More Than ABCs: Letter Knowledge and the Development of a Literacy Processing System
Elizabeth L. Kaye and Mary K. Lose

Promoting Discovery During Roaming Around the Known
James R. Schnug

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Paula Bennet

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Editor’s Corner

Connie Briggs, Editor-in-Chief

In education, we often feel that we do not have enough time to teach what we need to teach or to learn what we need to know. “If only I had another day, another week . . .” is often a phrase I say to myself. Yet think about what is accomplished in just 12 to 20 weeks. Teachers trained in Reading Recovery can literally change the trajectory of a child’s life in an average of just 36 hours of instruction.

We are often asked why Reading Recovery professionals are so committed. Perhaps because we can see a child change right before our eyes in a short period of time — gaining confidence and literacy skill that will be foundational to his or her life. What we do positively impacts individual children, schools, communities, and beyond! Just read the “Where Are They Now?” stories to see real examples of the influence of our work with students.

In this issue, you will read three articles that focus on what some might consider as peripheral to teaching a child to read and write. However, each topic is instrumental in accelerating learning. Betsy Kaye and Mary Lose look at how visual discrimination and fast visual processing with letter work contributes to the development of a literacy processing system. Jim Schnug shares how important the 10 days — just 5 hours — of Roaming Around the Known are to getting a powerful start to accelerated learning. And Paula Bennet has written about how supportive, intentional, and clear instructional conversations are key to effective lessons. These three teaching articles reveal instructional practices — culminating in a just a few hours across a series of lessons — that can make a dramatic difference.

In the Implementation section you will find an article about the impact of the Investing in Innovation grant to scale-up Reading Recovery. Upon the completion of the 5-year grant, we are seeing the positive effects on schools, teachers, and children. From California to Massachusetts, examples illustrate how schools and districts had opportunities to expand or to implement Reading Recovery for the first time, resulting in the training of over 3,700 teachers serving over 400,000 children who may not have had an opportunity to learn to read and write in first grade.

Many teachers trained in Reading Recovery work with children who are English language learners, either in one-to-one instruction, small groups, or whole class. Adria Klein shares a valuable resource for these teachers in her review of the book, Cultivating Knowledge, Building Language: Literacy Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary School. Authors Nonie K. Lesaux and Julie Russ Harris from the Harvard Graduate School of Education provide strong research and field-based practices for language development and expansion of academic language. They offer detailed ideas for lesson plans and language projects for a variety of grade levels and content areas that not only extend learning for English language learners, but for all elementary students.

As always, our professional organization, the Reading Recovery Council of North America, provides information about advocacy, grant and scholarship opportunities, resources, awards, and conferences to inform membership and provide support and encouragement. Share in our sincere wishes to celebrate Dr. Marsha Studsbaker’s 15-year contribution to Reading Recovery by reading a tribute from colleagues. Marsha is also celebrated, along with two other noteworthy recipients, in the Teacher Leader Awards article.

Exciting plans are being finalized for the 9th International Institute to be held in Vancouver, British Columbia, this July. Allyson Matczuk, our Canadian colleague, shares information about this Institute for all Reading Recovery professionals. Keynote and featured speakers from five countries will join international trainers and teacher leaders for 3 days of professional development. I hope you will make plans to attend.

In the big scheme of life, approximately 36 hours over 12 to 20 weeks is a relatively small amount of time. To a child learning to read and write, this may be one of the most-important times of his or her life. Henry Brooks Adams has written, “Teachers affect eternity; no one can tell where their influence stops.” I think this is especially true for teachers who teach Reading Recovery students. Our time is well spent!
How to Submit Articles

Write for The Journal of Reading Recovery

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

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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.
5. Send either long or short articles. Published length ranges from two- and three-sentence anecdotes to longer, more technical articles.
6. Articles will be edited to fit space and style requirements.
7. RRCNA publications follow the style designated by the most-recent edition of the Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association.
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More Than ABCs: Letter Knowledge and the Development of a Literacy Processing System

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Editor’s note: All names are pseudonyms.

“We think that learning letters is easy. It is quite easy to learn to sing the alphabet in a song but visual recognition of many letters builds up slowly in young children.”
— Clay, 2005b, p. 38

Introduction
To become strategic readers and writers, young children must learn to efficiently integrate language structure, meaning, and visual sources of information in reading and writing. Particularly challenging for young learners is the processing of visual information, both the conventions of print and the random symbols, or letters, used in the English language. As well, the teaching of alphabet letter names along with young children’s mastery of letters and their links to sounds are remarkably complex (Clay, 2005b; Reutzel, 2015). Teachers need to carefully observe what young children have learned about letters and the speed with which they use letter knowledge to solve words and construct meaning as they read and write continuous text. Teachers also need to be aware of particular instructional approaches that enable children to use letters effectively and avoid those that might confuse or discourage letter discrimination for a particular child. In Reading Recovery this is especially important, as the aim is to optimally support children’s learning beginning with where they are currently, what they know well, and what they need to learn how to do next in their literacy learning journey.

To that end, in this article we present a range of issues related to letter learning beginning first with a brief review of the literature as it relates to learning the symbol system of letters including visual discrimination and the role of fast visual processing. Second, we discuss examples of children’s letter knowledge as revealed in their Observation Survey tasks and the ways they make links and increase their control over letter knowledge. Third, we explore Clay’s teaching procedures for letter learning and letter work, with examples from several children’s Reading Recovery lessons including isolated letter work at the whiteboard, the use of the child’s alphabet book, and support for letter formation. Fourth, we discuss one child’s idiosyncratic letter knowledge and how it may inform planning for her learning. Fifth, we invite colleagues to reflect on what can be learned through careful observation as we work with any child’s patterns of strength and create opportunities for the child to extend his or her control over letter knowledge, its use in continuous texts, and its role in the child’s development of an effective literacy processing system for reading and writing.

Learning the Symbol System of Letters, Visual Discrimination, and Rapid Visual Processing
The development of visual perception begins at birth, yet formal reading and writing instruction must take into account each child’s acquired ways of attending to the visual information in print (Clay, 2013). Children must first learn to perceive the symbols that represent print; knowing what to look for, where to look, and which way to look. Although visual information in the form of pictures, objects, and colors may be easily recognized, letters are not as easily perceived and must be learned. This learning involves the visual sense and the ways to recognize and distinguish each symbol one from another at the rapid speeds required to interpret and construct messages fluently in reading and writing. In order to learn to read and write, young children must learn to distinguish between numbers and letters (zero versus the letter O), use print signposts (comma versus quotation marks), and determine what is “to notice” in terms of letter
sequences (for example g paired with n in sign is silent; but not in signal). At the same time, children learn that recorded messages must correspond to the letters they see with respect to the serial order of print. What is initially a slow and sometimes haphazard process involving ‘wandering eye’ (or hand) movements comes under the child’s increasing control as he learns to integrate all levels of language at the letter, sound, word, and sentence levels—with each one as important as the other—in order to read and write successfully. (See Clay, 2001, chapter 2 and chapter 4; Clay advises that children need “experience with words in texts and words in isolation; words in continuous text favours learning about word probabilities while words in isolation favours learning about letter sequences” (Clay, 2001, p. 171). Thus, children must learn to deliberately attend to the left-to-right sequences of letters since only slight changes in order will signal unique words (spot/tops, there/three, lift/flit, who/how, nope/open). Part of early literacy learning is also to discover that sounds are linked to letters, sometimes arbitrarily, which can be especially challenging for very young learners. For example the sound for the letter c can be /k/ or /s/; y may sound like /l/ (baby), /l/ (my) or /y/ (yes), and g like /j/ or /g/ and some letters combine to share the sound of a single letter as in kn /n/, wh /w/, and ea /e/. Learning the names of letters and their links to sounds, unique letter shapes and their formation, and their sequences separated at times by white space to make up words (i.e., pain, in, ain’t, a, are part of paint; he and her are embedded within here), all develop at the same time children learn concepts about print, new words, and how to read and write continuous texts.

Although young children learn to pick up visual information quickly, perceiving letters is gradual, can take up to a year of instruction, and is best accomplished through reading and writing continuous texts. Although letter learning can be difficult, most young learners approach it enthusiastically, claiming ownership of the first letter in their name and developing preferences for specific letters that are especially meaningful to them (Butler & Clay, 2008). Early on, children learn that letters come in a set comprised of 54 distinct forms—upper- and lowercase letters and a and g—and that letters must be distinguished one from another in spite of their visual similarities, e.g., orientation (u/n, t/f, b/d/p/q, M/W) and smallest features (a/o, v/w, h/n, y/v, t/n, i/j, X/K).
(else, why); nonetheless, letters must be recognized as distinct, one from another. Thus, a slow response in letter naming may indicate that the novice learner is challenged primarily with the retrieval of the label versus having a problem with visual discrimination of letters.

Children must learn to shift their attention to and fro from language and meaning to print even at the letter and subletter levels to problem solve flexibly and comprehend. And, very importantly, teachers must be aware of the potential for children’s confusion in letter learning and letter naming in order to effectively support their journey toward becoming proficient readers and writers.

**Children’s Ways of Knowing Letters**

“Efficient school programs allow children to expand their awareness of letters from whatever its level is when they walk in the school door” (Clay, 2014, p. 47). Letter learning is sensitive to classroom instruction and we can often see its impact in our students’ responses (Clay, 2013). A teacher’s careful observation might reveal how children work to retrieve their letter knowledge. In the following illustrations, each of the four students scored between 20 and 40 on the Letter Identification task (U.S. Stanine 1); however, notice how differently they respond when confronted with a letter for which they cannot give the name. Consider the unique ways they use what they know from their kindergarten experiences to make sense of the task.

**Bradley**

In Bradley’s kindergarten classroom the teacher planned frequent, meaningful activities with children’s names that supported letter learning. Whether part of the daily routine, such as taking attendance and lunch count, or presented as center activities during which children worked in pairs to match students’ names with their photos or “sort” children into various groups such as favorite recess activity, these cleverly planned opportunities sparked children’s interest and supported their letter learning much more than the “letter of the week” approach. While engaged in these activities, it was common to see and hear children thinking through their decisions as they worked together:

- **Student 1:** (pointing to a card with the name Carl) This can’t be Cassandra; it’s too short.
- **Student 2:** No, that’s Carl. His name ends with l.
- **Student 2:** Here’s Cassandra (selecting the Cassandra card).

Fortunately, Bradley could draw on his rich classroom experience when given the Letter Identification task. He knew several letters by name and identified 12 additional letters by naming a family member or classmate whose name began with that letter. Bradley’s knowledge about letters and names was useful during writing as well. Several weeks into his lesson series he wanted to write about a Batman costume he saw at the store. As he worked through the writing of his story with a bit of help from his Reading Recovery teacher, he paused at the word costume, turned to his teacher and said, “Costume. Does it start like Katy or Cameron?” It seems he was thinking “I know there are two different ways this sound can be represented; which is it?” His repeated experiences with children’s names supported his discovery about the idiosyncrasies of letter-sound links and the complexity of our spelling system.

**Logan**

Logan identified many letters by name and several others by characters’ names he learned in a kindergarten program, along with the initial sound of those names. For example, Logan said, “Hattie Hedgehog /h/” for the letter H and “Leo Lion /l/” for the letter L. It appears that the colorful characters and related stories of their escapades had captured his attention in the classroom, and he associated their names and initial sounds with the corresponding letters. Logan retrieved this particular knowledge about letters more easily than the letter’s name in several instances, thanks to a classroom teacher who designed learning experiences that captured his interest and brought meaning to abstract letter forms.

**Zoe**

Zoe came from a classroom in which students wrote, read, and discussed continuous text for a large portion of the language arts block. Her responses on the Letter Identification task reflected these experiences. She frequently responded to the task with high-frequency words such as like for the letter l, come for the letter c, and go for the letter g. In terms of letter knowledge, Zoe had an advantage over students in some other classrooms because she was immersed in meaningful reading and writing activities, and as a result, was able to relate letters to words she read and wrote.
Mason

Mason spent a good deal of time separated from his kindergarten classroom for what his school characterized as problem behavior, therefore it is difficult to know what kindergarten practices, if any, contributed to his singularly unique approach to letter identification. In the fall Observation Survey assessment, Mason identified 23 letters, naming a few of them quickly. However, often he quietly recited the alphabet and stopped at the letter he wanted to name, “A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J—that’s J” and “A, B, C, D, E—that’s E.” It is important to note that he was not looking at an alphabet chart at the time and no printed alphabet decorations adorned the room. It appeared that his route to recalling letter names was simply to recite the alphabet and stop at the letter that he associated with the printed symbol. Obviously, this letter naming retrieval strategy is extraordinarily inefficient, but clearly it was Mason’s “way in” at the time.

Although letter names provide the most expedient way to refer to letters, evidence suggests that Zoe, Logan, and Bradley “know” letters in a variety of other ways as well. We can make inferences about their letter knowledge from their responses supported by our knowledge of the literacy practices in their classrooms, and we see many strengths to build upon in lessons. In contrast, Mason’s approach to letter naming is clearly much less efficient, yet, it is unwise to establish expectations for his literacy learning based only on this initial assessment. Mason’s teacher will need to discover his strengths and start from there to increase his ways of knowing and help him find more-efficient ways of working with letters. Because each of these children displayed distinctive ways of knowing and using letters, their teachers will need to build on each child’s current letter knowledge and expand its use as a source of information in text reading and writing.

Becoming aware of detail and learning to differentiate letters

We can sometimes “see” children learning to differentiate letters, one from another, as illustrated by Adam who began Reading Recovery able to identify six letters. In the course of reading and writing during Roaming Around the Known, he learned to write the word I, which also appeared in his little books in two different forms: I and l. In an early lesson he wrote T on a scrap of paper, presented it to his teacher and asked “Does I sometimes look like that?” His teacher responded “No, that’s a T. The I usually has a top line and a bottom line, like this.” It was interesting to see how Adam was sorting out his new learning, and it is easy to forget the complexity involved in differentiating letters based on the smallest details. Interestingly, while typing the uppercase T for this manuscript, we noticed that the font puts serifs on the lines at the top and bottom of the letter. Although that is not the version of T that Adam had asked about; nevertheless, he would soon need to learn T in all its variant forms, including the typeface with serifs. Several examples of the variability in fonts that might challenge a young learner are displayed here:

sometimes children correctly identify most or all letters on the Letter Identification task—even those that are quite similar—but have not yet learned to write those letters correctly in every detail. Alec correctly identified all letters on the Letter Identification task, yet he often interchanged n and h in his writing. It seemed that he did not realize he should attend to the length of the vertical line as a distinguishing feature. Figure 1 shows Alec’s writing before his teacher...
taught him to attend to the difference. Notice how he has formed the letters $n$ and $h$.

The teacher gave Alec a magnetic letter for $n$ and $h$ and drew his attention to the difference between the two letters. He also looked at these letters in two known words (*no* and *have*) in a familiar book, confirming the difference. Then the teacher guided his attention as he wrote the two letters, asking Alec to check to see that the line was in proper proportion for each letter: a short line for the $n$ and a tall line for the $h$. For the next week, when the letters $n$ or $h$ came up in Alec’s writing, his teacher prompted him to think about how the letter should look before writing it. Soon Alec began monitoring the formation himself. Figures 2 and 3 show an example of Alec monitoring his letter formation while writing the story “I wish he was on my team or I was on his team.” Figure 2 shows Alec’s initial error on the working page of his writing book, when he wrote *wish* as *wisn*. He quickly self-monitored, asked for correction tape, and fixed his error by shortening the $s$ and lengthening the line on the $h$. Figure 3 shows the corrected version.

As the examples of Adam and Alec illustrate, learning to distinguish each letter from all the others requires close attention to fine detail. Yet, the proficient young reader must learn to make these distinctions quickly and flawlessly. The observant teacher will note students’ hesitations and confusions, considering the children’s work with letters in isolation and on-the-run during reading and writing. Only then will she be prepared to efficiently address the intricacies of letter learning.

*Exploring letter knowledge using the six tasks of the Observation Survey*

When gathering information about children’s letter knowledge and considering their useful strategic activity with letters, it is helpful to look across all six tasks of the Observation Survey. Clay asks us to consider children’s *movements* in forming letters, their *visual awareness* of letters (e.g., which letters are identified and attended to, which are difficult), and how they use the *sounds* of letters while writing (See Clay, 2013, p. 135). Children’s writing gives a good indication of what they are attending to in print (Clay, 2013). The fall Observation Survey tasks for Lexi, below, provide an opportunity to consider the kinds of knowledge she has about letters and how she uses that knowledge. Lexi’s scores for the Observation Survey tasks all fell into Stanines 1–3. Additional details follow, along with a reproduction of three of the tasks.

**Letter Identification.** When asked what the letters were called Lexi said, “ABCs.” She correctly identified 14 uppercase and 16 lowercase letters by name, had five confusions, and offered no response for the remaining letters (see Figure 4).

**Writing Vocabulary.** Lexi wrote six words: her name, *like*, *I*, *see*, *me*, and *look* (see Figure 5).
Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words. Lexi wrote some high-frequency words and was able to record several dominant consonants and some vowels correctly (see Figure 6).

First let’s consider what Lexi knows from the Letter Identification task. It appears that she has a preference for identifying letters by their names and she refers to them as “ABCs.” Several of her confusions occur with letters that look similar: p/q and d/b are mirror images of each other. The attempt v/z might occur because the letters look similar, produced with angled lines, or because the names of the letters sound similar. Likewise, j/g look somewhat similar with a curved tail, have names that sound similar, and sometimes represent the same sound (jump, giraffe). The letter names for U and Q sound similar as well. It is interesting to note that some of the uppercase letters for which she gave no response look identical to the lowercase letters she identified correctly or vice versa (e.g., Zz, Ss, Xx, Vv).

Analyzing the two writing tasks, we learn more about Lexi’s letter knowledge and strategic activity with letters. She seems to have good control over letter formation and can write many letters easily without a copy, including several that she does not yet identify by name. When writing, she is able to slowly articulate words and record some consonant and vowel sounds correctly. We also note some confusion with the orientation of letters. It appears that she tried to write a g at the beginning of go and at the end of big and dog; however, the g is backwards and resembles an e. Lexi seems to have a preference for using mostly lowercase letters, which is what we normally see in printed texts and is also an expectation for children’s writing in first grade. One wonders if she chose to make a capital B (big) and a capital D (dog) because she is unsure of the orientation of the lowercase letters. She misidentified b as d on the Letter Identification task but correctly identified the d. Lexi identified the B correctly and gave no response for the D; however, when writing dog (Doe), she actually told the teacher, “This is a D” while showing the teacher the D. It is reasonable to assume that her letter knowledge is still tentative and varies by context.

Concepts About Print. Now let’s consider what we can learn about Lexi’s letter knowledge from the Concepts About Print task. Three items are particularly relevant to this discussion:

1. On item 19, the tester points to a capital letter and asks the child to “find a little letter like this.” When asked to find the lowercase form of l, she correctly indicated the i. It is interesting that she demonstrated her understanding of the relationship of l to i, yet she had not identified l on the Letter Identification task.
Despite writing I as a word on both writing tasks. When Lexi was asked to find the lower case form of M, she identified an n. Lexi identified M and n correctly on the Letter Identification task and was able to produce both lowercase m and n on the writing tasks.

2. On item 21 of Concepts About Print, Lexi was able to demonstrate her understanding of the term letter by correctly showing one letter and two letters.

3. Item 24 asks the child to “Show me a capital letter.” In response Lexi pointed to a lowercase e in the text, indicating she probably has not yet sorted out the categories of capital and lowercase.

Text Reading. It is important to consider texts read with at least 90% accuracy when determining students’ useful strategic activities. Lexi read the Level 1 text A Bird Can Fly (Scott Foresman & Co., 1979) with 93% accuracy. She made one error, omitting the word fly on the last page. She was able to read the book Dad (Randell, Giles, & Smith, 1996) with 100% accuracy after the teacher first read it to her. Lexi gave no indication of attending to letters while reading either text. On the hard text, Hats (Scott Foresman & Co., 1979), Lexi omitted has on the first two pages then substituted have for has on the next three pages. Although these words both begin with h, the tester noted that she could not be sure that Lexi was looking at the print. See Figure 6 for a summary of Lexi’s reading of easy, instructional, and hard texts.

