The Role of Powerful Language Interactions in Reading Recovery Lessons: Developing Strong Literacy Processing Systems
Eva Konstantellou and Mary K. Lose

Making Instructional Decisions: Deepening Our Understanding of English Learners’ Processing in Reading
Allison Briceño and Adria F. Klein

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A current opportunity for discussion, learning, and reflection by our Reading Recovery community is presented by the evaluators of the Investing in Innovation (i3) scale-up grant that our 19, U.S. university training centers participated in for 5 years (2010–2015). This grant funded the expansion of Reading Recovery and the external, independent evaluation. The findings of the evaluation are detailed in the recently published Reading Recovery: An Evaluation of the Four-Year i3 Scale-Up (May, Sirinides, Gray, & Goldsworthy, 2016). A rigorous, comprehensive undertaking, the evaluation involved research activities applied to assess the effectiveness of Reading Recovery on students’ literacy learning, to examine evidence for causal conclusions, to explore fidelity, implementation, and instructional issues, and to assess progress in relation to the scale-up goals.

In this issue two articles review the procedures and findings of the evaluation report, identify issues that prompt problem solving and re-thinking, and suggest lessons learned. Detail regarding the procedures and findings of the evaluation study in relation to effective school-based implementations are presented by Connie Briggs and Barbara Honchell. They review the researchers’ approaches and findings relative to fidelity to Reading Recovery implementation procedures. They share discussion of the variations discovered across schools and describe four distinct implementation schemata. After discussing areas of school-level factors not meeting expected program fidelity, the authors detail a process for Reading Recovery professionals and administrators to evaluate their implementations, identify challenges, and engage in problem solving possible solutions. Thus, they identify important issues learned and provide guidance for improvements.

Robert M. Schwartz continues our exploration of the report highlighting the outcomes of the experimental evidence and sharing the positive, large effects of the intervention on the literacy performance of Reading Recovery children irrespective of such factors as school location (e.g., rural) or subgroup (e.g., English language learners). He extends this discussion by contrasting the results of the i3 studies with previous efforts to scale up research-based literacy programs, by exploring cost effectiveness, and by reviewing implementation variations. He concludes by suggesting alternative efforts for professionals engaged in learning to improve.

Mary Fried identifies key concepts related to our continuous learning by discussing Marie Clay’s contributions to early literacy instruction and by sharing her observations of instruction and the voices of Reading Recovery teachers. An important contribution is her commitment to knowing and revisiting early, significant research of Reading Recovery instruction. This research resonates with issues confronted today: Why don’t we teach Reading Recovery in small groups? Why is teacher training a full academic year? Mary Fried’s answers echo the i3 evaluation report findings and reaffirm the unquestionable impact and importance of effective teacher training and professional development. May et al. (2016) determined that “Reading Recovery teachers’ instructional strength ultimately rose above all other findings of the implementation study as the most important issue in the effectiveness of lessons” (p. 90). Understanding the attributes of teacher professional development is key to training and supporting highly effective teachers.

As revealed by the i3 evaluators, Reading Recovery teachers are effective instructors of diverse learners and this includes children learning English. Two articles provide rich discussions of the literature and detail compelling insights accounting for aspects of language learning. Allison Briceño and Adria Klein enhance our understanding of the analyses of processes revealed in the running records of English learners. They define and clarify language-related errors, caution the interpretation of such errors, and provide valuable instructional considerations. Eva Konstantellou and Mary Lose emphasize the importance of teacher-child conversations and the influential role of language interactions in supporting all learners engaged in constructing literacy processing systems for reading, comprehending, and writing. These authors offer valuable considerations for teachers committed to maximizing the learning of each Reading Recovery child.

Anthony Bryk (2009) has noted that “a key strength of Reading Recovery, in its inception and in its organizational life today, is in its openness to continuous learning and in being prepared to challenge its working theory based on new data” (p. 19). The i3 evaluation report provides new data, and our authors inspire our continuous learning.


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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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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.
8. The online RRCNA Style Manual provides additional guidance for authors.

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For questions about or help with the submission process, contact Vicki Fox, director of communications, at vfox@readingrecovery.org or call 614-310-7332.

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The Role of Powerful Language Interactions in Reading Recovery Lessons: Developing Strong Literacy Processing Systems

Eva Konstantellou, Lesley University
Mary K. Lose, Oakland University

Editor’s Note: All children’s names are pseudonyms.

Introduction
The reading and writing opportunities in the Reading Recovery® lesson provide an ideal context for meaningful language interactions between teacher and child that are derived from key characteristics of adult-child interactions fundamental to developing both oral language and literacy. For example, the teacher’s intentional language provides a scaffold that fosters the child’s ability to draw upon multiple sources of information, from his own language resources and his knowledge of the world. According to Clay, the child’s own oral language is both a resource and a beneficiary:

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 move forward together, linked and patterned from the start, that will surely be more powerful. (2001, p. 95)

Another key characteristic of adult-child interactions is that as children learn to read and write with the support of interactions with expert others, they link their spoken language and knowledge of the world (invisible information) to the visible symbols of the messages they send and receive from texts (Clay, 2001, pp. 98–99). Indeed, implicit within Clay’s definitions of reading “as a message getting, problem-solving activity,” and writing “as a message sending, problem-solving activity” is the assumption that teachers and children engage in powerful language interactions around those messages that are foundational to becoming literate (Clay, 2005a, p. 1). Clay has written extensively about the role of conversation in fostering language development and in negotiating meanings between teacher and child. The adult speaker in conversation with a child listens carefully to the child’s responses, reformulates them while maintaining the child’s meaning, and gives them back in a more-complete grammatical version, thus expanding the child’s language (Clay, 1991). The teacher must tune into the child’s intentions because his control of language is still developing and he can understand more than he can express. This is especially relevant in the case of the second language learner who does not yet have control over language structures, and this might interfere with his teachers’ assessment of his comprehending. Indeed, “Language and cognition are fused in verbal reasoning. Comprehension problems, which arise because children have yet to master specific features of language use and structure, act as a barrier to learning and understanding” (Wood, 1998, p. 180). Therefore, through conversation teachers tune into the child’s attempts at making meaning, despite his limited control of language. As Clay (2014) explains, “Sometimes the expert sends the message and the child has to understand (receive) it. Sometimes the novice sends the message, and the expert has to try to understand it” (p. 23). Clearly, the making of meaning is always paramount. In addition to Clay, other theorists note the importance of conversational exchanges between adults and children in fostering children’s learning, language competence, and independence. For example, Siraj & Asani (2015) write about the interactions of adults and children in preschool settings and refer to the sharing of thinking with an adult as “sustained shared thinking” (p. 403). This concept suggests that shared language is essentially pedagogical.
because it is internalized by the child and central to his capacity to develop self-regulation. Judith Lindfors also discusses the role of the adult in modeling what accomplished conversationalists do: “In collaboration with a more competent conversationalist, each child can go beyond herself. She can be the very thing she is becoming: a conversationalist … watching, noticing patterns in what more accomplished conversationalists do, and then doing it [herself]” (Lindfors, 2008, pp. 5–6). Raban (2014) also emphasizes the powerful role of talk in supporting the child’s cognitive and emotional development. She specifically refers to a kind of talk called extended discourse which helps children with “developing a depth of understanding, achieving a deferred purpose other than the here and now, establishing links between ideas and experience, and fostering precision and articulation of thinking” (p. 8). Similarly, Stuart McNaughton has argued for the modeling and elaboration of instructional conversations which include “deliberately activating the children’s background information, directly teaching a skill or concept where necessary, and deliberately promoting complex language and expression by eliciting student rationales for their statements” (McNaughton, 2002, p. 148). In this way, teachers create opportunities for children to initiate the production of language that ensure higher levels of engagement and a gradual increase in language complexity.

Concurrently, teachers should aim to reduce the psychological distance between themselves and their learners with language. As Peter Johnston states in Choice Words, “The greater the gap between teacher and learner, the harder the teaching becomes” (p. 7). It behooves us to know precisely what the child knows or controls and aim our teaching interactions at the ‘just right’ level thereby contributing to the development of a sense of agency in children. “Teachers’ conversations with children help the children build the bridges between action and consequences that develop their sense of agency. They show children how, by acting strategically, they accomplish things, and at the same time, that they are the kind of person [emphasis added] who accomplishes things” (Johnston, 2004, p. 30).

