Expanding Your Expertise in Responsive Literacy Coaching
Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell

Interpreting Policy for Practice: A 4-Part Process
Rachael Gabriel

The Role of Observation in Advancing the Science of Reading Instruction
Robert M. Schwartz, C. C. Bates, Adria Klein, Denise N. Morgan, and Jeffery L. Williams

The Journey to Integrated Implementation: Sarasota Reading Recovery/Literacy Lessons Site
Lea M. McGee and Lisa A. Fisher

Reading Recovery and Research: Beyond the Intervention
Debra Zarling
This issue of *The Journal of Reading Recovery* is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Billie J. Askew.

The Reading Recovery Community reflects on the loss of a dear friend and mentor. Billie Askew was loved by many in the Community and beyond for her brilliance, grace, humor, and exceptional kindness. Her many contributions to Reading Recovery and to literacy development reverberate worldwide through the educators she inspired to the youngest learners in whom her influence took root.

Donations in Billie's memory may be made to these funds:

- Billie J. Askew Memorial Fund
  RRCNA's Foundation for Struggling Readers
  readingrecovery.org/billie-askew

- Billie J. Askew Endowment
  Texas Woman's University
  twu.edu/reading-recovery
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A Call to Action!
The articles in this issue of The Journal of Reading Recovery are both a call to action and a wealth of support for every Reading Recovery professional. To accomplish our main goal of ensuring a quality intervention for every first-grade student who needs it, we must include actions beyond our 30-minute lessons. The authors in this issue argue for everyone to be a knowledgeable other, well-informed about Reading Recovery; to serve as a literacy leader in their building via coaching and professional development; and to be an active advocate relative to state and federal mandates.

A Knowledgeable Other
The Research Committee of the North American Trainers Group (NATG) has been working to provide support for all Reading Recovery professionals to serve as advocates for Reading Recovery. Based on their recommendation, “Intervention Essentials,” our new FAQ series, premieres in this issue with brief answers to questions most often posed when talking about Reading Recovery. The three questions in this issue focus on the rationale for a full series of lessons, the importance of individual instruction, and the importance of full implementation. Look for more answers to questions in future issues. We hope you will find these rapid responses helpful and appreciate the work of the trainers who write in response to the FAQs.

A Peer Coach
Reading Recovery teachers and teacher leaders have specialized knowledge that is hugely valuable for primary teachers. One way to share this knowledge is through peer coaching. The power of these interactions is clearly described by Lea McGee and Lisa Fisher as we learn about their journey in Sarasota, Florida, implementing both Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons. The lead article by Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell offers ways to expand your expertise in responsive literacy coaching as you work with primary classroom teachers. Their article offers a structure for coaching, language which facilitates change, and a rationale for active listening.

An Active Advocate
We can no longer passively accept mandates from state or federal levels. Rachael Gabriel describes a 4-part process for actively unpacking the meaning behind such mandates as part of our Distinguished Scholar Series. She uses examples of legislation from 4 different states to discuss ways that “all policy is always incomplete and imperfect” (p. 21) and describes ways to interpret legislation and demonstrate compliance yet keep within the theoretical stance of the district’s literacy program. Debra Zarling’s article provides important information relative to current challenges such as those arguing for a Simple View of Reading (SVR), followed by an important article by Robert Schwartz and colleagues using recent challenges to MSV-based approaches to literacy instruction. Finally, Billy Molasso writes about new initiatives from RRCNA including web-based resources, a new Legislative Response Team, and an invitation to join the new Community Advocacy Committee.

The articles in this issue are powerful supports for all Reading Recovery advocates. My hope is that the entire issue is read and discussed in small groups and in ongoing professional development to support this Call to Action!
How to Submit Articles

Write for The Journal of Reading Recovery

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

Blind Peer Review Process

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

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

Guidelines for Authors

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

Submitting Articles for Publication

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

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

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

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Expanding Your Expertise in Responsive Literacy Coaching

Irene C. Fountas, Lesley University
Gay Su Pinnell, The Ohio State University

If you are a literacy coach, you are an important asset for the team in your school. You may be a full- or part-time coach; you may be in a role that involves coaching as well as other responsibilities; you may be a supervisor or principal who sees your role as both evaluative and supportive; or you may be part of a team that engages in peer coaching to support professional learning. You may be a teacher leader who has the responsibility of supporting the development of teachers and monitoring the implementation of a highly effective intervention like Reading Recovery.

Coaching may be well established in the school or district, or it may be a new venture. You may be appointed because of the expertise of your teaching, with the assumption that you can work successfully with adult learners. Or, hopefully you have had training in effective coaching skills, either generic or context specific. Whatever your role, we hope you will find this article useful as we dig into the acts and interactions of responsive literacy coaching.

A Culture for Effective Coaching and Teamwork

Coaching is most effective in a healthy school culture that supports teamwork, a common vision and curriculum, and continuous professional learning by all the educators. The following characterize a strong culture to support effective coaching (Fountas & Pinnell, in press):

- The coach is viewed as a member of the school team and has participated in creating the school’s common vision for literacy learning.
- The staff holds a common vision for the goals of literacy learning over time and the curriculum they want to use to accomplish their goals.
- Coaching is welcomed and expected as part of the teachers’ roles in improving their craft.
- Everyone, no matter how much experience they have, participates in coaching with enthusiasm.
- There is an ambiance of trust and teamwork.
- Every educator treats others with respect and collegial generosity.

Achieving the above cultural characteristics in your school, in itself a large accomplishment, requires the commitment and participation of the great majority of the staff and is continually in process. But even within these conditions, you will want to make the most of your coaching time and engage teachers in interactions that result in shifts in the ways they think about teaching and learning and result in improved student outcomes. You can expect teachers will want to be coached when they find the time you spend together is well worthwhile.

A Responsive Coaching Structure

Your role is to facilitate a conversation that is productive for the teachers and fosters a relationship of trust and risk taking. These processes take place within a general coaching structure, such as this.

Aim Get baseline data and set an agenda.
Observe and transcribe for memory.
Analyze, summarize, generalize, set goals, and evaluate.

Think Together
Think Together for the Lift
Observe Teaching
Essential Elements and Your Role as Thinking Partner

We ask you to consider several important concepts related to your coaching: stance, language, data and tools for coaching, and reflection.

In our view your role is not the “expert,” but you are a thought partner whose role is to support the developing expertise of colleagues so that your team can impact the achievement of all the students in the school. You certainly bring to your role your unique experiences and lots of “expertise,” your professional training in working effectively with adult learners, and your knowledge of how to position yourself to make coaching a valued opportunity instead of something to avoid. The teacher also brings expertise and experience to the conversation and brings the most knowledge of the students.

Your coaching stance

Stance encompasses your underlying attitude and philosophical understanding of your role as a coach. How do you see yourself? How do you see the colleagues you coach? Are you the giver of knowledge and the teacher is the receiver? Or do you see yourself and your colleague as partners in learning?

These are critical questions because your stance influences everything you do or say as a literacy coach.

An investigative stance. It is highly productive to engage in collaborative inquiry as you work with teachers in a coaching situation. Both you and the teacher are looking for evidence and finding direction together as you investigate the problems of practice. Together, you create hypotheses, gather information, and come out with productive direction. Both of you can learn from every coaching interaction. Not only will you learn more about how children become literate, but as a coach, you will be refining your own understanding of teachers’ perspectives and development as professionals over time.

An efficacy stance. Coaching begins with the belief that teachers are competent and can develop and learn and that everyone wants to improve. Indeed, in all our experience we have not encountered any teachers who want to be ineffective. It is imperative that they see themselves as capable of improvement. Teacher efficacy means that they believe in themselves. There may be struggles or periods of discouragement, but they believe that, with effort and support, they will become better teachers each day.

An inclusive stance. Every act in the school, including coaching, rests on strong beliefs regarding the individuality of each adult and each child. Coaching skill involves sensitivity to implicit and explicit biases as well as to racism, sexism, and the diversity of lived experiences of all members of the school community. It means being able to foster a willingness to create an inclusive school where people are knowledgeable and work together to assure equitable student outcomes. It means considering the unique strengths and experiences of the adults as well as the children. It will mean differentiating instruction so that every child receives the support needed to reach full potential. It will mean differentiated coaching support for teachers to assure every teacher is successful.

A supportive stance. Teachers need different forms/levels of support according to their current understandings and skills. When an instructional practice is completely new, they will have many questions and need some specific information and even demonstration. It will help to take it slowly, providing guidance that will increase understanding not only of instructional procedures but of the rationales for using them. You will need to introduce assessment processes for gathering information and tools that will provide helpful directions.

You will find, though, that teachers can quickly learn the steps of an instructional practice and begin to be somewhat automatic and efficient. Your role is to support a deeper understanding of the decisions made within the act of teaching. The power of teaching is in the interactions the teacher has with students within the structure of the lesson, whether whole class, small group, or individual. Most teachers need coaching support to achieve these powerful teaching moves that are most responsive to the students and most effective in helping teachers develop their understandings of literacy as a processing system.

Your language

Learning is social and it is supported by talk. Talk is your greatest tool as a coach; you do the following through conversation:

• Collect the information you need.
• Gain insights as to the teacher’s present understandings, strengths and perspectives.
• Reveal and shape your professional relationship.
• Shape thinking in subtle ways.
In our view your role is not the “expert,” but you are a thought partner whose role is to support the developing expertise of colleagues so that your team can impact the achievement of all the students in the school.

We invite you to reflect on the role your language plays in promoting the teacher’s sense of agency and ability to reflect on teaching and learning. Your language impacts your team’s view of your role and your stance. It communicates that you are a genuine colleague who can add another set of eyes and ears as you think together about teaching and its effects on student learning.

Language to support teacher growth can be generic, meaning language that helps the individual self-reflect within any instructional context, or it can be highly specific, meaning it is geared to particular subject matter areas and instructional contexts. The use of language specific to literacy has been shown to improve instruction and increase collegiality among teachers over a 4-year period (Hough et al., 2013).

Language does not mean simply answering every question a teacher asks or telling a teacher what to do; it involves active listening and facilitating and supporting teachers’ construction of something deeper. It involves helping the teachers discover for themselves what they know and how they can engage in the problem-solving process.

Facilitative talk. You make choices in the language you use, and when you do talk, use language that accomplishes your goals. It is important to consider your language choices thoughtfully to make conversations collaborative and substantive rather than resorting to a telling-only format. You will, of course, offer suggestions, but the more the teacher engages with concepts and participates in the investigative process, the greater the learning and the more likely the teacher is to become independent. The goal, after all, is to help teachers continuously learn from their teaching. Your carefully considered language can result in the teachers learning to ask themselves the same questions as they reflect on their own teaching independently.

The language you use is meant to facilitate coconstruction of new understandings and problem-solving together. The coaching experience has generative power. You and your colleague use your time together to gain deeper understandings of teaching and learning that have implications for not only that lesson but for thinking about teaching other students in other lessons. If you observe a coaching conversation, you might hear the coach use talk like this that prompts teacher inquiry and reflection:

- What was your thinking about …?
- I wonder if/whether …
- Where did you see evidence of …?
- What do you think about …?
- Maybe we should look at some records of their reading together …
- Is there another way to think about that?
- I noticed … . What were you thinking about that?
- What were surprises for you?
- When do you think the children were most engaged? Why do you think that?
- When did you notice a shift in the children’s understandings?
- What language did you think was most effective in enabling the children to do their own thinking?
- What do you think was most effective in your teaching today?
- What aspects of your teaching today did you find tricky?
- What did you learn about the children today as readers/writers?

Collaborative inquiry. The language interactions explored above shape the situation into more than a perfunctory observation/feedback loop. With your colleagues, you engage in collaborative inquiry. Genuine inquiry is an everyday occurrence in the classroom but it rests on what is essentially a scientific process. Together, you and the teacher coconstruct new understandings. You sharpen your observational powers to discover and articulate evidence of learning, identify problems and/or what the child needs to learn next, and develop hypotheses that can be tested. This process is more important than perfect lessons (which we all know are not possible). Participants, including both you and the teacher, internalize the analytical
and reflective process so that it becomes an integral part of teaching and of the coaching process.

Collaborative inquiry sets up a way of working together that furthers the conditions described earlier. It increases trust, allows for focus on specifics, and removes judgment of good and bad to a state of investigation. Both coach and teacher are on a quest to find ways of deepening understanding of literacy as a complex process, refining teaching decisions, and facilitating the development of the student’s literacy competencies.

**The power of listening.** Sometimes we forget that productive conversation requires intentional listening. The pressure to be a good coach can lead to a diminished tendency to listen actively. While the teacher is talking, there is the temptation to form your own response. But your best information comes from listening with concentration as the teacher talks. Through listening, you gain critical information and insights such as the following:

- Understandings the teacher currently has (as the beginning step in providing support to extend learning)
- Answers to your own genuine questions about the children, their learning, and the literacy experiences they experienced in the classroom (a valuable help in understanding beyond your limited experience as an observer)
- Clarification of the teacher’s rationales
- Appreciation for the teacher’s expertise and attempts to grow
- Respect for the teacher’s knowledge and perspectives

A general rule of thumb is to ask genuine questions, the answers to which you do not know. Your questions are not a test of the teachers’ knowledge and active listening will place you in a learner’s role. You need much of the information the teacher holds and there is no other way to get it. For example, if you need information on how the children’s literacy processing has changed over time, the teacher and the artifacts and tools they have used are your best source of information. A listening attitude will keep you away from jumping to prescribe, which undermines thinking and problem solving.

As you listen, ask “why” or “what makes you think that” or “what do you notice.” Notice tone, gesture, and body language. Be sure to provide wait time and pauses that allow your colleagues to think. Try to get behind the teacher’s thinking. There is no substitute for giving full attention to what the teacher says and does. It shows your respect for the teacher as a professional.

**Data and tools for coaching**
In the process of coaching, it is critical to use data from the student’s literacy processes to guide instruction and ground your thinking in evidence. You also need useful tools that, in a sense, “corner the conversation” so your conversation stays focused on how the child is building a literacy processing system and how the teaching decisions influence what the child can do. The data and tools move the conversation from one person telling the other what to do or being the judge of what is right or wrong to a process that involves two professionals as co-learners searching for answers and understandings together. Some examples of artifacts and tools include the following:

- Records of reading behavior (running records) that the teacher has taken in order to analyze behavior
- Written products
- Readers’ or Writers’ Notebooks entries

Reflect on Your Coaching

You need time to reflect in order to support your own growth. Consider these questions.

- Did I listen with dedication?
- Did my questions ask for information and clarification?
- Did I see information to help me understand the teacher’s understandings and perspectives?
- Did I avoid judgment?
- Did I involve the teacher as a colleague in seeking information?
- Did I see evidence of shifts in teacher understanding?
- Did I use tools to keep the focus on the evidence of the child’s learning?
• Observational notes from teaching reading and writing
• *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals* (Clay, 2016), which describes procedures with rationales, and guides for observing closely the children in Reading Recovery or Literacy Lessons™
• *The Fountas & Pinnell Literacy Continuum* (2016), which details characteristics of texts and evidence of learning across time for several classroom contexts for instruction.

Such tools will help you keep the focus on the children’s literacy processing and how the teaching decisions influence the children’s responses (as opposed to a critique of the teacher’s performance). Using these data and some of these tools or others that you have found helpful, you and the teachers (or even a small group of colleagues) can problem solve together. The process introduces another resource or level of expertise into your conversation.

**The Power of Your Responsive Coaching**

Responsive coaching means the coach observes and tunes in to the precise knowledge of the colleague to lead him forward. It means being able to notice what teachers know and are able to do. Too often educators slip into focusing on what the teacher cannot do instead of building on a foundation of strengths.

As a coach you can assume every teacher is committed to children and is capable of growth. The heart of your responsive coaching is supporting your colleagues’ ability to develop their understandings about literacy processing, their powers of observation, and their understanding of how their feedback or responses to students confirm or expand their competencies.

Responsive coaching is based on
• seeing the teacher as a capable and continual learner,
• gathering evidence of teacher understanding and shifts in learning (not just of the execution of the steps of a lesson), and
• making informed decisions about how to support the teacher in further learning.

**Your Professional Growth as a Coach**

There is no question that coaching teachers is a challenging task requiring highly intellectual activity and skill. As a coach you need a high level of expertise in the particular context you are working; but that is not sufficient. You need to be able to analyze teaching interactions and make quick decisions as to the type of support to offer. You need to hold an intimate knowledge of the teacher’s understandings and be able to document evidence of teacher and student shifts in understandings. This is a process of continuous learning and every coaching opportunity will add to your expertise. We encourage you to take every opportunity to be engaged in your own professional development as a coach so that you can model the kind of lifelong learning as a professional that you support in your school.

**References**


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Why does the Reading Recovery® trademark guarantee participating students a full series of lessons that may be up to 20 weeks of instruction?

“The quality and integrity of your implementation [Reading Recovery] is protected by a trademark annually granted to sites, pending a review of adherence with the Standards and Guidelines of Reading Recovery in the United States …” (Reading Recovery Council of North America [RRCNA], 2021, p. 33). With over 35 years of research and excellent national student outcome data, schools and districts that adhere to standards and guidelines—and employ an effective implementation plan—can be assured that investing in Reading Recovery will reduce the number of children with reading difficulties and the long-term cost to their systems for educating these children. Adherence to all aspects of the Reading Recovery standards, guidelines, and procedures is key to establishing and maintaining effective interventions.

What is a Full Series of Lessons?
Per Clay’s (2016) design for this intervention, every Reading Recovery student is entitled to a full series of Reading Recovery lessons, and that is individual lessons of 30 minutes daily for a maximum of 20 weeks. Some children will not require the maximum weeks of instruction. They will accelerate their literacy learning and demonstrate the proficiency levels, the literacy processing system, and the learner independence required to ensure their continued literacy learning with less than 20 weeks of instruction. Their series of Reading Recovery lessons then ends as they have achieved intervention goals. They will receive ongoing literacy instruction from their classroom teachers, most often within average groups. Other children will need 20 weeks of instruction to achieve intervention goals, and a small number will not achieve intervention goals even with 20 weeks of individual instruction. Irrespective of their progress, all students are guaranteed access to 20 weeks of lessons.

