

The Journal of Reading Recovery®

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Promising Practices and Collaborative Discussions: Supporting Children's Letter Knowledge and Literacy Success

*Elizabeth L. Kaye
Mary K. Lose*

Paying More Attention to Phrasing in Fluent Reading

James R. Schnug

The Impact of Intentional and Purposeful Practice with English Language Learners in Reading Recovery: A Historical View

*JaNiece Elzy
Jeffery Williams
Jeffrey Brymer-Bashore*



Reading Recovery® Council
of North America

A Perpetual State of Inquiry: Our Commitment to Continue Marie Clay's Tradition of Continuous Improvement

Salli Forbes, Billie Askew, Jennifer Flight, and Judy Embry

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Celebrating 35 Years: New Running Shoes!

This issue marks the beginning of a yearlong celebration of Reading Recovery's 35th birthday in the U.S! It's fitting that we begin the party with lots to celebrate!

Celebrating Inquiry

When we celebrated the 30th anniversary of Reading Recovery, I wrote a piece for JRR based on the interviews I had done with some of the key scholars who brought Reading Recovery to this country and supported its expansion. The title of the article was "Get Your Running Shoes On: Reading Recovery Moves to the U.S." Bob Bowers of the Ohio Department of Education had told Gay Su Pinnell to get her running shoes on when he approved funding for the partnership between Columbus Public Schools, The Ohio State Department, and the Ohio Department of Education. Those "running shoes" were certainly needed as Reading Recovery expanded quickly across the U.S. Now, at the 35th year, we have on a new pair of running shoes thanks to a new partnership with Dr. Tony Bryk and the Carnegie Foundation. In the article, "A Perpetual State of Inquiry: Our Commitment to Continue Marie Clay's Tradition of Continuous Improvement," Salli Forbes, Billie Askew, Jennifer Flight, and Judy Embry, share how Reading Recovery professionals are taking an inquiry approach as new running shoes to improve and expand Reading Recovery in the U.S. and Canada.

Celebrating Teaching

This issue is filled with articles for Reading Recovery teachers and teacher leaders to deepen their teaching expertise. Elizabeth Kaye and Mary Lose focus on helping students with letter knowledge in both classrooms and Reading Recovery lessons. Their article, "Promising Practices and Collaborative Discussions: Supporting Children's Letter Knowledge and Literacy Success," will support conversations between Reading Recovery professionals and classroom teachers to ensure all children are able to use letter knowledge as they learn to be readers and writers. Jim Schnug offers a new lens on teaching for fluency in his article, "Paying More Attention to Phrasing in Fluent Reading." Schnug provides a strong theoretical rationale for Clay's approach to teaching fluency plus carefully selected examples of how to teach for fluency across the lesson. Jennifer Flight and Holly Cumming describe an inquiry project into book selection in their article, "Language Not Levels: An Inquiry into Book Selection." Their article helps readers to make carefully thought out decisions about selecting the new book for Reading Recovery students.

Celebrating Successes

In the research section, JaNiece Elzy, Jeffery Williams, and Jeffrey Brymer-Bashore explore the effect of Reading Recovery on English language learners in their study, “The Impact of Intentional and Purposeful Practice with English Language Learners in Reading Recovery: A Historical View.” Using data from 2005 to 2018, the team confirmed the findings from the i3 research report that Reading Recovery’s success with ELL students should put this intervention at the forefront of districts’ plans to support children learning to read in English.

Celebrating Colleagues

Karen Scott’s message, “Honoring a Rich Legacy of Commitment to All Learners,” is a celebration that highlights Reading Recovery’s rich heritage of commitment to all learners and also a celebration of Linda Dorn’s life as a change agent in all the schools she worked with. Karen also notes several opportunities we have to carry on Linda Dorn’s legacy by donating to new funds set up in her name.

The Reading Recovery community is also thankful for the talents that Dr. Mary Anne Doyle has brought to *The Journal of Reading Recovery* — from her role as the original Teaching Section editor to editor-in-chief. When you read more about her contributions in the spring issue celebrating our 35th Anniversary, you will understand that I have “big shoes” to fill as I begin my first term as editor-in-chief! Many thanks, Mary Anne!

Errata

Scharer, P. L. (2019). What’s the fuss about phonics and word study? *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 18(1), 15–26.

Researchers for the Phonics Screening Check study were inadvertently omitted from the following paragraph on page 24 and from the reference list. Editors apologize for the error.

Finally, it’s important to celebrate some recent news coming out of England where a study of the economic impact of Reading Recovery over 10 years found that “...every £1 spent on Reading Recovery since 2005/6 will create a potential societal benefit of £3.30-4.30” (Hurry & Fridkin, 2018). The study also included the results of the Phonics Screening Check where researchers found that 75% of students who had Reading Recovery prior to taking the Phonics Screening Check passed (Harmey & Anders, 2018).

Harmey, S., & Anders, J. (2018). *An analysis of the performance of Reading Recovery students on the phonics*. Poster presented at the 25th Meeting of the Society for the Scientific Studies of Reading, Brighton, United Kingdom. Available at https://www.ucl.ac.uk/reading-recovery-europe/sites/reading-recovery-europe/files/phonics_and_reading_recovery.pdf

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

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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 acknowledgement 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.

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1. Select a topic of interest to our Reading Recovery audience.
2. Write clearly, concisely, and use an active voice.
3. Be sure the message is clear and has a consistent focus throughout.
4. Include dialogue or samples of children's work when possible.
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For questions about or help with the submission process, email vfox@readingrecovery.org.

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Promising Practices and Collaborative Discussions: Supporting Children's Letter Knowledge and Literacy Success

Elizabeth L. Kaye, Texas Woman's University
Mary K. Lose, Oakland University

All names are pseudonyms.

In many school districts, Reading Recovery® teacher leaders and teachers serve as curriculum leaders and literacy coaches. These leadership roles consist of serving on school literacy teams, collaboratively reviewing data, monitoring the progress of children who may be at risk for literacy failure, and serving as a resource to classroom teachers (Askew, Pinnell, & Scharer, 2014). In this comprehensive approach to literacy, Reading Recovery professionals and classroom teachers are perfectly poised to observe individual children's progress and adjust their teaching in response to each learner and as informed by Clay's literacy processing theory (Stouffer, 2016). Likewise, Reading Recovery educators can learn more from classroom teachers about grade-level expectations and appropriately support children's successful experiences in the classroom before, during, and following Reading Recovery. The ultimate goal is to promise a successful literacy outcome for every young learner.

One approach is to begin by carefully examining the Observation Survey (Clay, 2019) results for groups of children. As part of the school team, Reading Recovery and classroom educators can work together to discern what items of knowledge children control and which of these items may need more focused attention to support children's overall growth in literacy. Children's letter knowledge is one of those items worth examining and presents a useful starting point for this collaborative work. This can be a particularly powerful approach to the prevention of later literacy difficulties if begun early when Reading Recovery teachers and teachers of young children plan for children's earliest experiences with reading and writing.

Control over letter knowledge, or identifying letters and linking them with their corresponding sounds, is an important achievement for young learners. Yet, letter knowledge must also be applied effectively while reading and writing for real purposes (Byington & Kim, 2017).

The following brief scenario shows several kindergarten children as they enter the classroom, hang up their coats, and sign in. They gather around the posted cafeteria menu, eagerly discussing their lunch options.

Lana: Oh, good. I'm having tacos for lunch today.

Peyton: You can't have tacos today. It's pizza day!

Lana: Nuh-ah, tacos.

Peyton: See, it says *pizza*—*P* (pointing to the first letter of "pizza")

Paul: That's right. It's a *P* for pizza, just like my name.

Lana: Oh, yeah. *Paul* and *pizza* start with *P* (glancing at the names chart). Oh, and *Peyton* too!

Notice how the children in this setting make links among letters, sounds, and words and consider how this kind of informal observation can inform teachers' awareness of each child's current control of letter knowledge and help them plan literacy activities that foster their development as readers and writers. Building on children's strengths early can go a long way toward advancing literacy learning and preventing potential learning difficulties.

In this article we look at strong literacy teaching and learning practices in a kindergarten classroom that highlight how Reading Recovery teachers and classroom teachers can work collaboratively to optimize children's letter knowledge as they engage joyfully with authentic texts in writing and reading. We provide an overview of the research on the critical nature of letter knowledge and the complexities of letter learning. We also include suggestions for documenting children's accumulating letter knowledge and practical ideas for teaching letters that build on each child's unique stores of knowledge and support their independent use of letters. These suggestions include identifying, naming, and writing letters; discriminating among visually similar letters; linking sounds to letters; and using letter knowledge to read and write texts.

Examples from Ms. Comer's child-centered kindergarten classroom reveal how a teacher can appropriately support and advance young children's letter knowledge and overall literacy development both in individual and group contexts. Although the scenarios presented in this article are from a kindergarten classroom, many of the promising practices and collaborative discussions among educators can also apply to pre-K and first-grade settings. Opportunities to "Pause and Discuss" are embedded throughout this article to foster discussion among Reading Recovery and classroom teachers in support of their collaborative efforts to enhance letter learning on behalf of their young literacy learners.

The Importance of Letter Knowledge: What the Research Tells Us

Researchers have determined letter knowledge is essential to developing children's reading and writing skills. To advance their literacy skills, children need to recognize, name, and form letters (52 in English with 40 distinct shapes), understand the concept of *letter*, distinguish letters from other symbols, and link sounds with letters and letter patterns, all while scanning print from left to right (Clay, 2015).

Children's letter knowledge develops at different rates during early childhood, and this is expected. Variations in knowledge of letters (names, formations, and sounds) are due to each individual child's distinctive experiences with letters and literacy, and unique opportunities to learn (Doyle, 2014). Because knowledge of letters and sounds is quite varied upon entry to school, teachers must accommodate for this diversity and capitalize on the strengths each child brings to letter learning. However, some developmental patterns have been observed. Most young children learn the uppercase letters before the lowercase letters with A, B, O, and X known by many 4-year olds (Justice, Pence, Bowles, & Wiggins, 2006). Also, most children recognize letters at the beginning and end of the alphabet before those occurring in the middle (McBride-Chang, 1999). According to Jones and Reutzel (2012), other influences on children's letter learning include

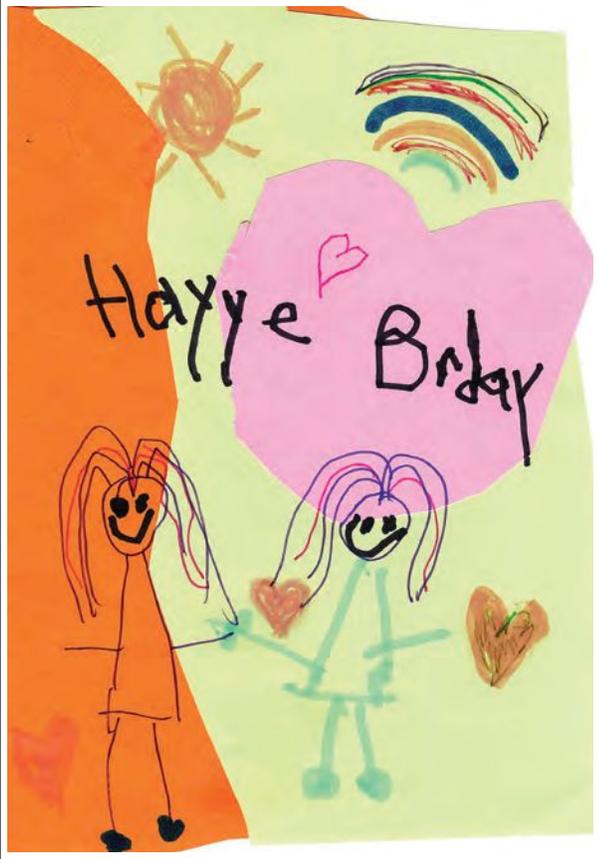
- the presence of the letter in the child's name,
- the frequency of the letter's appearance in print,

- the presence of the letter sound in the letter name (/t/ in the letter name Tt), and
- the points in time at which children typically learn to pronounce the sound represented by a certain letter.

Letter learning has many facets, yet most children discover a great deal about letters through their everyday explorations of print. Letter learning includes recognizing the letter-forms with attention to each letter's shape and orientation (e.g., b/d, u/n, M/W) and distinguishing between the small traits that differentiate visually similar letters (e.g., h/n, f/t, w/v, E/F) (Clay, 1975, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2015; Gibson & Levin, 1985). Writing letters may challenge some children (Clay, 2016), and other children may incorrectly link some letter names and their sounds e.g., Q has the sound /k/, W has the sound /d/ (Block & Duke, 2015). When teachers teach about letters, children do indeed learn letters; however, much less is known about *how* the teaching should effectively and efficiently proceed (Piasta & Wagner, 2010).

Unfortunately, some approaches to teaching letters can result in children spending inordinate amounts of time on letters they already know. Other approaches expose children to letters in isolation slowly, week by week, disconnected from opportunities to apply their letter knowledge in the context of authentic reading and writing. Additionally, sometimes the teaching results in children forgetting the letters they had learned previously. Teaching and learning about the alphabet, although it seems straightforward to laypersons, is actually quite complex (Reutzel, 2015).

Though very little is known about the particular teaching approaches that are most effective in supporting young children's letter knowledge, we do know that one-size-fits-all, scripted, fixed-sequence approaches limit letter-learning (McKay & Teale, 2015). In contrast, working deliberately in meaningful ways that account for children's existing letter knowledge can optimally support their literacy development (Kaye & Lose 2015, 2019; McKay & Teale, 2015; Pinnell & Fountas, 2011; Scharer, 2019; Stahl, 2014). In this way, children can extend their letter knowledge while reading and writing engaging texts with teacher support.

Figure 1. Amna's Birthday Card for Peyton

Amna: I said it really slow like hhhaaaaapy (smoothly articulating *happy*, sweeping her finger under the word, left to right).

Ms. Comer: (puzzled) Listen while I say it slowly and run my finger under the letters (sweeping her finger left-to-right as she says /hap/, forcefully enunciating /p/ with her finger paused under the two y's). Can you hear /p/? Happy.

Amna: Yes, and I put *two p's* (pointing to the two y's) because I seen how it looks before. Hap-peeccc. Then I put *e* at the end.

Ms. Comer recognizes some strengths in Amna's writing in addition to the unusual substitution of y for p. She quickly jots some notes to document Amna's knowledge and skills (see Figure 2).

The readers may have noted that Amna is developing several ways to work out new words in writing: She can say a word slowly to analyze the sounds; she can use the class names chart as a resource; and she is developing a visual memory for how words look. She has also learned to write her name and a few high-frequency words independently. Amna demonstrates good spatial and directional concepts, is using mostly lowercase letters in her writing, and is beginning to use punctuation appropriately.

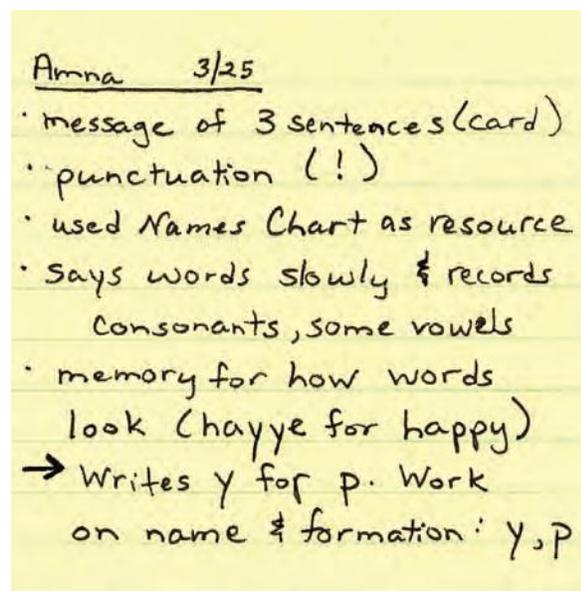
Learning About Letters During Writing

Ms. Comer provides her kindergarteners many opportunities for independent writing on self-selected topics across the school day. As Ms. Comer walks past the table at which Amna is working, she notices Amna has pieced together some brightly colored paper scraps to fashion a card (see Figure 1). Amna waves her over, whispering excitedly, "Ms. Comer, I'm making a birthday card for Peyton! It's a surprise!"

Ms. Comer: Oh, Amna! You're such a thoughtful friend. I know Peyton will love getting your card. Will you read it to me?

Amna: (pointing under the words) Happy birthday, Peyton. I love you. Love your friend Amna. Guess what? I found Peyton's name on our Names Chart, and I wrote it here (pointing to *Peyton*).

Ms. Comer: That was a good idea. How did you figure out *happy birthday*? (wondering about the unusual spelling of *happy*)

Figure 2. Ms. Comer's Documentation About Amna's Writing

Amna's substitution of *y* for *p* is intriguing. She clearly articulated /p/ in *happy*, and she *said* she wrote 2 *p*'s; however, she actually wrote two *y*'s. Ms. Comer hypothesizes that Amna knows the sound /p/ is represented with the letter *named* *P* but that she confuses the *symbol* for *p*, representing it as *y*. Writing the *P* in Peyton was easier because it was copied. Perhaps Peyton's *P* will be a good link to help Amna identify and write the letter *P* in the future.

Because this is personal correspondence between two friends, Ms. Comer appropriately decides not to direct Amna to use conventional spelling. She wants to honor Amna's efforts and send the message that meaningful communication is valued above accuracy.

Pause and Discuss

- What do you see as Amna's strengths?
- How might you use or adapt Ms. Comer's note taking method to make it useful in your classroom?
- Pull recent writing samples for children who exhibit unconventional or puzzling writing patterns. Take a few minutes to discuss the students' strengths as well as the unusual patterns. What do these writing patterns reveal, and how might you begin to address them in the kindergarten classroom? In the first-grade classroom?

Learning How to Form a Letter

The next day, Ms. Comer spends a few minutes helping Amna learn the letter *p*. She gathers several magnetic letters including *P* and *p*, a tray of sand, a chart with known color words *pink* and *purple*, name cards for *Peyton* and *Paul*, and a small slate. She puts the materials on a table by the white board and asks Amna to join her.

Ms. Comer: Yesterday you made that lovely card for Peyton and wrote her name on it. Do you see Peyton's name on the table?

Amna: Here it is. (selecting the name card)

Ms. Comer: Let's say Peyton's name a couple of times and listen carefully to the first sound.

Amna and Ms. Comer:
(in unison) Peyton, Peyton

Ms. Comer: Watch my lips as I say it, Peyton (emphasizing /p/). What do you hear at the beginning?

Amna: /p/. It's a *P*.

Ms. Comer: Yes, and *here* is the letter *P* in her name. (pointing to the *P*)

Amna: That's the *P*? /p/, /p/ Peyton. (as if checking)

Ms. Comer: And here is Paul's name. Say it slowly and listen for the sound of *P*.

Amna: Paul /p/, /p/, Paul. *Paul* starts like *Peyton*. And *pink* and *purple* too!

Ms. Comer: Yes, do you hear /p/ at the beginning?

Amna: Pink, purple, yep.

Ms. Comer: Look, *here* is the letter *p* at the beginning of *pink* and *purple*. (pointing to the *p* at the beginning of each word)

Amna: And, *Paul* and *Peyton* start with *P*.

Ms. Comer: I'll show you how to make a *p*. Watch me. (slowly writes a large *p*, modulating her voice in coordination with the movements that describe how to form the letter *p*)
Dooowwn, uuup, around. That's *p*.

Amna: That's *p*.

Ms. Comer: Let's write *p* together. (prepares to guide Amna's hand)

Amna and Ms. Comer:
Dooowwwwn, uuup, around (coordinating the movement with the words)

Amna continues writing *p* using a variety of media and surfaces (e.g., sand tray, white board, chalk on the slate), working toward fluent formation. As she practices, Ms. Comer fades her verbal directions and lets Amna's words guide her own movements.

Learning to Rapidly Differentiate Letters

With the experience of forming and naming *p* fresh in Amna's mind, Ms. Comer and Amna proceed to the magnetic white board for a letter sorting activity. She wants to ensure that Amna can easily and quickly differentiate *p* from other letters, just as she would need to do when reading connected text.

Approximately 20 colorful lowercase magnetic letters are arranged at Amna’s eye level on the white board (see Figure 3). In addition to the *p*’s, which are newly learned, are the letters *m*, *o*, *l*, *c*, and *n*, which she knows quite well. Ms. Comer purposely avoids letters that might be confused with *p* at this point in Amna’s learning, such as *b*, *d*, *q*, and *y*.

Ms. Comer invites Amna to look at the letters on the board (see Figure 4). Amna begins to name the letters, “m, n, l.” Ms. Comer interjects, “Yes, you’re saying their names. Now, how could you sort them into two groups?” (She knows that Amna has previously sorted her known letters by features such as short/tall, curves/straight lines, humps/no humps, etc.) Amna quickly arranges the letters into two groups: *p*, *l*, *m*, and *n* in the first group; *o* and *c* in the second group and explains, “See, these have sticks, and the other ones just have curves.”

Figure 3. Ms. Comer’s Arrangement of Letters on White Board



Figure 4. Amna’s Arrangement of Letters on White Board



This and additional brief activities for working with letters in isolation help expand children’s letter knowledge and support them in rapidly discriminating among easily confused letters. Ultimately, increasing one’s knowledge about letters, letter formation, and links to sound is useful to all young learners as they advance their overall literacy development.

Pause and Discuss

- Do you have any students who have difficulty forming letters or discriminating among visually similar letters?
- Role-play teaching one of the letters, incorporating the verbal directions, visual model, and movement to enhance letter formation. For specific directions, see Clay (2016) *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals* (2nd ed.), pp. 64–65.
- Discuss the importance of fostering rapid visual discrimination of letters. Work together to plan a letter sort for a child whose discrimination of letters is slow.

Learning About Letters During the Introduction to a New Story

Ms. Comer invites Lana, Samir, Isaac, and Andre to a small table and begins a guided reading lesson by introducing them to their new book, *Danny and the Big Race* (Coulton, 2012). “In this story, four dogs including Danny run in a race. Each dog wears a different color scarf around its neck. I wonder who will win the race?”