In addition to the discussion above, what else do you notice about Lexi’s letter knowledge, formation, and use as you look across each of her Observation Survey tasks? We suggest that readers consider the questions Clay (2013) asks us to address when thinking about useful strategic activity with letters on page 135 of An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement. Consolidating an analysis of this information on the Observation Survey Summary (side 2) is a helpful starting point when planning for children’s learning opportunities.

Making links and learning more about letters

As children progress through their series of lessons, they learn more letters and learn more about letters, consequently teachers must continually revise their understanding of students’ letter knowledge and its application in reading and writing texts. Mason, discussed earlier in this article (see page 8) began Reading Recovery trying to recall letters by reciting the alphabet, yet he soon started linking letter forms to the words and sounds he knew well. For example, he recognized the word
LEGO from the movie and the toy of the same name, so the word and its picture became the reference for L in his alphabet book. The excerpts below illustrate how Mason was able to use the L-Lego link to problem solve on continuous texts and also show how his actions become more-efficient over time.

1. Mason substituted *farm* for *Look*, the first word on the second line of the page. (The error made sense because he ignored the period at the end of line one.) Then he stopped, said “Lego,” and finally self-corrected saying, “Look.” It appears that the item Lego in his alphabet book helped him monitor and correct his error.

2. Mason was writing a story about a game he wanted to play. The teacher drew boxes for *play* on the working page of his writing book, and Mason slowly articulated the word as he pointed to the boxes and wrote a *p* in the first box. He then articulated the word again saying, “p-l-Lego! It’s L,” and wrote the *l* in the second box. Again, Mason used the association from his alphabet book to match the sound he heard with the letter he needed to write.

3. Mason was reading a book about a lizard, which he had thought was a gecko during the previous day’s first reading. During his running record, he came to the word *lizard* and said, “lizard, /l/, yep!” and quickly continued reading. Rather than making three moves (*lizard-Lego-/l/) to confirm his attempt, he was able to quickly confirm using just the first letter — a more-economical move and an indication that he was increasing his strategic control over letters.

The teacher aims to support letter learning by providing optimum support with minimum confusion. In one early lesson, the teacher was working with a child who was now able to identify both the upper- and lowercase *k* and it was time to solicit from the child his choice for a link to that letter to use in his alphabet book. He smiled broadly and offered “cake.” With this contribution from the child, the teacher must make a swift decision: Accept the child’s link which sounds like *k* at the beginning but doesn’t correspond to the correct first letter of the word, probe for another more desirable link from the child, or perhaps offer some alternatives that might be familiar to the child (*kite, key, Kansas*, etc.) from which he might choose. Clearly, *cake* is not an ideal choice and Clay (2005b, p. 37) cautions: “Far too often early literacy teaching misrepresents letter-sound relationships to children.” It is important to select a link that matches both letter and sound, so as not to further confuse a young literacy learner. A similar confusion may result when the picture is not well known by the child, such as a picture of an *alligator* for *a* which the child consistently calls a *crocodile*, or when *lion* is confused with *tiger*.

**Attending to letter sequences**

Jasmine entered Reading Recovery with strong oral language skills and a good sense of how stories work. She had been making rapid progress in both reading and writing and had begun to integrate all sources of information while also reading fluently. In recent lessons, her teacher noticed that Jasmine’s reading errors were often a very close approximation of the words in texts. Even though her substitutions were meaningful, it seemed that Jasmine had developed a haphazard approach to print, had become satisfied with her initial attempts, and neglected to look precisely at the sequence of letters within visually similar words, as evidenced on some recent running records.
(e.g., stopped/stayed, pulled/played, last/fast, left/felt, and sitting/standing).

While reading yesterday’s new book, The Lion and the Rabbit, Jasmine substituted after for fast and although the substitution fit, neglected to attend carefully to the detail of letters within words and take the initiative to correct the error.

Jasmine: The deer ran after… and it got away.

Text: The deer ran fast… and it got away.

Jasmine’s teacher resolved to intercept this inefficient responding by demonstrating how to look carefully at the arrangement of letters within words. At the end of the story, after asking her to monitor (Were you right?), Jasmine quickly responded “yes,” then looked at her teacher and stated, “it’s fast” while neglecting to even glance at the text and seemingly unsure of how to confirm her response. Determined to help Jasmine use visual information more efficiently, her teacher capitalized on the opportunity to demonstrate precisely how to look carefully at the sequence of letters in words in continuous text and check on herself using the procedure found at the bottom of page 108 in Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals Part Two: Teaching Procedures (Clay, 2005b).

Teacher: Yes, and what letter would you expect to see at the beginning of fast?

Jasmine: f

Teacher: And what letter after that?

Jasmine: a, then s, t.

Teacher: And are those the letters you see (sliding a white card across the letters to reveal them one at a time)?

Jasmine: Yes, that looks right now (initiating a slow check beneath the word using her finger to look closely).

Teacher: That’s it. So, next time as you say the word, be sure you’re checking for all the letters.

Teaching Procedures and Rationales: Working with Lexi

We now invite you to consider how to build on one child’s idiosyncratic knowledge of letters and consider how Clay’s teaching procedures for letter identification, attending to letter formation, use of the alphabet book, and learning a new letter, are used to support and extend Lexi’s control over letters. As you read about the teaching decisions, you might find it helpful to review Lexi’s Observation Survey tasks, presented earlier.

Working with letter identification

Children need to learn to attend to features of letters so that each can be “rapidly distinguished from all similar letters” (Clay, 2005b, p. 25). Manipulating or sorting letters in the very brief segment of the Reading Recovery lesson affords the child an opportunity to attend to, discriminate, and recognize letters, gaining control over them with increasing speed and without the distraction of their arrangement in words or lines of continuous text. As Clay advises, “Always do a little letter work after taking the Running Record in the lesson” (Clay, 2005b, p. 29). Not an optional extra, the letter identification activity should not be omitted from a child’s daily lessons. Therefore, Clay cautions, help with letter learning “should always be a part of early intervention lessons but should take little time. The child cannot afford to waste time on letter-learning activities or games when he could be reading well-chosen books” (Clay, 2005b, p. 31).

For Lexi, one of the first letter identification activities at the upright whiteboard immediately following Roaming Around the Known lessons includes an arrangement of one or two of each of the following magnet letters: uppercase C, O, Y, A and lowercase letters c, o, y, i (see Figure 8). Notice that the letters chosen by the teacher for this activity were correctly identified by name on the Letter Identification task on entry to her program and had not been used to identify another letter as in U/Q, v/z, p/q, j/g. The teacher also minimizes the potential for Lexi to confuse letters in this activity by deliberately not choosing letters for which one of the identical uppercase or lowercase pairs (K/k, P/p, S/s, Xx, Z/z) were unknown or used to identify a visually similar letter (v/z and p/q).

Notice also that the colors and types of the letters chosen (foam, smooth plastic, Quercetti) are random. Lexi...
stands facing the whiteboard while her teacher invites her to place the letters into two groups (upper- and lowercase) which she does easily and quickly. When finished, she spontaneously names the letters and notices that each has a mate, except A and i. In each subsequent lesson, Lexi’s teacher arranges additional opportunities to identify and sort letters at the whiteboard, taking care not to place visually similar letters side by side until they are easily distinguished. As Clay cautions: “If children have confused any two letters repeatedly then relearning those letters will not be easy for them” (Clay, 2005b, p. 29). The teacher adds letters that are becoming known to the array and removes some that are well under control, inviting Lexi to categorize them. This can include a variety of options: sorting by color (an easy task, reserved only for a few children in early lessons), similarities, differences, and arbitrary categories such as upper- and lowercase pairs (Clay, 2005b, p. 28). One of these activities from a later lesson in which Lexi has added significantly to her repertoire of known letters is illustrated in the transcript of the interaction with her teacher below. Clearly, Lexi has become quite flexible in working with letters in isolation (see Figure 9).

Teacher: Find every t as fast as you can.
Lexi: (quickly moves the letters to the side) Done!
Teacher: Okay, now you tell me to find a letter.
Lexi: (while looking at the letter arrangement on the board) Okay, find every h.
Teacher: Hmm… (moves two of the h magnet letters and hesitates over the n, but does not move it) Yep! Now you find every u.
Lexi: (quickly moves the one u and smiling turns n upside down) This is a u, too!
Teacher: (noticing Lexi’s flexible use of letters) No it isn’t! That’s n!
Lexi: Well, now it’s a u! And this is really n (smiling playfully and covering the top of the h with her finger).
Teacher: Very clever!
Lexi: Yep! (proceeds to rapidly identify the remaining letters as she touches them one by one)

Attending to letter formation
On her Observation Survey, Lexi demonstrated an awareness that the sound /g/ is represented by the letter g; however, she consistently recorded that sound with a backwards g that resembled an e. During writing activities in Roaming Around the Known, Lexi’s teacher encouraged her to write the sounds she could hear, but she did not want to further habituate Lexi’s letter reversal. After reading the book The Go-Carts (Randell & Giles, 1996), Lexi wanted to write about a time she and her brother rode go-carts. When Lexi got to the part of her story containing the word go-carts, she said, “I know how it starts, it’s G.” The teacher exclaimed, “It sure is!” and put a magnetic letter g in front of Lexi then wrote it clearly in her story, while saying “around, up—down, up” as she matched the rising and falling pitch of her voice to the up and down movements. On the next page of her go-cart story, Lexi wanted to write the go of go-cart so the teacher put the magnetic letter g in view and said, “I’ll help you get started.” The teacher guided Lexi’s hand as she wrote the g. Each time Lexi heard /g/ during writing during the next several sessions, the teacher pulled out the magnetic letter and Lexi correctly formed the g.

Several weeks into her lesson series, the teacher noticed Lexi was consistent with her formation of g when writing go, but still demonstrated some lapses in formation when g appeared in other words. Clay (2005b) provides a useful framework for understanding what it means to “know” a letter or a word that helps us understand these lapses:

We can think of a new response coming into a child’s repertoire of literacy behaviours as being

• new
• only just known
• successfully problem solved
Lexi’s teacher knew it was important for \( g \) to be well known and consistently written with the proper orientation, so she addressed its formation when it came up in the context of writing, using some of the procedures found on pages 23–32 in *Literacy Lessons Part Two*. She modeled the formation of \( G \) on the whiteboard in large print, matching her movements with her talk: “around, up–doown, up.” Then she had Lexi write the letter several times guided by verbal directions and using one or two of the following media before writing it on the working page of her writing book: chalkboard (with chalk or water on a paintbrush), whiteboard, sand tray, or in the air. Bringing the behavior under verbal direction for a short time helped develop the desired pattern of movement, and Lexi’s use of different media and the horizontal and vertical surfaces helped her become more flexible with her knowledge.

In subsequent lessons, the teacher took care to intervene to prevent the unwanted response from occurring by directing Lexi to the working page and saying, “Remember you’re going to start writing that \( g \) by going around—” or “Try the \( g \) up here first.” Most of the letter formation practice took place on the working page of the writing book by this time and verbal direction were phased out. With continued practice in writing continuous texts, Lexi’s letter production speed increased, thus taking what Clay describes as the second journey in letter learning:

- moving from very slow,
- to very fast production or very fast recognition measured in thousandths of a second (or milliseconds). (Clay, 2001, p. 20)

**Using an alphabet book**

Beginning in lesson 11, Lexi’s teacher introduced her to an alphabet book. They began working together to enter Lexi’s known letters and a key picture that she associated with each letter. During Roaming Around the Known, Lexi had consistently demonstrated that she knew the sound \(/g/\) was associated with the symbol \( g \) and the word *go-cart*. She surprised her teacher by referring to the symbol with the correct letter name as well, knowledge she had not shown on her Observation Survey. Lexi’s alphabet book had a page with the letters \( Gg \) accompanied by a simple drawing of a *go-cart* (see Figure 10). The typeset \( g \) was not entered because she did not yet know that form.

A few weeks later, Lexi paused during the first reading of the new book, unsure whether she was correct. The interaction below describes the use of the alphabet book to support Lexi’s self-monitoring.

**Figure 10. Lexi’s Alphabet Book**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text:</th>
<th>Dog food! Dog food! All I get to eat is dog food!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lexi:</td>
<td>Dog food! Dog food! All I... (hesitates) get (stops)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>Why did you stop?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexi:</td>
<td>I’m not sure if it says get.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>(pleased) You’re checking on yourself! (opens Lexi’s alphabet book to the ( Gg ) page) Would get start like that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexi:</td>
<td>(deliberately articulates the initial /g/ sounds) get, go-cart. Yes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>Now read it again and see if get makes sense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexi:</td>
<td>Dog food! Dog food! All I get to eat is dog food! It makes sense. He’s tired of always eating dog food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher:</td>
<td>(smiles) You checked to make sure it made sense and looked right.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this teaching interaction, Lexi correctly read “All I get,” but she was unsure whether she was right and did not seem to know how to check on herself. The teacher let Lexi know that checking on herself was a good
thing to do and quickly provided the alphabet book to help Lexi monitor with visual information. Her question “Would get start like that?” prompted Lexi to think about the initial sound of get, represented by the letter g, and check it against go-cart which Lexi already associates with g. After confirming the letter-sound association, the teacher shifts Lexi’s attention to meaning. She asks Lexi to consider whether get makes sense in the context of the text on this page of the book, and Lexi rereads the page, continuing on to the end of the sentence to confirm that get does indeed make sense. The teacher made several astute moves to support Lexi’s development of strategic activity in this interaction. She made it easy for Lexi to learn by helping her use what she already knows (g associated with go-cart); she gave Lexi two ways to check on herself (through meaning and letter-sound relationships), and she kept the focus on strategic activity (self-monitoring) rather than making Lexi think reading is about remembering words or being right. Throughout the exchange, the teacher kept the interactions brief and supportive.

Learning a new letter

Clay (2005b) reminds us that the “child can only make use of what he can recognize as familiar in some way” (p. 25). Similarly, “children who know only a few letters will learn words slowly” and “fast recognition of letters allows the reader to make faster decisions about words” (p. 24). Therefore, learning letters and learning about letters enables children to proceed with confidence in reading continuous text, integrating all sources of information—meaning, structure, and visual—to read fluently and problem solve on the run.

Because Lexi has learned to write lowercase g fluently and it is becoming well known and recognized in several contexts, her teacher has determined that now is an appropriate time for learning a new letter to be learned. Lowercase a was chosen because evidence from the Observation Survey tasks and later in Roaming Around the Known lessons suggests that a is coming under Lexi’s control. First, Lexi knows something about the letter since it was written correctly in the words a, at, and in her attempt to write take (written as tac) in the Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words task. She correctly identified am on the Ohio Word Test, and she was able to identify its uppercase form. Second, the lowercase a is in her last name and it is a letter that appears frequently in words (unlike her unknown letters x and q). And third, writing the lowercase a involves the same movement as in the formation of the top half of the lowercase g that she is now able to write fluently.

Lexi’s teacher begins by introducing the letter with one magnet letter at the whiteboard stating, “This is the letter a,” to which Lexi adds, “it’s in my last name.” Her teacher replies, “Yes, and it goes with this uppercase letter that you know” (producing the magnet letter A and placing it on the whiteboard). “That’s A!” observes Lexi. “Yes,” replies her teacher who then invites Lexi to notice the shape and feel of the magnet letter a and asks her to trace it with her finger. Lexi’s teacher also invites her to write the letter on the upright whiteboard, guiding her hand only if necessary, while she describes the formation using the words “around, up, down.” Lessons that follow include additional opportunities as needed to produce the a by forming it in the air, on sandpaper, and in a sand tray, and writing it on a small individual whiteboard or chalkboard. Over subsequent lessons, several other letter learning activities will include identification of a in an array of magnet letters at the whiteboard along with some of Lexi’s well-known but visually dissimilar letters (e.g., t, i, x) and later in the more-challenging task of its identification among known and visually similar letters (e.g., o, a, g). Additional opportunities arranged by her teacher include identifying a in the first letter position in a familiar book or in one read to Lexi by her teacher or learning one or two new words (and, at) that start with a (Clay, 2005b, p. 29). As well, both the upper- and lowercase letter a will be added to the alphabet book with an object chosen or a picture drawn by Lexi that serves as her link to the initial sound (e.g., ant, apple, antlers) of the letter. Very importantly, work with letters on the work page and in writing stories should link to work with letters in reading. As Clay states, “Work to ensure that what is learned in one place is transportable to another place” (p. 47). The aim in all of these activities is to work first with what Lexi knows and arrange opportunities to extend her learning ensuring that the letter will become well known in its variant forms (p. 46) in the service of fluent reading and writing of continuous texts.
Analyzing Letter Knowledge and Planning Learning Opportunities for Elijah

It is important to consider children’s letter knowledge from several angles, looking across the Observation Survey tasks. We invite you to join with a colleague to analyze and discuss the following Observation Survey data for Elijah on this and the following page as we did earlier for Lexi. Listening to others’ ideas helps us remain open to possibilities, giving us the opportunity to entertain alternative perspectives. As you work together, consult the “Useful strategic activity with letters” section of An Observation Survey (Clay, 2013, p.135) to think about his letter knowledge as related to movement, visual awareness, and sounds.

The following questions provide additional guidance for your discussion. We will share a few of our observations following your analysis.

Looking across tasks…

What evidence do you have of letter knowledge that is well controlled? …that is tentative, or known with lapses?

Do you see any patterns among his confusions? What might be contributing to this difficulty?

How would you summarize Elijah’s “useful strategic activity” and “problem strategic activity with letters”?

How will you help Elijah become fluent and flexible with letters during Roaming Around the Known? Consult chapter 4 in Literacy Lessons Part One (Clay, 2005a) as you have your discussion.

What behavior(s) will you plan to intercept, so as to avoid habituating patterns of error?

In terms of ‘moving into instruction,’ what priorities would you set for the following and why?

- letter identification
- attending to letter formation
- using an alphabet book
- learning new letters
Teaching Journal of Reading Recovery
Fall 2015

OHIO WORD TEST SCORE SHEET

Date: ________________  Name: ________________
Class: ________________  Test Score: ________________
Teacher: ________________  Striking Group: ________________

Record incorrect responses (choose appropriate list of words)  
Correct Response  No Response

LIST A  LIST B  LIST C

- and  ran  big
- the  it  to
- pretty  said  nite
- has  her  him
- down  find  far
- where  we  you
- nor  they  this
- let  line  may
- have  away  in
- am  are  at
- there  no  with
- ever  pull  some
- little  back  make
- did  do  east
- what  who  am
- them  then  walk
- one  play  red
- like  little  again  now
- could  give  from
- yes  she  saw  home

WAVING VOCABULARY OBSERVATION SHEET

Date: ________________________

Name: Elijah  Age: ______
Record: ________________________

Correct Response: ______ Correct

(First name correct) 6 of 7 letters correct

Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words OBSERVATION SHEET

Date: ________________________

Name: Elijah  Age: ______
Record: ________________________

Correct Response: ______ Correct

- Tried sounding the words, very frustrated
- Wrote letter to right, with return sweep to the left
- Looked around for letters, asked "How do you draw it?"
- "How do you draw me?" K

CONCEPTS ABOUT PRINT SCORE SHEET

Date: ________________________

Name: Elijah  Age: ______
Record: ________________________

Correct Response: ______ Correct

1. Front of book
2. Print contains message
3. Where to start
4. Which way to go
5. Return sweep to left
6. First and last concept
7. Bottom of picture
8. Turned back then pointed

COMMENTS:
- Extremely difficult to read, looking around for letters, asked "How do you draw me?"
- Threw up his hands when asked about words.