Why 20 Weeks?
Adherence to 20 weeks of Reading Recovery instruction for all students in need of this time was suggested by Clay’s early research. Clay (as reported in Clay & Tuck, 1991, reprinted 2009) found that children take different paths to learning and it is not possible to predict at the outset of a learner’s intervention the amount of instructional time needed by the student to reach Reading Recovery goals. In fact, “premature predictions about whether a child would achieve the intervention goals could be wrong for too many children …” (RRCNA, 2021, p. 48). Learners enter Reading Recovery with differing prior experiences and varying amounts of literacy awareness, i.e., reading and writing concepts and skills. Consequently, some readers make accelerated progress early in the series of lessons allowing them to exit the intervention with less than 20 weeks of instruction. Other readers need more instructional time to establish a literacy processing system and achieve accelerated progress, and many are successful given the full 20 weeks of instruction. For those children who do not reach the intervention goals after 20 weeks of instruction, Clay (2016) confirmed that access to this full series of lessons, 20 weeks, is paramount to collecting rich, diagnostic information critical for planning the ongoing, literacy support most appropriate for these learners following the Reading Recovery intervention.

A secondary rationale is based on the number of instructional days in a school year. In the United States, Reading Recovery teachers serve 8–10 students in two rounds of the 20-week intervention. These teachers instruct their intervention students for one-half of their day and fulfill other teaching duties during the rest of their school day. The schedule is not only more cost effective for the school but also enables the highly skilled teachers to share their expertise with many other students in classrooms or small groups and share their expertise with other teachers in
the school. Thus, the 20-week maximum for the intervention, with teachers engaged in Reading Recovery instruction at .5 FTE, provides both economic and academic benefits.

What Happens During the 20-Week Intervention?
Clay’s literacy processing theory focuses on perceptual and cognitive behaviors that change over time as teachers trained in Reading Recovery instruct on the cusp of individual student’s strengths and understandings. Reading Recovery teachers have a deep understanding of emergent literacy development and are able to successfully scaffold a reader’s competencies in literacy across a series of lessons. Reading and writing are viewed as reciprocal processes so, during every daily lesson, children read many books at both their instructional and independent levels, and compose and write many stories.

One of the hallmarks of instruction is teaching for independence and not doing for the child what he can do for themself. Another hallmark is teaching for problem solving and decision making. Emergent readers must learn to self-monitor when there is dissonance, search for information that will inform a decision, and make a confirmation based on the strategic, in-the-head processes that were carried out. Readers entering with limited understandings must learn how to look at print, discriminate among letters, use prior knowledge, link oral language to print, link sounds to letters, develop a repertoire of known words, construct texts, and explore details in print in both reading and writing. The ultimate teaching goal is to support the reader to be constructive and independent as they learn to use phonemic awareness, phonics, oral language, vocabulary, and fluency in the service of reading with meaning (Doyle & Forbes, 2003). The instructional need and learning path is unique for every student, and may require up to 20 weeks of instruction to achieve literacy goals.

Positive Outcomes
Every child who receives a full series of Reading Recovery lessons makes progress with two positive outcomes. First, the majority of the lowest-achieving readers and writers make accelerated progress and “have reached grade-level expectations in reading and writing, demonstrating strategic activities that will foster continuing achievement in the classroom with little or no additional support beyond the classroom” (RRCNA, 2021, p. 27). The second positive outcome involves two sets of students: those who, after 20 weeks of instruction, have made impressive gains and have a literacy processing system under construction but need additional support to reach average levels of literacy proficiency. Often, this support comes from the classroom teacher. The second set of students are those few who have made limited progress after a full series of 20 weeks of instruction and are deserving of long-term support. These children are recommended by the school team for further specialist help. “Both [of these outcomes] are positive for the child and for the school” (RRCNA, 2021, p. 27).

Conclusion
Each child deserves every opportunity to leave first grade as a confident reader and writer. Becoming literate is crucial to school success; research studies have shown that learners who are poor readers at the end of first grade are likely to be poor readers at the end of fourth grade as well (Juel, 1988). For more than 35 years in the United States, Reading Recovery, a highly successful, research-based, data-driven literacy intervention has helped schools to meet the challenge with a promise of 20 weeks or less.

References
Reading Recovery Council of North America. (2021). *A site coordinators guide to the effective implementation of Reading Recovery (2nd ed.)*.

About the Author
Dr. Connie Briggs is a professor emeritus at Texas Woman’s University and a Reading Recovery trainer emeritus with the North American Trainers Group.
Why are Reading Recovery® lessons taught one-to-one?

Reading Recovery teachers are responsible for instructing first-grade children who are the lowest achievers in beginning reading and writing. “[c]hildren who will learn to read and write only if they get individual attention” (Clay, 2016, p. 15). The achievement levels and instructional needs of these students are confirmed by observation and formal assessment in An Observation Survey of Early Achievement (Clay, 2019). The Reading Recovery teacher’s mandate is to provide instruction allowing these students to accelerate their learning and demonstrate the literacy proficiency expected of the average learners in their grade cohort within 12–20 weeks of the intervention.

Reading Recovery teachers are successful in this effort with significant numbers of students, and this success is verified annually by analyses of national data reported by the International Data Evaluation Center (see Mauck & Brymer-Bashore, 2021). Significant, positive treatment results have also been revealed by external evaluations (May et al., 2016) and in summaries of the research of multiple literacy programs as detailed by Allington (2013):

Of the 153 different reading programs reviewed by the WWC (What Works Clearinghouse), only one had ‘strong evidence’ that it improved reading achievement! One! That program was Reading Recovery. (p. 522)

Key to this success is Marie Clay’s design for Reading Recovery lessons to be taught one-to-one.

Why Individual Instruction?

Literacy acquisition is a complex, problem-solving process. Although approximately 80% of young children learn reading and writing through various methods of instruction in group settings (Clay, 2016), Reading Recovery children are those unable to make progress within the context of group instruction; the written code remains a mystery. This is because small-group instruction does not permit the classroom teacher to attend closely to each student’s performance and responses. Instructional compromises are made as the teacher selects materials, identifies learning objectives, and presents lessons for the group that may not meet the needs of individuals (Clay, 2016). For the confused student, this may result in the development of inappropriate, unhelpful ways of responding to reading and writing tasks and their achievement then wanes, resulting in widening the achievement gap. Young students who experience the most difficulty acquiring beginning literacy require and deserve individual, expert attention to positively change their literacy learning trajectories.

Additionally, while all Reading Recovery children are the lowest performing in their grade cohort, no two learners are the same. Reading Recovery selection is inclusive, and there are no exceptions to access to the intervention based on intelligence, oral language skills, first language, immaturity, learning disabilities, poor motor skills, economic factors, or prior experiences. None of these factors predict their literacy learning success if provided adequate instruction. Moreover, what is difficult in learning to read and write differs from child to child (Clay, 2016). The resulting diversity among Reading Recovery students is addressed effectively in one-to-one settings with expert, observant teachers. The one-to-one instructional setting allows the Reading Recovery teacher to design lessons tailored to the specific strengths and needs of each individual learner. As a result, Reading Recovery teachers are successful in lifting the literacy achievement of the diverse set of learners they serve (Clay, 2016).
What are the Benefits of Individual Instruction?

Two key goals of the Reading Recovery intervention are acceleration of each student’s literacy learning and identification of those students in need of ongoing specialist support. Individual instruction is essential to realizing these goals.

Time is critical to prevent further literacy confusion and to stop widening the achievement discrepancy between struggling learners and average literacy learners. Each daily lesson provides exactly what is needed for the learner to acquire reading and writing knowledge. Based on careful observation of the individual student’s reading and writing behaviors and patterns, the Reading Recovery teacher provides contingent, responsive instruction during each intensive lesson. “Observant teachers not only discover new behaviors and changes in behaviors but also think about children’s learning in new ways” (Clay, 2014, p. 100). The teacher “designs each part of every lesson and wastes no time teaching what the learner already knows. This is a critical variable for Reading Recovery’s success” (Clay, 2016, p. 18). Likewise, there is no set sequence of curricular goals that the teacher and child must follow; each learner is supported in creating a unique path to literacy.

Expert instruction allows the learner to take over the learning process, make new discoveries independently, and make progress in both reading and writing at an accelerated rate. This learner acceleration allows the student to achieve grade-level proficiencies in reading and writing within a short timeframe, e.g., 12 to 20 weeks.

Students who accelerate reach grade-level proficiencies that allow them to continue learning within the context of their classroom programs, often without ongoing ancillary help beyond the support of their classroom teachers. Thus, both referrals to special services, including special education, and the retention of children in first grade are reduced. The savings realized by the school in the reductions of referrals to special education, limited needs for remedial services, and fewer retentions are a substantial benefit making one-to one instruction economically beneficial (Reading Recovery Council of North America, 2021).

While almost all Reading Recovery children make progress, a few students do not develop the independence and literacy processing systems required to ensure ongoing progress without additional support. These students are referred for ongoing specialist evaluation and instructional intervention. The early identification of students deserving of specialist help is another positive outcome of Reading Recovery. For these students, records of their one-to-one lessons provide rich diagnostic information beneficial for describing their literacy behaviors and determining appropriate instructional recommendations.

Summary

Reading Recovery teachers make a positive difference in the lives of children, one by one. As Marie Clay (2016) has so eloquently stated: “[I]nstruction that is individually designed and individually delivered provides the intensive care that results in the fastest recovery of a normal trajectory of progress for any child” (p. 19).

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Why does full implementation in Reading Recovery® matter?

The goal of Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura—Reading Recovery in Spanish—is to efficiently and effectively lift the literacy achievement of children who are experiencing difficulties learning to read and write. School systems that choose to implement the interventions do so with the understanding that reducing the number of first graders who have extreme difficulty learning to read and write not only sets students on the path for success in literacy learning but also benefits the total school as well. Full implementation is essential for maximizing the effectiveness.

What is Full Implementation?

Full implementation, sometimes referred to as full coverage, means that every child who needs Reading Recovery services has access to the intervention at their school during first grade (Reading Recovery Council of North America [RRCNA], n.d.). Children making low progress in learning to read need to make accelerated growth by increasing their rate of progress relative to the expected growth by the end of first grade in order to close the achievement gap. “A school or district has reached full coverage or full implementation when sufficient time and teacher support is available to serve all identified children (RRCNA, 2021, p. 31).

What are the Benefits of Full Implementation?

Students, teachers, and schools benefit from full implementation of the one-to-one intervention that significantly lifts the literacy achievement for each student who receives the intervention. Students develop systems for independent problem solving, often achieving several months of growth in just a few weeks of their daily, individually designed lesson series. Students who make this accelerated progress seldom need referral for long-term interventions, thus reducing costs associated with remedial instruction and referrals to special education. In addition, reducing unnecessary referrals to special education frees time for special education educators to focus their attention on those students who truly need those services.

Reading Recovery teachers identify and work with each learner’s strengths and design lessons to support the student making accelerated progress. The focus on a strength-based intervention and teacher expertise lead to a positive and productive learning culture for the whole school. Working from a theory that emphasizes teaching for independence and thoughtful analysis of teaching decisions, schools create a culture of what Fullan & Quinn (2016) refer to as “coherence making.” Schools that operate with coherence build capacity for purposeful action and interaction, building precision in teaching and accountability.

The added benefit of full implementation includes the highly trained teachers who share their early literacy expertise to grow collaborative cultures and deepen learning within the total school. While it may take 2–3 years to achieve full implementation, planning for full implementation is an important goal in lifting achievement to within the average band of all readers and writers and reducing the number of referrals to special education or retentions in first grade.

How to Plan for Full Implementation

Reading Recovery’s unique system for lifting individual student’s literacy achievement in first grade requires school leaders to think both about student needs on a campus (across a district) and staffing flexibility to achieve full implementation.

Student need

To determine the appropriate level of support, teachers typically begin by identifying 20–25% of their first graders making the lowest
progress on their district early literacy performance indicators (Clay, 2005). Reading Recovery teachers then administer An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement (Clay, 2019) to determine the children most in need of Reading Recovery instruction. Classroom teachers and the Reading Recovery teacher or a literacy team work together to determine the students most in need and begin by taking the lowest-performing students. By annually being attentive to changes in demographics, changes in performance standards, and changes due to growth, school teams can anticipate the number of teachers who are needed to provide Reading Recovery instruction for all students who need it.

Flexible staffing
Reading Recovery teachers typically serve four students individually in daily lessons for 12–20 weeks (determined by the learner’s progress). The short intensive individual instruction allows teachers to serve between 8–10 students across the school year. Because Reading Recovery instruction is only part of the teacher’s day (typically a .4 FTE), this teacher may use their expertise in a variety of roles within a school during the other part of the day. Flexible staffing models include shared classroom models, English language [EL] services, small-group interventions across other grade levels, literacy coaches, or special education services (RRCNA, 2021). These flexible staffing models enable schools to achieve full implementation. When a school is fully implemented and all first-grade children who qualify for the intervention have been served by the end of the year, teachers are able to work with kindergarten children or some second-grade students who may have moved in the district or need additional support.

An example
In a school with four first-grade classrooms, each with 22 students, a school team could anticipate that 17–20 students would benefit from Reading Recovery. To achieve full implementation, the school would need two, possibly three, teachers depending on the makeup of the campus. These two teachers would be able to have 8–10 students in their first 12–20 weeks of instruction and potentially 8–10 students in their second 12–20 weeks of instruction. Teaching for acceleration and efficient entry and exit processes will contribute to the efficiency of the implementation. Close collaboration with the classroom teachers maximizes the successful transition into classroom instruction so that the child can learn with independence.

Full Implementation Achieved
Full implementation is part of a school and district’s comprehensive literacy plan. Striving to achieve full implementation in schools requires dynamic planning annually to anticipate change in student need and teacher availability. Campus leaders, teacher leaders, site coordinators, and teachers can establish systems for annually reviewing outcomes and anticipating future needs. A commitment to full implementation ensures that children most in need are able to make significant growth in their literacy learning. In addition, the commitment to full implementation reduces the long-term costs of intervening services to educational systems. Full implementation is both a process and a goal in maximizing students’ early literacy success.

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There have been two major waves of policy related to early literacy instruction and intervention over the past 10 years: laws focused on the identification and remediation of dyslexia, and laws focused on requiring instructional alignment with the “science of reading,” definitions of which vary by state. Compared with previous trends in state and federal legislation related to literacy instruction, each wave has been increasingly prescriptive, specific, and narrow in its conceptions of what counts as appropriate instructional practice for children in Grades K–3. When faced with increasingly complex and specific legislative language, literacy educators need tools to systematically analyze policies that carry implications for practice.

Since 2015, 46 of 50 states passed legislation related to instruction of students with dyslexia labels (Dyslexia Association International, 2015, updated 2021). Since 2019, 20 states have considered and/or passed legislation related to the science of reading (Pondisco, 2021), which has much broader impacts as it is concerned with the classroom instruction provided to students in general education settings. Though a general awareness of state policy may once have been adequate for classroom teachers and school leaders, it is increasingly inadequate when it comes to literacy instruction because of the specificity with which recent legislation mandates and/or prohibits specific practices. Therefore, it is important for educators to have tools to systematically analyze policy so that they may respond to it with integrity. Understanding how issues and policies are framed allows educators to identify and address the core issues of complex policies in their advocacy and implementation efforts.

The inevitable distance between policies and practice is often bemoaned as a reason for the mismatch between intentions and realities. This distance exists because policy is a relatively blunt tool for structuring the social reality of particularities of specific times, places, and circumstances. It is at once bounded to a specific place and time, and often too general to be used to guide every possible in-the-moment decision. For example, traffic laws in one place may be very different from traffic laws in another where speed limits, vehicles, and even the side of the road you drive on differ. This is an example of sets of rules for decision making while driving being bound to a particular place rather than a naturally universal phenomenon. However, within a single location, governed by a single set of traffic rules, there are scenarios that are not well explained by existing rules, and times when breaking the rule represents the most rational choice (e.g., swerving out of your lane.

DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR SERIES

Interpreting Policy for Practice: A 4-Part Process

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Dr. Rachael Gabriel is an associate professor of literacy education at the University of Connecticut. She is author of more than 50 refereed articles, and author or editor of five books for literacy teachers, leaders, and education researchers. Rachael currently teaches courses for educators and doctoral students pursuing specialization in literacy. She currently serves on the boards of the International Literacy Association and Reading Recovery Council of North America, and as the analyst of Reading Recovery’s Networked Improvement Community Hub. In addition to experience as a classroom teacher and reading specialist, Rachael holds graduate certificates in both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Rachael’s current research is focused on embedding teacher professional learning, supports for adolescent literacy, state literacy policies, and discipline-specific literacy instruction.

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to avoid an accident). The metaphor of swerving is particularly helpful when considering the implementation of policy in particular circumstances. That is, stepping out of line with one detail of policy is sometimes required to preserve the intention of that policy. However, individuals are unable to effectively recognize and act on these moments if they are unfamiliar with the way issues and solutions are framed within state law.

In this article, I suggest a 4-step analytic process for analyzing and interpreting policy for instructional practice. This analysis draws on Framing Theory (Goffman, 1974; Benford & Snow, 2000) to analyze how a policy problem is defined, constructed, and addressed by a given set of rules within proposed or recently passed legislation.

Interpreting Policy for Practice

As Coburn (2006) writes, “Policy problems do not exist as social fact awaiting discovery. Rather, they are constructed as policymakers and constituents interpret a particular aspect of the social world as problematic” (p. 43). Policy problems require analysis because the problem each policy seems designed to solve is not always obvious. Many policies seem to repeat or reiterate the rules of existing policies (Gabriel, 2019), but they have unique targets or contexts. For example, rules about how many courses teachers take in reading might be found in acts regarding higher education, educational equity, reading by third grade, dyslexia, and the science of reading. Also, the campaign or intention that led to the crafting of a specific policy may no longer be fully—or even partially—represented in the final draft of that policy. Policy language can go through multiple layers of revision throughout the policymaking process as it goes from committee to committee and body to body (e.g., state representatives to state senators). Therefore, a bill that was drafted or intended to focus on a certain problem and provide a certain remedy to not only consider the meaning of a new policy, but also the aspects of the social world that it implicates. That is, to consider why this diagnostic frame had traction among legislators and what it might reflect about current concerns, vulnerabilities, and goals. The same is true for motivational and prognostic frames.

It is important for educators to have tools to systematically analyze policy so that they may respond to it with integrity. Understanding how issues and policies are framed allows educators to identify and address the core issues of complex policies in their advocacy and implementation efforts.

