successfully with certain words so that they become familiar, and like old friends” (Clay, p. 156).

The adage, “success breeds success,” is true. The child’s successes will bolster confidence, positive emotion, and motivation. Think about how the following progression fosters success. It all begins with selecting a word from the composition that will be most facilitative for this child to work with and learn from.

Start by writing the word clearly on the working page. Help the child write the word correctly, look at it carefully, and write it a few more times on various parts of the working page. Have him check his attempt each time with the word, you wrote (Clay, p. 89). This does not mean lines, circles, four corners, or any particular number of times like three, five, or seven repetitions. It means as many times and in as many ways and places as required. Most notably, a space like the large chalkboard or whiteboard where you have ample space for many repetitions facilitates the child’s learning. For some children, the whiteboard is too slippery and the rougher surface of a chalkboard or a large piece of construction paper using chalk allows for greater control of the letter and word formation and provides greater feedback through the child’s hands.

What’s does this child’s “tentative responding” look like? What are signs of hesitation? Can you observe uncertainty, even if it is a furrowed brow or a pursing of the lips?

Have you chosen a word that will be used often by this child? (Clay, p. 90). The word may not be used frequently by everyone, but it is by

this particular student, as in Jason’s example of the word “Jets” which is his favorite hockey team.

But he knew it yesterday! We all have difficulty remembering some things at times. This is particularly so if we did not know what to pay attention to in the first place or had too many things we were trying to remember or if we weren’t as aware of why we might need to remember the word.

- At any time in the lesson series, if false moves stubbornly recur, the teacher will need to *thoroughly and carefully* retrace the learning path, not allowing an error of letter selection or order to occur (Clay, p. 91).
- Fluctuations in performance are to be expected. However, when a child has difficulty with recall on most occasions, not just a temporary lapse (Clay, p. 176), it is helpful to remember the quote from Dr. Larry Squires at the beginning of *Literacy Lessons*. He cautions that in order to be “more savvy about the way you remember things ... have a good system. Notice your errors and try to fix them.”

The teacher is constantly urging the child to lift control and add new knowledge. This will challenge some old knowledge. Adding new writing vocabulary is a matter of finding a place for a new word amongst the many other orthographic patterns that have been learned.

Savoring vs. quenching. When working to build a writing vocabulary, there is a delicate balance to be struck between allowing the child

the opportunity to (slowly) solve the problem and prompting for speedy production (Clay, p. 88). When the child is just learning about a word—“look,” for example—they might need to feel the word, run their finger over it, talk about what they notice, and the teacher might point out other aspects worth noting. Tracing the letters might be a start. The letters “L” and “O” are likely easy, but the letter “K” is a bit of a crooked looking thing with unusual angles. That is where one might need to do a little teaching. The teacher helps the student know how to “savor” the whole word until they know it very well. Then, in the next few days look for the opportunities to take that known word and encourage fast production so that the writing of the word quenches the need to write more and to write quickly.

Caution. Think carefully about asking the child to quickly write the word which has just been learned. When this demand is put on a child who is just beginning to build a repertoire of words or feel in control of learning new words, a request to “speed up” can be overwhelming and it can easily interfere with progress and motivation. It takes a number of experiences to get the first words learned and to notice the discriminating features. Later on, when the child knows more about words and more about how to learn new ones, the process will likely speed up. It is not the aim of Reading Recovery teachers to inadvertently create problems, but consider the sensitive observation required to know when learning is secure for each child, secure enough so that it contributes to the development of their literacy processing system.

Concern 3: Reading Progress is Stagnant or Chaotic

In every lesson, teachers have the opportunity to reinforce the appropriate processing a student engages in. They have the opportunity to build on the secure aspects of the child's processing system and to know what the next, most useful thing is to teach and when to teach it. All of the little check marks noted on a running record tell a story. They represent processing that has gone well, and they should not be ignored but used

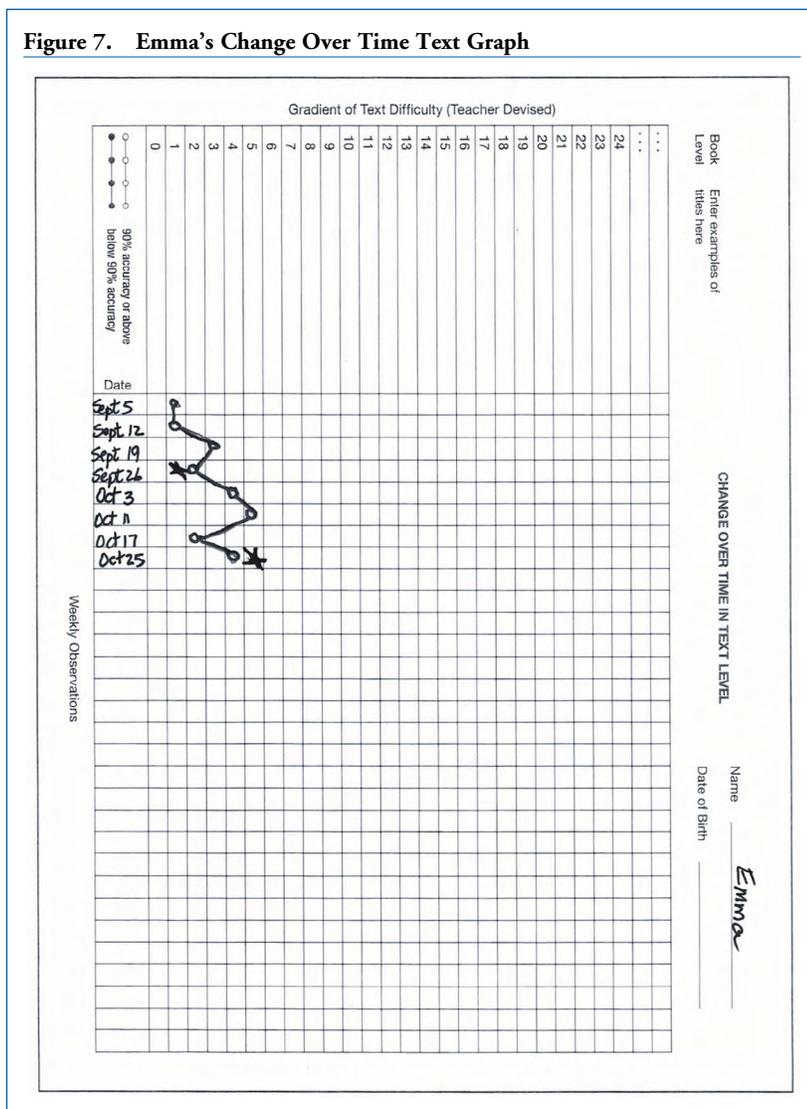
for their potential for the child to notice more. Perhaps the child has done something successfully today, without overt behaviors other than correctly reading a phrase, which had been troublesome only the day before. While Jason's book graph (see Figure 1) was quite flat, Emma's (Figure 7) shows that her progress is more chaotic and tempestuous. The stats written onto the graph indicate colleague consultation by her teacher.

Investigate running records
Investigate several running records,

which accurately record ALL reading behaviors observed, to look for any of the following missteps:

- The child self-monitors but is not sure where to search or what to search for.
- The child's attempts at a new or unknown word is a letter-by-letter analysis without keeping meaning and/or structure in mind thereby not commonly integrating meaning and structure with visual information.
- The reading does not sound good.
- There are many 'Tolds' on the running record (both with and without an attempt by the child).
- Attempts are not quick.
- The child is looking for little words in big words ("so," "me") rather than useful clusters of letters he recognizes.
- The child's visual analysis of words or phrases does not respect left-to-right order.
- The child cannot get phrasing going independently.
- The child looks at the teacher but does not verbally appeal for help.

Figure 7. Emma's Change Over Time Text Graph



Clay clearly states, "the habit of left-to-right scanning of print is a very important transition to facilitate from the first week of a child's lesson series" (p. 202). "If a varied approach to scanning print goes unnoticed then the child might be allowing himself to practise alternatives daily to left-to-right attention to print. Lapses are important: they should be dealt with immediately" (p. 172). In addition, she points out that word work in

taking words apart while reading or when working with words in isolation (no matter how interesting and useful they are) need to be words noticed by the child rather than words on a teacher's list of what matters most. It would not be advisable to use words that are unrelated to today's reading and writing task as that would make them difficult to remember.

Most words studied in isolation should emerge from, and relate to, the current work going on elsewhere in the lessons. The activities refresh and repeat successful recent experience (perhaps from yesterday's words in reading or writing) and consolidate some links" ... Teachers will need to keep good records of the words they have used with each child. (Clay, p. 155)

Jill made an effort to have Jason scan left to right at the word level and attempted to draw Jason's attention to the ends of the words by looking at two words that were read correctly and by talking about the scanning from left to right across the entire word (see Figure 8). She made sure he looked at the onset of the word as well as the rime by employing the use of a masking card and Jason's finger to help his visual attention. This resulted in her being able to use the prompt, "Say it slowly and move your finger under it, like this" (Clay, p. 54) until he was able to use just his eyes alone. She could then observe how he worked with a word on which he had paused to guide her next move to teach, to prompt, or to praise him. The important thing was that the teacher was able to observe an overt behavior indicating that he was able to use more visual information to self-monitor his reading. Jill wanted

Jason to be dissatisfied with only using some information. Although he was initially discouraged and impatient with himself and continued to resist help from his teacher, within 2 days he had made the required shift and was much more consistent and effective self-monitoring his reading (and rereading his writing) largely due to his success in using left-to-right scanning at the word level.

Jill: Were you right?

Jason: No, for sure wrong.

Jill: Try it again, and think what would look right at the first AND last part of that word.

Jason: (rereads with the same error)

Jill: Did you look carefully? What letter would you expect to see at the end of the word "summer"?

Jason: "R." I did that.

Jill: The word is "spring." Take a look at the last part of that word. Do you see the part that says "ing"?

Figure 8. Jason's Running Record of Baby Lamb

		Count		Analysis of Errors and Self-corrections	
Page	Text	E	SC	Information used	
				E MSV	SC MSV
10	<p>Baby Lamb is up Baby Lamb is looking for <u>me</u> milk Baa baa Baa Baa</p>	1		MSV	
12	<p>Here is the milk Here is the milk for Baby Lamb</p>				
14	<p>Look at Baby Lamb's <u>toes</u> tail</p>	1		MSV	
16	<p>Mother Sheep and Baby Lamb <u>here</u> happy <u>summer</u> in the <u>spring</u> are</p>	2		MSV MSV	

Jason: That's what I said.

Jill had learned that what she paid attention to, Jason paid attention to. His scanning at the word level had been incomplete but was now shifted so that he did take a good look at more than the first letter at the beginning of the word. In the example provided, his response, "No, for sure wrong" is an indicator of his processing of, or attending to visual information — and his monitoring of visual information (because it makes sense and sounds right).

Take action

When dealing with running record analysis, remember to take the child's use of meaning and structure into consideration before looking at the child's use of visual information. All substitutions—those grossly or slightly different from the word in the text—will be visually different in some way.

As the child's proficiency in looking at words in serial order becomes more secure, they will become more aware of processing visual information beyond the initial letter. Reinforcing this visual processing while maintaining attention to meaning and structure as key sources of information is the teacher's challenge. For example, in *Blackberries* (Randell, 1996) the child read "Father Bear and Mama Bear and Baby Bear went to look for blackberries." This reading shows the child using all sources of information (i.e., the picture clearly shows the mother and the initial visual information, "M," in the child's substitution for "Mother" is correct). The teacher's response needs to be based on her knowledge of the child's known. In this case, the teacher is confident that the child can

visually scan a word in serial order to analyze visual information across the entire word. To support this reader's more effective processing, the teacher might say "It could be Mama. And, what else could it be?" In this way, the child's use of meaning and structure is acknowledged, and the teacher invites the child to search further (i.e., to check information sources in more detail). If this reader corrects their reading, the teacher may reinforce their processing of visual information and encourage checking by asking "Does it look right? What would you expect to see at the end of Mama?" If the child notices and corrects the error, the teacher can add "Are you right? And does it make sense?" In this way, the teacher reinforces the reader's further searching of multiple sources of information (in this instance visual information found at the end of the word by scanning the entire word "Mother," and meaning information by checking the picture) and fosters checking all sources of information to confirm that they are right.

Following are suggestions to encourage this left-to-right scanning of a word so that it can be used for more complex processing such as self-monitoring, confirming, and further searching of visual information:

- Ask how you can "decrease the occurrence of the unwanted behavior, and increase the occurrence of the wanted behavior" (Clay, p. 181).
- Use magnetic letters at the white board to learn a new word that can be read effortlessly during text reading.
- Have the child write the word on unlined paper so

that it becomes well-known and useful for self-monitoring in reading and in writing.

- For a while, think about similar words to consolidate searching for and using further visual information. For example, if the word "other" becomes well-known it can be used to help solve words in reading that look similar (brother, others) and words in writing that sound similar (another, mother).
- Use a little slip of paper as a masking card (your fingers may not be ideal) to help the child to see what should be attended to.
- "... [D]o not allow any scope for lapses from a strictly left-to-right approach. Over-emphasis is appropriate until a new habit has been established. Be cautious about activities with letters and words in isolation ..."
(Clay, p. 172).

Clay references procedures to take and says to "repeat these activities often for at least six days" (Clay, p. 173). It is rare for a specific number to be mentioned, but one must assume that there had been a tendency among teachers to attempt to rush this change into a day or two, when this critical aspect of reading demands that it be consolidated as soon as possible.

The early intervention teacher's task is not to analyse the language in order to present it to the child. Her task is to analyse the child's learning, so she knows how to shape his encounters with the language. (Clay, p. 155)

This is a bold and complex perspective worthy of discussion in the Reading Recovery session. When language in text is taken apart to the word or letter level, rather than presented as a whole sentence, a developmental component of young children's learning is being ignored. Children below the age of 7 tend to be able to pay attention either to the parts (the letters or individual words) or the whole (the meaningful phrase or message) but are unable to "attend to or perceive both at the same time. It's a case of one or the other" (Wood, 1998, p. 89). To work with this developmental perspective in mind, Clay points out, "most young children engage with books at the level of the story, not with isolated words." (Clay, p. 110). It may seem nonsensical to the child that the teacher pulls phrases out of the story, words out of phrases, and letters out of words unless the teacher's demonstration is clear. Thus, the goal is to have the reading sound the way the author intended, with words grouped together as they are in oral language.

Investigate how the reading sounds

Teacher attention should be directed to really listening to the student read and putting the description into words. Ask yourself: How can I describe how the reading sounds and why doesn't the reading sound good? Is the child pausing at inappropriate places or not pausing when they should? Are the wrong words grouped together with an inaccurate word emphasis? Is there a rise or fall of the voice, no matter how slight, at the right place or is the reading flat? Perhaps records and notes show the following:

- The child cannot engage in conversation about the story.

- Each page of the story takes a long time.
- It is hard for even the teacher to tell what is happening in the story.
- Substitutions do not reflect effective use of meaning and structure.

Take action

When you are learning how to unpack the nuances of phrasing in fluent reading, it may help to make an audio recording to listen to later. As you become more comfortable and experienced, you may be able to use the opportunity at professional development sessions to explore the sound of the reading further. An audio recording will ultimately not be needed because you will have learned how to listen "on the run" and make the comment at the end of your running record descriptive and meaningful. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Does this child believe he is reading a story or does he think he is merely reading a list of words?
- Does this child understand this story?
- Do I have an ear for the sound of good reading (e.g., fluent and phrased, reading with expression)?

Clay suggests ways to support the development of phrasing in fluent reading, all of which is intended to help the child develop an ear for how the reading should sound.

- Reading to the child. Inviting the child to join in at appropriate parts (Clay, p. 125).

- Reading some stories together (Clay, p. 125).
- Rereading some stories from past lessons so that they sound good (Clay, p. 112).
- Using [phrasing] ... in a manageable new book as an emphasis in teaching (Clay, pp. 115–16).

"No one can impose fluent reading on the complex task of reading continuous text any more than they can make the beginning writer a fast writer. It takes time to develop fast control of many subparts of a complex whole so that it operates smoothly and fluently" (Clay, p. 122). "We also know that learning how to make the reading sound phrased has a great deal to do with knowing how to look at text" (Clay, p. 126). "The child needs to be able to see the words that go together. We have procedure designed for exactly this" (Clay, pp. 123–124).

Consider the phrase below:

Baby Bear went on fishing.
Baby Bear went on fishing.

The first example will render a confused meaning if the first phrase is grouped together and the sentence is complete. However, in the second example, words are grouped in a more meaningful and structurally appropriate way which helps the reader understand what Baby Bear did.

Some children may need to practice a phrase such as "went on fishing" since it reflects book language rather than conversational language. This aspect of improved phrasing can be a teaching point at multiple places in the lesson. In familiar reading and rereading yesterday's new story, the teacher can think about how the phrasing can be improved with one

or two powerful examples where the child has almost been successful. During the writing portion of the lesson, the child can work on putting words together as he or she composes and rereads the partially recorded composition. The cut-up story offers another opportunity to think about phrasing (Clay, pp. 106–109). The introduction to the new story and the first reading of the new story are two more opportunities for the teacher to emphasize saying, seeing, hearing, and reading groups of words together.

Thoughtful running record analysis with phrasing in mind allows the teacher to describe the effectiveness of instruction on phrasing in fluent reading. It allows the teacher to describe how the child self-monitors and the effect of phrasing in that process. Think about the way the child engages in searching. Has the sound of the meaningful phrases played a role in the way he or she searches at any point?

Concern 4: Lessons Are Not Delivered Daily

Initially, it had taken Jill almost 3 weeks of school to achieve 10 lessons with Jason. This does not negate the observations she had made about his learning, but it impeded Jason's successes. Her teacher leader identified this as a contributing factor to his progress and Jill's challenge to achieve a shift in his learning. Jason's attendance record revealed that in the first 15 days that school was open, there had been a day of school closure for staff professional learning, a half-day event of a fun run for all students, a bus safety demonstration for his class, and 2 days (both Fridays) when Jason was absent from school.

Investigate attendance

One of the key principles of Reading Recovery is providing daily lessons. For any other deeper analysis of responding to children to be effective, daily instruction must be in place (Clay, p. 21). What do your attendance records show? Are the students getting a lesson every day? If lessons are missed, find out why and determine what was responsible for the Reading Recovery teacher being unable to deliver a lesson every day that school is open.

As one Reading Recovery teacher aptly reflected:

In Reading Recovery, we have a responsibility to persist professionally in getting five lessons a week. School days are busy, classrooms are busy, and teachers are busy. That does not diminish my responsibility to deliver daily lessons to students during my Reading Recovery time. The outcome of daily lessons is accelerated learning for those students who need a little bit, often. As we persist professionally to deliver daily lessons, students' literate learning accelerates at a faster pace. My increased sense of accountability this year ensures daily lessons, which then guarantees accelerated learning. I see students progress in their reading and writing by building on strengths that came out of yesterday's lesson, tomorrow's teaching emphasis comes from today's observations. The resulting impact of daily lessons is success. I feel re-ignited about supporting students and my students are excited to come into my teaching space every day!

Take action

All aspects of learning are difficult when there is only a lesson now and then. The teacher can work with the school team, which includes the principal, and with the family or caregivers of the child. If communications with the family include news of success, accomplishment, and positive anecdotes, it is more likely that school and home will be able to work together to improve this one critical aspect of the learning conditions. Find out why attendance is not regular and offer ways to support regular attendance. It is not helpful to make assumptions or to lay blame; arrange for success.

Final Words

It is helpful to reflect on each lesson and a span of three to five lessons to consider what the child has learned to do and how the teacher has arranged for success. Wishing and hoping for change are not plans for improvement. Think about how you can make it easy for this child to learn, keeping in mind that we design lessons for individuals. Look for reduced tension in the child, it will lead to reduced tension in the teacher (even if the child had never noticed you were challenged in that regard)! Create failsafe situations for the child (and for you). No one can sail or learn under dangerous circumstances. It is only when learning is safe that we can all relax. This means that once you identify what it is you need to teach the child to do now, you will need to let some other things go for a time. We aren't teaching for perfection. We are teaching so that the child knows how to solve problems for himself or herself, and this means there will be some stumbles and some errors for the child's processing system to learn

how to resolve. Be persistent, consistent, and insistent in your teaching, always with a relaxed posture and an enigmatic smile. Look for reduced tension and increased celebration in the child and in yourself. Dig in to create a positive learning environment for growth!

Marie Clay reminded us, “If the child is a struggling reader or writer the conclusion must be that we have not yet discovered the way to help him learn” (2005, p. 158). Parents trust teachers are acting with their child in mind, doing the best they can for each, not giving up, not suggesting that “I can’t do it for this one.” Know that you can, and you will. William Arthur Ward (1970) noted, “The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails.” Adjust your sails for a child that challenges your teaching, and the course to literacy learning will become navigable.

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Where Are They Now?

The True Meaning of ‘Full Circle’

Michelle Brandis, Hamilton City Schools, Hamilton, OH

What does “full circle” mean? For me, it means being able to provide my students what Reading Recovery® provided me many years ago. Opportunity. Experience. Success. Hope.

As a young student I was a painfully shy, slow worker who rarely completed my schoolwork. I remember wanting everything to be perfect at school. My first-grade teacher, Mrs. Sullivan, wrote, “She is very easily distracted during her independent work. Often I think she’s trying so hard she *needs* to take a break from work.”

I received reading intervention, speech therapy, and was still struggling to learn to read and write. I qualified for Reading Recovery in the 1989–90 school year. Mrs. Vogtsberger was my Reading Recovery teacher, and it was Benton-Carrol-Salem’s first year implementing Reading Recovery. I still remember having books to take home that I could read and that I could write with my Reading Recovery teacher’s guidance! I made significant growth during that school year.

In the following couple years, school remained somewhat challenging for me. I continued to be monitored and received some reading intervention as needed. Each year, I was growing at a rate faster than my classmates and by fifth grade had not only exited all monitoring and reading intervention, but I was helping in the reading resource room! Amazingly,

in the sixth grade, I earned straight As in my first year of junior high and helped start and manage a peers-tutoring-peers support program. I was a strong and confident reader, and I believe that my time spent in Reading Recovery was the true catalyst for the shifts I made that year and in the years following.

I knew in first grade that I wanted to be a teacher when I grew up. Reading Recovery gave me the opportunity to make that dream come true by supporting my journey of becoming a successful reader and writer. I graduated from Bowling Green State University summa cum laude with a bachelor’s degree in education and from Xavier University with a master’s degree in reading education.



After several years of classroom teaching, I knew my calling was in supporting students who were struggling to learn to read and write like I was in first grade. After pleading my case and expressing my desire to support emerging readers and writers, I joined the Title I team at my school. A few years later, when I heard my district

was implementing Reading Recovery, I shared my passion and desire once again — detailing why I should be part of the first train-

ing class for Reading Recovery in Hamilton City Schools in Ohio.