NAME OF WRITING VOCABULARY OBSERVATION SHEET

Date: ________________________

Name: Elijah  Age: ______
Record: ________________________

Correct Response: ______ Correct

- Remade words said, "I tried"
21. One letter less letters
22. One word less words
23. First and last letter of word
24. Capital letter

COMMENTS:
- Tried sounding the words, very frustrated
- Wrote letter to right, with return sweep to the left
- Looked around for letters, asked "How do you draw it?"
- "How do you draw me? K"
In thinking about letter knowledge that was well controlled, we wonder if you noticed that Elijah knew A and L in several contexts. He identified all three forms of A (A, a, a), heard and recorded A several times (in his attempts to write A, at, am, and take), and recorded lowercase a when he wrote his name. Similarly, he identified L and l, wrote L and l (the latter in his name), and read little for like on the Ohio Word Test, both words beginning with l.

Given his ability to hear and record sounds, do you think writing appears to be a relative strength for Elijah? When you thought about opportunities for him to become fluent and flexible, perhaps you discussed the importance of providing many opportunities for writing during Roaming Around the Known. Writing will give him a chance to share his ideas, compose a message, and record many sounds independently. As he writes, perhaps he will become even stronger at hearing and recording sounds in words and engage more easily with writing and reading activities. He might also enjoy rereading his messages either independently if he is able to, or with his teacher’s help, thus fostering the reciprocity of reading and writing.

Undoubtedly you also discussed letter formation concerns, as with the letter h, and symbol confusions such as b/d, p/q, and q/g that would need to be sorted out once instruction began. Thus it is likely you also set some priorities for letter learning that you gleaned from Elijah’s comments on the writing tasks in which he asked the tester how to write m, g, and k. Likewise, quite possibly you have considered which letters to place in his alphabet book and how to find out what links he has already made to particular letters.

We invite you to further engage in reflection, analysis, and collegial discussions of letter learning opportunities that you will create for the children you teach. The possibilities are limitless and dependent on your astute observation of children’s strengths, professional knowledge, and powerful insight.
Conclusion
Clearly, letter learning is foundational to becoming a successful strategic reader and writer. Evidence demonstrates that high-progress literacy learners gain control over letters easily and by the beginning of their first year of formal reading and writing instruction, while low-progress learners encounter difficulty with this challenging task. Yet, as we have illustrated, teachers can help children learn letters and their associated sounds to become fluent readers and writers of complex texts. Teachers of the most-challenged learners can have an extraordinary influence on letter learning. Valuing children’s current letter knowledge and designing appropriate reading and writing tasks using Clay’s teaching procedures support children in becoming strategic readers and writers and make a positive impact on children’s continued learning and literacy achievement.

Authors’ note
In addition to the 2005 Clay text, Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals: Part Two: Teaching Procedures, more information about letter learning and visual perception may be found in the following Clay texts:

- Change Over Time in Children’s Literacy Development (2001)
  • Chapter 1 – Extra Power from Writing in Early Literacy Interventions
  • Chapter 4 – Adjusting the Visual Working System for Literacy: Learning to Look at Print

Becoming Literate: The Construction of Inner Control (1991)
• Chapter 5 – Introducing Children to Print at School
• Chapter 12 – Visual Perception Strategies: One Kind of Inner Control

References

Children’s books cited

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Promoting Discovery During Roaming Around the Known

James R. Schnug, The Ohio State University

My grandson, Colin, and I were writing a story about playing with Ninja Turtles. As he slowly said and recorded the dominant sounds in the word, play, I jumped in and said, "And there's a quiet y at the end. It doesn't make a sound." Colin wrote a miniscule y at the end of play, much smaller than the previous letters. In fact, the y was barely perceptible. When I inquired as to the reason, Colin solemnly replied, "It's quiet, Grandpa."

As a preschooler, Colin's response is another bit of anecdotal evidence of the rule-governed system a child constructs with more-competent others in their early literacy attempts (Clay, 1975, 2001; DeFord, 1991). These discoveries don't come out of the blue but are intentional (Clay & Cazden, 1990, 2007; Siegler, 2000), and a noticing teacher or parent gains insights as to the child's intentionality, noting what is useful or problematic as the adult frames a response to this primitive, yet powerful processing.

Why Roam Around the Known in Reading Recovery?

Though an admittedly shameless retelling from a proud grandpa, Colin's writing episode is also a reminder of some of the desired features during the first 10 lessons of a child's Reading Recovery program (Clay, 2005), a timeframe delineated as Roaming Around the Known:

- Shared, meaningful literacy tasks
- Massive amounts of successful responding from the child
- Appropriate adult support
- Opportunities to engage in useful strategic behaviors, e.g., saying a word slowly, choosing and recording appropriate letters to go with sounds, and scribing left to right
- Sustained chances for the adult to listen and observe
- Active, tentative discovery of how print works

Yet for all these positive features, it is not unusual for the teacher to question the purpose for 10 Roaming Around the Known lessons, especially in the high-stakes arena of early literacy intervention where she is cognizant of the need for the child's accelerated progress within a window of opportunity that is limited to 12–20 weeks.

Prior to Roaming Around the Known, the teacher has put time and talent into constructing what McNaughton (2014) termed a personalized literacy profile of the child. This profile emerged from the administration and scoring of the Observation Survey tasks (Clay, 2013), the Observation Survey summary, and predictions of progress (Clay, 2005). Yet Clay mandates that in the beginning lessons, the teacher should "stay with what the child already knows how to do. Do not deliberately teach him any new items or processes …" (2005, p. 32).

It is understandable, yet premature, for a teacher to think as I used to think: I know what the child can do. I have summarized what is useful and what is not useful. I have developed short-term and long-term goals for this child based on a careful analysis and synthesis of six literacy tasks. Let me teach!

A cursory look at past guidebooks reveals that Roaming Around the Known has been the inaugural event of any child's intervention since Reading Recovery's inception. "Hold his interest, bolster his confidence, make him your co-worker. Get the responding fluent and habituated. You will have founded your programme on a rock" (Clay, 1979). Though the quote's wording has been updated in subsequent guidebooks, the underpinning theoretical justification for Roaming Around the Known is still evident even as far back as 1979. According to McNaughton (2014), "the concept of roaming around the known is a brilliant application of a developmental analysis" (p. 3) in which precious instructional time is devoted to a better understanding of how the child works on text.
Discovery During Roaming Around the Known

The teacher should review the reasons that Roaming Around the Known must be at the start of any child’s lesson series. Those nine reasons are distilled into four desired outcomes: “Confidence, ease, flexibility and, with luck, discovery are the keynotes of this period…” (Clay, 2005, p. 32). Though discovery is the final outcome listed, coming only after the qualifying prepositional phrase, “with luck,” what appears to be the extraordinary at the start of any child’s program can become the ordinary if there is a noticing teacher scaffolding successful reading and writing opportunities from the outset.

Clay states that Roaming Around the Known should “unleash two sets of responses — those discarded approaches this child has ceased to use on texts and new ones that come from we know not where” (p. 37). These responses can’t help but prime a child’s discoveries on print in the right conditions. And if discovery is expected in Roaming Around the Known, then the teacher must be ready to capture those discoveries and immediately integrate these into subsequent reading and writing opportunities. If the child is truly roaming around his known, the teacher soon realizes that any child’s discoveries put a shelf life expiration date on his Observation Survey results, and she must be ready to roam with the child into new learning that has not been directly taught.

I have often invited Reading Recovery teachers and leaders to pinpoint in the four scant pages dealing with Roaming Around the Known in Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals Part One (Clay, 2005), explicit or implicit references to discovery. Over 10 cryptic or extended references can be found, suggesting that just as there is a high chance for rain when the conditions are right, Clay might be signaling the teacher that there is a high chance for discovery if the right learning conditions are present.

In order to illustrate the conditions that might accommodate a child’s discovery during Roaming Around the Known, I will use examples from my teaching a few years back with Anthony (pseudonym). Anthony entered Reading Recovery midyear. His Observation Survey scores for fall and his mid-year entrance are summarized in Table 1. A happy young boy who had recently turned 7 at the end of December, Anthony’s scores indicated that he had not made much movement forward in his journey to read and write, though he came into his program controlling many concepts about print including how it tracks, one-to-one matching on three lines of text, the difference between first and last, letter and word, and uppercase and lowercase letters. Anthony tended to search the pictures and maintain a simple, established pattern when he read, and he heard and recorded beginning and ending sounds, using slowly formed lowercase letters. He had meager reading and writing vocabularies.

In the remainder of this article, I will discuss the following conditions that might foster discovery during Roaming Around the Known: reading and writing of continuous text, opportunities for fluency and flexibility, the child’s ownership of the tasks, conversation, and the teacher’s tracking of discoveries.

Reading and Writing Continuous Texts

In the quest to achieve Roaming Around the Known outcomes, teachers have designed and implemented many creative, appealing activities, often justifying the inclusion of such activities by citing from Clay (2005):

- “Design interesting, shared activities and have the child contribute what you know he knows as his share of the activity…”
- “… you can engage in some new activities that will catch his attention…”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Initial Assessment (September)</th>
<th>Entrance Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter Identification (54)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio Word Test (15)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concepts About Print (24)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Vocabulary (10 min.)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing &amp; Recording Sounds in Words</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Reading Level*</td>
<td>Below</td>
<td>Below TRL 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NOTE: Anthony was unable to read at his instructional level (90–94% word accuracy) the easiest book administered to him in the Text Reading Level task. Using established program procedures for finding continuous text that he could read at his instructional level, I discovered during my initial assessment that Anthony could successfully read a program Level 1 book after I had read it once.
• Work until your ingenuity runs out and until he is moving fluently around his personal corpus of responses.” (p. 34)

When teachers share such creative activities they often ask themselves and their teacher leaders, “Can we do that during Roaming Around the Known?” In order to answer that question, they should review the fourth bullet under the listed nine reasons for Roaming Around the Known: “The teacher works mostly with reading texts and writing texts. This seems to give the child the feeling that he is reading and writing” (Clay, 2005, p. 32). It is clear that the bulk of time in any Roaming Around the Known lesson must be devoted to the reading and writing of continuous text, and any activity that steals valuable time from independent and joint attention to such texts must be challenged as to the suitability for a condition that can promote discovery.

The challenge to the teacher is how to be creative with her responses and activities during the reading and writing of continuous text, because it is through this ingenuity that a teacher will prime for discovery without unnecessary, distracting activities that could focus the child on isolated bits. For example, at the start of his second lesson, Anthony—a big fan of Batman—chose two Batman stickers showing the caped crusader in action. From those stickers, Anthony wrote with me the following: He is sliding. He paused before writing is and announced, “I don’t know how to write is,” even though is was a known sight word. At that point I had a decision to make. Do I write the word for him, sharing the task, or do I prompt him to use what I think he might know about is, i.e., his known sight word? Holding my breath, I quickly handed Anthony two magnetic letters and replied, “You read is all the time.” Here are the letters for is. Make is.” Anthony successfully assembled the word and copied it into his story. Later in the writing, Anthony cowrote a second sentence about Batman after I inquired what else Batman was doing: He is jumping. When Anthony arrived at is, his eyes glanced up to the original sentence, and he quickly copied is into the second sentence.

Later in that same lesson, I read with Anthony, What is a Huggles (Cowley, 1986), a patterned book with strong picture support that humorously details all the zoo animals a Huggles is not. I established the pattern on the first reading and Anthony joined in, pointing along on each page’s single line of text. After the first reading, I framed the word is on one of the book’s pages and asked, “What is this word?” Anthony replied, “is!” I then invited him to point and read the book on his own. Anthony was very successful until he got to the page that read: A tiger is not a Huggles. Anthony overpointed, saying ger for is. But then he stopped, returned to the beginning of the sentence and self-corrected. He repeated similar self-correction behavior when he subsequently read, “A giraffe is not a Huggles,” and even later, “A kangaroo is not a Huggles.”

In the above example I inferred the following discoveries:

• Anthony discovered that if he can read a word, he can write that word.
• He continues to know how to read a word in isolation and discovered that he can find that known word quickly in text in order to write it himself.
• He uses a known word in order to self-monitor and self-correct his reading.
• And who knows? Perhaps Anthony was even beginning to think about how some words like tiger, giraffe, and kangaroo, need just one touch of the finger while reading, even though these words have more than one beat!

If discovery is expected in Roaming Around the Known, then the teacher must be ready to capture those discoveries and immediately integrate these into subsequent reading and writing opportunities.
I do not contend that the teaching prompts or activities in this reconstructed example were very creative or even ingenious. Upon reflection of my Roaming Around the Known diary entries, though, I saw the payoff when quick teacher prompts and actions during reading or writing allowed Anthony to engage in useful problem solving that was not observed on the Observation Survey.

Opportunities for Fluency and Flexibility
The example illustrating Anthony’s problem solving with is can also illustrate the next condition for a child’s discoveries during Roaming Around the Known: The teacher is always on the lookout for chances for the child to use what he knows and knows how to do in different ways.

Even in Lesson 2, the word is was fast becoming what Clay (1991) calls an “island of certainty,” (p. 172). In Lesson 2, Anthony had at least three chances to construct the word with magnetic letters or marker, and he did so by honoring serial order. He quickly read it in isolation and picked it out among other words in a sentence in order to write it or self-monitor with it.

Anthony’s Batman story expanded over four subsequent lessons, and any lesson’s writing was typed up and pasted into a blank book, accompanied by the chosen stickers that matched the day’s message. During the composing of another page in his Batman book in Lesson 3, Anthony discovered that he could independently write is. In fact, whenever is had to be written in subsequent stories, Anthony was so confident and eager to write that I had to be ready to prompt him to show his eyes where he was going to write the word since he was not yet controlling his own spacing between words in his written stories.

What began as a known sight word for Anthony quickly became a useful anchor that he could count on as he read, wrote, and problem solved in continuous text. When a teacher sets up this condition of recurrence in many different formats, while prompting for quicker responding, she sets up for the child the discovery that what is known in one setting can also be known in different settings.

Ownership
Clay (2005) challenges the teacher who “has not accepted that the child has to gear up to actively using his eyes, and his ears, and his thinking. He needs to take ownership of part of the tasks during this period…” (p. 33). Certainly a child who is successfully reading and writing continuous texts—along with a teacher who is also providing multiple opportunities for him to quickly use what he knows in flexible ways—begins to take ownership of his learning, a condition that also primes for discovery.

A gross measure of a child’s control is illustrated in Table 2 where simple tallies of book titles independently read by Anthony over the 10 lessons are summarized. Note that except for Lessons 1 and 7, Anthony read more books independently than books he read with me in any one lesson. Further, shared books always began with a supportive orientation, and I sometimes read the first page or two, after which the shared reading quickly morphed into an independent reading.

Similar tallies of a child’s successful control during reading can easily be achieved by the Reading Recovery teacher if she has found for the child what Clay termed “readable texts,” (2005, p. 35), i.e., those types of texts the child showed on the Observation Survey that he could read with 90% or higher accuracy. Readable texts provide a consis-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Independent Control</th>
<th>Shared Control</th>
<th>Total Books Read</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Books Read: 53 + 17 = 70

NOTE: If Anthony controlled the reading of the book with little if any teacher prompting, that book was determined to be independently controlled. A book that was designated as “shared control” was one that was new to Anthony and one in which I provided a supportive orientation to the storyline and book structures, often reading the first page before inviting Anthony to join in the reading.
tent mix of success and challenge that will allow the child to orchestrate all that he knows and knows how to do, while at the same time freeing up his attention to discover aspects of print that have not yet been noticed.

An example of discovery resulting from Anthony’s independent control occurred early in Roaming Around the Known. He and I initially shared the reading of *I Can Jump* (Cowley, 1986), a book that contrasts what braggadocios insects do to what the poor snail can’t do. By Lesson 4, I invited Anthony to read the book independently which he did with 100% accuracy, even self-correcting can’t for can. Midway through the book the text reads: “I can fly,” said the butterfly, to which the snail replies, “I can’t fly.” After reading those pages, Anthony stopped suddenly and announced, “*Fly and butterfly* rhyme! They both have F-L-Y.” The previous repeated readings of the book oriented Anthony to the meaning and language of the book, priming him to independently control these features of the text while freeing him up not only to self-monitor and self-correct using a known word (*can*), but also delve into the detail of print and discover how some word units sound alike.

Increased control during writing is also expected from the child as well. Writing should be occurring several times in any Roaming Around the Known lesson. Teachers who are used to the formal lesson’s writing component, may forget that Clay stipulates that the teacher should “use a variety of different media to write with and write on,” (Clay, 2005, p. 36), and that the teacher “works mostly with reading texts and writing texts” (p. 32). Certainly increased student control is not promoted if the teacher limits the opportunity to write, and the child is subsequently denied opportunities to quickly use what he knows and knows how to do — that fluency and flexibility condition, already described above.

The sidebar below summarizes the types of writing and the formats for writing Anthony experienced throughout the first 10 lessons. These evidenced for me that I was trying to honor Clay’s stipulation.

### Types of continuous texts cowritten with Anthony
- Original stories
- Variations on books read, using the books’ structures
- Personal responses to a book read or a favorite page
- Dialogue balloons

### Formats used during the writing of continuous texts
- Paper
- Chalkboard
- Post-it tape
- Blank books
- Dry erase board

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>I like</em> chicken and sausage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><em>I like</em> watermelon and bananas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><em>I like</em> muffins and cake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><em>I like</em> popcorn and bally popcorn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><em>I like</em> pizza and tacos.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** Underlined segments indicate the parts of the sentence Anthony independently wrote, without copy. Portions of words independently written followed teacher prompting to say the word slowly or clap it.

Most of Anthony’s writing products were variations on books he had read independently, often using the same pattern that he had read. For example, over Lessons 6–10, Anthony read and reread *I Like* (Scott Foresman, 1976). Photographs of food items in this book were organized into groups, e.g., desserts were organized on one page, various vegetables on another. At the top of each page were the words, *I like*. The book’s photographs generated lots of conversation and reactions as Anthony and I discussed what we liked and didn’t like to eat. In later lessons of Roaming Around the Known, Anthony composed his own version of *I like*. In each lesson, Anthony chose a page from the book to return to and I invited him to select two items he liked. Then we cowrote the sentence using the pattern: *I like* (noun) and (noun), building his variation into his own *I like* book by Lesson 10.

Anthony seized the opportunities to write many times in any lesson and throughout Roaming Around the Known, and Table 3 is illustrative of the subsequent, increased control he exhibited. The portions of his writing that are underlined in Table 3 were produced independently, without a copy. Anthony demonstrated on the Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words task of the Observation
As with control in reading, increased control during writing can promote discoveries that the child will share with the teacher. After we cowrote tacos in Lesson 10, Anthony covered the s and announced, “If you take away the s, you get taco.” Clay (2005) says, “Listen carefully to what he says and the connections he is making. Be prepared to be surprised by his ingenuity!” (p. 35). I certainly was surprised at this moment in Lesson 10, but if I have faith in the conditions for successful Roaming Around the Known, such as child control, then discoveries will be made.

**Conversation**

Like many teachers in Roaming Around the Known, I knew it was important for Anthony and me to get to know each other; that’s the first listed reason for Roaming Around the Known on page 32 of Literacy Lessons Part One (Clay, 2005). What books did we like? What did we do for fun? Did we have siblings? What are we good at? Only through conversation could we establish that human connection. But a closer reading of the second clause in that first reason allowed me to value the role of conversation far beyond just “connecting with my student,” i.e., our conversation will “develop useful ways of interacting” (p. 32). Clay (2014) privileges the role of conversation in the instructional setting: “[T]he conversational exchanges should be a valuable context within which literacy learning becomes the focus” (p. 34), and she compares the teacher to a listener, adding this:

> In some ways the listener has to be more active than the speaker — and that is not the way one would normally think about it. Teachers can think of themselves as a listener and remind themselves how active they have to be to understand what is being said.