Step 1. Identify diagnostic frames

The core analytic question for identifying diagnostic frames is “what problem is this policy trying to solve?” When reading Tennessee’s SB7003, 41-9-105, section a, the first rule comes on the second page of the document:

(a) Each LEA and public charter school shall provide:

(1) Foundational literacy skills instruction to students in kindergarten through grade three (K–3). Foundational literacy
skills instruction must be the LEA’s primary form of instructional programming in English language arts; and

(2) Reading interventions and supports designed to improve a student’s foundational literacy skills to each student identified as having a significant reading deficiency. An LEA or public charter school may comply with this subdivision (a)(2) by providing the interventions identified in Tennessee’s response to instruction and intervention (RTI 2) framework manual.

This is the first of 16 rules within SB7003, all of which relate in some way to literacy instruction by creating rules for textbook options, screening tool options, requiring specific teacher preparation and professional development, etc. However, looking at 41-9-105 section a, we can assume that this rule is made because it represents an ideal that is not yet the reality in most classrooms. That is, some students are not receiving instruction on foundational literacy skills in English language arts as their primary focus, and some are receiving interventions that are not approved by the state (not included in the framework manual). Therefore, the problem that is solved seems to be: Students are not receiving enough or the right kind of literacy instruction or intervention.

In this law, “foundational literacy skills instruction” is defined explicitly:

Foundational literacy skills instruction means an evidence-based method of teaching students to read that includes phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension that enables students to develop the reading skills required to meet Tennessee’s academic standards.

Though this may be interpreted to mean a specific approach to teaching reading, the language here is quite broad when it comes to instructional approach. The only troubling part is the omission of writing as a foundational skill, though writing instruction could arguably be done in service to one of the skills listed above. According to this first rule in the comprehensive law, we can infer that policymakers were convinced that students across the state are not receiving enough or the right kind of literacy instruction or intervention.

It is possible to read that definition and think that almost all instruction fits. But following the framing of the law, rather than the letter of the law, allows us to analyze instruction alongside it.

Once the frame is identified (e.g., ask: What problem is this policy trying to solve?), the next question is whether and how this frame applies to your own work, and what might be learned from reflection or investigation in this direction. In the example above, policymakers are convinced that students are not receiving adequate instruction or intervention focused on foundational skill areas. In this case, you might look at the students within your own sphere of influence (e.g., family, classroom, grade-level team, school, district, region, state) and consider whether and for whom this is the case. What data would you need to be able to say definitively whether all your students have access to adequate foundational skills instruction and intervention? What have you observed that gives you information about this question? If some students demonstrate adequate development in this area, and some do not, what is the pattern associated with those that do and those that do not?

Virginia’s recent law, VA § 22.1-253.13:1 (2021) includes this rule:

The English Standards of Learning for reading in kindergarten through grade three shall be based on components of effective reading instruction, to include, at a minimum, phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, fluency, vocabulary development, and text comprehension.

In this example, the problem the policy aims to solve seems to be that students in K–3 are not receiving the minimum level of attention needed on the several skills listed above. It also seems that there are ways of teaching phonics that are unsystematic, thus requiring the adjective be emphasized by italics within the text of the law. Again, it might be easy to assume that most students have access to instruction focused on these things, but the letter of the law is not as important as its diagnostic framing: there is a lack of instructional focus on these five areas. If this frame is used in your state, you may ask yourself the following questions: What evidence do you have that the instruction within your sphere of influence adequately addresses these five areas? What patterns might explain where one or more of these areas is not adequately addressed via instruction?

Answering these questions positions individuals and communities to demonstrate how they comply with the law already, and/or where resources
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or guidelines within the law might be used for improvement. In cases where there is clear evidence of compliance, it can be helpful to understand the motivational frames used in the law to connect with the ideas and entities who carry responsibility for the policy.

Step 2. Identify motivational frames
The core analytic question for identifying motivational frames is: What motivates people to action on this policy issue? More specifically, what are the ideas, statistics, values, and goals that have evoked this response from policymakers?

Tennessee’s motivational framing is evident in the first lines of TN § 49-1,5,6 (2021):

(a) The general assembly finds and declares that:

(1) A literate society is essential to maintaining a free society;

(2) There is a need to improve literacy rates across the state;

(3) In 2019, Tennessee’s third grade English language arts proficiency rate was thirty-six and nine-tenths percent (36.9%);

(4) In 2019, Tennessee’s eighth grade English language arts proficiency rate was twenty-seven and one-tenth percent (27.1%); and

(5) In 2019, Tennessee ranked thirty-first in the nation in fourth grade reading proficiency and thirtieth in eighth grade reading proficiency.

This list of five statements creates an argument by first asserting the essential importance of literacy in general, and then using statistics for third grade, eighth grade proficiency rates, and national ranking to demonstrate that the state needs improvement in this essential area. The state or health of literacy as an asset within the state is measured by third and eighth grade proficiency rates in much the same way that public health might be measured in rates of disease: with a single number representing a wide range of circumstances, measures, and potential meanings. However, if that singular statistic is the motivating factor, then reframing that statistic can work to direct or deflect the energy of the policy. That is, concentrating on the proficiency rate within your sphere of influence can be used to magnetize more resources and attention to your community. Even if your school community values project-based learning over standardized testing, publicizing test scores on a school website, and creating documents that link tested areas to specific projects can demonstrate alignment with the test scores as a motivator without making it a focus for the work of the community.

On the other hand, demonstrating higher than average rates of proficiency compared to others in the state can be used to position your sphere as separate or different from those for whom this law was intended. Likewise, moving from one category to the other (e.g., increasing scores) becomes a potential target for reform because of the policy consequences. In either case, this work is guided by these analytic questions: How might my work align with this motivation? And, how can the scores produced within my community be used to argue for or against?

Step 3. Identify prognostic frames
The third frame to discuss relates to the prescription or solution assigned to the problem outlined in the policy. In Colorado’s recent law, CO 22-7-1202 (2021), the solution is outlined as the most “appropriate” action. Here, the district should assign specific responsibility for different aspects of the solution and outline what it will take to solve the policy problem.

… It is appropriate that each school district board of education select the core reading instructional programs and reading interventions to be used in those public schools, so long as they are focused on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency including oral skills, and reading comprehension to ensure that the students educated in the public schools throughout the state consistently receive evidence-based instruction that is proven to effectively teach children to read.

The core analytic question for this section is: What is the proposed solution? In other words, what does this policy say should be done about the problem. When it comes to the problem of lower than desired test scores, there are many potential solutions. Given the problem of low scores, which of the many avenues for change does this policy invest in as its solution? And, what cause does it identify as potentially having the desired effect? In the case of Colorado’s recent legislation, we have two statements beginning with “it is appropriate that…” and one beginning with “to ensure.” To find the cause and effect within the long
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string of legislative language, we can link them together:

“It is appropriate that … each … district … select the core reading instructional programs and reading interventions … so long as they are focused on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency including oral skills, and reading comprehension.”

“To ensure that students … consistently receive evidence-based instruction that is proven to effectively teach children to read.”

One could argue that there are some omissions or errors of logic contained in the linked ideas. Rather than judging the potential merits of the solution, imagine that all policy is always incomplete and imperfect. Instead, ask: What are the targets of the solution, and how do they relate to my work? The assumption of Colorado’s law is that if reading instruction and intervention are focused on five foundational reading skills it will be consistent and effective. How does this assumption relate to your assumptions about the nature of instruction that leads to student learning? How might you highlight the ways your approaches engage the five foundational skills to demonstrate alignment with the state’s basic assumption so that you can have the freedom to add other targets for instruction and nuanced engagement with the five foundational skills that reflect your understanding of students’ rights to effective literacy instruction?

It is possible that, if a community of educators can demonstrate effective engagement with the five foundational skills, but the state merely requires the five reading skills be taught (Dutro, 2019).

It is important at this point to highlight the myopic nature of the examples used. Each of the rules used as an example so far is one of 15 or more rules contained in a single bill that has become law in 2021. I used the first rule listed in the text of each policy document, but it may not have been the most powerful or impactful rule or rule change in the bill as a whole. When considering the law as a coherent set of rules, it is important to seek out places where there might be internal conflict or contradiction. For example, if other rules contained within the law inhibit the teaching of foundational skills by impinging on educators’ opportunities to engage in any of the pedagogical work listed above, there is a conflict within the law itself, which is likely to be highlighted and exploited for better and for worse at the point of implementation.

Step 4. Identify conflict or contradiction

Connecting policy problems with solutions outlined in new or proposed legislation as described above is an attempt to identify the underlying logic of the policy. However, policies are not often crafted in ways that promote one coherent view of the problem, motivation, and solution. Rather,

If educators have not identified the contradictions and conflicts inherent in the law they are meant to follow, they will either knowingly or unknowingly bend the law or their instruction.
analysing the law and the elements of instruction to which it refers. For example, 49-1-905 of Tennessee’s law relates to informing parents about any difficulties that are identified among students because of required assessments:

Immediately upon determining that a student in kindergarten through grade three (K–3) has a significant reading deficiency, based on the results of the universal reading screener most recently administered to the student, the LEA or public charter school shall notify the student’s parent in writing that the student has been identified to have a significant reading deficiency, and shall provide the student’s parent with:

(1) Information about the importance of a student being able to read proficiently at the end of the third-grade level;

(2) Reading intervention activities that the parent may use with the student’s parent at home to improve reading proficiency; and

(3) Information about the specific reading interventions and supports that the LEA or public charter school recommends for the student, which may include the interventions provided by the LEA or public charter school pursuant to Tennessee’s RTI 2 framework manual.

This rule seems to address the proposed problem that parents are not told when schools have concerns about their child’s reading development, don’t know that this is important, and/or are not connected with ways to proactively support or advocate for intervention services. There may be problematic assumptions within this diagnostic framing, but it highlights parent communication and partnership as key to the perceived health or value of an instructional system. The tension lies between this prognostic frame and the definition provided for “universal reading screener”:

(11) “Universal reading screener” means a uniform tool that screens and monitors a student’s progress in foundational literacy skills.

Screening and monitoring tools cannot, by definition, be used to determine deficiency. They can only be used to assess the risk of possible deficiency. Likewise, they could never be used to match students with “specific reading intervention and supports” because they merely identify the potential need for intervention, not the specific need. Screening assessments can be used to flexibly group students for further instruction and to identify the need for further assessment, but the class of assessments identified in Tennessee as universal reading screeners are not reliable enough to identify or assign deficiencies, nor do they have the content validity needed to prescribe intervention approaches based on assessment data. Further, individual diagnostic testing would be required to responsibly contact parents and recommend interventions and supports.

The motivation to communicate with parents early in an intervention process in meaningful and substantive ways is compelling, but using universal screening tools, a school or district could only ever match one of those three criteria. The communication would be early, but not meaningful or substantive because of the high risk of both false positives and negatives, and the difficulty assigning a specific intervention based on the kind of data generated by universal screening tools. These tools are best suited to locate potential areas or items associated with comparative difficulty, but not identifying the cause or relationships of this difficulty. In other words, they might identify what to teach, but not how or why it requires more—or more intense—instruction.

One dilemma raised by the Tennessee’s “Bill 3” is the motivation to include parent communication as a core and universal aspect of an intervention process. Parent communication is almost always good, unless, of course, it is inaccurate. Given this, local leaders need to be able to consciously decide whether to bend their values about parent communication and send potentially misleading messages that lack actionable information to this important stakeholder group, or to consider the spirit of the law and bend implementation to delay information related to #2 and #3 until diagnostic testing has been completed by notifying parents about universal screen scores (not deficits) and following up with information about specific deficits as needed.

This positions parents to hold schools accountable for reasonable follow-up testing in a timely manner but does not run the risk of misidentifying or misdiagnosing difficulties in communications with parents, which would surely be an unintended consequence of the law.
Conclusion
The trend towards science of reading-related legislation over the past several years has codified a narrow and often misleading brand of certainty about what counts as appropriate reading instruction and intervention. Tight prescriptions of what should be done leave little room for the particularities of the places in which people live and work. As of 2021, Rhode Island demands “scientific reading instruction” [which] means instruction that is instructional centered, empirically based, and further based on the study of the relationship between cognitive science and educational outcomes” (Right to Read Act). And California may one day require that “All teachers, including teachers with multiple subject and education specialist teaching credentials, should be prepared to teach foundational reading” (SB488). Since this batch of new laws is increasingly prescriptive about what to teach and assess, it is increasingly important that educators have tools and frameworks with which to productively engage with policy to ensure it is implemented with integrity in relation to both learners and the law. Some nuance will always be required to reconcile the tensions between a single prescription for all teachers and learners, and the principles of scientific grounding and diagnostic-prescriptive teaching.

In this article, I have attempted to add a systematic structure to the construction of nuanced understandings of both. If educators have not identified the contradictions and conflicts inherent in the law they are meant to follow, they will either knowingly or unknowingly bend the law or their instruction. Bending the interpretation of the law intentionally to address the unique needs of a particular scenario is a way of honoring the spirit of the law and the population it is meant to serve. Bending instruction to stay within the law regardless of its impact on students does neither.

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The purpose of this article is to describe the 6-year journey implementing Reading Recovery® at our site and the changes which occurred for students, teachers, administrators, and schools. We then argue that the Sarasota Reading Recovery/Literacy Lessons™ site in Florida is currently at the “integrated” level of implementation according to Reading Recovery: An Evaluation of the Four-Year i3 Scale-Up Report (May et al., 2016). We have not only implemented Reading Recovery that serves the needs of our low-performing children, but we also have impacted our school system through the value we add in improved teacher knowledge and student learning in classrooms.

Our Journey
We will argue that our district implementation, while differing from school to school and teacher to teacher, is considered “ideal” and has added value to our district through the leadership provided by our Reading Recovery teachers in their schools. However, when our site began in 2015–2016, we did not know that was the direction we were headed or even that we should be heading this way. In this section of the article we discuss our journey and the conditions that propelled us to move toward our current stance of not only deliberately planning to train teachers as Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons teachers, but also as literacy leaders.

Gearing up Reading Recovery and uncovering two issues with unexpected payoff
The Sarasota site began with the efforts of Veronica Brady working with Keith D. Monda, one of the private funders needed for The Ohio State University Investing in Innovation (i3) grant (2010–2015). Monda was influenced by the strong results of Reading Recovery’s impact on the learning of the most at-risk children and wondered how this could be implemented in the Sarasota County School District where he resided. In May 2015, he requested a meeting with Director of Elementary Education Dr. Laura Kingsley and requested that his colleague, Veronica Brady from the Gulf Coast Community Foundation, locate someone who knew about Reading Recovery to attend the meeting. Lea McGee, trainer emeritus from The Ohio State University, had just retired to Sarasota and was available to attend that meeting.

Following that meeting, Monda, Gulf Coast Community Foundation, and the Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation, along with other private donors, provided funds for the startup of a Reading Recovery site to begin August 2015. Three principals volunteered to pilot the intervention in their schools, and two teachers were selected from each school to be trained as Reading Recovery teachers. Lisa Fisher was selected as teacher leader to be trained at The Ohio State University during 2015–2016, and Lea McGee taught the first training class of six teachers. In many ways our first year was like all sites implementing a brand-new Reading Recovery site. There was a scramble to get the behind-the-glass room constructed and financial procedures had to be ironed out. Getting schedules established for the teachers was of utmost importance to protect half of their day for Reading Recovery. These necessary measures required much communication on many levels within a school and throughout the district.

The first year was a blur of activity with much enthusiasm and hard work. Just as we were ready to celebrate the outcomes for our first round of children, we encountered our first challenge — an issue we faced which turned out to have long-term positive outcomes. Sarasota, like all school districts in Florida, had mandated multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) policies and procedures...
for Children At Risk in Education (CARE) which involves school-based MTSS/CARE teams. MTSS is a term used to describe a model of schooling that uses data-based problem solving to guide academic and behavioral instruction and intervention. Children receive instruction and intervention in varying intensities (Tier 1, 2, and 3) based on student need. Typically, children who are not achieving with regular classroom instruction (Tier 1) are recommended for more intense Tier 2 instruction. When children do not respond to instruction in Tier 2, they are recommended for Tier 3 instruction. The school CARE team carefully reviews the cases of children in tier instruction and makes recommendations for additional testing or services for children who make minimal learning gains in Tier 3. A CARE team is comprised of teachers, administrators, support staff, and others from multiple community agencies. The team works together to address challenges facing the at-risk student population and their families.

The first of our challenges was to integrate Reading Recovery within Sarasota’s MTSS/CARE process. Fisher recognized that working across three different schools with three different teams emphasized the need for a system-wide approach. She approached our site coordinator (elementary school director) to schedule a meeting with the student services program specialist who supervises all elementary school MTSS/CARE processes for the district. During this meeting many issues were identified; however, the program director agreed to watch a behind-the-glass lesson. He suggested that the program director for speech and language services would be a valuable addition to the working group.

After watching the behind-the-glass lesson, both program specialists agreed that Reading Recovery was a model intervention with strong progress monitoring results. They were especially impressed with the content and pedagogical approaches used in instruction and saw the text level progression graph and writing vocabulary progression graph as powerful documentation for the required MTSS/CARE progress monitoring. Thus, the concept of knowing a student’s text level and being able to track progress in increasing text levels for all low-achieving children was introduced to district and school personnel. Of course, at the time, almost none of the teachers and other staff members of the MTSS/CARE teams at the three schools knew what this meant, but the idea that knowing the level of text that students could read was critical for teaching and evaluation had been planted.

The second challenge emerged amid end-of-year testing and making decisions about second-round children. Teachers at all three schools had children in second round that had been identified as possible retention candidates at the time they entered Reading Recovery. As the year ended, two children in one school who had discontinued reading at or above level 18 were still being considered for retention according to that school’s pupil progression guidelines (i.e., performance levels required to be promoted). As we were working through how to address this issue, we examined the pupil progression guidelines for all three schools and discovered many inconsistencies but only one commonality — none of the guidelines indicated that text level reading should be a factor in considering first-grade retention because of low reading achievement. Instead, all schools required children to know phonics and sight words, but the number of items expected to be known varied considerably from school to school.

Again, the site coordinator, because of her work through the year with Reading Recovery, recognized the shortfall in the progression guidelines (both their inconsistencies across the district and their lack of attention to text level reading). As director of elementary schools, she mandated that a district-wide committee be formed the following year to prepare pupil progression guidelines for K–5. This was yet another way in which the idea that it is essential to know a student’s text reading level began to percolate through the system.