Together, they look at the cover and the photos that show each dog wearing a different colored scarf. The students browse the book’s pictures, share animated comments about the characters, and predict which dog will win. Ms. Comer invites the children to rehearse the language structure that is repeated on several pages and asks them to identify the initial letter heard first in two new words.

Ms. Comer: (directing students to page 4) On each page they tell us about a dog, a runner.
Here comes the red runner. You say it.

All: Here comes the red runner.

Ms. Comer: And what letter would you see first in *comes*?

All but Samir: (responding simultaneously) *C*.

Samir: (at the same time as the others) *S*. (pauses) I mean *C*.

Ms. Comer: Yes, *c*. Put your finger under *comes*.

All: (pointing beneath *comes*)

Ms. Comer: Well done. You found *comes*. (notes Samir's *S* response)

Isaac: He's got a red scarf on his neck.

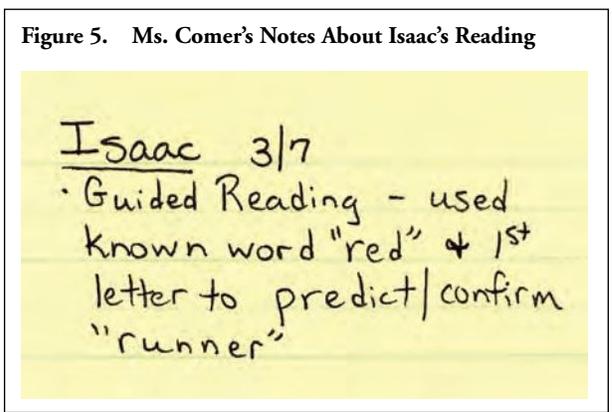
Ms. Comer: That's because he's the red runner. And what letter would we see first in *runner*? (emphasizing /r/)

All: *R*.

Ms. Comer: Yes. Put your finger under *runner*.

Isaac: This one says *red*, so this must be *runner*. (pointing beneath each word to make the distinction)

Ms. Comer notes Isaac's attention to the initial letter in *red* and *runner* and his ingenuity in using a known word (*red*) to confirm that the new word in the text was indeed *runner* (see Figure 5). She refrains from commenting on Samir's response, aware that he has not yet related either the hard sound of *c* (*comes*) or the soft sound of *c* (*city*) to the letter *c*. Ms. Comer wonders: Does Samir's first response, "S," indicate a confusion between the letter name *C* and the initial sound /s/ heard when pronouncing the letter's name? Or, is it possible that he attended to the *final* sound in *comes* rather than the *initial* sound in the word? Ms. Comer tentatively concludes that the answer



to the first question is yes, because Samir previously has not displayed any problem with confusing first and last sounds.

As the story introduction continues, children shift their focus back to the plot and enthusiastically predict the story's outcome. Concurrently, Ms. Comer resolves to build on Isaac's discovery and further explore Samir's understandings about letter names and their links to sounds in words as opportunities arise in the next few days.

Attending to Letter Knowledge During Story Reading

As Ms. Comer listens to the children independently read the text, she wants them to make sense of the story, use their strengths in oral language, and draw on their emerging understandings of letters and sounds. For the learners in this group, attending to the initial sound of words is an appropriate starting point. Ms. Comer knows it is important not to confuse the child with a prompt that is too open ended. Importantly, she must clearly show the child what is meant by her prompting. Her comments and prompts foster children's use of multiple knowledge sources (Clay, 2016):

- *Did your reading make sense?* (meaning-making/comprehending)
- *Does the word you said begin like the one in the story?* (using the first sound/s and initial letter/s to check on oneself or confirm)
- *Does it look right at the beginning* (pointing to the first letter) *and sound right* (considering oral language and syntax) *to you?*

Ms. Comer focuses on Samir's reading, aware that he has previously shown some *p/b* confusions. On page 6 he reads: "Here comes the yellow runner and here comes the purple runner." Responding to his meaningful substitution of *purple* for *blue*, she also asks Samir to check on himself with attention to the visually similar letters:

Ms. Comer: Were you right?

Samir: (without looking at the text) Yes.

Ms. Comer: Not exactly. Your reading *made sense* but something didn't look right at the beginning. (offering encouragement) I think you can fix it. Try reading this again and make sure it also *looks right*.

Samir: (rereads and self-corrects) Here comes the yellow runner and here comes the /b/ blue runner.

Ms. Comer decides to highlight Samir’s solving process rather than focusing only on the accurate outcome. “Yes, this word (pointing to *blue*) starts like a word you know how to read and write” (showing him *boy*, in the familiar story that the group just read). Samir locates *blue* and observes, “Yep, they both start with *b*.” To reinforce his noticing, Ms. Comer writes *boy* and *blue* on a small whiteboard, covering the ends of each word to draw attention to their beginning letters and reminds, “So, when you’re

reading, remember to look closely at the words and make everything look right.”

Considering Samir’s meaningful substitution (*purple/blue*) and noting his possible *p/b* confusion, Ms. Comer plans to revisit Samir’s letter chart, recent running records, and her notes to plan additional instruction for discriminating between these two letters (see Figures 6 and 7). Her concise teaching is based on connecting a known word and its initial letter to solve an unknown word. Additionally, her summation reminds Samir that he can always use letter knowledge to check on himself as he reads.

Pause and Discuss

- Notice how the teacher attends to the meaning of the story and the language structures, freeing up the children’s ability to attend to visual information as they construct their understanding of the text.
- How do the teacher’s introduction to the story and subsequent teaching interactions support children’s attention to initial letters and sounds in words?
- Schedule a time to work together to plan a book introduction that will help children draw on meaning, language structure, and visual information (especially the initial letter in the earliest reading levels) as they attempt to read a new book.

Figure 6. Ms. Comer’s Notes About Samir’s Guided Reading

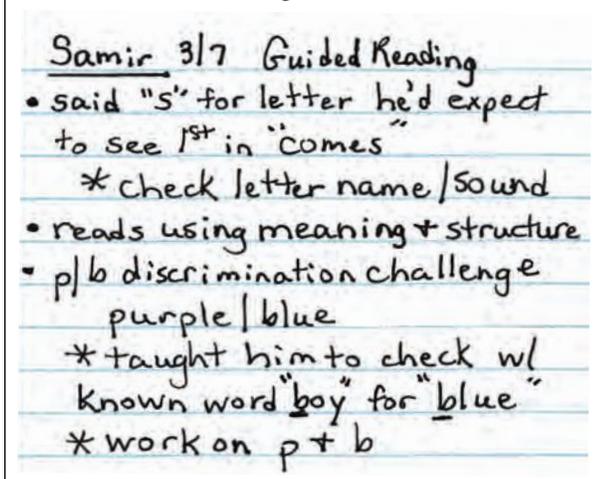


Figure 7. Samir’s Letter Chart

Letter Knowledge Record: Samir

Knows Names						
A a	B b	C c	D d	E e	F f	G g
H h	I i	J j	K k	L l	M m	N n
O o	P p	Q q	R r	S s	T t	U u
V v	W w	X x	Y y	Z z		

Associates Letter and Sound						
a	b	c	d	e	f	g
h	i	j	k	l	m	n
o	p	q	r	s	t	u
v	w	x	y	z		

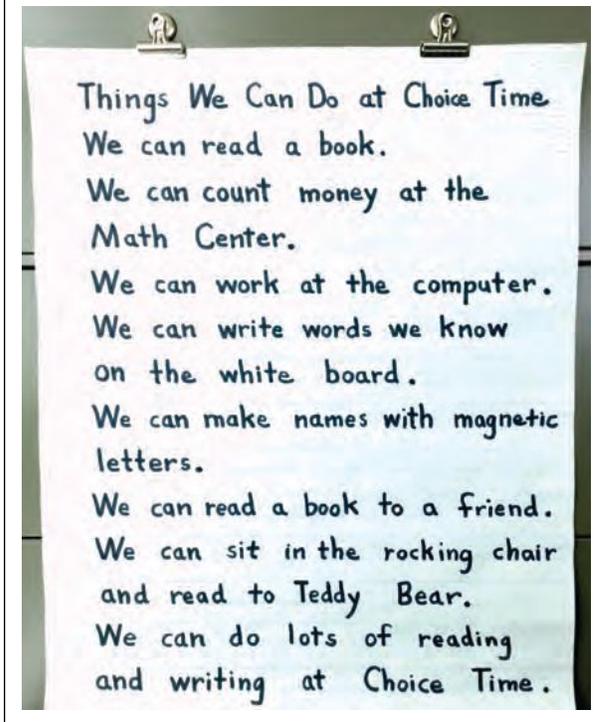
Writes Form						
A a	B b	C c	D d	E e	F f	G g
H h	I i	J j	K k	L l	M m	N n
O o	P p	Q q	R r	S s	T t	U u
V v	W w	X x	Y y	Z z		

Documenting a Child’s Emerging Letter Knowledge

Children in this classroom participated in a wide range of daily self-selected reading and writing activities, including rereading familiar texts. Ms. Comer knows that children gravitate toward texts they have composed individually and during interactive writing (Hall, 2014). She makes a point to have many of these texts available for children to revisit across the school day.

In this scenario, Samir and Isaac stand in front of a chart displaying a class-composed text and take turns reading it using a large pointer (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Class-Composed Text



Samir: Okay, let's read! I'll start. (reading the title)
 Things *you*, I mean *we* (correcting his error)
could do at Choice Time. (neglecting to notice his could/can error)

As the children continue reading, Samir substitutes *count* for *can* (line three), corrects his error, and confirms his choice by checking the word wall.

Ms. Comer is pleased that Samir notices the discrepancy between *you* and *we* and that he self-corrects *we*, likely using some letter or word knowledge. She notices that his substitution of *could* for *can* uses meaning, syntax, and the initial letter *c*, which he previously had not linked to its sound /k/. Furthermore, he uses the word wall to confirm his self-correction of *count* for *can*. She believes now may be a good time to capitalize on his emerging knowledge of the letter-sound correspondence for *Cc*. Ms. Comer quickly records her observations of Samir's reading on a sticky note (see Figure 9). She knows that careful record keeping can help her create opportunities that maximize each child's learning.

Linking Words, Letters, and Corresponding Sounds

The next day, Ms. Comer decides to capitalize on Samir's emerging understanding of sound and letter correspondences linked to some known words (*can*, *cat*, /k/, *Cc*). She chooses not to address the soft *c* sound that is less familiar to him at this time. She invites him to add his personal link to the *C* page in his alphabet book (see Figure 10).

Ms. Comer: Let's add a picture to your *C* page. You know several words that start with the sound for the letter *C*. *Cat*, *can*. (pausing to invite additional responses)

Figure 9. Ms. Comer's Notes About Samir's Rereading of Class-Composed Text

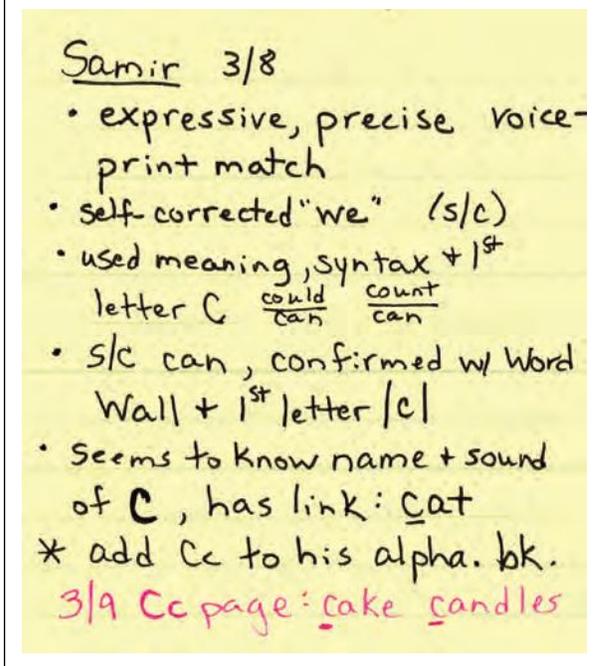
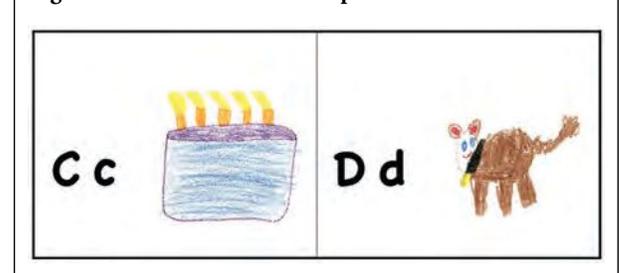


Figure 10. Samir's Personal Alphabet Book



- Samir: I want *candles!* On a birthday cake!
- Ms. Comer: Ok, I'll make the cake, and you can draw the candles.
- Samir: They both start with /c/! *Candles, cake* (proudly adding candles to Ms. Comer's drawing of a cake)

The personal alphabet book becomes a unique record of each child's discoveries about letters, words, and sounds and a valuable resource for learning how to use this knowledge strategically for reading and writing.

Pause and Discuss

- What opportunities do children have in your classroom for learning about words and letters by rereading familiar texts (teacher made, class made, published, etc.)?
- What resources do children have for confirming their letter and word knowledge (word wall, personal alphabet book, class-made dictionary, etc.)?
- In general, how can the Reading Recovery teacher, working as a member of the school team, help prepare students for independence in the classroom, particularly in terms of letter knowledge?

Learning Letters, and So Much More!

Ms. Comer's ultimate goal is to engage, support, and guide her young learners in meaningful literacy experiences to facilitate their development as confident readers and writers. To that end, she seamlessly addresses *all* elements that contribute to successful literacy learning including naming, identifying, and forming letters; making connections among letters, sounds, and words; and engaging with published stories and children's own compositions. The key is to know students as individuals: Understand what they know and how they make connections, and know their interests — both within and beyond traditional literacy activities. This requires observing, documenting, and reflecting on children's learning in a variety of classroom activities to ensure their continued learning.

Within child-centered classrooms that build on children's unique strengths, Ms. Comer and countless numbers of early childhood educators intentionally support and advance children's use of a range of knowledge sources, including letters, for reading and writing development. Classroom teachers working in collaboration with Reading Recovery educators can find inspiration in creating joyful opportunities that advance letter learning and support the goal of literacy for *all* young children.

Authors' note

Practical application of the information presented in this article, selected resources, and relevant artifacts to support Reading Recovery and classroom teachers' collaborative efforts can be found in additional articles by Kaye and Lose (2015, 2019).

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Paying More Attention to Phrasing in Fluent Reading

James R. Schnug, *The Ohio State University*

Looking at Phrases

Read aloud the following phrase:

The hungry giant...

That phrase is a unit of meaning about a very tall character from traditional literature who happens to have an appetite. Given your exposure to fairy tales, you also know that any hungry giant will most likely cause problems in the story. If you are a Reading Recovery® teacher, that phrase additionally calls up Joy Cowley's (1980) book — a book that so many children have enjoyed reading.

That noun phrase, *the hungry giant*, is also a unit of language structure. It contains a determiner (*the*) that is followed by an adjective (*hungry*) that is describing the noun, *giant*.

We must also recognize that phrase as a unit of printed language that is comprised of sublevels of information such as three words, two of which are made up of two syllables, various onsets and rimes, and multiple letter-sound relationships.

You probably read aloud those three words, *The hungry giant*, in a phrased manner. Harris and Hodges (1995) defined phrased reading as “reading in which the unit of meaningful recognition is larger than a word but smaller than a sentence” (p. 187). Your “meaningful recognition” of the phrase *the hungry giant* involved the complex, effortless interplay among different sources of information such

as prior knowledge, word meanings, language structures, and print information.

When you read this sample phrase, you might have been anticipating, “What about this hungry giant?”

Read aloud the following summary sentences as possible answers:

The hungry giant terrorized the townspeople.

The hungry giant in the story bellowed for bread, butter, and honey.

You likely read these summaries with an appropriate rate and word accuracy, two important but insufficient

aspects of oral reading fluency (Alt & Samuels, 2011). You probably paused at the end of each sentence. Perhaps you stressed the word *bellowed*. You most likely paused after each comma in the second summary sentence. In short, you used juncture, pitch, and stress (Clay & Imlach, 1971), what Schreiber (1987, 1991) termed the supra-segmentals of oral language, and what the reading teacher would listen for in the child's oral reading expression.

Read aloud again those two summary statements, above, but this time pay attention to your voice after the word *giant*.



We want children in Reading Recovery to read with phrasing that reflects the language structures and the comprehension of the author's messages. In order to select an appropriate prompt or procedure, we need to first think what the child needs at any point where we will teach for phrasing.

In the first summary sentence, you might have paused ever so slightly after the word *giant* but you most likely didn't pause after that word *giant* in the second sentence. In the latter sentence you probably lingered after the word *story*, and you did this without any print signals, such as a comma.

Finally, read aloud the following sentence, paying attention to what your voice sounds like:

*The hungry giant hit the
beehive with his bommy-knocker.*

You probably read this two-line sentence without any pause at the end of the first line, even though there was plenty of white space at that point to suggest that you should stop. Rather, your eyes quickly scanned to the start of the second line, without pausing while you maintained the appropriate phrasing.

Appropriate reading rate, punctuation use, intonation, pausing — you did it all as you read aloud the sample sentences in a phrased manner, and it was done without deliberation. Your conscious focus was ultimately on the meaning and memories of a hungry giant and the trouble he causes. You read aloud in a way that we want children in Reading Recovery to read, i.e., with phrasing that reflects the language structures and the comprehension of the author's messages.

How can Reading Recovery teachers teach effectively for phrased oral reading in a child's series of lessons? This article will attempt to answer this question by

- building a theoretical base for the importance of phrasing in a child's Reading Recovery lessons,

- exploring common teaching practices that work against recapturing a child's intuitive sense of oral language phrasing that he brought to his lessons,
- summarizing effective procedures for promoting a child's phrasing during oral reading, and
- emphasizing teaching for phrasing opportunities throughout the Reading Recovery lesson.

A Case for Phrased Reading

As I was writing this article, my daughter sent me a video of my 2-year-old granddaughter, Ella, 'reading' *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* (Martin, 1983). Ella stared at each page and reconstructed the repetitive language structures in a way she had heard her parents read in this favorite bedtime book. For example, when arriving at the page where the teacher is asked about what she sees, Ella announced in her 2-year-old voice, "Cheechuh, cheechuh, whada-ya see?" Ella wasn't reading the words on the page. She wasn't looking at the commas or the question mark, but she certainly was reconstructing the oral language phrasing she had heard her parents use.

Schreiber (1987) reported that "even during the babbling stage children produce prosodic contours [intonation, stress, pausing] like those of their target language" (p. 243). Though Ella was certainly beyond the babbling stage of oral language acquisition, her intonation, stress, and appropriate pausing during her reconstruction were helping her to do what Schreiber calls "demarcating the

boundaries of syntactic constituents" (p. 243).

Each child enrolled in Reading Recovery brings the "prosodic contours" of their native language to each lesson, yet how often do we observe in our lessons or behind the glass the following:

- His reading is choppy.
- She's reading word-by-word.
- He's using his finger to point.
- Listen to how slow she's reading.
- He's ignoring the periods.

Two questions that beg to be answered at these times are, "What happened to the child's prosodic contours of his oral language which he brought to his Reading Recovery lessons, and how can we help him use his oral language phrasing when he reads his books?"

In answer to the first question, many researchers (Downhower, 1991; Schreiber, 1987, 1991; Rasinski, 2010) suggest that the culprit is a lack of consistent print signals that a child can use during oral reading which activates his oral language abilities. For example, in the sample sentence you read aloud—*The hungry giant in the story bellowed for bread, butter, and honey*—the commas signaled you to pause after each item in the list. But in that same sample sentence, the ever-so-slight pause you most likely made after *story* was not marked with any punctuation.

Though a lack of consistent punctuation in our written language is uncontested, another more obvious reason for a Reading Recovery child's lack of phrasing is that all beginning reading instruction necessarily slows down the child, so that he can

pay attention to a novel system of how sounds in our language can be represented (Clay, 1993). For example, in Reading Recovery, consider the importance of a child establishing one-to-one correspondence early and effectively. When a teacher says, “Point to each word while you read,” in the earliest book levels, she is slowing down the child in order for him to observe that any word coming out of his mouth corresponds to a unit of print on the page that is separated from other units with white spaces. Yet a child doesn’t speak word by word, hesitating between each word. But with his teacher, his attention is now on looking *and* speaking word-by-word. He is learning to look at print.

Print conventions aren’t going to change, i.e., new marks to indicate needed intonation or pausing, for example, aren’t going to be part of our written code in the near or far futures. Beginning reading instruction will also continue to slow down children’s reading, so that any child has a fighting chance to learn to look at print and take on the demands of an alphabetic language. But what is imperative for a child’s progress in Reading Recovery is the recapturing of his oral phrasing ability during oral reading. Why?

Over 110 years ago in his landmark book, *The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading* (1908), Huey defined phrasing when reading:

The visual recognition of a familiar phrase as a phrase [is a process in which] the recognition of constituent words as well as of letters in this case being partially inhibited in favor of the total recognition of a larger unit. (p. 114)

Huey concluded why this occurs:

Meaning, indeed, dominates and unitizes the perception of words and phrases ... and ... the reader’s acquirement of ease and power in reading comes through increasing ability to read in larger units. (p. 116)

Clay and Imlach (1971) reported a similar conclusion in their study of the differences between high-progress and low-progress early readers:

[F]or fast accurate sequential decoding of texts a hierarchy of reading responses places the linguistic cues from larger stretches of structure and meaning in the most facilitating position, or top gear as it were with the other level of cues available if there is a need to drop gear. (p. 139)

Schreiber (1987), cited earlier, also pointed to the instructional necessity for teaching for phrasing early on if Huey’s “reading power” is to be achieved by the child:

It is clear that, in order to attain reading fluency, a beginning reader who has (at least partially) mastered decoding skills must minimally learn to group words into appropriate phrases. (p. 264)

Schreiber’s instructional direction to reading teachers was still being emphasized over 20 years later in Rasinski’s (2010) compilation of oral reading fluency techniques.