My life has yet again been changed for the better by the Reading Recovery experience. My amazing teacher leader, Carla Castator, and my Reading Recovery training have

taught me lessons that not only changed and improved my teaching, but also my life. From the shy first grader who desperately wanted to be a skilled reader and writer, to the passionate Reading Recovery teacher shaping lives each day, I am a true example of the phrase “full-circle” and I am prouder today than ever to support my students on their individual literacy journeys.



Michelle has learned many lessons from Reading Recovery — both as a first-grade student and as a teacher now supporting her own students.

DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR SERIES

Equity and Excellence Now

Douglas Reeves, Creative Leadership Solutions, Boston, MA

About the Author



Dr. Douglas Reeves is the author of more than 40 books and 100 articles on education and leadership. His most recent book is *Achieving Equity and Excellence:*

Immediate Results from the Lessons of High-Poverty, High-Success Schools.

He has twice been named to the Harvard University Distinguished Authors Series and was named the Brock International Laureate for his contributions to education. Dr. Reeves received both the Distinguished Service Award from the National Association of Secondary School Principals and the Parent's Choice Award for his writing for children and parents. His career of work in professional learning led to the Contribution to the Field Award from the National Staff Development Council. For his international work, Dr. Reeves was named the William Walker Scholar by the Australian Council of Educational Leaders. You can reach the author @DouglasReeves or Douglas.Reeves@CreativeLeadership.net.

Editor's note: An earlier version of this article was presented as a keynote address at the 2020 National Reading Recovery & K-6 Literacy Conference (now LitCon) in Columbus, OH.

Equity without excellence is a code word for low expectations. Excellence without equity is a codeword for exclusion. As we near the end of the global pandemic, schools remain closed and children have been struck with staggering learning losses (Manno, 2020), with estimates of student performance in reading and math declining by one-third of a year to a full year. It's not as bad as all that — it's worse. Before COVID-19 struck and schools closed, many students were already behind, meaning that in the fall of 2021, teachers are faced with students who may be 2 or 3 years behind. These learning losses have a particularly large impact on students of color and students from low-income families (Aucejo et al., 2020). Although the challenges for educational recovery can seem overwhelming, this article suggests specific actions educators, policymakers, and leaders can take to achieve both equity and excellence in schools. We first consider the false dichotomy between equity and excellence. Then we review five areas in which schools are challenged to deliver equity and excellence: college level classes, gifted and talented programs, discipline, homework, and grading.

The False Dichotomy

Equity is a primary goal for schools, yet the term remains poorly defined and implemented. Equity is, as author and consultant Ken Williams describes it, providing students what

they need, when they need it, with a sense of urgency (personal communication, January 15, 2021). Too often, equity training becomes a focus on feelings rather than action. A better approach is to focus on practices and policies that undermine equity, with the understanding that improvements in attitudes and beliefs occur after practices and policies change. This sequence is strikingly different from the claim that leaders must first achieve buy-in from faculty and staff before implementing change. A focus on buy-in before practice is a formula for delay and failure (Reeves, 2021). As the case studies in the next section suggest, the path toward equity and excellence is fraught with opposition. If we are committed to equity in action, the path does not start with tear-filled workshops and futile attempts to change feelings, but rather with implementation of effective practices and policies well before feelings change. We now consider five case studies in equity and excellence, each of which are certain to engender opposition, but nevertheless call for action by educational leaders

At the heart of creating schools committed to the twin goals of equity and excellence is effective literacy instruction, including both evidence-based reading instruction and a heavy dose of nonfiction writing at all ages. The most recent data on national reading achievement, collected before the COVID-related school closures, showed that two-thirds of elementary

and middle school students were not proficient in reading (Green & Goldstein, 2019). During school closures, instructional time declined and, for many students, evaporated entirely. As schools resume in the 2021–2022 school year, it will be interesting to observe how many schools revert to their previous schedules and continue the pattern of inadequate reading achievement, and how many will drastically reform schedules at every level to include reading instruction in all grades, from kindergarten through high school. As

At the heart of creating schools committed to the twin goals of equity and excellence is effective literacy instruction, including both evidence-based reading instruction and a heavy dose of nonfiction writing at all ages.

this paper is written in the spring of 2021, there are few signs that school schedules will change. One of the greatest tragedies of the pandemic will be if educational leaders collectively say, “Thank goodness that’s over – now we can go back to what we were doing before.” The lessons of COVID-19 have been purchased at the cost of half a million lives in the United States alone. It is up to educators, leaders, and policymakers to ensure that the lessons we learn and apply are worthy of the cost.

Advanced Placement Classes

The path to college credit classes, such as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate, and other college-level classes offered in high schools, begins in elementary school. Students who struggle with reading in the primary grades rarely have the opportunity to recover in higher grades. Consider the schedule in elementary grades, where typically 90 to 180 minutes are devoted to literacy instruction in the primary grades, and as students proceed to intermediate grades, middle school, and high school, time allocated to reading instruction declines and ultimately disappears. Why should we be surprised that reading proficiency declines in intermediate and middle grades when teachers are given fewer minutes for that instruction?

Inequities in advanced classes are pervasive and appalling. While children of color make up almost half the school-age student population, only 8.8% of AP exam takers were students of color and only 4.3% achieved scores of 3 or higher in 2018, the threshold at which colleges might accept the test for college credit (Jaschick, 2019). The ability to earn college credit in high school has both financial and psychological impacts on students. The financial impact is clear and quantifiable. I have seen school districts that create large 8-foot wide “checks” that read “Pay to the order of the Parents of...” and insert the cost per credit hour in the state multiplied by the number of credits earned by the student. The psychological impact is also significant, as students think of themselves as college students with a bright future.

Some of the limits to AP and other college-level classes are self-imposed at the high school level, with admission often conditioned on teacher recommendations and performance in previous classes in the same subject. The problem with this process is the pathway to advanced classes is narrowed not to the most capable students, but to those who earned high grades in earlier years. As we shall see later in this article, those grades are often related more to homework completion and parental encouragement than to individual proficiency. Thus, every time elementary and middle school teachers send the message “you are just not college material” to their students, the indelible message remains imprinted on them well into high school. In order to achieve equity at the high school level, two decisions are required. First, high schools must open the gates to advanced classes to all students, even if those students will need additional support to succeed in those classes. Second, elementary and middle schools must prepare students for the rigors of advanced classes at an early age. It is imperative that “rigor” is not used as an excuse for exclusion and failure, but rather is a bar to which all students are expected to rise. This may require changes in elementary and middle school schedules so that both students and teachers have the time they need to gain entry to advanced classes. This also means explicit literacy support for students well after the primary grades, so that the opportunities for advanced study are available for every student.

To put a fine point on this issue, students in expensive independent and international schools are routinely expected to take and pass

AP examinations. Some of those students struggle in reading and math, but they are rarely excluded from advanced classes. Instead, the schools assume that all students are entitled to advanced coursework. This entitlement is not a reflection of their cognitive ability, but rather of the societal norm that rich students deserve advanced classes. The question, therefore, that every educator and school leader must ask is, “What would we do if our students were rich?” If the answer is that they would receive every opportunity for success in advanced classes, then that is what we must provide them.

Gifted and Talented Education

Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) is a mainstay of many educational systems as they seek to provide support services for academically advanced students. But admission to these programs may or may not be related to academic potential. One study of more than 10,000 students revealed that students of color are dramatically under-represented in GATE classes (Wynn, 2016). Specifically, researchers reported the odds of Black and Hispanic children being referred to gifted programs are respectively 66 and 47 percent lower than those of White students.

In some cities, such as Boston, the admission to elite public schools such as the Boston Latin School, the oldest public school in the nation, is based on a single test. Even if one accepts the dubious premise that a test can identify the best and brightest students, even the most strident supporter of testing would have to acknowledge the following. A well-constructed test administered

to 1,000 students competing for 500 slots in an elite school may be able to distinguish the top 100 from the bottom 100. But it is statistically indefensible to suppose that the test can distinguish between #500, who is admitted, and #501, who is denied admission. This is a distinction without a difference. In statistical terms, it means that the difference between these two students—#500 and #501—is more likely due to random variation than to a meaningful difference between the two students.

There are two opportunities for responding to the inequitable and inaccurate way in which students are selected for or denied admission to GATE programs. The first is simply to provide the hallmarks of gifted education to all students. The National Association for Gifted Education suggests that gifted students receive the following:

1. Good curriculum and instruction.
2. Good teaching based on the needs of the individual student.
3. Providing lessons at a higher degree of difficulty where appropriate.
4. A willingness to take supported risks that extend learning beyond merely earning a high grade. (Tomlinson, 1997)

Despite my deep respect and admiration for the author of this article, I must ask the question every parent asks: Isn't this just good education for all students? Shouldn't every teacher follow these four guidelines?

Second, even if there is to be a separate program for GATE students, schools must cast a wider net than

a single test. Some schools find that peer nomination will help to identify students who solve problems quickly, come up with innovative solutions, and synthesize different ideas effectively. There is also a case to be made for random assignment of students to GATE classes. There is a natural experiment that validates random selection, as Boston Latin inadvertently admitted dozens of the “wrong” students to its prestigious school. Once admitted, however, the “wrong” students seemed to do just fine. After all, they qualified

Equity and excellence need not be elusive goals. Schools have a moral and professional obligation to pursue both. The first step is to acknowledge gaping inequities that pervade education in everything ...

for Boston Latin, didn't they? If there are limited slots for GATE programs, and, as in the example above, there are 1,000 applicants for 500 slots, schools can logically make the argument for perhaps admitting the top 100 and selecting the rest of the students at random from the other applicants. This eliminates the illusion of precision, which parents, teachers, and students assume that educational system can scientifically differentiate between the 500th applicant and the student who ranked 501st.

Discipline and Suspensions

It's not just that we deny academic opportunities to students of color; we beat them more often as well. To our national disgrace, 19 states still allow corporal punishment, and more than 600 students are beaten in public schools every day in the name of discipline and good order (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019). Black boys are more than twice as likely as White boys to receive corporal punishment, and Black girls are three times as likely to receive corporal punishments as their White peers. Every school has less drastic disciplinary actions, such as office referrals and suspensions. But the impact of these disciplinary practices falls disproportionately on Black children, and those "lighter" punishments nevertheless lead to lifetime consequences that influence higher education and employment opportunities (Richeson, 2019). The most casual inquiry into the cause of office referrals shows that "disrespect" and "failure to complete work" are among the more common causes of referrals. In some school districts, there is a cascading impact of disciplinary actions, in which three office referrals automatically lead to a suspension, and multiple suspensions lead to expulsion.

The lust for punishment, whether physical or psychological, appears to be ingrained in our educational system, and these punishments, however benign they may seem to the teacher, have a disproportionate impact on students of color. The answer is not to have classrooms that are dangerous and devoid of effective teaching, but rather to equip teachers with the tools necessary to manage classrooms well and impose appropriate consequences,

including positive consequences, so that students learn classroom norms.

Homework

If you ask teachers why they assign homework, the nearly universal answer is that students need practice. Indeed they do, and therefore the question is what constitutes effective practice. Observe a great athletic practice and one can see quickly the characteristics of effective practice: coaching, feedback, reactions to feedback, and immediate improvement. For example, if students are learning to serve in volleyball, they might miss 15 serves in a row. Fortunately, they will have a coach who provides explicit guidance on the proper form for a serve. Imagine that, based on the student's response to this coaching, they successfully complete 15 serves. To review: The student misses 15, receives coaching, and makes 15. That is, by any measure, a great practice. But when the same student turns in homework with 15 correct and 15 incorrect answers, it will be marked with a 50% and solid F. In sum, we know what good practice is — coaching, feedback, and application of that feedback immediately for improved results. That never happens at home. In a synthesis of 37 different studies on the subject (Neason, 2017), the impact of homework in the elementary grades is zero, and the impact in secondary grades is negligible. Teachers routinely report that homework does not reflect the work of students but that of sources ranging from parents and siblings to a variety of helpful Internet sites that provide answers without the bother of students engaging in meaningful practice. Indeed, when teachers stop relying on homework as practice and instead insist that the work be done

in class, they report not only significantly higher achievement by students but also more honest conversations about what the students know and do not know (Reeves, 2019).

Some homes are organized to support homework, with helpful parents, great Internet connectivity, and quiet spaces for academic work. Other homes, perhaps with multiple families living in a cramped space, are less conducive to homework. When homework is graded, especially as a significant part of a student's final mark, it is worth asking whether we are grading the student or their home environment. Students do need practice, but homework almost never provides the essential components of practice, with coaching and feedback from the teacher and an immediate opportunity for the student to apply that feedback and improve performance.

Grading: Getting Rid of the Average

It is not necessary to overhaul grading systems in order to make small changes that have a disproportionate impact on student success. I have elsewhere (Reeves, 2020) described the many failings of grading systems, so in this article I will confine my comments to a single source of inaccuracy and unfairness in grading: the use of the average to determine the final grade. If education means anything, it is a commitment by student and teacher to learn continuously. At the heart of this commitment is resilience and perseverance — bouncing back from failure and frustration. Every state in the U.S. and many other jurisdictions have a multi-decade commitment to academic standards in which students are to be

evaluated based on their proficiency as measured against a standard. That is the way we evaluate drivers, pilots, and brain surgeons — not based on an average of their past errors, but on their proficiency. Despite this multi-decade commitment to standards, schools routinely rely upon computerized grading systems that use the average to calculate final grades, and therefore punish students at the end of a term for mistakes that they made 4 months earlier. In these systems, the rhetoric of resilience gives way to the inevitable implication of the average. It doesn't make any difference how resilient you are, how much you persevere, and how successful you are in meeting standards, we will punish you for your past mistakes. As this article is submitted, I once again saw cases of students earning Bs and As at the end of a semester in which they will receive a grade of F due to missing work or lack of participation in class. These cases are not outliers. Every year there are students in Advanced Placement classes who demonstrate the ability to do college-level work by earning 4s or 5s on the AP exam, but who nevertheless receive D and F grades due to missing work. It is clear that whatever they were missing was not relevant to their success on the AP exam. Nevertheless, toxic and inaccurate grading systems persist, and administrators steadfastly refuse to challenge them.

Conclusion

Equity and excellence need not be elusive goals. Schools have a moral and professional obligation to pursue both. The first step is to acknowledge gaping inequities that pervade education in everything from the

gifted and talented selections in the primary grades through the college-level opportunities in high school. Inequities affect discipline, including the barbarous practice of corporal punishment, and academic performance. Workshops on equity that focus on feelings but fail to address these essential practices are diversions of time and resources from the essential challenges at hand. For change to happen, we don't need to wait for attitudes and beliefs to change. We need courageous action now.

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What Is Possible Through Widespread Teacher Leader Collaboration?

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In March of 2020, a global pandemic prompted sudden school closures, both nationally and internationally. The unprecedented events of COVID-19 brought forth unique challenges to teachers everywhere, including those in the Reading Recovery® community.

The Ohio State University (OSU) trainer team (Drs. Jamie Lipp, Lisa Pinkerton, and James Schnug) became increasingly aware that their teacher leaders were in need of support as they attempted to navigate this uncharted territory. After several remote brainstorming sessions with OSU-affiliated teacher leaders, Dr. Schnug raised the idea that the issues and roadblocks OSU teacher leaders were facing extended beyond the OSU site. He initiated the process to join forces and collaborate across the three largest (in terms of the number of teacher leaders and affiliated sites) university training centers (UTCs) to allow for increased input, problem solving, and solution-based activity to occur.

During the summer of 2020, teacher leaders from OSU, National Louis University, and Saint Mary's College joined forces remotely to tackle the most common and pressing issues concerning Reading Recovery/Literacy Lessons™ teaching in remote, hybrid, and socially distanced formats.

Although brought together through unfortunate circumstances, the power and promise of increased collaboration opportunities among teacher leaders became increasingly apparent. In this narrative, we will discuss the benefits of teacher leader collaboration in support of ongoing teacher learning, tell the story of recent cross-UTC collaboration, and consider the future possibilities of expanded collaboration opportunities moving forward.

Collaboration as Integral to Teaching and Learning in Reading Recovery

Collaborative communities, also known as professional learning communities (PLCs), consist of a group of educators who participate in collective inquiry and problem solving, while allowing space for innovation. Three important elements for successful PLCs are a focus on learning, collaborative culture, and results-oriented thinking (DuFour et al., 2006). A PLC may comprise educators within a single school building or beyond, the same content area or cross-curricular groupings. Ideally, PLCs “would be a place where teachers inquired together into how to improve their practice in areas of importance to them, and then implemented what they learned to make it happen” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 127).

PLCs are beneficial in four ways. They have the potential to (a) improve student achievement, (b) improve relationships among team members, (c) promote reflective practice, and (d) expand each member's repertoire of tools. The ability to improve practice, which in turn has the potential to improve student achievement, is a leading positive

result of collaboration (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Smith et al., 2020). The power behind PLCs lies in the development of professional capital. Hargreaves and Fullan define professional capital as “having and building a system that will be truly great” (p. xvi). Professional capital is promoted by the highest-performing economies and educational systems worldwide. High-quality teaching and learning is a trademark of professional capital, such that “the group is far more powerful than the individual” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 3).

Reading Recovery is, essentially, an international PLC that is designed to maximize the power of professional capital. Wilson and Daviss (1994, as cited in Watson & Askew, 2009) explain that, “International Reading Recovery Trainers, alongside the professional community of teachers, Tutors/Teacher Leaders, administrators, other educators, and policy makers worldwide, offer a unique synergy that results from combining research, development, mentoring and redesign” (p. 304). Clay designed the system framework of Reading Recovery to essentially create what we now call PLCs in three tiers: university trainers, teacher leaders, and teachers.

Central to the work of individuals within each part of the system is the study of the literacy processing theory (e.g., Clay, 1991, 2014, 2015, 2016). Clay’s theory posits learning as a complex process of constructing meaning which forms the basis of the hypothesis that “teachers must participate in constructing their own understandings” (Lyons et al., 1993, p. 12). This is true for all Reading Recovery professionals (trainers, teacher leaders, and teachers) in the

Reading Recovery network. In the following sections, we first discuss the previous ways in which teacher leaders have collaborated with one another, and then we describe the new ways in which teacher leaders had the opportunity to collaborate outside of their usual networks during the summer of 2020.

Prior Opportunities for Teacher Leader Collaboration

Reading Recovery teacher leaders participate in an initial year-long training at a certified UTC. Although the number of teacher leaders in a training class and their geographic location varies, the participant makeup of the class remains constant across an entire school year. Classmates from different states often develop strong social and emotional bonds due to their shared experience of an intense year of learning and reflection, which often acts as a springboard for future cooperative work as they support each other in their teacher leader roles.

Beyond the training year, teacher leaders have opportunities for continued collaborative inquiry and learning through the following:

- annual Teacher Leader Institute
- national and regional conferences
- ongoing professional learning at individual UTCs
- participation in state or local committees and organizations
- publication opportunities

Most of the collaboration we have identified supported extending understanding of Clay’s literacy theory

and practice, problem solving when something is not going well in teaching or student learning, considering advocacy opportunities, or extending the reach of Reading Recovery teachers’ expertise to support and influence teachers and students in other settings. Participation in these opportunities opened doors for teacher leader collaboration in order to enhance theory and practice together. While numerous opportunities for collaboration exist within the network, many of these occur in small-scale situations involving only a small portion of the teacher leader population, highlighting the need to explore further the power of widespread collaboration efforts. The following section describes how the pandemic provided an opportunity for teacher leaders to participate in a more widespread collaboration across the UTCs.

Cross UTC Collaboration: Process, Product, Power

Many previous opportunities for collaboration occurred on a small level, typically among teacher leaders within a single UTC. However, seemingly overnight, COVID-19 presented time-sensitive challenges that required swift problem-solving efforts. The global pandemic thrust educators into novel situations and created emotional uncertainty that affected every part of their lives and the lives of their students and families. The impact also reached the Reading Recovery/Literacy Lessons community. (Literacy Lessons is an intervention designed to reach young children—generally Grades 1-4—in special education or ESL settings who are struggling with beginning reading and writing but are not eligible for

Reading Recovery.) This was no longer just about extending content knowledge. It was evident that our existing knowledge was insufficient to address the challenge of teaching children from a distance, whether remotely or 6 feet apart.

Thus, the idea of joining forces across multiple UTCs emerged. This now larger group of 55 teacher leaders across three UTCs was able to rely on more minds and ideas to begin climbing the immense hill placed in front of them. The initial meetings elicited eight priority areas, specifically: (a) teaching Reading Recovery lessons while socially distanced, (b) teaching Reading Recovery lessons remotely, (c) administering the Observation Survey remotely, (d) developing necessary resources, (e) providing social and emotional support for students, (f) collecting, analyzing and applying data, (g) teaching Literacy Lessons, and (h) administering the Record of Oral Language. Teacher leaders volunteered their time and self-selected into a workgroup of interest to them. During the summer months of 2020, each workgroup met multiple times via Zoom to talk through and identify overall objectives and to complete the group's tasks. Groups varied in size, from three to thirteen teacher leader members, and each group included at least one teacher leader from each UTC within the collaboration. To promote efficient, organized work, each group had a facilitator who established meeting dates and times, took notes, and disseminated information to teacher leaders across the larger group.

As the three UTCs were united in this focused problem-solving process, conversation, creativity, and possible solutions increased. Workgroup

members were highly invested as they faced the *need* to find solutions to the problems caused by the pandemic and the abrupt change from the usual, and comfortable, mode of teaching. Teacher leaders needed to think flexibly and tentatively, exploring various possibilities to continue the important work of Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons. Cooperative learning, combined with specific but varied strengths of individual teacher leaders, facilitated achieving group goals in a timely manner.

The Reading Recovery community continued to work together to serve the students most in need throughout the pandemic while fully attempting to maintain the integrity of the *Standards and Guidelines* for both Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons.

It is important to acknowledge that changes in tools, resources, and teaching interactions could compromise the standardization of lessons and assessments. Close observation is a central tenet of Reading Recovery and was often challenged through alternate methods of instruction such as remote teaching and teaching while remaining socially distanced. However, the Reading Recovery community continued to work together to serve the students most in need

throughout the pandemic while fully attempting to maintain the integrity of the *Standards and Guidelines* for both Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons. The remainder of this article describes the goals, experiences, and outcomes for seven of the eight priority areas identified above. We also try to capture and discuss the power of those unique collaboration opportunities in hopes that such collaborative work can continue and be prioritized in the future.

Teaching Reading Recovery lessons while socially distanced

Since new guidelines halted the physical gathering of students and educators, the Reading Recovery community recognized the need to problem solve how best to continue lessons in accordance with these restrictions. This workgroup's (11 teacher leader members) objective was to consider: How are we going to work one-to-one with students while incorporating the social distancing guidelines? The governing sources that influenced the work were the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines, individual district protocols, and recommendations provided by the North American Trainers Group (NATG) *2020–2021 Pandemic Task Force Report* (Briggs et al., 2020). Group members knew that variations in the implementation of social distancing would exist from district to district based on the virus' impact in each community. Because teacher leader members in this group spanned the national grid, a myriad of context-specific considerations was taken into account.