This essential concept, that instruction is most effective when it is delivered at a student’s instructional level, was not necessarily a shared belief held in all the schools when Reading Recovery began. During
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our first year delivering Reading Recovery, very few classroom teachers assessed children’s text reading levels, and even fewer used their knowledge of children’s text reading levels to plan instruction. Instead, teachers were mandated to use the core reading program with fidelity. Therefore, most teachers read the core passages in the literature anthology with children in whole groups and sometimes provided differentiated small-group experiences by reading what the core program called paired reading texts. These texts were designed to be read in small groups with children reading below grade level, at grade level, and above grade level. The below-level paired text was the same text as the on-grade level text except that the text had fewer words. The above-level paired text was the same text as the on-grade level text except that the text had more words. The sight words and the words using the phonics patterns that were targeted for instruction for that week in the paired reading texts were the same across all small-group texts and in the literature anthology. Thus, teachers could enact the reading curriculum using the core materials without regard to a students’ actual text reading level. For the most part, during those early years, teachers taught the same skills to all groups of learners at the same point in the curriculum.

Expanding Reading Recovery into all Title I schools
In 2016–2017, Reading Recovery expanded from 3 schools to all 10 Title I schools in the district and 14 new teachers were trained. While we were busy with this new training class, we were also working with the district on a common MTSS/CARE procedure and with the committee developing new pupil progression guidelines. During this year, new issues emerged. At a meeting with our incoming superintendent, Lori White, the outgoing and long-time superintendent praised our promising results. However, she challenged us: “If Reading Recovery is not just to survive, but to thrive, classroom teachers must see Reading Recovery as essential.” This challenge is one faced by all Reading Recovery sites as they struggle to avoid becoming isolated, having little interaction with the larger literacy picture in a school or district.

On a similar note, several times during our Reading Recovery monthly meetings the site coordinator would ask how the teachers were doing sharing their knowledge with their classroom colleagues. Indeed, many of the Reading Recovery teachers reported to us they were bursting with new understandings and teaching strategies and were eager and willing to share their insights. We knew this was happening in an informal manner. However, we considered what it would take to have teachers share knowledge with classroom teachers in a way that could maximize impact on student learning. Because of the encouragement from the site coordinator for our Reading Recovery teachers to share their “expert knowledge,” we decided that the way we would meet our challenge of not just surviving, but thriving, was to use our Reading Recovery teachers to provide high-quality professional development at the school level. To make this happen, we knew we had to develop a consistent approach and content for the professional development. We also realized that Reading Recovery training alone was not sufficient for the Reading Recovery teachers to develop the skills needed to engage classroom teachers in collaborative learning during professional development. So, we knew we had to provide additional training for the Reading Recovery teachers on the attributes of effective professional development. We also had to revise how we recruited and selected incoming Reading Recovery teachers to be more deliberate about requiring candidates to have a desire for and ability to take on leadership in engaging teachers in professional development.

We began writing what we call Reading Recovery Professional Development Modules around seven topics including book introductions, monitoring, using sound boxes, teaching with rhyme (analogies), working with multisyllabic words, and using cumulative decoding. Each module included directions for presenters (Reading Recovery teachers), a teachers’ guide (for classroom teachers), and hands-on activities to engage teachers in the content. Most modules included videos, PowerPoints, and other materials. The modules were in two parts: a short introduction to the topic which could be delivered in a professional learning community (PLC) meeting and a longer, in-depth exploration of the topic which could be provided during a district professional development day or an after-school meeting. As we finished the modules, we began providing additional trainings (beyond the ongoing professional development required for Reading Recovery) on how to deliver the professional development modules to the first two cohorts of Reading Recovery teachers.

Professional development for the modules met many of the criteria established for effective professional
Development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). It focused on helping Reading Recovery teachers actively engage classroom teachers in hands-on activities which would demonstrate the concepts under study. Videos or demonstrations were used to provide examples of effective practice. Classroom teachers were encouraged to participate in a follow-up application activity following the introduction to the topic, and the Reading Recovery teachers always took the first 10 minutes of the next PLC meeting to engage teachers in sharing their experiences with these application activities. This cycle of learn, do, and reflect was designed to foster greater collaboration and group problem solving among the teachers and the Reading Recovery teacher.

Expanding Reading Recovery into all schools
During the 2017–2018 school year we expanded to all 23 elementary schools in the district. Fourteen new teachers were carefully selected and trained bringing us to a total of 34 Reading Recovery teachers. After their training year, we established the expectation that all Reading Recovery teachers would provide some professional development to K–2 teachers through their PLCs. We suggested selecting the Reading Recovery Professional Development Modules which would be most relevant for their schools. A teacher at one of our schools, after providing professional development using the book introductions module, posted a video on YouTube showcasing how her colleagues were able and willing to successfully use their new strategies immediately in their classrooms (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lUtFmAVInI).

During that same school year, the new pupil progression guidelines for the district were revealed. Each grade level had a band of text reading levels that was expected to be reached by the end of the year. An example of the pupil progression guidelines for kindergarten is found in Figure 1. This figure shows that all kindergarten teachers were expected to administer running records to their low-performing students to determine each child’s text reading level. The guidelines for first grade and beyond also included a band of expected text level achievement and all teachers were expected to use running records to provide these data. Because of these new guidelines, principals began purchasing benchmark assessment systems to measure text reading levels, and some Reading Recovery teachers began writing grants or securing PTO funding to purchase sets of leveled books which they loaned to classroom teachers. These new materials brought the need for further professional development which principals encouraged the Reading Recovery teachers to provide.

The site coordinator—who was now assistant superintendent/chief academic officer—mandated that all

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**Figure 1. Grade Level Progression Chart Example**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Meeting grade level expectations</th>
<th>Progressing to grade level expectations</th>
<th>Below grade level expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter Recognition (Upper &amp; Lower 52)</td>
<td>50-52</td>
<td>41-49</td>
<td>40 or below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter Sounds (31)</td>
<td>26-31</td>
<td>18-25</td>
<td>0-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concepts of Print (13)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11 or below</td>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blending Phonemes (10)</td>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>5 or below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segmenting Phonemes (10)</td>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>6-8</td>
<td>5 or below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running Record (Guided Reading)</td>
<td>D (9)</td>
<td>C (4)</td>
<td>A/B (1-3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i-Ready Reading</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>308-308</td>
<td>Below 308</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| i-Ready Math | 50e percentile | 21-40th percentile | Below 21%

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_Sansota County School District GRADE LEVEL PROGRESSION CHART (No single data column should be used solely as a set of criteria to determine a student's progression towards end of year grade level expectations)_

**Kindergarten**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Name:</th>
<th>DOB:</th>
<th>DATE:</th>
<th>Age:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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K–2 teachers in the district receive professional development on how to administer and score running records so that the teachers would be prepared to implement the new pupil progression guidelines. The goal was for teachers to not just use running records to obtain text reading levels, but to also use them to drive ongoing instruction. All Reading Recovery teachers were required to provide this professional development during the planning week of school start up in 2018–2019, and the schedule of trainings was placed on the district menu of required school opening trainings.

Each of the Reading Recovery teachers led the professional development on administering and scoring running records for their first- and second-grade classroom teacher colleagues as school began in 2018. Additional running records trainings were provided later in the fall on how to analyze running records and use the results to focus instruction. This was a clear demonstration from the district leadership that Reading Recovery teachers had critical and valuable information that all classroom teachers should know. We received much positive feedback from this activity from classroom teachers, principals, and assistant principals. Following this intensive delivery of professional development, our Reading Recovery teachers reported that teachers began requesting additional professional development. Several Reading Recovery teachers initiated “push in” small-group instruction in regular classrooms after teacher requests.

**Introducing Literacy Lessons**

We have continued to grow. In 2019–2020, 2020–2021, and in 2021–2022 again with the support of donors and our Teacher Leader Rachel Chappell, we were able to provide Literacy Lessons training to cohorts of teachers of English language learners (ELLs) and exceptional student education (ESE) along with replacement Reading Recovery teachers. This expansion of Literacy Lessons allowed us to provide the literacy instruction that our ELL and ESE teachers desperately needed to close the achievement gap. We continue to provide professional development for delivering our modules to all Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons teachers. We also trained a new teacher leader, Laurel Hinds. Our site now includes 58 Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons teachers and 3.5 teacher leaders.

**Current Status of the Sarasota Reading Recovery/Literacy Lessons Site**

The Sarasota Reading Recovery/Literacy Lessons Site is housed in Sarasota County, Florida. The county has 61 schools and over 43,400 students. There are four preschools, 30 elementary schools (including six charter and two magnet schools), 18
middle schools, and 9 high schools. Forty percent of the students are minorities and 47% of the students are economically challenged. Two sets of data further describe our site: achievement data from International Data Evaluation Center (IDEC) and data from an interview with Reading Recovery teachers taken prior to last year’s school ending.

**Strong results 2020–2021 despite the pandemic**

Figure 2 presents data from IDEC regarding the text reading level growth comparison of children who made accelerated progress at the Sarasota site compared to the national pool of all Reading Recovery children making accelerated progress in 2020–2021 and the national random sample. Our first-round children started at a slightly lower text level in the fall than the national pool of all Reading Recovery children and much lower than the random sample children. Upon exit, children in Sarasota had higher text levels than both the national pool of all Reading Recovery children and the national random sample. Thus, while starting as low as all Reading Recovery children in the United States who made accelerated progress, children in Sarasota who made accelerated progress made greater text level gains and continued making those gains after leaving Reading Recovery.

The data displayed in Figure 2 are very similar to the data from all our previous years showing high levels of text reading achievement reached at the exit of the series of lessons and end of year.

Unfortunately, the pandemic did have an impact on our success, as it did all across the country. In 2018–2019, the year before the pandemic began, a total of 264 children were served by 32 Reading Recovery teachers. Of all the children who received a full series of lessons, 80% made accelerated progress and lessons were discontinued, and 20% were recommended. During 2020–2021, 298 children were served by 36 Reading Recovery teachers. Of all children who received a full series of lessons, 70% made accelerated progress, 18% made progress, and 13% were recommended. This dip in results was disappointing, but not unexpected.

**Behind the scenes support from the district**

Like other sites across the country, we continue to face challenges and difficulties. However, our site has survived (with the support of two new superintendents) and thrived (growing in 6 years from six teachers at three schools to 59 teachers at 25 schools including one charter school and one K–8 school with more growth this current year). The story of our journey has provided insight into the role played by Dr. Laura Kingsley, our site coordinator and assistant superintendent/chief academic officer. Her willingness to step in to make things happen for Reading Recovery and her insistence that Reading Recovery teachers are experts who must share their knowledge beyond their classrooms played a critical role in shaping our journey. She is the “make it happen” person on our team.
Another district administrator has been a key player. Christopher Renouf became the director of elementary education and joined the Reading Recovery team when Dr. Kingsley was promoted to assistant superintendent at the end of the second year of our implementation. During his first year as director of elementary education, he took time to meet with Lisa Fisher to find out more about the intervention and to visit a behind-the-glass lesson. As he stated in a recent interview, “I knew Reading Recovery had a great reputation, but it has turned out to be even greater than what I could have ever conceived.”

In his director role, he spoke with principals weekly about Reading Recovery, and many of his communications with principals were through individual, one-on-one conversations. He claimed that the most frequently discussed topic with principals was the potential value which the Reading Recovery or Literacy Lessons teacher would bring to the school. He advocated for principals to collaborate with the Reading Recovery leadership team in order to select the best possible candidate for new positions. He also shared with principals that their new Reading Recovery or Literacy Lessons teachers were expert at listening, observing, and learning — skills which they would bring to the collaborative work in professional learning communities. He reported to us that each new Reading Recovery or Literacy Lessons position in a school brought additional opportunities for those teachers to contribute to what he called “hardwiring” best practices (Studer, 2003, 2014). Hardwiring in schools is when a behavior or belief becomes the standard, accepted practice by all. One indication of our hardwiring best practice is that our Reading Recovery teachers report that running records are now part of the evidence used to discuss students of concern.

Insights From Our Journey
May and colleagues (2016) argued that “A . . . lesson that emerges from the case studies (of Reading Recovery implementation) is that if it is the goal that Reading Recovery influences literacy instruction school-wide, certain supports must be in place,” (p. 146). We would contend that there were six key factors which influenced our journey to integrated implementation and allowed us to influence literacy instruction district wide. The first key element was making the decision to deliberately and strategically leverage Reading Recovery teachers as literacy leaders in their schools through providing professional development. Other sites might position their Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons teachers as leaders by playing roles such as coach (Baker & Brown, 2019; Fountas & Pinnell, 2009) or providing mini-professional development sessions around topics selected by teachers (see Lipp, 2018, for a discussion of other leadership roles Reading Recovery teachers might take).

The second key to our success emerged from having the right administrators in the right positions and having frequent communication with them about implementation. Our teacher leader met with the site coordinator (executive director of elementary schools) bi-monthly during the first year of the project, then met monthly with both our executive director and K–12 assistant superintendent during subsequent years. At the end of the second year of implementation, the Reading Recovery leadership team expanded to include the elementary school executive director. Our site coordinator had tremendous influence in the district and was able to broker collaboration across different departments as needed, and the elementary school executive director was key in communicating with all principals. While individual schools may reach integrated levels of implementation, it is not likely that entire sites can reach this level without at least one powerful district-level administrator working hand in hand with the Reading Recovery team.

The third key element in our success was the frequent communication the elementary school director had with principals about Reading Recovery. He emphasized the principal’s role in maximizing the potential leadership of the Reading Recovery or Literacy
Lessons teacher. He encouraged principals to take an active role in how the Reading Recovery Professional Development Modules were implemented in their schools. While our teacher leaders did communicate frequently with principals, we believe that to reach a high level of principal buy in, at least one administrator at the district level must have knowledge and passion for Reading Recovery and the willingness to communicate with principals frequently.

Selecting the right Reading Recovery teachers was a fourth key to our success. To select teachers with the right attributes, the principals and the Reading Recovery team decided that, starting in Year 3, all candidates for a Reading Recovery position would be interviewed by an administrator and at least one teacher leader. We found that it is critical for our teachers to display open-mindedness and willingness to listen to all sides of an issue, ability to engage others in collaborative communication, and confidence in their abilities and knowledge. We also found it critical that teachers were eager to take on not only training in Reading Recovery or Literacy Lessons but also leadership roles.

Having principals who were willing and able to support their Reading Recovery teachers as they enacted leadership roles within the school’s professional learning communities was the fifth key to our success. Schools that have demonstrated the greatest shifts in the way their K–2 teachers deliver literacy instruction have principals who not only support their Reading Recovery teachers as they provide professional development, but also make time in their schedules for systematic follow-up coaching and school-wide professional development.

Our sixth and final key to success was providing Reading Recovery teachers with the tools and resources they needed to deliver high-quality professional development with confidence and skill. The professional development modules and the training that the teachers received to deliver these modules helped build confidence and allowed for consistent, high-quality professional development across the district.

### The Value Added to the District by Reading Recovery

In the midst of the pandemic, there were many ways we showed our administration and funders the value of Reading Recovery above and beyond outcomes for children served. First, we reviewed the presentation we made at LitCon 2021 titled, “Empowering Reading Recovery Teachers as Change Agents in Your Schools and for Your District.” This presentation began with a statement made by Dr. Kingsley, our site coordinator and assistant superintendent/chief academic officer:

> Sarasota County’s Reading Recovery teachers and teacher leaders have transformed every one of our primary classrooms into literacy-focused, strength-based environments where children learn to LOVE to read! These incredible educators are the literacy experts our district desperately needed! All of us, from classroom teacher to administrator to superintendent, have come to depend on these educators to influence all important ELA decisions. Almost everything we have to brag about regarding literacy in our district can be traced back to our Reading Recovery teachers and teacher leaders!

As we searched for a way to support this statement with data as compelling as our IDEC data, we recalled insights from the 2016 i3 scale-up report related to the idea of Reading Recovery having added value beyond individual lessons. The authors of this report concluded, “In order to be well-supported, Reading Recovery must gain value somehow; and it is not always true that student data can make the case for the program alone,” (May et al., 2016, p. 146). The value added explored in this report was clearly demonstrated in case studies of schools at the integration level of implementation. May and his colleagues argued that Reading Recovery schools are at different levels of implementation — from isolation and obstruction at the lower end to endorsement and integration at the upper end. Schools that exhibited an integration level of implementation were “considered ideal implementations” (May et al., 2016, p. 131).

One of the critical characteristics of schools with integrated implementation as described in the i3 scale up report was that they use Reading Recovery to build capacity in the school. In the report, for example, principals and classroom teachers made comments about the value of Reading Recovery teachers collaborating to build new understandings about literacy acquisition for all children but especially for children who struggle. According to May et al. (2016), principals argued that they played an active role not only in supporting Reading Recovery but also in brokering communication and knowledge sharing among Reading
Implementation

Recovery and classroom teachers. They claimed they were vocal about the value of Reading Recovery in a variety of settings.

There were two important and intertwined characteristics of schools with integrated levels of Reading Recovery implementation. First, Reading Recovery teachers enacted the role of what May and his colleagues called literacy leaders. Second, the principal played an active role in supporting teachers as they enacted that leadership role. May et al.’s (2016) selection of the term literacy “leader” rather than literacy “expert” or “specialist” is notable and connects to a related concept — “teacher leader.” In the field of school reform, leadership, in general, and teacher leadership, specifically, has gained importance in the last decade (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Mangin and Stoelinga (2008) argued that teachers can play pivotal roles in school change efforts that build capacity in a particular setting because they are so immersed in the complexities of teaching in that setting. They are uniquely positioned to address local needs by increasing teacher collaboration around best practices in particular content area (Curtis, 2013; Muijs & Harris, 2003, 2006). Thus, the role of literacy leader, akin to the role of teacher as leader, is particularly relevant to our setting.

We wanted to demonstrate that our site meets the two intertwined criteria of integrated implementation: Reading Recovery teachers serving as literacy leaders and principals providing active support to Reading Recovery teachers in that role. Further, we wanted to demonstrate the value that the Reading Recovery teachers add to our district. In order to support our assertions that our Reading Recovery teachers were enacting a leadership role, we developed a 15-minute interview protocol for our Reading Recovery teachers. As part of the interview, teachers were asked to describe their role in their grade-level PLC meetings. In our site, all Reading Recovery teachers are required to be a member of one grade-level PLC team which meets weekly. The members of the PLC team include grade-level teachers, and may include ESE and ELL support staff, speech and language pathologists, behavior specialists, and Reading Recovery teachers. These teams are expected to provide forums for professional learning and collaboration around the instructional needs of children; thus, it is likely that Reading Recovery teachers might provide leadership at these meetings.

During the interview, as teachers described their role in the PLC teams, they were asked to provide concrete examples. If teachers described their role as providing professional development, they were asked to describe what they had presented and why they chose that particular content. Next, they were asked to rate their principal’s support for playing this role and to provide concrete examples of their principal’s actions or words.