[S]ome scholars argue that the phrase is the key component in gaining meaning through written text. And a considerable amount of research has demonstrated that helping students learn to read in phrases will

improve their reading fluency and overall reading achievement. (p. 106)

In their comprehensive review of phrasing and fluency’s contribution to a child’s progress in Reading Recovery, Briggs and Forbes (2002) summarized Clay’s emphasis on phrasing and fluency as this emphasis impacted a child’s reading progress:

The young reader develops a network of competencies through experiences with reading and writing. The network continues to grow in power and generate further learning the more the learner engages in reading continuous text. Phrased and fluent reading is not only the product of this network of competencies but is also an important contributor to developing the network from early on. (p. 1)

Later in that same article, Briggs and Forbes state, “Appropriate phrasing provides access for using language structure and meaning in order to predict a response” (p. 2). And Clay (2001) adds, “We pull words together for literacy acts constrained by invisible relationships and roles which words have within a simple sentence” (p. 102), i.e., the reader uses more information than known words or letter-sound relationships when reading orally.

In the first edition of *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals* (2005) in the section on phrasing procedures, Clay also emphasized phrasing as the fast pick-up of visual information that is integrated with the meaning and structure the child is monitoring; “Fluent reading has quite as much to do with rapid looking as it has to do with language” (p. 154).

In *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals* (2016) this emphasis on the importance of fast looking is retained: “Everything we do in mature reading and writing will rely on fast accurate perception of language sounds (captured by the ears) and visual symbols (captured by the eyes) as we read and write” (p. 40). Furthermore, from the 2005 edition of the *Literacy Lessons* text, Clay reminds teachers:

But there is more to fast and fluent reading than just rapid action from a brain that recognizes letters and words and patterns fast. We have to think about phrasing in reading. (p. 150)

Given this select overview of research, the following points summarize a case for phrased reading in any child’s series of lessons:

- Over time there has been a persistent research emphasis that highlights phrased reading as an important contributor to a child’s development of the beginnings of a self-extending processing system when first learning to read.
- Phrasing in oral reading uses both the eye and ear for fast pick-up of visual information on the page and should not be considered only as an expressive outcome to listen for in a child’s oral reading.

As Clay emphasized in 2005, “We have to think about phrasing in reading” (p. 150), and it is to that challenge I turn next by first reviewing teaching practices that work against the child’s oral reading phrasing; then I will follow up with a summary of procedures that will assist the child to

speed back up after we have slowed him down in his early learning.

Working Against a Child’s Phrasing

Earlier in this article I cited research that maintained that children bring an intuitive sense of oral language phrasing to their beginning reading instruction and that as teachers, we slow down that oral language as we teach children to look at print. Since the inception of Reading Recovery, Clay has also cautioned against teaching practices that work against a child’s reintegration of his oral language phrasing, once the child has begun to learn to look at print. Such unproductive teaching practices, Clay wrote, “lead children to think that reading means word reading” (2016, p. 125):

- We over-rely on procedures and prompts that ask the child to work out letter-sound relationships, parts of words, or emerging sight words. As Clay warned as far back as 1998, “Over attention to these levels of language will displace, in the child’s mind, the idea that there are meaningful stretches of language” (p. 52).
- We interrupt too much during the reading of text, insisting that the child is either getting every word accurately read or that the child is always using some part of the visual information that we have previously observed he could use. (p. 125)

These two practices are also recognized as detrimental overall to a child’s flexible use of a primitive, emerging processing system — a sys-

tem that allows him to self-monitor and integrate multiple sources of text information on the run.

There are two additional teaching practices Clay (2016) warned against that directly and negatively impact phrased reading in oral reading:

- We allow the child to read orally word-by-word, even after one-to-one matching is secured. (p. 125)
- We allow the child’s finger pointing, long after it’s needed. (p. 54)

Though *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals* (Clay, 2016) highlights the importance of observation and judgment on the part of the teacher as to when a child could be speeded up to read with more phrasing, without his finger, Clay is just as clear in stating, “As soon as control of directionality and one-to-one matching is firmly established begin to call for flexible use of that control” (p. 125).

When do we observe and teach for a child’s firm control of the early behaviors of directionality and one-to-one matching? Though there is no rule or text level, both of these early reading behaviors align with the need for the child to learn to look at print, and that begins in the earliest book levels. Further, if we are still teaching for directionality and one-to-one matching when a child is reading beyond, say, Levels 3 or 4, we have a bigger problem than the child’s phrasing, i.e., the child has not begun to effectively look at print.

Why might we allow the child’s finger to remain in the text, pointing, or allow the child to persistently read word-for-word without his finger? I have thought or heard the following:

- He needs to have so many sight words before I remove his finger.
- She is just starting to use the first letter of unknown words. Her finger focuses her.
- If he isn't pointing, he'll just use his memory of what the book says.
- How can I be sure she's looking at the print if she isn't pointing?
- I wasn't paying attention to phrasing *now*. That comes later.

Whether you or I have thought one or more of these reasons as sufficient rationales for allowing word-by-word reading, we shouldn't be surprised then in subsequent running records when a child makes substitutions that are visually similar to the word on the page but ignores the meaning or structure of what is being read. And at the point of frustration when we say, "Why isn't he listening to himself? Doesn't he know that what he said doesn't make sense or sound right?" There certainly should be finger-pointing at that point of teacher angst, and the finger should be pointed back at us.

The listed teacher excuses, above, also diminish if not ignore many aspects of Clay's literacy processing theory, such as these:

- The child uses multiple sources of information to read.
- Multiple sources of information are checked against or integrated with each other.
- The child must develop flexible ways of looking at print.

- Teaching props are retired when they have outlived their usefulness; and if they remain they could actually impede a child's progress. (The finger is a prop.)
- Phrased reading is not an outcome that is taught for after the child has reached some undetermined level of decoding or word identification ability.

Yet the teacher excuses, listed above, also reveal an unstated responsibility. If we are to slow down the child to begin to pay attention to the demands of an alphabetic language, then we want to be confident that the child's early attention to print will hold and be built upon. Clay (2016) recognized this concern and provides a way to address it:

How to pay attention to detail in a slow, careful manner is learned from the teacher, but as soon as detail is easily recognized she should lead the learner back to fast processing. Too often teaching practice perpetuates slow processing. (p. 40)

I now turn to effective teaching practices that will, in part, promote faster processing through phrased oral reading as well as cautions to those practices that could impede a child's flexible use of phrased reading.

Teaching for Phrasing

In *Literacy Lessons* (Clay, 2016) procedures are listed for teaching for phrasing, with the added imperative, "Select as appropriate" (p. 123). In order to select an appropriate prompt or procedure, we need to first think what the child needs at any point where we will teach for phras-

ing. Perhaps the child needs a clear teacher model or demonstration, and Clay lists possibilities for this such as "Read a story to the child to give him a sense of what fluent reading sounds like" (p. 125). Perhaps the child needs specific prompting that keeps him in control of his reading but brings to his attention something that he is ignoring. One such example from the procedures is, "Read to the end" (p. 124). Or perhaps the child needs a chance to assess how his oral reading is sounding, using a prompt such as "Is that story sounding interesting?" (p. 124). Selecting an appropriate teaching response at a point when the child should be more phrased comes only after a teacher decides what will be the most effective level of support at that point, and that level of support can ebb and flow within the same book, across the lesson, and across a period of time in the child's series of lessons.

Another way to think about the prompts and procedures when teaching for phrasing is to consider how the options from which you select support the use of the child's oral language structures (through his ear) and the child's fast pick-up of visual information (through his eyes). Such a consideration of all the listed prompts aligns with Clay's (2016) emphasis on phrased reading being just as much about looking as listening (p. 126). My valued colleague, Mary Fried, got me thinking about Clay's emphasis on a visit a few years ago when she pointed out that I was over-using prompts such as "How would you say that?" or "Make it sound like (favorite book)." She helped me determine that I was over-relying on prompts that focused on the child's use of language structures

(through his ears) to the exclusion of prompts that allowed the child to use both his ears and his eyes.

This is not to suggest that any listed prompt or procedure that favors the child's ear should be avoided. Rather, we must always be vigilant to observe that the child is also looking at the print as well as listening to himself.

In summary, in order for us to select appropriately from the prompts and procedures when teaching for phrasing, we must first think about what the child needs and then reflect on the balance of teaching responses that engage both the child's ears and eyes. Next I turn to the specific points in any child's series of lessons when we start calling for more phrased reading.

Text segmenting or marking has a long history of inclusion in procedures for teaching children to be phrased in fluent reading (Downhower, 1991; Rasinski, 1989, 2010). Rasinski (1989) states, "Research has shown that marking phrase boundaries in student texts with a penciled slash or vertical line may aid fluency" (p. 692). Reading Recovery procedures do not suggest placing marks in text to support the child in visually recognizing phrase boundaries, but in the section entitled 'Demonstrate phrasing on text,' Clay (2016)

wrote: "Occasionally cover the text with a card or thumb, exposing a few words at a time and ask the child to read it all [or] read it smoothly" (p. 124). Figure 1 illustrates the procedure. Note that the masking card, at first, exposes a two- to three-word phrase in an early book level. When initially using this procedure, it is useful to demonstrate what is expected, i.e., you will mask all but a small phrase and perhaps say, "Read it all, like this" (Demonstrates)" (p. 124). As soon as the child demonstrates the desired phrasing, expose the next small phrase and repeat.

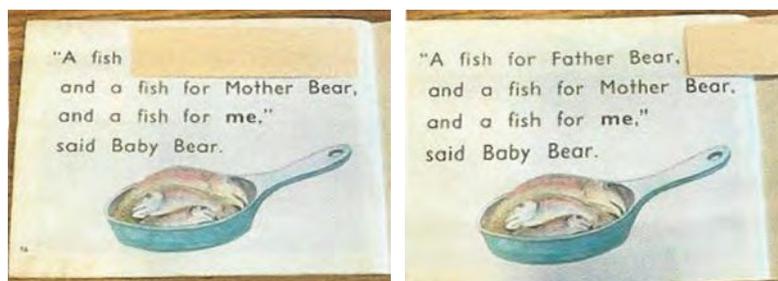
As with all assisted procedures, text masking or any of the other listed procedures and prompts can be unthinkingly applied or over done in a child's progress with phrased oral reading. A noticing, responsive teacher will do the following:

- Focus the child first on small phrases. We have slowed down the child considerably when helping him establish one-to-one correspondence, getting him to read and speak word-by-word. We know we can't suddenly expect him to read smoothly in long phrases or sentences.
- Use the masking card flexibly. After a few opportuni-

ties employing the masking card, we should unobtrusively remove it and listen for any shifts in the child's phrasing.

- Not allow reading in small phrases for too long. Many published fluency rubrics over the last 30 years (Allington, 1983; NAEP, 1995; and Zutell & Rasinski, 1991) position this type of beginning phrasing just above word-by-word reading. We look for chances to quickly up the ante, revealing longer or natural phrases of varying lengths for the child to take on.
- Listen for oral phrasing from line to line. Though some book series such as Rigby PM often arrange lines of text in phrases on any page, many other publishers do not. If we are noting more errors at the start of subsequent lines, that might indicate the child anticipated meaning and structure but wasn't looking closely, at speed, at the visual information on the subsequent lines. One procedure from *Literacy Lessons* (Clay, 2016) could be employed to promote phrasing line to line: "After phrasing has been established, you might slide a card from left to right, covering the text and forcing the child to speed up so he processes a little more fluently without breaking down. This can encourage him to make his eyes work ahead of his voice" (p. 124).
- Daily assesses how the running record sounded, putting into words not only how fast or expressive the child read but also describing the pattern of

Figure 1. Masked for Phrased Reading — Early Teaching



phrasing the child exhibited (Clay, 2013, p. 63).

- Expect to teach for phrasing on the variety of books the child reads. Though Clay (2016) stipulates that we should “select texts to support fluent reading,” that stipulation is to support shifts in phrasing in fast and fluent reading (p. 125). Clay did not mean that these are the only type of books in which we expect phrasing.
- Look for opportunities across any lesson where a child’s phrasing could be expected. It is to these daily echoes of phrasing throughout the lesson I turn to next.

Phrasing Opportunities Throughout the Lesson

DeFord (1991) reminds Reading Recovery teachers that Clay developed daily opportunities in the lesson for the child to successfully problem solve with manageable challenges in reading and writing, while also reading large swaths of texts in a phrased and fluent way:

...[T]he framework itself is intended to develop the child’s growing [self-extending system] and to provide ample opportunity to build both fluency and problem-solving ability. The teacher works with the child across and within lesson components...to facilitate the development of fluency and problem-solving. (p. 205)

Phrased oral reading is an important aspect of fluent responding that must be encouraged within and across the lesson components. Earlier in this

article, I detailed ways we can teach for phrasing within a book. I now turn to components of the daily lessons where phrased reading can be encouraged. Each lesson component’s description will be followed with questions I have found useful when reflecting on whether my teaching for phrasing is producing results.

Familiar reading

This opening lesson opportunity is where we first begin to expect faster, phrased reading from the child. Once directionality and one-to-one correspondence are firmly established, we begin to encourage the child to use just his eyes and not to point when he reads his familiar books. It is also the part of the lesson where we will begin to teach hard for phrased reading. Consider the following questions when determining how to promote the child’s phrasing during this time:

- Does the child have regular opportunities to read a familiar book in a phrased way without your interruptions or prompting?
- Does the child also have regular opportunities to read a newer book that provides a few opportunities to speed up in a phrased way with your assistance?
- Do you keep at hand a book that the child has read with phrasing and which you can refer to during this time: “Read your next book like you read that book.”
- Do you remind the child not to use his finger before he starts to read a familiar book? And if that finger creeps back in

at some point, do you quietly remind him to remove his finger as he’s turning the page if you determine he doesn’t need it?”

Running record

I have already referred to the importance of the running record as the daily opportunity to think about how the reading sounded, including how phrased the child was. We should be persistent in assessing how our teaching for phrasing is paying off on a daily basis as well as over time. Often those notations at the end of the running record are signaling the teacher as to how the child’s oral reading phrasing needs to shift.

We should also think about that running record as a familiar book, albeit one that was introduced by the teacher and read once by the child in the previous lesson. Given that stance, do you return to a page or two after the running record where you determine the child was reading accurately with little or no problem solving needed, but also was reading with little or no phrasing? Do you consider improved oral reading phrasing a valued teaching point after the running record?

Writing

It is rightly argued that given the purposes of the writing part of the lesson and the slowed-up attention required of the child as he takes on the sound-symbol relationships of our alphabetic language, opportunities to read in a phrased way are minimized. But consider the following:

- During the composing portion of the writing, does the child have a chance to formulate his own oral language structures

for his desired story? At this point, he is most likely trialing his emerging composition in a phrased way.

- If the child is not using his finger during familiar reading, then during the rereading of his emerging story, is his finger (or marker) pointing at his composition? It shouldn't be.
- Do you look for opportunities for the child to reread his emerging story in a phrased way? At the point his phrased reading meets up with white space for the next word to be written, there is the improved chance that he is already anticipating what he expects to hear *and see* next.

Assembling cut-up stories

Review the bullets in *Literacy Lessons* (Clay, 2016) on p. 106 that list accelerative outcomes for the child during the daily reconstruction of the cut-up sentence. Two of those outcomes seem quite similar: (a) “one-to-one correspondence of spoken and written words” and (b) “breaking oral language into segments” (p. 106).

If you focus on the second outcome, above, and think about phrased reading, then what first might appear to be a redundancy is a distinctive awareness for the child, since a written phrase represents a segment of oral language. This understanding can be confirmed on p. 109 when Clay writes that when the child is reconstructing the cut-up sentence he is mirroring what he must do in reading: “[He] gives attention to a word’s placement among other words in the context of a phrase in a way that no activity of studying words in isolation ever does.”



Clay writes that when the child is reconstructing the cut-up sentence he is mirroring what he must do in reading: “[He] gives attention to a word’s placement among other words in the context of a phrase in a way that no activity of studying words in isolation ever does” (2016, p. 109).

Many teachers have noted that over time their child will organize the cut-up sentence in more than one line, and that at the line breaks, the child will maintain appropriate phrase units from the end of the line to the start of the next line. This is an important emerging behavior to note as it evidences that the child is now mapping visual information into larger units beyond the word level — an important integration that has reciprocal benefits when reading his books. This behavior can be taught for as well. One of the suggested procedures for fostering phrased reading in *Literacy Lessons* on page 125 (Clay, 2016) encourages the teacher to rearrange the child’s original reconstruction into phrases she thinks the child can read and teach for phrasing at that point.

Book introduction and first reading

Clay (2016) stipulates why a new book is introduced at the end of each lesson: “Most of the neural networks the child will need to use when problem-solving will have already been

activated by the preceding tasks... Using the new book, [you] will introduce something novel to his primed processing system” (p. 113).

If there have been orchestrated opportunities to read in a phrased way throughout the lesson, those opportunities contribute to this priming of his processing system which will now be engaged on a new book. This is not to suggest that the first reading of the new book should now sound like the reading of more familiar books, especially given the new challenges the child will assuredly encounter in the new book. It does suggest, though, that the child should still be reading large swaths of the new book with similar levels of phrasing that the child has been taking on when reading more-familiar books. If we observe that the first reading reverts to stilted, word-by-word reading with little or no phrasing, then we have to ask these questions:

- Was the book introduction supportive for phrased oral reading? “The teacher must

plan for the child to have in his head the ideas and the language he needs to complete the reading. The observant teacher introduces into her talk any concept, or word, or *phrase structure* that she has not heard this child use before.” (Clay, 2016, p. 115) [Italics added.]

- In the book introduction, do you “give the child opportunities to hear and use new structures that he will need to use in the reading?” (Clay, 2016, p. 115)
- Does the child realize that he must try to read this new book just like he has read his familiar books? If not, then teaching for phrasing at a select point in the new book firms up this awareness.
- Do we “attend to how the reading sounded” (Clay, 2016, p. 120) after the first reading? A possible, productive procedure is to return to a page in the new book that wasn’t read in the expected phrased way and teach for phrasing at that point.

In the preceding section I have described many opportunities throughout the daily lesson where we should expect or teach for phrasing. In essence, we are providing “ample opportunity” that DeFord stipulates in this section’s opening quote while recognizing that phrased reading is an important part of fluent responding.

Summary

Far too often in my own teaching and in my observations of others teaching I have realized that we are not appreciating the importance of

phrased reading’s contribution to the child’s overall processing system. This article attempted to develop a better appreciation that is comprised of the following thrusts:

- A phrase is a unit of print information, just as much as it is a unit of meaning and language structure.
- The child brings to Reading Recovery an intuitive sense of phrasing that he has constructed in his oral language.
- Reading Recovery’s instruction, as in all early reading instruction, must slow down the child’s oral language phrasing in order for him to pay attention to the relationship between the many levels of oral language’s organization, e.g., phonemes, word parts, words, and phrases, and a new symbol system for representing those levels.
- Once the child has established control over directionality and one-to-one matching, we must begin to teach for phrasing. We must avoid thinking of phrased reading as just an outcome of proficient reading. We should keep the focus on oral reading phrasing as evidence of effective, fast processing of visual information.
- Phrased oral reading is as much about rapid looking as it is listening to oneself. Powerful teaching for phrasing encourages the child’s use of his ears and eyes.
- We can impede a child’s oral reading phrasing with unproductive practices that get in the way of faster responding.

- Every Reading Recovery lesson contains many opportunities for the child to read in a phrased way.

Clay (2016) articulated what is at stake when a child is reading in phrases:

When reading is phrased as in spoken language, and the responding is quite fast, there is a fair chance that the reader has grouped together the words that the author has intended to go together. In order to understand the author’s message the reader has to put several words into a grammatical phrase. If he can do this easily then he attends to letters and the words and the grammar, on the run, and as a result he can give more attention to the messages. (p. 121)

Ultimately, teaching for phrased reading is helping the child understand what he is reading. That is what is at stake, and these are high stakes, indeed, yet achievable when our teaching allows the child to increasingly pay attention to phrased reading in the construction of his self-extending system.

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About the Cover

Abigail is an enthusiastic learner who came to her Reading Recovery lesson with a big smile every day. She especially looked forward to reading new books. Abigail made great progress and her lessons were discontinued in 18 weeks. Even after her lessons ended, she would stop by her Reading Recovery teacher's reading room to pick out new books to read on her own.



Language Not Levels: An Inquiry into Book Selection

Jennifer Flight, *Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery Western Region*
Holly Cumming, *Winnipeg School Division, Manitoba, Canada*

As Reading Recovery® teachers, daily and weekly reflection is necessary to make strong instructional decisions in response to a child's reading and writing behaviors. As teachers engaging in regular reflective practice, we continually aim to improve our responsiveness to individual children. One way that we can reflect on our practice is to delve into Clay's teaching procedures in *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals* (2016) and deepen our understanding of how we make decisions to design instructional opportunities tailored to each learner. Importantly, Clay tells us that "*the teacher must be tentative, flexible, and immediately responsive to the best opportunity for a particular learner at this moment*" (p. 24).

In this article, we share an inquiry project to impact the appropriateness of teachers' book selections for particular children. We wanted to learn more about the ways in which teachers were choosing new books, as well as to draw teachers' attention to language structures children controlled and the language structures in texts as a consideration for selecting books. Prior to launching this project, we gathered observations, engaged in conversations, and reviewed lesson data to identify some challenges related to selecting books:

- For some children, the books selected are either too easy or difficult and offer few opportunities for new discoveries about print;
- Sometimes we rely on our favorite books and book series, perhaps without thinking carefully about matching the book to the child;
- Sometimes we may rely on the reported book level as a major consideration when selecting books for individuals, perhaps overlooking factors related to the language of the book and the child's strengths and challenges when reading a particular book.

We know that some of us find it challenging to consistently select new books for some children, particularly for English language learners and children needing additional

support for language. Given this, we invited colleagues to reflect more deeply about our practice, with a focus on improving the book selection process.

To begin this process, we turned to guidance from Clay (2016): "Teachers should have opportunities to talk with colleagues about features of books they have found unduly challenging" and "particular attention should be paid to the child's control of oral language structures or syntax ... Syntactical knowledge enables the child to construct sentences to anticipate which way a sentence might go" (p. 114). Knowing attention needed to be given to book selection, we wondered if teachers' heightened awareness of the child's oral language competencies and the language of books would result in their applying these new understandings to the book selection process.