The workgroup explored and documented possibilities for personal protective equipment including

masks, face shields, gloves, and a clear plexiglass divider between the teacher and student. This group also considered how to maintain clean and nonshared materials, from individualized materials to be handled by only one student, to disinfecting the space between student lessons, to projecting books electronically on a wall in a classroom to allow a student to use one-to-one correspondence without touching the book itself. The group had thoughtful discussions about measuring, monitoring, and recording student success during uncertain times.

Teaching Reading Recovery lessons remotely

As the summer drew to a close, many school districts across the country had announced their intentions to begin the school year with 100% remote instruction. Other districts indicated that they would be providing students with a blended model of instruction using a combination of in-person and remote learning days. Both of these instructional models required a way to deliver Reading Recovery lessons remotely. Some teachers had already experienced remote lessons amidst the initial shut down (March to June), during which they learned a great deal about the challenges and successes of working remotely with Reading Recovery children. This group's goal was to build upon this emerging knowledge about remote lessons and provide teachers with more guidance and options in order to implement remote Reading Recovery lessons as closely to *Standards and Guidelines of Reading Recovery in the United States* (2017/2018) as possible.

This workgroup (13 teacher leader members) carefully considered how to address specific teaching challenges



Possibilities for personal protective equipment included a plexiglass divider between the teacher and student.

in a remote setting, such as promoting independence in reading and writing, learning to look at print, and especially one-to-one matching. Since student devices, internet platforms, and available instructional tools (at home and at school) would vary considerably across the country, the group created a list of recommended tools and materials (e.g., document cameras; digital alphabet books; at-home kits for children containing writing journals, magnetic letters, Elkonin boxes; etc.). They suggested possible online applications like Jamboard to deliver the lesson components of letter/word work and the cut-up sentence. The group also explored digital access to leveled texts and the use of leveled book collections with document cameras.

The workgroup brought all ideas together into a document that examined each component of the lesson and shared implementation suggestions, platform-specific ideas, and resources that would support effective delivery of each. This

resource has been used in a variety of ways since its dissemination among members of the three UTCs: as a part of continuing professional development sessions preparing for remote lessons, to investigate the recommended materials, and to practice the use of the various resources. As the school year began, teacher leaders provided teachers with more frequent, informal opportunities (e.g., short online check-ins outside of scheduled professional development time) to reflect upon what was working well with this remote format, to share new ideas, and to problem solve new challenges that arose.

Administering the Observation Survey remotely

Determining how to assess and monitor students' literacy growth and knowledge in an online format was a challenge that many teachers faced. This workgroup (9 teacher leader members) considered how to respond to the question: How will we be able to assess students in the fall to learn more about each child's literacy

strengths and needs? This workgroup grew out of teachers' initial efforts in the spring and responded to the urgent need for a complete set of digital tools to use when completing the tasks within Clay's (2019) *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement*.

For those who would be teaching Reading Recovery remotely, it was essential that they had access to the Observation Survey tasks to assist with student selection and to analyze data to prepare for instruction. The group worked together to create a digital version of each Observation Survey task, a guidance document for its use as well as technology tips based on the various platforms available to different districts. The group also created a letter that could be shared with parents to explain the purpose of the assessment.

When developing the slideshow of the Observation Survey tasks, there were many discussions surrounding how to maintain the integrity and purpose of the assessment while

balancing that with the logistics of ease of delivery and minimizing confusion. One example of such in-depth conversations happened with the Letter Identification task. To put all 54 letters on one slide was not realistic; students would not be able to see the letters clearly if they had a device with a small screen and teachers would not know where the child was looking or which letter(s) they were identifying. However, creating 54 separate slides—one for each letter—was too bulky. The compromise was to isolate one line of letters from the assessment at a time (6–7 letters) for the child to identify so the letters were still embedded within print, but yet it was manageable for both the student and the teacher.

To date, the Concepts About Print task proves the most challenging to administer remotely given the call-and-response format of the assessment. However, problem-solving teachers have found unique ways to complete the task successfully, including annotating the document during a screen share or using the Jamboard

or Pear Deck applications to allow students to mark up the slides on their end. The documents created by the group provided a skeleton and framework on which many teachers have built.

Developing necessary resources

In order to support Reading Recovery lessons that would be delivered remotely, this workgroup (3 teacher leader members) investigated and compiled a broad list of specific resources that teachers could use. The group identified many different platforms and apps that could support online learning and described how they could be used with either live teaching or as a recorded video (e.g., Google, Zoom, Screencastify, Pear Deck, Seesaw, etc.). The group also found various resources that would assist teachers with writing and word learning, including digital magnetic letter tiles, sight words, and digital whiteboards like Jamboard. In addition to resources for writing instruction, the group researched digital book collections that could be used via screen sharing during lessons and listed the applicable subscription options and costs. The final document also suggested a variety of physical materials (e.g., document camera, iPad/cell phone stands) that could be helpful as teachers shared books from their own collections. Finally, the workgroup listed possible inexpensive books and materials that could be purchased for students' at-home use (e.g., Keep Books [www.keepbooks.osu.edu], book sets through various publishers, etc.). This list could serve as a starting point to save time as teachers were beginning to wrap their heads around the unique teaching that would be part of the 2020–2021 school year. As the school year began,



Magnetic letters, writing journals, and Elkonin boxes were among the tools and materials recommended for at-home kits for students working remotely.

not only were these resources helpful for Reading Recovery teachers, but they also proved important for other intervention and classroom teachers for continued reading and writing instruction online.

Providing social and emotional support for students

Thoughtful educators know that the most meaningful plans must factor in the social and emotional needs of those involved (teachers, students, and, in remote learning, families as well). This workgroup (5 teacher leader members) determined that although it was certain that social and emotional needs would be great during the pandemic, the range of needs that may occur would be difficult to define. For that reason, the group decided to create a resource document that teachers could consult and use to address the varied and unique needs they might encounter.

Each member researched personal resources and tools that, in their past experience, had been helpful. When

the group met again, they developed a plan for organizing this information in a user-friendly way. The social-emotional needs of teachers were the impetus for this due to the fact that the group wanted to be mindful of their needs as well. The result of these meetings was a two-part document that teachers could reference as needed. The first part of the document included guidance and recommendations for building relationships and fostering engagement. The second part was a list of topics, possible resources, key ideas, and related page numbers that could support the particular social and emotional needs that might occur. This document could be shared with teacher leaders and, in turn, shared with individual sites as needs arose.

This work provided ideas for setting up the foundation for engagement and relationships with parents and students. From experience and specific feedback, the workgroup learned that working remotely and intentionally building relationships

with families created many positive results. If families were not completely overwhelmed, they had been steady in communicating and working in partnership with teachers. This truly impacted the social-emotional well-being of teachers, students, and families.

Collecting, analyzing, and applying data

Data tell a story. If it is up to Reading Recovery professionals and teacher leaders to give voice to that story, what story might our 2019–2020 data tell? The task of this workgroup (7 teacher leader members) centered around identifying the various types of data that show how Reading Recovery can help systems weather the disruptions caused by the pandemic. The group explored typical uses for the site report to tell the story of each site. This led teacher leaders to consider how site reports would be different from one another and the opportunities this might afford all stakeholders impacted by Reading Recovery. Conversations pushed this group beyond just data to confront the reality that systems would be facing in welcoming back students who may need additional support in literacy learning. Reading Recovery certainly had the potential to support systems, teachers, and students to provide just-in-time learning.

Through these conversations, the workgroup created a table identifying specific tools to support data analysis: site report, I Love Data Fridays (www.idecweb.us), additional data collection ideas, testimonials and surveys, acceleration, equity, and social-emotional tools. This table included language and explanations about how these tools might help teacher leaders

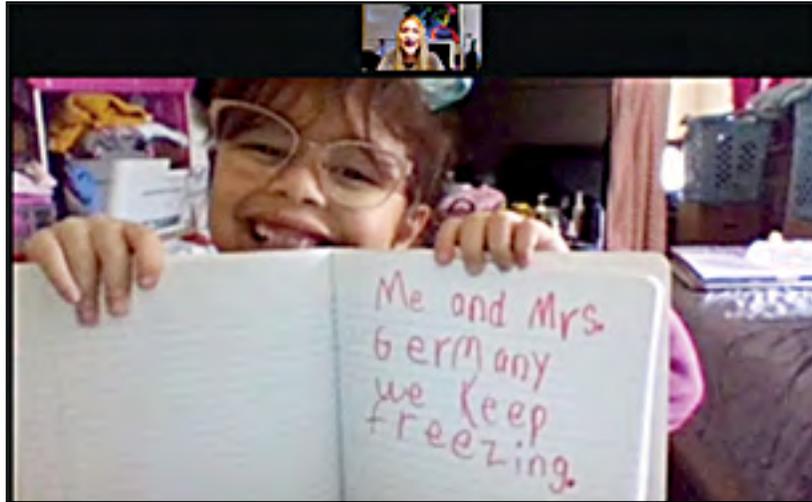


Working remotely and intentionally building relationships with families created many positive results and impacted the social-emotional well-being of teachers, students, and families.

support sites more effectively as well as talking points that might be useful when working with external stakeholders. This workgroup was able to move beyond simply analyzing data from the interrupted school year to leveraging data by sharing Reading Recovery's impact over time and how that might support systems in this unique time when acceleration and social-emotional connections are needed.

*Teaching Literacy Lessons**

The collaboration that occurred within the Literacy Lessons workgroup (4 teacher leader members) started with a discussion of the current state of districts' slightly varied Literacy Lessons implementation. This opportunity for conversation provided a unique view of how Literacy Lessons is implemented across our nation. This workgroup determined the *why* behind renewed, collaborative efforts. An opportunity was evident: Reading Recovery has an opportunity to blaze a renewed Literacy Lessons path. COVID-19, coupled with this collaborative process, provided an opportunity to understand where Literacy Lessons has been and to consider reimagining and reinvigorating it. This felt like a turning point. Literacy Lessons in the United States has been developing for years. This process of bringing teacher leaders together uncovered an urgency to re-imagine Literacy Lessons on behalf of the children whose Reading Recovery journey was interrupted during the 2019–20 school year as well as for



Many different platforms and apps that could support online learning were identified, with descriptions of how each could be used with either live teaching or as a recorded video.

children who are up and coming, early acquisition literacy learners in the early elementary grades. The workgroup's goals remained flexible yet responsive, resulting in a suggested system approach to address the rising number of needs across the grades with Literacy Lessons as a possible solution.

This workgroup created a document containing a collection of resources: discussion questions (to foster system conversations by district or site), student selection ideas, and rationale for lesson modifications (with specific connections to *Standards and Guidelines of Literacy Lessons in the United States* (2013/2015)). The group also offered suggestions for professional development for both continuing teachers and teachers in training.

Dissemination of the work among the three UTCs

As the summer drew to a close, each workgroup uploaded their information and resources into an electronic folder. Trainers then compiled and distributed a complete set of electronic resources to teacher leaders affiliated with each of the three UTCs. Teacher leaders now had full access to all resources, which could then be passed along to the teachers within their site. This all happened before the school year began so that teacher leaders and teachers could use the materials and resources from the first day of the new school year. The workgroups were a way to align systems of delivery and equip Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons teachers with tools and materials that could be used to maximize instructional time and continue to

* Literacy Lessons is an intervention designed to reach young children (generally Grades 1–4) in special education or ESL settings who are struggling with beginning reading and writing but are not eligible for Reading Recovery. Intervention specialists in these two settings are trained to use Reading Recovery instructional procedures to design individual lessons for their students with the goal of accelerating their literacy learning. (Reading Recovery Council of North America, n.d.) For more information about Literacy Lessons training, please see the *Standards and Guidelines of Literacy Lessons in the United States* (2013/2015) or contact a UTC near you.

close students' literacy achievement gaps. The workgroups aimed to provide a foundation and starting place to lessen anxiety, workload, and pressure.

Using What Was Learned to Advance Future Collaboration Efforts

Of those who participated in these workgroups, 42 of the 55 teacher leaders (76%) completed a survey about their perceptions of this work (see Table 1). For almost all statements, teacher leaders responded with the two most favorable perceptions. Teacher leaders felt that their contributions were valued by colleagues and that the outcomes were worth the personal time and effort expended. An overwhelming majority (95.2%) indicated that they would be willing to collaborate like this in the future with teacher leaders outside of their UTC. This seems particularly important, noting that more than 70% of respondents had not previously worked with teacher leaders outside of their UTC.

An open-ended survey question asked how this workgroup experience was different from the other ways in which they had worked with teacher leader colleagues. Three themes emerged from the responses to that question. First, these groups had a very clear and specific focus, as they came together to problem-solve specific issues related to supporting Reading Recovery implementation during a pandemic. Second, teacher leaders indicated that this collaboration allowed for alternative perspectives to be shared and considered throughout the process. Teacher leaders felt that their diverse contributions were valued and important. Finally, teacher leaders indicated that this work afforded them opportunities to build both professional and personal relationships with colleagues and expand their network of expertise beyond their own UTC.

The teacher leader feedback about these workgroups echo those described by Schwartz (2006) that “the Reading Recovery community of practice is centered around the

activities of literacy learning and instruction. The product of our community is knowledge and the process of production is shared inquiry” (p. 55). Teacher leaders inquired together about literacy learning and instruction during unusual circumstances and produced new knowledge to combat the challenges, demonstrating the power of this professional learning community. Anonymous teacher leader feedback further highlighted the impact and benefits of the collaboration process.

“It is so helpful to collaborate, share concerns, and problem solve together. This work was important and urgent to all of us! It was wonderful to talk with others across the country, so we knew that we weren't in this alone.”

“Everyone's contributions were valued. This was different than meeting people at a conference, working together to problem-solve something at a table and then walking away. We had to come together multiple times. Relationships were

Table 1. Participants' Perceptions of Their Workgroup

	5	4	3	2	1
I contributed to my workgroup's discussion.	50.0	40.5	7.1	2.4	0
My workgroup colleagues valued my contributions.	73.8	26.2	0	0	0
My colleagues' discussions contributed to my thinking on the workgroup's focus.	85.7	11.9	2.4	0	0
My time expended on this workgroup was worthwhile.	88.1	9.5	2.4	0	0
My effort expended on this workgroup was worthwhile.	85.4	9.8	4.9	0	0
My workgroup received the support it needed to complete its work.	78.6	21.4	0	0	0
My workgroup's final recommendations will benefit (or have benefited) fellow teacher leaders and teachers.	75.6	17.1	7.3	0	0
I am willing to collaborate like this in the future with teacher leaders outside my university training center.	95.2	4.8	0	0	0

NOTE: A score of 5 designated the most positive perception. Scores are reported as a percentage of respondents.

built. Conversations, both professional and personal, continued at the end of the task.”

The planning we did during summer 2020 was instrumental in enabling teachers and teacher leaders to deliver quality Reading Recovery lessons, regardless of setting, that are as close as possible to the lessons to which we are accustomed. After observing dozens of remote and socially distanced Reading Recovery lessons, we are inspired by this newfound ability to reach and teach our most vulnerable students during this most difficult and challenging time in our lives. Teacher leaders felt that relationships with families through remote learning have improved as has parents’ understanding of how to support their children at home. We have seen and heard children become active problem solvers, read with fluency and expression, write poignant and meaningful messages, and become more strategic readers and writers despite the pandemic.

Conclusion

It is evident that we (teacher leaders) are truly stronger together. This was an important opportunity to connect, collaborate, problem solve, and share outside of our smaller regions. Together, we engaged in conversations aimed at problem solving our implementation challenges and issues. Together, we explored and planned for potential pitfalls. Together, we broadened our concepts of what is possible. This rare opportunity to collaborate across our vast network gave us a clearer understanding that many of our individual challenges are not unique to our particular context. More importantly, we learned that solutions to these challenges may already exist somewhere in another

part of our learning community. A summary of the workgroups’ completed products, process outcomes, interfering factors, and new directions and possibilities is outlined in Appendix A.

What is the take-away from this collaborative work? Lyons et al. (1993) discuss *novelty detection* as “providing emotional overtones and motivation for learning” (p. 31). The novelty of this situation energized and motivated teacher leaders to be highly engaged, as did the driving force

Together, we engaged in conversations aimed at problem solving our implementation challenges and issues. Together, we explored and planned for potential pitfalls. Together, we broadened our concepts of what is possible.

to help Reading Recovery teachers prepare to teach remotely in a way that would support the students, the families, and the learning. The job of the workgroups was ultimately to help energize, encourage, and empower Reading Recovery teachers to teach in new environments and with new requirements so that they, in turn, could energize, encourage, and empower their students to learn in new situations. The Reading Recovery teacher leader professional learning community faced this task with resolve, tentativeness, mutual

respect, encouragement, and confidence. As the year of remote or hybrid learning continued, the original resources from the summer work continued to grow and change as a result of the daily teaching encounters of Reading Recovery teachers and teacher leaders with students and colleagues.

There have always been opportunities for teacher leaders to initiate collaboration with other teacher leaders, so what made this experience different? In this instance, trainers facilitated the workgroups by providing access to other teacher leaders, narrowing focus topics (rising from teacher leader conversations), inviting teacher leaders to choose a workgroup, providing a framework with adequate time and autonomy to create their own plan of action, administering a follow up evaluation survey, and providing time for sharing and celebration. This resulted in high quality work, a large quantity of learning, and a newly expanded network. We are hopeful that this joining of teacher leader minds and efforts will continue in the future and on a larger scale. The question is: Does this level of collaboration need to rely on trainer initiation, or can teacher leaders expand their own networks and opportunities to work collaboratively?

Reading Recovery encourages networks of teachers, schools, tutors/teacher leaders and trainers to critique and support each other’s problem solving. “The search for solutions has no end” (Clay, 2016, p. 214). It is our hope that continued and enhanced collaboration among teacher leaders and across UTCs is also never-ending in nature.

Appendix A

Summary of Teacher Leader Partnership and Collaborative Outcomes (Summer 2020)

Completed Products	Process Outcomes	New Possibilities	Interfering Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital version of the Observation Survey • Considerations for Literacy Lessons • Digital resource for social-emotional aspects of remote learning • Tools for supporting data and advocacy • Provision of options and guidance to support remote Reading Recovery lessons • Resource to share CDC guidelines/ideas for socially distanced Reading Recovery lessons • List of specific resources to support students and teachers in lessons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formation of new professional bonds • Enlargement of professional network • Sharing of alternatives to common issues • Enhancement of ideas and perspectives on common topics • Contributions to the success of Reading Recovery outcomes • Realization that topics and ideas are bigger than one person or one site • Focus on reflective practices • Expansion of tools and expertise • Momentum of group carries others through difficult times • Constructive learning with a larger group • Engagement in collective inquiry • Opportunity to articulate and investigate the reasoning behind respective positions • Energized approach to work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiating new topics for broader collaboration by individuals, sites, teacher leaders, and trainers • Revisiting common topics in Reading Recovery across sites and states • Increasing participation across sites, states, national, and international lines in IDEC Data Friday sessions • Highlighting teacher leaders on the Reading Recovery Facebook page, Twitter, blogs, etc. • Increasing the number of co-written articles for <i>The Journal of Reading Recovery</i> • Increasing teacher leader blog contributions as author or co-author for Reading Recovery Council of North America • Increasing participation through RRCNA committee work • Increasing participation in national teacher leader work (e.g., book leveling) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time: commitment and scheduling • Routinized ways of doing things • Lack of awareness of what is possible • Lack of structure, catalyst, or leadership to initiate these kinds of collaborations

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Pandemic Transition Plan Reflects Flexibility, Innovation of Reading Recovery

Stephanie Cecchini, York Region District School Board, Ontario, Canada

Author's note: Jake is a pseudonym.

The global COVID-19 pandemic caused many disruptions within education, but it was also during these trying times that innovative ideas arose to meet the varying needs of students. In September 2020, as a result of a school district's decision in the Greater Toronto Area of Ontario, Reading Recovery® teachers within this board were provided a rare opportunity. In order to help transition Grade 1 students who, in the spring of 2020 were impacted by school closures and online learning, this school district created a transition plan to support these students into Grade 2. This plan allowed Reading Recovery teachers to utilize their literacy expertise and knowledge to design individualized lessons for the lowest-achieving Grade 2 students—in partnership with school teams and families—for the first 2 months of school. The goal of this transition plan was to collaboratively and responsively design intentional one-to-one instruction and support the transition of these students into the Grade 2 homeroom program.

Enter Jake, a new Grade 2 student at a suburban school within this district who I worked with for the first few months of the school year — 10 weeks to be exact. Jake's story shows that his progress would not have been achieved without the intentionality of building a relationship and trusting

environment while simultaneously learning effective literacy processing.

When I first met Jake, he was very quiet and reserved and it seemed that he would not take risks. This was evident when administering the Observation Survey in September (see Table 1). On his running records, there were many 'Tolds' and when attempting to complete Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words, he placed his hands in his hair, tugged at it, and did not record anything on paper at first. From my observations, I noticed early on that writing seemed to be an area of frustration for Jake. His homeroom teacher shared that he seemed reluctant to write in class.

Before starting lessons, I contacted Jake's mother and we talked about Jake and his interests. She gave me

so much insight into his character, both as a child and student, his experiences, interests and frustrations with writing being one of them. Based on my interactions with all stakeholders in Jake's education—his family, teachers, and Jake himself—I compiled the information I learned to help build his Learner Profile, an ongoing document used in my school district which helps inform my daily teaching and supports the individualization of lessons. This ongoing process of communication with his family and classroom teacher paved the way for engaging with Jake in a variety of ways and helped build a trusting relationship with all partners.