Interview results

We interviewed 26 of the 32 teachers from 21 schools who had been in Reading Recovery for 2 or more years. (Other Reading Recovery teachers and Literacy Lessons teachers at our site were not interviewed as they had only recently been trained.) Teachers who were not interviewed were on leave or retiring. All teachers

A Sarasota Reading Recovery teacher models small-group instruction for an intermediate classroom teacher during push-in coaching lessons.
who were interviewed reported that they were always on the PLC agenda or could ask for an agenda slot at any time. Teachers described roles they played in the PLC that could be considered supporting the professional learning of classroom teachers:

• Provide support and resources for small group differentiated instruction.
• Provide input in discussions about students of concern.
• Review and interpret progress monitoring data, especially running records.
• Provide suggestions for Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction.
• Answer teachers’ questions (most Reading Recovery teachers reported an increase in the number of teachers who regularly ask them questions).
• Provide professional development using Sarasota’s Reading Recovery Professional Development Modules.
• Provide professional development for new small group reading texts and intervention materials recently purchased.

Some of the teachers offered suggestions which implied they take a collaborative role with their colleagues:

• Plan for coaching in a teacher’s classroom.
• Be a good listener; help teachers tease out issues and problems.
• Guide discussions around ideas for solving issues or roadblocks (being careful not to tell teachers what to do but getting them to delve into the problem and focus on desired outcomes).
• Ask questions (probe general statements for more careful detail).
• Help focus discussions that encourage teachers to articulate what they know about best practices.
• Collaborate with teachers on interpreting data and aligning instruction with not only best practices, but what the data is showing about needs.
• Offer follow-up support. (How can I help you with ______ that we talked about today?)

After describing their roles in the PLC during the interview, interviewers discussed with the teachers how their activities allowed us to identify them as what the professional literature (Wenner & Campbell, 2017) calls “teacher as leader” and explained how that role was defined (a K–12 teacher who takes on unofficial leadership role outside her classroom). Then the Reading Recovery teachers were asked to rate how well their principals supported them in playing that role. They were asked to rate their principals on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the most supportive principal imaginable, and 1 being an obstructionist who actively worked against them taking this role. The score of 5 would indicate their principal was neutral — neither supportive nor obstructionist.

Nineteen of the 26 Reading Recovery teachers rated their principals with a 6 or higher indicating they believed their principals were supportive of their enacting a leadership role within their school. Fourteen teachers rated their principal at a level of 9 or 10, indicating a very high level of support. Seven teachers rated their principals as being neither supportive nor obstructionist. Regardless of whether the principal was perceived as being supportive, all Reading Recovery teachers reported that their principal was willing to listen to their concerns and needs and tried to find ways to solve problems and provide new materials. Importantly, most Reading Recovery teachers who rated their principals as supportive mentioned at least one way their principal had positioned them as a valued team player in their school. For example, a few teachers mentioned that at staff meetings their principals had remarked on the success of Reading Recovery or how the Reading Recovery teacher had obtained new materials and would be offering training on their use. Other Reading Recovery teachers reported that their principal frequently referred other teachers to them to help problem solve issues. Two teachers remarked that, during retention meetings, principals frequently asked them for input.

Many of the Reading Recovery teachers reported that their principals had placed them on the school’s adoption committee for the new core literacy program. Two teachers commented that after providing a professional development training to classroom teachers, principals asked them what aspects of instruction they should be looking for in walk-throughs. One teacher reported that when the new superintendent visited her school, the principal took him to the Reading Recovery room to watch part of a lesson and to discuss how she had received external donor funding for new classroom small-group reading instruction.

Integrated implementation of Reading Recovery: Value added through Reading Recovery
The results of this interview with our current Reading Recovery teachers.
reinforced that all teachers at the Sarasota site are enacting the literacy leader role by contributing to the professional learning of their classroom colleagues. All have been involved in informal learning experiences through group discussions and all have provided planned professional development sessions during the PLC meetings. Many have provided longer, follow-up professional development to the short sessions presented in PLC meetings. Thus, our site is meeting the first criteria of integration implementation — using Reading Recovery teachers to build capacity within the literacy program by knowledge sharing. They have become literacy leaders in their schools. Some of our Reading Recovery teachers discuss their roles in ways that suggest they play a more collaborative role with their colleagues likely contributing to collective efficacy (Donohoo et al., 2018). Their comments suggest that they believe they are members of a team whose combined ability and problem solving can influence student outcomes.

We have also met the second criteria of having principals who support their Reading Recovery teachers as literacy leaders. With very few exceptions, our Reading Recovery teachers report that their principals are highly supportive of them in the role of literacy leaders. They stated that many principals provide positive and public support for them. They provided examples of actions that principals took which demonstrated that they regard the role of the Reading Recovery teacher to be vital in the literacy program of their school.

Because of their supportive roles, our principals could be described as providing distributed or collective leadership (Bolden, 2011). Collective or distributed leadership occurs in a group when there is a planful or strategic alignment of resources (power, political influence) with a specific person equipped with particular skills and knowledge (Leithwood et al., 2006; MacBeath et al., 2004). The change that arises from the group’s actions is a result of the unofficial leadership created by the strategic alignment of resources with a particular member of the group. This contrasts with the view that leadership can arise only from attributes and behaviors of individuals with official leadership roles. Overall, the principals in our site distribute leadership power to Reading Recovery teachers through their public and private acknowledgment of the value of their role in supporting improved student learning.

We can also point to one important outcome of having Reading Recovery teachers who are empowered to play the role of literacy leader in their schools. There has been a significant reduction in kindergarten, first-, and second-grade retentions from the first year of implementation in 2015 to 2019. (2020 results not provided due to pandemic.) In spring of 2015, from all 23 elementary schools a total of 420 children kindergarten through second grade were retained; 250 children were from the 10 Title I schools. In the spring of 2019, only 250 children were retained overall, with 119 children retained in the Title I schools. This reduction in retention rates is due to many factors; but having Reading Recovery teachers collaborate with their classroom teacher peers to develop stronger strategies for instructing low-performing children was certainly a significant factor. These reductions in retentions have led to a cost avoidance of hundreds of thousands of dollars yearly to our district.

* A homeroom primary teacher implements the letter tracing procedure from the alphabet module after receiving literacy kits and being trained by her school’s Reading Recovery teachers.
Another outcome of having Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons teachers play leadership roles is reflected in the shift of focus of classroom teachers’ conversations during PLC meetings and in their classroom practices. Before, Reading Recovery teachers reported that most conversations during the PLC meetings were about “how to teach this or that skill.” Now they talk about “how to teach this child.” In addition, all our Reading Recovery teachers reported that they have had frequent discussions with classroom teachers regarding the analysis of running records and how to use them to modify instruction.

The Reading Recovery teachers also reported other shifts in classroom literacy teaching. One teacher noted that when she began teaching Reading Recovery only 20–40% of the teachers in her school taught small groups daily. Now she estimates that 90% of the teachers do this daily and everyone does it several times a week. Another teacher reported that this year, all the first-grade teachers in her school had checked out many sets of different leveled texts to use in small-group instruction, a practice that was not in place when she first began as the Reading Recovery teacher a few years ago.

All our kindergarten and first-grade teachers have shifted their teaching in another way because of new materials they received through the efforts of one Reading Recovery teacher. In the spring of 2018, one of our Reading Recovery teachers approached a donor during our annual donor appreciation luncheon to share with her the contents of a teaching literacy kit she had developed for the kindergarten and first-grade teachers in her building. She also shared testimonials from the classroom teachers about how the materials made their teaching so much more powerful. The donor was impressed by the teacher’s initiative and the testimonials and was willing to provide funds for the teaching materials for all classroom teachers in our district. In the fall of 2018, every kindergarten and first-grade teacher in the district (300+ teachers in all) received a kit of multisensory materials for teaching the alphabet and phonemic awareness. All the Reading Recovery teachers provided professional development to the teachers in their buildings on effective uses of these materials.

In Closing
Our journey has implications for other sites who wish to strengthen their impact on the literacy learning of all children in a district. We suggest that Reading Recovery leaders consider what value could be added...
Implementation

We conclude by emphasizing what May and his colleagues (2016) suggested about the ability to reach integrated levels of implementation:

...[The] positioning of the program and Reading Recovery teachers in a building should be a conscious part of initial program adoption, as well as ongoing implementation—something that would require particular attention by administrators, teacher leaders, site coordinators, and even UTC directors. (p. 146)

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About the Authors

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As of 2015, Lisa Fisher was the first Reading Recovery teacher leader trained in Florida in over 10 years. She currently is one of four Sarasota County teacher leaders serving under the leadership of National Louis University’s Reading Recovery Center for Literacy training site. She is also one of Sarasota County’s ELA district program specialists. Lisa has 24 years of experience as an elementary teacher, reading specialist, reading resource teacher, CARE and MTSS facilitator, professional development coordinator, and Reading Recovery teacher leader. She is a former Sarasota County Teacher of the Year and has since presented at several national conferences. Lisa can be reached via email at lisa.fisher@sarasotacountyschools.net or twitter @lisafisher95.
Reading Recovery® is one of the most well-researched interventions available and has consistently shown positive results for children, yet the continued reactivation of the reading wars at the very least ignores the impact of Reading Recovery and at worst attacks and villainizes it as dangerous or harmful to at least some students. This disparagement is also transferred to universal instruction, especially in some districts that embrace the research of Marie Clay and Reading Recovery. Literacy programs in districts and schools are being questioned and challenged by parent advocacy groups and proponents of particular programs and practices. Practitioners need to be critical consumers of research and understand what it really tells us about effective instruction. This article acknowledges how Clay’s research and Reading Recovery research have influenced instruction and learning in early literacy and identifies research from outside of the Reading Recovery community that validates and supports major aspects of Clay’s influences on classroom and small-group instruction.

In Reading Recovery articles and presentations, the references are largely internal. Reading Recovery teachers, teacher leaders, trainers, and researchers support their thinking primarily with references to Clay’s work and the work of other Reading Recovery educators. While this is appropriate for Reading Recovery, it is not always enough—or even appropriate—when applied to universal classroom and small-group instruction.

Clay (2016) reminds us:

> Because it is an individual intervention delivered only to the children experiencing difficulty, Reading Recovery cannot specify how a classroom programme for children of wide-ranging abilities should be mounted. One would not design a satisfactory classroom programme by studying only the needs of struggling learners. (p. 2)

Yet, many of the insights Clay had about beginning reading are relevant and actionable in the classroom for both whole-class and small-group instruction. Even more, her work has had a profound effect on early literacy teaching and learning in general.

Janet Gaffney and Billie Askew, in a biographical sketch of Marie Clay adapted from their 1999 book, *Stirring the Waters Yet Again*, share this on the Reading Recovery Council of North America website:

> Clay’s role in developing and guiding the implementation of Reading Recovery is such a demanding and illustrious one that there is a danger that it will mask her accomplishments in other areas, including oral language (Clay, 1971, her first book; and Clay, Gill, Glynn, McNaughton, & Salmor, 1983), writing (Clay 1975, 1987), and teaching-learning interactions that accommodate individuals with diverse starting points and rates of learning in typical primary classes (Clay, 1998). (n.d.)

Across the country, there is currently pressure from the media and the public to adopt a Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) and/or implement instructional programs and materials focused on the “science of reading.” In some states, legislative mandates have codified these concepts (Thomas, 2021). Proponents regularly claim that if you are not using a program based on the science of reading, then you are not providing research-based instruction. As part of this push, there are a number of concepts that are repeatedly misrepresented and denigrated as inappropriate and even dangerous to children’s literacy development. These challenges include attacks on

- complex literacy processing systems in favor of a simple view;
- the use of multiple sources of information, including but not limited to phonics and morphology;
- the use of connected text carefully chosen by the teacher to meet the needs of the student instead of relying solely on decodable texts;
- building on student strengths and responsive teaching rather than relying on a program approach where every child gets the same instruction regard-
less of what they may already know, or the additional support they might need; and

• a knowledgeable teacher who makes decisions based on the needs of the students as opposed to purchased programs with a specific scope and sequence.

Despite the fact that all of these concepts have been attacked in the past, and those attacks have essentially been proven to be unfounded, they continue to be raised (Thomas, 2021). Publishers and vendors have again jumped on the bandwagon to promote their products as THE answer to any concerns districts, schools, and educators have about literacy instruction, even though those products may have little, if any, independent evidence of effectiveness (Gabriel, 2021).

In contrast to packaged programs, Reading Recovery is an approach for developing teacher expertise that empowers teachers to intervene early before students fall too far behind in foundational literacy skills and strategies. In addition to Reading Recovery, Clay’s work encompassed a number of important concepts that are currently being disputed. A critical review of research adds evidence for many of these ideas.

Research: What We Need to Know
As practitioners and critical consumers, there are a few relevant understandings we must know about research. Pearson (as cited in International Literacy Association [ILA], 2019, n.p.) provides six rules for using research. Among those rules, two are particularly relevant:

• When research is applied, it ought to be applied in an even-handed way. No cherry picking!! (ILA, n.p.) You must look at all research, not just the bits that fit your biases.

• When you invoke the mantle of science, you have to accept the full portfolio of methods scientists use (ILA, n.p.)

Literacy practitioners must be critical consumers of research. As critical consumers, one main priority is to recognize the difference between research, opinion, anecdotes, and testimonials. Levitan (2017), neuroscientist and cognitive psychologist, cautions “‘[i]n journalists sometimes forget that the plural of anecdote is not data; that is, a bunch of stories or casual observations do not make science’” (p. 172). This contention is important for educators as well, as journalists are not the only ones who confuse opinion, anecdotes, and testimonials with research. Often, blog posts, news articles, and program testimonials or marketing information—rather than research—are offered as supports for instructional processes and products. While blog posts and other kinds of opinion pieces can be informative and can lead us to further investigation, they should not be considered research or taken at face value. There is a reason they are labeled as opinion and not published in peer-reviewed journals. Even if references are included, it is important to examine those references closely. It may be they are simply referencing other opinion pieces. The following questions may be helpful when evaluating the information blogs and other opinion pieces:

• Who is the author and what are their qualifications? Does the author have expertise in the field of literacy instruction? What is the nature of that expertise — a degree, training, work experience in the field?

• Might the author have certain biases? What is the author’s motive for providing the information? What does this author have to gain or lose?

• What is the source of the information? Are there references for the information being provided and what are those references? Are references to relevant research included, or are references made to other opinion pieces?

There are a variety of kinds of research and all of them contribute to our understandings in different but significant ways. While all research comes with limitations, some research adds significantly to our knowledge base, while others do not. Literacy researchers Duke and
Martin (2011) remind us that “the educational enterprise is far too complex for one type of research to answer all of our questions or meet all of our needs” (p. 11). They describe different types of research, tell how each adds to our understandings, help us identify high-quality research, outline what research can and cannot do, and provide important questions to ask about research.

Currently, research that is based on randomized controlled trials is being privileged over other types of studies. As with all types of research, there are limitations. For example, a popular position is that scientific research has proven the one best way to teach reading and this is often described as an almost exclusive focus on phonemic awareness and phonics instruction in the early grades. Proponents often argue that this is settled science. However, one thing that we know about science is that it is never settled. Or, as Gabriel (2021) reminds us, “science is tentative, not tyrannical” (p. 64).

Shanahan (2020) describes two types of science, basic and applied. Basic science aims at answering fundamental questions such as how the reading brain works and how we may learn to recognize words, but also clarifies that these studies provide no direct test of any instruction. This is contrasted with applied science which tries to solve practical issues, like how best to teach reading. Shanahan cautions against over-relying on basic science in determining how to best teach reading:

> If our goal is to determine how best to teach reading, then we must rely on data that evaluate the effectiveness of teaching, rather than depending solely or even mainly on studies of reading processes or of other noninstructional phenomena, which are then applied to teaching through analogy or logical deduction or from premature conclusions drawn from empirical investigations that do no more than describe or correlate. (p. S236)

Shanahan (2020) also states: “No matter how scientific basic research may be, ultimately any science of instruction will have to depend on applied studies of teaching, that is, those studies that require smaller inferences to application” (p. S239) cautioning against using basic science alone to prescribe pedagogical practice and policy. Shanahan goes on to discuss what he refers to as “pieces that do not fit” and uses Reading Recovery as an example, referring to it as a hummingbird.

According to Ransford (2008), “[t]he hummingbird is an animal that by all rights shouldn’t be able to fly. Its wing movements are very different from that of other birds. But not only can they fly, they’re so good at it that they’re the only species which can fly backward. They’re also one of the few—but not the only—that can hover” (para. 1).

Shanahan considers Reading Recovery to be a hummingbird because, despite the “inconsistency of that program with what is known about effective decoding instruction … qualitative syntheses (e.g., Shanahan & Barr, 1995), meta-analyses (e.g., D'Agostino & Harmey, 2016), and specific high-quality studies (What Works Clearinghouse, 2008) have all concluded that Reading Recovery improves reading” (2020, p. S242).

According to Shanahan, this hummingbird of a program “has no impact on phonological awareness” (Shanahan, 2020, p. S242) and he cites a 2001 study by Chapman, Tunmer, & Prochnow. However, both the analysis of Reading Recovery (2013) by the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) and the single study analysis that looked at the results of the May, et al., (2016) i3 grant study (WWC, 2016) showed a significant effect in the area of alphabatics. The WWC specifically includes phonological awareness in its definition of alphabatics.

**Complexity**

Clay (2015a) defined reading:

> … a message-getting, problem-solving activity, which increases in power and flexibility the more it is practiced. My definition states that within the directional constraints of the printer’s code, language and visual perception are purposefully directed by the reader in some integrated way to the problem of extracting meaning from cues in a text, in sequence, so that the reader brings a maximum of understanding to the author’s message. (p. 6)

However, the definition currently being promoted in the media (Hanford, 2018) and through advocacy groups is the Simple View of Reading (SVR). Unlike Clay’s understanding of reading as a process, the simple view says that reading is more like a mathematical formula: decoding x oral language = comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). In practice, the simple view often focuses almost exclusively on the decoding side of the equation. Definitions are important because they provide the understanding around which research questions are developed.
and research studies are designed. If reading is conceived of as a simple process, then the research conducted will likely be designed to answer simple questions. For example, a study may be designed to test the acquisition of knowledge of specific skills without testing whether those skills are then transferred to new situations.