As Reading Recovery teachers, we are encouraged to evaluate our teaching and ask "What are the strengths?" "What are the weak aspects?" (New Zealand Reading Recovery, 2018), and when writing Predictions of Progress we note, "I will need to pay special attention to ..." (Clay, 2016, p. 28). As teachers, we ask ourselves, why am I doing what I am doing? To further investigate and learn more about selecting books for individuals, we can ask, what conditions do I need to create for my own learning in order to make better book choices? What do I need to learn more about? How can my colleagues support me? How do I attend to the ways in which I select books for children?

We knew it was important to think about these questions in relation to the procedure for choosing a new book. In *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals*, Clay (2016) provides some key considerations regarding book selection. "From the hundreds of books available, the highly trained teacher will select one that the particular child will:

- want to read
- be able to relate some personal knowledge
- succeed with and enjoy
- use to establish new competencies." (p. 114)

Clay also tells us, “The teacher must preview the book and weigh up its suitability for this child at this time. A successful book choice will be well within the child’s control, using language structures, words and letters he knows or can get to with his teacher’s help. A few things in the book will require new learning” (p. 114). As Clay (2013) reminds, “[I]n every way the information produced by systematic observation reduces our uncertainties and improves our instruction” (p. 3). To select ‘just right’ books for students, we need to become keen observers of children’s use of language, what captures their attention, and what motivates them as readers and learners.

Essentially, Clay (2016) encourages us to engage in inquiry to strengthen our teaching, “think about new insights and explanations that may apply. You are likely to have some blind spots in these areas, and the opinions of colleagues could be most useful for adjusting your teaching” (p. 166). Indeed, we felt it was essential to examine how we might improve the selection of books for children with varied language competencies.

The Inquiry Process

To guide the inquiry project we asked, “If we heightened teachers’ awareness of the child’s oral language competencies and the language of books, would teachers apply these new understandings to their book selection process?” We hoped that asking this question might help us focus on a range of considerations including, and very importantly, the role of language, to “weigh up its [a book’s] suitability for this child at this time” (Clay, 2016, p. 114).

Participants

A group of seven experienced Reading Recovery teachers participated in this inquiry about book selection. The teacher leader selected the teachers because at the start of the school year, they had expressed concerns about a particular student’s oral language and were aware that specific attention needed to be given to oral language learning in their teaching. The teachers all had successful experience supporting students with limited control of English language. They were a reflective group of professionals with a desire to further their own learning in order to better support students.

Each teacher was teaching four students and of these students, one was selected as a case study student for the teacher’s additional time devoted to planning, reflecting, and analyzing the case study students’ records. All of the case study students’ lessons began in September of the

Grade 1 year and all were identified as needing further language support. Five of the seven students scored below 13 on the Record of Oral Language. Clay, Gill, Glynn, McNaughton, & Salmon (2015) suggests, “These children should be considered for special attention in oral language development” (p. 22). Additionally, the students’ instructional reading levels ranged from level 3 to 6, with five of the students reading level 3 and 4 books.

Timeline

The inquiry into book selection took place over 6 weeks in the fall of the school year. At the time of the start of the inquiry project, all students had been in Reading Recovery lessons for approximately 6 weeks.

Materials

A list of recommended titles organized by level is available as a “guide to the selection of storybooks for students in Reading Recovery and represents a gradient of difficulty for students who are finding it difficult to learn to read. Text selection is always based upon the professional judgments of trained Reading Recovery teachers and determined by the needs of the individual child” (Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery, 2017, p. 2). However, for this inquiry, teachers selected *new* books outside of their typical Reading Recovery book collections. The books used in this inquiry project also included those that might be found in classrooms or school libraries.

We wondered if eliminating text levels as a criterion for book selection would serve as a catalyst for teachers to look at book language in new ways for particular children. It was our intention that each teacher would devote extra attention to “preview the book and weigh up its suitability for this child at this time ... using language structures, words and letters he knows or can get to with his teacher’s help” (Clay, 2016, p. 114). To ensure that this would happen, we decided that for this 6-week inquiry, the teachers would not use books listed on their Reading Recovery Book List.

Also, because this project coincided with the field testing of books for possible addition to the Canadian book list, the seven teachers were given a bin of approximately 40 new books to be field-tested and available for use with their case study student. The new books were from a variety of publishers and authors and included both fiction and nonfiction titles. Teachers were also encouraged to select new books from school and classroom libraries. Most of the books were unseen texts, but some of the

books were familiar to the teachers through various classroom shared reading experiences. The combination of the new books and the books from libraries meant that teachers would work with an expanded array of texts not on the Reading Recovery Book List and with which they were unfamiliar. Teachers would select the new books from the expanded set of books and use them within the Reading Recovery lesson framework: introduction and first reading of the new book, followed the next day with a second reading and the teacher taking a running record, and books for familiar reading (Clay, 2016, p. 35). Following the 6-week inquiry, teachers would return to using books from their established Reading Recovery leveled book sets.

Procedures

To support teachers in building knowledge about using a child's language strengths and interests as considerations when matching books to individual readers, a 1-hour initial meeting, at the beginning of the 6-week inquiry project, and a half-day final meeting, at the end of the project were planned.

Initial meeting

The teacher leader held an initial meeting to introduce the inquiry project, which included attention to process, assessments, and record keeping. *Biks and Gutches: Learning to Inflect English, A Guide for Teaching* (Clay, 2015b), unfamiliar to most of the teachers, was introduced to the teachers at this meeting. The Biks and Gutches assessment "gives a strong indication of how far particular children have come along the path to controlling the language in their reading books" (p. 8).

At the meeting, teachers were invited to review and discuss the characteristics of their new, field-test, unlevelled books. The teacher leader guided the teachers to think about the features of the books that would support the development of their case study students' literacy processing systems. The teachers were excited to preview the books and reflect on the importance of matching stories to their students' language strengths. During the discussion, the teacher leader prompted the teachers to talk about how they were selecting new books and why.

Through this process, the teachers began to reject some books entirely and to trade some books with each other as they discussed the particular interests of their case study students. In their ongoing work with children, teachers were encouraged to learn more about each of their case study student's interests and consider this as important

for selecting books for their students. Teachers were also encouraged to engage in more conversations with children and prompt them to tell stories about topics that were important to them. These topics included family and friends, favorite things, likes and dislikes, feelings, imagination, and other books of interest.

Consistent with Reading Recovery practice, the running record taken on yesterday's new book was used to evaluate the teacher's choice of book and provide information to select the next new book. Teachers were encouraged to think about the child's current literacy processing behaviors as evidenced on the running record—attempts at difficulty, self-corrections, errors, sources of information used or neglected, and how the reading sounded—always aiming "to have the child read the book fluently. The outcome should be that the reader is keen to move on to the next exciting exposure to new things" (Clay, 2016, p. 114).

Although teachers had administered the Record of Oral Language at the beginning of the child's lesson series, it was not re-administered at the start of the inquiry project, as Clay recommends that the administration be 6 months apart (Clay et al., 2015, p. 34). However, teachers were encouraged to use the child's responses to the initial assessment as an important way to "observe aspects of a child's control over oral language utterances and assess a child's ability to handle selected grammatical structures" (p. 9) and apply this information to choosing books for their student throughout the 6-week project.

Also at the initial meeting, the teacher leader and teachers reviewed Clay's procedures for "Choosing the new book" (2016, p. 114). At the end of the meeting, teachers were provided the following readings to encourage even more support for their ongoing reflection related to strengthening the books chosen for use with their case study students:

- Shaping the PM Story Books (Randell, 1999)
- Introducing Storybooks to Young Readers (Clay, 2014, pp. 186–199)

The teacher leader also encouraged the teachers to read the following articles:

- The Power of Story (Cowley, 2015)
- Where Did Baby Bear (and All Those Other Stories) Come From? Writer Shares Sources of Her Ideas (Randell, 2014)

The inquiry was planned primarily as a self-study. Teachers would review Clay's procedures for selecting books for children; engage in some additional professional reading; think about what they felt were important considerations for their case study student; and put their learning and thinking into action, exploring what seemed to work or not work with their student. The teacher leader and the colleague group were available to answer questions and discuss book choices.

The 6-week inquiry

During the 6 weeks, teachers selected books with a focus on the child's language strengths and interests. The teachers reflected daily, writing in diaries, and completed a book log with comments. Although not part of the original plan, teachers requested additional time to meet mid-way through the project. They had appreciated reviewing and talking about books together at the initial meeting. Teachers appeared to draw deeply on their understandings of language structures and text features and not rely on habits developed from using only the leveled books with which they were already familiar. This also led to some dissonance as they grappled over whether a particular text would be appropriate for a child. At times, teachers questioned their abilities to select suitable books, as they seemed somewhat less confident about their understanding of text features and language structures. As a result, they wanted to continue their colleague conversations around the characteristics of books.

Accommodating the teachers' request, the teacher leader facilitated an additional 1-hour meeting about mid-way through the inquiry project. The discussion centered around the teachers' daily records, reviewing daily lesson data, and evaluating how the selection of texts was supporting students' processing systems for reading and writing. Teachers were encouraged to talk about what they were noticing, why it might be happening, and consider implications for their teaching. Teachers discussed their learning and were challenged to think about linking children's observed language competencies to the language of books.

Data collection process

Data were collected to examine teachers' attention to and awareness of the child's oral language competencies as related to the selection of books. Teachers collected data at the beginning, during, and at the end of the inquiry project.

Pre- and post-project data — The teachers administered Biks and Gutches (Clay, 2015b) at the beginning and the end of the 6-week inquiry. The Record of Oral Language was administered only at the end of the 6-week inquiry, although all the teachers had administered the Record of Oral Language when the case study student began lessons in September.

During the 6-week project — Teachers kept daily records of their case study student's progress and recorded their reflections about the child's language competencies and reading behaviors. Sources for this record keeping and the teacher's written reflections included the daily lesson record, daily running records; Change Over Time in Writing Vocabulary chart; the child's writing booklet, and the child's longest utterance.

Teachers also kept daily reflections summarizing what they had noticed related to the child's language competencies and responses to selected books. This daily log (see Figure 1) included comments about language structures and an overall evaluation of whether or not the teacher would recommend the book for inclusion on the Reading Recovery Book List; daily reflections recorded in a blank diary format; and a summary reflection at the end of the inquiry project. The teachers' daily logs and reflections revealed their reflective practices with specific attention to language competencies, book language, and children's interests with the goal of selecting books that would be a match for each case study child.

What We Learned

The aim of this inquiry was that through focused attention on children's language and the language of books, teachers would apply their new understandings to the book selection process on a consistent basis. We predicted that using unfamiliar texts that had not yet been leveled as a criterion for book selection would support teachers in focusing more precisely on language, not just text level, as a way to "preview the book and weigh up its suitability for this child at this time ... using language structures, words and letters he knows or can get to with his teacher's help" (Clay, 2016, p. 114). We wondered if teachers' attention to children's language and the language in books would affect how they matched books to their case study students. Our observations about the teachers and students are as follows.

Observations about teachers

The teacher’s ear would be tuned to language structures. We predicted that the teacher’s ear would be tuned to the types of language structures the child was using in speech and the language in the books read by the child. By recording the child’s longest utterances, teachers found they were taking on the role of being more observant about the child’s language use and somewhat more present in lessons with their students. The teachers also felt they paid more attention to the different aspects of the lesson as they pertained to children’s language use and how children’s language was changing. Teachers’ written reflections recorded in daily logs provided evidence that they had a heightened awareness of the new language structures being used by students (see Figure 1). Their ‘before reading’ entries noted the structures and vocabulary which the teacher would use in the new book introduction. Their ‘after reading’ entries indicated the structures and vocabulary that challenged the child during the reading of the new book and that surfaced as difficult on the running record taken the next day.

In reviewing the daily logs and the running records, we identified some patterns in the teachers’ notes before and after the reading of the new book. Teachers seemed to have a basic understanding of language structure as it related to selecting books. Overall, the teachers’ observations of language structures align with the different types of diagnostic sentences in the Record of Oral Language, in which declarative statements had been transformed into more complex structures— imperatives, questions, negatives, phrases, and clauses (Clay et al., 2015). Some specific observations based on the teachers’ reflections concerned the following:

Prepositions — Teachers had awareness of prepositions being challenging for the students, often describing an intention to attend to prepositions in the orientation to the new book. However, only two teachers noted prepositional phrase structures to introduce prior to the child reading the new book. For example, ‘in the white, white snow’ or ‘on the top of the water.’ One teacher stated, “I have become more aware of introducing those prepositional phrases realizing that they may not be part of children’s natural language.” On some running records, some children seemed unable to anticipate the prepositional phrase structure and waited to be told the word.

Pronouns — Only one teacher identified pronouns as a language consideration when selecting and introducing new books. For example, in her diary entry she stated, “My student was struggling with understanding and using ‘it’ ... so as I was thinking more specifically about structures really tried to get him to understand how we use ‘it’ so encouraged him to use ‘it’ in conversations.” For other students, there was evidence of pronouns presenting challenges on a number of running records. Generally, teachers noted pronouns as vocabulary that needed to be addressed but neglected to note that the child might not have understood what the pronoun (‘it’ or ‘this’ for example) referred to as the book was being introduced.

Questions — Teachers identified questions as potentially challenging language structures. For example, Can you come? Where are you going? If you are ... or Who am I? It is not clear why the teachers thought these structures would be challenging for children, since they typically described children as having successfully read sentences that were questions. One teacher selected a book format with a question and answer structure as a potentially supportive book structure and, as she had anticipated, the child easily read the story.

Verb tenses — All teachers noted an awareness of verb tenses and used this as a factor when thinking about book selection. One teacher noted how the student read present tense verbs with ease but had difficulty when a book contained both present and past verb tenses. “At first I was struggling to find that appropriate book, but then I became so much more aware of past tenses — went, was, yelled, liked, saw, looked — which my student was really struggling with.” Another teacher selected a book anticipating that the child would easily take on similar verb forms — catching/catch, swimming/swims. Yet, after the child read the book, the teacher noted that the child did not successfully “handle the variety of verbs.” And, another

Figure 1. Daily Log Sample

Language Not Levels 'Daily Log'				
Book Title & Date	Before Reading Make note of language structures (S) and vocabulary (V) that supports this student	After Reading Make note of language structures (S) and vocabulary (V) that challenged this student	Would you recommend this book?	Longest Utterance
My Blue Car Nov 19 (printed from classroom)	S - uses prep phrases read previously - only - present tense - V - simple, verb V - familiar with	S - uses prep phrases read previously - only - present tense - V - simple, verb V - familiar with	Yes, good use of Green's words but not for of introduction - using off print for	"He rode back good" 4 words
The Case of the Missing Pat Nov 20	S - I am, I will V - a die, phrases repeated throughout S - strong structure V - repeats all sight words but not new words	S - Some difficulty with preposition to past - (on up get by) the girl, which? V - simple, verb V - simple, verb V - simple, verb	Yes, but not so good challenge - long like a story - structure - structure	The shark came the sea lion. 6 words
Charlie Xmas Tree Nov 21	S - strong structure repeated throughout V - repeats all sight words but not new words	S - very easy for Jack Paul's way V - simple, verb V - simple, verb	Yes! Great accessible story	Charlie was Peter's helper. 5 words
After a deal at the water go? Nov 23	S - simple, verb V - simple, verb V - simple, verb	S - simple, verb V - simple, verb V - simple, verb	Probably not for reading above	My horse is eating like he never. 2 words
Harpoon Island Nov 24	S - simple, verb V - simple, verb V - simple, verb	S - simple, verb V - simple, verb V - simple, verb	Probably not for reading above	The harpoon almost got the harpoon whole. 7 words
Other Comments	will handle those as catching, catch, swim, swim	V - behind/behind him/far/past eye/catch all a double up		

er teacher acknowledged, “I failed to prepare my student for the past tense ‘like’ to ‘liked’ and now realize how all the components of the structures of language need to be thought out.”

Imperative sentences — One teacher described selecting a book that included imperative sentences, for example, “Eat your peas Louise!” The teacher had predicted that the book would be a good choice as it was written in rhyme and therefore should pose no problem for the child. On reflection, however, the teacher commented that the child was unable to use rhyme to anticipate the imperative language structure. Essentially, greater attention needed to be given to the language structure itself, instead of assuming that a rhyme would make it easier for the child to read the text.

Verb contractions and adverbs — Interestingly, only one teacher suggested that children’s control over contractions such as ‘don’t’ and verbs (‘do’) modified by an adverb (‘not’) would be important considerations for the children’s reading. However, on some running records, errors were made or students engaged in problem-solving behaviors in order to read texts that included contractions and the corresponding verb modified by an adverb. In their notes pertaining to ‘after the child’s reading,’ teachers acknowledged that some of these verb examples posed challenges for certain children and that perhaps had they anticipated the challenges (can’t/cannot and wouldn’t/would not) they might have attended to them in their preparation for a particular child’s reading.

In general, teachers described themselves as analyzing language structures and vocabulary in a more disciplined way when selecting books. One teacher stated, “It made me critically think about the structures and language in the book.” They considered the structures controlled by the child as well as the text structures that were challenging. Another diary comment described the student initiating conversation topics and using more-complex language in both speaking and writing. One teacher suggested this might be due to having been introduced to a variety of language structures. “I was surprised that my student took on some challenging language structures, but it was because of his high interest in the books.” Alternatively, perhaps knowledge of the topic and meaning making enabled the child to overcome language structures that have been anticipated to pose challenges to the reading.

Likewise, by heightening the teachers’ attention to language structures and book structures, they seemed to become more aware of the need to continue to deepen

their understandings about language. One teacher admitted, “I feel that I need more practice in analyzing language structures and text features found in the books I am using with my students.”

A focus on composing: Using books as prompts to conversation. In planning the inquiry, we predicted teachers would notice students wanting to use books as the context for the child-teacher conversations that precede writing with children wanting to either write about the story or use the story ideas as a jumping off point for their own composing. As conversation might be more spontaneous and genuine, we anticipated compositions to include more complex story ideas and in turn provide more opportunities to learn how to solve more complex words.

Teachers’ reflections included comments about books prompting some of the child’s compositions. Typically, the writing samples about books were a comment about something that had happened in the story. For example, “The big cat didn’t have food in his bowl.” or “Baby Bear went fishing. Baby Bear caught a fish.” Or “Pete the cat looked in the sand for the treasure box! “TREASURE BOX!” said Pete the cat.” There were very few samples of informational writing based on books, i.e. “Peas turn into pods. They grow on vines.” or “They can hear very good because their ears are big.” Some stories showed the child using features of texts likely borrowed from reading — paragraphing, dialogue, and varied punctuation. One teacher reflected, “I am beginning to realize that supporting my student to compose a good story for writing is really complex.”

A check at week 3 of the inquiry indicated that teachers felt composing “took off” and children had more ideas that they wanted to write about based on the books they were reading. “Confidence in writing is higher. He is more excited to write about these books. Although the spacing and font were unusual in some books, with exposure to different styles of writing and different page layouts, he became more independent and engaged. Now wanting to take his own stories home!”

Teachers also noted that when children are highly interested in a particular book, the teacher needs to use this opportunity to foster genuine conversations to support composing for writing. One teacher said, “I need to use books that are high interest for the students as conversation starters for writing, otherwise I’ve missed an opportunity.” Another asked, “Do we miss opportunities to use high interest books to gain more complexity in story writing?”

The length of children's stories varied. Table 1 shows samples of the shortest and longest stories written by each child during the 6-week inquiry project. However, the length of stories for each child seemed to be somewhat random during the project. Only one student showed a steady increase in story length from the beginning to the end of the project. When using books as the provocation for the child's story, the compositions were usually a restatement of the plot and rarely about the story's characters, actions, or events, or a link to their own lives. This prompted teachers to think about keeping better records about the contexts that supported the child in composing and recording lengthier stories. Perhaps in future lessons, the teachers might also note whether a child's stories are related to a book read in the lesson, a personal story about an event, or an object or a topic prompted by classroom activities.

Although teachers felt the writing vocabulary had taken off in the first 3 weeks of the project, students continued to add to their writing vocabulary at typical or expected rates. The majority of words added to the writing vocabulary sheets were high-frequency words and not high-interest words. "Sometimes I found myself stuck helping the student with high-frequency words to add to the writing vocabulary and I missed opportunities to use the child's interest words," one teacher noted. Another teacher noticed her student would get excited about a word or group of words in a text leading the teacher to suggest "let the child choose the word they want to learn." The child's enthusiasm aside, choosing which words might be learned and allocating precious lesson time to support learning 'how to learn' words, seemed imperative.

Teachers' observations and extending their understandings. We predicted teachers would see themselves as actively constructing new understandings related to both language and book selection. Teachers wrote daily in diaries. They explored criteria for choosing a book for a child, noting how the book supported the student's developing processing system. Comments included notes about fluency, independence, reciprocity, language development, running record analysis, writing, and the selection of the new book for the next day's lesson.

Teachers also thought about motivation and enjoyment in selecting books. They commented that books connected to the child's identified interests were highly motivating and some children were able to orient themselves to books with less teacher support because of their high interest. Teachers felt students seemed to view themselves as readers and made comments like, "He felt he knew how to read them easily" and "Students began to request to read books when they saw the covers," and "It was amazing how, despite a child's limited control of language, they can be motivated to persevere to read more-difficult texts simply because they are interested in what the text is about. By taking part in this project [the student] challenged my assumptions and predictions about how successful she can be." Teachers commented that this confidence was also evident in the classroom and children became comfortable with self-selecting new books for reading during and outside of class time.