Jake was a reluctant writer, and he seemed to approach writing with an understanding that it was just about

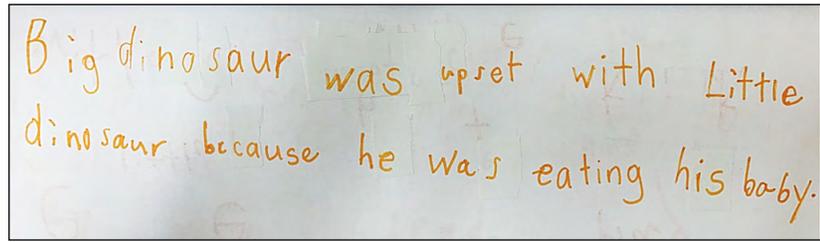
Table 1. Raw Scores for Each Task of the Observation Survey, at Entry and at Exit 10 Weeks Later

Observation Survey Task (Raw Score Total)	Entry	Exit
Letter Identification (54)	53	54
Concepts About Print (24)	13	22
Word Reading (15)	14	14
BURT (no ceiling)	26	39
Writing Vocabulary (no ceiling)	17	55
Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words (37)	31	36
Instructional Text Level	5	27

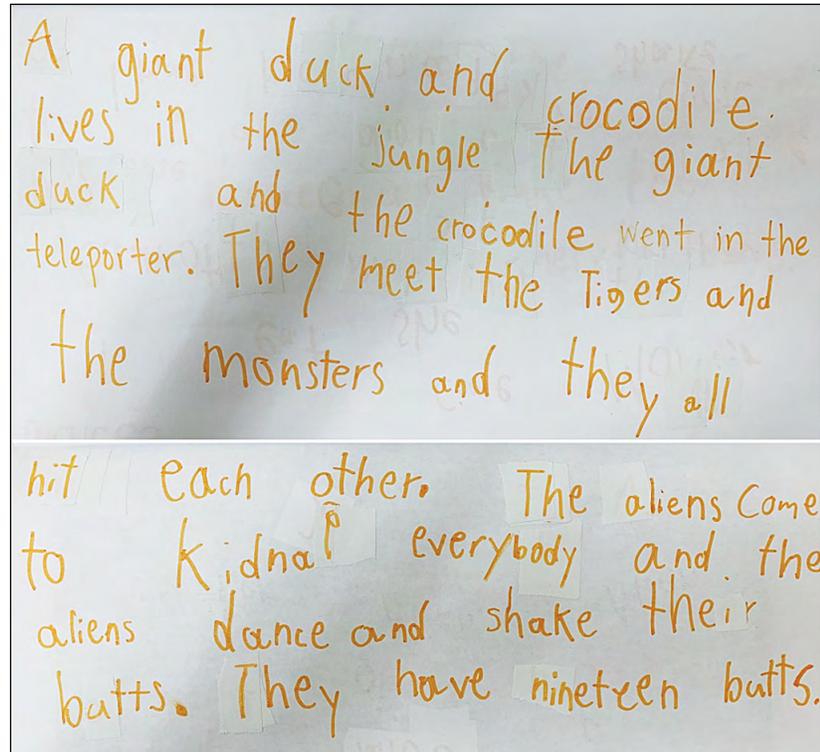
spelling words accurately which seemed to inhibit both the composition and construction of his messages. Engaging in authentic conversations with Jake before, during, and after our lessons was instrumental in allowing his voice, ideas, questions, and wonderings to be acknowledged and heard. This also provided opportunities to further develop his use of language structures.

During our one-to-one, daily instruction, Jake responded well to praise and encouragement; sharing the task of writing helped alleviate Jake's preoccupation with spelling as I was there to support him when needed. He started to show more interest in the writing portion of each lesson by writing letters to my daughter about their joint interest in Roblox or constructing one of his many adventures while enjoying keeping me in suspense as he unveiled a new character or a twist in the plot. I noticed a shift in Jake's perception of writing whereby it was now about sharing his ideas and sending messages; he was seeing that writing had a purpose.

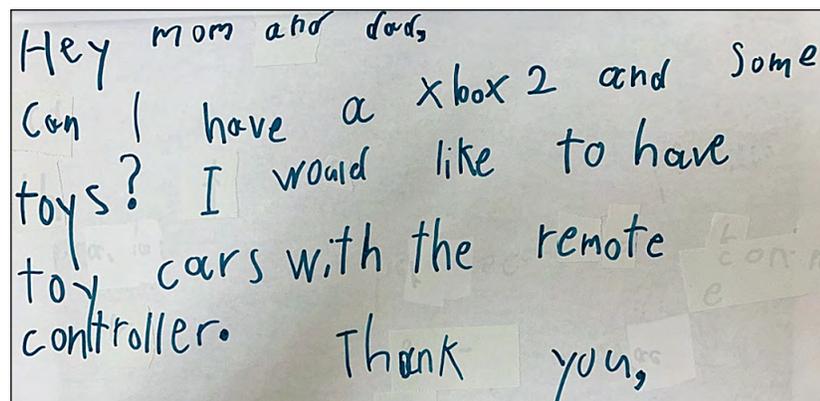
Signs of Jake making attempts and taking risks were becoming evident and he demonstrated self-talk while engaging in literacy activities which at times prompted him to take further action, like using a known word to help get to an unknown word or initiating a self-correction. I believe that, through writing for various authentic and engaging purposes, he learned that he had a "voice" and that voice could be shared through writing as well as in his conversations. The support he required throughout the



Big dinosaur was upset with Little dinosaur because he was eating his baby.



A giant duck and crocodile lives in the jungle. The giant duck and the crocodile went in the teleporter. They meet the Tigers and the monsters and they all hit each other. The aliens come to kidnap everybody and the aliens dance and shake their butts. They have nineteen butts.



Hey mom and dad,
Can I have a xbox 2 and some toys?
I would like to have toy cars with the remote controller.
Thank you,

Early in his lessons (top image), Jake was a reluctant writer. After a few weeks of authentic conversations, his writing (middle image) began to show more confidence. Jake's oral language is a strength, and the rich vocabulary he uses is reflected when he now composes and constructs messages (lower image) during meaningful and authentic writing experiences.

series of lessons diminished over time as he became more confident and independent.

The results of the Observation Survey administered at the end of the series of lessons highlights the impact the opportunity to receive lessons from a Reading Recovery teacher had on Jake (see Table 1). The behaviors observed during these tasks depict a child who shows he is able to monitor his own reading and writing, search for and use information from various sources, and self-correct — all of which are signs of effective literacy processing and growing independence. More than anything, his final scores portray a confident young boy who will take risks to further his learning in a supportive, motivating, and engaging environment.

Jake is an independent reader and writer. After 10 weeks of lessons, he seems to attempt tasks on his own and has the confidence to take risks, both in his reading and his writing. When writing, Jake has demonstrated

he can compose and record a message independently. Jake’s oral language is a strength, and the rich vocabulary he uses is reflected when he now composes and constructs messages during meaningful and authentic writing experiences.

When reflecting on the progress Jake made, I realized that there were a myriad of opportunities and experiences that supported this success. During this global pandemic, Reading Recovery continues to serve as a system resource, and this school district’s transition plan highlights the flexibility and innovation of this early intervention program and its impact on student learning. By building relationships that involved ongoing communication with his family and teachers over the 10-week period—incorporating authentic and genuine conversations that honored Jake’s voice and creating the supportive environment whereby he felt confident to take risks—Jake developed an effective literacy processing system.

About the Author

Stephanie Cecchini is a Reading Recovery teacher leader-in-training with the York Region District School



Board in Ontario, Canada. In addition to years of experience in Reading Recovery, she has held positions as a lead teacher, literacy teacher, teacher librarian, special education teacher, and classroom teacher. She is deeply passionate about developing trusting relationships to support the success of student well-being and academic achievement.

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Teachers and Children Learning With and From Each Other: What Is Possible With Literacy Lessons

Mary Ann Poparad, National Louis University

Author's note: All student and teacher names are pseudonyms. Special thanks to Literacy Lessons teachers from Wisconsin Valley, Menomonee Falls, WI, and Champaign, IL for their contributions and reflections.

"His progress in reading is the only thing that is going right in his life. I have seen the positive social-emotional effects. Reading has given him an outlet. He can soothe himself with a book and find entertainment in a book. But most of all, he feels so proud of himself."

— Oliver's fourth-grade special education social worker

Oliver, referenced in the quote above and described later in this article, represents one of an increasing number of children experiencing accelerated learning gains through participation in Literacy Lessons™ delivered by their special education or English language learner (ELL) teachers. Credentialed Reading Recovery® and Literacy Lessons teacher leaders engage specialist teachers in intensive initial training courses and continuing professional development, often along with Reading Recovery teacher colleagues. When Oliver's special education teacher began learning about Literacy Lessons, he discovered his pathway for becoming a reader.

The positive effects of Reading Recovery as a successful short-term prereferral first-grade intervention have been consistently documented for over 30 years (Rodgers, 2016). Literacy Lessons offers another opportunity for children who are already enrolled in special education or ELL intervention services to experience similar successful learning outcomes. This article presents important reasons for schools to consider implementing Literacy Lessons, an introduction to Literacy Lessons as a supplemental instruction option for children outside of the scope of Reading Recovery, and finally, specific examples illustrating how individual children can experience accelerated

literacy gains when their specialist teachers participate in the Literacy Lessons professional development model.

What is Literacy Lessons?

Marie Clay historically advocated for expanding the application of Reading Recovery for special populations of children:

It is because these [Reading Recovery] procedures are designed for adapting instruction to the learning needs of individual children that they can be applied to special education students who are experiencing difficulty with early literacy acquisition and to English language learners, who need foundational instruction in English literacy. (Clay, 2016, p. 16)

Recognizing the increasing numbers of children qualifying for special services, the North American Trainers Group followed Clay's vision while conducting field trials and research that lead to the collaborative development of the *Standards and Guidelines of Literacy Lessons in the United States* (2013/2015). Through the documentation of field trials, data collection, and working with trademark lawyers at The Ohio State University, the Literacy Lessons trademark became established.

School systems implementing Reading Recovery may choose to implement Literacy Lessons services, training, and ongoing professional development for certified teachers assigned to special education or ELL teaching positions. Credentialed trainers within Reading Recovery/Literacy Lessons university training centers provide the initial rigorous yearlong course work, training, coaching, and ongoing professional learning for teacher leaders who then train and coach Literacy Lessons specialists in their school districts. Implementations aim to reach students in Grades 2–4 who continue to experience early literacy learning difficulties as assessed with *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Clay, 2019). Incorporating the tenants of Reading Recovery, teachers

learn how to purposefully design individual literacy lessons that uncover unique student strengths and particular difficulties that block literacy learning.

Unlike Reading Recovery, Literacy Lessons offers greater flexibility in terms of lesson frequency, lesson length (15–40 minutes vs. 30 minutes), and unlimited weeks of service with intentional methods supported by theories of working with special populations of children who may have developed strong skills that block learning (Clay, 2016). Both Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons teachers aim to help each student acquire the essential foundational skills for supporting an early literacy processing system as well as the self-assured will to continue to learn in the absence of individual lessons. Primary professional resources are *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals* (Clay, 2016) and Clay's Observation Survey.

Incorporating the tenants of Reading Recovery, teachers learn how to purposefully design individual literacy lessons that uncover unique student strengths and particular difficulties that block literacy learning.

Typical individual lessons or tutoring sessions include reading and enjoying familiar books; reading yesterday's new book; manipulating magnetic letters; constructing and breaking words apart (phonology and orthography); composing and transcribing a message or story; reconstructing a cut-up message; and learning how to orientate oneself to a new story or an informational text and attempting to read it with a little help from the teacher.

Literacy Lessons offers an appropriate option for particular children placed in special education programs or for others qualifying for ELL programs in Reading Recovery schools. Literacy Lessons specialists acquire dexterity in customizing lesson components — selecting from a variety of instructional material aiming to engage students in purposeful reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities. Both Literacy Lessons and Reading Recovery share these two important tenants emphasizing the role of observation and the power of aligning word study, reading, and writing activities within each lesson:

1. Individual lesson planning follows systematic observation of the unique ways a particular student works on problem solving while using oral and written language. Day by day, the teacher designs each lesson to leverage student strengths as a resource for working through literacy task difficulties, for developing alternative problem-solving methods, and speedy solving of increasing complex challenges.
2. Learning accelerates when strategies learned in both reading and writing reciprocally support each other. Teachers help students recognize, apply, and transfer word solving (decoding) skills during reading to word construction (encoding) skills while transcribing cohesively composed messages during each lesson. (Clay, 2016, p. 15)

As a companion to Reading Recovery, an implementation of Literacy Lessons prepares specialist teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and tools that directly support and improve extraordinary instruction for children who qualify for special education or ELL services. The following illustrates how individual children experienced accelerated literacy gains as their specialist teachers learned how to design tailored literacy instruction that focused more on individual strengths over deficits.

Three Reasons to Consider Implementing Literacy Lessons

Increasing populations of ELL and special education students

Between the fall of 2000 and the fall of 2017, public schools in all but seven states and the District of Columbia experienced a significant increase in the numbers of students needing ELL services. In 2017, the highest percentage of ELL students were enrolled in lower grades (K–5). For example, 16% of kindergartners, 9% of sixth graders, and 4.6% of 12th graders were ELL students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). The national data show that 14% of all public-school students receive special education services under the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and 1% to 20% of a school's total enrollment may include ELL students. During the 2018–2019 school year, 33% of all students who received special education services fell into the specific learning disabilities category. Students in this category generally present with one or more of the

basic psychological processes involved in understanding or using language—spoken or written—with specific difficulties related to listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, spelling, or mathematical calculations.

An implementation of Literacy Lessons alongside Reading Recovery addresses the rising need to provide special needs students access to grade-level curriculum through evidence-based interventions, and to narrow the widening achievement gap across student subgroups.

Reading achievement gap

With the No Child Left Behind Act of 2000 and the IDEA of 2004, schools became accountable for reporting academic achievement outcomes for all student subcategories including students with disabilities (SWD) and students classified as ELLs. Most recently, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) required states to report academic outcomes of SWDs and ELLs as compared to all students. Revisions of both IDEA and ESSA clearly shift the definition of accountability and educational access from reporting the physical delivery setting of educational services to the reporting of academic growth relative to how much children learn each year.

Conducting a meta-analysis of 23 selected studies published between 1997 and 2016, Gilmour et al., (2019) estimated the size of the reading achievement gap between elementary and middle school students with and without disabilities. They generally found SWDs lag about 3.3 years behind their nondisabled peers in reading achievement growth. This particular finding magnifies concerns regarding SWDs access to the general curriculum, especially given the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2019) report indicating that 60% of fourth- and eighth-grade students *without disabilities* fall below grade level in reading.

Gilmour et al. (2019) acknowledged that accountability practices focused solely on achievement gap data may not lead to stronger academic outcomes for SWDs or improve their access to the general curriculum. This particular

investigation raised more questions regarding why the achievement gap is so large and offered initial findings of an in-progress observational research project (Lindström, 2018) regarding reading instruction for students with or at risk for disabilities. Lindström found little evidence of effective instructional strategies for special needs students with teachers spending less time on literacy instruction than other classroom activities. Instruction often failed to address foundational reading skills and hampered access to the general curriculum.

Improved access and outcomes

Improving outcomes and access to the general education literacy curriculum for students needing very specific learning support begins with increasing teacher knowledge and skills regarding the adaptation and customization of instructional practices to meet the needs of a wide variety of individual learners. While specialized supplemental instruction tends to focus on remediating documented student deficits, Marie Clay's work persistently prompts us to think more deeply and observe more intently the unique approach individual children take while in the act of reading and writing age-appropriate and interesting texts. She originally posed these important research questions leading to the original development of Reading Recovery, continued expansion through Descubriendo la Lectura (DLL) in the United States, Intervention préventive en lecture-écriture (IPLÉ) in Canada, and more recently Literacy Lessons:

1. What is the brain doing when a child is reading and writing successfully?
2. What is possible for individual children who experience great difficulty with early literacy learning?
3. What if the severe literacy learning difficulty rate (within a school population) were reduced to less than 1%? (Clay, 2004)

A recent large-scale independent research project (May et al., 2016) offers substantial evidence that implementations of Reading Recovery can indeed increase the literacy achievement for most of the children Clay's work originally intended to reach. Recent implementations of Literacy Lessons replicate similar accelerated gains for elementary students identified for more intensive and highly specialized literacy interventions. While Clay's vision of reducing literacy learning difficulties to less than 1% of primary school students has yet to be realized in North America, we are beginning to experience the possibility as special

program teachers engage in intensely focused professional development designed to lift their knowledge toward highly responsive instruction for individual children identified for Tier 3 or 4 literacy learning interventions beyond first grade. Increasing teacher expertise and confidence in helping children acquire effective and efficient problem-solving methods for reading texts through an implementation of Literacy Lessons can narrow the achievement gap that traditionally widens over time.

Literacy Lessons offers school systems a highly effective method for addressing the rapidly increasing numbers of children qualifying for ELL or special education services. An implementation of Literacy Lessons alongside Reading Recovery addresses the rising need to provide special needs students access to grade-level curriculum through evidence-based interventions, and to narrow the widening achievement gap across student subgroups.

Literacy Lessons Teachers and Children Learning Together

Four teacher leaders who train, coach, and support both Literacy Lessons and Reading Recovery teachers asked Literacy Lessons teachers to describe their work with Literacy Lessons students who experienced successful outcomes. Selected snippets from their descriptions follow in the next section. In all cases presented here, the Literacy Lessons teacher's primary job assignment was to deliver ELL or special education Tier 2 or 3 interventions. Each Literacy Lessons teacher participated in an initial yearlong series of university courses with simultaneous practicum, followed by annual continuing professional development sessions along with Reading Recovery teachers in their school districts. Literacy Lessons teachers designed and delivered 30- to 40-minute individual lessons to one or two of their caseload students daily or as often as possible. Four students described here represent students with specifically identified learning disabilities including a documented individualized educational program (IEP). One, the first example below, represents an ELL receiving ELL supplemental instruction.

Consider what can happen for children when their specialist teachers increase professional knowledge of early literacy practice applying new-found understandings to daily teaching with deliberate dexterity, highly focused with consistent instructional decisions customized and responsive to each student's unique learning needs.

Speaking, reading, and writing in English as an emergent bilingual learner: Andre

Andre's family relocated from Mexico to the United States just before the start of his second-grade year in school. He had successfully completed 2 years of primary education in Mexico. Since no Spanish instructional setting was available in his new school, he entered into an English only classroom. After a few weeks, his second-grade classroom teacher observed how quickly he was beginning to read and write along with his English-speaking peers. She recognized that Andre's understanding of basic print concepts, alphabetic, and phonetic knowledge in Spanish served as a strong foundation for accessing literacy learning in English. Guided by his second-grade teacher, Andre began his first steps toward English literacy while maintaining his Spanish oral language.

At the start of third grade, Andre was successfully reading level 6/D storybooks in English. His English as a second language (ESL) teacher and classroom teacher agreed to offer Literacy Lessons within his ESL support. A highly motivated learner, Andre was eager to learn. His teachers consistently modeled, noticed, and contingently supported his increasing control of English language production including past tense verbs, prepositional phrases, and conjunctions.

Andre's English oral language expanded through reading stories and engaging in conversation with his Literacy Lessons teacher about stories within the individual lessons. As a result, his ability to detect and self-correct errors while reading and writing also advanced. Supported by his strong meaning-making skills, his desire to enjoy stories, and reading standard English syntax embedded within interesting texts, Andre became increasingly skilled in communicating his ideas in English.

By the middle of third grade and after 17 weeks of individualized lessons carefully coordinated with his classroom instruction, Andre successfully read and comprehended texts at level 24/L, catching up to a second-grade reading level. Based on further assessment and documented progress, the school team decided that Andre had sufficiently developed a foundational literacy processing system in English to allow him to profit from small-group guided instruction with his peers both in the classroom and in supplemental ELL instruction.

Andre's end of third-grade developmental reading assessment verified his independent reading capacity at level 26/M, slightly below the third-grade benchmark. He

acquired foundational skills and strategies to support continued learning gains in English literacy. As an emergent bilingual learner, Andre gained 2 years of reading achievement through the combination of consistently focused goals shared between his classroom and ELL/Literacy Lessons teachers. As a fourth grader, he continued on his English language and literacy learning journey with his classmates.

Andre's third-grade classroom teacher shared this observation:

Andre significantly benefited from receiving Literacy Lessons in third grade. Being involved in an intensive, consistent literacy supplement helped him build a strong vocabulary in English. He learned how to relate events that occurred in the stories he read to his own life and how to retell stories including key details that he wrote about. Literacy Lessons enabled him to actively and confidently participate in small group instruction with his grade-level peers in our classroom. Literacy Lessons made a huge impact!

Developing self-regulation while learning: Matthew

Shortly after he moved into a new school at the start of first grade, early assessment results placed Matthew among the lowest achievers in his classroom and he entered Reading Recovery. After 20 weeks of daily individualized lessons supplementing his first-grade classroom curriculum, his scores on the Observation Survey indicated satisfactory gains in all areas with the exception of Text Reading. Most children reach grade-level proficiency as a result of participating in Reading Recovery. Some children, like Matthew, experience a secondary positive outcome of Reading Recovery:

Instead of continuing to struggle through class levels, never able to catch up, the child is identified for ongoing support that can be tailored to his current educational needs. The careful assessment of reading and writing progress by Reading Recovery teachers helps specialists to identify appropriate further help for the learner. Early identification of a small group of children who need extended help is a second positive outcome of Reading Recovery. Transfer from Reading Recovery to further help should be made immediately to ensure that what has been learned so far will not be forgotten. (Clay, 2016, p. 19)

Before the end of first grade, Matthew qualified for cross-categorical special education services under the category

of "significant developmental delay" in the areas of fine gross motor, emotional, and social. In the middle of second grade, he entered an emotional behavioral disabilities program at his school. During that time, Matthew participated in a second-grade general education classroom supplemented with individualized instruction provided by his special education teacher who was trained in Literacy Lessons to meet his IEP for reading and writing. He received additional special education services for math and social skills.

Because he easily drew upon his knowledge of story, sentence syntax, and initial letters to read texts, Matthew often avoided problem-solving efforts that called for using known clusters of letters embedded within words to confirm or correct his reading. His teacher's call for word solving beyond a single letter or single letter sound level resulted in yawning, wiggling legs and arms, and lots of deflective side talk during book reading. These apparent avoidance behaviors signaled his Literacy Lessons teacher of his need for word solving instruction in order to build up his efficacy as a reader. Based on her emerging hypothesis grounded in sensitive observation of Matthew's behaviors, the Literacy Lessons teacher aimed to teach him how to initiate word solving while maintaining his strength as a meaning maker. As a result, his confidence increased dramatically as a stress-free reader who could successfully apply more sophisticated word-solving strategies.

For several weeks, the Literacy Lessons teacher intentionally worked only within Matthew's set of known skills while maintaining a consistently trusting and collaborative working relationship. As Matthew's confidence gradually increased, his Literacy Lessons teacher revised both his learning and her teaching goal toward showing him how to locate and use known letter clusters, sounds, and blends within larger word parts such as prefixes, suffixes, and syllables for solving new words encountered during reading interesting texts. After completing 18 weeks of Literacy Lessons during the last half of second grade, Matthew's independent text reading had increased from a level 9 to 14.

Matthew's third-grade fall Text Reading assessment indicated that he had maintained skills and strategies previously acquired at end of second grade. Even though his independent reading remained far below third-grade proficiency, he held on to previous learning even after the summer break. His Literacy Lessons teacher again developed a plan to build upon and extend his current

competencies, while working through avoidance behaviors that occasionally resurfaced.

Whenever those behaviors resurfaced during text reading, his Literacy Lessons teacher aimed first to reestablish their working relationship by holding him accountable for what he could do and providing varying degrees of help in other areas more challenging for him. Within a very short time after the start of third grade, Matthew regained the self-control necessary for attending to problem-solving tasks while reading. His teacher quickly updated instructional progress goals to teach him how to maintain high comprehension and take words apart using known visual information when he needed to solve new words encountered during reading and writing of continuous text.