Although proponents often claim that the SVR has been proven in a plethora of research studies, more recently they like to say that it isn’t really simple; that it includes lots of complexity. The fundamental elements, decoding and oral language, are often broken down using Scarborough’s rope (2001) or another model as the visual for this complexity. Perhaps that is because others are questioning whether this theory does enough to explain reading.

The National Research Council (1998) described reading as “a complex developmental challenge that we know to be intertwined with many other developmental accomplishments: attention, memory, language, and motivation, for example. Reading is not only a cognitive psycholinguistic activity but also a social activity” (p. 15). The 2000 National Reading Panel (NRP) report, especially the sections on phonemic awareness and phonics, is frequently invoked as the ultimate proof of the recommended focus on decoding in early literacy learning and the simple view. What is often not acknowledged is that all of the research in that report was conducted before the year 2000, when the report was published. Proponents also often fail to consider the other areas covered in the report, the narrow range of research examined, and the many areas that the NRP did not have enough time to consider.

Since the publication of the NRP report, two other reports have been published by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) in an attempt to broaden the thinking promoted in the NRP report. The first report, Improving Reading Comprehension in Kindergarten through 3rd Grade: A Practice Guide, (Shanahan et al., 2010), is focused on comprehension for beginning readers. Comprehension instruction, especially for students in kindergarten through Grade 3, was largely absent during the No Child Left Behind years, despite the inclusion of comprehension as one of what are often referred to as the “five pillars” identified by the NRP. The introduction to the guide states, “[T]he panel believes that students who read with understanding at an early age gain access to a broader range of texts, knowledge, and educational opportunities, making early reading comprehension instruction particu-larly critical” (Shanahan et al., 2010, p. 5). The report goes on to say “the panel believes decoding instruction alone will not produce desired levels of reading comprehension for all students” (p. 6).

The second document, Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten through 3rd Grade (Foorman et al., 2016) “reviews research published since 2000 and finds new evidence supporting instruction in alphabetic, fluency, and vocabulary, as well as new evidence supporting instruction in additional skills” (p. 1). The document also expands definitions from the NRP report: “Fluency includes the automaticity and speed of decoding skills as well as reading accuracy and expression, while alphabetic includes additional attention to morphologic skills” (p. 99).

Williams (2019) describes a review of the recommendations in the foundational skills guide and the references used to support those recommendations. The review found that “Research from Reading Recovery is cited 117 times by the authors in support of the panel’s four recommendations” even though Reading Recovery is never mentioned in the document. However, it is important to note that, in addition to the Reading Recovery research references, there is significant additional research that supports the complexity of learning to read within the 2016 Foorman et al. document.

Cartwright and Duke (2019) advise “[P]olicy and practice suffer when understandings of reading are too simplistic” (p. 7). They use driving as a metaphor for explaining the complexity of reading, the different bodies of knowledge, and for what happens when we read. For example:

- Monitoring your reading is like monitoring the road and the dashboard as you drive.
- Reading different texts is like driving on different roads.
- While the wheels, which represent decoding and word recognition, are necessary to make the vehicle move, there are many other aspects that need to be a part of the process.

In 2020, the National Academy of Education (NAEd) published the results of their federally funded, decade long, $120 million study known as the Reading for Understanding Initiative (Pearson et al., 2020). Key findings are summarized and include “(a) the importance of emphasizing comprehension in pursuit of knowledge and insight; (b) redoubling our efforts to enhance language
development, both oral and written, for students across the age-span; and (c) changing the culture of classrooms to emphasize collaboration, deep comprehension, critique, and the generative use of comprehension” (NAEd, n.d., para. 2). These findings confirm the importance of teaching comprehension not just relying on the child’s current level of oral language for understanding text.

While this research focused on comprehension, the SVR was the theory under which the research was conducted. In an article focused on the research carried out under the grant program, Cervetti et al. (2020) raised some cautions about the simple view. The research validated the SVR, but also noted challenges to using it, essentially stating that it did not go far enough in helping to understand reading comprehension or diagnosing reading difficulties in young children. The authors explain that the research “rendered the Simple View of Reading more complex by proposing different models of how the broad components of listening comprehension and decoding interact at various stages of development” (p. 4). Perhaps the reason that the SVR was found to be insufficient was because it “was originally intended to provide a broad model for understanding the role of decoding in reading comprehension and to identify potential sources of reading disabilities” (Gough & Tunmer, 1986, p. 1). It was never intended to answer broader questions about reading.

Clay (2015b) believed “[i]f literacy teaching only brings a simple theory to a set of complex activities, then the learner has to bridge the gaps created by the theoretical simplification. The lowest literacy achievers will have extreme difficulty bridging any gaps in the teaching programme and linking together things that have been taught separately” (p. 105). The SVR is not necessarily wrong, it just does not go far enough to explain the complexity of literacy learning. In turn, a complex theory of literacy learning that considers a broader range of influences, including student language and the importance of comprehension, would be supported.

Reciprocity of Reading and Writing
Clay (2016) describes the contributions of writing to literacy learning:

During early literacy learning, writing helps the young reader to analyze some of the detail in print.

- Fosters a slow analysis of print, from left to right
- Highlights letter forms
- Coaches the eyes to scan letters in a word from left to right
- Forces the learner to attend to different levels of analysis (features and letters) and to attend to the importance of letter sequence
- Requires the eye and hand to coordinate awareness and actions
- Puts the learner under pressure to group letters so he can get the message down quickly
- Consistently, but subtly, seduces the learner to switch between the different levels of letters, clusters, words, phrases and messages (p. 77)

Anderson and Briggs (2011), provided additional information on the reciprocity between reading and writing including reciprocity in relation to meaning, structure, grapho-phonetic information, and self-correcting. Unfortunately, this reciprocity between reading and writing is not always acknowledged. In 2014, the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) adopted the term “structured literacy” to describe instructional approaches that teach students explicit and systematic strategies for decoding and spelling words. Currently, Structured Literacy™ (IDA, 2019) is being marketed as the answer to issues with literacy learning in the United States. Teacher education programs are being pressured to revise courses to focus exclusively on structured literacy using the IDA’s Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading (2018).

The IDA website includes a letter to members stating: “The term ‘Structured Literacy’ is not designed to replace Orton Gillingham, Multi-Sensory, or other terms in common use. It is an umbrella term designed to describe all of the programs that teach reading in essentially the same way. In our marketing, this term will help us simplify our message and connect our successes. ‘Structured Literacy’ will help us sell what we do so well” (IDA, 2014, para. 6).
In a 2019 introductory guide, the IDA continues: “This approach is characterized by the provision of systematic, explicit instruction that integrates listening, speaking, reading, and writing and emphasizes the structure of language across the speech sound system (phonology), the writing system (orthography), the structure of sentences (syntax), the meaningful parts of words (morphology), the relationships among words (semantics), and the organization of spoken and written discourse” (p. 6). Yet, in practice, writing appears to refer largely to basic skills including spelling words accurately, penmanship, and sentence structure.

Evidence of the importance of writing to support and extend reading instruction dispute this simple view. Weiser and Mathes (2011) examined eleven studies and found that “struggling readers and spellers receiving encoding instruction integrated with decoding instruction were indeed able to make significant gains in phoneme awareness, alphabetic decoding, word reading, spelling, fluency, and comprehension” (p. 190). More recently, Graham and his colleagues (2018) conducted a meta-analysis of programs that balance reading and writing instruction, including 47 studies, and concluded: “These findings demonstrated that literacy programs balancing reading and writing instruction can strengthen reading and writing and that the two skills can be learned together profitably” (p. 279).

The ILA (2020) research advisory, Teaching Writing to Improve Reading Skills, examined and synthesized meta-analyses of scientific studies where writing, reading, or both were taught and concluded that “[c]ollectively, writing and the teaching of writing enhance not only students’ comprehension and fluency when reading but also their recognition and decoding of words in text” (p. 2). Again, there is adequate evidence to support Clay’s position that “[w]riting can contribute to the building of almost every kind of inner control of literacy learning that is needed by the successful reader” (1998, p. 130).

Oral Language

Clay (2001) writes: “If we harness the established power of children’s oral language to literacy learning from the beginning, so that new literacy knowledge and new oral language processing power move forward together, linked and patterned from the start, that will surely be more powerful” (p. 95). Although oral language is invoked as an important element in conversations around the SVR and the science of reading, in practice, as with writing, it is often ignored or marginalized.

In Hard Words, the documentary which is often recognized as the catalyst for most recently reigniting the reading wars, Emily Hanford (2018) actually stated that “[l]anguage comprehension is what develops naturally in children when people talk to them. … Decoding is what kids have to be taught” (p. 13). Hanford is essentially saying that oral language does not need to be a focus of instruction. However, several of the documents referred to earlier in regards to the complexity of literacy refute this idea and also provide considerable support for the importance of oral language in literacy instruction. It is also important to note Hanford is a journalist, not a researcher or educator, yet she continually argues as to knowing the “right way” to teach reading.

Shanahan et al., (2010) includes a recommendation for guiding students through focused, high-quality discussion on the meaning of text, even in the primary grades. Foorman, et al, (2016) includes a recommendation for teaching academic language skills. They contend that “academic language is a critical component of oral language” (p. 6) and define academic language skills to include the following:

- Articulating ideas beyond the immediate context (inferential language)
- Clearly relating a series of events, both fictional and nonfictional (narrative language)
- Comprehending and using a wide range of academic vocabulary and grammatical structures, such as pronoun references (p. 6).

In addition, the NAEd Reading for Understanding project delved deeply into the area of oral language in their studies. One of the key findings was the importance of “(b) redoubling our efforts to enhance language development, both oral and written, for students across the age-span” (NAEd, n.d., para. 2).

Cervetti, et al. (2020) noted “this research has pointed to the importance of early oral language development and, thus, potential limitations of an exclusive focus on decoding in early reading instruction. In addition, the research
has suggested that language is best conceptualized as a constellation of closely related skills and knowledge that are likely best developed together from the earlier through the later years of schooling” (p. 5).

Alphabet knowledge at preschool and kindergarten is often cited as a key predictor of later reading success (National Early Literacy Panel, 2009, p. vii). However, the NAEd research also suggests that a student’s oral language level may be a better predictor of later reading comprehension than low letter knowledge in preschool and kindergarten. The NAEd project concludes that “these findings point to the significance of early oral language for later reading comprehension and suggest that language development early in school may set the stage for later success with comprehension” (Pearson et al., 2020, p. 49). Even more, Clay’s teaching on the importance of oral language has been supported by additional research, as noted in the following:

So my discussion proceeds on these assumptions: that literacy learning includes reading and writing, that the aim is to have children reading a variety of texts using a range of flexible strategies (including but not restricted to attacking unknown words phoneme by phoneme), and composing simple messages in writing. As children work towards this end goal, oral language is both a resource and a beneficiary. (Clay, 2001, p. 95)

Teacher Expertise
Zhao (2020) used the analogy that educators are becoming “teaching machines,” being told exactly what to teach as well as when and how to teach it. The media has picked up on calls from advocates for simple answers to issues with reading proficiency. A single “right way” to teach reading that is focused on vendor products is being heavily promoted as discussed earlier. The concern with this is that research clearly tells us that the quality of the teacher and their decision making in response to the unique needs of their students is what makes the difference for students, especially those who have difficulty.

Clay’s often cited quote, “If a child is a struggling reader or writer the conclusion must be that we have not yet discovered a way to help him learn” (2016, p. 166), reminds us that good teaching is heavily connected to teacher expertise. The teacher must be able to analyze what the student can do, understand what the student needs to learn next, and provide appropriate instruction for optimal student learning.

The teacher must be able to analyze what the student can do, understand what the student needs to learn next, and provide appropriate instruction for optimal student learning. This is often referred to as “responsive teaching” and its importance has been borne out in numerous research studies over many years.

During the 1990s, Michael Pressley, Richard Allington, and their colleagues examined multiple classrooms across the U.S. to determine what made some classrooms more effective than others. Among their findings, published in a number of peer-reviewed articles and several books, is the following:

[Primary-grade teachers] in the most effective schools supplemented explicit phonics instruction with coaching in which they taught students strategies for applying phonics to their everyday reading. Additionally, more of the most accomplished teachers and teachers in the most effective schools employed higher-level questions in discussions of text, and the most accomplished teachers were more likely to ask students to write in response to reading. In all of the most effective schools, reading was clearly a priority at both the school and classroom levels. (Taylor et al., 2000, p. 121)

Peter Johnston’s (2003) work, which has taught us much about how expert teachers use language, grew out of his work with Pressley and colleagues on teacher effectiveness. Johnston studied successful literacy teachers by noticing, recording, and analyzing the “powerful and subtle ways these teachers used language, and began to explore its significance” (p. 2). He focused “on those things teachers say (and don’t say) whose combined effect changes the literate lives of their students” (p. 2). His work has had profound influence on the importance of the language that teachers use. Similarly, in research for the book, Professional Capital, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) found that the one
variable that has consistently proven effective is teacher expertise. They assert that honoring and developing the capability of all teachers is critical for the future of the teaching profession:

The essence of professionalism is the ability to make discretionary judgments. … If a teacher always has to consult a teacher’s manual, or follow the lesson line-by-line in a script, you know that teacher is not a professional, either because he or she doesn’t know how to judge or isn’t being allowed to. (p. 93)

No program can replace an expert teacher. It is the skillful teacher’s responsiveness to the needs of the student, rather than the dictates of a program, that will have the greatest positive impact on student learning. In the Reading Recovery i3 study, one of the questions explored was regarding instructional strength. Why was the Reading Recovery intervention more successful in some places than in others? The researchers concluded that two critical factors were deliberateness, “an encompassing commitment to thoughtful practice” and instructional dexterity which was defined as “the flexible application of deep skill” (May et al., 2016, p. 91). The best Reading Recovery teachers exhibit these characteristics, and it is likely this commitment to the teacher as expert decision maker that really sets Reading Recovery apart. Experience and evidence provide support that these factors also apply to instructional settings beyond the Reading Recovery tutoring situation.

Conclusion
Marie Clay’s work has taught us much about what is important to effective early literacy learning, especially for beginning readers and those who may experience difficulty acquiring early literacy. As Gaffney and Askew (n.d.) note in their biographical sketch:

A major contribution of Marie Clay’s has been to change the conversation about what is possible for individual learners when the teaching permits different routes to be taken to desired outcomes. This conversation is now embedded in diverse international educational systems. Our thinking has been stretched in ways that make some former assumptions about the lowest-achieving children intolerable. We now live inside of a new agreement about what is possible…an agreement, a paradigm that did not previously exist and that will shape future actions and conversations.

It would be detrimental to see this commitment to students stifled by the search for simple solutions to valid concerns of literacy learning in the U.S. and elsewhere. Additionally, current conversations around literacy learning seem to be focused on looking at many learners as “broken” and in need of being “fixed” rather than seeing their strengths and questioning how we can build on those strengths. As Clay (2016) said, “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 performance” (p. 196).

Clay’s work has exhibited a broad sphere of influence spanning far wider than the Reading Recovery intervention. It is imperative for educators, policymakers, and beyond to be critical consumers of research and to constantly search for answers to questions regarding children’s literacy teaching and learning. There are no quick fixes, simple solutions, or one-size-fits-all answers to complex processes such as reading and writing.

It is imperative for educators, policymakers, and beyond to be critical consumers of research and to constantly search for answers to questions regarding children’s literacy teaching and learning. There are no quick fixes, simple solutions, or one-size-fits-all answers to complex processes such as reading and writing.
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About the Author

Debra Zarling was the PK–5 literacy coordinator for the Oshkosh Area School District in Wisconsin and site coordinator for the Valley Area Reading Recovery Consortium prior to her retirement in 2021. In addition to her role as a district reading specialist, she has also been a classroom teacher, Title I teacher, Reading Recovery teacher, school level reading specialist, and an ad hoc instructor for the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. She holds a master educator license as a reading specialist, is currently president of the Wisconsin State Reading Association, and is a former RRCNA Board of Directors member.
Errors that occur during text reading reflect how a novice reader is drawing from multiple sources of information including meaning (M – a range of story content and features), language structure (S – syntax and grammar) and visual (V – “letter-to-sound and sound-to-letter links” (Clay, 2016, p. 129) that is, the reader’s stored graphemic and phonological knowledge. Observing, recording, and coding oral reading errors based on MSV is an initial step in the analysis of beginning readers’ complex approaches to word solving. Our goal in this article is to explicate and warrant MSV-based approaches to word recognition instruction. First, we examine instructional and observational research that supports the use of MSV. Next, we describe change over time in children’s developing word recognition processing based on teacher observation and coding of errors. Then, we contrast recommendations to guide teachers’ responses to students’ oral reading errors. Finally, we consider the complexity of designing classroom curriculums or early intervention implementations based on research.

As teacher educators and members of the Reading Recovery® professional community, we have accumulated significant experience, research, and theoretical perspectives that connect literacy learning and instruction, most specifically, as it relates to children who struggle with initial literacy learning (Doyle, 2018; Schmitt et al., 2005; Sirinides et al., 2018). Based on observations, both formal and informal, we are eager to engage in dialogue among basic and applied researchers, teachers, and other educational professionals to develop new knowledge and that will move the field forward (Solari et al., 2020).

Instructional Research
Psychology has a long history of research on the process of reading and implications from this research have been used to support the development of literacy curriculums and instructional practices (Pearson, 2004; Shanahan, 2020). This influence on policy and practice was greatly enhanced by the inclusion of the term “scientifically based reading research” in the Reading First legislation (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). It is defined in Section 1208(6) as research that

(A) applies rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and reading difficulties; and

(B) includes research that —

(i) employs systematic, empirical methods that draw on observation or experiment;
(ii) involves rigorous data analyses that are adequate to test the stated hypotheses and justify the general conclusions drawn;
(iii) relies on measurements or observational methods that provide valid data across evaluators and observers and across multiple measurements and observations; and
(iv) has been accepted by a peer-reviewed journal or approved by a panel of independent experts through a comparably rigorous, objective, and scientific review.

Observation and experimental procedures are given equal weight in this definition of scientific research. Laboratory experimental studies and the meta-analytic procedures used to identify reliable patterns across these experiments provide causal evidence...
that can be used to test theories and evaluate alternative processing models (Castles et al., 2018; National Reading Panel, 2000; Petscher et al., 2020; Rayner et al., 2001; Tunmer & Nicholson, 2011). Still, this basic research can provide only tentative implications for practices that need to be tested in real-world effectiveness studies (Institute of Education Sciences, 2016; Solari et al., 2020).