For the purposes of this article, we make a distinction between the language used in genuine and meaningful child-teacher conversations during reading and writing activities and the language of succinct prompts used by the teacher as a call for the child’s action during problem solving. In other words, both kinds of language interactions throughout the lesson foster a way for the teacher and child to establish and maintain a productive working relationship. As Clay (2005b) states, “Conversations in the lesson should be warm and friendly, but when the child must attend to something, or must pull several things together, the prompts must be short, clear, and direct” (p. 202). Additionally, the child and teacher often engage in spontaneous language interactions before and after the child’s lesson that inform their work together during the lesson. Conversations create a safe context within which teachers employ the more precise language of prompting to build effective literacy (Clay, 2005a, p. 34). Essentially, the warm and friendly conversations are intentional. They create the necessary climate for the teacher’s prompting that calls the child to action and supports his construction of a literacy processing system. These conversations support the affective domain that is foundational to the effective prompting that activates the child’s cognitive response (Lyons, 2003). Otherwise, the short prompts would feel abrasive and too teacher-directed for the child, resulting in his merely reacting versus internalizing the strategic action required to advance his control over literacy. We emphasize that throughout the child’s series of lessons, both kinds of language interactions are equally important to advancing the child’s effective literacy processing.

Thus, in this article, we present the centrality of language interactions in the Reading Recovery lesson and their role in supporting the child’s construction of a strong literacy processing system. Drawing upon the contributions of Clay and other theorists to understanding the role of language in teaching and learning, we examine select examples from Reading Recovery lessons that illustrate children’s attempts at extending their control over language and their ability to construct and derive meaning from texts while working with a noticing and responsive teacher. We also provide recommendations for creating opportunities within lessons for powerful intentional language interactions that strengthen our teaching and our students’ learning.

Examples of powerful language interactions are to be found in the daily lesson and throughout the child’s series of lessons in Reading Recovery. In fact, researchers have noted that one element that influences students’ learning is the “judicious use of language” by strong Reading Recovery teachers during lessons (May et al., 2016, p. 99). The examples we provide highlight child-teacher language interactions in Roaming Around the Known, in familiar reading and after the reading of yesterday’s new book,
before and during the writing of a story, in reconstructing the cut-up story, during the orientation to and first reading of a new book, and in the discussion after the reading of the new book.

**Powerful Language Interactions in Early Lessons: Roaming Around the Known**

*Just as a listener tunes into a speaker, so a teacher must observe, listen to and tune into a learner.* Being sensitive to the learner’s thinking allows the teacher to draw the child’s attention to many things. The teacher in conversation with the child creates opportunities for the child to talk, and to talk more.

— Clay, 2005a, p. 34

During the Roaming Around the Known lessons, teachers aim to create an environment rich in language exchanges which facilitates the child’s tentative attempts at literacy learning. Clay suggests that in the first few lessons “the child and the teacher have an opportunity to get to know each other and develop useful ways of interacting” (Clay, 2005a, p. 32). Those interactions resemble closely parents’ and caregivers’ interactions with children as depicted in the exchanges between a father and his two young daughters during a visit to a supermarket on a Saturday morning (Figure 1).

This kind of exchange models for children ways of communicating about the world around them that prepares them for successful learning in school. Through these early interactions children start constructing an identity in the company of caregivers who respond to their attempts at making sense of the world around them. Similarly in teacher/child language exchanges, the teacher makes every effort to learn not just *where* this child is at in his literacy competencies but also *who* the child is as a human being. In essence teachers during these early lessons acquire an “ethnographic stance” (McNaughton, 2002, p. 195) that enables them to closely observe their students and gather information about them as members of diverse communities that extend beyond the world of the classroom.

Genishi and Dyson (2009) remind us of “the importance of educators’ learning about each child as a person whose social sense and knowledge resources come from a diversity of involvements as a friend, a family member, and a participant in community and popular cultures” (p. 19). As the second example of the supermarket father/child interactions indicates (Figure 2), children, in conversations with adult caregivers not only produce intelligible utterances but also meaningful statements that help them construct specific identities that have an impact on the world around them. It is important to acknowledge that even ordinary events and routines are profoundly influential in shaping children’s thinking and actions. Through these natural exchanges about everyday events and occurrences, children are socialized into a language discourse that not only enables them to communicate their thoughts with clarity and precision but also helps them shape their thinking and acting upon the world as empathetic human beings. As Peter Johnston has remarked, “In these conver-

**Figure 1. Language Interactions Between Father and Two Young Daughters at the Supermarket in the Fresh Produce Aisle**

A father and his two young daughters around the ages of 3–4, engaged in a lively discussion about green vegetables at the fresh produce section. The father invited his daughters to identify all the green vegetables they could think of.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father:</th>
<th>Daughter 1:</th>
<th>Daughter 2:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is this something you would like and do you think that the children would like that, too?</td>
<td>Yes, they’d like that because it’s yummy and good for kids.</td>
<td>Yes, it is; and we can eat it raw in salads or we can cook it in different ways.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2. Language Interactions Between Father and Two Young Daughters at the Supermarket in the Canned Soup Aisle**

The family’s attention was directed to different kinds of canned soup which they intended to buy for a food drive that was organized by local charities. (At the entrance of the supermarket the customers were given lists of foods that they might want to buy and donate.) The father and his daughters were discussing the options in front of them. They were naming different soup cans, describing ingredients as they were trying to make appropriate decisions about what to buy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father:</th>
<th>Daughter 1:</th>
<th>Daughter 2:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>So what do you think the children of the families we’re buying the soup for would like to have?</td>
<td>Well, maybe some chicken with vegetables would be nice?</td>
<td>Yes it is; and we can eat it raw in salads or we can cook it in different ways.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father:</th>
<th>Daughter 1:</th>
<th>Daughter 2:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is this something you would like and do you think that the children would like that, too?</td>
<td>I like spinach. It makes you strong and healthy.</td>
<td>(At the entrance of the supermarket the customers were given lists of foods that they might want to buy and donate.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
sations children learn how to understand and share emotions and sensations—developing their empathy—and expand their ability to understand the beliefs and wishes in others” (Johnston, 2012, p. 75).

The tone and the intent of these conversations between caregivers and children are recreated during the first 2 weeks of the child’s series of lessons in Roaming Around the Known. During this time, children extend their control over language and construct meaning from texts while conversing with their teachers during reading and writing activities. Teachers make simple early books enchantingly interesting when they interact with children to help them go beyond mere deciphering of print.

The following examples from a teacher working with her student, Amal, in Roaming Around the Known illustrate the negotiation of meanings in reading and writing between teacher and student as well as the role of teacher language in building upon and expanding the student’s language through paraphrasing and reformulating of her less complete utterances. Figures 3 and 4 present excerpts from conversations around the reading of The Little Snowman (Level 3) and the subsequent composition of a story about the family activity of building a snowman. The seamless flow from the reading to the writing illustrates how conversations in Roaming Around the Known support the child’s attempts at constructing an effective processing system in both reading and writing continuous text and highlight the reciprocity between the two activities.

During the reading of the book (Figure 3) and the lively exchanges between the teacher and Amal around the meaning of the story, the teacher took the opportunity to confirm the child’s noticing of the print (see Turns 8, 9, 10, and 11 in transcript where the teacher directs attention to snowball and snowman). Of particular importance is that the child’s attention to visual information does not occur at the expense of enjoying and talking about the story. The child has demonstrated and the teacher has reinforced the importance of cross-checking as a strategic activity — using both the meaning she has searched for in the pictures and the visual information on the page. Also notice how the teacher takes the opportunity before and during the reading of the story to paraphrase and extend the student’s utterances (Turns 4, 5, 14, and 15). Through active listening, the teacher sends the message that the child is understood despite her incomplete and tentative utterances (“it was like a light everywhere,” “The hat?”).

After the reading of The Little Snowman and as a way of moving into the writing activity, the teacher made the decision to connect the reading of the book to the conversation that led to the reading.

During the conversation that led to the composing of the story (see Figure 4), we notice that the teacher’s invitations to Amal to talk and the appropriate wait time following the questions seeking information allowed Amal to engage in self-repair in speech (going from “Mom don’t want to do that” to “Mom didn’t do it” and from “I can do it myself” to “I did it by myself” in Turn 10).

As Clay has remarked, “Every sentence the child constructs is an hypothesis about language” (1991, p. 69). As the child listens to herself, she makes decisions about whether her ideas should be expressed that way, and her teacher in turn confirms her choice through her response: “You did it all by yourself.” During this conversation Amal’s teacher works on new vocabulary (snow angel, Turns 4 and 5), and helps Amal shape her story (Turns 19 and 21).

During the writing after teacher and child have started to co-construct the story, with Amal writing independently what she knew in the story and her teacher adding the rest, the teacher invited the child to read what was written thus far:

Teacher: So far your story says…

Child: On Saturday my mom and grandma and me made a…snowman (looks back at the book The Little Snowman)

Teacher: Oh, is that word in the book?

Child: snow-man (copying from the book)

Teacher: You read that word in the book and now you’re writing it into your story (while child writes).