(p. 35)

I will be the first to admit that is difficult to be an active listener as I move into Roaming Around the Known lessons. I have many ideas about this child as a reader and writer, given the preparatory assessment and planning that preceded Roaming Around the Known. And therein lies the danger as Clay (2005) warns that the most important reason for Roaming Around the Known is to “require the teacher to stop teaching from her preconceived ideas” (p. 33). Conversation between the child and me and my active listening allow me to keep what I know about that child at arm’s length, knowledge that can easily be reviewed and revised through talk with the child during the reading and writing of texts.

The concept of teacher as active listener resonated with me in the following exchange with Anthony during Lesson 2. He was independently reading an easy, patterned book, *The Way I Go to School* (Randell, Giles, & Smith, 1996) after I had introduced it and read it with him in Lesson 1. When he arrived at the page showing a picture of a child getting into a van with the accompanying words: *I go to school in a van,* Anthony announced, “It’s going to say van on this page.” I had come into that lesson that day knowing that Anthony could remember and repeat simple structures such as those in this book. He also demonstrated on the Text Reading Level task of the Observation Survey that he could say words slowly and that he heard and recorded many beginning sounds of unknown words. It was important that Anthony had a chance to fluently and flexibly continue this behavior, even in Roaming Around the Known, so I consistently prompted him to say a word slowly on selected words that were not part of his writing vocabulary. What began as a limited sound analysis and recording of the beginning sounds in Lessons 6 and 7 (e.g., /s/ in sausage, /bl/ in bananas), ended with more-extensive analyses, including sounds heard within words and at the end of words, (e.g., /lm/ and /ln/ in muffins, =/kl/ in popcorn, and /st/ and /sl/ in tacos).

As the teacher, I discovered by reviewing my diary entries over these lessons, that Anthony also knew how to independently write words that did not show up on the Writing Vocabulary task of the Observation Survey (Clay, 2013), e.g., *like, and.* In fact, I challenged myself to give Anthony some breathing room in order to keep his control over the writing. For example, given that *and* was not part of Anthony’s writing vocabulary when he started Roaming Around the Known, I still cautiously asked in Lesson 6, “Do you know how to write and?” at that point in his composing. He nodded but paused. I prompted, “It starts with an a.” He wrote an a then quickly added the n and d. I reflected on my need to give Anthony a little more time to produce what he knows, realizing that I can set up future opportunities to get the tentatively known to fluency.

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**Survey**

A word slowly on selected words that were not part of his writing vocabulary. What began as a limited sound analysis and recording of the beginning sounds in Lessons 6 and 7 (e.g., /s/ in sausage, /bl/ in bananas), ended with more-extensive analyses, including sounds heard within words and at the end of words, (e.g., /lm/ and /ln/ in muffins, =/kl/ in popcorn, and /st/ and /sl/ in tacos). As the teacher, I discovered by reviewing my diary entries over these lessons, that Anthony also knew how to independently write words that did not show up on the Writing Vocabulary task of the Observation Survey (Clay, 2013), e.g., *like, and.* In fact, I challenged myself to give Anthony some breathing room in order to keep his control over the writing. For example, given that *and* was not part of Anthony’s writing vocabulary when he started Roaming Around the Known, I still cautiously asked in Lesson 6, “Do you know how to write and?” at that point in his composing. He nodded but paused. I prompted, “It starts with an a.” He wrote an a then quickly added the n and d. I reflected on my need to give Anthony a little more time to produce what he knows, realizing that I can set up future opportunities to get the tentatively known to fluency.
Instead, my question got me much more than I bargained for. Anthony pointed to the word \textit{van} and replied, “It has a \textit{v} and an \textit{n}.” Clay (2014) maintains that my question, “is asking the child to reflect on the grounds of her own reasoning” (p. 22). I hurriedly scribbled down Anthony’s discovery as he continued to read, while also reforming my view of him as a problem solver during reading. Presenting the concept of conversation as a rich resource for instruction, Clay says, “Sometimes the expert [teacher] sends the message and the child has to understand it. Sometimes the novice sends the message, and the expert has to understand it” (p. 23). The second situation is both the challenge and reward of good conversation during Roaming Around the Known, as the following example illustrates.

In Lesson 3, Anthony was independently reading \textit{The Shopping Mall} (Parker, 1995), a story of a dad and his children who inform the reader where they went in the mall. On page 5, Anthony read the sentence: \textit{We went in the doors}. He stopped, laughed, and announced, “They should have written, ‘We are going in the doors.’” I didn’t inquire as to why he said that — an opportunity missed. After the reading, I did go back to page 5 and asked if he wanted to cowrite his revision on the chalkboard. At the chalkboard, Anthony decided to maintain the page’s original structure. He started to laugh, almost uncontrollably now. I could not find anything funny about that original book structure, so I finally asked him, “Why are you laughing?” He replied that he thought it was funny that the family \textit{walked in the doors}, “Like BAM!” Again, a simple question from me provided insights as to Anthony’s reasoning. He didn’t want to change the original structure because his revision would put the structure in the present tense and more closely match the picture, as I assumed. Rather, to Anthony, the original structure was a hilarious mismatch with the picture. (In fact, we drew a picture of the family.

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{Conversation between the child and teacher and active listening allow you to keep what you know about that child at arm’s length, knowledge that can easily be reviewed and revised through talk with the child around the reading and writing of texts.}
\end{figure}
crashing in the doors once the sentence was written, taking the hilarity to its rightful closure.)

Given all we know about the child moving into Roaming Around the Known, conversation is our best refuge against calcified notions about this child as a struggling reader and writer, as well as a natural context for exploring further discoveries with the child who will be leading the way.

**Tracking Discovery**

A final condition for facilitating a child’s discovery during Roaming Around the Known is teacher note taking. Though no formal forms are used during this time, Clay (2005) suggests teachers use a diary format in order to record the many reading and writing activities accomplished over the 10 lessons, and, more importantly, the diary is used “to capture as many aspects of the child’s behaviours as you can. Make yourself specify just how he responds. Put it into words. What does he do well? How does he help himself?” (p. 33).

During Anthony’s Roaming Around the Known, I paid particular attention to his self-correction behavior. Given these self-tutorials that revealed how he successfully helped himself (Clay, 2001; Goodman & Goodman, 2013), I was able to gain additional insights into Anthony as a reader. In Lesson 1, for example, Anthony was independently reading *The Way I Go to School*, referenced above. On page 14, he instantly self-corrected *on* for *in* when he read the text, “I go to school in a bus.” When he read page 16 (“I go to school on a boat.”), Anthony read, *I go to school in a boat.* I prompted him, “Try that again.” He returned to the start of the text, reread and self-corrected. Clearly these two self-corrections, considered together, indicated Anthony was probably paying attention to some fine print detail, detail that he didn’t pay close attention to when he was reading during the Observation Survey.

Such self-correction behavior that seems to be new for the child isn’t really new. As Clay (2005) says, “He begins to apply his strategic problem solving that he learnt in everyday life to his work with his teacher” (p. 36). Self-correction behavior evidences a child’s discoveries on how he can problem solve and are bright signals that the child is controlling his literacy learning. A teacher needs to be aware of these opportunities as they occur and track them in her diary.

I also returned to the Roaming Around the Known diary every two lessons or so to look for notations that evidenced child behavior I did not see during the Observation Survey. Whether this new behavior is new to me or to the child, it is behavior that can recur in later opportunities during Roaming Around the Known if the teacher is on the lookout to promote its use. In Lesson 2, for example, I was able to capture six instances of Anthony’s self-correction behavior over three independent readings. This was enough of a pattern to encourage me in later lessons to prompt Anthony to “Try that again,” if he made errors that I felt he could self-correct through some type of rereading.

The same applies for writing. Anthony was writing *I packed my folder* in Lesson 1, a response to the book, *Victor Packs* (Comodromos, 2010) that we had just shared. He said to himself after he wrote *I*, prior to writing *packed*, “I need a big space.” That discovery became a new touchstone I referred to in later writing opportunities when I often prompted, “Where are you going to write that next word? Show your eyes.” As mentioned earlier, spacing between his words was not yet under independent control, but as he paid attention to it, I could as Clay (2005) says, “prompt him to recognize the things you know he knows in different settings” (p. 35).

An ongoing review of diary entries during Roaming Around the Known will also allow the teacher to note ongoing or emerging confusions. As shown earlier in Table 3, Anthony independently wrote the words, *like* and *and*, in Lessons 6 through 8. In Lesson 9, though, Anthony wrote *ili* for *like* and *and* in mirror image. The inevitable ebb and flow of what is known and how well it is known is evident in this example, and the diary entries allow the teacher to flag the child’s approximations, ready to anticipate these in later lessons and think about how she might scaffold her response in future recurrences in order to get more successful responding.

**Summary**

The Roaming Around the Known period lasts 10 lessons, the equivalent of 5 contact hours, or less than 1 school day. So much must happen in this relatively limited time, and in this article I have reviewed the theoretical underpinnings and rationales for Roaming Around the Known as well as illuminate conditions that promote a child’s discovery. If it is the teacher’s goal to make it easy for the
child to roam, then discovery will occur, without explicit teaching. In order for this to happen, the child should have voluminous, ongoing chances to be in control successfully, using what he knows in different ways while reading and writing continuous text. Through conversation and active listening, the teacher sets up a valuable conduit for successfully focusing the child while reading and writing, and her diary and reflection directs her as to how the conversations will need to change. Ultimately, Roaming Around the Known must be a time of learning that solidifies what the child knows and knows how to do, while allowing him to roam into new discoveries about how print works.

Author’s note:
Appreciation is extended to teacher leaders Michael Buonaiuto, Brenda Baleno, and Lori Fitzgerald who helped me move in my own understandings of the power of discovery during Roaming Around the Known.

References


Children’s Books Cited
Teaching

Where Are They Now?
A Positive Outcome and Influence

by Pat Wright

As a former Reading Recovery teacher I tend to judge the success of this intervention by its discontinuation rate. Reading Recovery teachers work very diligently to ensure that the children they teach are receiving the most-powerful strategies to mold them into successful readers and writers. Many students have become successful members of the literary community with the help of these dedicated teachers.

But what happens to those students who just don’t make the gains to discontinue? Do they continue to struggle throughout their educational career? Are they so frustrated with their struggle that they give up? As a parent I witnessed the journey of one such child.

My son, James, was identified as one of the lowest-achieving students in his first-grade classroom. As a kindergarten student he just couldn’t seem to put the pieces together to make sense of what he was seeing on the page. This was very frustrating to me as a Reading Recovery teacher. Of course I worked with him at home, but sometimes a mom who is a teacher is not the best person to teach her own child. We live in a small community and at the time I was the sole Reading Recovery teacher in our school district. I knew I could not build the kind of rapport with James that is needed to make struggling readers successful. I was at a loss. The intervention that I had seen be successful

The Wright family celebrates at Morningside College, where James received a degree in business administration. From left to right are London, Randy, James, Pat, Matthew, and Michael.
with so many students was not going to work for my child because of me. Thank goodness for a very dedicated and supportive teacher leader.

Pat Fostvedt-Oxendale, the teacher leader at Northwest Area Education Agency in Sioux City, agreed to work with James. She was already teaching children in another district but stopped on her drive into the office in Sioux City to teach James. Unfortunately, James did not make the gains needed to discontinue and was placed in special education. James continued to be a part of the special education program throughout middle and high school. However, I believe, that even though he did not make the gains needed to label him discontinued from Reading Recovery, his time as a Reading Recovery student laid the foundation for future success.

As I watched him during the time he was in Reading Recovery I observed many positive things. First and foremost, he was starting to believe that he could read even though it was still very difficult. He learned that through hard work he could be successful and that there were people who believed he could read. Reading Recovery teachers are those who believe and encourage the students they teach while searching for the best methods and strategies to teach the struggling readers they encounter every day.

James may have not have been a positive statistic as far as Reading Recovery data are concerned, but his time in that intervention had a very positive influence for years that followed in his educational career. Even though he did not make rapid gains, the foundation needed to become a reader and writer was laid. With the support of many other teachers like Pat Fostvedt-Oxendale, James graduated from Woodbury Central High School in 2011 with a GPA of 3.0 and went on to attend Morningside College in Sioux City, Iowa. As a parent, I am proud to say that he was a part of the recent commencement ceremony at Morningside College and graduated with a degree in business administration.

Discontinuation continues to be, as it should, the goal for all students served in Reading Recovery. However, those students whose outcome in Reading Recovery we often view as a disappointment, due to their lack of accelerated progress, have also been greatly impacted by the dedication of those involved with Reading Recovery. It is my belief that all students touched by this intervention have taken something positive away from this experience.
Where Are They Now?
From Migrant Child to Future Teacher

by Lois Bailey

When Marco Vasquez started kindergarten at South Adams Elementary, his migrant family had recently settled in our community. As an ESL student, Marco qualified for our extended-day kindergarten program. He was a quiet, shy boy who worked very hard and wanted to do well. He also had very supportive parents. His father was fluent in English, but mother was not. It was obvious that both parents loved him deeply and wanted what was best for him — especially a good education.

Marco did well in kindergarten, so his name was not on the list of teacher recommendations for fall Reading Recovery testing. However, by the second round of testing, his teacher felt he needed Reading Recovery. Marco entered the program reading at Level 5 and when his lessons were discontinued 17 weeks later, he was reading at Level 20.

Mrs. Rohrer, his first-grade teacher, remembers Marco as a very polite, conscientious, and quiet first grader. She says, “With English as his second language, Reading Recovery was a wonderful help to Marco. It helped him take off in reading. Marco always was enthusiastic about whatever we were doing. I can still see his smile and remember his class color and number: Marco was Red 21.”

Middle school language arts teacher Gwen Habegger calls Marco a “model student.” She explains, “Marco always completed his assignments, whether it was writing an essay or reading a story. He enjoyed reading sports fiction books from the library, particularly about basketball and baseball. With a constant smile on his face, Marco was respectful of others and a hard worker. He is destined for success!”

From a quiet and shy first grader to a popular student athlete and role model for younger students, Marco continues to work hard and wants to help others.
As we have watched him progress through school, Marco is still a quiet young man who works hard and wants to do well, whatever he is doing. He has excelled in three sports. South Adams Starfires’ High School coach Andy Brown said Marco was ‘Most Improved’ for the basketball team as a sophomore and was second team ‘All Conference’ in basketball his junior season.

“Marco is a hardworking individual, whom I was able to see grow as a leader,” Brown said. “He leads by example and exemplifies a ‘team first’ attitude. Marco also cares deeply about people and has a passion for helping others.”

Soccer coach Luke McClung agrees. “Marco is one of the best young men I have met, both on the field and in the class. He has grown into a natural leader in whatever setting he has been placed. It has been truly great to watch Marco grow as a young man, and I’m proud of the man he has become.”

He adds, “Marco deserves every good thing that comes his way and I wish him luck moving forward in life. I expect big things from him!”

Marco is a popular student, and he was elected to homecoming court. He has been a role model for younger students. Besides having a younger brother who idolizes him, he has interned in a third-grade classroom, one period each day, to further explore his interest in becoming a teacher.

Jamie Gerber, his supervising teacher, says, “Marco has been my intern for the 2014–2015 school year. He has proven to be a great asset to my classroom. He is very positive in his interactions with each of the students — even those who are difficult. The girls think he’s cute and the boys look up to him as a role model!”

Marco spends most of his time in the classroom working with the students. “He reads one-on-one with students, reads tests aloud when needed, and leads small-group math review sessions,” Gerber added. I can always count on him to do whatever I ask and to do it well.”

High School principal Trent Lehman calls Marco a “talented, humble, kind, and solid young man.” Lehman reflects, “There is an inner strength and confidence in him. He thinks of others.”

Marco received two scholarships at the high school awards ceremony last spring, including one for students studying to be a teacher. He is now majoring in elementary education at Indiana-Purdue University in Fort Wayne. And we are all eagerly looking forward to the day when Marco is able to pass on to his own students what he has learned in Reading Recovery and beyond.

Lois Bailey is a Reading Recovery teacher at South Adams School Corporation in Adams County, Indiana.
Our 30th Anniversary website has taken on a new life as the home of stories that celebrate literacy success.

In addition to posting more student, school, and educator success stories and photos, we will continue to update the Reading Recovery in North America history timeline.

We know there are hundreds of stories out there, and we need your help to spread the word beyond our own community. Please share your story!

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Supporting Learning Through Instructional Conversation

Paula Bennet, University of Northern Iowa

Introduction

Language is the mode through which we communicate, and oral language is the foundation for everything that is learned about and through reading and writing. Children who have fallen behind in literacy achievement must learn at a faster or accelerated rate in order to meet classroom benchmarks and learn alongside their peers. To fully benefit from teaching, children struggling with reading and writing need specific and purposeful instruction. Intentional teaching conversations offer these children opportunities for accelerated learning and the possibility of catching up to their peers. In instructional conversations, the conversational interplay between the teacher and learner is the key to supporting accelerated learning for children who initially struggle with reading and writing.

Vygotsky (1978) stressed the social nature of language that includes attention, memory, and thinking. He stated, “children grow into the intellectual life of those around them” (p. 88). Whether teaching a child individually during a Reading Recovery lesson or in a small literacy group, the most-powerful teaching happens when teachers maximize the potential that lies in the conversations they have with children and in the conversations children have with peers. The responsibility for the conversation lies with the teacher who listens closely in order to provide the appropriate level of assistance so that each child successfully accomplishes a task. The teacher responds with temporary scaffolds that help children efficiently take on independent action (Clay, 1991), learn how to solve problems, and make good decisions.

When conversation accompanies productive activity, it provides the path to what Vygotsky referred to as learning or the internalization of concepts (Moll, 1990). Conversation can help children enjoy a story’s meaning while at the same time encourage and prompt them to discover and work with features of print. In Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals Part Two: Teaching Procedures, Clay (2005b) reminds us “there are no set teaching sequences” (p. 2), but teachers support accelerated learning by remaining responsive to the unique needs of each child. “It is the learner who accelerates because some things no longer need his attention and are done more easily” (Clay, 2005a, p. 24).

This article explains the basics of effective instructional conversations between teachers and students. It also offers ways to elicit greater child participation during instructional conversations and provides examples of effective conversations that scaffold children’s learning, giving them opportunities for independence, initiative, and discovery while reading and writing.
Instructional Conversations

Conversation is dialogue, an exchange of ideas between two people, and the flow of the conversation often varies with the purpose. The desire to understand and to be understood is innate, and in good conversations participants go back and forth as they negotiate the roles of speaker and listener. Think about the last time you had a simple yet enjoyable conversation. During casual conversations, participants assume either the role of speaker or listener, and the exchange of ideas does not happen if one individual is dominating the conversation. During casual conversations, participants go back and forth as they negotiate the roles of speaker and listener. Think about the last time you had a simple yet enjoyable conversation.

The role of the speaker is to monitor and listener's attention, engage-ment, eye contact, and nonverbal cues, revising the message as needed. The role of the listener is to offer verbal and nonverbal cues that indicate understanding or seek clarification.

Teachers and students engaged in instructional conversations possess the same desire to understand and be understood. Unlike informal conversations, which may not have a particular agenda, instructional conversations require intentionality in order to provide opportunities for focused attention on particular information. Teachers deliberately provide opportunities for collaboration and shared understanding. Additionally, instructional conversations require teacher and student to check in, continually monitoring both verbal and nonverbal cues to confirm they are reaching a shared understanding and that meaning is not being lost (Clay, 1985).

When confusions are not cleared up or language is misunderstood, meaning breaks down. Conversations resulting in confusion happen for a number of reasons. In English, for instance, many words have multiple meanings and when interpreted out of context, confusions lead to misunderstanding. This type of misunderstanding happened after a student had read a story about Little Chimp and the teacher initiated an instructional conversation about the story.

The following is an example of how easily a message can be confused and shows the importance of negotiating understanding.

Teacher: What makes you feel safe?

Student: (very expressively) I don’t feel safe swinging on the stairs at the park.

Teacher: (having never heard of swinging stairs) Oh, there are stairs you can swing on?

Student: (annoyed) No, I said I wasn’t safe to swing on them so I just walked down them.

Teacher: Oh, yes I understand, there were stairs you couldn’t swing on.