Teachers found it "rejuvenating to take a look at books in a fresh way" and to expand the available choices for children. More choices created opportunities for children to be exposed to different genres, page layouts, fonts, spac-

Table 1. Length of Sentences Composed During the 6-Week Inquiry Project

Student	Shortest Sentence	Longest Sentence
1	He was hungry for cat food.	Mom was looking for the spider but she cannot go to bed.
2	The shoes are mixed up.	The sun is too hot for the cactus. He is happy.
3	I got ketchup chips.	There was three blue ones and the middle one was a bumpy one.
4	Mom and Zia went on their bikes.	Mommy and me, Mommy and me, Mommy and me. We went to see some ice cream.
5	We played four square in the gym.	At my home I eat a sandwich for lunch.
6	Peas turn into pods. They grow on vines.	Pete the cat looked in the sand for the treasure box! "TREASURE BOX!" said Pete the Cat.
7	Dad almost ate the spider!	Meg was just trying to get the bird. He was cold on the rock.

ing, photographs, and more nonfiction books. Teachers commented that they felt this would support transitions to classroom reading opportunities and expectations.

Teachers also commented that the inquiry project supported their continued professional learning. Their comments included, “the in-depth reflection propelled my teaching to the individual” and “reflection time on books leads to better book choices” and “re-honing my focus on language structures in the stories helped me to better select and introduce books” and “journaling was hard to do but it was important.” The project promoted thinking about children’s oral language structures, syntactical structures in books, and book selection for individual students.

In summary, the project teachers agreed that it was challenging to find additional time to preview possible texts with consideration for individual children’s control over language structures. This was especially the case because the books were also new or unfamiliar to these Reading Recovery teachers. Additional time was also needed to reflect on the observation data in order to strengthen teaching decisions and to write daily reflections. Yet, each of the participating teachers seemed to value the inquiry project experience and its impact on their continued professional learning.

Observations about students

Change over time in text level. We predicted that students would read increasingly complex text through the inquiry project and that by the end of the 6 weeks each child would achieve an increase of six text levels, an average of one text level per week. Book levels were not known

during the 6-week inquiry; however, pre- and post-inquiry text levels were recorded. Children’s increase in text levels from the start of the inquiry project to the end of the period ranged from three to seven levels in 6 weeks with two of the seven students making the predicted growth of one text level per week.

However, following the 6-week inquiry, four of the seven students maintained or continued an upward trajectory. For three of the students, teachers dropped the text level for 2 to 3 weeks before these students regained an upward trajectory. It is interesting to wonder why these teachers dropped the text level after they had already determined the child’s instructional text level using books from their Reading Recovery collections. We wondered if the teachers felt that learning opportunities had been missed as a result of not using a controlled gradient of difficulty for the previous 6 weeks. We do not know if the decision to drop text levels for a week or two was a good decision, as regardless, the children were able to resume accelerated progress.

Change over time in the child’s language. As a result of the teachers increased attention to the child’s use of language in talking, reading, and writing, we predicted an increased control of language structures used by the child.

Students’ language proficiency appeared to change during the period of the inquiry. Oral language appeared to become more complex. During the 6-week project, there were changes in longest utterances noted and recorded at each lesson, with an average gain of 10 words per utterance in 6 weeks (see Table 2). Using the Biks and Gutches (Clay, 2015b) assessment, children gained an average of

Table 2. Change in Longest Utterance Samples

Student	Beginning of the Inquiry	After the Inquiry, 6 Weeks of Lessons
1	Flash is beating bad guys.	My mom had a birthday and we ate cake it was so good.
2	The baby is up.	Tomorrow I get to see Santa at the North Pole and I am going with my sister Angelina and Bonnie and other teachers from the school and it will be so much fun.
3	I got chips.	Sometimes he scratches me. I cry and I tell on my cat.
4	I went to the movies with my grandma and watched Littlefoot.	He went somewhere and he fell in a mud puddle and there was a stick to help him up.
5	You almost got to erase this.	I sing Christmas Alvin and the Chipmunks because I hear it.
6	I like to go to Toys ‘R Us because it has a lot of toys.	Do you know the persons that skate on a competition they push them up and they land on their feet?
7	Baby Bear caught a fish.	I’m going to the movies with my Nanny – Ralph Breaks the Internet.

4 inflections, with 3 of the 7 students gaining 9 to 11 additional inflections.

The Record of Oral Language (Clay et al., 2015) had been administered 6 weeks prior to the beginning of the inquiry project. Therefore, the gains in children's language based on the results of that assessment are from the first 12 weeks of the children's lesson series. On the Record of Oral Language, all students repeated additional sentences accurately with an average gain of 2 sentences per child; 4 of the 7 students gained 3 to 9 sentences. This is important to note as the recommendation is to readminister the task at 6 months, yet growth was evident for all students in just 12 weeks (from the start of the children's lessons in September to the end of the 6-week inquiry project). It is not clear whether the teachers' attention to language resulted in these gains or if the gains would have been made otherwise.

Other interesting observations

Through engaging in this inquiry, we anticipated that teachers would make intentional connections with the classroom teacher and/or school librarian to learn more about the types of books and the processes used when children select books for their classroom reading.

Based on the inquiry project teachers' reflections, many benefits to using classroom books were noted. One teacher saw it as "a celebration to connect with what is being read in the classroom such as the *Elephant and Piggy* books by Mo Willems, *Pete the Cat* books by James Dean, and more nonfiction." Another teacher noted, "occasionally using books from the classroom makes children feel more like a reader with that classroom connection," and another noted the child was "happy to use books in lessons that she saw in the classroom." Another teacher felt that finding the "just right books" from the classroom [for a Reading Recovery teacher to use during familiar reading] promotes more effective transition back to the classroom at the time of their lessons being discontinued." Another teacher felt that her student "having seen such an array of different stories and formats [during the inquiry project] was not as afraid of new books in the classroom."

Using a wider array of stories during familiar reading was seen to support the transition from Reading Recovery lessons to working in the classroom without additional support. Reading Recovery teachers felt students had become more comfortable selecting and reading books from their classroom libraries. One teacher said she was "thinking more about including some favorite classroom stories in

familiar reading time" and another, that it "provided a professional learning opportunity to view books in a more reflective and strategic way." Teachers noted spending time reviewing books in the children's classroom libraries, but we wondered if there was also some form of collaboration with classroom teachers or school librarians around criteria for selecting books for their students, as this was not mentioned in the teacher reflections. Yet, teachers acknowledged they needed to explore school libraries more in order to become more familiar with locating books for Reading Recovery students to read as part of their transitions to their classrooms.

In the teachers' written reflections, comments included, "My student was able to take on challenges that were sometimes unexpected, perhaps because sometimes he was introduced to a wide variety of books." Another saw the future benefit of "more variety of language structures in books we select [as it] spills over to stronger readers and writers in the classroom."

What's Next? One Inquiry Leads to Another ...

This "Language Not Levels" inquiry project focused on book selections matched to children is just a sample of our ongoing efforts to support strengthening of instructional expertise. Clay (2016) tells us:

The teacher must be able to design a superbly sequenced series of lessons determined by the particular child's competencies and make highly skilled decisions moment by moment during the lessons. (p. 20)

Through listening to teachers' conversations, reading their reflections, and reviewing records and assessment tasks, we have learned that the exploration of language in speaking, reading, and writing strengthens teacher decision making around book selection.

What inquiry might we engage in next? You might find an inquiry project among the following suggestions that we see as possible next steps. We encourage everyone to ask questions and continue to engage in in-depth exploration of improved teaching. Like the teachers who participated in this project, we value continuing to extend our professional learning, seeking out resources and colleagues for support, and further advancing our instructional expertise.

Possible further inquiry 1. Work with colleagues to analyze and discuss factors that may contribute to the difficulty of a book in order to better understand what to look

Selected Resources to Support Further Inquiry into Book Selection and Children's Language

- Briceno, A., & Klein, A. (2016). Making instructional decisions: Deepening our understanding of English learners' processing in reading. *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 16(1), 55–66.
- Briggs, C., & Forbes, S. (2009). Orientation to a new book: More than a picture walk. *The Reading Teacher*, 62(8), 706–709.
- Bufalino, J. (2013). Understanding text complexity (K-2). [RRCNA webcast; available online].
- Clay, M. M. (2004). Talking, reading, and writing. *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 4(2), 1–15.
- Dixon, M. (2014). Put your ear a little closer: Tuning into a child's language. *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 14(2), 16–24.
- Flight, J. (2017). Learning language—Run, run as fast as you can. What might be possible in 3 weeks of Reading Recovery lessons? *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 17(2), 19–34.
- Kaye, E. L., & Van Dyke, J. (2012). Interpreting Running Records: Re-examining common practices. *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 12(2), 5–21.
- Konstantellou, E., & Lose, M. K. (2016). The role of powerful language interactions in Reading Recovery lessons: Developing strong literacy processing systems. *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 16(1), 5–28.
- Lose, M. K. (2013). Selecting and introducing texts. [RRCNA webcast; available online].
- Neal, J. C. (2009). Teaching for comprehension and language development of English learners: Insights from Reading Recovery. In C. Rodríguez-Eagle, Y. Freeman, & N. Freeman (Eds.), *Achieving literacy success with English language learners: Insights, assessment, instruction*. Worthington, OH: Reading Recovery Council of North America.
- Van Dyke, J. (2008). Reading books and discussing stories: Constructing knowledge through talk. *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 8(2), 18–24.

for in selecting a book for a particular child. Examine current book collections with a focus on book language and text structures and how these change at higher text levels.

Possible further inquiry 2. Work with colleagues to develop a process for evaluating book choice, possibly through an analysis of the book introduction; the teacher's teaching before, during, and after the first reading the new book; and the analysis of the running record taken after the second reading of the new book. We suggest recording book introductions and asking ourselves: Why did I select this book for *this* child? How did I support *this* child to orient himself to the text? Did this book pose some challenges for *this* child and if so, how were these challenges addressed or how could they have been addressed?

Possible further inquiry 3. Add additional rigor to analyzing daily and weekly lesson records. For example, when acceleration is compromised, review the child's longest utterances with consideration for language structure. Further examine the child's writing samples, running records, and books read by looking across all records. Summarize and record weekly patterns looking for changes over time and make adjustments in book selection and the support provided to the child at the earliest indication of difficulty.

Conclusion

Through participation in this inquiry project, teachers were challenged to reflect more deeply about each child's interests, control over language, language structures, and the language in the books they choose to support the child's successful reading. Teachers reflected that the project "shook their thinking" about the ways in which they select books for students and challenged them to re-examine the language in books in their Reading Recovery book collections. In the words of one of the teachers, "I feel like I am living the quote from Clay where she says to 'put your ear closer and concentrate more sharply' when thinking about supporting my student with those harder structures in the books (2015a, p. 69). The teachers in this project were keen to become actively engaged in their professional learning and to seek out resources and colleagues for support. Through their participation in this project, the teachers advanced their understanding of the role of each child's control over language and importantly, the role of *language*, not *levels*, in the books they select and introduce to children.

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Reading Recovery® Council
of North America

Where Are They Now?

Different Paths to Common Outcomes

When Billy Molasso first learned about Reading Recovery® it was from a teacher in Upper Arlington, Ohio. Carrie Williams explained to him how the one-to-one individualized instruction helps children who are struggling with early reading and writing skills — including his twin boys. Ricky (who is 4 minutes younger) and Eli are now thriving fifth graders.

Carrie shares her memories

Eli and Ricky were as adorable on the outside as they were on the inside! Although they were twins and had many similarities, they were quite different when it came to their literacy development! One of the many hallmarks of Reading Recovery is the individualized, customized lessons, based on each specific child's strengths and needs. Never was this more apparent than when these twins walked through my door. It served as a great reminder that no series of lessons are alike! They kept me on my toes—not because they were hard—but because they forced me to stay focused on their specific needs, regardless of the similarities they shared, the home-life they shared, the parents they shared, the physical appearance they shared, and the school community they shared.



Although they have many similarities, the twins took very different paths in their literacy development.

Their different paths to a common outcome were just that: different. While one moved faster, the other needed more time. While one loved writing, the other loved reading. While one's interests were gymnastics, drawing, and painting, the other enjoyed baseball and playing outdoors. They both LOVED Legos. We wrote about each of their different interests and we wrote a lot about their wonderful family. Reading Recovery laid an incredible foundation for both boys. Watching them grow was a treat, and I was reminded, while reminding their fathers, that each would take a different path to a common outcome.

One twin left Reading Recovery having met most of the benchmarks, with the other twin meeting all the benchmarks. While they required further support after their series of lessons, I am certain that their accelerated growth, their learning to be strategic problem solvers, and working towards independence played a pivotal role in their subsequent success. I am indebted to these boys for making me a better teacher and a better problem solver for every student that sits next to me. And, I am grateful to both of their fathers who did not flinch for a second when I shared what their responsibilities were with the twins' daily homework — 2 SETS of Reading Recovery homework, nightly!

Billy tells their story

Ricky and Eli were just a year old when Billy and Joe welcomed them into their family through adoption in Washington, DC. Wanting to raise the boys with Midwest family values, they identified several cities and began job searches — agreeing that whomever got the first/best offer is where they would move. Billy was hired as dean of students at Franklin University, and the family moved to Columbus.

When they started school, both boys struggled with reading and with math. Ricky recognized that his skills were less than other kids sitting around the table, and it impacted his sense of self in a very real way. He went into first grade with a stigma and came out as a firecracker, and he's still that way. He struggled a little in second and third grades — they change the goal post every year. But he's at the top of the thermometer instead of the bottom. He has a great sense of self and knows how to figure out problems by asking the right person. He's even doing better in math now.



The fifth graders still talk about their Reading Recovery teacher, Carrie, and the stories they read and wrote.

Eli had the same biology, same nurture and nature, but he continues to struggle with reading and math. Reading Recovery helped him move from hating books to hating books that he can't read. He has been diagnosed with ADHD and we all continue to look for ways to help him figure it out.

They're 10-year-old boys. Messy. Love video games. Love to be loud. Both like baseball. Ricky is a gymnast with the OSU younger boys club. Eli likes bugs and insects and being outside and is still trying to find his love and passion. They still talk about Carrie who had the right attitude and understood that the instruction needed to be different with each boy. I hope they connect the building of their self-confidence back to that first-grade Reading Recovery experience.

RRCNA welcomes Billy Molasso

Billy (Dr. William R. Molasso) is learning even more about Reading Recovery as the new executive director of RRCNA, replacing Jady Johnson who retired in August. Among the first things he learned is the depth of commitment — something every Reading Recovery person he has met displays.

"You have to have some degree of passion and love what you're doing," he said. "I'm amazed at how deep that goes. It's part of their identify, not just part of their heart."

As he's becoming acquainted with his staff, he's also learning the role RRCNA plays and how all the pieces of the Reading Recovery community fit together. He is impressed with the strength of the volunteer leaders who help guide the work of the Council. His goal, in the short run, is to spread our messaging wider and farther to other stakeholders.

"I'm a strategy person. I think three steps ahead and backtrack two steps to see where we are and how to get there," Billy said. "We need to revisit who we are and where we want to be," something he recognizes the Hub and improvement science work with the Carnegie Foundation will help establish. (See article on page 38 of this issue for more about the history and work of the Hub.)

"This renewal process will help," he said. "We have to change the trajectory of where we are. Look at the cities and populations we serve. What do parents need and want to know? What do principals and administrators need to make informed decisions? We need to take the rich legacy of Reading Recovery and tailor our messages to meet the needs of those stakeholders."

Before coming to RRCNA, Billy was the director of research and education for the Association of College and University Housing Offices-International, based in Columbus. He coordinated volunteer leader engagement strategies and facilitated learning for the association's nearly 1,000 campuses and 200 companies worldwide—over 16,000 individual professionals—including conferences, online courses, webinars, books, and other resources.

He earned his PhD from Michigan State University in 2004. His rich academic background includes a variety of positions and locations — graduate assistant, adjunct instructor, program coordinator, assistant professor of higher education, and advisor to the dean among them. When the family moved to Columbus in 2011, it was after accepting a position at Franklin University, where he created the division of student affairs and served as its dean of students. He has facilitated undergraduate, master's, and doctoral courses in tenure-track appointments with teaching, research, and service responsibilities, and directed extensive assessment and data-based decision-making processes. He has authored numerous scholarly publications and papers, presented at regional and national conferences, and has extensive experience with grant writing/reviewing and fundraising.

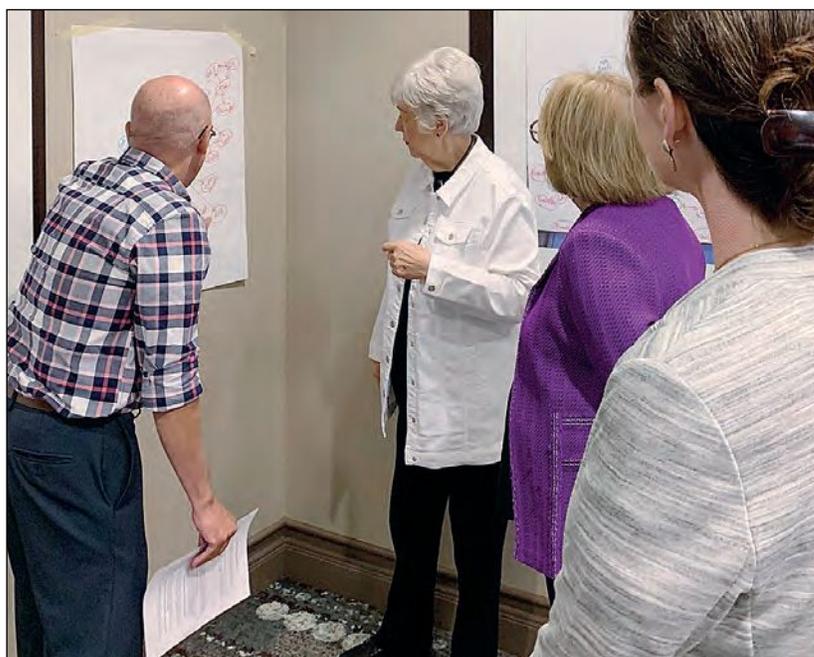
A Perpetual State of Inquiry: Our Commitment to Continue Marie Clay's Tradition of Continuous Improvement

Salli Forbes, University of Northern Iowa; Billie Askew, Texas Woman's University; Jennifer Flight, Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery; and Judy Embry, University of Kentucky

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

Marie Clay established the example of continuous inquiry, exploration, and research which we are now responsible for perpetuating. As a dynamic intervention, Reading Recovery® is continually informed by research and inquiry. Just as the intervention itself is renewed through inquiry, methods of inquiry are developed and refined as well. Reading Recovery professionals in North America have embarked on a new journey of inquiry through the methods of improvement science (Bryk, 2015). Improvement science is defined as, “the methodology that disciplines inquiries to improve practice. Undergirding it is an epistemology of what we need to know to improve practice and how we may come to know it” (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, & LeMahieu, 2015).

In this article, Billie Askew shares examples of Marie Clay's inquiries; Salli Forbes describes the development and features of improvement science; and Judy Embry and Jennifer Flight explain the work that



Carnegie participants Jim Schnug, Billie Askew, Gay Su Pinnell, and Jennifer Karnopp discuss a diagram of the Reading Recovery support system.

professionals in the Reading Recovery network have undertaken to learn and engage in improvement science for the continuous renewal of Reading Recovery.

Examples of Marie Clay's Inquiries

Billie Askew, Hub executive sponsor
I am personally reminded of so many examples of Marie Clay's perpetual state of inquiry. Although her inquiries related to Reading Recovery were

revolutionary, her perpetual state of inquiry was a hallmark of her work and her life. Examples in her professional life are noteworthy — as well as some from her personal life.

When given a unique research opportunity to study higher multiple births, Marie became curious about the effects of environment that may show up in children of identical heredity — children who were growing up differently in home experiences which seemed so similar for each child. This was very differ-

ent from the pervasive emphasis on heredity in studies of multiple births. The result was a book that was the richest compilation to date on the documentation of higher multiple births (Clay, 1989). During a 1997 visit to Texas, Marie and I traveled to Galveston to visit with Helen Kirk who had been tracing the lives of multiple births for decades. I marveled as I observed these two women going through archived boxes of data and recalling stories of these children around the world — and catching up with their current lives!

Consider this inquiry: “What are the current points of contact with society for today’s children?” Although Marie knew that development is dependent on the opportunities, pressures, and crises of the particular society in which a young person lives, she found that ‘out-of-school contexts’ were rarely studied. She and a colleague set about collecting information to get a national picture of the interests, activities, perceptions, and behaviors of New Zealand youth on the threshold of adolescent changes — directly from the views of 12-year-olds. The outcome was a comprehensive volume that sensitively focused on the points of contact with society of individuals on the verge of change (Clay & Oates, 1984).

In both examples, Marie searched for and found answers to these questions:

1. What exists in the real world?
2. How well do our theories explain what exists?
(Clay, 2015, p. 3)

During her extended stays at Texas Woman’s University, Marie visited the library regularly. When she returned to her office with stacks of books, she began her daily quest to

find answers to questions. She often deposited books on our desks with a “subtle invitation” to read and find answers to *our* questions!

Marie’s sense of inquiry permeated her personal life as well. She loved to travel — and inquiry guided every step of the journey. She studied the history of each destination and explored the culture with delight. Even when going to the Broadway show, “Smokey Joe’s Café,” she wanted to know more about the music of the 50s and 60s in the U.S. When we left the theater and asked for her impression, her simple answer was, “I guess you had to be there!” I guess sometimes inquiry does not lead to cultural satisfaction!

But back to Marie Clay’s journey of inquiry that has affected all of us:

I set out to be a problem-solver not a ‘stirrer.’ I admit to a long personal history of saying “What else is possible?” “What if...?” In 1960, I asked “What if we refused to accept that 15% of children will have literacy difficulties? What if the severe difficulty rate were half of one percent?” A crazy question! (Clay, 2007, p. 8)

Consider her question that leads us directly to our current commitment to engage in improvement science work:

How can a program like Reading Recovery prepare itself to change as required (a) to adapt to conditions in other education systems and (b) to take aboard new theoretical insights as they emerge in the literature, so that “black holes” in current rationales for aspects of the program can be filled by new information after it

has been tried and tested on the population for which Reading Recovery was designed? (Clay, 1994, p. 136)

Marie realized that new learning should lead to change, but note her caution in the quote above — *after* it has been tried and tested in the population for which Reading Recovery was designed.