When the focus shifts from a theory-based “science of reading” to a practice-based “science of literacy” instruction, different types of research are required to test the effectiveness of the implementation and to specify the characteristics of students, teachers, conditions, and systems that contribute to demonstrated effects (Shanahan, 2020; Seidenberg et al., 2020; Solari et al., 2020). The Reading Recovery scale-up evaluation (Sirinides et al., 2018) is an example of a real-world instructional research, which showed substantial results in word reading and comprehension measures (Boulay et al., 2018). This evaluation includes both a regression discontinuity analysis and four independent randomized experimental trials, thus providing the replication of results essential to the accumulation of scientific knowledge (Institute of Education Sciences, 2016; Solari et al., 2020).

Shanahan (2020) references Reading Recovery as an example of “instructional practices, supported by pedagogical research but inconsistent with basic research findings” (p. 242). He likens Reading Recovery to a hummingbird:

> What physicists and engineers knew about aerodynamics was not consistent with the flight behaviors they could observe in hummingbirds (Ransford, 2008). That led them to a great deal of study of hummingbirds, expanding what we now know about flying and hovering. Instead of assuming that the basic knowledge of aerodynamics was complete and correct, researchers decided that it was worth probing those instances where practice was not in accord with empirically grounded theory. (p. 243)

As with the hummingbird’s flight, it is worth probing more deeply into the seeming contradiction between instructional implication drawn from basic science and findings from instructional research. Shanahan (2020) points out that the Reading Recovery evaluation was not designed to demonstrate the effectiveness of particular instructional components. While the study did not isolate active ingredients, the independent research team (May et al., 2016) did conduct extensive interviews and observations to identify factors that might contribute to variations in effectiveness across teachers and sites. They identify instructional strength as a major source of variation, specifically naming teachers’ deliberateness and instructional dexterity. “In Reading Recovery, deliberateness is understood as an encompassing commitment to thoughtful practice; instructional dexterity is defined as the flexible application of deep skill” (p. 91).

Reading Recovery teachers engage in extensive professional learning activities to support their deliberateness and instructional dexterity as they work with individual children on all the components of a typical Reading Recovery lesson (Clay, 2016). These components include:

- reading of familiar text;
- oral reading assessment and instruction on the text introduced in the previous lesson;
- letter identification (including name, sound, and formation);
- word study using known words;
- writing (including composing a message, spelling using sound to letter expectations, and development of writing vocabulary);
- reconstructing a cut-up version of the child’s written message; and
- the introduction and reading of novel text.

A major focus of the teachers’ professional learning activities centers on the observation, analysis, and possible teaching decisions in response to the child’s oral reading errors, that is, their MSV patterns. The demonstrated effectiveness of the Reading Recovery intervention (Schwartz, 2018; Schwartz & Lomax, 2020; Sirinides et al., 2018) warrants further consideration of how this aspect of instructional strength contributes to student learning. In the next section, we examine the observational research that forms the basis for teachers’ analysis and decision process.

**Observing Children’s Oral Reading Errors**

Marie Clay laid the foundation for her subsequent development of the Reading Recovery intervention with a year-long observational study of
100 New Zealand children as they entered school at age 5 (Clay, 1968, 1982; Doyle, 2018). Her observations included weekly records of children’s reading and writing, and a battery of tests administered three times across the year. Clay developed a coding system used to record children’s oral reading errors known as the running record of oral reading, which is used daily in Reading Recovery lessons (Clay, 2013; Schmitt et al., 2005).

Clay (1968) indicated that, “When a child gave a reading response that was not an acceptable pronunciation of the stimulus word for the linguistic environment in which it occurred, an error was recorded. The errors corrected by a child without prompting were called self-corrections” (p. 435). Across the year she recorded a total of 10,525 errors of which 26% were self-corrected (Clay, 1968). Each error was analyzed for the kinds of information used (or neglected) up to the error (Clay, 2013).

• Did the meaning/message influence the error? (M)
• Did the sentence structure (syntax) influence the response? (S)
• Did visual information from the print influence any part of the response? (V)

Based on an end-of-the-year standardized reading test, she divided her sample into four quartiles. Students in the highest quartile showed a self-correction rate of 35% compared to 11% by the lowest quartile students. This observed difference in the self-correction rates, growth, and change over time between high-progress beginning readers (top quartile) and striving readers (lowest quartile) played a key role in Clay’s subsequent development of her literacy processing theory (Clay, 2015a, 2015b; Doyle, 2018) and early intervention procedures (Clay, 2016). Clay observed that, from the beginning, children who became proficient readers used their oral language knowledge as a way of predicting words and detecting errors. Gradually, over time, visual perceptual learning—including, letter, letter-sounds associations, word, and the efficient use of word parts and syllables—would eventually dominate the word recognition process (Doyle, 2018).

In a study of beginning readers’ word recognition errors, McGee et al. (2015) reviewed the findings of previous observational studies and added their own analysis of 1,362 error episodes. The participants in their study were selected for Reading Recovery intervention support based on a literacy screening measures administered in the fall of first grade (Schmitt et al., 2005). According to Elliott’s (2020) discussion of common conceptions of dyslexia, these striving readers would qualify as the lowest-performing students on the screening measure, similar to Clay’s lowest quartile students at the end of their first year in school. McGee et al. subdivided the intervention group based on end of first grade measures into those now performing at average levels (74%) and those still reading below grade level (26%). The latter group fits another of Elliott’s (2020) conceptions of dyslexia as students showing persistent intractability to high-quality intervention.

McGee et al. (2015) classified errors as single action, when a student made an error and kept on reading, versus action chains in which the student noticed the error and either self-corrected or made multiple attempts to solve the word recognition difficulty. McGee et al. examined differences in error behavior across these groups and as text complexity increased across text levels 5, 7, 9 to 12 (Pearson & Hiebert, 2014). They found that students in both groups at the lowest text level made a number of single action errors (34%) based on contextual information (M and S). As students moved to reading more complex texts at their instructional level (greater than 90% accuracy), they increased their use of letter-sound information (V) and the combination of letter-sound and contextual information (MSV). A major difference between the two groups of students was that “RR students who ended the year reading at the first-grade level increased their use of these action chains, whereas RR students who ended the year reading below this level did not” (McGee et al., 2015, p. 263). This shows a difference between groups in the tendency to notice and take action on their own errors.

Change Over Time in Word Recognition Processing

Word recognition models that include self-correction as a critical component of change over time must include processing related to “searching” and “monitoring” (Clay, 2015b; Doyle, 2018; Schwartz 1997, 2005, 2015; Schwartz & Gallant, 2011). When reading texts, children search information sources to generate an initial attempt to read an unfamiliar word. They may then use additional information to monitor the attempt and initiate further searching if needed. Since correct responses fit all...
possible information sources, studies analyze errors to infer the types of information readers are using for monitoring and searching.

Like Seidenberg et al. (2020), we find Kahneman’s (2011) perspective on processing helpful in thinking about how beginning readers might coordinate information sources for monitoring and searching (Schwartz, 2015). Kahneman describes two types of processing: The fast intuitive processing (System 1) used in most everyday situations and the more deliberate and effortful processing (System 2) that can be used to monitor and correct errors resulting from intuitive processing. The following problem demonstrates how these processing systems typically function (2011, p. 44).

A bat and ball cost $1.10.

The bat costs one dollar more than the ball.

How much does the ball cost?

The intuitive answer given by 50–80% of college students is 10 cents. These respondents fail to invest the additional System 2 processing required to check whether their answer fits all the information (i.e., If the ball cost 10 cents and the bat cost a dollar more than the ball, the bat alone costs $1.10, so together the bat and ball cannot cost $1.10).

Given this view of processing, it is not surprising that novice and striving beginning readers generate many single-action word recognition attempts based on contextual information (M and S) and fail to monitor these attempts as they read instructional level texts (McGee et al., 2015; Schwartz, 2015). For example, when reading a book about objects that are either hard or soft, a child might say “bunny” instead of “rabbit” in the sentence “A rabbit is soft.” Kahneman describes this type of processing as the law of least effort.

If there are several ways of achieving the same goal, people will eventually gravitate to the least demanding course of action. In the economy of action, effort is a cost, and the acquisition of skill is driven by the balance of benefits and costs. (2011, p. 35)

The child has achieved the goal of providing a meaningful response to the printed page, matched a word in oral language to each word in print, used the language structure of the book, and correctly identified the known words “A” and “is.” Prompting the child to monitor this response by visual (V) information may activate System 2 processing, reduce the types of information the child needs to consider, and result in the child rereading the sentence, noticing the error, and perhaps self-correcting.

Clay (2015a) describes children as “using ‘predict and check’ in many cases as a substitute for letter-sound decoding, in situations where their print knowledge was inadequate. These intermediate skills enable a reader to use prediction to narrow the field of possibilities and to reduce the decoding load” (p. 254). Direct instruction, along with reading and writing experience, increases print knowledge and the ease of access to stored letter-sound relationships. Prompting striving beginning readers to use this developing knowledge to monitor their word recognition attempts can refine their processing. As McGee et al. (2015) found, orthographic information begins to play a more dominant role in single action errors, with students showing rapid progress continuing to refine the types of information they were able to monitor.

If children’s processing followed a simple progression, it would be easy to base instructional decision on an analysis of error behavior. Multiple factors, however, influence the type of processing a child might demonstrate at point of difficulty. These factors include the child’s (a) current language ability; (b) item knowledge related to letters, sounds, orthographic patterns, and words; (c) the syntax and position of a word within a sentence; (d) the overall complexity of the text; and (e) relative difficulty of the text for a child (Briceno & Klein, 2019; Clay, 2015b). These factors contribute to complex error patterns. Siegler (2007) explains this type of developmental pattern as overlapping wave theory. The theory maintains that early strategic approaches to cognitive tasks coexist and are gradually replaced by more advanced processing. The onset and uptake of new strategic approaches can be slow or more rapid, thus leading to waves with gradual or steeper crests. Several waves may eventually give way to the mature form of processing which approaches near 100% use.

In reading development, the mature form of processing would be the automatic word identification described by Ehri (2020). The waves represent changes in monitoring and searching as readers become more efficient at using information from the text and their knowledge of letter-sound connections. Multiple waves coexist and may be displayed at points of difficulty. Despite the complexity of children’s error patterns, Reading Recovery teachers attempt to foster progress by careful analysis of change.
over time in these patterns (Clay, 1998, 2015b; Doyle, 2019; McGee et al., 2015; Schwartz & Gallant, 2011). This analysis establishes a teacher’s deliberate orientation to respond to particular types of errors and dexterity in responding to these errors when observed.

We agree with Petscher et al. (2020), Seidenberg et al. (2020), Ehri (2020), and the large body of research that demonstrates that skilled readers identify almost all words automatically without letter-by-letter sounding out or contextual guessing. We also concur with Petscher et al.’s concern that contextual guessing, even if integrated with some partial graphophonic information, may not provide the orthographic learning needed to support automatic word identification.

Instruction fostering students’ monitoring of word recognition attempts by visual information, however, addresses both of these concerns. Ehri (2020) describes several studies in which orthographic mapping goes from sound-to-letter connections rather than the letter-to-sound connections. Sound-to-letter connections are frequently employed in writing programs to support spelling and to develop a writing vocabulary (Castles et al., 2018; Ehri, 2020; Richgels, 2001).

Still, we would not expect striving readers to make progress toward mature word recognition processing without considerable direct instruction to build letter-sound knowledge. The Reading Recovery intervention includes direct instruction in letter-sound connections during the letter, word, and text reading components of the lesson, along with phonemic awareness and phonics instruction during the writing component using Elkonin boxes to scaffold this learning. This is why Adams (1990) noted, “The Reading Recovery program has been methodically designed to establish and secure that whole complex of lower-order skills on which reading so integrally depends” (p. 421).

If children’s processing followed a simple progression, it would be easy to base instructional decision on an analysis of error behavior. Multiple factors, however, influence the type of processing a child might demonstrate at point of difficulty.

There is a reciprocal relationship between the phonemic and phonics knowledge developed through writing and the visual monitoring of word recognition attempts (Clay, 2015a, 2015b). The ability to hear and represent sounds in words when writing provides expectations for visual monitoring when reading. Children who read voluminous amounts of texts and actively monitor both correct and incorrect word recognition attempts by meaning, structure, and sound to letter expectations are optimizing their opportunities for the orthographic mapping that develops an automatic and self-extending reading vocabulary.

### Instructional Decisions

Scanlon and Anderson (2020), Davis et al., (2020), and Duke (2020) all present recommendations that classroom teachers can use to help beginning readers search for information to make a word recognition attempt when they encounter a word that is part of their oral language, but unfamiliar in print. Davis et al. and Duke both recommend searching procedures based on sounding the letters of the word in sequence. Davis et al. suggest a process of saying and blending the sounds of the letters. Duke’s process emphasizes sliding through the sounds within the word to avoid extraneous vowel sounds that result from trying to produce individual consonants in more traditional “sound it out” procedures. Both sets of recommendations include monitoring these visual attempts by meaning and language structure.

Davis et al. (2020) and Duke (2020) recognize that beginning readers may use M and S to generate some word recognition attempts, especially “when they have not yet acquired enough alphabetic knowledge to kickstart the processes of orthographic mapping” (Davis et al., 2020, p. 8). Since monitoring by visual information is not part of their system, it is unclear how they expect teachers to respond to word recognition errors based on M and S but undetected by the child. Prompting children to monitor these types of errors using sound-to-letter expectations would likely advance their goal of having beginners “attend closely to the letters in words and their associated sounds” (Duke, 2020, p. 3).

Scanlon and Anderson’s (2020) word recognition approach includes using meaning clues from pictures or context; structure clues from reread-
ing the sentence; and sounds related to letters, word families, and other orthographic elements. They want students to use these information sources in “interactive and confirmatory ways. We did not want students to just decode the words, but rather to make sure their attempts resulted in real words that fit the context” (p. 23). This suggests that searching attempts, using multiple information sources, should then be monitored by meaning. The heavy emphasis on writing and making words with letter tiles based on the teacher’s dictation provides phonemic awareness and phonics knowledge that would support monitoring word recognition attempts based on M and S using sound-to-letter expectation, but this doesn’t appear to be part of their word recognition recommendations. Scanlon and Anderson report the results of several instructional studies that support the effectiveness of their overall instructional approach.

Schwartz (2005) suggests a framework to support teachers’ decisions as they listen to and respond to children’s oral reading. This framework includes (a) knowledge of the child’s previous response history; (b) the types of information sources the child uses, notices, or neglects; (c) the type of processing the teacher intends to foster; and (d) the level of support needed to facilitate the child’s processing. Consider a child who substitutes “home” for “house” during oral reading. If this type of error occurs early in a child’s learning, where the response history shows many gross visual errors based on M and S, e.g., “pony” for “horse,” “purple” for “fat,” or “river” for “water,” the teacher might ignore the home/house substitution and wait for a clearer example on which to teach for monitoring by sound to letter expectations. At a later point in time, when the child responses show that many of the initial attempts fit M, S, and the initial visual information, then the home/house substitution would be exactly the type of error the teacher would target to prompt for monitoring by additional visual information.

If the child has completed the sentence without showing signs of having noticed the error, a prompt with high support would be, “That makes sense. Check to see if it looks right” (referring to the whole sentence, not pointing to the error). A lower level of monitoring support might ask, “Were you right?” As the child rereads the sentence and says “home,” phonics knowledge creates the expectation of seeing an “m” near the end of the word. Noticing the conflict between sound-to-letter expectations and the print is a first step in creating a new wave of visual monitoring.

Selecting the prompt that fits the observed reading behavior demonstrates instructional dexterity and is grounded in the teacher’s deliberate analysis of previous running records of text reading. This type of contingent teaching is complex even in a one-to-one teaching context.

Looking at a different type of contingent teaching, Phillips and Smith (1997) reported that intervention teachers responded to 95% of student errors, but only fostered post-error self-monitoring 34% of the time. Teachers maximize their instructional dexterity by basing their responses to students’ errors first on whether the student has noticed their error (monitoring) and then on the type of information sources used to generate the initial attempt.

Complexity in Research and Practice

Most children (80–90%) do not require the procedures developed for early intervention with striving beginning reader and will learn to read in classroom programs of many different kinds. High progress students...
learn the components emphasized by the selected approach and infer any additional processes needed to construct an effective literacy processing system. This makes it difficult to identify the critical element of any comprehensive literacy program or intervention (Clay, 2015b, 2016).

Word recognition instruction that includes M and S information as part of early processing has been critiqued because basic research clearly shows this is not how skilled readers identify words (Ehri, 2020; Seidenberg et al., 2020; Stanovich, 2000). It is equally true, however, that skilled readers do not sound out words letter by letter. Supporting change over time in children’s word recognition processing (Clay, 2015b; Seidenberg et al., 2020; Ehri, 2020) requires a deeper understanding of beginning reading. Classroom curriculums and early interventions should reflect this complexity.

Petscher et al. (2020) argue that an early emphasis on letter-to-sound processing of words is necessary to promote the orthographic mapping that supports skilled word identification. We argue that sound-to-letter processing to monitor word recognition attempts can also support change over time in students’ searching strategies and orthographic mapping. Ehri’s (2020) research has shown that both paths can facilitate learning. The common goals are that children (a) identify most words automatically, (b) solve “challenges including multisyllabic words within more difficult texts at speed, working with clusters of letters” (Clay, 2016, p. 47), and (c) show evidence of becoming self-extending readers and writers (Clay, 2016; Share, 2008).

Seidenberg et al. (2020), Shanahan (2020), and Solari et al. (2020) each describe the complexity of moving from basic science to instructional practice. Unfortunately, attempts to bring research-based practices to scale have too often lost their effectiveness in translation (Balu et al., 2015; Boulay et al., 2018; Gamse et al., 2008). An exception to this pattern is the independent evaluation of the Reading Recovery scale-up that demonstrates effectiveness and replication of effects with striving beginning readers over four large independent samples in standard school settings (Schwartz & Lomax, 2020; Sirinides et al., 2018).

Shanahan (2020) likened Reading Recovery effectiveness to a hummingbird’s unexpected success in flying. Scientists needed to conduct considerable research to explain how it managed to fly. We offer this discussion of word recognition processing to engage basic researchers and educators in a dialogue to advance our understandings of how to help children having difficulty learning to read take flight.

References


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Hub Continues Work to Increase Instructional Strength of All Reading Recovery Teachers

Amy Smith, Richmond, KY

The North American Reading Recovery Improvement Science Hub is a professional learning community of stakeholders coordinating Reading Recovery® improvement efforts.