The confusion came about because in the second conversational move, the teacher was using the term you collectively to mean people in general. The student assumed she had not listened to him and rephrased what he had said in order to make sure he knew that he didn’t feel safe. To communicate that he had been correctly understood, the teacher repeated the child’s words emphasizing the word you — specifically referring to him.

According to Peter Johnston (2004), teachers use talk as a central tool of their trade, while helping children make sense of “learning, literacy, life, and themselves” (p. 4). He writes that while we use language to provide information, conversations also relay information about the speaker and his or her relationship to the listener. The teacher in the previous example repeated the child’s statement in order to ensure he knew his comments were understood and that he had been heard.

As teachers reflect on conversations they have with children, they must ask themselves about both their intended, explicit messages and the messages that may have been conveyed implicitly. Instructional conversations provide unspoken opportunities to let children know we have confidence in them and expect them to take initiative to problem solve as independently as possible. We ask ourselves if we have communicated confidence in the child or conversely have taken over tasks too quickly, given too much help, or used too many words. Any of the latter moves have the potential to create a sense of dependence or learned helplessness.

Because learning is social and depends on dialogue (Vygotsky, 1978), we need to understand our role in the quality and quantity of our interactions with children. Teaching and learning that “proceeds like the everyday conversation” (p. 13) mirrors the way in which children begin learning (Clay, 1998). Even before they can speak, children learn by listening to conversations.

Clay (2005b) provides caution about using too much teacher talk when teachers assume the role of speaker.
When a teacher uses more words than necessary to get a point across, children have to do more in-the-head processing, and they may find it harder to understand and act on the teacher's message. The following conversation is one in which the teacher uses too much talk:

Text  “Happy Birthday, Mom!”

Teacher: When it’s someone’s birthday we say Happy Birthday. The boy is giving his Mom a gift for her birthday so what do you think he is saying to his Mom?

Student: Here is a present.

Teacher: Maybe, but what do we say at the beginning of the Happy Birthday song?

Student: Happy Birthday to you.

A more-efficient use of conversation might have been this:

Teacher: Andy is wishing his Mom a happy birthday as he gives her the gift. He’d say…

Student: I know what he’d say. (Rereading text) Happy Birthday, Mom!

Teachers monitor cues to make sure the child shows signs of understanding. These cues, both verbal and nonverbal, indicate engagement and provide feedback. Nonverbal messages are conveyed without words and are equally important to attend to as verbal communication (Lose, 2008). If evidence of confusion seems likely, the teacher needs to check what part is confusing the child and modify the message.

As listeners, it is important to attend to what is being said, decide if the meaning has been compromised, and seek clarification if confused. Some children must be taught how to recognize when they do not understand someone’s message, and they have to be taught how to use strategies for seeking clarification or ask for additional information. Children who find this easier are provided with more opportunities to negotiate shared meanings (Clay, 1998).

The links between language, conversation, and thought provide listening opportunities for teachers to attend carefully to what a child is saying or attempting to say:

- We recognize and value the prior knowledge and background that children bring to bear on instructional conversations.
- We provide opportunities for children to continue to develop their oral language vocabularies and structures.
- We assume the responsibility for guiding the discourse. Clay wrote, “conversation in the company of an adult [is] the best tutorial situation in which to raise the child’s language functioning to a high level” (1991, p. 70).
- We provide cues to signal that a message is being understood (or as in the earlier example, being misunderstood).
- We seek clarification if something is unclear. “Being sensitive to the learner’s thinking allows the teacher to draw the child’s attention to things overlooked, to new aspects of the task, or to other possible interpretations” (Clay, 1998, p. 13).

Features of Instructional Conversations

A natural and effective instructional conversation involves teacher and student weaving together spoken language in a way that allows for a discourse followed by a desired action. Unfortunately, in many classrooms, teachers do most of the talking. A teacher loses children when ignoring their thinking, meaning, or understanding (Clay, 1998). Good classroom conversations help children learn about themselves in relation to learning. Effective instructional conversations have several consistent features, six of which are described here.

Natural conversation

Natural conversations have a flow to them. Sometimes likened to cocktail party conversations, individuals switch effortlessly between the role of speaker and listener. One person does not ask a steady stream of questions while the other answers. It is easy for instructors to fall into the trap of questioning, eliciting a response, and then evaluating the response (Johnston, 2004). The following is an example of one such conversation that takes the child off task by focusing on the word lake.

Text  He went to the river to swim.

Student: He went to the … (pausing at the word river) lake?

Teacher: What letter do you hear at the beginning of lake?

Student: k

Teacher: Is that right? (slowly articulates l-ake)

Student: yes
Teacher: I- you would expect to see I- at the beginning of lake. What do you see?

Student: r

A more-productive instructional conversation might have been this:

Student: He went to the … (pausing at the word river) lake?

Teacher: Lake makes sense, but does it look right?

Student: River! He went to the river to swim.

Note that the conversation, although brief, is focused on problem solving in a very natural way. The teacher interacts just enough to allow the child to take initiative to consider visual information along with meaning and make a self-correction.

Negotiated shared meaning

Effective teacher communicators, acting as both the speaker and the listener, understand that they do not necessarily know what the child is thinking. They check in from time to time, asking for and providing feedback. Checking in enhances the opportunity for shared knowing. It sometimes requires the teacher to ask for a response that enhances the level of understanding, as in this conversation that helped the student compose a message during the writing segment of the Reading Recovery lesson.

Teacher: You really had fun at your Valentine party, didn’t you?

Student: Yeah.

Teacher: What was your favorite part of your Valentine party?

Student: When it was done.

Teacher: When it was done? Why?

Student: Because when it was done — everybody gave valentines — and when it was done you get to open them.

Checking on confusions and negotiating a shared meaning is important because it provides an opportunity for teacher and student to have a better understanding of each other’s intended message. Clay (1998) noted that “almost any adult can talk with children in ways that teach” and “anyone who can converse with a child can foster language development” (p. 13).

A teaching conversation is most effective when it mimics the give and take and clarification seeking in everyday conversation.

Built on oral language strengths

Oral language is the basic tool of communication that teachers and children share. Almost all children come to school with language, and whether or not their first language is the language of instruction, we as teachers help them make sense of their world. It is most critical for teachers to value the unique language development of each child and honor their differences (Lindfords, 1991).

Each child enters formal schooling desiring to understand and to be understood. Clay (1998) writes that children often enter school with fewer opportunities to converse with adults than they do at home. She goes on to state that, “It is only when we know our children well and listen closely to their use of language that we can get inside the child’s frame of reference and support the child’s next forward moves” (p. 10).

We are reminded that children who are learning the language of school need to experience one-on-one conversation with adults more frequently. Clay instructs teachers to “talk to the ones who are least able to talk to you. Talk when the going is hard. Listen when the child wants to talk to you. Reply, and extend the conversation” (1998, p. 11).

Teachers who pay attention to a child’s utterances encourage them to talk more and ask questions that call for them to converse. The following conversation with a student in Reading Recovery shows how the teacher drew the child into conversation.

Teacher: Little Chimp climbed back up the tree. Do you like to climb up in trees?

Student: I tried to climb a tree once but I couldn’t get up in it. Everyone else was getting up in it but I couldn’t.

Teacher: (with a puzzled look) Everyone else?

Student: Even the adults were getting up. I couldn’t though. My mommy helped me up. She helped me get up in the tree.

Reflection of what is important to the child

Teachers are able to personalize the learning when they employ wait time, active listening, and intentional responding. Clay (1998) reminds us that personalizing learning is important because “of how diverse the literacy foundations are from child to child” (p. 4). When working with children, following the child’s discov-
eries sometimes requires the teacher to ‘let go’ of a preplanned agenda. When children are noticing and making connections, teachers need to recognize what the children are doing and build on these discoveries.

Text: Today is Mom’s birthday.
Student: Today is my Mom’s birthday. (Student stops and furrows brow.)
Teacher: (after a short pause) What did you notice?
Student: Something’s not right. Oh, I know! (Rereading) Today is Mom’s birthday.

The teacher’s actions honored the child’s thinking and followed his lead. She intentionally waited before responding, allowing him time to notice his error. Observing his furrowed brow, she asked “What did you notice?” which let him know that it is important to notice when something is amiss. It honored his work to that point, including his self-monitoring, and he was able to self-correct the error on his own.

Concise, focused teacher language
By using questions and prompts that negotiate problem solving, teachers help children construct their own understandings. Keeping questions clear, to the point, and focused on actions helps children to extend their thinking. Clay (2005b) calls for teachers to use clear and memorable examples when questioning and prompting for problem solving. The following conversation is concise and clear.

Text: “Come on, Little Chimp,” said Mother Chimp. “Come up the tree.”
Student: Come on, Little Chimp, said Ma– mo–
Teacher: What would make sense? (pointing to the larger chimp in the illustration)
Student: Mother Chimp. Come on, Little Chimp, said Mother Chimp looks up as if finished).
Teacher: (no response)
Student: (looks back down and reads as if noticing additional text) Come up the tree.

Praise focused on actions
Many teachers purposely use praise to motivate children. Too often in one-to-one and small-group interventions children are told “good job” when in fact they did not meet expectations. Johnston (2004) explains that directing praise at “their effort (You worked hard at that) or their intellect (You are so smart)” (p. 39) is equally not useful in changing a child’s actions. He states that drawing attention to success, decision making, and strategic actions increases a child’s understanding that effective action leads to desired results. One such conversation occurred during writing when the child used an analogy to write the word some.

Student: (noticing that some is like come) It looks the same.
Teacher: It does look the same. What did you have to change to make some?
Student: I changed the C. This part is the same (circling -ome).
Teacher: You are right, that worked!

Good instructional conversations help children learn about themselves in relation to learning. Reiterating Johnston’s (2004) view, talk is the primary tool of a teacher’s trade. We use praise to change a child’s thinking about decision making and performance. According to Henderlong and Lepper (2002), praise results in perceptions of competence. Teachers can build competence by using praise in a natural and authentic way. Praise can focus on success and provide needed links between action and desired results. Bandura (1997) refers to this as self-efficacy: the belief that actions lead to preferred outcomes. People with more positive self-efficacy beliefs are inclined to persevere in the face of difficulty, work at alternative solutions to problems, and give up less frequently.

Benefits of Instructional Conversations
Natural instructional conversations focus on children’s actions and allow for language and meaning to be constructed and negotiated. Focusing conversation around a child’s specific literacy behaviors and responding appropriately personalizes the interaction. This personalization helps focus on the child’s unique learning and language needs. By using intentional and specific conversational
moves, teachers aid in their students’ language development (Van Dyke, 2006), which is important for both reading and writing. According to Clay (2005b), there is no quick way to extend language, but the conversations that happen around reading and writing provide the best opportunity.

Instructional conversations that are efficient and clear provide opportunities for a child to bridge language and thinking (Vygotsky, 1978; Anderson, 1999). Too much teacher talk can confuse a child. It requires him to process too much information and sometimes interferes with the processing of print. As children think, speak, read, and write, they are seeking to make meaning of their world (Johnston, 2004; Clay, 2004; Lindfors 1999).

Another benefit of good instructional conversations is that teacher talk offers children opportunities to ‘try on’ different identities. Children can be nudged toward constructive identities that promote independence — the notion that they are the problem solvers. This sense of agency is important to their sense of well-being because it helps them identify as good decision makers. Children who doubt their competence believe problem solving is outside of their abilities. They have low expectations, give up easily when confused, and do not identify as readers. They disengage and become passive. On the other hand, children who have confidence work harder and are known to try various attempts to solve what they do not know. They show more interest and perceive themselves as readers. They concentrate harder when faced with difficult tasks, plan better, and have more-focused attention (Johnston, 2004).

Talking with children in ways that help them think about what they are doing encourages their strategic thinking. When teachers use intentional conversations about strategic processing it helps children monitor, make decisions, and respond to print actively. They make new discoveries, search for relationships, and link new information to old information (Clay, 2005b).

Eliciting Child Participation

During an instructional conversation, children have opportunities to talk, uncover confusions, negotiate meaning, and extend their thinking. Some children, however, are reluctant to participate in talking with their teacher. There are many reasons for this that are outside the scope of this article, but providing opportunities for children to participate in conversation takes intentionality.

Children need
- wait time,
- invitations into conversation,
- interactions around what is known by both teacher and child, and
- a sense that what they have to say is meaningful.

Wait time

In order to be able to contribute during a teaching conversation, some children need more time to search for meaning or think of related information. Ideas do not always come quickly, so children need varying amounts of wait time from the teacher (Clay, 1998). This added time allows children to construct ideas in their head, search for ways to logically compose them, and evaluate the intended meaning. Johnston (2004) writes that children need to ask both “What do I know about this?” and “What do I know that this is like?” (p. 46). Making meaningful connections to what
is known is the premise for learning. Although some children can make links quickly, others need varying amounts of wait time before they can be expected to contribute.

Invitations into conversation
Sometimes children need to be invited into conversation by helping them make connections to what they know or have experienced. Teachers let go of personal agendas and ask questions that open a conversation. Open invitations include asking children questions like, “What did you notice?” or “What does that remind you of?” and “What else could it be?” These questions are removed from right-or-wrong thinking and encourage links and connections to prior learning.

Interactions around what is known
When children view themselves as learners and discoverers, they are encouraged to make discoveries and link new learning to prior knowledge. They come to know what they have to say is meaningful and not going to be evaluated as right or wrong. Clay (1998) tells us that children bring knowledge with them to the conversation. Adults often make the error of bypassing the child’s thinking in an attempt to thrust new knowledge on the child.

Meaningful interactions
Children will participate in instructional conversations if they believe what they have to say is meaningful. Teachers stimulate a sense of meaningfulness when they recognize and genuinely value children’s ideas and comments. One way to show a child’s comments are meaningful is to reflect back to the child what was understood.

Student: And I had trouble with this (pointing to the words water bottle).
Teacher: Yes, water bottle – you had to make a decision and you figured it right out.
Student: I did.

This purposeful reflecting signals that the child’s message was meaningful and understood. It can also be used when there is a need for clarification but, nevertheless, the reflection indicates that the message was important enough to warrant explaining.

Oral language is the basis for literacy learning; therefore, quality conversations between teacher and child foster accelerated learning. Support is provided through instructional conversations that create opportunities for and reinforce independent problem solving. The next section situates instructional conversations within the framework of Reading Recovery lessons to illustrate the ways these conversations can support students’ strategic activity in reading and in writing.

Instructional Conversations During Familiar Reading, Writing, and New Book Reading
Teachers working in Reading Recovery have excellent opportunities to support children’s accelerated learning while the student reads easy and familiar text, when writing messages, and during the reading of new material with support.

Janice Van Dyke (2006), in her article “When Conversations Go Well,” reminds us that we encourage children to participate in conversation when we talk about their experiences and interests. By probing, summarizing, paraphrasing, or restating what the child says, teachers help children make links between their ideas and their oral message. The following is an example of a teacher helping an English learner express himself.

Teacher: In this book the family decides to go on a picnic. You remember what a picnic is, from Little Dinosaur…. What does it look like Dad is doing here?
Child: sandwiches
Teacher: (probing) What is he doing though?
Child: making
Teacher: (restating the idea as a complete sentence) Yeah. He’s making some sandwiches.
Child: He’s making sandwiches.

Teachers help children extend their control of oral language by talking in ways that help them create links between thinking and their message. Clay (2005b) tells us, “We know something has changed in the child’s language when we hear him (or her) construct part of a sentence in a new way” (p. 51).

Supporting learning during familiar reading
Familiar reading material allows children to practice problem solving, read fluently on material that is partially known, and talk about what the story meant to them (Clay, 2005b). It is an opportunity for children to integrate all they know about a text as they control the reading. There are many
opportunities for conversation that accelerates learning during the reading of familiar text.

Talking with children about familiar books before or after the reading helps them become even more familiar with the nuances, the vocabulary, and particular sentence structures within stories. It is not productive to interrupt familiar reading. After the reading, teachers can encourage children to talk about particular events or solutions in the story. Teachers encourage conversation by asking open-ended questions or statements that require a child to compose in her head. For example, in the little story *Baby Bear Goes Fishing*, a teacher may ask “Why do you think Baby Bear is big enough to go fishing?” or “What do you think may happen the next time Father Bear goes fishing?”

These types of conversations encourage children to think and talk about what they are reading. It encourages them to experience reading as a message-getting activity, not a word-reading task. Some of the most-enjoyable and memorable conversations I have had with children were about a story, poem, or other text.

When children control the reading of familiar material, they experience the opportunity to discover new things because their attention is free to attend to features of the text they have yet to notice (Clay, 2005b). The teacher must be careful not to draw the child off task by conversing during the familiar text reading. Children need to be reading as independently as possible. This is enhanced when they are reading interesting texts fluently while problem solving. Teachers who do stop the reading when it becomes slow or when there is an error only prime the child to be on guard and wait for interruptions.

**Supporting learning during writing**

Writing provides a learner with opportunities to carefully attend to print, make discoveries, and analyze specific features of letters and words. Writing requires children to initiate ideas in their minds, construct a message that makes sense from their ideas, and record the message in a way that a reader can understand. To ensure learning, teachers might need to support students with any of these processes. Children need varying levels of scaffolding when coming up with ideas, when transferring ideas into a message, and when recording the message.

Attentive teachers ask pertinent questions that help a child formulate ideas. Clay (2005b) recommends that the teacher start a “conversation, guided by all you know about this child” (p. 55). Conversations need to be interesting and constructive. This is not the time to ask a list of closed questions, but instead to encourage the child to verbally articulate ideas. Begin the writing portion of a lesson by talking with the child about a book or experience. Teachers begin conversations by asking questions like these:

- Can you tell me more about what happened when your class went out to the garden this morning?
- You were absent yesterday. What kept you from coming to school?
- You said it was funny that the spider wanted to eat all of the bugs. What do you do when you see a spider?
- Last weekend you were going to take your puppy to dog training class. What are you helping him learn?

During a short but genuine conversation before writing, it may be necessary for the teacher to summarize, rephrase, or ask additional questions to help a child expand the message. This leads to the second part of the process of writing, which is composition. After the ideas have been expressed orally, the teacher might ask, “How would you like to write that down?” or “What would you like to write first?” Helping a child construct a message from the conversation allows the child to take ownership of the story. While talking with a child during an individual lesson or during a writing conference, listen carefully to the ideas and help the child compose a sentence or message that captures the most-important part. By scaffolding the connection between ideas and thoughts and oral language, teachers help children construct a message that can then be written down. Teachers support children’s oral language so they will speak and write more-complex sentences. These short but powerful conversations help children link their spoken language to their writing.

**Supporting learning before, during, and after reading new material**

In order to support learning during the reading of new text, teachers begin by carefully choosing a book that the child can read successfully with some assistance, one that will help expand the reader’s strategic thinking and behaviors. A child needs to read fluently enough to retain the meaning of the story while solving unknown text independently.
Before children read the book, teachers engage them in a conversation about the story. They help them understand the plot and become familiar with book language and unfamiliar vocabulary. Children are engaged in and interacting with a book during this new book conversation (Clay, 2005b; Cazden, 2005).

Clay provides explicit and differentiated instructions for the kind of teaching conversation we have with children after the first reading (see the section “Teaching after the first reading” on pp. 95–96 of Literacy Lessons Part Two). Unlike the talk before the reading, this specialized instruction helps children make links to help themselves in the future. The language needs to be clear, helping the child attend to problem solving.

That will help scaffold the child to more-complex texts. What teachers attend to should change over time as children develop more-sophisticated problem-solving behaviors.

After the first reading, teachers and children have a brief conversation about the book in order to reinforce that the meaning of the whole story is important (Clay, 2005b). This conversation allows the child to attend to the message of the story and helps the teacher know what the child understands and what connections she is making. This conversation also fosters the child’s connection to the story in future readings.