Each time Matthew encountered new or unexpected challenges his teacher noticed a temporary lapse in progress. Each time, his Literacy Lessons teacher persistently and skillfully reestablished his confidence by temporarily reducing challenges, revisiting familiar texts, reviewing, and revising previous learning until he felt secure and confident again before gradually lifting the daily challenge of reading a new text. The Literacy Lessons teacher had learned to recognize a learning lapse as a phenomenon that Clay named the “pebble in the pond effect.”

Sometimes what you think is old and established learning can be disturbed by some new competing learning and for a short time confusion rather than ‘knowing’ is observed. New learning has created a disturbance in an old response pattern that had seemed to be learned.

If learning were just a matter of adding bits of knowledge to our memory banks this would not happen. When a response is controlled by a pattern of movements (and a network of brain reactions) it is not surprising that the established pattern could be disturbed by adding a new component. It takes a little time to rearrange the old learning. The observant teacher tries to work out what new experience has upset the old established responding. (Clay, 2016, p. 39)

Matthew’s Literacy Lessons teacher practiced systematic observation as she intentionally and contingently challenged him during each lesson to learn a little bit more. As Matthew began to initiate and internalize a strategic problem-solving approach to reading, he and his teachers celebrated incremental learning gains. Increasing degrees

of stamina and perseverance replaced inattentiveness and fidgeting as he developed ways to search for multiple sources of information, to self-monitor and to correct most of his mistakes while reading interesting texts, and writing to communicate meaningful messages. The self-controlling behaviors internalized during his individualized Literacy Lessons began to transfer across all academic areas into the general education classroom environment and across math and science content areas.

At the end of third grade and after participating in a total of 116 Literacy Lessons sessions, Matthew no longer required individualized lessons. He had acquired the necessary foundational literacy skills and strategies, increased confidence, and self-control to successfully participate in small-group instruction with his peers within a general education classroom setting. While his special education services continued after third grade, he achieved full integration into a general education classroom with his fourth-grade age mates.

Accelerated learning: Annie

Annie’s independent text reading scores remained far below grade-level expectations at the end of first grade after a series Reading Recovery lessons. Similar to Matthew’s case, Annie’s subtest scores at end of first grade on the Observation Survey had increased with the exception of Text Reading. At the start of second grade, she read level 4/C, indicating a 1-year achievement gap. Upon a review of further assessments, the school team placed Annie into special education services as a Tier 3 supplement to her second-grade classroom literacy instruction. Her special education teacher decided to meet Annie’s IEP minutes for literacy instruction using the individualized Literacy Lessons framework. Daily engagement in carefully selected and slightly supported reading and writing activities resulted in accelerated learning.

Between September and November, Annie’s text reading capacity grew from level 4/C to level 14/H. Across 2 previous years or 72 weeks of schooling, she had gained only six text levels or approximately one text level per 12-week period. After 8 weeks working with her Literacy Lessons teacher, her text reading capacity began accelerating by approximately one text level per week! This accelerated rate of learning occurred for several possible reasons. Emergent and very early literacy foundation skills were likely established during her K–1 general classroom instruction supplemented with Reading Recovery tailored instruction. However, Annie seemed to require more time

to learn with the support of intensely focused lessons customized to her particular way of learning.

As she engaged in collaborative training sessions with her colleagues, Annie's special education/Literacy Lessons teacher combined her emerging understandings of Clay's work with her previous knowledge and experience working with children like Annie. Sensitive observation and the context of working individually with Annie allowed the teacher the room to carefully craft and deliver responsive instruction that built upon Annie's knowledge while offering just the right amount of challenge.

Narrowing achievement gap: Oliver

Oliver attended a standalone regional special education district (SED), a county cooperative district covering a 400-square-mile county and drawing students from 31 surrounding rural school districts. The cooperative pools resources in order to serve students with physical, social-emotional, and other learning challenges. Children like Oliver who qualified for special education services are bused daily from their home schools to the SED school until they no longer need services. Most students continue attending the SED school through eighth grade, as few progress enough to be fully integrated into their home elementary school classrooms.

Oliver began attending SED in kindergarten. His first opportunity to participate in Literacy Lessons came at the start of fourth grade when his special education teacher entered initial training courses for Literacy Lessons. The Observation Survey revealed Oliver's independent reading capacity to be at a level 5/D after 5 years of specialized schooling supported by teams of well-intentioned, caring, and certified special education teachers, psychologists, and social services personnel.

After just 17 weeks in individual Literacy Lessons, Oliver gained 15 text levels, successfully reading level 20/K and reducing his achievement gap by 3 years! Accelerated literacy progress continued through the end of fourth grade as Oliver came to believe in himself as a learner. During this time, Oliver's Literacy Lessons teacher engaged in collaborative training sessions with her colleagues and combined her growing understandings of Clay's work with her previous knowledge and experience working with children like him. His Literacy Lessons teacher practiced systematic observation, setting attainable short-term goals, and offering just the right amount of challenge in

each intentionally customized lesson. Finally, as a fourth grader, Oliver began extending his current capacities and his self-efficacy as a reader, as a writer, and as a learner. The design of Literacy Lessons tutoring sessions combined with his teacher's learning launched him upon a journey toward becoming literate and opened the door to further learning opportunities. In addition to his case social worker, his teachers and his mother took notice:

I have noticed a tremendous increase on his level of independence especially with his writing. Before Literacy Lessons intervention, he did not want to write anything on his own and now he just takes off.
— Oliver's third- and fourth-grade classroom teacher

He is so motivated to read ... While waiting at the barber shop to get a haircut, he found a book in the waiting room. He was so into the book that when it was his turn to get his haircut he let another boy take his turn because he didn't want to stop reading. He was very insistent on finishing his book.
— Oliver's Mom

Capturing attention: Garrett

Garrett qualified for special education services due to a diagnosis of moderate autism spectrum disorder (ASD). ASD refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech, and nonverbal communication. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, autism affects an estimated 1 in 54 children in the United States (<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/data.html>). Garrett was one of several children with some degree of ASD attending his particular school that operated under a model of inclusion for all learners. The school offered both Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons within a portfolio of various other intervention services.

The school team reviewed assessment data and recommended Literacy Lessons as the most appropriate intervention for Garrett at the start of second grade to meet his IEP goals for literacy learning. The Text Reading subtest of the Observation Survey indicated his highest independent text reading to be near level 3/C, indicating a 2-year achievement gap when compared to the fall second-grade proficiency benchmark. Drawing upon her study of Clay's works and participation in the Literacy Lessons professional development sessions, Garrett's special education teacher skillfully identified his unique strengths and needs as a person and as a literacy learner.

At first, Garrett could sustain and manage his attention for only short periods of time. His teacher limited his Literacy Lessons sessions to about 15–20 minutes. Over time, lessons gradually increased to 30 minutes as Garrett’s stamina improved with sustained attention to text reading and writing activities carefully selected, tied to his interests, and easily accessible. Early lessons focused on learning to distinguish between the role of print on the page in relation to the pictures and how stories are constructed page by page. Extended periods with repeated readings of a text allowed him to build fluency, success, and stamina over time. His teacher recorded snippets of running records whenever he began to take over text reading. She delayed taking a full running record to assess independent reading after three or more readings of a text, with lessening degrees of teacher help gradually transferring greater responsibility to him.

Through daily writing opportunities negotiated and constructed with his teacher’s assistance, Garrett gained skill and understanding of how and why linking sounds to letters could be useful when writing meaningful messages. Gradually he learned how to spell and write a variety of words including multisyllabic words and words with irregular spellings such as “goodnight,” “brother,” and “elephants.” He learned how to apply word construction knowledge gained during writing to solving during reading texts. He learned how to initiate problem-solving strategies while reading unfamiliar words in texts such as taking words apart, rereading, listening to himself to monitor meaning while reading continuous text, and how to self-correct most mistakes. By April of second grade, Garrett could independently read a level 16/I on a first reading indicating that he could now participate in small-group reading lessons. Teachers began transitioning him from individual Literacy Lessons to a small guided reading group intervention with his same-age peers. He continued enjoying the challenge of reading new books with less dependency on teacher prompts and reminders. In the small-group setting, Garrett continued to progress approaching second-grade reading proficiency by the end of the school year. In addition to his text reading gain, word reading vocabulary tripled in size from 34 words in the fall to 92 words at end of year.

Into third and fourth grades, Garrett continued to grow as a reader and a writer with specialized reading support focused on increasing reading fluency and higher-level comprehension skills. He finished fifth grade reading

independently at level N and continues to enjoy reading as a sixth grader. Receiving Literacy Lessons in second grade provided him with the tools and strategies necessary to launch him into a literate life that now allows him to participate with his age mates in a regular education setting.

Living with autism presents ever emerging new challenges for individuals throughout a lifetime, but learning to read and write need not be one of them. Participating in Literacy Lessons with his specially trained and coached special education teacher opened new possibilities and hope for Garrett’s future. His teachers understood, accepted, and celebrated learning how to read and write as an individualized journey.

Increasing Teacher Knowledge and Expertise

For some children, the route to literacy learning may be littered with obstacles and detours that require the teacher to become an expert navigator, responsive to individual needs, and an informed decision maker. All teachers, including specialist teachers, must be prepared to navigate each child’s unique route to learning. While each child’s pathway to literacy learning will be unique, the methods of responsive instruction grounded in the works of Marie Clay’s foundational early literacy theories and practices provide common supports for teachers. Despite an educational system’s best efforts and well-intentioned instruction, the children described in the examples above experienced severe learning delays prior to entering Literacy Lessons. Their successes demonstrate that many more children can begin a gradual upward climb toward literacy learning while experiencing increased social and emotional well-being under the guidance of expert teachers. Literacy Lessons teachers participate in specifically tailored, laser focused, and continuous professional learning around their work with special needs students.

Both Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons teachers engage in specialized clinical-based initial training and in ongoing professional development. Regular coaching visits are focused on developing multiple ways to practice responsive, intentional, and contingent teaching tailored to an individual student’s unique strengths and weaknesses. Credentialed teacher leaders facilitate these experiences for teachers over time within their school districts. Literacy Lessons intervention specialists hold special education or ELL teaching endorsements. They work

with children who are not eligible for Reading Recovery and who qualify for extra specialized services. Literacy Lessons teachers continually practice how to interact with a very wide variety of learners who experience the most difficulty in accessing the school literacy curriculum. By flexibly applying teaching procedures described in *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals* (Clay, 2016), and drawing upon their continued professional learning and teaching experiences, teachers can empower student learning gains. Andre, Matthew, Annie, Oliver, and Garrett experienced learning gains within a relatively short time beyond the expectations of their teachers, specialists, and families.

The next section summarizes reflections gathered from three Literacy Lessons teachers in response to this question: How has Literacy Lessons teacher training and continuing professional development influenced your work with children and others? Their comments revolve

Their successes demonstrate that many more children can begin a gradual upward climb toward literacy learning while experiencing increased social and emotional well-being under the guidance of expert teachers.

around particular changes in their approach to instruction as a result of their participation in Literacy Lessons training conducted by their district's teacher leader. Areas most significant to them were (a) focusing on student strengths to overcome deficits, (b) intentionally connecting reading and writing instruction, and (c) teaming with colleagues for student learning gains

Focusing on student strengths to overcome deficits

Kathy (Matthew's teacher) began the clinical training for Literacy Lessons after nearly 20 years as a special education teacher, including 5 years teaching in an emotional behavior disabilities program. Over the last 3 years implementing Literacy Lessons, she reports significant changes in her teaching practices overall, not just for literacy instruction. As a teacher of students with social-emotional, behavioral, and academic needs in multiple content areas, she can be intentional and decisive in instructing students across all academic areas.

Before Literacy Lessons training, Kathy wrote IEP goals in very general terms based on Common Core Standards and assessment results that highlight student deficits that determined qualification for special education services. She is now more knowledgeable of the scope and sequence of early literacy learning which allows her to identify where a student's learning journey may best begin. Kathy communicates more precisely with other teachers as they coconstruct realistic and attainable student IEP goals aiming for transfer into the general education setting. Coconstructing individual student learning goals and sharing specific learning gains across the general and special education contexts increases each student's capacity for transferring skills across contexts, literacy, and other content areas.

Kathy continues to refine her understandings and skills for identifying each student's specific literacy strengths and weakness. Customized learning targets for literacy as well as across all academic areas now start with a recognition of what students already know and can do. She practices contingent teaching being constantly aware that the gradual release of responsibility varies for each student and changes over time. Through her practice with Literacy Lessons and collegial discussions with her Reading Recovery/Literacy Lessons teacher leader and others, her knowledge continues to deepen and the literacy learning of her students continues to accelerate. She attributes her professional growth directly to her experiences with Literacy Lessons. She reports teaching with intense precision and clarity of purpose. The critical nature of time management and capturing an individual student's full engagement throughout each lesson each day is of highest priority. Applying these principles beyond the individual literacy lessons to group instruction and all areas of her daily teaching practices results in greater academic gains for all students on her caseload.

The highly supportive and collegial nature of the Literacy Lessons training sessions that include teaching lessons while colleagues observe and provide feedback helped Kathy to discover gaps in her practices and knowledge. Unawareness turned into awareness and renewed efforts to improve. In her words, "Every student comes with a different set of skills and teachers must observe, identify, and develop instruction that builds on that student's set of skills. The Literacy Lesson training allows me to reflect on my teaching in order to reteach, reconstruct, or identify the higher priority of some skills, without making me feel

like I made a mistake in my teaching. And for that I am grateful across all areas of teaching.”

Intentionally connecting reading and writing instruction

As an experienced special education teacher and through her participation on Literacy Lessons training sessions, Brenda (Garrett’s teacher) believes in the critical importance of early literacy intervention as a foundation for student success across all academic areas. Prior to her experiences with Literacy Lessons, Brenda generally taught reading and writing separately without realizing the reciprocal nature that “each produces learned responses that facilitate new responding in the other area” (Clay, 2016, p. 22). She now realizes that reading and writing instruction complement each other and improve a child’s potential for developing early literacy foundational skills and problem-solving strategies. Uniting reading and writing instruction within the same lesson positively influences rapid student progress in reading. Literacy Lessons teachers study and experience the results of Clay’s (2016) guidance:

Reading and writing are two different ways of learning about the same thing — the written code used to record oral language. It is like having two hands. The knowledge you have about writing can be used during reading, and vice versa. Children give us hints about the common ground they notice between reading and writing. Most literacy instruction theories pay little attention to the fact that the child is learning to write words and stories at the same time as he is learning to read. The reciprocity of early reading and early writing is grossly undervalued. (p. 77)

Through her thoughtful and intentional guidance, Brenda’s students can make connections across reading and writing activities shifting from receiving a message (reading) to giving a message (writing) within each lesson. Brenda writes: “It is so powerful to watch my students, not only in Literacy Lessons, but in all literacy interventions, make accelerated progress; large in part due to the knowledge I now have as a Literacy Lessons teacher. My teaching will forever be changed for the better!”

Teaming with colleagues

As an ELL, bilingual, and Literacy Lessons teacher, Ellen works in a K–5 dual language school. All students enrolled in her school receive 50% of their general instruction in Spanish and 50% in English. Teachers regularly collaborate to develop best methods for teaching

the foundational skills children need to become literate in both Spanish and English. Ellen’s participation in the Literacy Lessons training sessions empowers her to share increasing knowledge of instructional practices with teams of teachers in her school. She lifts and facilitates improved understandings. Children within a dual language curriculum may encounter reading difficulties for multiple reasons, including the challenges of encountering new vocabulary, unfamiliar syntax, and concepts. Discussing and sharing her learning discoveries with colleagues continues to deepen and develop Ellen’s understanding. One particular challenge for Ellen and her school team is that many more children are entering school as language learners in both Spanish and English without a dominant oral language base. Through consultation with administrators, teacher leaders, and others in her school, Ellen developed a short-term intervention to help students construct an oral language foundation first in Spanish reflecting the family’s dominant language. They clustered high need ELL first graders into small intervention groups for the purpose of strengthening and extending oral language development. Instructional activities included shared reading, reading aloud, retelling stories, engaging in interactive writing in order to draw upon oral language as one resource for problem solving while reading, and constructing written messages.

Ellen believes that her participation in Literacy Lessons professional development sessions, followed with coaching visits from her teacher leader, transforms her instructional decision-making in teaching reading overall and more specifically in supporting ELL students. The opportunity for in-depth study of oral language development continues to be most influential in improving her work with students. Before Literacy Lessons training, her language acquisition lessons focused on increasing student skills in all areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing simultaneously with a limited understanding of the significantly primary role of oral language development. Through her study and practice as a Literacy Lessons teacher, she began to view oral language as the primary resource that every child brings to early literacy learning and serves as the initial foundation of a self-extending processing system for both writing and reading. While planning instruction for ELL reading groups, Ellen now carefully considers how students’ oral language competencies might support or hinder successful engagement during reading and writing tasks. When selecting texts, she considers how to best

The challenges of collaborations across special education, ELL, Reading Recovery, other intervention services, and general education programs within complex systems can be conquered.

introduce and navigate students through unfamiliar story elements or ideas, new language structures, and unfamiliar vocabulary. Ellen confesses she often and confidently veers away from the scripted lesson plans found in the district's adopted ELL curriculum to customize lessons for particular children.

For example, she explains that “Literacy Lessons training has made me look at high-frequency words differently, understanding that for many language learners, abstract words carrying little meaning (*the, was, it, is, this, here*) are harder to master than concrete concept words such *book, table, fish*.” Rather than delivering a scripted lesson, Ellen first asks herself: What is within this student's zone of proximal development? What new challenge can be conquered and how can I scaffold instructional language to support greater independence in this learner? “Shifts in my thinking lead me to helping our students bridge languages in order to become more efficient language and literacy learners,” Ellen said.

In Closing

Literacy Lessons can produce successful outcomes for both teachers and children. Pairing Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons implementations offer rich opportunities for collaboration across general education, special education, ELL, Reading Recovery, and other specialist teachers as they engage in the collaborative professional learning experiences as one community of learners. Teachers counsel each other as they practice and refine skills in becoming intentionally focused on observing carefully and responding contingently in the moment in ways that allow student learning to accelerate. They gain a renewed sense of urgency and a deepened belief that all children can learn. Teacher leaders purposefully design initial training courses, individualized coaching visits, and

continuing professional development sessions to nurture risk taking, challenging conversations, and constructive feedback around student-centered professional practices grounded in the most current evidence-based research and the works of Marie Clay.

The challenges of collaborations across special education, ELL, Reading Recovery, other intervention services, and general education programs within complex systems can be conquered. Embracing Clay's earliest question, “What if the severe literacy difficulty rate were reduced to less than one percent?”, beckons educational systems to engage in concentrated, continuous, united efforts where all teachers, administrators, parents, and policy makers work together to give all children and their teachers opportunities to learn. Pairing Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons offers an effective approach for realizing that potential—especially for our most fragile learners—and prioritizing continuous teacher professional learning acknowledging that “in the end it is the individual adaptation made by the expert teacher to that child's idiosyncratic competencies and history of past experiences that starts him on the upward climb to effective literacy performances” (Clay, 2016, p. 195). The examples offered here of teachers and children learning together illustrate how the opportunity to learn can be realized for special populations of children in your school. Let us advocate for giving our most fragile learners the greatest opportunity to realize and enjoy a literate life.

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About the Cover

Laylah grew tremendously as a reader and a writer during her time in Reading Recovery. She especially loved to create her own elaborate and funny stories. She would often bring her own stories (written at home!) to lessons to share with her teacher.

Now in fourth grade, Laylah enjoys reading fantasy stories, especially if it is about unicorns or other mythical creatures! She continues to work hard each day and brings joy to all those around her.

Change Over Time: The Redevelopment of Intervention préventive en lecture-écriture in Canada

Lisa Harvey, *Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery Atlantic Region*

In her observations and experiences with young children, Marie Clay (2004) tells us that “Before 7 years of age, the child is a language genius who can learn two languages easily, keep them separate, and use different languages in different settings...” (p. 2). This theory/perspective can be explored in Canada where children, regardless of the language spoken at home, have the opportunity of English or French as their language of instruction in school. Aimed at supporting Grade 1 students from English classrooms, the implementation of Reading Recovery® in Canada is well established. Its redevelopment as Intervention préventive en lecture-écriture (IPLÉ) serves as an intervention for French language learners and continues to evolve. As interest and enrollment in French programs continues to expand in Canada (EdCan Network, 2019), Clay’s words regarding learning multiple languages resonate when supporting children being taught in French who are struggling in their literacy development.

Background

Over 50 years ago, the government of Canada adopted the Official Languages Act that recognized English and French as the official languages of the country and ensured the equal status of both. While it does not require that every Canadian

speak English and French, it values either language spoken and guarantees that services are available in a person’s language of choice (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 2020). Results from the 2016 Canada Census show that 20% of Canadians identify French as the language spoken at home, with

at home. Interventionists and specialist support are provided in French. French Immersion is a program that falls within English programs and is taught as an additional language at the school. Students are “immersed” in the French language for most of the school day, with the percentage of English instruction gradually

Clay (1990) tells us that “if a culture is clear about its goals for language learning, the problems of teaching children to read ... can be faced” (p. 90) resulting in creating successful readers and writers.

the majority based in the provinces of Quebec, Ontario, and New Brunswick (Statistics Canada, 2016). In an education context, everyone has the right to be educated in either English or French, and documents must be available in the language of instruction such as communication between home and school as well as professional resources that are provided to teachers.

An important distinction is that there are two possible options that are available to students: *French First Language* and *French Immersion*. In a French First Language school, French is the language of instruction for the entire school day and typically, French is the language that is spoken

increased at each grade level. This program is designed for children with little or no previous understanding of French or an expectation that it be spoken at home. Interventionist and specialist supports are provided in French, if available.

Historical Context

Clay believed that the same theoretical model used to create Reading Recovery could be applied to students in another language. She had visited Canada on several occasions and saw the possibilities of offering Reading Recovery in French.

In 1995, Clay began the process of redeveloping Reading Recovery into French with Gisèle Bourque, who

would later become Canada's first trainer in IPLÉ. This course of action was not simply a translation of the professional resources and training into French. Rodríguez, et al., (2003) explained the reconstruction in other languages must "...fit the linguistic and cultural context and be sensitive to the literacy developments that children need to master in each language" (p. 38).

Canada and the United States share similar features when considering education governance structures. In Canada, education is distinctly a provincial responsibility. Within each province, geographical boundaries create local structures. These entities have differing names (e.g., school board, region, district) but all have authority as defined in their provincial Education Acts for educational matters that may include implementation of the provincial curriculum, human resources, operations, and facilities management (Hickcox, 2013).