The Hub was established in 2019, as a leadership team to continue the work initiated by the North American Trainers Group (Forbes et al., 2019). Since that time, Hub members have worked to build their understanding of improvement science, developed and trialed change ideas, and communicated our efforts with the Reading Recovery community. This article provides an overview of our efforts in 2020–2021 as well as some of our goals for the upcoming school year.

Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Cycles
Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles are a mechanism in which small change ideas are trialed. The Hub has designed and carried out several PDSAs, including two that investigated if modifying standard record forms could strengthen teachers’ instructional decision making through a literacy processing lens. In 2020–2021, the Hub ran iterations of PDSAs to test the modified forms. In addition, we created a PDSA to trial a series of training modules designed to orient new improvement teams to improvement science. Despite the challenges of working virtually and intermittent school closures, we were excited to move forward with new and additional iterations of PDSAs. We are also grateful to the teachers, teacher leaders, and trainers who volunteered to participate in these PDSAs.

Establishing Improvement Teams
Increasing collaboration between the Hub and our broader network was a primary goal in 2020–2021. Thus, we established three stakeholder-specific improvement teams: a Reading Recovery trainer team, a Reading Recovery teacher leader team, and a school/district administrator team. Each team worked with Hub members throughout the school year to learn more about improvement science. The orientation process included developing a common language and exploring improvement tools and processes. Teams reviewed the driver diagram (see Worsfold, 2021), examined data from PDSA cycles, and participated in a PDSA inquiry. Establishing these teams is a step toward embedding improvement science principles across our network. The work of improvement team members also informs the Hub’s evolving theory of improvement.

Sharing Our Work
Communicating our work to the Reading Recovery network is an ongoing goal for the Hub. In 2020–2021, we shared our work through presentations at the Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery Conference, the Reading Recovery Teacher Leader Institute, and the North American Trainers Group meetings, and at meetings of the Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery and the Reading Recovery Council of North America boards of directors, and The Ohio State University Advisory Board. The response from stakeholders is overwhelmingly positive and many have expressed interest in participating in future PDSAs. The involvement of more Reading Recovery professionals is important and provides an opportunity to test current and future change ideas in more diverse contexts.

Changing Membership
In the spring of 2021, Dr. James Schnug, the OSU trainer representative to the Hub, announced his retirement. Jim’s work as a Hub member was invaluable. Each spring, the Hub members evaluate the needs of the group and identify stakeholder representation gaps. Thus, our final accomplishment of the year was to select new Hub members, including two who will represent the perspectives of Descubriendo la Lectura (DLL) and Intervention Préventive en Lecture-Écriture (IPLÉ). We are excited to welcome the following
About the Cover

Tania loves to visit the kindergarten classrooms and read stories to them. Now a seventh grader, Tania wants to be a teacher because she likes to help people learn. After her full series of Reading Recovery lessons, Tania went on to pass her OST and met the criteria for the 3rd Grade Reading Guarantee.
It was early in the spring of 2021, that I was finally able to take my mother for a drive near her home in Carlisle, PA. After a year of distancing, the chance to be in the same physical space with my mom was its own tonic. Add to that her 96 years of wisdom and perspective, and you have the makings of a memorable car ride.

The trees were still quite bare, and the surrounding farms were brown and dormant. My mom gazed out the window while I concentrated on the narrow hilly road. After some time, she turned to me and said, “Winter reveals structure, doesn’t it?” Puzzled, I asked, “What do you mean, Mom?” She went on to say that during summer, when everything is lush and leaf-filled, we can’t see the underlying architecture of living things.

Mom’s observation prompted me to research how master gardeners approach designing a landscape. I discovered that most experts find the effusive display of full bloom distracting and suggest that winter is the time to consider and plan a garden’s structure. During a lecture I attended at the Chicago Botanic Garden, Maria Smithburg encouraged gardeners to “always let the winter tell you something about the garden.”

According to Marie Clay (2001), using a different lens grants us the capacity to gain perspective. She says such a lens “is used for limited purposes for which it is particularly suited (like viewing things in detail or taking a panoramic photograph)” (p. 41). It occurred to me that winter could be a type of Marie Clay’s unusual lens, since it offers an opportunity to see what lies hidden from view during the growing season.

We have been in a winter season of sorts, pared down to the essentials during the pandemic. In light of the clarity this unusual lens provides, I’ve noticed some characteristics of our Reading Recovery Community’s landscape. I’ve reflected on our community’s navigation of the events of the past year and how we’ve viewed and tended our own garden. This atypical season gave us the rare opportunity to examine our structure, unencumbered by the excessive foliage of past growing seasons.

The Reading Recovery community’s vision is to “ensure the competencies necessary for a literate and productive future for children learning to read and write.” According to our mission statement, we aim to “construct collaborative partnerships to change the trajectory of literacy achievement.” Measured against these aspirations, how did we fare during the past year? I would like to suggest some tangible indicators of the vitality of Reading Recovery that another, more typical year may have obscured.

Incredibly, Reading Recovery students who achieved Accelerated Progress outperformed their random sample peers in each and every measure of growth on the Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement (International Data Evaluation Center, 2021). This remarkable accomplishment is unprecedented and comes during a year when some of us did not see a single student in person! What seemed a dormant season proved quite the opposite, as the blooming of strong readers and writers revealed when spring returned. Whether teachers taught remotely in a hybrid manner, or in person with social distancing protocols in place, learning and acceleration happened. The strength of the lesson framework, combined with the deliberate and dexterous expertise of teachers, ensured that children received the high-quality, responsive teaching that is at the heart of Reading Recovery instruction. Good soil (a sound theory), strong roots (a history of thoughtful practice), and plentiful sunlight and rain (a commitment to daily instruction) led to vibrant growth.

We proved to ourselves and to others that our intervention is effective in all seasons because we do whatever it takes to find a way to teach children to read and write.

This past winter also allowed us to see parts of our structure that were hidden by the foliage of previous springs, such as the vital support of a child’s family in the process
of learning to read and write. Due to the necessities of online learning, many of us were able to connect with the families of our children in more authentic and tangible ways. Families welcomed us into their homes, and we traded the more sterile environment of the classroom for the warmth of kitchens and family rooms. Of course, our families have always been there, but the recent winter of the pandemic reminded us that family connections are critical when growing readers and writers.

In addition, our technical expertise grew exponentially and surprised us. Teachers and teacher leaders, with the support of trainers, found creative ways to maintain the integrity of the Reading Recovery lesson while delivering instruction through a variety of virtual platforms. This is knowledge that will serve us in many ways in the future — from coaching opportunities to increased collegial collaboration. Our attention to the whole child seated (albeit virtually) beside us deepened. We proved our ability to respond proactively through innovation and collaboration and were elated to see the positive effects on children’s learning.

Since a garden’s structure is more apparent in the winter, gardeners can more easily see gaps in the design, opportunities for new growth.

The wisdom and perspective of Leslie’s 96-year-old mom helped reveal new opportunities for growth in the Reading Recovery Community.

This is true in our community as well. New initiatives at RRCNA have grown out of a careful look at ways in which our mission can be strengthened and enhanced.

The pared-down nature of the past year gave us an unusual lens for noticing and elevating possibilities for new growth.

In June, Past President Amy Smith, President-Elect Maeghan McCormick, and I attended a presidents’ retreat, hosted by RRCNA Executive Director Billy Molasso. Together we reflected on past and present, while imagining prospects for future initiatives. The events of the past year gave us a renewed sense of urgency to examine possibilities for new growth. One of the most important topics we discussed was Kivvit’s work on our behalf. For those of you new to Kivvit, this public affairs strategist has been working with us since January 2021, to assist our organization by crafting a concise, compelling message for the public. Because of Kivvit’s deep dive into opposition research, as well as testing what messages from our community have the greatest resonance, we are positioned to have a more targeted and robust impact on the literacy conversation taking place in the public square.

We found another opportunity to cultivate new growth in the formation of our Legislative Response Team (LRT). It has been a while since our community focused on advocacy at the state level. The LRT will help us identify and respond to legislative initiatives that directly or indirectly impact the implementation of Reading Recovery at the state and local level. Responses can be quickly crafted and mobilized in real time, to sustain and grow our spheres of influence.

My mom opened my eyes, and hopefully yours as well, to the beauty and clarity that a winter season lays bare. And once we’ve gazed through this unusual lens, we can’t unsee what we’ve discovered. We can’t waste what we’ve learned. The challenges of the last year revealed a vibrant community, and I’m excited to see what new growth springs from our proposed initiatives. Tending a healthy and robust garden requires constant attention and expert care. We’ve learned a lot about ourselves as a community from the past winter. As we move into yet another, I believe we do so as more evolved gardeners with a deeper understanding of our landscape.

References


Executive Director’s Message

Collective Voices Can Help Learners Who Need Us Most

RRCNA Executive Director Billy Molasso

Let me guess: You became an educator because you adore thoroughly digesting reams of “legal-ese” and analyzing the means and motivations behind rules, regulations, and mandates.

No? Maybe not.

I’ll try again. You became an educator because you deeply care for the well-being of your students and want to use your voice to help them learn. A true advocate for kids, especially those struggling with literacy.

I bet that’s closer to the mark.

Depending on how long you’ve been in education, you’ve likely found yourself treading in the wake of at least one tsunami of bad policy, be it testing mandates, overly prescriptive methods, or other “red tape” measures that—however well-intentioned in their inception—have contributed to educator overwhelm and presumably even the national teacher shortage. If only those laws had been shaped by or had the voices of true advocates behind them!

In “Interpreting Policy for Practice: A 4-Part Process” (page 17 of this issue), Rachael Gabriel outlines a framework through which educators can systematically analyze policy so that they may respond to it with integrity” (p. 17). Gabriel offers multiple examples of policies enacted over the past several years and examines where legislation slanted toward science of reading “has codified a narrow and often misleading brand of certainty about what counts as appropriate reading instruction and intervention” (p. 23). Gabriel illuminates where the underlying sentiment of a law may have been pure in its intent toward helping struggling readers, but where over-prescriptive measures often leave out those who may not fit into the narrow view of those who crafted the legislation.

Gabriel posits, “Since this batch of new laws is increasingly prescriptive about what to teach and assess, it is increasingly important that educators have tools and frameworks with which to productively engage with policy in order to ensure it is implemented with integrity in relation to both learners and the law” (p. 23).

That is exactly where the Reading Recovery Community comes in!

The time is long past where educators can sit by and assume that the laws and policy enacted will be thoughtfully laid out with the needs of our students in mind. Now is the time when real educators contribute to legislative conversation — to have their wisdom from the field, the classroom, and the intervention office be heard by those shaping policy. This need was the impetus for us to create the Legislative Response Team, which recently had its inaugural meeting to outline its goals and strategies for amplifying the voice of our members in state-level advocacy.

And when we say the “voices of our members,” this includes yours! This is officially your call to action. In the coming weeks and months (and hopefully years and decades), watch for opportunities to make your voice heard on legislative issues that affect our students.

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NEW! Community Advocacy Committee
Currently seeking chair, chair-elect, and members

Calling passionate proponents of Reading Recovery to help us spread success stories in your community and beyond! The Community Advocacy Committee facilitates resources and strategies for Reading Recovery professionals to advocate in their local communities, including with other teachers in their buildings, with building and district leadership, school boards, parents and families, and others at the local community level. The Community Advocacy Committee will work in coordination with a new Legislation Response Team that will focus on state-level advocacy issues.

Blog Review Committee
Currently seeking members

Blog Review Committee is looking for educators who love reading and Reading Recovery to recruit and give feedback to aspiring bloggers. This is an easy volunteer opportunity with a minimal time commitment that allows you the first look at key issues from the field — perfect for those who like to keep up with the latest in literacy.

Interested in serving? Log in to the Reading Recovery Community Forum and go the Volunteer tab to find these and more volunteer opportunities.

share one of your own, or otherwise use your expertise to enlighten those in your sphere of influence about Reading Recovery as a non-negotiable piece of literacy curriculum.

Would you like to contribute on an even deeper level? Sign up for the new Community Advocacy Committee to facilitate resources and strategies for Reading Recovery professionals to strongly advocate for Reading Recovery, DLL, IPLE, and Literacy Lessons in their local communities— including with other teachers in their buildings, with building and district leadership, school boards, parents and families, and others at the local community level.

In whatever way you choose or are able to contribute, we urge you to be vocal in your support; be louder than the detractors. Who knows? Yours could be the voice that helps inform the next wave of policy. Let’s use our collective voices in support of the learners who need us most.
Teacher Leader Awards Support Training for Three

Three teacher leaders are in training thanks to a generous donation from Pioneer Valley Books. These awards are funded to school districts that have demonstrated a commitment to Reading Recovery and have selected a qualified teacher leader candidate.

**School District of Waukesha, Waukesha, WI**

Lisa Lawrenz brings over 12 years of teaching to her training as a teacher leader. She has a master's degree in bilingual education and ESL certification from University of Wisconsin-Madison. Lisa is looking forward to expanding her knowledge and supporting the growth of the district’s Reading Recovery teachers so they can provide the most expert instruction to struggling readers.

**Gwinnett County Public Schools, Gwinnett, GA**

Sharon Smith brings 20 years of experience to her training as a teacher leader and has a PhD in language and literacy education from University of Georgia. Gwinnett County Schools has been a Reading Recovery site for 26 years and is working to significantly increase the amount of Reading Recovery teachers in the district. Sharon is dedicated to place a high priority on building relationships as the foundation for all learning, both for Reading Recovery teachers and students. Sharon is training at Georgia State University.

**University Consortium at National Louis University, Lisle, IL**

Dana Hagerman brings 18 years of teaching experience and a doctoral degree in curriculum and instruction with an emphasis in literacy from The University of Wisconsin. She is committed to partnering with diverse communities to strengthen education programs to ensure that Reading Recovery teachers are ready to teach in diverse classrooms. Dana is training at National Louis University.

**Professional Development Awards Help Fund LitCon 2022 Registration**

Generous donors have contributed awards to help offset the cost of registration for LitCon 2022. Awards will be presented to Reading Recovery teachers, teachers-in-training, teacher leaders, university trainers, or administrators who support the implementation of Reading Recovery. Applicants must be current members of RRCNA to qualify. More information can be found on the RRCNA or LitCon website.

Geri Stone Memorial Fund awards will also be awarded to help offset the cost of attendance, teaching supplies, and more.
Hailed by some as “The best TLI ever!” the 2021 Teacher Leader Institute was held virtually June 15–18, 2021. The theme of this year’s event was “Stronger Together: A Collaborative Inquiry on Theory & Practice,” and offered opportunities for teacher leaders, site coordinators, and trainers to connect, collaborate, and strengthen their bonds as educators on a mission. Top notch presenters included keynotes by Mary Fried and Jeffery Williams, plus informative sessions on data, equity, and much more. Read what some attendees had to say.

“Extraordinary speakers, rich audience participation, relevant content, numerous takeaways—best of literacy PD experiences!!!”

“TLI is rejuvenating, inspiring, and collaborative! My first experience was amazing, and it will have you thinking/planning for the upcoming school year. Thanks!”

“It is such a great experience to close out one year and start a new fresh with new questions and new thinking. I would do just about anything to go every year, online or in person!”
Enjoy a few of the “No one outside of this job would understand this” gems shared on the Community Forum — especially fun during the past year of so many challenges!

**COVID Quotes**
Direct quotes from my student (who has known me for many years) that reflect our experience, together, during COVID …

“Ms. Amy, that’s my marker! We aren’t supposed to touch the same marker! Quick, where’s the Virex?”

“I can still tell when I do something good (even with the mask on) because I can see your eyes and they do this (makes a squinty face).”

“Hey, you know the good thing about this? Since you can’t bring your coffee to the table, you can’t spill it on MY books.”

(And the COVID version of the “gotta go to the bathroom” avoidance move before writing segment): "I need a mask break. I am definitely going to pass out if we don’t step outside immediately so I can take my mask down.”

*Amy Smith*
*Richmond, KY*

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**For the (Lesson) Record**
Ran out of time for NB (new book) because I was attempting to fix mask strings.

*Heather Good*
*Dayton, OH*

Or, if you’ve written on the lesson record: “Couldn’t record much on lesson record because my right hand was holding my phone as a light so that we could complete the lesson under the table with lights off and shades closed due to longer than usual unannounced lockdown drill. Benjamin enjoyed the experience, did very well with the new book, and asked if we could do this again tomorrow!” :)

*Jeff Williams*
*Chagrin Falls, OH*

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One of my students was quarantined with 5 siblings last month. During his first lesson at home, a little brother slowly crept into the picture behind us to listen to the books read aloud. By the second lesson, we had three listeners. By the end of the week, it was Storytime with Sam! He had an audience now, so we had to take time to negotiate at the beginning of every lesson which books his crowd would like to hear the most. It was time well spent. I wrote on the lesson record under familiar reading, “Market research.”

*Braedan Schantz*
*Dayton, OH*

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*Leslie McBane*
*Columbus, OH*
This issue of *The Journal of Reading Recovery* is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Billie J. Askew.

The Reading Recovery Community reflects on the loss of a dear friend and mentor. Billie Askew was loved by many in the Community and beyond for her brilliance, grace, humor, and exceptional kindness. Her many contributions to Reading Recovery and to literacy development reverberate worldwide through the educators she inspired to the youngest learners in whom her influence took root.

Donations in Billie’s memory may be made to these funds:

- Billie J. Askew Memorial Fund
- RRCNA’s Foundation for Struggling Readers
  [readingrecovery.org/billie-askew](http://readingrecovery.org/billie-askew)

- Billie J. Askew Endowment
- Texas Woman’s University
  [twu.edu/reading-recovery](http://twu.edu/reading-recovery)
Our vision:
We ensure the competencies necessary for a literate and productive future for children learning to read and write.

Expanding Your Expertise in Responsive Literacy Coaching
Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell

Interpreting Policy for Practice: A 4-Part Process
Rachael Gabriel

The Role of Observation in Advancing the Science of Reading Instruction
Robert M. Schwartz, C.C. Bates, Adria Klein, Denise N. Morgan, and Jeffery L. Williams

The Journey to Integrated Implementation: Sarasota Reading Recovery/Literacy Lessons Site
Lea M. McGee and Lisa A. Fisher

Reading Recovery and Research: Beyond the Intervention
Debra Zarling

LitCon 22 is the biggest, best K-8 literacy conference in North America. Learn from the experts, tap exclusive resources, and build special bonds to move literacy education and Reading Recovery forward.

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- Administrators
- Literacy coaches
- Curriculum directors
- Interventionists
- Specialists
- Reading Recovery professionals

got details and register at
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