**Conclusion**

Teachers facilitate accelerated learning when they teach conversationally, listening and responding intentionally. The learning potential lies in the conversation between child and teacher, which can provide efficient scaffolding for problem solving and decision making. Lessons for struggling readers and writers must promote accelerated learning in order to help them catch up to their classroom peers.

The teachers most effective in closing the learning gap are intentional about what they talk about and how they talk, and they are skillful in eliciting conversation from the learner.

**References**


**About the Author**

Dr. Paula Bennet is an assistant professor at the University of Northern Iowa. Her research interests are directed at helping teachers improve their practice. Currently she works with teachers and teacher coaches to help better meet the literacy needs of all children.

**About the Cover**

When Jackson began his Reading Recovery lessons during the 2013–14 school year at Clara Love Elementary in Justin, TX, he was reading at Level 0. When his lessons were discontinued, he was reading at a Level 14 and at year-end at Level 22 — above average for first grade. Jackson said he enjoyed coming to Reading Recovery class every day, reading a variety of books that he chose on his current level for practice. “I was one of those people who read levels 1 to 20 and got a medal,” he said. He also wanted to read chapter books.

Now in second grade, Jackson said he gets to read any type of book from his class library. His favorites are *I Survived* and *The Pizza the Size of the Sun*. He also enjoys doing some cool things, especially during science class. He practiced making ice melt and did a project with a cookie, and then got to eat it.

Jackson likes to play football and tag and hangs out on the monkey bars during recess. He wants to be some kind of engineer when he grows up — one that builds new transportation and/or toys or perhaps fixes robots and cars.
Children, Teachers, Schools Feel Impact of i3 Scale-Up Grant

In October of 2010, the U.S. Department of Education awarded The Ohio State University a $46 million Investing in Innovation (i3) Scaling Up What Works grant to expand Reading Recovery over a 5-year period. These funds, along with approximately $10 million in additional private sector matching funds, allowed 19 Reading Recovery university training centers to train more than 3,700 Reading Recovery teachers across the 5 years of the grant. As a result, Reading Recovery implementations grew and teachers provided expert one-to-one reading and writing instruction to nearly 400,000 children who might not otherwise have had the opportunity for Reading Recovery.

The Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) conducted an independent evaluation of the Reading Recovery scale up. The CPRE Year Two report revealed that students in Reading Recovery performed better than control group students on each Reading subscale of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (May, et al., 2014). In addition, effect sizes were large for both the Reading Words and Reading Comprehension subscales. “Even when benchmarking the impacts on ITBS scores relative to the full population of first graders in the nation, the standard effect sizes are still large…and represent a growth rate that is 27% greater than the national average for first graders” (May, et al., p. 46).

The positive impact of the i3 grant is evident in schools and districts across the United States, with Reading Recovery changing the lives of children and the educators who teach them. Because of the i3 grant, some schools and districts had the opportunity to implement Reading Recovery for the first time, and others rapidly expanded Reading Recovery to reach full implementation. This article adds faces to the data, celebrating the success of Reading Recovery on the local level and showing the impact Reading Recovery has made in a few of the many schools and sites and in the professional lives of teachers.

i3 Helps Districts Initiate Reading Recovery

Beginning up and scaling up in Oklahoma: Broken Arrow Public Schools

Broken Arrow Public Schools are located in northeastern Oklahoma, in a combination of urban-suburban communities. The area is bustling with growing businesses, industrial bases, and agricultural areas. In 2010–11, the district literacy committee began searching for an early literacy intervention to help their struggling students. When they learned of the Reading Recovery university training center at Texas Woman’s University (TWU), and knowing the success of Reading Recovery, they began exploring options to fund its implementation.

With the help of the i3 grant, Broken Arrow implemented and expanded Reading Recovery rather quickly. Jan Grisham trained as a Reading Recovery teacher leader under the i3 grant during 2011–12. The funds allowed Grisham to travel back and forth between Denton, TX, and Broken Arrow for her training. Interested in getting the intervention off to a strong start, Broken Arrow leaders wanted to
train Reading Recovery teachers during the same year. So veteran Texas teacher leader Carol Southerland traveled to Broken Arrow to train 10 Reading Recovery teachers, while Grisham completed her training at TWU.

Broken Arrow had a Reading Recovery teacher class during every year of the grant, training 26 teachers. These teachers play diverse roles in their schools. The majority of the Reading Recovery teachers spend part of their days as Title I interventionists, some teachers work as literacy coaches, and a few teach special education for a portion of the school day. The depth of the Reading Recovery training and the flexibility of Broken Arrow’s implementation model allow teachers to excel in all four roles. As a result, Reading Recovery has helped to significantly reduce the number of students retained at the end of first grade or referred to special education in Broken Arrow Public Schools.

Santa Clara Unified School District becomes a Reading Recovery site
Santa Clara USD in California has had a largely successful scale up of Reading Recovery as a direct result of receiving i3 funding. They were able to establish a training site, train a teacher leader, build a training room with a one-way mirror, and train 41 teachers in three districts over the course of 4 years. The many positive effects of Reading Recovery in the Santa Clara district include

- increased teacher expertise,
- positive student growth,
- school impact beyond first grade,
- professional development for classroom teachers provided by Reading Recovery teachers,
- creation of a collaborative learning community around literacy,
- support for principals in developing multitiered systems of support, and
- attendance at state and national conferences.

Bowers Elementary, as one example, has had full implementation for the past 4 years thanks to i3 funding. This school has decreased the special education population significantly, necessitating a .6 FTE instead of 1.1 FTE. Reading Recovery students’ subsequent performance has been followed each year, and 70% of the children who had lessons the first year (2011–12) scored basic or proficient on state standardized tests in second grade.

Rapid Growth for Vintage Reading Recovery Sites

Cape Cod Site triples Reading Recovery implementation
The Cape Cod site is a vintage site based in the Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School District, which has been effectively supporting Reading Recovery teachers for over 25 years. In the 2010–11 school year, the site included 17 teachers from eight schools in four districts on Cape Cod and the surrounding area. The Cape Cod site took full advantage of the availability of the 5-year i3 grant, training 30 additional Reading Recovery teachers.

In addition, the site’s territory expanded to include two new school districts from the southeastern coast of Massachusetts: Plymouth and Middleborough.

The Plymouth Public School District includes eight elementary schools that are now fully implemented in Reading Recovery with 18 teachers, all trained through i3 funding. The Middleborough Public Schools currently have two Reading Recovery teachers in each school and are working towards full implementation.

Due to the availability of the i3 funding, the Cape Cod site has expanded almost threefold! They are now 45 teachers strong, from 20 schools in six different districts. Currently 90% of schools in the site are fully implemented, and last year teachers in the site taught 319 first graders to read and write! Massachusetts teachers are grateful to have had the opportunity to expand so much in such a short time and to serve the literacy needs of so many youngsters in the southeastern region of their state.
Implementation

The i3 grant had an incredible impact on the Reading Recovery program. SFUSD has more than doubled the number of Reading Recovery teachers in the district. Since 2011, 24 Reading Recovery teachers have served 404 of the most-struggling readers in first grade. In addition, 132 Spanish-speaking readers in first grade received DLL lessons during the same time period. Several of the DLL teachers used grant funds to train in Reading Recovery, then bridged to DLL the following year, providing support for first graders in both Spanish and English.

Full implementation in a large, diverse district: Fort Bend, Texas

Fort Bend Independent School District is the seventh largest school district in Texas, with more than 72,000 students on 75 campuses, including 46 elementary schools. Fort Bend is recognized as a district that openly embraces the diversity of its student population. Students in Fort Bend speak 90 different languages and dialects, making the district one of the most culturally diverse school systems in the state of Texas and the U.S.

Fort Bend’s teacher leaders, Cynthia Bogle, Cathleen Duvall, and Raquel Gonzales, know firsthand the far-reaching impact of i3 funding. Because of this grant, they were able to train 40 Reading Recovery teachers and 5 DLL teachers in their district, as well as 14 teachers in neighboring districts. Fort Bend initially struggled to fund the tuition for each teacher’s training of 6 graduate-level course hours of education; however, the grant paid the tuition for the teachers and enabled them to attend the Texas Woman’s University Billie J. Askew Reading Recovery and K-6 Literacy Institute for 2 consecutive years. Because of the i3 grant, Fort Bend Independent School District has implemented Reading Recovery on every elementary campus — a major accomplishment.

Whole-School Benefits Realized in California

Manzanita Public Charter School

Manzanita Public Charter School is a small school of 420 students, and over the 5 years of the i3 grant they trained six Reading Recovery teachers. Training teachers in Reading Recovery has given them the opportunity to be a fully implemented site for the past 5 years. Reading Recovery has had positive effects in the school, including increasing teacher expertise in the classroom, collaboration among classroom teachers and Reading Recovery teachers, providing professional development by Reading Recovery-trained teachers, and student growth by the end of first grade.

Because the i3 funding has enabled Manzanita Public Charter School to reach full implementation, teachers have been able to use their knowledge in a variety of ways. The understandings teachers gained from their Reading Recovery training have been helpful in their work with primary-grade classrooms as well. As a result, the whole school has enjoyed the benefits of having Reading Recovery-trained teachers in the school.
San Ramon Valley Unified School District
The scale up of Reading Recovery in San Ramon Valley USD was possible because of the i3 funding received over 4 years. In 2011–12, one i3 teacher leader was trained. From 2012–15, 23 teachers in three districts successfully completed their training year. The positive effects of Reading Recovery in this California district and beyond include measurable student growth, support for principals in developing multitiered systems of support, professional development provided for classroom teachers and site staff by Reading Recovery teachers, collaborative processes around literacy intervention implementation, and improved classroom instruction. Classroom teachers, parents, and administrators have noted the difference Reading Recovery has made in the site, putting Reading Recovery in great demand. San Ramon Valley is exploring ways to reach their goal of full implementation in coming years.

Share Your Stories
These are but a few stories to illustrate the impact that the i3 grant had on the professional learning of teachers resulting in positive outcomes for children. Because of this grant, some schools were able to implement Reading Recovery as a powerful intervention for the first time; others were able to move toward full implementation, ensuring that every child who needed a literacy intervention in first grade received an opportunity to learn from a highly effective teacher. Additionally, sites report the impact teachers trained in Reading Recovery had as they collaborated with teachers to improve classroom instruction. The i3 grant provided tuition and resources to train additional Reading Recovery professionals across the United States, proving that the intervention could be scaled up with fidelity to positive outcomes for teachers and children, as well as provide an impetus of change within schools.

We invite you to share your i3 success stories. Please email your articles and photos to vfox@readingrecovery.org and we will follow up for additional information as we share your news on the Celebrating Literacy Success website and in other print materials.

You can read more about the i3 scale up, including the CPRE Year One and Year Two reports, on the RRCNA website in the Research Section under Effectiveness.

Missouri Teachers Express Appreciation

“Reading Recovery training is the most valuable piece of education and training that I have received since starting my undergraduate degree in teaching,” stated Kim Bihr, a Reading Recovery teacher at Oak Brook School in Parkway School District in St. Louis. Bihr recognizes the high quality of her yearlong Reading Recovery training and the value of the i3 grant. The grant funded Bihr’s graduate level coursework and covered the cost of her travel expenses to and from class. In addition, these funds enabled her to deepen her learning by attending the Missouri Association of Reading Recovery Educators (MARRE) conference and gave her access to many teaching resources. “The i3 grant provided me with a library full of great leveled texts… that provide many learning opportunities for students,” explained Bihr. “I’m so thankful to have received the i3 grant and the many resources that it provided.”

Lou Ann Moore has taught children in Reading Recovery for 2 years in the Francis Howell School District in St. Charles. One of three Reading Recovery teachers at her school, she has noticed the remarkable impact of Reading Recovery at the school level. “The i3 grant has made a positive impact on our school because it allowed for eight more Reading Recovery students to receive services last year and eight more this year,” she explained. “I am thankful for receiving the i3 grant. It allowed me to receive the intense training I needed to better serve the changing population of my school. I truly feel that I am changing children’s lives daily because of the training I received through the i3 grant.”

This roundup of impact stories was compiled by the editors of JRR, who thank all those who contributed.
Professional Learning Toolkits

Free and Low-Cost Resources to Strengthen Schoolwide Literacy

Weblinks • Videos • Journal Articles • Audio Files • Webcasts
and other resources organized by topic areas and designed to help you
learn together while creating a shared vision for literacy learning

Promising Literacy for Every Child: Reading Recovery and a Comprehensive Literacy System

Online toolkits supplement RRCNA’s planning guide that includes
self-assessments, interactive online forms, and case studies to
help build or strengthen literacy communities.

INTERACTIVE TOOLKITS NOW AVAILABLE

• Introduction
  Describes the resources and guides leaders on how to use them
• Toolkit #1
  Assessing and Monitoring Children’s Literacy Behavior
• Toolkit #2
  Literacy Teaching and Learning
• Toolkit #3
  Text Reading and Comprehension

Leader-Directed Professional Development Modules

Running Records

An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement

The Record of Oral Language

Modules include disks and PDF files to print — Leader’s Guide, Narrator’s Script with
specific directions and cues for discussion, student records, practice worksheets, and more!
We all know the excitement we experience just after we finish a really good book and can’t wait to share it with someone. That is how I felt after reading the new book, *Cultivating Knowledge, Building Language*, by Nonie K. Lesaux and Julie Russ Harris. They are both at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Lesaux is a professor and director of the Language Diversity and Literacy Development Research Group and her collaborator, Harris, is the manager. That group has been conducting research in large urban districts on increasing opportunities to learn for students from diverse linguistic, cultural, and economic backgrounds. The subheading of their book is *Literacy Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary School*. The quote that they shared on the back of the book clearly states the purpose of their work: “Unless we support educators to design instruction to match the demographics of today’s students, as the EL [English learner] population continues to grow and to grow up, so too will the number of students experiencing difficulties.”

This book, published by Heinemann, is part of The Research-Informed Classroom series edited by Nell K. Duke. In her introductory message, Duke says that the authors call for building the curriculum for English learners around content-rich big ideas. Duke goes on to say, “many practices described in this book, while particularly important and well-suited for English learners, can be beneficial for monolingual English speakers as well” (p. x). The key focus here is strong practices for language development, an essential understanding for teachers across all content areas.

The title of the opening chapter, “What We Know About Reading Development Among English Learners,” captures the concept that reading and language development are closely interrelated. This immediately led me to think about what Marie Clay says about language development and literacy learning in *Change Over Time* (2001):

> 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. (p. 95)

The chapter does an outstanding job of contrasting the English learners’ code-based skills development with their meaning-based skills development. The authors review the research from August, Shanahan, Lesaux and others supporting the point that “typically developing ELs perform comparably to their monolingual English-speaking peers on measures of phonological processing skills … and research even suggests that ELs may outperform monolingual learners on measure of rapid naming speed and phonological awareness” (pp. 9–10). However, a wide gap occurs in meaning-based skill development.

Their definition of oral language broadens the field and sets the purpose for the work. The definition is presented in a diagram on page 16 and unpacked in chapter 2. It includes phonological skills, syntax, morphological skills, pragmatics, and semantics or vocabulary. However, while phonological skills—defined as an awareness of sound such as syllables and rhymes—are part of the broad oral language definition, Lesaux and Harris clearly argue the perspective that phonological skills do not present lasting sources of difficulty for ELs. They go on to say that second language acquisition is by nature an uneven developmental process. They say, “ELs’ facility with the different components of oral language typically varies at any given time point, and it is common for ELs to be stronger in some dimensions than others” (p. 17).

They spend a great deal of the first part of the book defining and expanding academic language, relating but distinguishing it from oral language. In their definition of academic language they include syntax, mor-
There is essential to understand is the connection they explain between academic language and reading comprehension. Using A House for Hermit Crab by Eric Carle as one of many text examples, they carefully unpack the definition in a section titled “Academic Language in Action.” Because they explain academic language from beginning book levels up through the grades, and then go on to indicate implications for design of literacy instruction, I found that discussion compelling and most relevant for teachers of all ages. This is no longer “a learn to read then read to learn” perspective, but clearly about integrated processes from the beginning.

Academic language is, therefore, a contributor to this learning from the earliest interactions in the read-aloud to independent reading; it is part of understanding what needs to be part of interventions as well. However, academic language is not a standalone instructional component, but clearly integrated into making meaning in the context of reading continuous text.

Home language doesn’t easily lend itself to the language used in text; this is true for all languages. We demand an academic register that is very different than we use every day, so need to impact language from print during reading. Most students have a fairly well developed day-to-day conversational language, but when they read independently and have to learn from text, there is a gap. This again led me to think about Clay’s work:

Change in grammar takes time, and I doubt if we know why. The child reads easy grammars well, reads more, and has more exposure to alternative ways of varying the construction of sentences. Talking and writing alone may not introduce enough exposure to literary variations of language use. (2004, p. 3)

The concept of deep learning is presented in the literature in the late 90s from the works of several different authors. Lesaux and Harris refer to a number of those resources as they explain making sense of depth versus breadth, all the time keeping academic language in focus. While they reference the Common Core Standards, their points focus more on the English learner perspective and acquiring academic language.

Over half of the book is devoted to detailed ideas for lesson planning to help teachers learn how to design lessons that both build knowledge and develop language. The authors provide a range of examples from planning knowledge-building cycles to protocols to in-depth discussion of vocabulary development. It is a marvelous resource, solidly built on theory and field-based research.

In the last chapter, Lesaux and Harris suggest a design for what they term language production projects. They identify five ways that these projects extend learning: written language, oral language, reading comprehension skills, context area knowledge, and academic motivation.

While focused on English learners in the elementary school, there is so much that teachers of all students at a wide range of age and experience levels will find useful. Reading Recovery teachers will find very helpful foundational information in this solidly researched book.

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**References**


**Children’s Book Cited**


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**About the Author**

Dr. Adria Klein is a Reading Recovery trainer, literacy coach trainer, and director of the Reading Recovery Center at Saint Mary’s College of California. She is a respected educator, author, consultant, and leader in the fields of literacy, English language development, and crosscultural understanding. The author or co-author of many books and journal articles, she conducts workshops around the country, and is a frequent presenter at state and national conferences and universities. She co-edited *Research in Reading Recovery Volume 1*, and authored or co-authored several other professional books and many children’s books. Adria is a past president of the California Reading Association and a former board member of the International Literacy Association.
International News

Canada Hosts International Institute

Allyson Matczuk, Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery and Chair of the International Reading Recovery Institute

From July 20-22, 2016, it will be Canada’s turn to host the International Reading Recovery Institute. The theme of this 9th Institute—held in downtown Vancouver, British Columbia—is “Widening Circles: Literacy Learning for All.”

We expect more than 350 participants representing all countries implementing Reading Recovery, Intervention préventive en lecture-écriture, and Descubriendo la Lectura. For U.S. teacher leaders, the 2016 International Institute will take the place of the 2016 Teacher Leader Institute, with sessions designed specifically for teacher leaders.

The iconic images of the Aurora Borealis and the Inukshuk in the Institute graphic were selected to not only depict the vast Canadian North and all that lays open to discovery, but also to represent the influence that Dame Marie Clay and all Reading Recovery professionals have provided — unending opportunities and direction to literacy learners and teachers around the world. The Inukshuk (pronounced en-ook-shook) is made of large stones that are supported through balance alone and represent strength through unity within the Inuit community. They act as guiding landmarks that help travelers navigate the barren landscape, communicating direction, and sometimes holding a cache of food to ensure survival for the weary traveler.

A keynote and featured speaker from each of the five countries that comprise the International Reading Recovery Trainers Organization are on the 3-day Institute schedule. These presentations will be rich in theory and application for Reading Recovery professionals.

Speakers from the five countries:

• Australia
  Dr. Bridie Raban, keynote
  Dr. Janet Scull, featured
• New Zealand
  Dr. Stuart McNaughton, keynote
  Dr. Christine Boocock, featured
• United Kingdom
  Dr. Iram Siraj, keynote
  Ms. Glen Franklin, featured
• United States
  Dr. Gay Su Pinnell, keynote
  Dr. Robert Schwartz, featured
• Canada
  Dr. Jeremy Burman, keynote
  Ms. Janice Van Dyke, featured

In addition there were will be seminar sessions with Reading Recovery trainers, tutors, and teacher leaders from all five countries, an international panel, a welcome reception, and a social evening.