In 2000–2001, a pilot program trained IPLÉ teachers at the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP), Nova Scotia's French First Language School Board. The following year, the implementation expanded to include all 20 teachers at all CSAP schools across the province and was supported by two teacher leaders (Bourque, 2001).

Since that time, IPLÉ's implementation in Canada has grown to include students enrolled in French Immersion programs where French is an additional language of instruction. Clay (2015) believed that even if a child speaks a different language from the teacher's, they have already learned how to learn language.



The provinces of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island support provincial implementations, while IPLÉ's strong roots are established in multiple school districts located in Vancouver, British Columbia, and the Yukon as well as across the province of Manitoba.

Today's Context

Currently, two bilingual trainers collaborate to support the IPLÉ implementation which has expanded across four time zones in Canada — from coast to coast and up to the most northern regions of the country. Six teacher leaders, all with a deep understanding of literacy processing theory in French as a first and/or second language, guide and support 75 teachers in 60 schools (Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery [CIRR], 2019, p. 6).

The provinces of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island support provincial implementations, while IPLÉ's strong roots are established in multiple school districts located in Vancouver, British Columbia, and the Yukon as well as across the province of Manitoba. Every year, the CIRR responds to numerous inquiries about training from interested French teachers as well as prospective school boards and districts across Canada.

Moving Forward

One of the challenges faced with growing IPLÉ's implementation to new regions in Canada is the requirement in many French Language school boards for all professional resources to be available in French, the language of instruction. Currently, the only official translation available to IPLÉ teachers and teacher leaders is *Le sondage d'observation en lecture-écriture* (Clay, 2003). This resource is an adaptation that dates to Clay's (1993) first edition of *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement*. Their English Reading Recovery teacher and teacher leader counterparts, however, are currently using Clay's 2019 fourth edition of the Observation Survey.

Clay (2014) defined awareness as it relates to literacy as "being able to attend to something, act upon it, or work with it" (p. 38). The same holds true, she added, when thinking about the implementation of IPLÉ. In 2018, the CIRR and its board of directors

initiated an increased awareness on IPLÉ with its plan to train an additional bilingual trainer. Since then, the focus has been to support their IPLÉ teachers and teacher leaders by increasing the availability to French professional resources.

With the support of the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and with permission from New Zealand, the CIRR has completed the official translations for Canadian Guidesheets that are being used in the 2020–2021 school year. In addition, permission has been obtained from New Zealand to translate and adapt their Tutor Information Sheets.

Preliminary inquiries have been made by the CIRR and a publishing company regarding adaptations and translations of two of Clay's works: *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (4th ed., 2019) and *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals* (2nd ed., 2016), and IPLÉ teacher leaders are reviewing texts to add to the IPLÉ Booklist.

Clay (1990) tells us that “if a culture is clear about its goals for language learning, the problems of teaching children to read ... can be faced” (p. 90) resulting in creating successful readers and writers. Culture and language are interconnected and dependent upon one another. In recognizing French and English as official languages and that both have equal status, the Canadian government has demonstrated its commitment to valuing and promoting bilingualism. Within an

educational context, parallels can be drawn between Reading Recovery and its redevelopment as IPLÉ. Both interventions provide children who struggle in their literacy development the opportunity for support in their language of instruction by valuing the child's language and culture.

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About the Author

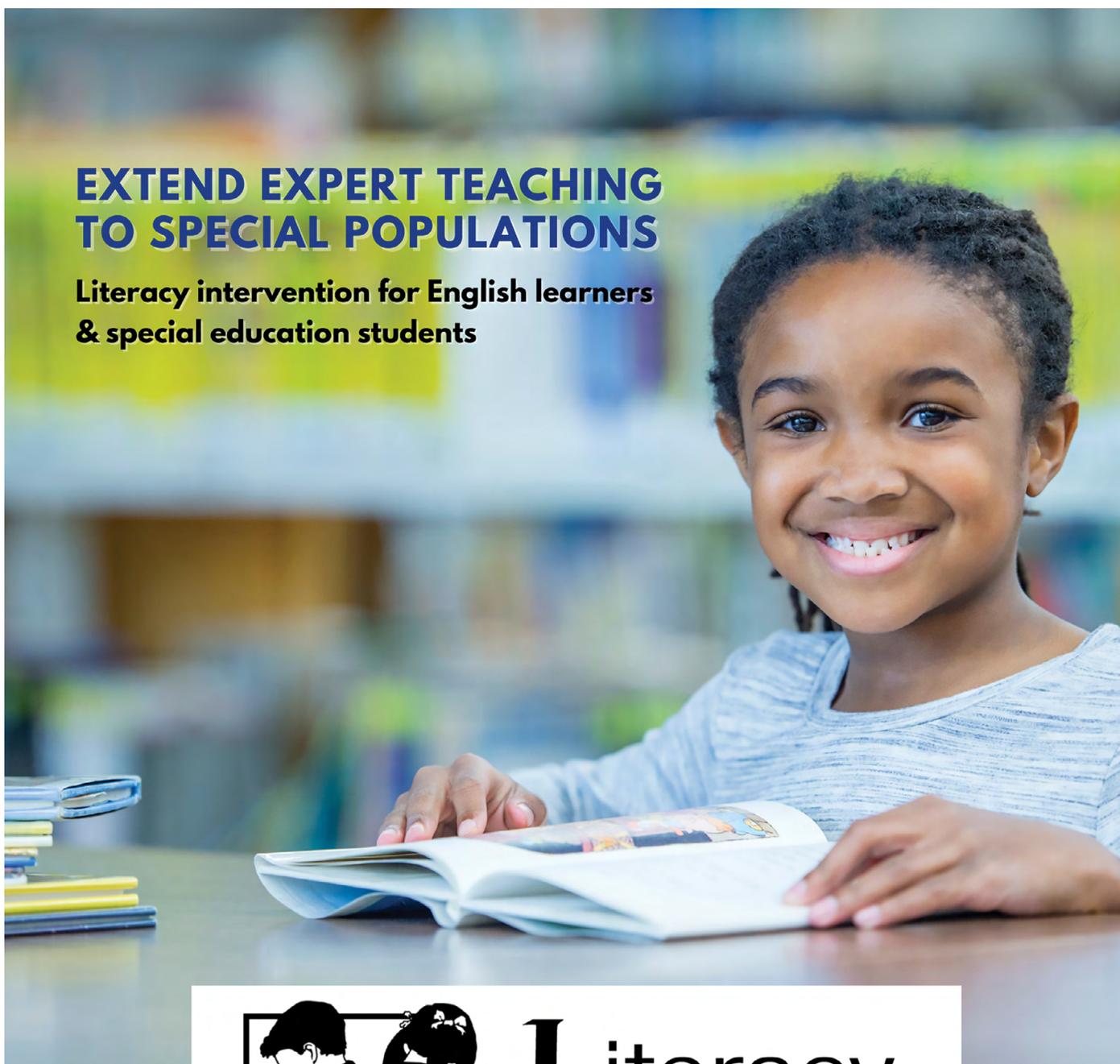
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15 years teaching in Nova Scotia French Immersion classrooms at the early elementary level and in specialist positions including resource and early literacy. Lisa is passionate about French language instruction and student achievement.

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Charting a Path for Improvement: Our Driver Diagram

Shari Worsfold, Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery

Editor's Note: This is the third in a series of articles published in this journal about Reading Recovery and improvement science.

The North American Reading Recovery® Community is a complex system made up of teachers, teacher leaders, trainers, site coordinators/liaison administrators, district administrators, and principals. Improvement across a system as large and complex as Reading Recovery requires shared understanding of problems and disciplined processes to find solutions to those problems.

In *Learning to Improve*, Tony Bryk suggests that successful improvement efforts depend upon comprehensive analyses of a problem and its potential causes. Central to this work are improvement science tools to help us “See the system that produces current outcomes” (Bryk et al., 2015, p. 57). The complexity of the Reading Recovery network is a strength — enabling robust, consistent implemen-

tation across myriad contexts. This same complexity makes it difficult for individuals within the system to understand or see the system as a comprehensive whole.

In 2018, a diverse set of stakeholders from across the Reading Recovery community came together to share our perspectives and build mutual understanding of potential factors impeding our improvement (Forbes et al., 2019). Specifically, our aim was to investigate and understand possible contributors to variation in results and implementation across the Reading Recovery network. Engaging in a causal system analysis, Reading Recovery community members identified areas of variation throughout our complex system. These initial analyses of the problem and potential causes became the reference point for constructing our theory of improvement. Since that time the work has continued, including the formation of a leadership Hub to drive the improvement work (Lochmiller & Karnopp, 2020).

This article describes the ongoing work of the Hub as we implement improvement science methods and tools to guide improvement efforts. First, I share the purpose of a driver diagram, then explain the key components of the driver diagram and their relationship to a theory of improvement. Examples from the Reading Recovery community’s current driver diagram illustrate these components.

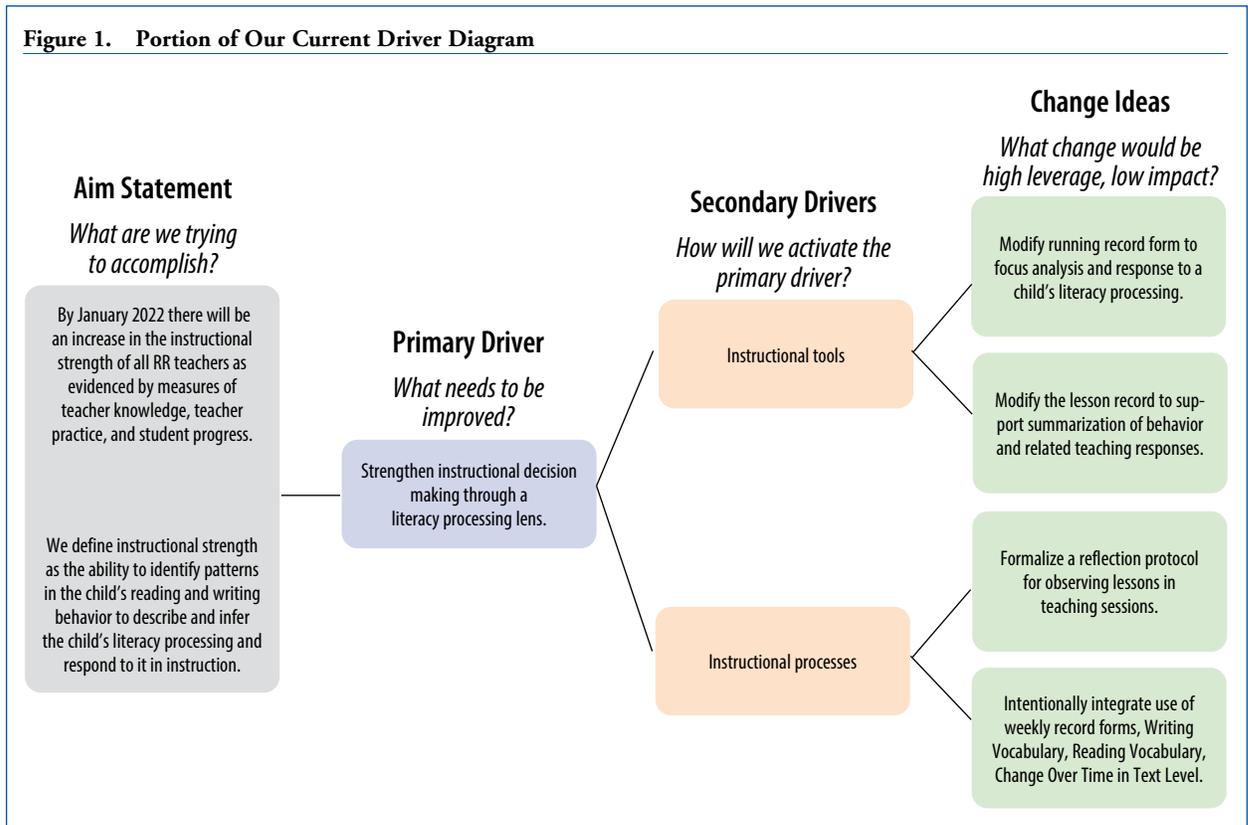
Driver Diagram: A Tool to Map Our Path to Improvement

To chart a course for improvement work, improvement science methods include a tool called a *driver diagram* (Bryk et al., 2015; Langley et al., 2009), a visual representation of the current theory of improvement. A driver diagram explicitly maps out a path toward an intended outcome. It provides an improvement community with a shared understanding of the problem, the goal, and potential paths toward the goal, thus aligning individuals’ work across a complex system.

A driver diagram typically includes four components: an aim statement, primary drivers, secondary drivers, and change ideas. As well, driver diagrams depict the interconnections between these components and the hypotheses they represent. A core tenant of improvement science is that our theory of improvement and the

A driver diagram explicitly maps out a path toward an intended outcome. It provides an improvement community with a shared understanding of the problem, the goal, and potential paths toward the goal, thus aligning individuals’ work across a complex system. (see page 58)

Figure 1. Portion of Our Current Driver Diagram



tools to depict that theory are never complete and always evolving (Bryk et al., 2015). Figure 1 illustrates part of our most recent driver diagram, which is continually revised in conjunction with emerging findings.

Aim statement

Developing a driver diagram begins with identifying a measurable improvement aim that answers the question, “What are we trying to accomplish?” The aim statement includes a timeframe, a target outcome, and an indication of how the outcome will be measured. The current aim statement driving our improvement efforts is, “By January 2022 there will be an increase in the instructional strength of all Reading Recovery teachers as evidenced by measures of teacher knowledge, teacher practice, and student prog-

ress.” The aim statement communicates intent and provides a focus for improvement efforts. Measurement is embedded within the statement enabling evaluation of whether a change is actually an improvement.

Primary drivers

A primary driver reflects a hypothesis about a key lever in achieving the aim. A primary driver identifies “what or where” to launch improvement efforts and represents a prediction about an area of influence that is high-leverage and instrumental to enacting a change. The primary drivers offer an “overview of the landscape for change” (Bryk et al., 2015, p.76). Although too general by themselves to direct improvement efforts, they describe what needs to change for improvement to occur. While multiple avenues to improve-

ment exist for a single problem, it is imperative to identify a small set of high-leverage drivers to maximize your improvement efforts.

Figure 2 illustrates three primary drivers, each describing potential levers toward the aim of increasing instructional strength: (a) Strengthen instructional decision making through a literacy processing lens, (b) Systematize collaboration at all levels, and (c) Use data effectively and flexibly to understand and advocate. Our theory of improvement suggests that innovation and change are necessary in each of the three areas in order to achieve the identified aim.

Secondary drivers

The secondary drivers represent the powerful levers that are essential to achieve productive change. They

articulate how a primary driver will be activated. The link between the two drivers is crucial to improvement efforts, as the primary driver describes what needs to change and the secondary driver describes how to implement that change. Figure 1 illustrates our primary and secondary drivers, as well as the relationship between them. For example, we hypothesize that changing/modifying instructional tools (secondary driver), will strengthen instructional decision making through a literacy processing lens (primary driver).

Change ideas

Change ideas represent high-leverage, low-impact, user-centered ideas that may be developed, tested and refined. Specific improvement or change ideas link to one or more secondary drivers (see Figure 1). Change ideas are usually linked to a process inherent in daily practice (i.e., refining standard processes or tools, designing new tools or processes to foster improvement, or developing new norms to sustain productive change (Bryk

et al., 2015). Once a change idea is selected, the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle is used to test the change.

Interpreting the Driver Diagram

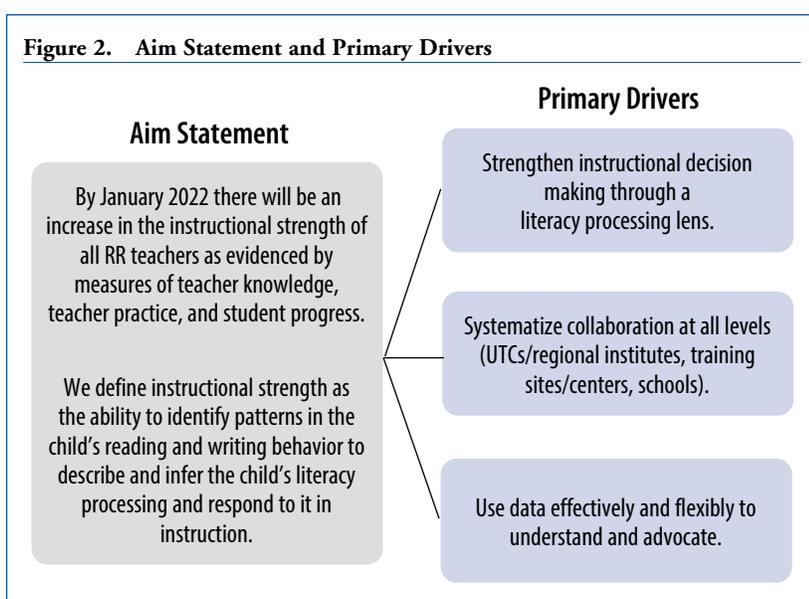
It is important for all individuals who are working toward the aim to have a clear understanding of the components of the driver diagram and the interconnections between them. The driver diagram may be easiest to read from right to left, beginning with a single change idea. For example, beginning with a change idea (see Figure 1), we hypothesize that if we “modify the running record form to focus analysis and response to a child’s literacy processing” (change idea), this will change a daily instructional tool (secondary driver), which in turn will “strengthen teachers’ instructional decision making through a literacy processing lens” (primary driver), and move us toward our aim of increasing the instructional strength of all Reading Recovery teachers (Aim Statement).

Conclusion

A driver diagram is an essential mechanism to organize the improvement efforts of stakeholders across complex systems. It aligns the work of an improvement community by providing a shared understanding of the problem, the goal, and potential paths toward the goal. Like predictions of progress, the driver diagram provides a plausible path toward achieving a specific aim. Just as teachers use observations of student behaviors to evaluate a child’s progress and identify instructional adjustments resulting in revised predictions of progress, the driver diagram is an evolving tool, revised in concert with evidence from PDSA cycles. It reflects the continuous nature of improvement work, as our predictions and hypotheses evolve in response to our findings.

Though no single change idea will, in isolation, achieve our aim, improvement science offers our community new and innovative ways to conceive and test changes and more disciplined processes for evaluating the improvement potential of the change. This commitment to inquiry and learning is foundational to Reading Recovery as Clay reminds us to be open to new understandings that might lead us to paths of change. In the words of Marie Clay,

I live in a perpetual state of inquiry, finding new questions to ask, then moving on. I do not have ‘a position’ or a safe haven where what is ‘right’ exists. Pragmatism precludes idealism. I search for questions which need answers. What exists in the real world? And how well do our theories explain what exists? (Clay, 2015, p. 3)



About the Author

Dr. Shari Worsfold is a member of the North American Reading Recovery Improvement Science Leadership Hub. She is a past president and a current member of the Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery (CIRR) Board of Directors. Prior to her initial training as a Reading Recovery teacher in 1997, she taught kindergarten and Grades 1 and 2 in Haines Junction, Yukon Territory, Canada. In 2004, she completed teacher leader training in Nova Scotia and returned to Yukon Territory to support Reading Recovery and primary classroom teachers. In 2014, Shari became the primary years consultant with Yukon Education and the liaison administrator for Reading Recovery in the Territory. In 2017, she moved to Victoria, British Columbia, and became one of two teacher leaders for the tri-district Southern Vancouver Island Reading Recovery Consortium until her retirement in 2020. In addition to sharing her knowledge at the Canadian National Reading Recovery Conference for both classroom and Reading Recovery strands, Shari has also presented at the RRCNA National Conference in Columbus, OH, as well as the International Reading Recovery Institute in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada in 2016.



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NEW!
THIS SUMMER

TEACHER OF COLOR TRAINING AWARD

Funds will go toward the training of a Reading Recovery teacher this fall. Applicants from school districts demonstrating great need are encouraged to apply.

A Report of National Outcomes for Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura for the 2019–2020 School Year

Susan A. Mauck and Jeffrey B. Brymer-Bashore, International Data Evaluation Center, The Ohio State University

This report features the results of the 2019–2020 school year for the Reading Recovery® and Descubriendo la Lectura interventions in the United States. The 2019–2020 academic year turned out to be an unusual one. Starting in late February, principals, superintendents, and then governors ordered schools across the nation to shift from in-person instruction to distance learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. By mid-April, more than half of the public schools in the United States had been ordered to shut their buildings for the rest of the academic year, and in early May, nearly all states had ordered their public schools to stop providing in-person instruction. The change in the way students were instructed placed a lot of stress on the U.S. educational system.

During a typical academic year, schools participating in Reading Recovery and/or Descubriendo la Lectura submit test scores to the International Data Evaluation Center (IDEC) for the first-grade students enrolled in their intervention programs and for a random sample of first graders at several times throughout the year (e.g., in the fall, mid-year and end-of-year). This school year, to allow teachers to focus on their students and lessons, IDEC made the decision to not require that teachers

submit end-of-year data. Because of this decision, most of the statistics in this report were calculated using data only from students who received an intervention in the fall.

Despite the shortcomings of the 2019–2020 data, Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura have continued to maintain strong outcomes, both in terms of progress across the length of the intervention, and as contrasted against the comparison group. These results are comparable to those of the 2018–2019 school year (Brymer-Bashore, 2020).

Summary of the Reading Recovery Implementation

Characteristics of participants

During the 2019–2020 school year, Reading Recovery was implemented by 13 university training centers (UTCs) responsible for overseeing the intervention in schools located in 41 states (Table 1). More than 29,000 children were selected to participate in the one-to-one Reading Recovery intervention. These children received the intervention from 3,924 Reading Recovery teachers who were supported by 249 teacher leaders in 201 training sites serving 858 school districts. There were a total of 2,635

schools participating in Reading Recovery, and these schools were located in urban (25%), suburban (36%) and rural (39%) areas.

Demographic information for the participating Reading Recovery students ($n = 29,045$) reveal that children were from different racial and ethnic backgrounds (i.e., 57% White, 18% Hispanic, 17% African American, 3% Asian American, < 1% Native American, and 5% either multiple races or other ethnic backgrounds) and that 53% were boys. About half of the schools (i.e., 51%) reported federal lunch status

Table 1. Participation in Reading Recovery in the United States, 2019–2020

Entity	<i>n</i>
University Training Centers	13
Teacher Training Sites	201
States	41
School Systems	858
School Buildings	2,635
Teacher Leaders	249
Teachers	3,924
Reading Recovery Students	29,045
Started in Fall	15,585
Started in Spring	11,532
Started at Year-end	1,741
Unknown When Started	187
Random Sample for RR	2,349

and, of those, approximately 70% of Reading Recovery students were reported as being eligible for free or reduced lunch.