The Promise of Improvement Science

Salli Forbes, Hub director

The field of improvement science, developed over the past century, focuses on an organization’s continuous improvement (Bryk et al., 2015). The tools and methods of improvement science have been used in agriculture, manufacturing, and service industries for many decades to improve results. In the past two decades, the Institute of Healthcare Improvement (IHI), a nonprofit organization, has used improvement science to improve healthcare outcomes.

Researchers at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, led by Director Anthony (Tony) Bryk, began investigating improvement science as a possible approach to reducing variation in student achievement in U.S. schools. They studied Deming’s work with businesses to create continuously improving outcomes, what Deming termed a *System of Profound Knowledge* (LeMahieu, Grunow, Baker, Nordstrum, & Gomez, 2017). Profound knowledge necessitates “system thinking” to recognize the system’s components and processes and to integrate these “so they work together as a whole to achieve a shared aim” (LeMahieu et al., 2017, p. 7). The application

in education is the development of a systems map, which identifies the processes provided by each part of the organization and how those separate processes lead to a common aim. Initially, in identifying the processes/parts of the current system, problems in the system are also revealed. The problems which contribute the most to unwanted variation in results or unwanted outcomes can be identified and addressed.

The Reading Recovery network is a very complex system, comprised of individuals who work across a variety of organizations, roles and responsibilities. In applying improvement science methods to Reading Recovery, it is essential to reveal the current system and any problems that occur in the processes of the system. Only then can we identify the causes of those problems within the system. This does not mean changing the organizations within the system or network but *improving* how they function and interact with each other to improve results.

The Carnegie team studied the IHI work with healthcare. They found that the IHI's *Model for Improvement* was a good fit for improvement work in education. This is a model that can be used to address the high-leverage problems that have been identified. That model involves responding to three questions:

1. What is the specific problem I am trying to solve?
2. What change might I introduce and why?
3. How will I know whether the change is actually an improvement? (Bryk et al., 2015, p. 9)

Like the system itself, identifying problems within the system is com-

plex. This requires a clear definition of goals and the processes that contribute to these goals. The second question calls for proposing possible changes that would address the problem and lead to better results. Each change idea will be trialed by a small part of the organization before it is scaled up, so that it can be determined if the change idea is effective. Before the change idea can be trialed, a method of measuring the results needs to be determined, so that it will be clear whether the change is effective.

The trials are done within learning communities that are connected through the methods of improvement science, referred to as networked improvement communities (NICs). The change idea is trialed in a small number of these communities and the results are determined through clearly identified measures. If the change idea produces a positive result it can be trialed in more of the communities. If there is again a positive result, this process can be repeated several times while each time scaling up the number of communities trialing the idea until it is at full scale. If there is some promise of a positive result but an adjustment is needed, then the change idea can be revised and re-trialed with a small number of communities again. If the change idea does not produce positive change toward the stated aim, then it is discarded. In all three of these possibilities, the results are helpful because they advance the knowledge of the networked communities (and the entire organization) about the work, for whom, and under what conditions there are positive changes.

The complexity of the network of Reading Recovery can be viewed as an advantage, since the many com-

ponent groups have the potential to become NICs. As the Reading Recovery community embarks on our journey with improvement science, it seems that we have a path for continuing Marie Clay's state of inquiry by unleashing the power of NICs that are searching for specific problems in the network, possible change ideas, and clear measurable results of implementing the change ideas.

Reading Recovery's Experience with Improvement Science

Judy Embry, North American Trainers Group president

In July of 2016, during the ninth Reading Recovery International Institute in Vancouver, Canada, a group of international trainers led by Dr. Robert Schwartz began a study of the book *Learning to Improve: How America's schools can get better at getting better* (Bryk et al., 2015). These trainers became increasingly interested in Tony Bryk's work on applying improvement science to education. As a result, the North American Trainers Group (NATG) invited Tony, as president of the Carnegie Foundation, to meet with them in March 2017.

The trainers' discussion with Tony at that meeting focused on two areas for improvement, both of equal importance, which emerged as priorities related to the future of Reading Recovery:

1. the variation in student outcomes (and related variation including fidelity to standards, instructional strength, and implementation) as identified in the report from the Consortium for Policy Research in Education

(CPRE) that detailed outcomes of the Investing in Innovations (i3) grant (May, Sirinides, Gray, & Goldsworthy, 2016), and

2. the consistent decline in Reading Recovery implementations in North America.

As a result of the discussion, the trainers were impressed with the promise that improvement science offered to help in identifying root causes of these two problems and identifying ways to address them.

At the fall meeting in 2017, NATG made a commitment to embrace the approach of the Carnegie Foundation to improvement science within networked communities; to learn not just what works, but rather what works for whom and under what set of conditions. In the spring of 2018, NATG began raising funds to support Phase One work with Carnegie. Through a collaborative effort involving NATG, university training centers, The Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery (CIRR), the Reading Recovery Council of North America (RRCNA), the Southeast Reading Recovery Conference, and several individuals, funding was secured to learn about improvement science.

A plan for Phase One of this work was developed with Carnegie researchers, coaches, and staff which involved designing learning opportunities for the Reading Recovery group and identifying participants who would represent the many roles involved in or supportive of Reading Recovery.

Joining together in Stanford to begin learning from the Carnegie experts were 49 participants from across North America: trainers, RRCNA board members, teacher leaders, site coordinators, superintendents, university researchers, a university training center dean, the RRCNA executive director, and the director of the International Data Evaluation Center (IDEC). All participants brought

their own perspectives related to what is and what is not working in Reading Recovery. The Carnegie coaches supported us in sharing perspectives, voicing concerns, using new inquiry tools, and advancing towards a common aim.

The participants were divided into two groups to correspond with the two identified goals: reducing variation in results (VIR) and growing



Drawing diagrams of how they envision the organizational structure of Reading Recovery are Amy Smith, Rachael Gabriel, Salli Forbes, and Shari Worsford.

and sustaining our work (GSOW). Evident from the beginning of the work was the critical nature of fostering a social learning community that has agency to exercise their knowledge and engage in the work to improve. A social learning online platform, the Networked Improvement Learning and Support (NILS), provided an online opportunity for participant communication. NILS was an important communication tool for commenting on ideas, asking questions, and sharing inquiry findings — keeping participants connected before, during, and after in-person meetings.

Phase One work included two in-person workshops called Networked Improvement Meetings (NIMs) on the Carnegie campus, with presentations, specific activities, and work sessions planned, presented, and supported by Tony Bryk and several members of the Carnegie team. There were also videoconference informational meetings and specific assignments that participants completed before and between the workshops. All participants were responsible to engage in pre-work, in-person work, and activity periods between in-person meetings.

Prior to our first in-person (NIM 1), each participant was assigned a task to either (a) prepare and post a narrative of their prediction of the future of Reading Recovery in the next 3 years, or (b) prepare presentations using existing data to illustrate both the issue of variation in results and current challenges related to growing and sustaining the work. These tasks were designed to help participants see the system, the processes that define

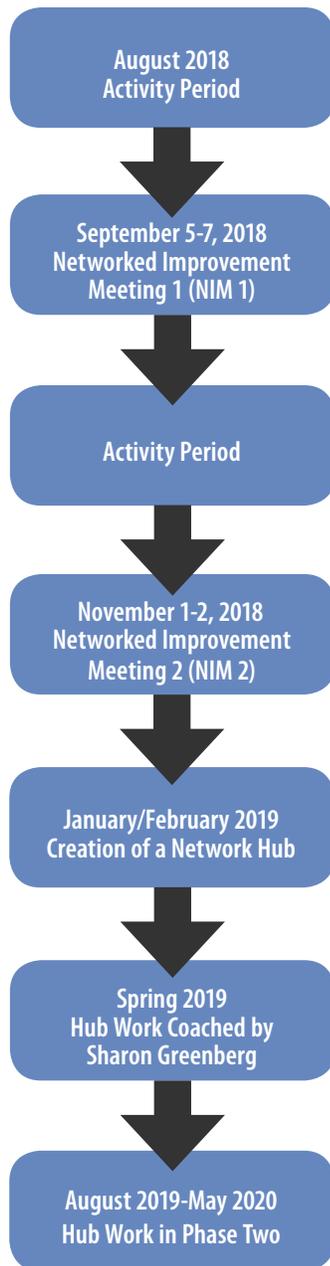
the system, and problems within the system. From these narratives, patterns emerged about what might be responsible for the success of Reading Recovery and what might be interfering with the processes.

During NIM 1, Tony and the Carnegie team helped identify reasons that might contribute to variation in results and the Reading Recovery decline. Later, the groups were challenged to identify specific problems and ask ‘why’ questions. To assist in pulling together the ideas, Tony asked the groups to think about the future of Reading Recovery. He challenged us to use the analogy of a tree and consider what would be needed in order to move Reading Recovery from a limb to the trunk, with the image of the trunk as the necessary or main part of the tree. The outcome of this activity was to identify five main tree trunk ideas:

1. to vitalize a continuous learning research and development network studying variability in order to reliably advance quality standard outcomes,
2. to rethink the organization within and among the university training centers,
3. to expand professional development for a range of stakeholders,
4. to develop effective cost-efficient integrated models to support system leaders and schools, and
5. to create a clear message of Reading Recovery as a coherent system.

During the activity period between NIM 1 and NIM 2, participants were encouraged to conduct studies to learn more about one of the problems that had been identified during NIM 1. Inquiries included surveys of stakeholders, in-depth analysis of teachers’ complete records of Reading Recovery students’ series of lessons, analysis of IDEC data to identify groups of students with particular patterns of entry scores, analysis of data collected from the first few weeks of Reading Recovery students’ instruction, and a study of teacher leaders’ and teachers’ identification of the Reading Recovery schools they support within the four implementation schemas described in the CPRE report (May et al., 2016).

During NIM 2, Tony and the Carnegie team led the group in learning how to create specific aim statements, identify improvement hypotheses, and test those hypotheses (change ideas). As the participants left the November meeting, they had a basic understanding of the tools/processes of improvement science and were enthusiastic about moving forward into Phase Two of the work. The work in Phase One led to a deeper understanding of root causes of problems within the Reading Recovery organization. The group realized the importance of networking. They had fostered a social learning community by supporting innovations, seeing patterns, accelerating knowledge acquisition, and working in a safe environment with their colleagues. As Tony said to the participants in Phase One, “Putting a face on a problem, especially a child’s face, often builds a will to solve it.”



Current Hub Members

Director: Salli Forbes
 Executive Sponsor: Billie Askew
 Data Analyst Researcher: Rachael Gabriel
 Trainers: Jennifer Flight, Jim Schnug
 Teacher Leaders: Amy Smith, Shari Worsfold
 Site Coordinator: Karen Scott

Reading Recovery's Current Focus on Continuous Improvement

Jennifer Flight, Hub trainer representative

Preparing for Phase Two

To sustain and continue the work that was begun in Phase One, a network leadership group or Hub needed to be formed. In January and February of 2019, there was a nomination and selection process with consideration given to selecting members from diverse regional, institutional, and instructional settings. Bryk et al. (2015), describe a network Hub as

a core group formed either as a single organization or distributed across network members that carry out critical functions necessary for the support and effective operations of a networked improvement community. These functions include, but are not limited to improvement science expertise, analytics, knowledge management, convenings, communications, and technological support. (p. 196)

In the spring of 2019, Hub members worked with Sharon Greenberg, an improvement science consultant associated with the Carnegie Foundation. Sharon coached Hub members in bi-weekly meetings and activity periods to build on the work begun in Phase One with the larger Reading Recovery network and NATG. Through videoconference meetings, the Hub worked to build community; deepen understandings of the problems; further develop the aim statement; and, map out a working theory of improvement focused on reducing variation in results.

By the end of the 8-week period, the Hub had reevaluated the problems identified during the Phase One work; developed and refined the aim statement; and, identified the factors that contribute to reaching the aim. The Hub members were learning a process as they were using improvement science tools. The products developed represented the Hub members' best thinking at that time. They were definitely incomplete and tentative but foundational for further development in Phase Two. Members of the Hub anticipated that learning from this effort would inform and accelerate the work on the second problem of Growing and Sustaining Our Work, and perhaps the two problems might be addressed with the same aim statement.

Beginning the work of Phase Two

Chad Lochmiller is the improvement science coach for the Hub's work in Phase Two. Chad is a faculty member at Indiana University and has had special training from Carnegie to lead improvement science projects. He currently coaches several school districts as they implement improvement science. His graduate assistant, Jennifer Karnopp, supports the learning and work of the Hub, increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of that work.

Chad is working with the Hub during the 2019–2020 academic year with both in-person clinics and regular videoconference meetings. The objective is to move Reading Recovery forward in the pursuit of improvement science as the way of operating within the North American network. The intention is to refine the work the Hub has previously done and begin to test change ideas

with some of the networked communities within the Reading Recovery North American organization.

Marie Clay embraced change that was thoughtful and tested, with a focus on evidence and theoretical explanation.

The art in the change process is that the changes should not distort or diminish its payoff and any changes made should be explicitly referred to theories of what is occurring. Compromise, or unthinking adaptations can readily change the impact of the innovation and reduce its capacity to deliver effective results. (Clay, 1994, p. 136)

I want to find evidence to convince me of the need for changes in understanding. (Clay, 2015, p. 3)

Like Marie's commitment to inquiry, we are embarking on ways to improve

an already successful intervention. Let's ask ourselves *her* question: "What is possible?" And ask *our* question: "How can we explore and test ways to improve our work through a focused learning journey?" Through improvement science, that inquiry promises to provide opportunities for Reading Recovery's continuous renewal.

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About the Authors



Dr. Salli Forbes is professor emerita at the University of Northern Iowa, where she was the director of the Jacobson Center for Comprehensive Literacy and the Reading Recovery Program until her retirement from the university in June 2019. Currently, she is a Reading Recovery trainer for Saint Mary's College. She is co-editor of *Changing Minds, Changing Schools, Changing Systems: A Comprehensive Literacy Design for School Improvement*.

Dr. Billie Askew is professor emerita at Texas Woman's University where she served as a trainer and director of the Reading Recovery Center. She is co-editor of *Stirring the Waters: The Influence of Marie Clay* and *Boundless Horizons: Marie Clay's Search for the Possible in Children's Literacy*. In addition to her work on the Hub, Billie continues to actively support Reading Recovery as a trainer consultant to RRCNA.



Jennifer Flight is a Reading Recovery trainer at the Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery, Western Region, Winnipeg, Manitoba. She has experience as an early years classroom teacher, and as a Reading Recovery teacher and teacher leader. Recent research interests include using improvement science tools to engage in small tests of change to strengthen learning opportunities for teachers.

Dr. Judy Embry is director of Reading Recovery & Comprehensive Intervention Model at the University of Kentucky. Instrumental in the Carnegie Foundation work since the early stages, she continues to help define and support the work of the Hub as current president of the North American Trainers Group.



The Impact of Intentional and Purposeful Practice with English Language Learners in Reading Recovery: A Historical View

JaNiece Elzy, National Louis University

Jeffery Williams, Solon City Schools, Solon, Ohio

Jeffrey Brymer-Bashore, The Ohio State University, International Data Evaluation Center

During the decade between 1966 and 1976, Dr. Marie M. Clay was concerned with documenting how young children developed literacy, including the special population of children who were attempting to acquire English as an additional language. Her research led to a central elegant question, “What is possible when we change the design and delivery of traditional education for children that teachers find hard to teach?” (Clay, 1993, p. 97) which led her to design, test and implement Reading Recovery® in New Zealand. From its inception, Reading Recovery procedures and practices were designed to meet the diverse learning needs of individual children.

Language is a central component of Clay’s theoretical perspective, as the written word *is* language. Clay (2016) explains that both reading and writing “involve linking invisible patterns of oral language with visible symbols” (p. 5). Every language is extremely complex, full of subtle intricacies and distinctions that native speakers are not even aware of. Nevertheless, children ‘master’ their first language in about 5 or 6 years and become adept at reformulating their phrases and sentences to ensure that their ideas and messages are understood. Clay (2015a) states, “every sentence the child constructs is a hypothesis

about language” (p. 69). Therefore, the more opportunities children have to communicate, the more they learn about expressing themselves. In this way, oral language development is a child’s first self-extending system. As children begin to make sense of the written code by linking world knowledge, linguistic knowledge, and phonological knowledge together, the child who has a larger and more flexible linguistic reservoir has a greater foundation upon which to choose, as Clay (2015a) explains, “he simply has to select the appropriate structures from his speech repertoire” (p. 82). However, it is well understood that not all children come to literacy learning with the prior experiences with print or the same language abilities.

The Reading Recovery lesson design provides a personalized space to expand the oral language competencies of children participating in the intervention. The individualized, one-to-one lesson structure allows for increased opportunities for students to participate and engage in personalized conversation. Clay (2015a) states, “We have known for a long time that conversation in the company of an adult was the best tutorial situation in which to raise the child’s language functioning to a high level” (p. 70). For children who are acquiring

English as an additional language, this frequent and sustained access to an adult language model is critical for early literacy success.

Reading Recovery teachers must be intentional and purposeful when planning for and instructing all students. For English language learners (ELL) students, this may include spending more time focusing on oral language development. This thoughtfulness may also include being aware of the idiosyncrasies in the English language, such as the lack of gender-specific word endings; the curious nature of prepositions; and how the inflection of words can impact the meaning of a sentence.

Study Rationale

Since the year 2000, the United States has seen a steady increase in the number of ELL students in public schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). This increase is also represented in Reading Recovery, as more than 6,000 ELL students were served in 2017–2018, making up 17.7% of all students. All too often, ELL students are isolated in their school environments, and Reading Recovery has demonstrated, successfully, the ability to adapt and meet the needs for accelerating their early literacy progress. As noted in the recent i3 randomized control

trial, Reading Recovery showed positive impacts on students' reading achievement, particularly ELL students, who represented 19% of the total sample. The authors concluded, "Treatment students who participated in Reading Recovery outperformed students in the control group on the Total Reading battery of the ITBS, Reading Comprehension and Reading Words subscales of the ITBS, and the OS... Moreover, these findings were generally similar for students attending schools in rural [areas] and their counterparts in non-rural areas and for ELL students and their non-ELL counterparts" (May, Sirinides, Gray, & Goldsworthy, 2016, p. 44).

Knowing what we know about the impact of intentional and purposeful practice in Reading Recovery, we began to wonder if this impact is represented historically in the International Data Evaluation Center (IDEC) data. Specifically, our investigation looked to answer the following research questions:

1. Are the findings of the i3 evaluation study represented historically in IDEC data?
2. How does the discontinuation rate of ELL students compare to non-ELL students?
3. How does the early literacy progress of ELL students compare to random sample students?

Methodology and Results

Research question #1:
Are the findings of the i3 evaluation study represented historically in IDEC data?

To answer the first research question, we followed the methodology design from the i3 evaluation study

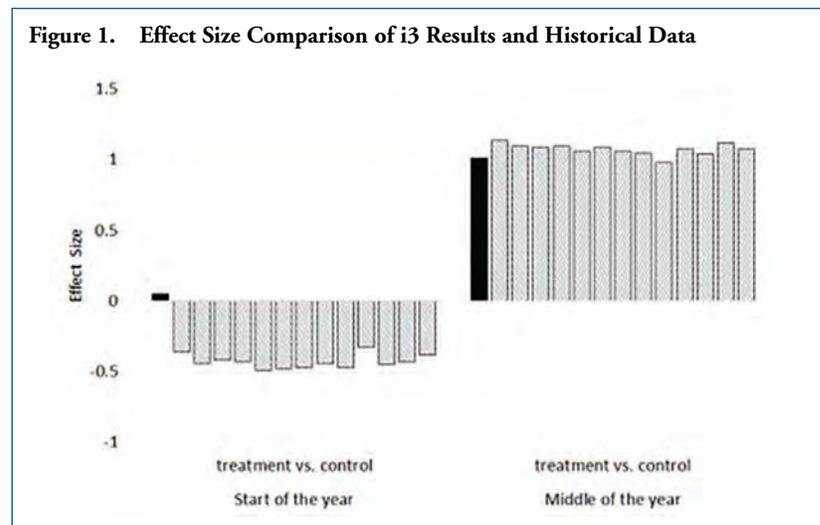
(May et al., 2016). The evaluation examined two groups of students — a treatment group and a control group. The treatment group were students who received Reading Recovery at the start of the year and the control group were students who received Reading Recovery at the middle of the year. We divided students in a similar manner for this examination. We did not conduct any random assignment, as was conducted for the i3 evaluation study, and only focused on the growth of treatment and control students from the start to the middle of the year using the Observation Survey (Clay, 2013) as the sole assessment. The i3 evaluation study computed results using the Observation Survey Total Score, and our analysis followed this precedence as well.

We computed effect sizes (Glass's Δ) at the start of the year and at the middle of the year to examine the differences between treatment and control group students at those time points. For our historical analysis, we used 13 years of ELL student data from the IDEC database (2005–06 to 2017–18). Effect sizes for ELL students in the i3 study were com-

puted by using the results reported in Table A7 of the final i3 report (May et al., 2016). Specifically, we used the means and standard deviations reported for treatment and control students reported in the *Pooled* column that reports results using ELL data from all 4 years of the grant. Effects sizes were computed by subtracting the mean Observation Survey Total Score of control students from the mean Observation Survey Total Score of treatment students and dividing those results by the standard deviation of the control students. For effect sizes, we used a standard that .2 is a small effect size, .5 a medium effect size, .8 a large effect size. All students were included regardless of their intervention outcome.

Figure 1 shows data represented by the i3 evaluation study (May et al., 2016) represented by the solid black bars and historical IDEC data, represented by the black speckled bars. There is one bar for each year of data and they are ordered left to right, from 2005–06 to 2017–18.

The i3 evaluation study found large positive effects (a value of 1.01) at the middle of the school year, as repre-



sented by the right-most black bar in Figure 1. Our analysis, represented by the speckled bars, show a small to medium (-0.36 to -4.9), negative, effect size difference between our treatment and control students at the start of first grade. What this tells us is that teachers are selecting the hardest-to-teach students, at the start of the year. These treatment students are starting off the school year lower than the control students. This is to be expected as that is the policy for Reading Recovery. Thus, there is a difference in this first set of bars on the left, but this difference is caused by the difference between the randomization used in the i3 evaluation study and the typical Reading Recovery procedure of selecting students with the lowest fall scores first, and not by some anomaly in the intervention.