It was obvious that the child’s noticing of print (snowman) while reading the book provided an opportunity for the child to make the link to a word she wanted to write. The teacher beautifully scaffolded when she first commented on the child’s noticing (in reading) and in her conversation with the child about the story she was writing. This is an example of the reciprocal links between reading and writing and of a noticing teacher who is poised to provide this timely support to the child.
Figure 3. Language Interactions Between Teacher and Child (Amal) During Rereading: The Little Snowman (Level 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>We had kind of an exciting weekend, didn’t we? What happened? First we didn’t have school on Friday, and then we didn’t have school yesterday, so we had four days. What did you do with your time?</td>
<td>(points at the cover of book, The Little Snowman) My mom can do this! My Mom holds a snowball and we take a picture two times, another day and another day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The two days when it was snowing out. So, you’re pointing at this picture of a woman in The Little Snowman book. Did your mom wear gloves?</td>
<td>My mom she throw the ball and we take a picture. And it was like a light everywhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>So your mom threw the ball and you took a picture. When you looked at the picture, it was light everywhere. That’s because of the snowflakes coming down. Would you like to read this story?</td>
<td>Okay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>This is where they’re making the snowman, they have the snowman’s eyes… And then the surprise ending, right?</td>
<td>And the hat. (begins reading story) Look at the snow! Yes! (looking at pictures and reading the pages with print hesitates on the word snowman on page 7, reads snow pauses a bit and then reads the second part of the word, man, commenting) He was a snowball and here he’s a snowman.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Are you talking about the picture or the word?</td>
<td>The word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>So, you noticed that on this page it said snowball and on this page it said snowman. I noticed that too. The first part of the word is the same snow— but the second part is different —ball, —man.</td>
<td>(continues reading “Here is the snowman’s scarf,” commenting) I have a red one. (on page 14 reads with good expression and comments) Oh, oh… (commenting on the picture)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>We know what he’s going to do, don’t we?</td>
<td>The hat?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yes, he’s putting his own hat on the snowman.</td>
<td>But, how about if dad gets cold?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>It looks like he’s getting out of his car from work and he’s going to go right inside.</td>
<td>(reads page 16 with excitement and finishes the reading of the story)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Here’s another exchange a bit later during the writing:

**Teacher:** So your grandma made a nose out of ice and snow? Oh, that was smart, your grandma had a great idea.

**Child:** (writes in her book) And my grandma made a...

**Teacher:** *Nose* — what do you hear at the beginning of that word?

**Child:** *N*

**Teacher:** I hear that, too.

**Child:** writes *nos*

**Teacher:** Oh you heard many sounds. And to make it look right we put an *e* at the end, like in *made* (referring to a word they had constructed earlier).

---

### Figure 4. Conversation Between Teacher and Child (Amal) Around Writing a Story During Roaming Around the Known (prompts in black; actions in parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>So I was wondering if you and I could write a story together about some of the fun things that you were just telling me about. I uhm, I was also watching the snow come down and I got to go outside in it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Me too.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Oh, you had those boots on, that would be helpful.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yeah, and I did this, look (demonstrating making a snow angel)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Did you do a snow angel? We call that a snow angel.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Yeah. Snow angel.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Did Mom do it too?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Nah.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>No, just you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Because, my Mom don’t want to do that. Mom didn’t do it (self-repair in speech). And I can do it myself. I did it by myself.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>You did it all by yourself, a snow angel?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>I did three times.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>You did three snow angels? Mmm that’s so fun. Did you make a snowman, like in the book?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Yeah, it was my Mom did a big one, I did a small one because I can’t do the big ones that’s why.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Do you want to maybe start writing...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I, I, go with my Grandma, Mom, and me!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Should we write a story about that snowman that you made? Hmm…so you said your Mom helped you and uhm I’m wondering if we could start, do you remember what day this was?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Uhmm it was like… Saturday!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>It was Saturday, so maybe we could start the story out by saying “on Saturday”?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Yes, “On Saturday…”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>What would you say next?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>… my mom and grandma and me made a snowman.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The exchange around the word *nose* shows that explicit prompting can occur within the context of conversation. During Roaming Around the Known lessons the child discovers a lot about print in an incidental way and in the context of the intentional conversations that support the meaning and the structure of the messages that are negotiated back and forth between teacher and child. Teachers position themselves to be surprised by the discoveries children make daily as they interact with print (Schnug, 2015). During these early lessons the teacher does not teach anything new but confirms the child’s known or almost known through helpful commenting and invitations to the child to share what she already controls. The child in earlier exchanges had demonstrated an awareness of the silent *e* at the end of words so the teacher took the opportunity during the writing of *nose* to link to this knowledge. Following the writing, the child is encouraged to draw a picture of the snowman and the conversation continues further as the teacher invites the child to share more information about the building of the snowman. Within the context of a friendly conversation, the child is given more opportunities to have her language extended and elaborated upon by her teacher as they talk about the drawing that the child has done to illustrate her story.

Notice how many opportunities this child—an English language learner—had to converse with her teacher, formulate statements, and hear statements reformulated by her teacher in standard English grammar (she *throw* the ball, she *threw* the ball, in Figure 3, Turns 4 and 5; the stick *fall* out, it *fell* off the tree, in Figure 5, Turns 8 and 9) in a conversation that flowed naturally, back and forth. Just like parents, teachers listen sensitively to the child’s utterances and ungrammatical forms and instead of correcting they reformulate and expand the child’s statements. In Clay’s words, ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>You said something about sticks for arms. Whose idea was that?</td>
<td>We did around around...It was mom, me, grandma, and my mom again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>No. Mom, me, and grandma, and again mom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>So everybody took turns. You went around and around. So mom took a turn, grandma took a turn, and you took a turn...</td>
<td>No. Mom, me, and grandma, and again mom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yeah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>So everyone got a turn and got to help.</td>
<td>Yeah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yeah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>That’s so great! Where did you find the stick?</td>
<td>The stick fell out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yeah. And she put it right here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>It fell off the tree?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>This was a fantastic story. I feel like I was there! I can picture what you did!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5. Language Interactions Between Teacher and Child (Amal) in Roaming Around the Known: Conversation After the Writing of a Story

Figure 5a. Amal’s Story (teacher’s contribution underlined)
of a child at a particular moment in time. They must respond to gradual shifts in less than perfect performance. (2005a, p. 47)

The child will continue to construct hypotheses about how something can be said and changes will occur over time as the child listens to the teacher’s reformulations or expansions of his own utterances. Throughout the lesson, the teacher is making decisions about how she will interact with what the child provides without insisting that the child adopt the teacher’s patterns of language. She might also take the opportunity during Roaming Around the Known to read to children books that are beyond their reading level, exposing them to new vocabulary and literacy language (see Clay, 2001, p. 95). Teachers need to be patient in their expectations for children’s language development, for as Clay reminds us, there are no shortcuts to extending the child’s language (Clay, 2005b).

As illustrated in the text examples on pages 8 and 10, both kinds of language interactions were present in Roaming Around the Known lessons to encourage the child’s strategic action: the warm and friendly conversations that fostered the trusting relationships and the short succinct prompting by the teacher. The conversational exchanges and ways of working together in Roaming Around the Known are indeed language acts that “create and express interpersonal relationships every bit as much as they create and express content, information, message” (Lindfors, 1999, pp. 6–7). These exchanges continue as teacher and child move beyond those early lessons and into instruction.

Interacting Powerfully Using Language Across the Child’s Series of Lessons: Reading Books and Writing Stories

The rich language interactions established in Roaming Around the Known continue as teachers move into instruction. In reading books and writing stories, the child is pulling together information from texts and integrating it with his prior knowledge to arrive at new and more substantial understandings. These insights are subsequently shaped and modified by the child as he converses with more knowledgeable others, including his teacher. Thus, a continuous process of knowledge construction, the essence of which is to extend the child’s comprehending and language during reading and writing, is further established with the child becoming the singular architect of his refined thinking.

Reading Books

When we read what someone else has written we are constructing and composing.

— Clay, 2005b, p. 50

In every lesson, Reading Recovery teachers foster the child’s construction of meaning and language development through powerful conversations and succinct prompting throughout three book-reading opportunities. The contexts for these language interactions are found during and following the child’s reading of familiar stories, during the orientation and the first reading of the new story, and following the teacher’s taking of a running record of the child’s reading of yesterday’s new book.

Reading and discussing familiar books: Making familiar books more familiar

Clay has guided us to “arrange for massive opportunity for each child in Reading Recovery to read enchantingly interesting texts fluently...[and] briefly question and discuss what he has read to you” (Clay, 2005b, p. 99). The first opportunity in the lesson for conversation around stories is found in familiar reading in which the child reads stories that he has read previously but has not memorized. The goal of familiar reading is for the child to enhance his strategic control over reading by problem solving flexibly, becoming more phrased and fluent in his reading, and shaping his ideas to arrive at new insights that may not have been discovered in earlier readings of familiar texts (Clay, 1991). Clay advises teachers to engage in conversations so as to align with the child’s interests, stating, “After any of the two or three familiar books, teacher and child may discuss the story (focusing on what it meant to the child)” (Clay, 2005b, p. 88).