The event venue is the Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre in downtown Vancouver. Registration is now open, with Early Bird pricing in effect until April 15. To register and for more information, visit the IRRTO website at www.irrto.org. Information will also be available on the websites of each participating country.

We look forward to hosting guests from around the world next summer in beautiful British Columbia’s largest city.
President’s Message

Change Challenges Us to Rechart Our Direction

RRCNA President Craig Dougherty

Reading Recovery is one of the most effective models for creating paradigm shifts in teachers. It is also the most researched and critiqued program in the world! Reading Recovery places the child at the epicenter; it is not a curriculum, not a textbook series, and certainly not a quick fix. The child is the focus. It has been proven beyond a doubt that an effective Reading Recovery teacher provides an opportunity for children to become self-extended learners, charting their own paths towards excellence by learning to read and write proficiently.

While Reading Recovery teachers in the U.S. and Canada have taught more than 2.2 million children in the past 30 years, we find ourselves at a crossroads. Our numbers, both in terms of students served and the number of Reading Recovery teachers and teacher leaders, have declined significantly since 2001. I believe we need to chart a brave new course to extend our reach beyond one-to-one intervention. We all know that many Reading Recovery teachers work with 8–10 Reading Recovery students across a school year, and four times as many other children benefit from their expertise each day. We know that they are among the best-trained staff in the school. Yet, school decision makers often underestimate the importance of addressing the needs of the lowest literacy learners at the onset of their learning to read and write.

They also underestimate the power of Reading Recovery teachers and teacher leaders as change agents within a school or district. Despite Reading Recovery’s outstanding data across a variety of demographics, the intervention is implemented less often or it is dropped as a reading intervention.

Change is never easy and, quite frankly, sometimes scary. We must never lose sight of what Reading Recovery is and the vision of Marie Clay, who created this beautiful way to teach high-risk children how to read. Yet, we must adapt to new realities and the business of educating children today.

We must never lose sight of what Reading Recovery is and the vision of Marie Clay, who created this beautiful way to teach high-risk children how to read. Yet, we must adapt to new realities and the business of educating children today.

In terms of real education reform, approaches have literally been all over the map. No one model has risen to an acceptable level of replicability and effectiveness. However, there are visionaries within our ranks, and to that end we must look for guidance and answers. Some initial work in embedding Reading Recovery in a comprehensive literacy model is promising. In addition, pilots of Literacy Lessons—training special education and ESL-certified teachers in Reading Recovery—are showing great promise. When all teachers in the school share the same theory base and understanding of literacy processing, significant progress can be made.

Principals and superintendents are looking for models that impact the whole school, increasing student proficiency in reading and writing. Reading Recovery needs to be at the forefront of schoolwide impact. Implementing Reading Recovery as part of a whole-school comprehensive literacy model must be pursued with the same rigor, passion, and excellence that scaled up Reading Recovery from 1984–2001, when 150,000 children were served annually. I urge all Reading Recovery stakeholders to take on this challenge and create new life for Reading Recovery!
Remember that Janet Jackson song from the 80s! (Remember our hair!) In the association management field, we know that members have high expectations and want to receive valuable member benefits for their dues dollars. Our goal is to be responsive to your needs. Here is an overview of our recent work:

- Organized the celebration of 30 years of Reading Recovery in North America. So many of you joined with us in the celebration — through our website, in your own site/district anniversary events, and participating with 2,800 others in celebration activities at the 2015 National Reading Recovery & K–6 Literacy Conference.
- Raised more than $280,000 in individual donations and grants in fiscal year 2015 to support our mission, including the following:
  - Collaborated with seven vendors to develop the Reading Recovery Expansion Grant initiative. Four university training centers (UTCs) were awarded funds enabling them to provide seven school districts with scholarships to support the training of Reading Recovery teachers to deepen or expand implementation. In total, UTCs received forty-five $1,000 grants for teacher training, plus 350 free little books and teaching materials for each teacher. The entire project distributed more than $127,000 worth of support!
  - Awarded three $10,000 teacher leader training scholarships and twenty $1,000 professional development grants to assist members in attending the 2016 National Conference.
  - Provided a year of free in-training membership to more than 900 i3 teachers in training.
- Advocated with members of Congress who are key in passing the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Our leadership encouraged them to press on and to maintain the language related to comprehensive literacy instruction.
- Participated in Advocates for Literacy, a consortium of 100 organizations committed to education policy and adequate funding to support improved literacy instruction in the nation’s most-challenged schools.
- Published the new guide, *Promising Literacy for Every Child: Reading Recovery and a Comprehensive Literacy System*. This resource enables Reading Recovery teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators to assess their school’s current approach to reading and writing instruction and then plan improvements through collaborative professional development, alignment of literacy theory, and focus on individualized instruction.
- Created online professional development toolkits that guide school teams in creating a shared vision and goals for literacy learning. Designed for use with the comprehensive literacy guide, the online toolkits include videos, reference guides, journal articles, web links, audio files, and other resources for teaching staff and administrators.
- Worked side-by-side with the North American Trainers Group, providing staffing and support for this group of 50 trainers in the U.S. and Canada who conduct ongoing research, train teacher leaders, oversee implementations, maintain and revise the standards and guidelines, and uphold the Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons trademarks.
- Published the outstanding bi-annual *Journal of Reading Recovery*, one of our most-valued member benefits.
- Provided an array of free members-only web-based resources — from the Reading Recovery Book List to online copymasters of forms, a searchable database of all current and past publications, marketing and advocacy fact sheets and printable resources, an online discussion board, webcasts, national conference handouts, mp3 recordings of your favorite speakers, and much more!
- Planned and conducted some of the highest quality literacy conferences available on the continent!
• Jumped into social media with Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn updates. Follow us!

• Fostered member involvement with RRCNA on committees, work groups, and through our National Conference membership meeting.

• Offered professional development publications and modules for your use, as well as the many logo items you love.

• Through our websites, informed school decision makers and directed them to Reading Recovery teacher leaders and university training centers throughout North America.

• Generated visibility for Reading Recovery and your important work with the education press, likeminded organizations, policymakers, parents, and the general public.

• Published resources you can use with decision makers in your district, such as “Early Literacy Matters: Dyslexia, Specific Learning Disabilities, and Reading Recovery” from RRCNA and “Ideology and Early Literacy Evidence: A Response to Chapman & Tunmer (2015)” by Robert M. Schwartz.

• Assisted in the management of the International Reading Recovery Trainers Organization and serving as event manager for the 2016 International Reading Recovery Institute in Vancouver next July.

• Made available an online literacy digital library through the Center for Early Literacy Information. This searchable research database is free and available to the public.

• Provided information and a forum for discussion and collaboration for the deans of the 18 university training centers.

• Awarded $87,000 in grants to train five new university trainers at Georgia State University, University of Maine, Texas Woman’s University, and the Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery.

• Provided assistance for the growth of the Spanish and French reconstructions of Reading Recovery, Descubriendo la Lectura (DLL) and Intervention Préventive en Lecture-Écriture (IPLE).

The RRCNA Board of Directors and staff work for you every day! Please feel free to contact me with new ideas we might pursue.

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RRCNA Pushes for ESEA Reauthorization in Washington

RRCNA has been active in communicating with the majority members of Congress who serve on the House and Senate education committees to pass a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) by the end of the year. Long overdue, the bill hasn’t gotten this far in the process in years.

In meeting with the offices of the most influential senators and representatives, we have asked them to urge their colleagues who may be appointed to the joint House-Senate committee to incorporate Title II, Part D, Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation of the Senate bill, S. 1177 into the final language.

Sen. Lamar Alexander, chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, and Rep. John Kline, Chairman of the Education and Workforce Committee, just appointed members to the joint committee. Meetings were held the third week of November. It is expected that the final vote will occur in December.

During the early October conference in Washington, DC of the Committee for Education Funding, which represents more than 100 education organizations concerned with adequate federal funding for education, RRCNA representatives met with nine congressional offices. President Craig Dougherty, Advocacy Committee Chair Amy Smith, Executive Director Jady Johnson, and Reggie Felton of Felton & Associates discussed ESEA and brought local and state information specific to each legislator.

When RRCNA advocates met with staff of Utah Senator Orrin Hatch in Washington, they introduced Reading Recovery at Alpine School District’s 29 elementary schools with a portfolio of materials. Photos of Reading Recovery students and teachers; quotes from parents, first-grade teachers, and principals; newspaper articles; and student letters added context to the Reading Recovery Executive Summary data and the results of a survey given to parents, first-grade teachers, and principals. Alpine implemented Reading Recovery just 3 years ago.
Legislative Background

Both the U.S. House and Senate have now passed legislation to reauthorize ESEA, known as the No Child Left Behind Act. The House bill, The Student Success Act, H.R. 5, was passed by a House vote of 218–213 on July 8, 2015. The Senate bill, Every Child Achieves Act, S. 1177, was passed by the Senate on July 16, 2015, with an 81-17 vote. The next step in the legislative process is that a joint committee will be appointed to resolve differences between the two bills.

Title II, Part D, Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation

A particular provision in the Senate bill that is of great importance to RRCNA and Reading Recovery professionals is found in Title II, SEC 2004 Literacy Education, Part D, Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation. This provision supports comprehensive literacy. Unfortunately, this provision is not included in the House bill. Therefore, the joint committee will determine whether this provision will be included in the final law.

Title II, Part D, would improve student academic achievement in reading and writing by providing federal support to states to develop, revise, or update comprehensive literacy instruction plans that ensure high-quality instruction and effective strategies in reading and writing from early education through Grade 12.

Additionally, this section of the bill would allow states to provide targeted subgrants to early childhood education programs, school districts, and their public or private partners to implement evidence-based programs that ensure high-quality comprehensive literacy instruction for students most in need. The language also provides for a national evaluation to be conducted by the director of the Institute of Education Sciences.

Make Your Voice Heard

RRCNA has encouraged hundreds of teacher leaders and other members who live in the districts and states represented on the education committees to contact their representatives and senators to make this same request. This is a perfect time to take the opportunity to provide local information and evidence about Reading Recovery.

We will keep you up-to-date on the ESEA reauthorization. If you are willing to serve as a contact for a member of Congress, contact Lou Ann Racher at lracher@readingrecovery.org. RRCNA’s 30-page advocacy guide and advocacy talking points may be found online. Just log in and visit the Members Only Resource Center, then click the “I’m a Reflection of You” resources.

We Can Help You Reach Out to Your Elected Officials

You’ve heard the saying, “all politics is local.” This is certainly true for Reading Recovery. The very best advocacy happens when Reading Recovery professionals reach out to their elected officials to share their experiences with children, the benefits to the school district and community, and why they are passionate about Reading Recovery. You can do this! RRCNA will provide resources and support. For more information, email Lou Ann Racher at lracher@readingrecovery.org.
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Three Scholarships Help Fund Teacher Leader Training

Teacher Leader scholarships are granted to schools that have demonstrated a commitment to continue Reading Recovery and selected a suitable teacher leader candidate. For the first time, this year's invitation to apply for the scholarship was extended to Canadian locations.

For the 2015–16 school year, three teacher leaders are in training thanks to another year of generous support from Hameray Publishing Group and the Yuen Family Foundation.

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—a private charitable organization—in conjunction with Hameray Publishing Group contributed $30,000 to fund the three teacher leader scholarships.

Effingham County Schools, Springfield, GA
Jenny Wilkins is training at Georgia State University. Jenny has 12 years of teaching experience, the last 5 in Reading Recovery. She received her District and School Teacher of the Year Award in 2013. Introduced 19 years ago, Reading Recovery has been fully implemented in Effingham County Schools since the 2005-06 school year. The board’s commitment resulted in a move 2 years ago to fully fund the intervention with local resources. Although about 15% of county residents live below the poverty level, nearly 50% of the 7,638 student population qualifies for free or reduced-price lunch. A total of 19 Reading Recovery teachers serve 847 first-grade students in 8 elementary schools. In 2014-15, 34 first-grade students were referred for special education — only 4% of the first-grade population.

Valley Area Reading Recovery Consortium, Oshkosh Area School District, Oshkosh, WI
Alissa Roe is training at National Louis University. She previously taught first grade for 1 year and K–4 literacy for 10 years. In 2010, Alissa received the Golden Apple Distinguished Team Member Award. A Reading Recovery site for the past 22 years, Valley Area Reading Recovery Consortium serves a diverse population. In the past 2 years, the consortium has expanded with 16 new teachers and one new district. Almost 35 languages are spoken among the 31,066 students in Grades K–8. The percentage of students receiving free or reduced-priced lunch varies from 16–57%, with individual schools having over 70% of students identified as economically disadvantaged. A total 53 Reading Recovery teachers serve the 3,151 first-grade students in 52 elementary schools.

York Region District School Board, Ontario, Canada
Terri Turner is training at Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery (CIRR) Central Division. Terri’s 25-year career includes teaching students from kindergarten through Grade 6. She is also a certified special education specialist and Principal Qualification 1, 2 (in process). Reading Recovery in the York Regional District School Board is funded entirely by district monies; individual districts in Ontario decide upon and pay for any early interventions. There is no local, state, federal, foundation, corporate, or other monetary source for this large district that serves nine municipalities with over 120,000 students in grades K-12. A diverse group of students in both urban and rural settings speak dozens of languages, including almost 19,000 students in 155 English-speaking elementary schools who are English language learners. Currently, 205 Reading Recovery teachers serve the district, which has implemented Reading Recovery for 20 years.
What began last February as a $30,000 grant from Pioneer Valley Books quickly grew to $1,000 grants for 45 new teachers-in-training plus starter sets of books and materials — a total value of $127,328.

Michele Dufresne of Pioneer Valley donated the $30,000 to make 30 teacher training grants available during Reading Recovery’s 30th Anniversary year. And she invited other associate members to join her. Craig Urmstrom of Kaeden Books agreed to donate $10,000, and Carol Levine of SongLake Books added another $5,000 to fund grants.

Pioneer Valley grants are helping to train new teachers through Georgia State University and Oakland University. Kaeden grants were awarded to The Ohio State University, and National Louis University is training new teachers with grants from SongLake Books.

Now, only a few months into the school year, these teachers are already seeing the impact of these grants.

“Having materials like leveled books, magnetic letters, and other supplies has made the transition in Reading Recovery so much easier,” said Lydia Pakenas, a Reading Recovery teacher-in-training at Earhart Elementary–Middle School in Detroit. “I have not had to search for what I need; it is right at my fingertips.”

Stephanie Jacobson, a reading interventionist at Walton Charter Academy in Pontiac, MI, also sees the value for the entire school. “This grant has been a very valuable resource as it has furnished my school with wonderful leveled books for my students and supported my school with the funding of my training. The publishers that have contributed to the grant have made a direct impact on many of my students and their reading endeavors,” Jacobson said.

And she is already seeing results with her students. “Although I am still early in my Reading Recovery training, I am already seeing the incredible benefits the program has brought to my students. My training has taught me to shift my approach in teaching struggling young readers and support their specific needs. In turn, I am seeing my students’ confidence soar and their ability to read and write grow,” Jacobson said.

Walton Charter Academy is a large, K-8 school serving a diverse student population. Pamela Haines is the ELL coordinator at Walton. “The Reading Recovery expansion grant has given me a wonderful opportunity to better myself as an educator and create strong partnerships with families,” Haines said. “Reading Recovery allows me to give one-on-one support to those who need it most.”

At Maury Elementary School in Washington, DC, MaryEllen Macek is already seeing positive effects. “Many are making tremendous progress and should exit from Reading Recovery, allowing more students to benefit from this reading program’s unique model.”

The students at Maury Elementary are not the only ones benefitting...
Reading Recovery helps children grow into successful readers and writers. The impact has been felt in millions of families across North America and around the globe.

Reading Recovery teachers assess children’s individual needs, designing lessons to build on their strengths. One by one, these children become engaged and successful readers. This is why Reading Recovery is recognized as the leading early literacy intervention. There is no program that matches its effectiveness and return on investment.

RRCNA is the only professional organization devoted to serving the priorities of Reading Recovery professionals like you. Through our new Growing Readers One by One campaign, we will again call attention to your valuable work through member solicitations, visibility at regional conferences, the National Conference donation challenge, and other initiatives and events.

Your gift to the Reading Recovery Fund plants a seed to advance the mission of RRCNA to expand Reading Recovery to more children. All gifts are tax deductible and support programs such as advocacy for federal reading policy and adequate school funding, teacher professional development, and literacy research.
Funds set aside by RRCNA are helping support trainers-in-training during 2015-16. They are training under an alternative training model proposed by trainers at The Ohio State University (OSU) and Texas Woman’s University (TWU) and approved by the North American Trainers Group (NATG) for this training year. The plan establishes a cohort of trainer candidates and provides them the opportunity to teach children in their home site while participating in site visits and coursework guided by trainers at OSU and TWU.

Funding for the expansion of existing training centers is designated as a priority by NATG. RRCNA set aside $100,000 to support training grants of up to $20,000 each to qualified recipients for the 2015-16 year. Among requirements of the grant was a 3-year commitment beyond the training year from both the candidate and the training center. Grants in the amount of $20,000 were awarded to the University of Maine, Georgia State University, and TWU, with $27,200 awarded to the Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery. OSU also has a trainer-in-training but did not apply for a grant.

Meet This Year’s Cohort of Trainers-in-Training

**Jennifer Flight**
Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery

I am currently training in Winnipeg, Canada, with the support of the Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery, Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, and the River East Transcona School Division. This year presents many opportunities to observe and gain insights into the workings of Reading Recovery. Not only am I following a teacher leader training group in Winnipeg, I will also have an opportunity to observe teacher leaders in training in Toronto, Ontario. I began my teaching career in remote communities in northern Manitoba, teaching young learners in Grades 1–3. After several years, I returned to Winnipeg, my home, where I took on different teaching positions including junior high science and high school math. Finally, I found my way into the lives of young learners again and trained as a Reading Recovery teacher and after 7 years, as a teacher leader. While working in the role, I supported Reading Recovery teachers in Winnipeg and southeastern Manitoba. I am currently in my 12th year as a Reading Recovery professional. My recent research interest has focused on investigating how to better support English language learners in Reading Recovery lessons. Always at the forefront of my thinking is Marie Clay’s question ‘What is possible?’ The community of Reading Recovery has changed the way I teach, think, and wonder.

**Christine Fraser**
Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery

I always wanted to have a t-shirt that read, “All I ever needed to learn, I learned from Marie Clay.” I trained as a Reading Recovery teacher in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada in 2002. I can honestly say that it changed my life. Until that year, I thought that I knew a lot about teaching struggling students to read and write. But that year, I learned that there was much more to be learned, about everything really. It opened me up in a way that made me ‘hungry’ for more learning. The opportunity to train as a teacher leader came in 2006, one of the most-challenging years of my life. I went back to Edmonton a changed educator and spent the next few years working very hard to expand the implementation of Reading Recovery within that district. In 2012, I moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, to work as a teacher leader with the Vancouver School Board. This year I am back on the prairies in Winnipeg, Manitoba, training to be the trainer for the Mountain Pacific Division of Canada. So far this year has also been a wonderful learning experience. It has helped me realize how very important Reading Recovery is for so many children and for so many teachers who are ‘hungry’ to learn.
Lisa Patrick
The Ohio State University

I work as a K–2 university trainer at The Ohio State University’s Literacy Collaborative. I trained as a Reading Recovery teacher last year as part of my Literacy Collaborative training, and earned my PhD in literature for children and young adults from Ohio State in 2013. I’ve taught at the preschool and elementary school levels, as well as a variety of literacy and literature courses at Ohio State, Ohio Wesleyan University, and Ashland University. I present on a range of literacy topics at national and state conferences, and serve on a number of literacy projects, including The International Literacy Association’s Teachers’ Choices Project, The United States Board on Books for Young People’s Publicity Committee, The Buckeye Children’s and Teen Book Award Council, and Reading Recovery’s National Conference Marketing and Children’s Literature Strand committees.