Looking at the right side of the chart you will notice effect size differences that were negative and small to medium in the fall have changed to positive and very large (0.98 to 1.14) by the middle of the school year. Our analysis found very similar results, as those of the i3 evaluation study, replicated again and again for all 13 years.

Research question #2:
How does the discontinuation rate of ELL students compare to non-ELL students?

We used the same 13 years of student data from the IDEC database (2005–06 to 2017–18) to answer the second research question. We specifically selected students who had the opportunity to receive a complete intervention. These were either students whose interventions were concluded because they made accelerated literacy growth, caught up to their peers, and showed evidence of having the

foundations of a self-extending literacy system, or who received 20 weeks of the intervention but did not catch up to their peers and did not show adequate evidence of possessing the foundations of a self-extending literacy system. We refer to these students as *discontinued* and *recommended* students, respectively. For each school year, for both ELL and non-ELL students, we computed the percentage of students who were discontinued.

Table 1 shows the total number of students, with complete interventions, and the percentage of ELL students who discontinued, compared to non-ELL students that discontinued from Reading Recovery for 13 years.

Starting with our ELL students, as we go down the rows, we see that between 68.7% and 75.3% students were discontinued. Over the entire 13 years of data and 100,156 students, 72.8% of ELL students were discon-

tinued from Reading Recovery. When compared to their non-ELL counterparts, we see very similar results. As we look down the rows, we see that anywhere from 70.2% to 75.6% non-ELL students were discontinued and overall, 73.9% were discontinued. Hence, the analysis shows that both ELL and non-ELL students are discontinuing from Reading Recovery in similar portions every year for the past 13 years.

Research question #3:
How does the early literacy progress of ELL students compare to random sample students?

As with our previous research questions, to answer the third research question we once again used 13 years of student data from the IDEC database (2005–06 to 2017–18). In addition to the historical data of ELL students, we also used data from a comparison group of students called

Table 1. Percentage of Students by Intervention Status, ELL vs. Non-ELL Students, by School Year

Year	ELL Students		Non-ELL Students		Difference
	n	Discontinued	n	Discontinued	
2005	12,218	75.3%	83,788	75.6%	-0.3%
2006	11,479	72.8%	75,801	73.2%	-0.4%
2007	11,035	73.8%	70,302	74.8%	-1.1%
2008	9,972	74.6%	64,970	75.2%	-0.6%
2009	8,702	74.5%	58,609	74.8%	-0.3%
2010	7,481	73.4%	49,404	74.4%	-1.0%
2011	6,473	72.5%	41,924	73.6%	-1.2%
2012	6,193	72.6%	38,473	74.3%	-1.7%
2013	5,978	68.7%	36,332	71.8%	-3.2%
2014	5,964	69.2%	35,489	72.5%	-3.2%
2015	5,567	71.0%	32,431	73.0%	-2.0%
2016	4,924	70.5%	29,490	71.8%	-1.3%
2017	4,530	69.8%	26,841	70.2%	-0.5%
TOTAL	100,516	72.8%	643,854	73.9%	-1.1%

SOURCE: Data collection International Data Evaluation Center, The Ohio State University, 2005–06 to 2017–18

the random sample. Each year, about half of the schools participating in Reading Recovery randomly select two first-grade students from the entire classroom to be tested at the start of the year, the middle of the year, and at the end of the year. These are the random sample students. These students give us a sense of how the typically achieving first-grader progresses throughout the year. For this analysis, we used the population of ELL students that received Reading Recovery at the beginning of the school year and either discontinued or were recommended after 20 weeks of intervention. For the purpose of this analysis we referred to them as students with a complete intervention. For the random sample student data, we used start-of-the-year and middle-of-the-year data that were reported in the latest version of the U.S. Norms for Tasks of An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement, which can be found in the publications section of the IDEC web site, <http://www.idecweb.us/Publications>.

We computed effect sizes (Glass's Δ) at the start of the year and at the middle of the year and analyzed the differences between ELL students and the random sample control group. These time points represented pre- and post-intervention periods for our ELL student group. Effect sizes were computed by subtracting the mean Observation Survey Total Score of random sample students from the mean Observation Survey Total Score of ELL students and dividing those results by the standard deviation of the random sample students. For the random sample, for start-of-the-year calculations we used a standard deviation of 53.44 and a mean 432.95 from a weighted sample 318,433 students. For middle-of-the-year calcula-

tions we used a standard deviation of 43.96 and a mean of 513.19 from a weighted sample of 298,678 students (D'Agostino, 2012).

Figure 2 shows the effect size differences between ELL Reading Recovery students with a complete intervention and the national random sample on the Observation Survey Total Score. The figure shows effect sizes at two time points, at the start of the year (leftmost bars) and at the middle of the year (rightmost bars). For each set of bars, there is one bar for each year of data. The bars are ordered from left to right from 2005–06 to 2017–18.

Our results show very large, negative, effect size across all years between ELL students and random sample students (-1.23 to -1.58) at the start of first grade. ELL students were starting significantly lower than the random sample students on the tasks measured by the Observation Survey. Moving right, to the middle of the school year, our findings show a change to small, negative, effect sizes across the years between ELL Reading Recovery students and random

sample students (-0.14 to -0.26). The Reading Recovery intervention has dramatically narrowed the gap between the ELL students and the random sample.

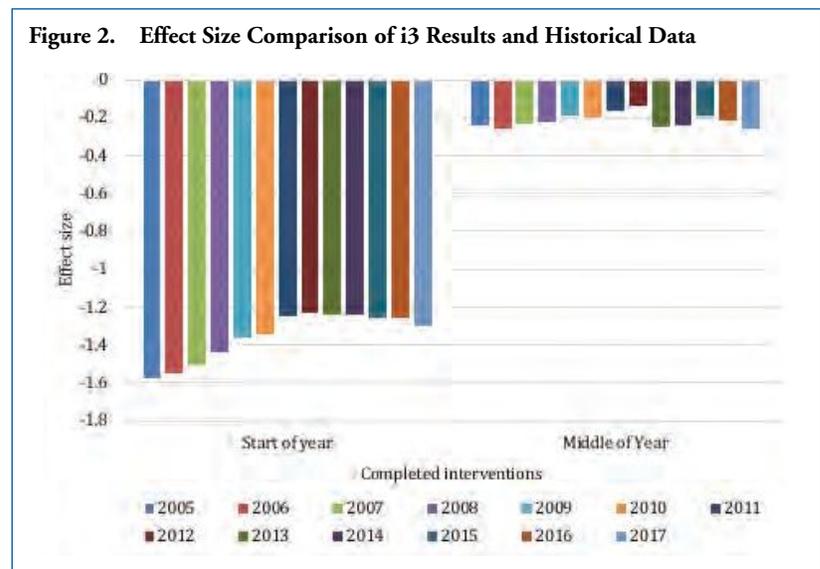
Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that Reading Recovery is an exceptional intervention for English learners, accelerating early literacy progress in ways comparable to native speakers across all domains. The explanation of why or how these results happen with such regularity logically lead us to examine the intentional teaching decisions and purposeful planning that might account for such successes. This discussion will explore some of the ways in which Reading Recovery teachers may design individualized lessons to meet the diverse language and literacy needs of ELL students.

Increased attention to oral language

One crucial contributor to Reading Recovery's success record with ELL students (and many others) is likely the attention to oral language development. As Clay stated, "there are no

Figure 2. Effect Size Comparison of i3 Results and Historical Data



quick ways to extend language but the best available opportunity for the Reading Recovery teacher lies in the conversations she has with the child in and around his lessons” (2016, p. 79). In daily lessons, teachers engage children in conversations about books being read and about interesting things going on in the classroom or home environment. Teachers are called to use language thoughtfully in teaching interactions, using prompts that are crisp and clear, avoiding unnecessary teacher talk (Clay, 2016).

Though it is true that children with limited language skills need more opportunities to talk, this does not mean we extend the 30-minute lesson time. Instead, teachers use more elaborative language or examine an illustration with greater care to extend vocabulary or background knowledge. Teachers have also engaged in longer language exchanges on the journey to and from the classroom, before or after the timer has gone off. “The teacher and child talk about experiences, stories, meanings, and messages. The phrases that the children construct in these conversations lead to increased awareness of language structures within sentences in their writing and reading” (Clay, p. 23).

One important way to foster more language is to use open-ended questions/prompts that don’t allow for one-word answers, as in this example:

Teacher: What do you think might happen next?

Child: They play in yard again.

Teacher: I bet they will play in the yard again.

Teacher: What about dad?

The results of this study demonstrate that Reading Recovery is an exceptional intervention for English learners, accelerating early literacy progress in ways comparable to native speakers across all domains.

Child: He not kick hard anymore.

Teacher: Or else?

Child: The ball will get lost... again.

Teacher: Yes, if dad kicks it hard.

As Clay (2016) notes, “An open-ended question can reveal a wealth of understanding and can also reveal misunderstanding or confusion. Meanings can be negotiated in a brief but helpful conversation” (p. 119.) But this alone may not provide enough extended practice. Some teachers occasionally make use of props, such as finger puppets (personal communication with Mary Fried) to increase oral language exchanges as students retell and replay the language of a story after reading. Don Holdaway described what is happening in such exchanges when children retell or replay stories when he wrote, “...the children were not recalling the surface structure of favorite stories but were re-creating new surface structures from deeply remembered meanings, and from deep syntactic relationships associated with those meanings” (1979, pp. 84–85).

Extending language during writing

In addition to the language opportunities mentioned above, there is daily time in the lesson framework devoted

to language development during the writing portion of the lesson. Before writing, the teacher scaffolds the child through brief exchanges to help the child compose a message. This is important because writing begins with composing—going from ideas in the head to spoken words, to printed messages—and is a process that needs to be learned (Clay, 2016). The teacher first engages the child in a genuine conversation about something meaningful—classroom experiences, home or playground events, or a discussion about a book—anything that captures the child’s attention and interest. The teacher helps the child shape thoughts into a sentence or two, supporting as needed to “help the child to learn more about composing messages by contributing to the language he offers” (Clay, p. 81).

Children who are learning English may have trouble composing unique messages. Teachers sometimes bring in a photograph or other objects to stimulate language that could lead to a composed message. Again, the teacher’s decision making before writing is critical because

...[T]he sentences that the child orally composes are more likely to be more complex and varied if that oral conversation is preceded by a scaffolding conversation in which the teacher draws out the child’s ideas ... sometimes refor-

mulating what the child says in a more expanded form. Then that language will also be in the air for the child’s subsequent appropriation into his or her own composition. (Cazden, 2001, p. 96)

Another way to help English learners is to encourage them to write about what they have recently read which allows for more opportunity for language appropriation as the child can ‘borrow’ language structures and concepts from the reading rather than producing them out of thin air. To do so, teachers may lead children toward retelling some interesting or funny part of the text or have students extend the text in some way, or by using phrases and concepts with the child’s own twists (see Figure 3). Writing about what has been read allows the child to work with more-sophisticated language structures and vocabulary than they may typically produce on their own. “Authors of children’s books often include unusual language features which children like to repeat” (Clay, Gill, Glynn, McNaughton, & Salmon, 2015b, p. 36). With more experiences from reading and writing messages, children begin to adopt and use language structures in their own speech and recognize them with ease in the books that they read later.

Clay also gives guidance about how to shift language development during writing:

Help the child to learn more about composing messages by contributing to the language he offers. As you respond to his effort stay with his message but encourage him to expand on his statement—to say a little more or tell what happens next. For an early writer, accept the child’s effort, making minimal change only if necessary... (2016, p. 81)

Clay adds that early on, composing can be undermined by too many teacher suggestions but when the child is more competent, teachers can easily suggest how a sentence might be more well-packaged, have more ideas, or have more variety in structure or vocabulary.

Demonstrating flexibility with language in the cut-up sentence

The work done each day with the cut-up sentence after writing is beneficial to all students because there is close alignment between the behaviors needed to re-assemble the cut-up story and those needed to read text successfully. In both settings, children must coordinate directional movement; demonstrate one-to-one correspondence between written

and spoken words; self-monitor and search for information sources; and check on letters, sounds, and clusters, as well as groupings of words and phrases. Furthermore, Clay (2016) states that during the cut-up sentence, the child “...gives attention to a word’s placement among other words in the context of a phrase in a way that no activity of studying words in isolation ever does” (p. 109), offering teachers a unique opportunity for teaching about language flexibility.

Reading Recovery teachers might look for opportunities to help develop students’ sense of structure dependent on need and skill. Early on the child may give more attention to the phoneme, letter/cluster level, and gradually shift towards attending to whole words. At some point “...the child will start paying attention to alternative ways of phrasing or arranging the word order or the line breaks” (Clay, 2016, p. 109) which can be especially helpful to English language learners.

In all languages, the position and order of words and phrases play a considerable role in determining meaning. Rules governing what can be left out and re-arranged without changing meaning can be demonstrated in the cut-up sentence to extend any child’s understanding of language structure and foster a sense of flexibility that is needed to read, speak, and write English. Consider Figure 4 that shows a progression of complexity in the ways that phrases can indicate a point in time. Notice the shift that occurs across the text gradient of difficulty from sentences that have no time references, to sentences with time references that happen at the beginning or end, to those with time references that occur mid-sentence. Language complexity, such as this example, is an important factor in text difficulty.

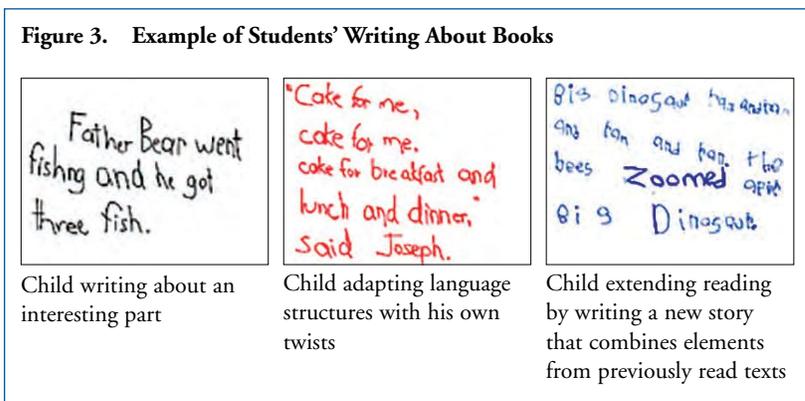
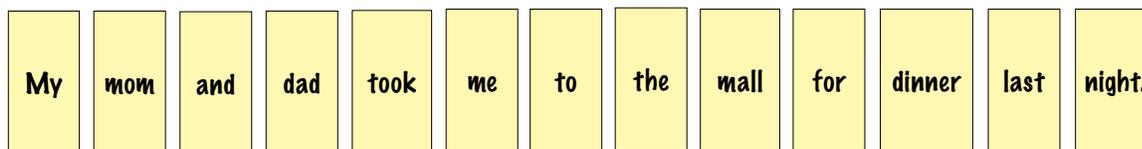


Figure 4. Sample of Language Complexity Across Levels

Level 5	<i>Father Bear Goes Fishing</i> Beverly Randall, 1994, Rigby PM	Father Bear went fishing.
Level 10	<i>Little Bulldozer Helps Again</i> Annette Smith, 2006, Rigby PM	Day after day , Big Truck came to help Big Bulldozer make the road.
Level 15	<i>Tents</i> Charlemae Rollins, 1976, Scott Foresman	It began to rain late that night .
Level 18	<i>Little Dinosaur Escapes</i> Hugh Price, 1998, Rigby PM	Little Dinosaur leaped, but just then , a flash of lightning lit up the sky.

Figure 5. Student Cut-Up Sentence Example



Now consider Figure 5. After the child has assembled the message correctly, a teacher might demonstrate one or more of the following changes in word order and phrase order. For example, a very low-level change would be for the teacher to rearrange the sentence to show that the order of *mom* and *dad* could be reversed and the sentence would mean the same thing. A somewhat harder concept would be for the teacher to move the phrase *last night* to demonstrate that we can explain when something happens at the beginning, end, or middle of a sentence without altering the meaning.

Figure 6 shows a progression of difficulty for re-arranging this sentence, which somewhat mirrors the progression of language arrangement that happens in the gradient of texts used in Reading Recovery. This intentional practice is an example of what Clay (2004) describes as building more “access roads—or more networks

across more neurons! Expanding language networks means having more alternatives from which to choose” (p. 3).

Reading connected text to develop language

It has been long established that the volume of reading connected text daily leads to reading growth and is associated with gains in vocabulary and comprehension (Allington, 2001; Anderson, Wilson, & Fielding, 1988;

Stanovich, 1986). It is well-documented that the amount of time spent reading continuous text in Reading Recovery is impressive, a fact that was recently acknowledged in a 2016 review of research conducted for the Institute of Education Sciences and published by the What Works Clearinghouse. This research review (Foorman, et al., 2016), noted that the significant positive effects of Reading Recovery were likely attributed to the fact that lessons emphasize reading

Figure 6. Teaching for Flexibility with Cut-Up Sentence

- Easiest change is to shift from the end of the sentence to the beginning.
Last night, my mom and dad took me to the mall for dinner.
- Harder to move the phrase to positions in the middle of the sentence.
My mom and dad took me, last night, to the mall for dinner.
My mom and dad took me to the mall last night for dinner.
- Most-complex changes involve shifting multiple phrases.
For dinner last night, my mom and dad took me to the mall.
For dinner, my mom and dad took me to the mall last night.

volumes of continuous text in addition to the specific prompting and teaching about word-solving, comprehension, and fluency typical in Reading Recovery lessons.

Teachers working with ELL students need to maximize this reading time to the fullest. Daily time devoted to reading familiar text does much to build and develop language, as well as the repeated exposure to the language structures particular to English texts helps students to “try them out” and work with them flexibly. Familiar reading also promotes fluency, including the phrasing and intonation associated with understanding texts. Because the texts are already familiar, though not memorized, the child is free to notice something new about the language and structures, how words work, or meanings. Every book re-read is an opportunity for the child to now learn about language through the eyes (Clay, 2004).

Another rich opportunity to help students learn English happens daily when the teacher introduces and reads a new text with the student. To maximize this opportunity, teachers must be particularly thoughtful of text selection, noticing what background knowledge the child may need about the topic or situation represented in the text as well as thinking about the vocabulary demands and language structures used in the text. For all Reading Recovery students, the teacher talks about the meaning of the story to be read, rehearses a few language structures that may be difficult, locates and discusses a few vocabulary words, and helps the child to attend to how the words work before reading the text. For ELL students, perhaps more time is spent elaborating on an illustration or rehearsing sentence structures.

The teacher must plan for the child to have in his head the ideas and the language he needs to complete the reading. The observant teacher introduces into her talk any concept, or word, or phrase structure that she has not heard this child use before. It helps if the child knows a lot about the story, before he reads it. (Clay, 2016, p. 115)

The time spent in rehearsing language structures and talking about the book before and after reading also contributes to the language development of the child because “children are exceptionally fast language learners; their brains are ‘hard-wired’ to internalize vocabulary and syntax” (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009, p. 34).

As Marie Clay wrote:

If we harness the established power of children’s oral language to literacy learning from the beginning so that literacy knowledge and oral language processing power move forward together, linked and patterned from the start, that will surely be more powerful. (2015, p. 95)

Because of Clay’s understandings and teachings on the importance of utilizing and developing the language capacity for all students, this practice is inherently at play in all Reading Recovery lessons. And this individualized setting, as demonstrated by our research, is ideal for many first-grade students who are also learning English as an additional language.

Conclusion

Population shifts—in response to economic, political, or environmental factors—have long been a substantial change factor over the course of human civilization. Recent trends, however, show that societies are

dealing with the influx of new citizens on an exponentially larger scale. These changes in populations, as well as globalization and the need to communicate across languages, have created the need for language shifts as groups and individuals attempt to assimilate into new social and economic settings. And, logically and historically, it is the education system that is charged with primary responsibility in facilitating this acquisition of language. Our analysis demonstrates the power of what is possible when the diversity of children’s language, culture, and prior learning experiences are acknowledged and welcomed as a source of value for instruction.

Education systems must meet the diverse learning needs of all students. Our analysis demonstrates that Reading Recovery is a powerful framework for assisting young ELL students on a course for being able to access future literacy learning by tapping into the interrelated processes of speaking, reading, and writing. Clay (2004) eloquently explained:

I argue that when we speak or listen to speech, we are constructing and composing; when we write any message, we are constructing and composing; and when we read text, we are again constructing and composing. The demands of each of these three activities are slightly different but each feeds into one pool of structural possibilities in the language. (2004, p. 4)

Schools will continue to face the challenge of helping students to have access to the necessary literacy skills to compete in a global economy. The 13 years of Reading Recovery data in this study prove that this intervention is on the frontline of helping with this task.

About the Authors

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Jeff Brymer-Bashore is the director and co-principal investigator at the International Data Evaluation Center where he has worked for more than 18 years.



With a degree in mathematics from The Ohio State University, he specializes in designing and managing large-scale data collections systems. When not working with data, Jeff is a DJ and children's entertainer.

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President's Message

Honoring a Rich Legacy of Commitment to All Learners



RRCNA President Karen Scott

Reading Recovery® theory underlies both my personal and professional practices. My journey with Reading Recovery began over 25 years ago when my school superintendent charged a colleague and me to investigate possible initiatives to support literacy growth. Our district population had increased poverty and diversity. Literacy scores were declining for the subgroups. As we observed many possible innovations, we discovered Reading Recovery. The results were significant for our young learners. Soon we had the opportunity to meet a dynamic young trainer, Linda Dorn, and the journey began. We

ences that are grounded in relevant events” (2015, p. 6). She ensured we studied, we asked questions, we observed, and we networked. We always studied our practices and knew that when we collaborated, we were better.

In *Shaping Literate Minds* (Dorn & Soffos, 2001) we find Eisner’s words: “Humans do not enter the world with minds but with brains. The task of education, acculturation and socialization is to convert brains into minds. Brains are born and minds are made and one of the privileges of the teaching profession is to have an important part to play in the shaping of minds” (p. ii).