One example of how the child’s understanding was shaped and extended through conversational exchanges during familiar reading is found in Jeremy’s reading of Seagull is Clever (Level 8). In this story, the reader discovers how seagull opens a seashell to access the food inside and evades capture by a seal. The meaning of the story was explored in earlier readings, yet each subsequent reading contributed to Jeremy’s further understandings and wonderings. Clearly intrigued by Seagull’s ingenuity, Jeremy theorized, “The shell’s too hard, he doesn’t have hands, bloop!” (mimicking the action displayed on the cover illustration by gesturing as if to drop the shell from above) then wondered aloud, “Why does he like it?” With a genuine response, the teacher extended the conversation and replied, “It’s gooey stuff. Seagulls like shellfish and...
some people even like them, too.” “Yuck, I don’t. I don’t like stuff like that, gross!” he responded, clearly disgusted by Seagull’s preferences for the raw cuisine. “Me neither,” echoed his teacher. “So, people have their own ways of opening up food, like nuts. They might use a nutcracker” (gesturing its use). “I never done that,” replied Jeremy, to which his teacher adds. “Well, you have to be careful, it’s hard to do.”

The conversation continued in another lesson in which Jeremy again reread the same book, offering several of his own ingenious ways to access a variety of sealed foods: a can opener for cans, a knife to make a slit in a plastic bag, and with reference to nuts, “I’d get a hammer (gesturing its use) and eat the inside.” The conversational exchanges between child and teacher around the reading of this familiar book covered not only the subject of animals’ and humans’ resourcefulness and approaches to obtaining foods, but also their preferences for certain foods. Clearly, there were opportunities for Jeremy’s extended understanding and comprehending because his teacher followed his lead and conversed with him around his inquiries and observations. Through the opportunity to initiate a conversation and receive his teacher’s genuine response, Jeremy continued to broaden his understandings and display increasing confidence, concluding that like Seagull, he was indeed quite clever — he was a big kid who knew how to do a lot of things and, yes, becoming a proficient reader was one of them! This is precisely Clay’s advice — that when we discuss a story, the focus should be on what it means to the child. In this way, teachers “help readers see the text from their own perspective so that they relate to it and make connections” (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009, p. 408).

**Introducing, reading, and discussing new stories**

The teacher’s introduction to the new story and her conversations with the child help orient him to the ideas and concepts in a new book and extend his understandings and control over language.

Story book texts are written to entice children into the story, to bring what they know to understanding the text, to take multiple meanings and new meanings from the encounter, and to learn more about how stories can be made meaningful by the reader’s active interaction with text. (Clay, 1991, p. 190)

The teacher converses with the child to help him become familiar with the plot, unusual language, ideas, and the overall gist of the story, and to connect these with the knowledge he brings from his personal experiences. In this way, the teacher’s support of the construction of meaning and the use of language before the reading allows the child to use flexibly all sources of information while attempting the reading.

Children in Reading Recovery must connect what they know, orienting themselves to texts and transcending surface meanings in order to comprehend deeply. To accomplish this, “the teacher must plan for the child to have in his head the ideas and the language he needs to complete the reading” (Clay, 2005b, p. 91). Thus, the introduction to the story establishes the critical foundation for the child’s comprehending and provides opportunities for him to engage in strategic activity — monitoring, searching, confirming, discovering, and further extending his control over literacy processing during the reading of the new text. Ultimately, the goal is a successful first reading with one or two new things for the child to learn while also maintaining fluency. Over time, strategic activities become smoothly integrated, and as Clay points out, the child will be using visual information efficiently “while remaining attentive to the meaning of the text, to the structure of the language, and to pace” (Clay, 2005a, p. 49).

To illustrate the power of the book introduction, we examine the language interactions before Jeremy’s reading of the new text, *Little Bulldozer* (Level 8) (see Figure 6). As illustrated in the transcript, Jeremy was intrigued and listened intently as his teacher provided the theme and overall gist of the story. Clearly excited, he immediately began to read the first page but his teacher purposefully suggested that he further orient himself to the story by perusing the illustrations. Jeremy paused on one page, clearly distraught that in spite of Little Bulldozer’s desire to help, the large vehicles vehemently rejected his wishes.

The teacher’s language supported the child’s construction of meaning, his use of language structure (Turn 2) and his search for and use of visual information (Turns 8 and 10). Turning the pages, Jeremy noticed a big bulldozer preparing to extract a large tree as Little Bulldozer, hesitant at first, joyfully accepted the invitation to share in the chore. Throughout this process, Jeremy was clearly engaged and excited, checked the illustrations intently, engaged with the emotions of the characters, wondered aloud (“Why do they call it a dump truck?”) and suggest-
ed that Little Bulldozer’s unfortunate predicament would indeed be resolved satisfactorily. In this exchange between child and teacher, one can observe the power of a clearly crafted introduction to the story that not only acquaints the child with the plot, big idea, and new vocabulary (dump truck), but also presents a critical opportunity for the child to go beyond the story elements to engage further with the emotions and feelings of the main character who—contrary to the convictions of some of the other characters—is indeed resourceful and competent despite his small stature.

During the reading that followed the introduction, Jeremy continued to notice the expressions on the faces of the Fire Engine and Big Truck, commenting, “They don’t like him (Little Bulldozer), adding “He’s angry and so is he” (pointing to the big vehicles), and as if to denounce reasons for Little Bulldozer’s outcast status, “but he didn’t do nothing!” The story’s theme, the triumph of a diminutive character over significant obstacles and disapproving others, is often repeated in the little books read by very young readers, enabling them to connect the experiences of the story’s characters to their own feelings of accomplishment and self-worth. Peter Johnston (2004) has described these ideas in the following way: “Building a sense of identity means coming to see in ourselves the characteristics of particular categories (and roles) of people and developing a sense of what it feels like to be that sort of person and belong in social spaces” (p. 23). Throughout Jeremy’s commentary during the reading, the teacher quietly affirmed his indignation and empathy with the character (“Ah-huh,” “It isn’t fair.”) further contributing to Jeremy’s engagement with the story.

A successful introduction helps students extend their understanding so that in addition to thinking within the text (accessing the literal meaning of the text and recalling the important information) they can think beyond and about the text in order to predict, make inferences, connect the text to personal and world knowledge as well as to other texts, and also think critically about the text and notice how the author has crafted it (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009). Similarly, Rosenblatt’s (1994) transactional theory of reading and Kintsch’s (2009) construction-integration theory hold that the reader’s application of his prior knowledge and the ways in which he brings meaning to the text are central to his understanding of that text. Thus, a mere accumulation of known words and word-solving skills alone are not sufficient for comprehending.

Teachers like Jeremy’s, having negotiated meanings during warm and genuine conversations, can use this as the canvas for the precise prompting for the use of additional sources of information—in this instance, visual information (as illustrated in the transcript in Turns 7 and 9) and language structure (Turn 1)—that are required for a strategic, successful reading of the story. Similarly, during the first reading of the text when Jeremy encounters difficulty, substituting what for with, his teacher responded as follows.

**Text:** Come and help me with this tree.

**Child:** Come and help me what this tree (stops, genuinely stumped by the sentence structure).

**Teacher:** Why did you stop?

**Child:** This (pointing to with).

**Teacher:** Read that again and think about what would sound right and look right.

Jeremy reread, self-corrected, and continued reading. These language interactions—warm and friendly conversations and crisp prompting—are combined to seamlessly support the development of the child’s literacy processing system.

**Language interactions following the child’s reading of yesterday’s new book**

The teacher and child continue similar interactions around stories after the child reads the text again the next day and the teacher has taken a running record. The teacher again uses crisp language to reinforce the child’s correct responding and to prompt for further problem solving. The teacher might reinforce phrased fluent reading by stating, “On this page your reading sounded smooth. Why don’t you read this page over here the same way? Start here.” Or she may prompt for monitoring and self-correcting: “You made a mistake on that page/in that sentence. Can you find it?” (Clay, 2005b, p. 113). Likewise, a teacher might invite the child to discuss the important ideas or explore some elements in the story that he did not quite understand (Clay, 2005b).