Lori Taylor
University of Maine

I currently serve as the associate project director and clinical assistant professor for the Reading Recovery Center in the Early Childhood and Elementary Education Department at Georgia State University, and recently finished my PhD at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. My areas of interest include literacy coaching, reading education, teacher professional development, discourse analysis, and reading interventions. I have worked as a district literacy coordinator, an intermediate literacy coach, a Reading Recovery teacher leader, and a classroom teacher. Additionally, I am a volunteer for the Clinch Valley Literacy Council, an adult education program, in Anderson County, Tennessee.

Journey Swafford
Georgia State University

I currently serve as the associate project director and clinical assistant professor for the Reading Recovery Center in the Early Childhood and Elementary Education Department at Georgia State University, and recently finished my PhD at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. My areas of interest include literacy coaching, reading education, teacher professional development, discourse analysis, and reading interventions. I have worked as a district literacy coordinator, an intermediate literacy coach, a Reading Recovery teacher leader, and a classroom teacher. Additionally, I am a volunteer for the Clinch Valley Literacy Council, an adult education program, in Anderson County, Tennessee.

Annette Torres
Texas Woman’s University

I am an associate professor in the Department of Reading at Texas Woman’s University, where I teach undergraduate and graduate courses in literacy education, supervise practicum experiences and graduate student research, and conduct an active research agenda. Prior to working as a university professor, I served bilingual students, teachers, and administrators as a bilingual teacher, Reading Recovery/Descubriendo la Lectura teacher, bilingual/ESL program district coordinator, and Reading Recovery/Descubriendo la Lectura teacher leader. I am a passionate advocate for bilingual education and serve on professional organizations at the local, state, and national level. I recognize the importance of forging mentoring relationships with undergraduate and graduate students and enjoy facilitating their participation in professional and service activities that motivate them and extend their professional growth. I also enjoy supporting the work of teachers through professional development activities and collaborations with school districts.
Donors Fund 20
National Conference Professional Development Grants

Each year the National Conference provides rich opportunities for educators to hear literacy experts speak, network with colleagues, and increase their professional knowledge and skills.

This year, generous donors have contributed 20 grants of $1,000 each to help offset the cost of registration, travel, meals, and hotel. Grants will be awarded to member Reading Recovery teachers, teacher leaders, university trainers, or administrators who support the implementation of Reading Recovery.

This funding is available through the generosity of Tenyo Foundation (10 grants), KEEP BOOKS (2 grants), MaryRuth Books (2 grants), Song Lake Books, Reading Reading Books, Minnesota Literacy grants, and Dr. Julie Olson Professional Development Grants (2 grants).

Geri Stone Professional Development grants were also awarded to help offset the cost of attendance at other professional development conferences, books, and more.

Clooney Helps Raise $3,631 for Reading Recovery Fund

Tammy Robinson, a teacher leader from Dumas, TX, walked away with nearly $1,000 in gift cards and a life-size cardboard cutout of George Clooney after winning the Teacher Leader Institute raffle in June.

Attendees were invited in advance to donate a gift card for the shopping spree, and Clooney attracted them to the registration desk to purchase tickets for the drawing. All proceeds from the ticket sales benefit the Reading Recovery Fund.

Congratulations to Tammy. We hope George didn’t cause too much excitement at airport security.
Members-Only Benefits Spotlight

Resources Help Communicate with Parents and Families

Each week, hundreds of RRCNA members log in on the Council’s website to take advantage of their members-only resources. Some come to find book levels or print off running record forms, others log in to use the searchable index to find and print specific journal articles or to listen to a recorded audio conference session.

Chances are, most of you are familiar with the members-only resources that are used in daily lessons or needed for professional development, but did you know that your membership also provides you with access to dozens of other valuable resources, including materials to help you communicate with your students’ parents and families?

The Parent and Family materials include template permission and exit letters, home-school communications forms, customizable text for newsletters, parent brochure, videos, and more.

These Word template letters and forms have been reviewed and selected by Reading Recovery-trained educators. The materials provide options as you work with families who are supporting children’s literacy learning during—and after—Reading Recovery lessons.

To check out these and the many other online benefits of RRCNA membership, log in at www.readingrecovery.org today. You’ll be glad you did!

Letter Templates

- Your Child Has Been Selected
- Parent Permission-Boy
- Parent Permission-Girl
- Discontinue Lessons Letter
- Exit Letter

Literacy Information

- Reading and Writing in Lesson
- Reading With Your Child
- Letter to Accompany Take Home Books

Home-School Communications

- Home-School Communications Sheet
- Parent Information Sheet

You’re invited!

2016 Annual Membership Meeting
Monday, February 8 from 4:45–5:45 PM

During the National Reading Recovery & K-6 Literacy Conference
in Columbus, OH

Reception with opportunity to meet RRCNA elected representatives and a chance to win door prizes!
Colleagues Say Thanks to Marsha Studebaker

Vicki Fox, Director of Communications

Many of you know that Marsha Studebaker retired at the end of June. This is the first issue of The Journal of Reading Recovery (JRR) ever published without her careful guidance — and my first since stepping into the position she stewarded for 15 years.

Marsha and I worked very closely for the 10 years I have worked at the Council. Her knowledge of and passion for education—especially for early literacy—guided every step of her journey at RRCNA. I am thankful for her support and encouragement and for the opportunity to have learned so much from her as both a mentor and a friend.

In a former life, Marsha was a kindergarten and first-grade teacher in Bexley Public Schools, a suburban Columbus community; a public relations account executive; an adjunct marketing faculty member at Franklin University in Columbus; and vice president of community relations for the Franklin County Mental Health Board.

As owner and president of her own communications firm, Marsha developed and maintained multiyear consulting relationships with a variety of Ohio businesses, nonprofits, and government entities, including Nationwide Insurance, Action for Children, Harding Hospital, the Ohio Student Loan Commission, and Ohio Psychological Association.

But in 2000, Marsha ran into her friend Jean Bussell (then RRCNA’s executive director) in the hallway of a building on The Ohio State University campus, and for the next 15 years she directed the Council’s communications work. All along the way she created content and oversaw the massive website; played a leading role in writing or rewriting virtually every press release, promotional message, advocacy and outreach appeal, product, and publication; logged hundreds of hours in video reviews and editing; responded to countless emails and telephone calls; and guided the work of several committees — all with thoughtfulness, sensitivity, and a collaborative spirit.

You’ll read more about her remarkable contributions during her 15 years at the Council in the Teacher Leader Awards article in this issue. But I wanted to share a little more about the “other” Marsha. Did you know that she was an accomplished ballroom dancer (loves watching Dancing with the Stars); built parade floats in her Bexley back yard; is a long-time friend/neighbor of former Ohio Governor Ted Strickland and wife Frances (Marsha’s former walking partner); grew up on a farm and had pet chickens; loves old rock-n-roll music; escapes to a cabin at Hocking Hills for every wedding anniversary with husband Terry, the “love of her life;” spent nearly every Friday for the last several years on adventures with two of her grandkids; makes a killer fruit salad… I could go on, but let me share messages from just a few of the many people she touched in the last 15 years.

I have had the pleasure of working with Marsha and learning from her since 2003. … Our leadership and staff have truly valued Marsha’s deep knowledge of Reading Recovery, her insight and communications expertise, and her devotion to RRCNA and Reading Recovery.

— Jady Johnson

During my 12 years working on The Journal of Reading Recovery, I was continually impressed with the contributions Marsha made, the special support she gave us. Not only did she have a great sense of what to do in response to multiple challenges (including adversity), she always demonstrated such grace: special wisdom, integrity, and the ability to communicate in effective and measured ways. We are all very fortunate to have had her on our team.

— Mary Anne Doyle

It is difficult to put into words all the many ways that I respect and admire her expertise, excellent work, and extensive support of the Reading Recovery network. … I am aware that so much of the outstanding communications, advocacy, and highlighting of Reading Recovery has been possible due to her efforts. Thank you, Marsha, for all you have done to advance the work of the Reading Recovery network.

— Salli Forbes

What a legacy she leaves! Reading Recovery has profited greatly from her excellent gifts!

— Mary Jackson
Marsha is a remarkable professional and most importantly, a beautiful one-of-a-kind person. She has been a wonderful colleague to me and to all of us in Reading Recovery. I’m grateful to have known her and appreciate all she has done to support our work. Wishing her all the very best and many joyful adventures in the years ahead!

— Mary Lose

Marsha represents such a strong work ethic and commitment to Reading Recovery. She truly has been a person who has supported our work and made a difference for us. This has translated into a difference for our children. I wish her well in retirement — knowing we will still have a strong advocate.

— Karen Scott

Marsha has been a truly gifted colleague to me and I believe to all of us in the Reading Recovery community. … Her ability to listen, seek out information, and respond in ways that build support are treasures. For Marsha, retirement will simply provide new opportunities for contribution to our work. Thank you, Marsha! You have made our work enjoyable.

— Anne Simpson

RRCNA has indeed been fortunate to have the expertise and professionalism of Marsha. I have had the privilege as board president to get to know her even better and have appreciated so much her help and support. I wish her all the best in her new chapter in life.

— Janet Behrend

I am happy for Marsha and wish her the best in her retirement … yet I am saddened by her decision. Marsha has been a joy to work with and a treasure to RRCNA. She has helped us navigate the shark-filled waters of detractors over the years in a professional but spirited manner of which we can all be proud. Her knowledge and expertise will be missed.

— Connie Briggs

Current and former editors of the journal celebrated Marsha with a surprise barbecue dinner in Kansas City last June during the Teacher Leader Institute & Leadership Academy.
Leadership That Supports Collaboration and Learning

2015 Teacher Leader Institute & Leadership Academy

The June 23–26 Institute in Kansas City, MO, provided intensive study in the areas of leadership and outreach, teaching children, and collaboration. Richard Allington, professor of literacy studies at the University of Tennessee and a former elementary teacher and Title I director, challenged us to action in his keynote, “We Could Teach Every Child to Read, But Will We?”

“We now have several studies demonstrating that every child could be reading on grade level by the end of first grade .... What it all comes down to is that some kids need early access to substantially more-intensive and more-expert reading instruction than is available generally,” he said.

General sessions addressed Literacy Lessons, IDEC and i3 updates, change over time in the strategic use of information at point of difficulty, and utilizing Reading Recovery professionals’ expertise to strengthen comprehensive literacy in schools.

Concurrent sessions and study sessions on coding completed the program.

Celebration filled the air as the 30th Anniversary of Reading Recovery in North America was recognized and the new teacher leaders were introduced. Attendees included Reading Recovery trainers, teacher leaders, teachers, site coordinators, school administrators, literacy coaches, classroom teachers, and other literacy team members.

Above — Newly trained teacher leaders and their trainers gathered for a photo.

Right — Keynote speaker Richard Allington with Institute co-chairs Barbara Honchell, Annie Opat, and Karen Scott.

Program content supported collaboration through discussions on leadership and strengthening implementation. Multiple study sessions challenged participants to think more deeply.
Teacher Leader Awards

are presented to individuals who have displayed a strong commitment to expand Reading Recovery and maintain its high standards, and who have made significant contributions to implementation beyond the local level. Congratulations to this year’s recipients!

Jane K. Berenz, Superintendent
Independent School District 196, Rosemount, MN

Jane K. Berenz has been connected with the Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan Public Schools (District 196)—the fourth largest district in Minnesota—since she was a kindergarten student. Her path to superintendent included positions of high school special education teacher, elementary school teacher, elementary principal, and district director.

Jane’s vision is to ensure all students have the opportunity to be lifelong learners. She recognizes Reading Recovery as the strongest intervention available to develop sturdy neural network systems for emergent readers. She also recognizes the unique nature of Reading Recovery professional development as the cornerstone for developing solid instructional decision making in teachers. This comes from her belief that Reading Recovery is the foundation to literacy development. Under her direction, the district is working to have all areas of instruction aligned with the philosophies of Marie Clay. One example of this is her work to change the school calendar to allow for assessing students using the Observation Survey. As a member of the RRCNA Superintendent’s Council, Jane is proud to be an ambassador for Reading Recovery.

Dr. Peter Stiepleman, Superintendent
Columbia Public Schools, Columbia, MO

When Peter Stiepleman briefly worked at the U.S. Embassy in Madrid, Spain, he saw firsthand how deftly Foreign Service professionals worked to resolve issues and build coalitions. He took that learning to Oakland, CA, where he served as a Spanish bilingual teacher, a language acquisition coach, and an assistant principal. Those experiences led him to Columbia, MO, where he has served the rapidly urbanizing community as a teacher, an elementary school principal, an assistant superintendent, and now as the community’s superintendent.

Dr. Stiepleman sought answers for the countless struggling readers he met while working in Oakland. He found that answer in Columbia when he met Susan Blackburn, a Reading Recovery teacher leader. Inspired by her commitment to unlocking literacy for children, he was determined to resurrect the only literacy intervention that works immediately, and more importantly, sustains permanently. He has dedicated the last 7 years to building coalitions to support the teachers who save lives through Reading Recovery. Peter Stiepleman always wanted to be a diplomat. He is pleased to consider himself an ambassador for Reading Recovery.

Dr. Marsha Studebaker, Director of Communications
Reading Recovery Council of North America
Worthington, OH

Marsha Studebaker, Peter Stiepleman, and Jane Berenz

Marsha Studebaker’s vision helped launch The Journal of Reading Recovery in 2001. She gave RRCNA a “face” by insisting on standards that continue to represent our professionalism in print and on the Council’s massive website. She has tackled Reading Recovery’s detractors, from the 2002 Internet Letter to current and ongoing issues with dyslexia and phonics-only proponents. She formed key partnerships and mobilized our leadership to manage the huge communications initiative around our 2005 complaint to the USDE Inspector General about the biased Reading First program. She helped carry us forward and modeled how to respond to our critics — with wisdom, integrity, and measured indignation. Although not formally trained in Reading Recovery, the former kindergarten and primary grades teacher with a master’s degree in elementary education and a PhD in educational media is among our most-knowledgeable and passionate advocates.
February 6-9, 2016 in Columbus, OH
Four days of outstanding professional development in Reading Recovery & K-6 literacy

Over 100 sessions with emphasis on research-based instruction in reading and writing for:
- Reading Recovery Professionals
- K–6 and ELL Teachers
- School Administrators, Principals, and Superintendents
- Literacy Coaches & Specialists
- Interventionists
- Title I Teachers & Coordinators
- Curriculum & Language Arts Specialists
- School Librarians
- School Psychologists
- University Faculty

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

SUNDAY

Linda Dorn
Reading Recovery trainer, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Little Rock, AR
Engaging Children in Meaning-Making

MONDAY

Anthony Muhammad
Author, educational consultant, and CEO, New Frontier 21, Novi, MI
All Means All! Building a School Culture to Assure Student Achievement

TUESDAY

Steve Jenkins
Children’s author and illustrator, Boulder, CO
Children’s Nonfiction: Making Sense of the World

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C.C. Bates
Michele Dufresne
Nell Duke
Sue Duncan
Mary Fried
Lindy Harmon
Peter Johnston
Susan Kempton
Mary Lose
Leslie McBane
Maryann McBride
Stuart McNaughton
Jan Richardson
James Schnug
Cheri Slinger
Jeffery Williams

Featured Sessions

Reading Recovery
Sue Duncan
Adjusting the Visual Working System: What Does this Mean as Children Learn to Read?

Mary Fried
The Process of Visual Information: Looking, Sounding, Integrating

Mary Lose
Contingent Teaching and the Scale of Help

K–6 Classroom Literacy
Nell Duke
Project-Based Informational Text Author Studies

Peter Johnston
What “Developing Literate Minds” Means in the Classroom

Stuart McNaughton
After Well-Intended Instruction Fails, What’s Next?

Preconference Institutes

Institutes provide in-depth explorations of topics with interactive discussions. Immerse yourself in a focused 1-day comprehensive session before the Conference begins!

C.C. Bates & Maryann McBride
WOW! How Constructive Readers Work On Writing

Mary Fried, James Schnug, Leslie McBane
It Takes a Village: Teaching and Learning that Make a Difference

Jan Richardson & Michele Dufresne
Next Steps for Struggling Readers: Guided Reading and Beyond

Lindy Harmon, Cheri Slinger, Jeffery Williams
Literacy Lessons and Collaboration: Different Paths to Common Outcomes

Susan Kempton
Creating the Literate Kindergarten: A Place of Wonder, Discover, and Feel

School Administrators Institute  Monday, February 8

Learn from today’s top K-6 literacy leaders who have a proven track record of creating collaborative school cultures that utilize all available resources including data, assessments, interventions and human capital. Dr. Anthony Muhammad, a former school administrator and best-selling author, will open the Institute addressing how to motivate, develop and build a consensus at your school. Join your colleagues to discuss healthy school cultures, equitable learning environments, leadership, and more.

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The Complicated Life of Baby Bear

Jamie Lipp,
Elementary Literacy Curriculum Specialist,
Westerville, Ohio

Ryan, a former Reading Recovery student, had a clever interpretation of the Baby Bear series by Beverley Randell. Ryan and I first read *Baby Bear Goes Fishing*, and a few days later, *Baby Bear Climbs A Tree*. Ryan immediately closed the book and proclaimed, “Baby Bear can’t make up his mind! First he’s not too little, then he’s not too big. Which is it?”

During *Baby Bear’s Hiding Place*, Ryan stopped after reading that Father Bear thought Baby Bear was lost in the woods. “He’s been kidnapped,” he said. When asked to clarify, Ryan very assertively declared, “If he was lost he would still have his basket. You never leave your food supply in the woods. I’m a cub scout- that’s survival 101. That bear’s been kidnapped!” Oh, how I miss my days with Ryan!

Comma Power

Becky Theis,
Reading Recovery Teacher,
Gillette, Wyoming

I have a poster on my door that is meant to amuse and entertain the sixth graders who line up in my hallway. It has a picture of a grandmother with the words, “Punctuation saves lives!” It also has the words, “Let’s eat Grandma,” and “Let’s eat, Grandma!” One of my more-curious students wanted me to explain how a comma could save lives. We had a good laugh over the poster and continued on with our lessons. At the end of his series of lessons, I administered the C.A.P. When I got to the comma question, I asked him what it was for. His reply was epic! With a straight face, he said, “I don’t know, but it saves lives!”

Sounds Like...

Julie McConnell,
Reading Recovery Teacher,
Abingdon, Virginia

One of my students was reading *A Picnic Lunch*. When we got to the part where the birds are flying down to eat the bread and saying “Cheep, cheep! Cheep, cheep!” he looked at me and asked, “Why are they saying ‘cheap’? They’re getting this stuff for free!

Literally Speaking

Connie Clark,
Title IA Interventionist,
Skowhegan, Maine

I was working on the writing portion of a lesson with Benjamin. He had just practiced writing the word *how* three times on his practice page and I asked if he thought he could now write it “without looking,” meaning without using a model of the word. I forgot how literal first graders could be! He looked at me oddly and said, “Okay,” then covered his eyes with his left hand while he tried to write *how* again on his practice page.

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 Vicki Fox, director of communications. Please include your position and location in your email.

vfox@readingrecovery.org
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- Press-on level labels
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See complete title lists at fountasandpinnell.com
Give a gift that makes a difference!

This holiday season, consider giving your friends and colleagues a gift that makes a difference—membership in the Reading Recovery Council of North America!

Each new member brings RRCNA closer to ensuring that children who struggle in learning to read and write gain the skills for a literate and productive future.

Recipients of gift memberships receive a full year of annual membership benefits including:

- 2 print issues of The Journal of Reading Recovery
- Members-Only online services and resources
- Discounts on RRCNA products, publications, and conferences
- Membership certificate and ID card
- Personalized gift card

Share the joy of the season and make a difference with gift memberships in RRCNA.

Visit the website now and start gifting!