Linda was always willing to step forward and be innovative. She ignited my desire to grow, collaborate, and listen to others in my network of literacy colleagues.

Linda Dorn certainly played an important part in shaping our minds — mine especially. Her excitement for learning and results were contagious. Linda was always willing to step forward and be innovative. She ignited my desire to grow, collaborate, and listen to others in my network of literacy colleagues.

embraced Reading Recovery and comprehensive literacy. It changed the trajectory of learning for children, teachers, and administrators, and this continued in the two districts where I worked.

As we worked, learned, and grew with Linda’s support, we built our understanding of Reading Recovery and comprehensive literacy that formed the foundation of our systematic approach. We knew that we must have a common commitment and understanding at all levels of education in the district and school. Reading Recovery and the classroom did not stand alone. We focused our learning on ensuring we had common language and practices. Early on we had the recognition that special education, general education, and interventions must align with the same focus if acceleration was going to occur.

Reading Recovery became the theory that became our belief system. Linda ensured we understood that Reading Recovery was more than a program — rather a system of change. It provided us the opportunity to see ourselves as a community of learners. Professional development was continuous and systematic. Often Linda would remind us of the work of Marie Clay and the impact Marie continued to have in our lives.

Secondly, Linda helped us understand that we must maintain high expectations for all learners — children, teachers, and administrators. Professional development was not an event; it was continuous. It went without a doubt that with these high expectations we also needed to hold ourselves accountable. As a learning entity, it was also important for us to develop a culture of teaching and learning focused on a team approach to problem solving.

In the introduction to *Changing Minds, Changing Schools, Changing Systems*, Dorn noted that “minds of educators can be changed only through authentic, mutual experi-



The Linda Dorn Reading Recovery Legacy Fund will support the training of Reading Recovery teacher leaders. A second fund, administered by RRCNA, will assist doctoral students at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

No one was an island — rather it was how we developed our common language and practices. Linda always demonstrated and provided the understanding that collaboration around our learners was essential. Reading Recovery theory is who we were. It was our belief system.

Recently I have had the opportunity to participate as a member of the Reading Recovery Network Improvement Science Hub (outgrowth of our work with Anthony Bryk and the Carnegie Foundation; *see related story on page 38 in this issue*). As I have worked with this group, I am constantly reminded of Linda Dorn's focus on learning and growing. I have learned to consider how this work has contributed to greater conversations among the members of the Reading Recovery network. We are taking the time to observe our practices and consider how we can with

intentionality and precision improve in small ways so that we can later grow in bigger ways. I am always reminded of the example Linda would offer regarding the pebble in the pond. We are starting small with the intent of impacting *big*. I know that my work with the Hub is also paying respect to Linda.

As a network of dedicated educators, we must continue our commitment to children and teachers — just like Linda constantly demonstrated. It is with a great deal of gratitude and pride I share with you the opportunity to contribute to the Linda Dorn Reading Recovery Legacy Fund that will support the training of Reading Recovery teacher leaders.

Linda's work was built on the foundation of Reading Recovery. She served in many volunteer roles throughout the years, including president of RRCNA in 2009–2010. As current president of the Council, I invite you to join me in honoring her by visiting the website and making a gift.

“The goal of teaching is to create the conditions where learners have the knowledge and motivation to extend their own learning to higher and higher levels” (Dorn & Soffos, 2001, p. 105). Linda created these conditions for us as learners. The challenge we have is to continue her legacy. This is how we honor her and our 35th year of Reading Recovery in the United States.

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**You're invited
to tell us what
you think!**

**Please join us for the Annual RRCNA Membership Meeting
Monday, February 11, 2020 • 4:30-5:30 PM**

During the National Reading Recovery & K-6 Literacy Conference

**Share your thoughts with fellow members, elected representatives,
and staff. You might even win one of dozens of door prizes!**

Executive Director's Message

Building an Even Stronger Sense of Community



RRCNA Executive Director Billy Molasso

I've had an incredible welcome to the Reading Recovery® community! As you may know, I joined RRCNA this past August as the new executive director at Jady Johnson's retirement. I'm thankful for the leadership Jady has shown the organization and look forward to building on her success in this role.

The sincere dedication of our members to help struggling readers improve their literacy skills is impressive. Engaging in thoughtful conversations with key leaders, participating in four different behind-the-glass sessions, and reading as much as I can get my hands on about early childhood literacy has already shown me the level of professionalism and dedication Reading Recovery teachers have to have to make the magic happen with the first graders sitting next to them.

Our community has a lot to celebrate as we enter our 35th year of Reading Recovery in North America. Our intervention continues to be impactful on our students, and we have data as a true evidence-based program to demonstrate it. Our community explores opportunities to enhance our work with different populations, from IPLÉ and DLL, to Literacy Lessons,™ to continually improving our daily

practice of Reading Recovery with students who need that extra enthusiasm and support. Our leadership structures are filled with strong, pas-

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sionate, and dedicated professionals who truly believe in the work of the organization and Reading Recovery.

In the past several weeks, I've shared some of my early observations with staff and RRCNA leadership. Together, we hope to build even stronger relationships with you and with the larger early literacy community.

I am excited to learn more about our work, identify ways that I can help strengthen RRCNA, and allow our leaders to do what they do best — advocate and advance skill development for struggling readers across North America.

I look forward to meeting you at my first National Reading Recovery & K-6 Literacy Conference in Columbus in just a few months.



Just after completing his first NATG meeting in Columbus in September, Billy visited Texas Woman's University in Denton to learn how teacher leaders and trainers are trained.

Twitter Chats: Powerful Professional Development

Not so long ago, it was hard to imagine that one of the hottest platforms for teacher professional development would be Twitter. Today, it's not only a great place to find Reading Recovery and early literacy educators to add to your professional learning network, but it's a great place for powerful PD — especially with Twitter chats.

RRCNA hosts monthly 1-hour Twitter chats, usually every third Sunday at 7 pm, EST, focused on a specific topic and led by special guest experts like Katie Keier, Pam Koutrakos, Colby Sharp, Tammy Mulligan and Clare Landrigan, Tanny McGregor, Gravity Goldberg, Maria Nichols, C.C. Bates, Jamie Lipp, and more.

If you aren't quite sure how to jump in, you can simply observe the conversation (or "lurk and learn" as we like to call it) by typing "#rrchat" into your Twitter search bar and then hitting "latest." All of our chats are archived so if you don't have time to join live, you can read the entire conversation online, usually the next day. Just log in to your Members Only Resources page and click on Learning Library, then Twitter Chat Archive.



Conferring to Empower Readers
How Problem Solving Beside Readers Increases Independence and Confidence
Sunday, December 1, 7 pm, EST

 **Penny Kittle**
Author, Teacher, & Literacy Advocate
@pennykittle
2020 National Conference Middle Grades Institute Speaker

 #rrchat

Invite your colleagues to join you for a conversation with Penny Kittle in December.

We hope you'll join a chat and find out why so many early literacy professionals are turning to Twitter to expand their PLNs and PD opportunities. Check the What's New page on the website and be sure to follow RRCNA on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Inquiry, Innovation, and Improving Instructional Strength

Highlights

- Sessions focus on improvement science, collaborative inquiry, the use of data including on-demand reports and site reports, new exit descriptors, and more
- IDEC update
- Session for new teacher leaders
- Session for DLL teacher leaders



Tuesday-Friday
June 16-19

DoubleTree Hotel Oak Brook
Chicago, IL

2020 Reading Recovery Teacher Leader Institute

Registration information available in late December

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

REQUIRED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR READING RECOVERY TEACHER LEADERS.
READING RECOVERY TRAINERS • READING RECOVERY SITE COORDINATORS

Questions? Email conferenceinfo@readingrecovery.org

Teacher Leader Scholarships

Support Training for Four

Generous donors and advocates contributed a total of \$50,000 to help train new teacher leaders for the 2019–2020 school year. Teacher Leader Scholarships are granted to school districts that have demonstrated a commitment

to Reading Recovery and selected a suitable teacher leader candidate. Pioneer Valley Books donated \$20,000. Hameray Publishing Group/Yuen Family Foundation and MaryRuth Books each donated \$15,000.

Hameray Publishing Group and the Yuen Family Foundation

The Hameray Publishing Group/Yuen Family Foundation has supported the training of 23 Reading Recovery teacher leaders through this scholarship program. The Hameray Publishing Group is dedicated to publishing innovative literacy materials for today’s educators. Combining a sound research-based approach with cutting-edge classroom solutions, Hameray has developed literacy materials for struggling readers as well as those reading at grade level. The Yuen Family Foundation is a private charitable organization.



MaryRuth Books

MaryRuth Books, Inc. is a publishing company committed to helping children become happy, successful readers. Every element in their “not as simple as they look” books is designed to maximize success for beginning readers and encourage their emerging reading skills. Leveled titles help teachers and parents choose books that offer the right amount of support and challenge to enable young readers to continually progress. Loved by children and endorsed by educators worldwide, the titles are staples in reading libraries, used by Reading Recovery, and favorites of elementary school classroom teachers.



Douglas County School District, Castle Rock, CO



Meg Dyck is training at Texas Woman’s University. Meg brings 22 years of teaching experience and a master’s degree from the University of Tennessee. She is currently the literacy intervention team lead for the Douglas County School District. Meg has had the opportunity to see district needs from a big picture perspective. She has spent much of the year supporting, coaching, and providing professional development to teachers and teams. As a teacher leader, Meg will continue to grow relationships with district and school leaders while providing ongoing support in schools.

RSU9, Mt. Blue Regional School District, Farmington, ME



Jennifer Ladd is training at the University of Maine Orono. She brings 24 years of teaching experience and has a master’s degree in educational leadership from the University of Maine Farmington. Recently, Jennifer was involved in revising literacy teaching based on data; assisting teachers in collating and interpreting the data relative to the needs of the students. She is looking forward to leading the Mt. Blue district as a Reading Recovery site that supports all teachers working with struggling literacy students. All of the elementary schools in the Mt. Blue Regional School district are Title I schools.

Pioneer Valley Books

Pioneer Valley Books is dedicated to producing the highest-quality books for early literacy learners. Their books have been carefully written to support students in gaining control over early reading behaviors and in becoming strategic in their approach to print. Books have highly supportive pictures, carefully selected reading vocabulary, and easy sentence structure, and they are specifically designed to help children gain fluency and independence in their reading.



Anderson County Schools, Anderson, TN



Jill Scott is training at Georgia State University in Atlanta. Jill brings 17 years of experience to her training and has a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from the University of Georgia. She has an open-door policy allowing other teachers to observe her lessons in a way that facilitates literacy conversations with other professionals and has found this to be a valuable learning experience for all involved. Jill would like to increase opportunities for second-grade teachers to collaborate with Reading Recovery professionals and benefit additional at-risk students. For 23 years, Anderson County Schools have implemented Reading Recovery and has nine elementary schools, eight of which are Title I schools.

Washakie County School District 1, Worland, WY



Sharee Barrus is training at Saint Mary's College in California. Sharee brings 13 years of teaching experience as well as a master's degree in reading curriculum and instruction from the University of Wyoming. She plans to work collaboratively to create a system

for staff to discuss instructional best practices and student learning. She had the opportunity to share success stories, interpret and explain data to the Rotary Club that allowed them to understand how the Reading Recovery intervention changes students lives, and she looks forward to sharing with many others. The district is a high poverty district with 55% of elementary students receiving free or reduced lunch.

Grants Help Fund Conference Attendance

Generous donors have contributed 18 grants of \$1,000 each to help offset the cost of registration, travel, meals, and hotel for the National Conference in Columbus. Grants will be awarded 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. This funding is available through the generosity of the Tenyo Family Foundation (10 grants), Teacher Leader Professional Development (2 grants), RR Books, Blueberry Hill Books, SongLake Books, Rose Mary Estice Memorial Fund, Debby Wood Professional Development Fund and the Minnesota Literacy Scholarship Fund.

Watch the website for award announcements.

Geri Stone Memorial Fund grants will also be awarded to help offset the cost of attendance or other professional development conferences, books, and more.



Funds for two Teacher Leader Professional Development Grants were raised during a silent auction of original work by Annie Opat, Reading Recovery

trainer at Emporia State University. An anonymous match of \$500 brought the total raised during the 2019 Teacher Leader Institute to \$1,669.

2019 Teacher Leader Institute

BTG: Transforming Our Practice

Teacher leaders and trainers focused on behind-the-glass lessons at the June 11-14, 2019 Teacher Leader Institute held in Greenville, SC. *Transforming Our Practice: Windows of Opportunity for Reflection and Learning* was the theme chosen by planning co-chairs Lisa Pinkerton, Lori Taylor, and Lindy Harmon.

In the opening session on Wednesday, Mary Fried focused on change over time in leading and learning during behind-the-glass lessons, including constructing chains of reasoning. Two sequential working sessions built on these concepts: *Introducing the Behind-the-Glass Lesson: Different Moves for Different Groups* and *Leading the Behind-the-Glass Discussion: Pitching the Discussion to Different Groups*.

Lisa Pinkerton led Thursday's general session, *Facilitating the Discussion Circle: Everyone Leaves with a Lift*, and incorporated small-group interaction around the role of the discussion circle in supporting the learning of



Teacher leaders engage in collegial interactions during working sessions that focused on behind-the-glass discussions.

everyone engaged. The day ended with individual and group reflection, action plan development, and UTC planning.

The final day of the Institute began with an IDEC update by Jeff Brymer-Bashore, followed by a focus on the use of technology referencing the most recent edition of the Reading Recovery standards and guidelines. The general and concurrent sessions

provided examples of ways to balance in-person and virtual visits and included the use of distance learning to enhance coaching. These sessions were led by trainers C.C. Bates, Adria Klein, and Deb Rich; and teacher leaders Christy Germany, Nancy Rogers-Zegarra, Shari Hansen, Gail Hunter, Tiffany McConneelee, Janelle Williams, Maryann McBride, Jaime Dawson, and Paulette Moore.



At the opening reception, the newest members of the teacher leader community were introduced by trainers representing Clemson University, Georgia State University, National Louis University, Saint Mary's College, Shippensburg University, The Ohio State University, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, and University of Northern Iowa.

Let's Celebrate!

35 YEARS



Visit the newly designed success site to scroll through the photos and videos and submit your own stories. The timeline is also being updated with content and photos. A toolkit featuring banners, logos, press release templates, and more are also available for you in RRCNA Member Resources.

We're officially kicking off the 35th anniversary at the upcoming National Reading Recovery & K-6 Literacy Conference coming up February 9-12, in Columbus. Look for congratulatory videos from parents, kids, and others to be shared before each general session. Videos and photos celebrating the 35th anniversary will also be featured on the redesigned Creating Literacy Success website.

A special luncheon will be held from noon-1:30 pm on Sunday, February 9, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel during the Conference. All attendees are invited to join this luncheon celebration with special guest speaker Gay Su Pinnell. Pre-register for the luncheon (\$20 ticket required) when you register for the Conference.

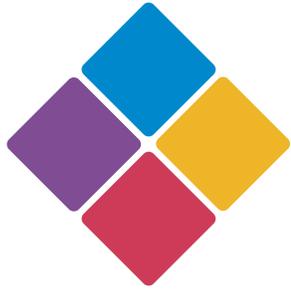


Make an impact on early literacy by making a donation to the Fund Challenge at the Conference this February. Your gift will support RRCNA's mission, including advocacy for federal reading policy and adequate school funding, teacher professional development, and early literacy resources.

New this year, the fund booth will feature interactive giving with fun prizes!

Your gifts to the Annual Fund Challenge will be matched up to \$10,000 with a donation from Pioneer Valley Books.





National Reading Recovery & K-6 Literacy Conference

February 8-11, 2020 in Columbus, Ohio

Powerful Professional Development for You and Your Literacy Team | Classroom & EL Teachers | Interventionists
 Literacy Coaches & Specialists | Title I Teachers & Coordinators | Curriculum & Language Arts Specialists | Building & District Administrators

Learn with these and other outstanding speakers

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



SUNDAY
Adria Klein



MONDAY
Douglas Reeves



TUESDAY
Nikki Grimes

New! Middle Grades Institute
for Grades 5-8 Educators

with Penny Kittle



Leadership Institute
for Administrators & Leadership Teams

with Jenny Donohoo

FEATURED AND OTHER SPEAKERS



Kylee Beers



Robert Probst



Kathy Collins



Matt Glover



Stephanie Harvey



Ralph Fletcher



Aerial Johnson



Mary Fried



K. Journey Swafford



Allyson Matczuk



James Schnug



Leslie McBane



Jamie Lipp



Cheri Slinger



Jeffery Williams



Jan Richardson



Celebrate 35 years of Reading Recovery excellence in North America



Join us for an anniversary luncheon with special guest speaker **Gay Su Pinnell** on Sunday, February 9 from noon–1:30 pm at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Pre-register for the luncheon (\$20 ticket required) when you register online for the Conference. Space is limited.

FEATURED SESSIONS

READING RECOVERY

- Mary Fried *Power Start: The First Six Weeks of Lessons*
- Allyson Matczuk *The Emergent Writer: Developmental Perspectives and a Teacher on the Cutting Edge*
- K. Journey Swafford *Developing Flexibility in Working with Words in Writing*

CLASSROOM LITERACY

- Ralph Fletcher *Engaging Boy Writers AND Helping Students Write Nonformulaic Nonfiction*
- Stephanie Harvey *From Striving to Thriving Writers: Strategies to Jump Start Writing AND From Striving to Thriving: How to Grow Confident, Capable Readers*
- Aeriale Johnson *For Want of Utterance: Teaching Literacy for Liberation*

INSTITUTES

READING RECOVERY

- James Schnug, Mary Fried, & Leslie McBane *Good Teaching Equals Acceleration... Or Does It?*
- Jamie Lipp, Cheri Slinger, & Jeffery Williams *Writing in the Reading Recovery Lesson: Process to Product and Everything in Between*

CLASSROOM LITERACY

- Kylene Beers & Robert Probst *Notice and Note in the Elementary Grades: How to Create Engaged and Skilled Readers*
- Kathy Collins & Matt Glover *Nurturing Meaning Making, Reading Identities, and Language Composition*

LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

— Jenny Donohoo
Quality Implementation: Leveraging Collective Efficacy to Make ‘What Works’ Actually Work in Schools

MIDDLE GRADES INSTITUTE

— Penny Kittle
Planning to Engage and Empower Readers and Writers

Flexible Registration Options

Register for a Saturday Institute, the entire Conference, and/or a partial Conference on a weekday or weekend. And find out how your administrator could attend for FREE!

Get more information and register online at www.rrcna.org/conferences

Register by December 15 and SAVE!

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In-Kind Sponsors

- Scholastic Education
- Pioneer Valley Books
- Experience Columbus

The Last Word

Our readers say The Last Word column in *The Journal of Reading Recovery* is one of their favorite things to read. **We need more of your great Reading Recovery stories.** So take a minute to share one of your favorite moments with all our readers. Just send a quick email to vfox@readingrecovery.org.

Angela Surber has been sending stories for The Last Word for many years — so many great stories that we've only been able to share a few. Here are some other gems the Reading Recovery/CIM Interventionist in Guyton, Georgia, has sent along. Thanks, Angela!

Pay Attention!

Zac is a sweet boy who is always willing to do as asked. We were early in his lesson series and he'd just finished reading the first book of the day's lesson. I praised his good reading and asked him to choose another book to read. Zac chose a book, opened it to the first page and stopped. As I made a note on my record sheets about the first book, I asked him to go ahead and start reading. Again, silence. Since the first word was "Here," I thought maybe he didn't know the word when it was the first word in the story and not in the middle or end of a sentence as he'd read before, so I gave him the word. More silence. Again, I told him the word and asked him to read. Then, just as sweetly and innocently as he could, he said matter-of-factly, "I know the word. I'm just waiting for you to pay attention." I assured him that sometimes I had to write down the good things he was doing and I was always paying attention!

Back in the Day

Today I was reading *Red Socks and Yellow Socks* by Joy Cowley (first published 1987) with Laurie. When we got to the page that reads "They hung them on the line. Red socks and yellow socks." she paused and said, "That's because back when this book was written, they didn't have washer and dryers."

Different Meanings

Today I told Landon that we were going to meet a new family after he put his story away. As he put his envelope in his bag he asked, "What time are they coming? Am I going to still be here?" I then had to explain that I meant a new family in a book, not someone coming to the school to see us. Our new book was *The Photo Book* by Beverly Randell (Rigby PM Collection).

Sounds Good to Me

C.A.P. Test #10 "What's wrong with this?"
(Lines are reversed)

Tiffany: "I don't know. (pause) You read it awesome, like smooth and really neat."

Fully Charged!

As Ethan was reading a familiar book, his reading got slower and slower. I commented that it sounded like his battery was dying. I then modeled a sentence to show him how his reading needed to sound. His response: "That sounds fully charged!"



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

— Irene C. Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell

— “ ” —



Your work as a teacher of literacy is worthwhile and important because it transforms the lives of students.

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

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Visit Us Online www.readingrecovery.org

For Your Eyes Only

The screenshot shows the website's interface. At the top left is the Reading Recovery Council of North America logo. To the right is a search bar labeled "Google Custom Search" and a "Logout" button. Below this is a navigation menu with links: Reading Recovery, RRCNA, Professional Learning, Conferences, Store, What's New, Get Involved, and Membership. The main banner features the text "RRCNA Members Only Resource Center" in yellow on a blue background, accompanied by a group photo of diverse people. Below the banner is a breadcrumb trail: "Home > Members Only Resource Center". A prominent purple box highlights the "RRCNA e-Learning Center" with the subtext "Customize and track your online professional development" and a "Get Started" button. Below this are three resource categories, each with a representative image, a title, a brief description, and a "RESOURCES" button:

- Advocacy & Outreach:** Resources to help administrators and elected officials understand the impact of Reading Recovery.
- Learning Library:** Audio recordings, teacher language modules, National Conference handouts, & more.
- Parent & Family:** Communication forms, customizable newsletters, brochures, parent letters, proposals, & more.

Take advantage of YOUR free learning resources!