When teacher and child discuss the story after the second reading, it is important to make a distinction between the teacher’s request for a retelling of a story by the child and a genuine conversation between teacher and child that positions the child as a meaning maker. In a retelling,
**Figure 6. Language Interactions Between Teacher and Child (Jeremy) During Book Introduction: *Little Bulldozer* (Level 8) (prompts in black; actions in parentheses)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn</th>
<th>Teacher Language and Actions</th>
<th>Child Language and Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(showing the cover) This story is <em>Little Bulldozer</em>. Little Bulldozer wants to help out, but all the big trucks tell him he’s too little. They’re mean and tell him to ‘go away’. You say ‘go away.’ (prompting for rehearsal of the structure and foreshadowing Little Bulldozer’s triumph in spite of his small size)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Go away! (stated with enthusiasm and obviously engaged with the meaning)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>But, when he meets a big bulldozer, he finally gets to help! So, he’s not too little after all. (suggesting the resolution of the plot)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>(looks at the cover, notices that page 2 is identical to the cover) He’s not too little. He’s going to do it. (spoken with conviction)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I think you’re right. He’s not too little. (confirming the child’s prediction)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>(opens the book and begins reading the first line of text, page 3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Wait, let’s look at the pictures. (pausing for the child’s perusal of the pictures to reinforce construction of the meaning, then on page 5 asks) What letter would you expect to see first in help? (prompting for the use of initial visual information)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><em>H</em> (points beneath word)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>(also referring to page 5) <em>Went.</em> What letter would you see expect to see first in <em>went</em>? (a page on which <em>will</em> also appears; prompting for the use of initial visual information)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><em>W</em> (scans page, then points beneath <em>went</em>. Continues turning the pages, pausing at the illustrations on pages 6 and 8) He’s sad. He wants to help.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Yes, and everybody keeps telling him that he’s too little. (confirming the child’s assertion)</td>
<td>He can do it. He’s not too little. Why does he look like that? (referring to the picture on page 8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>He looks mad, doesn’t he? (acknowledging the child’s observation and inviting further elaboration)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>But he won’t let him; he’s angry. (turning to page 10) Why do they call that a dump truck? (initiating, wondering)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I guess because it empties dirt and stuff out the back, it dumps. (clarification in response to child’s inquiry)</td>
<td>Hmm… (turns to the beginning of the book, quickly begins to read as if intending to confirm or disconfirm his hypotheses and observations about the story)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in response to a teacher’s questions, a child must put aside the elements of a story that matter most to him and instead respond to a set of pre-determined questions that matter primarily to the teacher (Van Dyke, 2008). In contrast, in an authentic conversation teachers have an opportunity to tap into what engages the child and probe what he understands about the text, helping him synthesize and interpret information from the text (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009).

For example, in the discussion following the taking of the running record, Jeremy continued to explore the range of emotions shown by the characters in Little Bulldozer, puzzled by Big Truck’s dismissal of Little Bulldozer’s gracious overtures to be of assistance to him in his work. Together Jeremy and his teacher engaged in a purposeful discussion of how older authoritative people sometimes might not fully realize how helpful a small person or a child, or in this case Little Bulldozer, can be.

Teacher: Big Truck was so big and powerful, he couldn’t imagine that Little Bulldozer could be of help. He just told him to go away.

Jeremy: But when he, Big Bulldozer came, he let Little Bulldozer help.

Teacher: Yes, he gave him a chance to show that he could help.

Jeremy: Yeah and he did. He did it!

Both teacher and child continued their discussion later when reading another book, Little Bulldozer Helps Again, (Level 10) a story in which Little Bulldozer’s small size now works to the advantage of Big Truck and Big Bulldozer. These intentional conversations continued over a series of several lessons in which Jeremy described how he had been helpful to his mother, teacher, and siblings, and led to several more stories being read (and written) that continued with the same theme. Thus, children are not merely relating information from a text as in a retelling, but they are talking about what is most interesting and meaningful to them and constructing deeper understandings about ideas and messages that transcend the literal meaning of a story or text.

Essentially, from the beginning to the end of the Reading Recovery lesson and across the child’s series of lessons, there are numerous opportunities to read and discuss delightful stories that support the child’s comprehending and extended control over language.

Writing Stories
When we write down a phrase, message, or story we are constructing and composing.
— Clay, 2005b, p. 50

Conversations that lead to composing
Writing stories during the Reading Recovery lesson provides opportunities for the child to learn language, learn through language, and learn about language (Halliday, 1982 as quoted by Anderson, 1999.) Teachers should not merely utilize writing as a way of constructing and solving words but conceive of the writing opportunity in the larger context of bringing together the child’s own ideas and messages to signify something of value to him. One of the most persuasive arguments for writing is “its strong motivation potential because of the sense of power it gives” (Clay, 1982, p. 225) because it is a self-composed message “rather than a dictated task or a message drawn from the teacher’s mind...” (Clay, 2001, p. 33). At first the child’s written messages resemble the messages he produces in speech and later on increase in complexity to match the more sophisticated and literary language that the child is being exposed to in the texts he reads.

Clay is emphatic about providing opportunities for the child to talk: “The child can talk. He has been composing messages orally for three or four years” (Clay, 2005b, p. 51). Conversations are key to helping the child talk about his ideas that will then lead to the formulation of a message that he will write in all its detail. The interactions with adults around ideas are critical. As Anne Haas Dyson (1999) has commented, “…messages do not come from thin air, nor do they emerge directly from expressive hearts. Their themes and forms—their very words—come from others; they are improvised revoicings” (p. 129).

Teachers help children move “from ideas to spoken words, to printed messages” (Clay, 2001, p. 27). It is important to pay attention to Clay’s guidance that “at first the teacher creates a conversation” by thinking of topics that might be of interest to the child ranging from an event that resonates with him, an object or item that the teacher has brought to the lesson to engage the child, or a familiar story the child has read and enjoyed during his lessons. As Clay has suggested, “The invitation is open-ended” (2001, p. 27). The conversation should move back and forth genuinely as in conversations between friends. The teacher should resist the tendency to interrogate the child because the “teacher’s goal is to increase initiation by the child” (Clay, 2001, p. 27). Similarly, having the child reread one
Figure 7. Conversation Between Teacher and Child (Erica): Composing a Story (prompts in black; actions in parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Well, you're going to take this story home tonight (referring to yesterday's new book that the child had just read) and you're going to read it to your cat, Splash. Now, where do you usually find your cat, Splash, when you go home? (supporting the child in establishing a focus for the writing)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Uh, probably under the fridge.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Oh that's where…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>'Cause we got two fridges.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Okay, you have one in the kitchen… (inviting the child to add detail)</td>
<td>One in the kitchen and another in the kitchen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Oh you have two in the kitchen (as if to clarify). Alright so does he have a little blanket or a box that Splash likes to stay in?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mmm, no…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Does he have a perch? (offering a term that might find its way into the story) You know what that is? (assessing whether the child is familiar with the term)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Oh, like a house?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>He has a house? (repeating as if to clarify and invite the child to say more) Okay, where do you keep his house? (seeking additional information that might find its way into the child's story)</td>
<td>In the bathroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The bathroom is his house. Or, he's under the bed. I can crawl under that bed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Oh, that's a good place. (validating the child's expansion)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Oh, that’s interesting that you could do that. So you're telling me now that Splash… (invitation to go from spoken ideas to the message to be written)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Or, uhm behind the other, uhm, fridge (adding ideas)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>All right, so you're telling me that Splash lives in the bathroom and sometimes he’s under the fridge. (narrowing the possibilities)</td>
<td>And sometimes he’s under the, uhm, couch. (continuing to expand upon ideas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Splash hides a lot of places.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Ok, so what could we say in a story that would be very interesting about Splash? What could you say? (prompting the child to pull together or shape the ideas for her composition)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Oh, I like that. That’s a wonderful start. So, you're telling me that Splash hides a lot of places. (confirming the child’s story)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
or two previously written stories also fosters the child’s initiation and provides the teacher and child with additional opportunities for conversing and extending understandings around familiar topics that the child has written about and that are of interest to him.

As we converse with a child we need to encourage him to “say more” and expand upon his limited formulations of language. The concepts of personalization (bringing the child’s own experiences to bear on the topic), shared territory (the teacher completing the child’s communication act), and appropriation (the picking up of new language by the child) are central to our understanding of the richness of the teacher-child interactions (Van Dyke, 2006, p. 27). Mindful of these three elements, teachers are aptly poised to extend the child’s language and his meaning-making acumen.

An example of how these concepts play out in a Reading Recovery lesson can be seen in a teacher’s interactions with her student, Erica, during writing (see Figure 7). The teacher’s open-ended invitations (Turns 1, 7, 11) that keep prompting the child to provide additional information about her cat’s hiding places create opportunities for Erica to clarify her thinking and synthesize information about a topic that is obviously of high interest to her. In Turn 17, the teacher pulls together the ideas that the child has talked about regarding her cat’s hiding places that result in the child’s use of the teacher’s statement to compose her own succinct message. The significance of this reformulation has been aptly described by Cazden:

In the more contingent writing segment of Reading Recovery, the sentences that the child orally composes are more likely to be more complex and varied if that oral conversation is preceded by a scaffolding conversation in which the teacher draws out the child’s ideas … sometimes reformulating what the child says in more expanded form. Then that language will also be in the air for the child’s subsequent appropriation into his or her own composition. (2001, p. 96)

In another example of a conversation between teacher and child, later in the lesson series, the child is quite competent in composing and the conversation requires very little negotiation between teacher and child (Figure 8). The teacher’s demeanor indicated that she appreciated the child’s story and the child in turn spontaneously offered more information. The teacher responded with a warm, open-ended authentic commentary (“Really! Everyone must have stood around watching!”) delighting in the child’s amusing story and validating her thinking.