At the beginning of the school year, teachers in each school that participates in Reading Recovery randomly select two students from all of the first graders in the school to be part of a national random sample of first graders. This national random sample of students are considered typical first-grade students and serve as a comparison group. The random sample from the 2019–2020 academic year ($n = 2,349$), was comprised of students who came from different racial and ethnic backgrounds (i.e., 63% White, 13% Hispanic, 14% African American, 3% Asian American, < 1% Native American, and 7% either multiple races or other ethnic backgrounds) and 48% of them were boys. Of the schools that reported federal lunch status, approximately 63% of the random sample students were reported as eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Reading Recovery teachers who participated in the 2019–2020 data collection had a mean number of years teaching of 20.8, with a mean of 8.6 years teaching Reading Recovery and/or *Descubriendo la Lectura*. On average, these teachers provided individual literacy instruction to 7.8 Reading Recovery children during the school year. In addition, Reading Recovery teachers worked with an average of 42.1 additional children beyond their Reading Recovery load. Thus, accounting for all teaching roles/assignments during the 2019–2020 academic year, each teacher instructed an average total of 49.9 children.

Assessment and exit status categories

The assessment used in this examination of Reading Recovery was *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Observation Survey; Clay, 2019). The Observation Survey was administered to Reading Recovery students and the random sample of comparison students during the 2019–2020 academic year. As noted above, this assessment is typically administered at several times during the school year (e.g., fall, mid-year, and year-end). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most Reading Recovery teachers did not submit scores for their students at year-end, so the results reported below were based only on those students who entered the intervention in the fall.

Of students who started their Reading Recovery lessons in the fall of 2019 and who completed the intervention ($n = 13,626$, 53.3% of all served) end-of-intervention outcomes were as follows:

- 51.3% ($n = 6,996$) reached at least average levels of reading and writing achievement. These students were identified as having achieved accelerated progress and were successfully discontinued from the intervention.
- 48.7% ($n = 6,630$) made progress in the intervention but did not demonstrate proficiency at average levels of reading and writing. These students were recommended for additional support at the conclusion of the intervention.

The proportions of Reading Recovery students who started the intervention in the fall of 2019 who were assigned

a status of accelerated progress or were recommended for additional support were similar to the proportions in previous years (e.g., of the students who began the intervention in the fall of 2017, 53.5% were identified as having made accelerated progress and 46.5% were recommended for additional support). Students who are selected for the intervention in the fall are typically the lowest-performing students in their schools (Brymer-Bashore, 2019). According to Brymer-Bashore, students who enter Reading Recovery during the second half of the school year are low, but typically higher performing than their peers who started in the fall. During the previous 3 academic years, the average percentage of students who completed the Reading Recovery intervention and who were identified as having made accelerated progress was 71% (IDEC, 2017a; 2018a; 2019a). Unfortunately, during the 2019–2020 academic year, because of the pandemic, end-of-year scores were unavailable.

The statistics reported above are based on students who started the Reading Recovery intervention in the fall of 2019 and completed the intervention. Not all students selected for the intervention in the fall were able to complete it (12%, $n = 1,866$). The following reasons were given for why they were not:

- 0.3% ($n = 41$) of the lessons were incomplete.
- 4.3% ($n = 643$) moved during the school year while still enrolled in lessons.
- 7.6% ($n = 1,182$) of the lessons were concluded early at the discretion of the school.

Comparison of Reading Recovery Outcomes

The fall data that were submitted to IDEC were examined to explore two critical questions regarding the impact of the Reading Recovery intervention. First, we compared fall and mid-year Observation Survey Total Scores for Reading Recovery students who made accelerated progress to the Reading Recovery students who were recommended for additional support. Next, we examined how both groups of students who participated in Reading Recovery compared to the random sample students on this overall measure of literacy achievement. Then, we examined how the individual Observation Survey tasks contributed to differences in progress for the Reading Recovery students—both those who reached at least average levels of reading and writing and those who were recommended for additional support—and the random sample students.

In summary, we had two research questions:

1. How did fall and mid-year Observation Survey Total Scores of Reading Recovery students who entered in the

fall differ between those students who made accelerated progress during the intervention and those students who were recommended for additional support at the conclusion of the Reading Recovery intervention, and how did these two groups of Reading Recovery students compare to a random sample of first graders (i.e., typical first graders)?

2. Which of the individual tasks of the Observation Survey contributed most to the differences in progress for the three groups (i.e., Reading Recovery students who made accelerated progress during the intervention, Reading Recovery students who were recommended for additional support, and random sample students)?

In order to answer research question one, Reading Recovery students were split into two groups based on their mid-year outcomes — students who made accelerated progress and students who were recommended for additional support. Next, average Observation Survey Total Scores were calculated for the fall and at mid-year for both groups and for the random

sample students. Last, we calculated gain scores for all groups by subtracting each group’s fall mean from their mid-year mean. Sample sizes varied as we only used data from students with valid scores in the fall and at mid-year. As noted above, end-of-year mean scores were not used as these scores were not available.

Research question one

As seen in Table 2, the mean fall Observation Survey Total Score for Reading Recovery students in the accelerated progress group were higher than the mean score for students in the recommended group. By mid-year, both groups had shown growth in literacy skills as evidenced by their mid-year Total Scores, but the mid-year mean of the accelerated group was higher than the mid-year mean of the recommended group.

In the fall, the Observation Survey Total Score means for both Reading Recovery groups were lower than the mean for the random sample students, but by mid-year Total Scores were highest for students in the accelerated progress group (Table 2). Notably, the average gain for students in the accelerated progress group was highest among the three groups, and the average gain for students in

Table 2. Fall to Mid-year Progress on Observation Survey Total Score for Reading Recovery Accelerated Progress and Recommended Students and for Random Sample Students, 2019–2020

Group	n	Fall		Mid-Year			Gain		
		n	M	(SD)	n	M	(SD)	n	M
Fall Reading Recovery Students									
Accelerated Progress	6,961	381.5	(32.9)	6,915	526.0	(23.5)	6,884	144.6	(34.2)
Recommended	6,621	351.8	(32.4)	6,516	471.8	(38.7)	6,508	120.0	(33.5)
Random Sample Students	2,260	438.9	(54.2)	2,078	513.4	(47.6)	2,032	73.7	(34.5)

NOTE: Statistics are based on the numbers of students who had data at each time point and at both time points (i.e. Gain).

the recommended group was higher than the average gain for the random sample students. Figure 1 presents the data in Table 2 visually.

Research question two

To answer our second research question, we used the groups formed to answer research question one but calculated effect sizes (Cohen’s *d*) for the mean fall and mid-year scores on the six individual Observation Survey tasks between the Reading Recovery students and the random sample students. Looking at Cohen’s *d* helped us identify which of the tasks contributed most to the group differences in progress by standardizing the differences. Cohen’s *d* can be interpreted as the standard deviation difference between two groups (Cohen, 1988; Hahs-Vaughn & Lomax, 2020). For this report, we calculated Cohen’s *d* twice, once for the accelerated progress students vs. the random sample students and

once for the recommended group vs. the random sample students. For example, to find the fall effect size (Cohen’s *d*) for the accelerated progress group vs. the random sample students on the Observation Survey Total Score, we subtracted the fall mean Total Score of the accelerated progress group (M_2) from the fall mean Total Score of the random sample students (M_1) and divided the difference by the pooled standard deviations (*SD*) of the two groups: Cohen’s $d = (M_2 - M_1) / SD$ pooled.

Individual Observation Survey task differences in the fall

As seen in Table 3, in the fall, the individual Observation Survey tasks that contributed most to the differences between the three groups were Text Reading Level, Writing Vocabulary, and the Ohio Word Test. On these three tasks, scores in the fall were greater than or equal to one standard deviation below the random

sample for all students who were identified for the Reading Recovery intervention. The two Reading Recovery groups differed in their scores on the Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words task; the difference between the random sample students and the students in the accelerated progress group was less than one standard deviation ($d = 0.9$) but the difference for the students in the recommended group was much greater than one standard deviation ($d = 1.7$). This indicated that students in the recommended group were on average performing almost two standard deviations below the random sample students on this task and almost one standard deviation below the students in the accelerated group. The standardized differences between the random sample students and the Reading Recovery students on the Letter Identification and the Concepts About Print tasks were smaller for students in both Reading Recovery groups.

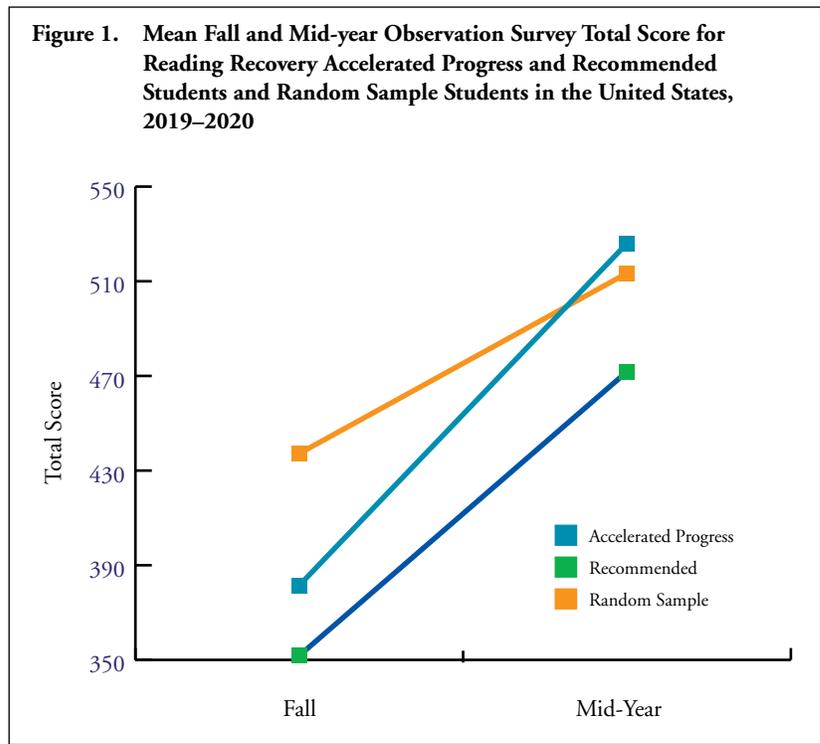


Figure 1. Mean Fall and Mid-year Observation Survey Total Score for Reading Recovery Accelerated Progress and Recommended Students and Random Sample Students in the United States, 2019–2020

Individual Observation Survey task differences at mid-year

After the Reading Recovery intervention, as seen in Table 4, the Reading Recovery accelerated progress students’ mean scores on five of the six individual Observation Survey tasks exceeded that of the random sample. The difference on the one task (i.e., Text Reading Level) where the accelerated progress students did not exceed the random sample students was small (i.e., 0.1) and the standardized difference was zero.

The individual Observation Survey tasks that contributed most to the standardized differences between the Reading Recovery recommended students and the random sample students were Text Reading Level and

Table 3. Fall Mean Scores and Standardized Differences for Reading Recovery Accelerated Progress and Recommended Students and for Random Sample Students, 2019–2020

Observation Survey Task	Accelerated Progress		Recommended		Random Sample	
	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>
Text Reading Level	1.3	(1.3)*	0.7	(1.1)*	6.0	(6.4)
Writing Vocabulary	10.3	(6.4)*	6.6	(4.9)*	20.5	(12.1)
Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words	21.0	(8.6)	14.2	(8.9)*	28.8	(8.5)
Letter Identification	48.3	(5.3)	42.9	(9.4)	50.9	(5.5)
Ohio Word Test	3.8	(3.1)*	1.8	(2.0)*	10.1	(6.3)
Concepts About Print	12.4	(3.2)	11.0	(3.3)	15.2	(3.5)

NOTE: *Standardized differences on these individual Observation Survey tasks were greatest between Reading Recovery students and the random sample students in the fall.

Table 4. Mid-year Mean Scores and Standardized Differences for Reading Recovery Accelerated Progress and Recommended Students and for Random Sample Students, 2019–2020

Observation Survey Task	Accelerated Progress		Recommended		Random Sample	
	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>(SD)</i>
Text Reading Level	14.3	(2.9)	6.9	(3.0)*	14.4	(8.1)
Writing Vocabulary	46.6	(11.8)	32.2	(11.8)	42.2	(16.3)
Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words	35.5	(1.9)	31.7	(5.3)	34.4	(4.5)
Letter Identification	53.2	(1.5)	51.7	(3.5)	52.9	(2.8)
Ohio Word Test	17.5	(2.2)	11.7	(4.4)*	16.4	(4.4)
Concepts About Print	20.0	(2.3)	17.4	(2.9)	18.8	(3.1)

NOTE: *Standardized differences on these individual Observation Survey tasks were greatest between Reading Recovery students and the random sample students at mid-year.

the Ohio Word Test. On average, for these students, the standardized difference is greater than one standard deviation below the random sample students on these two tasks at mid-year. Scores of the students in the recommended group on the other four Observation Survey tasks at mid-year were only about half a standard deviation below the random sample students. Notably, on the Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words task, the difference between the recommended students and the random sample students had decreased from a difference of 1.7 standard deviations to only a difference of 0.5 standard deviations due to ceiling effects.

We also examined the post-Reading Recovery recommendations that were made for the students who completed the Reading Recovery intervention but did not achieve average levels of literacy performance (i.e., students in the Reading Recovery recommended group). As seen in Table 5, the majority of students (70%) were recommended for either small-group literacy instruction or an intervention other than special education, and 22% were referred for literacy-related special education services.

Further examination of the Reading Recovery national data revealed that on the Observation Survey Total

Score the students in the accelerated progress group moved, on average, from the 17th percentile in the fall to the 61st percentile at mid-year. These students started the school year with literacy skills that were well below average, yet by mid-year their Total Scores were above average. The random sample students, on average, showed a slight decline: They moved from the 54th percentile in the fall to the 50th percentile at mid-year. Students in the recommended group, on average, moved from the 6th percentile in the fall to the 15th percentile at mid-year. Although these students still placed in the bottom percent quartile, they had moved up

Table 5. Post-Reading Recovery Recommendations, 2019–2020

Responses	<i>n</i>	%
Continued monitoring in the classroom with no further literacy intervention	381	6%
Small-group literacy instruction or intervention other than special education	4,640	70%
Referral for literacy-related special education services	1,436	22%
Retention in grade for literacy-related reasons	71	1%
None of these actions describe the recommendation	92	1%
No response	10	<1%
Total	6,630	100%

in rank more than twice from where they were in the fall.

The findings in this report provide support for the efficacy of the Reading Recovery intervention. Both groups of students who participated in Reading Recovery (i.e., those students who made accelerated progress and those students who were recommended for additional support) showed gains in literacy skills that exceeded the gains made by the typical first grader (Table 2 and Figure 1). Notably, the students in the accelerated progress group started the school year, on average, one standard deviation below the typical first grader in their literacy skills (Table 3), but by mid-year their scores were, on average, above the typical first graders (Table 4). The Reading Recovery students who completed the intervention and were recommended for additional support also made growth in their literacy skills; on four of the individual Observation Survey tasks, the standardized difference between the recommended students and the typical first graders had decreased almost one standard deviation ($d = 0.9$). After approximately 20 weeks, the first graders who participated in the Reading Recovery

intervention had made tremendous progress in their literacy skills.

Summary of the Descubriendo la Lectura Implementation

Characteristics of participants

The Descubriendo la Lectura intervention, a reconstruction of Reading Recovery in Spanish, was designed for first graders who receive their initial literacy instruction in Spanish. Table 6 provides details about participation in Descubriendo la Lectura in the United States during the 2019–2020 academic year. There were 223 children who participated and who received instruction from 70 teachers. These students attended 71 schools in 27 school districts that were located in nine states. The teachers were supported by 27 teacher leaders. Of the 223 students served, 49% were boys, 96% were Hispanic, and 96% were reported as eligible for free or reduced lunch. The schools these students attended were located in urban (54%), suburban (41%) and rural (5%) areas.

At the beginning of the school year, in each school that participates in

Descubriendo la Lectura, teachers randomly select four students from the first graders in the school. This group of random sample students are considered typical of the students in the schools that participate in the intervention. In the Descubriendo la Lectura random sample from the 2019–2020 academic year ($n = 223$), 46% were boys; 96% of the students identified as Hispanic; 93% were eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Descubriendo la Lectura teachers had a mean of 18.8 years of teaching experience and a mean of 7.7 years teaching Descubriendo la Lectura and/or Reading Recovery. On average, these teachers taught 5.4 Descubriendo la Lectura children during the 2019–2020 school year, and 26.3 children beyond their Descubriendo la Lectura load. Thus, accounting for all teaching roles/ assignments during this academic year, each teacher instructed an average total of 31.8 children.

Table 6. Participation in Descubriendo la Lectura in the United States, 2019–2020

Entity	<i>n</i>
University Training Centers	3
Teacher Training Sites	24
States	9
School Systems	27
School Buildings	71
Teacher Leaders	27
Teachers	70
DLL Students	415
Started in Fall	232
Started in Spring	150
Started at Year-end	30
Unknown When Started	3
Random Sample for DLL	223

Assessment and exit status categories

The assessment used in this examination of Descubriendo la Lectura was the *Instrumento de observación de los logros de la lecto-escritura inicial* (Instrumento de observación; Escamilla et al., 1996). The Instrumento de observación was administered to both participating Descubriendo la Lectura students and a random sample of students in their schools during the 2019–2020 academic year. Like the Observation Survey, this assessment is typically administered at several times during the school year (e.g., fall, mid-year, and year-end), but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most Descubriendo la Lectura teachers did not submit scores for their students at year-end so the results reported below were based only on those students who entered the intervention in the fall.

Of students who started their Descubriendo la Lectura lessons in the fall of 2019 and who completed the intervention ($n = 232$, 55.9% of all served), end-of-intervention outcomes were as follows:

- 35.8% ($n = 73$) reached at least average levels of reading and writing. These students were identified as having achieved accelerated progress and were successfully discontinued from the program.
- 64.2% ($n = 131$) made progress in the intervention but did not demonstrate proficiency at average levels of reading and writing. These students were recommended for additional support.

The proportions of Descubriendo la Lectura students who started the intervention in the fall of 2019–2020

who were assigned a status of accelerated progress or were recommended for additional support were similar to the proportions in previous years (e.g., of the students who began the intervention the previous year, 37.4% were identified as having made accelerated progress and 62.6% were recommended for additional support). Students who are selected for the intervention in the fall are typically the lowest-performing students in their schools (Brymer-Bashore, 2019). According to Brymer-Bashore, students who enter Descubriendo la Lectura during the second half of the school year are low, but typically higher performing than their peers who started in the fall. During the previous 3 academic years, the average percentage of students who completed the intervention and who were identified as having made accelerated progress was 59.8% (IDEC, 2017b; 2018b; 2019b). Unfortunately, during the 2019–2020 academic year, because of the pandemic, end-of-year scores were unavailable.

The statistics reported above are based on students who started the Descubriendo la Lectura intervention in the fall of 2019 and completed the intervention. Not all students selected for the intervention in the fall were able to complete it (12.1%, $n = 28$). The following reasons were given for why they were not:

- 0.4% ($n = 1$) of the lessons were incomplete.
- 4.3% ($n = 10$) of the students moved during the school year while still enrolled in lessons.
- 7.3% ($n = 17$) of the lessons were concluded early at the discretion of the school.

Comparison of Descubriendo la Lectura Outcomes

The fall data that were submitted to IDEC were examined to explore the same two critical questions regarding the impact of the Descubriendo la Lectura intervention as were done for examining the impact of Reading Recovery. We compared fall and mid-year Instrumento de observación Total Scores for students who made accelerated progress to the students who were recommended for additional support and then examined how both groups of students compared to the random sample students. We also examined how the individual Instrumento de observación tasks contributed to differences in progress for the Descubriendo la Lectura students, both students who made accelerated progress and students who were recommended for additional support, and the random sample students.

In summary, we had two research questions:

1. How did fall and mid-year Instrumento de observación Total Scores of Descubriendo la Lectura students who entered in the fall differ between those students who made accelerated progress during the intervention and those students who were recommended for additional support at the conclusion of the intervention and how did these two groups compare to the Descubriendo la Lectura random sample students (i.e., typical first graders in their schools)?
2. Which of the individual tasks of the Instrumento de obser-

Table 7. Fall to Mid-year Progress on Instrumento de observación Total Score for Descubriendo la Lectura Accelerated Progress and Recommended Students and for Random Sample Students, 2019–2020

Group	Fall			Mid-Year			Gain		
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	(<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	(<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	(<i>SD</i>)
Fall Descubriendo la Lectura Students									
Accelerated Progress	73	453.7	(30.7)	72	565.3	(17.2)	72	112.2	(31.8)
Recommended	131	427.4	(36.1)	131	518.0	(32.3)	131	90.6	(32.3)
Random Sample Students	218	479.7	(42.8)	206	533.8	(39.1)	203	53.4	(27.6)

NOTE: Statistics are based on the numbers of students who had data at each time point and at both time points (i.e. Gain).

vación contributed most to the differences in progress for the three groups (i.e., Descubriendo la Lectura students who made accelerated progress during the intervention, Descubriendo la Lectura students who were recommended for additional support, and the Descubriendo la Lectura random sample students)?

Research question one

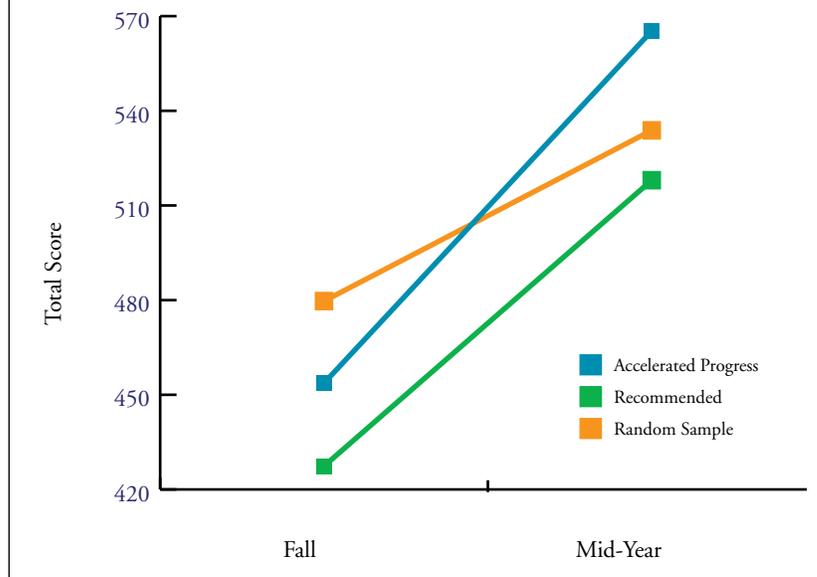
As seen in Table 7, the mean fall Instrumento de observación Total Score for Descubriendo la Lectura students in the accelerated progress group were higher than the mean score for students in the recommended group. By mid-year, both groups had shown growth in literacy skills as evidenced by their mid-year Total Scores, but the mid-year mean

of the accelerated progress group was higher than the mid-year mean of the recommended group.