### Figure 8. Conversation Between Teacher and Child (April): Composing a Story (prompts in black; actions in parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>What would you like to talk about today? Do you want to talk about your little brother? [Note: The teacher had observed that the child’s baby brother had accompanied her to the lesson.]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>You don’t? What would you like to talk about? (signaling to the child that their conversation will lead to a composition)</td>
<td>Hmm… My aunty’s choking on a gumball?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Off we go then. (tapping on table)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>(gesturing to show her grandpa’s action, expressing amusement) My grandpa had to pull in the ankles.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>No! Really! (laughing in response to the child’s amusement)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>At the movie theater.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Goodness gracious! Everyone must have stood around watching!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>(laughter)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>That’s very funny. Off you go then. What are you going to write? (prompting for the child’s composition)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>(recites story aloud) My aunty choked on a gumball. (begins writing)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Language that leads to constructing and solving words in writing

During the composing the conversation can be warm and friendly, but while the teacher and child are searching for ways to record the message, the prompts are distinct, crisp, and clear. The teacher's language helps the child search for and use in an integrated way different types of information, the meaning of what was composed, the language she will need to use to convey the message, and the phonological and visual information that she will link in order to construct words. The child engages in these strategic activities in both reading and writing continuous text.

The exchanges between Erica and her teacher that helped Erica construct words in writing (see Figure 9) are examples of a teacher's economical use of language that aims at prompting the child to be strategic about ways of solving words.

In Turn 1, the teacher's question prompts Erica to attend to sound-to-letter correspondence and in Turn 3 to print conventions. In Turn 5, the teacher makes a link to an uppercase letter that the child has encountered in a different context in the classroom. In Turn 5, she prompts the child to monitor using meaning and in Turn 7 she helps her again link sound to letter. The teacher's helpful language also sends a clear message about what a writer does in the process of writing a story or message. For instance, in Turns 13 and 17 the teacher teaches explicitly for the strategic action of rereading: “Now it helps us when we go back and read our story and then we’ll know what comes next” and “If you read it back, it will help you.”

As the child parses her story, she makes hypotheses about language structure and modifies her original story from “Splash hides a lot of places” to “Splash hides in a lot of places,” switching from an oral to a written register and becoming flexible in using language structure to monitor her writing. This self-initiated action is made possible because the teacher's prompting provided an opportunity for the child to listen to herself and make a decision about how the language should sound. Thus, the teacher’s succinct prompts throughout the process of constructing the
Figure 9. Language Interactions Between Teacher and Child (Erica): Constructing Words in Writing
(prompts in black; actions in parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>What are you going to start <em>Splash</em> with?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>What kind of an <em>S</em>? (prompting for conventions)</td>
<td>Uppercase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes, just like the ones we have up on the board. (writes the rest of the word) OK. What’s your next word going to be?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>Hides</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>Hides</em>. What’s that going to start with? (prompting for initial letter)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>(confirms and directs the child to write <em>h</em>, then writes the rest of the word.) What do you hear at the end? You say it. (prompting for recording of the letter heard at the end of word)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>(says the word slowly) S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes, (confirming) you put it right in.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>(writes S)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Now, it helps us when we go back and read our story and then we’ll know what comes next. (prompting the child to reread in support of continued recording of story)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>(rereads <em>Splash hides</em> and adds) in a lot of places.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Well you know you started to say “<em>Splash hides a lot of places.</em>” So how would you like to say that? What word are you going to put next? (prompting child to state next word)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>(hesitates, does not reread)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>If you read it back, it will help you. (prompting for the action to be taken by the child)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>(rereads <em>in</em>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Do you know that word <em>in</em>? Let me see that word <em>in</em> up on your work page. (prompting child to write the word)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>(writes <em>in</em>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Take a good look at that word. What’s that word?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td><em>in</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Let me see if you can write it a bit faster there. (prompting for automaticity) This is a word that we need to know fast in first grade. (providing a rationale for the word’s utility)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>(writes <em>in</em>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>What is it?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td><em>in</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 9. Language Interactions Between Teacher and Child (Erica): Constructing Words in Writing CONTINUED  
(prompts in black; actions in parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Don’t make such a tall back on that <em>n</em>. (prompting for monitoring letter formation) Let’s do it one more time. Let’s go up to the easel and write that word fast. (prompting for automaticity)</td>
<td>(practices writing <em>in</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Say the word. (prompting for identification)</td>
<td>(practices writing <em>in</em> several more times and says <em>in</em> responding to teacher’s prompt)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>(returns to the table) It’s your job to read it. (reminding child to check on herself)</td>
<td>(rereads story) Splash hides in a lot…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td><em>Lot</em>, what’s that going to start with? (prompting for the first letter in sequence)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td><em>L</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>(teacher writes the <em>o</em>) What do you hear at the end? (prompting for searching sounds heard last in the sequence)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td><em>T</em> (writes <em>T</em>, then writes <em>of</em>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>I didn’t know you knew that word <em>of</em>. Good for you!</td>
<td>(child pronounces next word) <em>places</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>How would that start? (prompting for first letter(s))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td><em>P – L</em>. I know blends.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>You say it slowly. (prompting for searching sounds heard in sequence and how to record them)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td><em>A</em>. That says <em>pla</em> (writes pla–)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Good for you that you noticed that. (finishes word, writes <em>ee</em>) That helps us to start new words. (confirming the child’s independent action in support of solving words in writing). What are we going to put at the end of the sentence? (prompting for punctuation)</td>
<td>(adds period)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Read your story back with your eyes. (prompting for attention to the print vs. merely remembering the story)</td>
<td>(reads story)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Read it quickly. (emphasizing pulling together all sources of information combined with a fluent reading)</td>
<td>(reads story)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Read it one more time so that you have it in your head. (directing the child to attend to the meaning and structure of the message so that in preparation for the assembly of the cut-up story, the child will be able to reconstruct it by also attending carefully to the visual information)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
story in writing aim at scaffolding the child’s strategic moves so that eventually she internalizes the language of the teacher and becomes increasingly independent and self-regulated. Vygotsky (1978) has described this as the role of assisted performance in the development of autonomous decision making.

In the interactions around the solving of *choked*, at first April offers *choke* as the next word to be written in her story. Appropriately, the teacher offers sound boxes as a support for the child’s solving and the child recorded three sounds in sequence. However, as she was thinking about her story, she realized that the word she was searching to write was *choked* and said that she heard a *t* at the end. As indicated in Figure 10, Turns 6, 8, and 10, the teacher wisely used this solving opportunity along with clear crisp language as an example of the difference between how words sound and how they look in print, helping the child to think flexibly about how to construct words in writing and link them to reading.

As the child continues recording her story, it soon becomes evident that she is increasingly confident and flexible in her solving; recording sounds in order (g-u-m), using known words to solve new words (*all, ball*) and applying the teacher’s earlier demonstration of the correct orthographic recording of the inflectional ending —*ed* (*grabbed*). Because it is apparent that the child is taking an active role in making links and monitoring the recording of the remainder of her story using multiple sources of information, the teacher wisely substitutes the clear language of instruction and prompting with almost no teacher talk at all. This “economy of words” (Clay, 2005b, p. 87) or “withholding comment” (Lose, 2008, p. 14) in the context of the child’s obvious competence is a valuable form of encouraging the child’s independent solving as shown in Figure 11, Turns 2–8. Notice how the working page “where all the risks are taken” (Clay 2001, p. 31) is bursting with examples of solving words through use of Elkonin boxes, spelling patterns, and exploration of alternative spellings as in the attempts of teacher and child around the word *aunty*.

### Language in support of composing in the cut-up story

The cut-up story activity presents another opportunity to examine teacher language that directs the child’s thinking. The child composes again holding the meaning of the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><em>(offering what to write next)</em> <em>Choke.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>Okay, we’ll do sound boxes. *(draws three boxes, one for each of the sounds heard, <em>ch, o, k)</em></td>
<td>*(writes <em>ch</em> in the first box, <em>o</em> in the second box, <em>k</em> in the third box) <em>Choked</em> but I hear a <em>t</em> at the end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>*(writes <em>ch</em> in the first box, <em>o</em> in the second box, <em>k</em> in the third box) <em>Choked</em> but I hear a <em>t</em> at the end.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td>Well, I hear it too. But to make it look right we need this at the end <em>(writes <em>ed</em>).</em></td>
<td>Oh, <em>ed.</em> <em>(confirming what the teacher has written)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td>Yeah, and you know this word <em>look</em> *(writes <em>look</em> on working page) and we need this at the end to make it look right <em>(writes <em>ed</em>).</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td>ed!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td>Yeah, so even though we hear a <em>t</em> at the end — <em>looked</em> like in <em>choked</em> <em>(clearly articulating the <em>t</em> sound at the end of the word)</em> we write it this way to make it look right. Could we do <em>played</em>? <em>(with marker poised above working page as if to write, then pauses)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><em>(grabs marker) I can do it!</em> <em>(quickly writes <em>played</em> on working page)</em></td>
<td>played, <em>ed!</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
story in mind in order to assemble his cut-up story. During the cut-up story activity, the teacher prompts the child to monitor, search for and use multiple sources of information, and confirm the reconstruction of his story. The cut-up story presents the teacher and child with a wonderful opportunity to refocus attention from words only and take it back to the meaning and structure of language.

In an early lesson (see Figure 12), notice how the teacher prompts the child to use the punctuation (Turns 3 and 13) and read the story in a phrased way (Turn 9). In this way, the teacher provides the child with an opportunity “to orchestrate strategic behaviours on familiar material, slowed up and deliberately reconstructed” (Clay, 2001, p. 30; Clay, 2005b, p. 85). The teacher’s prompting directs the child to work strategically and check the reassembled text against her original composition (Turn 7). Essentially, as illustrated in this cut-up story activity, the child has diligently heeded Clay’s admonition: “Get your act together. Think of everything at once, and get it all sequenced as quickly as you can” (Clay, 2005b, p. 84).

In later lessons, children monitor the assembling of their cut-up story more efficiently with greater degrees of fluency and flexibility. April, who had written the “choked on a gumball” story, when asked to assemble her cut-up story, reassembled it quickly and read it with greater degrees of fluency and flexibility with her teacher’s role shifting from supportive language interactions to simply monitoring the child’s performance and reminding her to check if all sources of information matched. So, clearly, this activity contributes to the construction of a strong literacy processing system because it “provides the child with opportunities to relate reading to writing, writing to speaking, and reading to speaking” (Clay, 2005b, p. 81).
Summary and Conclusions
In this article we emphasize the critical importance of teacher-child language interactions throughout the Reading Recovery lesson in terms of their utility in fostering an optimal working relationship and advancing the child’s development of an effective literacy processing system. Toward this end, teachers are reminded to reflect on their use of language at all times during the lesson activities, to be selective about the words/language they use, and to engage in precise teaching and prompting (as appropriate) in order to support the child’s independent problem solving. In an effort to capture both the warm and friendly conversations and the crisp and precise language of the teacher’s prompts, we have created a table in which we have looked across lesson activities and included examples of both types of interactions with reference to Clay’s theory and teaching procedures in *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals Part One* and *Part Two* (see Table 1 on pages 26 and 27). Many of the prompts in the table are also highlighted in the transcripts of teacher-child interactions around reading and writing that appear in this article. The prompts featured in the table are a representative but not an exhaustive sample of prompts included throughout the *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals* texts.

Essentially the Reading Recovery lesson is designed to foster constructive action—meaning making and meaning getting—in reading and writing activities and over all the child’s efforts at assembling a strategic processing system for literacy. The language interactions throughout the lesson provide the context within which the child is encouraged to strike out on his own to become a learner who skillfully increases his control over processing every time he reads and writes continuous texts. Yet, this is not to suggest that these language interactions throughout the lesson are merely procedural. In fact, the nature of the conversations and the ways in which the teacher engages the child promote the possibility of shared joy and satisfaction that emanates from a meeting of minds (Cazden, 2005, p. 3, referencing McNaughton, 2002).

Figure 12. Teacher and Child (Erica) Language Interactions in the Cut-Up Story: Early Lesson
(prompts in black; actions in parentheses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn</th>
<th>Teacher Language and Actions</th>
<th>Child Language and Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(teacher cuts apart story as child reads it) <em>Spash / hides / in / a / lot / of / places /.</em> What’s this? (pointing to the period)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>a period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>What does it tell us to do?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ok, now you’re going to make your story for me.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Is everything ok? (prompting the child to monitor and confirm)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>(assembles the story)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Let’s read it. Read it with your eyes. (prompting the child to read fluently integrating all sources of information)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>(checks to confirm that all sources of information match)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mrs. B. is going to make it like lines in the book. (arranges the story in two lines/phrases) Read it with your eyes. (prompting the child to read with phrasing)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>(reads the story fluently and with phrasing)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Drop your voice and stop at the period. (prompting for correct intonation as indicated by the punctuation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>(reads in a phrased way)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>(reads with correct intonation as indicated by the punctuation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clay has given specific guidance to teachers on how they can create environments within which they and children can talk and listen to one another. As stated in her 2004 seminal work, “Talking, Reading and Writing,” teachers can among other things:

- create rich contexts for language learning,
- increase language learning opportunities,
- understand that children learn language easily through conversation,
- consider what things make a child reluctant to speak,
- recognize the importance of reading aloud to children,
- create the need to produce language,
- arrange for sources of new language,
- think about which language structures are easier to learn,
- understand how children discover new rules and find when to use them, and
- appreciate how children learn to say the same thing in different ways.

Perhaps in the end, it is worth reminding ourselves of the foundational principle of personalizing instruction, taking into consideration the child’s meaning, thinking, and understanding (Clay 2004, 2014). In this way, teaching is not a mere depositing of information into the child, but a deliberate process of eliciting from the child what is meaningful to him. As Clay has so thoughtfully and diligently reminded us, “[A]ny learning situation is like a conversation, for it requires the learner to bring what he or she already knows to bear on the new problem being explored” (2014, p. 15). The teacher’s prompts and the warm friendly language enable the child to acquire the stance of a thinking person and establish the foundation of a literacy processing system that will continue to extend itself every time the child reads and writes.

Endnotes

1 The works of Rosenblatt (1994) and Kintsch (2009) are useful in understanding the construction of meaning during reading. According to Rosenblatt, readers acquire a dynamic stance towards the activity of reading. In her words, “the reader and the text are two aspects of a total dynamic situation. The 'meaning' does not reside ready-made 'in' the text or 'in' the reader but happens or comes into being during the transaction between reader and text” (p. 1369). Likewise, Kintsch holds that readers construct understandings based on input from the text combined with their prior knowledge and the end result is the development of what Kintsch calls a situation model (p. 224).

2 For another example of a well-crafted book introduction and the teacher-child language interactions throughout the introduction, the child’s first reading of the new book, and the discussion after the reading, readers may consult Lyons, C. A. (2003), pp. 88–90.

References


### Table 1. Principles and Select Examples to Guide Language Interactions During Reading Recovery Lesson Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Activity</th>
<th>Warm and Friendly Conversations</th>
<th>Crisp and Precise Prompts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Rereading Familiar Books                 | • “After any of the two or three familiar books, teacher and child may discuss the story (focusing on what it meant to the child)” (Clay, 2005b, p. 88).  
• Teacher “adjusts the child’s mental set for the task” (Clay, 2005b, p. 88).  
• During the reading, teacher … “keep out of the reading as much as possible” (Clay, 2005b, p. 88). | • Are you listening to yourself?  
• Did it sound good?  
• Make it sound like a story you would love to listen to.  
• Can you read this quickly?  
• Make your voice go down at the end of the sentence.  

*For these and other examples see Clay, 2005b, section 14.* |
| Rereading Yesterday’s New Book and Taking a Running Record | • The teacher and child converse about the deeper meaning of the text and/or highlight parts that the child found interesting.  

*“The teacher’s prompts and questions are critical” (Clay, 2005b, p. 115).  
“… teach not only on errors, but also on successful solving” (Clay, 2005b, p. 97).  
…”he or she selects for attention those [teaching points] which will contribute most to a lift in the child’s competencies” (Clay, 2001, p. 228).  

*For examples see Clay, 2005b, sections 10, 12, and 14.* |  |
| Letter Identification and Breaking Words  | • In this short part of the lesson, there is little conversation. This short part of the lesson is about crisp prompting.  
• The teacher invites the child to work flexibly with current knowledge of letters and words and make discoveries about how they work. | • Find one that is not like the other.  
• Down and around.  
• Make another word that looks like that.  
• We make it like this.  
• If we were going to write this word, we would have to write it letter by letter.  
• What’s the first letter in *look*? Can you hear the last part in *looking*? We can take the first part away.  

*For these and other examples see Clay, 2005b, sections 4, 5, and 13.*  

Caution: “It is very important that the child understands what you are saying when you prompt him” (Clay, 2005b, p. 107). |  |
| Composing and Writing Own Story           | • “Start up a conversation, guided by all you know about this child… This should not be an interrogation” (Clay, 2005b, p. 55).  
• “Teachers help children to compose oral messages and recount simple events in their lives” (Clay, 2001, p. 27). | • What could you write about that?  
• Tell me one more time.  
• Say it slowly.  
• What do you hear at the beginning, the end?  
• How could you write it?  
• Have you heard another word that sounds like that?  
• Think carefully before you start and write it here. And here.  
• Do it faster. Once more.  
• What letters would you expect to see?  