In the fall, the Instrumento de observación Total Score means for both Descubriendo la Lectura groups were lower than the mean for the Descubriendo la Lectura random sample students, but by mid-year, Total Scores were highest for students in the accelerated progress group

In order to answer research question one, the Descubriendo la Lectura students were split into two groups based on their mid-year outcomes, students who made accelerated progress ($n = 73$) and students who were recommended for additional support ($n = 131$). Next, we calculated average Instrumento de observación Total Scores in the fall and at mid-year for both groups and for the Descubriendo la Lectura random sample students ($n = 218$). Last, we calculated gain scores for all groups by subtracting each group’s fall mean from their mid-year mean. Sample sizes vary as we only used data from students with valid scores in the fall and at mid-year. As noted above, end-of-year mean scores were not used as these scores were not available.

Figure 2. Mean Fall and Mid-year Instrumento de observación Total Score for Descubriendo la Lectura Accelerated Progress and Recommended Students and Random Sample Students in the United States, 2019–2020



(Table 7). Notably, the average gain for students in the accelerated progress group was highest among the three groups, and the average gain for students in the recommended group was higher than the average gain for random sample students. Figure 2 presents the data in Table 7 visually.

Research question two

To answer our second research question, we used the groups formed to answer research one and calculated effect sizes (Cohen’s *d*) for the mean fall and mid-year scores on the six individual Instrumento de observación tasks as we did for Reading Recovery students’ scores on the six tasks of the Observation Survey. Calculating Cohen’s *d* helped us identify which tasks contributed most to the group differences in progress because Cohen’s *d* standardizes the differences. Details about Cohen’s *d* are stated earlier in this article. And, as we did for examining the Reading Recovery impact, we calculated Cohen’s *d* twice — once for the accelerated progress students vs. the random sample students and once for the students in the recommended group vs. the random sample

students. For example, to find the fall effect size (Cohen’s *d*) for the accelerated progress group vs. the random sample students on the Instrumento de observación Total Score, we subtracted the fall mean Total Score of the accelerated progress group from the fall mean Total Score of the random sample students and divided the difference by the pooled standard deviations of the two groups.

Individual Instrumento de observación task differences in the fall

As seen in Table 8, the individual Instrumento de observación tasks that contributed most to the differences between the three groups in the fall were the Análisis Actual del Texto, Escritura de Vocabulario, and the Oír y Anotar los Sonidos de la Palabras. The two Descubriendo la Lectura groups differed in their scores on the Prueba de Palabras task; the difference between the random sample students and the students in the accelerated progress group was only about half a standard deviation (*d* = 0.5) but the difference for the students in the recommended group was greater than one standard deviation (*d* = 1.4). This indicated

that students in the recommended group were on average performing almost one standard deviation below their peers in the accelerated progress group on this task. The standardized differences between the random sample students and the Descubriendo la Lectura students on the Identificación de Letras task and the Conceptos del Texto Impreso task were smaller for both groups of Descubriendo la Lectura students.

Individual Instrumento de observación task differences at mid-year

After the Descubriendo la Lectura intervention, as seen in Table 9, the accelerated progress students’ mean scores on all six individual Instrumento de observación tasks exceeded that of the random sample. The individual task that contributed most to the standardized differences between the recommended students at mid-year was the Análisis Actual del Texto task. On this task, on average for these students, the standardized difference is greater than 0.7 standard deviations below the random sample students. The mean scores of the students in the recommended group on the five other

Table 8. Fall Mean Scores and Standardized Differences for Descubriendo la Lectura Accelerated Progress and Recommended Students and for Random Sample Students, 2019–2020

Instrumento de observación Task	Accelerated Progress		Recommended		Random Sample	
	<i>M</i>	(<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i>	(<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i>	(<i>SD</i>)
Análisis Actual del Texto	0.9	(1.2)*	0.3	(0.6)*	2.7	(3.5)
Escritura de Vocabulario	8.4	(6.8)*	4.9	(4.7)*	14.7	(10.2)
Oír y Anotar los Sonidos en las Palabras	20.7	(10.3)*	13.1	(9.2)*	26.8	(11.4)
Identificación de Letras	41.9	(12.6)	35.0	(14.9)	48.6	(12.8)
Prueba de Palabras	5.9	(5.5)	2.5	(2.9)*	10.1	(6.9)
Conceptos del Texto Impreso	10.5	(3.4)	8.6	(3.2)	12.2	(4.2)

NOTE: *Standardized differences on these individual Instrumento de observación tasks were greatest between Descubriendo la Lectura students and the random sample students in the fall.

Table 9. Mid-year Mean Scores and Standardized Differences for Descubriendo la Lectura Accelerated Progress and Recommended Students and for Random Sample Students, 2019–2020

Instrumento de observación Task	Accelerated Progress		Recommended		Random Sample	
	<i>M</i>	(<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i>	(<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i>	(<i>SD</i>)
Análisis Actual del Texto	14.2	(2.7)	5.5	(3.3)*	9.1	(6.7)
Escritura de Vocabulario	41.6	(10.6)	28.0	(10.9)	31.6	(15.2)
Oír y Anotar los Sonidos en las Palabras	38.4	(1.1)	33.9	(6.5)	35.4	(6.7)
Identificación de Letras	59.1	(1.9)	54.3	(8.9)	55.9	(6.6)
Prueba de Palabras	19.6	(1.1)	14.7	(5.0)	16.3	(5.3)
Conceptos del Texto Impreso	19.5	(2.9)	16.0	(3.2)	16.4	(3.6)

NOTE: *Standardized differences on these individual Instrumento de observación tasks were greatest between Descubriendo la Lectura students and the random sample students at mid-year.

Instrumento de observación tasks had increased since fall and at mid-year were less than or equal to 0.3 standard deviations below the typical first graders in their schools. Remarkably, on the Prueba de Palabras task, the difference between the recommended students and the random sample students had decreased from a difference of 1.4 standard deviations to only a difference of 0.3 standard deviations.

We also examined the post-*Descubriendo la Lectura* recommendations that were made for the students who completed the intervention but who did not achieve average levels of literacy performance (i.e., students in the recommended group). As seen in Table 10, the majority of students in the recommended group (75%) were recommended for either small-group literacy instruction or an intervention other than special education.

Further examination of the *Descubriendo la Lectura* national data revealed that on the Instrumento de observación Total Score, the students in the accelerated progress group on average moved from the

20th percentile in the fall to the 75th percentile at mid-year. These students started the school year with literacy skills that were well below average, yet by mid-year they were well above average. The random sample students, on average, showed a slight decline. They moved from the 41st percentile in the fall to the 38th percentile at mid-year. Students in the recommended group moved on average from the 8th percentile in the fall to the 25th percentile at mid-year. Notably, this increase in rank from fall to mid-year for the students in the recommended group was more than three times where they were in the fall.

The findings in this report provide support for the efficacy of the *Descubriendo la Lectura* intervention. Both groups of students who participated in the intervention (i.e., those students who made accelerated progress and those students who were recommended for additional support) showed gains in literacy skills that exceeded the gains made by the typical first graders in their schools (Table 7 and Figure 2). Notably, the students in the accelerated progress group started the school year, on average, more than half a standard deviation below the typical first graders in the *Descubriendo la Lectura* schools in their literacy skills, but by

Table 10. Post-*Descubriendo la Lectura* Recommendations, 2019–2020

Responses	<i>n</i>	%
Continued monitoring in the classroom with no further literacy intervention	15	11%
Small-group literacy instruction or intervention other than special education	98	75%
Referral for literacy-related special education services	17	13%
None of these actions describe the recommendation	1	1%
Total	131	100%

mid-year their scores were, on average, almost one standard deviation above the typical first graders in their schools. The Descubriendo la Lectura students who completed the intervention and were recommended for additional support also made growth in their literacy skills (Tables 7 and 8). After approximately 20 weeks of the Descubriendo la Lectura intervention, these first graders had made great progress in their literacy skills.

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About the Authors

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GOT A MINUTE?

Check out volunteer opportunities in the Reading Recovery Community Forum for quick & easy ways to advocate in as little as one minute!



ONE-MINUTE
ADVOCATE

President's Message

Growing Community

RRCNA President Amy Smith



When I was elected RRCNA vice president, I never anticipated that my presidential term would coincide with a global pandemic. I always expected that the year would be challenging, but not like this. Even before I gaveled in as president, it was clear that absolutely nothing about the year would look like the year I imagined. As I think about this journey, I realize that for much of 2020, all I could see were the hurdles in front of us. Sitting here today, however, what I see most clearly is the incredible, fearless, collective work our group did to clear them. It's counterintuitive that being forced into isolation and separated from one another could bring us closer together. But from my perspective, that's exactly what happened. In the midst of a pandemic, our community sought connections with one another like never before. And, it was important.

We have always been a professional learning community, but far too often, our connections are limited to a few close colleagues. Indeed, we often operate in silos with limited opportunities to connect and with few systems in place to maximize the outcomes of those connections. When the world abruptly changed in Spring 2020, the structures, systems, and processes that typically guide our work were insufficient to address the myriad of challenges we were all facing.

Although there are likely innumerable examples of how members of our community worked together during the pandemic, one of the most powerful was a partnership established between the UTCs at The Ohio State University, National Louis University, and Saint Mary's College. The trainers at each site joined their TLs together to problem solve and strategize through the summer of 2020 (see page 27). This

We have always been a professional learning community, but far too often, our connections are limited to a few close colleagues.

structure maximized efficiency by distributing the burden of our work across numerous TLs. More importantly, it connected colleagues from different parts of the country and enabled them to share their diverse perspectives with one another. These trainers gave their TLs a process and an impetus to break out of their individual silos and learn together. Throughout the summer, I received frequent messages and updates from many TLs who participated in the collaboration. I knew their work would be exceptional (it was). What I did not anticipate, however, was the

overwhelming emotional impact the experience had on my friends. Their messages revealed a sense of excitement and momentum that was absent at the onset of the pandemic. After months of anxiety and uncertainty, they began to describe their confidence and hope about the future. By cultivating new relationships and connecting with one another, my TL colleagues realized they were less daunted by the work, because they were doing the work together.

Be sure to read the article, "What Is Possible Through Widespread Teacher Leader Collaboration," whose authors shared in this unique learning experience. It begins on page 27 in this issue. The partnership between these sites is a powerful example of systematic collaboration and should be a model for how we might move forward as a more connected community. It illustrates what is possible when people are freed of their silos and joined together with a common purpose. That mattered in 2020. It matters, still.

Just as the three UTCs were trying to solve problems they had never faced, RRCNA was grappling with the challenge of planning a virtual LitCon. No blueprint existed for this endeavor, and we had to draw a new one. As we struggled to find our way forward, we realized that we needed a way to connect with teachers to get their feedback on how to make a virtual conference meet their

needs. With very little time to plan a completely novel event, we needed to do it quickly. Trainers and TLs from across the country and Canada helped us assemble a teacher focus group that represented the diversity of our community. This group provided crucial guidance that reshaped our thinking about nearly every aspect of the conference and gave us positive momentum that continued throughout the fall and winter. These teachers were instrumental in making LitCon 2021 a resounding success and we owe them a debt of gratitude for that.

However, their impact on our work at RRCNA goes far beyond the conference. In essence, this focus group fundamentally changed our understanding about the need to establish systems to give members of our community greater agency and voice in the decisions we make. And, as a result, convening focus groups is now a standard work process for RRCNA to elevate the voices of individual members of our community. In so many ways, a group of 30 teachers helped RRCNA recognize and break out of our own silos and gave us a mechanism to be more connected to the community we serve.

Somehow, in the midst of an unrelentingly challenging year, we began to intentionally break free of our silos and seek connection with and help from one another. And the outcomes of these connections were powerful.

These are only a couple of examples of how our community came together in new ways in the midst of a crisis. But it is important to elevate them as they are powerful testaments to the ways in which more systematic, intentional collaboration enables us to respond to and overcome the challenges we face. Most importantly, these connections provided an opportunity for each of us to see and hear one another and to *know* one another, not only as professionals, but as human beings. While I've always admired the work ethic within our community, this year made me reflect upon the fact that our laser-like focus on the work in front of us can blind us to the struggles and perspectives of the people doing the work, ourselves included. This, too, is a silo. Perhaps, it's the most isolating of all. But, somehow, in the midst of an unre-

lently challenging year, we began to intentionally break free of our silos and seek connection with and help from one another. And the outcomes of these connections were powerful.

My teacher leader colleague, Braedan Schantz, helped me understand just how important this was when she said, "We have broken out of our silos and there is grain everywhere." Thank you, Braeden. Thank you to everyone in our community. You've helped me stop seeing this year as a crisis and, instead, focus on the remarkable things we accomplished. So, instead of remembering 2020 as the year we were separated and isolated and alone, I'll forever look back on it as the year our community came together.

RRCNA Board of Directors Election Results

We are pleased to share results of the recent election for terms beginning July 1, 2021.



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Rachael Gabriel

Associate Professor
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Reading Recovery
Teacher Leader
Lexington, KY

Executive Director's Message

Building Intentional Connections Through Online Community



Community. It's one of those words that means something a little different to every person that describes it; but by every definition, community is essential to the human experience. Especially in a year fraught with social distancing and often isolation, community has never felt more important.

As a professional association, we've made community building an intentional goal with the recent introduction of the Reading Recovery Community Forum. This valuable addition to the membership experience connects our members to resources, professional development, and—most importantly—to each other.

Think of the Community Forum as a 24/7 virtual “teacher’s lounge,” where you can go to ask a question, share a funny anecdote, commiserate over

a tough situation, or just chat with other members. Maybe you...

... are the only Reading Recovery person in your school and need advice. *Add a new thread in the Member Forum.*

... found a great handout you think other members would find useful. *Share it in the library.*

... want to connect with others who trained at your UTC. *Browse for members in the directory.*

... want to find ways to advocate for Reading Recovery. *Search for Volunteer opportunities.*

Plus, the Community Forum is exclusive to active members, creating a safe space of like-minded folks who know your lingo and value the impact Reading Recovery has on our learners and in our schools.

In the short time the Community Forum has been active, we've already been pleased with the conversation generated among our early adopters. Funny, insightful, important discussions are already happening. We can't wait to see what *you* have to contribute! Look on the following page for easy steps to get started. →

During my time as executive director, I've noted the educators in our community as some of the best collaborators, generous with their resources, ideas, and opinions (in a good way!) It's our hope that the Reading Recovery Community Forum will make it even easier to come together and fulfill our mission of constructing “collaborative partnerships to change the trajectory of literacy achievement.”



Now more than ever, virtual communities connect educators with essential knowledge and resources -- and with each other! The new Reading Recovery Community Forum will help you learn, engage, and connect with members from across North America.



5 TIPS TO GET STARTED

1

LOG IN: No need to register or set up an account. Simply click on the Community Forum link from www.readingrecovery.org home page and log in using your regular member password. You're in! Click on your profile to add some personal details if you like, or just jump right in.

2

FIND COMMUNITIES: Click on My Communities to see a short list of communities to which you belong. Or click on All Communities to find a group aligned with your interests. Have an idea for a Community you'd like to start? Email community@readingrecovery.org with the details.

3

JOIN DISCUSSION THREADS: First, stop by the Welcome and Introductions thread to say hi. Then scroll through the other discussion threads or start your own! Ask questions, give feedback, share a story...we can't wait to hear what you have to say!

4

USE THE DIRECTORY: Search for colleagues and other members by name or email address. Send an invitation to stay connected with new friends and the people in your network.

5

BROWSE AND SHARE: Use the Browse feature to search for threads of interest or to find uploaded resources from other members. Plus, upload your own files & resources to the library to make the Reading Recovery Community Forum a richer, more vibrant meeting place!

WELCOME! WE'RE GLAD YOU'RE PART OF OUR COMMUNITY!



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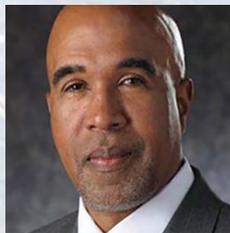
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Reading Recovery Community

LitCon Provides 15,000-Plus Hours of Literacy-Rich Learning

In a whirlwind year of change, flexibility, and of course, plenty of Zooming, our annual conference found its place in the virtual world. With a new name and a refreshed look, LitCon: National K–8 Literacy & Reading Recovery Conference delighted and educated more than 1,500 literacy educators from 5 countries.

Our virtual conference combined a powerful mix of literacy best practices and practical takeaway in both live and on-demand formats, designed to work around educators' busy schedules. Over the week of live sessions, and the month of access to recorded content, our attendees consumed more than 15,000 hours of literacy-rich learning!

This year's keynotes included a look at education's role in equity with the inspiring Cornelius Minor, a deep dive into executive functioning skills with the delightful Jeffery Williams, and a hilarious and heartwarming



RRCNA President Amy Smith introduces Cornelius Minor, one of three keynote speakers at this year's annual conference.

appearance by Gerry Brooks. It was truly a homecoming of literacy leaders, albeit from our own living rooms and offices.

And while we missed seeing our Reading Recovery Community in person this year, the virtual format allowed us to welcome many new faces — and more cats crawling on keyboards than we could count!

We hope our new friends and all of our returning guests will join us in Columbus, January 30–February 2, 2022. We're looking forward to a terrific LitCon 2022, featuring keynotes by Lucy Calkins, Gay Su Pinnell, and Carmen Agra Deedy.

Many thanks to the 2021 sponsors and exhibitors who helped make LitCon: National K–8 Literacy & Reading Recovery Conference possible.

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Exhibitors

Collaborative for Teaching and Learning
 Flying Start Books
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 Gibbs Smith Education
 International Data Evaluation Center
 MaryRuth Books
 Pioneer Valley Books
 Scholastic

LitCon Professional Development Awards



The spring issue of JRR typically features photos of award recipients and their donors taken during the Scholars and Partners Luncheon at the national conference. While the virtual format of LitCon 2021 didn't allow us to do share their smiling faces, we are still pleased to share their names in recognition.

Generous donors contributed over 30 awards of up to \$500 each to help offset the cost of conference registration. Awards are given to Reading Recovery teachers, teachers-in-training, teacher leaders, university trainers, or administrators who support the implementation of Reading Recovery.

Tenyo Family Foundation

funded 20 Professional Development Awards. Founded by the late Sophie Tenyo, the foundation supports charitable, religious, scientific, literacy, and educational endeavors for the public welfare and well-being of humankind.

Recipients:

Maureen Bowie

Uniondale School District
Uniondale, NY

Cynthia Bruno

Fayette County Schools,
Lexington, KY

Amy DeWitt

Tucson Unified School District
Tucson, AZ

Michael Edom

Cleveland Municipal School District
Cleveland, OH

Tracy Hagan

Monroe County School District
Tompkinsville, KY

Kaye Hendricks

Logan Schools
Russellville, KY

Nancy Knaup

Columbia School District
Brooklyn, MI

Michael Kuenzel

Mayfield City Schools
Mayfield Heights, OH

Lizbeth Kyser

ISD 196
Apple Valley, MN

Amanda Mattingly

Grayson County Schools
Clarkson, KY

Tabitha Ockleston

Pasco School District
Pasco, WA

Cheryl Panchur

Cleveland Municipal School District
Cleveland, OH

Shannon Richardson

Fayette County Public Schools
Lexington, KY

Amy Shiever

Orange City School District
Pepper Pike, OH

Christa Siegel

Dowagiac Union Schools
Dowagiac, MI

Pamela Slicker

Mogadore Local Schools
Mogadore, OH

Amanda Smith

Fowlerville Community Schools
Fowlerville, MI

Stephanie Smith

Henderson County Schools
Henderson, KY

Jennifer Taylor

Grass Lake Community Schools
Grass Lake, MI

Ashley Waechter

Fayette County Schools
Lexington, KY

MaryRuth Books

offers instructional, clever books that provide reading practice using photos and illustrations to facilitate word recognition and engage the young reader. MaryRuth Books is the proud publisher of the Danny series of books that not only provide reading practice, but also support the development of a lifelong love of reading.

Recipient:

Kathleen Butigian

Sarasota County Schools
North Point, FL

Debby Wood Professional Development Award

was established in memory of Debby Wood, Reading Recovery teacher leader in Prince George's County, MD.

Recipient:

Tamara Watson
Auburn City Schools
Auburn, ME

Rose Mary Estice Memorial Fund

was established in memory of Rose Mary Estice, one of the original Reading Recovery teachers trained at The Ohio State University.

Recipient:

LaShaunta Lake
Orange City School District
Pepper Pike, OH

Minnesota Literacy Professional Development Fund

was established in memory of Diane Holum, former Reading Recovery teacher leader, to honor her commitment and passion for Reading Recovery, literacy, and learning.

Recipients:

Kristi Paulson & Shelley Lynch
District 196
Apple Valley, MN

Geri Stone Memorial Fund

was established to remember the leadership of Geri Stone who passed away in 2002. Geri was one of Michigan's first Reading Recovery teachers and served as the Reading Recovery teacher leader for the Livonia, Farmington, and Utica Public School systems. Awards help offset the cost of conference attendance, teaching supplies, and more.

Recipients:

Kristina Krohn
American School of Warsaw
Konstancin-Jeziorna, Poland

Lindsey Edens

Duncan Elementary School
of the Arts
Duncan, SC

Sally Coughlin

Columbia Elementary School
Brooklyn, MI

*Applications for
future professional
development awards
will be available on the
RRCNA website.*



RRCNA Welcomes New Director of Information Systems

Please join us in welcoming the newest addition to the RRCNA professional staff, Laura VanTress.

Previously the database and business analysis manager for the Association of College and University Housing Officers – International (ACUHO-I), Laura brings a wealth of knowledge in managing and coordinating business analysis and database development-related activities in a matrix management environment to support the successful delivery of technology projects. She also has held roles focused on member recruitment and retention, database management, and volunteer management.

Laura is a graduate of The Ohio State University with a bachelor's degree in education and human ecology, with a specialization in consumer sciences.

Teacher Leader Training Awards

Three teacher leaders are in training thanks to generous donations to the Linda Dorn Legacy Fund. **Nicole Tschohl** from District 196, Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan, Rosemount, MN; and **Kerin Kuechel** from District 47, Crystal Lake, IL, are training at National Louis University. **Crystal Bryant** from Union County Schools, Union, SC, is training at Clemson University.

Applications for 2021-22 Teacher Leader Training Awards
will be available late spring, along with details on
a newly established Teacher of Color Training Award.

The Last Word

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.

Making It Right

Adrianna was reading the book, *Painting*. In this book, Toby (the little boy) watched his big brother paint a picture. When the brother left the room, Toby painted everything ... the table, the floor, the chair, etc. The small picture at right is the last page of the book, which Adrianna did not like. She said, "Mom would not be smiling." I took a small piece of white tape and drew a frown in ink and put it in the book. She said, "I can fix that!" and she took out her crayons to make my plain inked frown match the illustrations in the book. I've included the *new* picture as well.

Angela Surber, Georgia



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.





*EVERY CHILD HAS THE RIGHT
to live a literate life every day, in every classroom.*

– Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell

— “ ” —



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