*For these and other prompts see Clay, 2005b, sections 6 and 7.* |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson Activity</th>
<th>Warm and Friendly Conversations</th>
<th>Crisp and Precise Prompts</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reconstructing the Cut-up Story</td>
<td>• There is no conversation because this is the time when the child has to think and attend to all</td>
<td>• Were you right? \n• Try that again. \n• You made a mistake. Can you find it?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>sources of information to reconstruct his story.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orientation to the New Book</td>
<td>• Teacher and child discuss important ideas, look at the pictures as needed, to give a sense of</td>
<td>• In early lessons, ask the child to locate one or two known words.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the complete plot. “… it helps if a child knows what the story is about before he reads it” (Clay, 2005a, p. 91). \n• “The teacher’s introduction creates a scaffold within which children can complete a first reading of a whole story” (Clay, 2014, p. 187). \n• “To repeat or expand what a child says helps maintain interactive ease, but it also models that discussion is acceptable” (Clay, 2014, p. 190). \n• “… the overview of the story is like a conversational exchange, and the attention to detail should not dismember the flow of the story” (Clay, 2014, p. 190).</td>
<td>“What letter do you expect to see at the beginning of …?” [ask him to find the word] (Clay, 2005b, p. 91). \n• “The teacher may deliberately enunciate unusual syntax (for example, when the text uses a full form and the children may produce a contraction, like can’t for cannot), or may use a sentence pattern two or three times to help children hold the pattern in mind” (Clay, 2014, p. 191). For example “Baby Bear, where are you?” “Father Bear’s blackberries went into this basket.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching During the First Reading</td>
<td>• The teacher might make helpful comments before the child turns the page to support sustaining the meaning of the story. \n• Avoid unnecessary interruptions that interfere with the flow of the reading.</td>
<td>• Refer to “scale of help” (Clay, 2005b, pp. 132–133). \n• “Try that again and think about … … Indicate the type of information you want the child to attend to” (Clay, 2005b, p. 94). \n• “Look for something that would help you.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching After the First Reading of the New Book</td>
<td>• A brief conversation that invites the child to share what he thought about the book. “Good questions give the message that the whole story is the point of the reading activity …” (Clay, 2005b, p. 97).</td>
<td>• Try this again. \n• Read it again, and see if you can find the tricky word. \n• Try that again and think what would make sense, and sound right, and look like that. \n• How did you know it said that?</td>
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**Children’s Books Cited**


**About the Authors**

Eva Konstantellou is a professor and Reading Recovery trainer at the Center for Reading Recovery and Literacy Collaborative in the Graduate School of Education at Lesley University in Cambridge, MA. She currently works with Reading Recovery professionals in six states in the northeast United States. Her research interests include language learning, literacy coaching, the role of early literacy intervention in school change, and critical pedagogy.

Mary K. Lose is an associate professor in the Department of Reading and Language Arts, School of Education and Human Services, and director of the Reading Recovery Center of Michigan at Oakland University in Rochester. Her research interests focus on early literacy intervention policies and initiatives, teachers’ professional development, and contingent teaching.
Learning from Our Teaching

Mary D. Fried, The Ohio State University

Editor’s note: The following article is based on Mary Fried’s keynote address at the 2015 National Reading Recovery and K–6 Literacy Conference.

I was first trained as a teacher leader in the U.S. pilot study of Reading Recovery® in the United States in 1984–85. That year Marie Clay and Barbara Watson came to The Ohio State University to work with Gay Su Pinnell and Charlotte Huck to teach the courses for the first group of Reading Recovery professionals — 13 teachers and 3 teacher leaders from the Columbus City Schools. Gay Su studied to be the first university trainer. There were an additional four graduate students who trained as teacher leaders while they worked on the first pilot research of Reading Recovery. This pilot study was cosponsored by the university and the Ohio Department of Education and was implemented in Columbus, a major school district in central Ohio. At our first meeting of Ohio State faculty and Columbus district personnel Gay Su said, “This will probably be a 2-year pilot study and research project. We are delighted to have the university, the department of education, and the Columbus district working together.” Reading Recovery turned out to be much more than any of us envisioned that first year.

This article is based on the keynote address I was invited to present at the 2015 National Reading Recovery and K–6 Literacy Conference celebrating the 30th anniversary of Reading Recovery’s implementation in the United States. My topic then and the title of this article, “Learning from Our Teaching,” is a retrospective of some key concepts we have learned from working together as Reading Recovery teachers, teacher leaders, site coordinators, administrators, university trainers, and members of the Reading Recovery Council of North America (RRCNA). Together we make a powerful team of early literacy educators and advocates for all beginning readers and writers who are having difficulties in literacy learning. We have built what Peurach and Glaser (2016) define as a learning system (p. 3). We are proud of what we have accomplished over these 30-plus years as our goals, our work, our research, and our teaching continues. Our learning continues as we work together in what Bryk (2016) defines a networked improvement community (p. 469), developing practice-based evidence as we strive to fulfill the vision of RRCNA to ensure that children who struggle in learning to read and write gain the skills for a literate and productive future.

In this article I share salient findings from earlier, important research that are still applicable today and voices from educators in Reading Recovery whose messages continue to have resonance for our learning community.

Marie Clay’s Monumental Contribution to Early Literacy

Marie Clay has made a monumental contribution to the teaching and professional learning of educators involved in early literacy. In my years as a trainer I have observed the impact of Clay’s theoretical perspective, a literacy processing theory, and her development of Reading Recovery on educators around the world. For example, I think every teacher in the U.S. who has had Reading Recovery training has experienced a steep learning curve and a paradigm shift in their understandings and skills in teaching young children how to read and write. A recent Columbus teacher in training said at the end of graduation ceremony, “I have never worked so hard for one piece of paper in my whole career.” I think we could all identify with Nicki’s statement. More recently, a teacher in Detroit who was trained as part of the i3 grant funded opportunity awarded Oakland University was quoted to say, “As a teacher of over 20 years and being part of the Reading Recovery training program, I now see the teaching of reading through a different lens and would hope that all teachers of primary grade children would have the opportunity to do the same” (Lose, 2016, p. 22). These representative statements of teachers in training demonstrate the common perspectives expressed by many teachers over the years about the impact of Marie Clay’s work on their learning and teaching of children.

Clay made a major contribution to the professional development of teachers. Her model of observing a lesson through a soundproof glass while simultaneously listening, analyzing, and discussing the interactions between a teacher and a child has brought powerful perspectives into focus for teachers as they share learning conversations. For most teachers
this format was not only a personal challenge—especially when teaching behind-the-glass for colleagues—but it was also a unique learning experience. Discussions of lessons taught behind-the-glass that encourage teachers to reflect on their learning are consistently rated the highest by teachers. This powerful model continues to be employed throughout Reading Recovery classes and ongoing professional development.

Another observable example of the impact of Clay on early literacy teaching and learning is revealed by a quick survey of the many little books for children displayed by publishers at any conference that includes a focus on beginning readers. How different it is now. In the early years of Reading Recovery little books that were leveled and represented a gradient of difficulty were hard to find in the U.S. We ordered books from New Zealand and England to ensure adequate teaching resources, and this caused quite a stir in the treasurer’s office of the Columbus district as they had to deal with foreign exchange rates. The availability of books for beginning learners to read seemed to increase overnight. Now teachers and children have masses and masses of books at levels of challenge appropriate for reading at school and at home.

Clay’s influence can also be found in such instructional practices as familiar reading, a novel practice for many teachers involved in the first year of training and the pilot study. Thus, when a group of teachers and teacher leaders were debriefing at Charlotte Huck’s house, Rose Mary Estice captured our thinking in voicing this insight: “I’m a good classroom teacher. I’ve taught many first graders to read. I can’t believe I never thought to have children reread a story. Familiar reading is so important! I was just following the basal: “Read a story once and on to the next.”

Clay (2005) taught us the value of familiar reading for children just beginning to read and process text fluently in meaningful phrases (pp. 98, 150–152). Over the years many classroom teachers have incorporated familiar reading, silent reading, whisper reading, or independent reading into their kindergarten or first-grade daily schedules. Tubs or baskets of books for individual children or small groups abound.

One issue I have observed when visiting classrooms is that sometimes the books provided for many of the lowest readers in the class do not represent familiar or easy reading. Too often the books are just too hard! This is an opportunity for teachers, literacy coaches, Reading Recovery teachers, and administrators to work together to find and purchase appropriate books for children who need the most practice reading just right books. Administrators can encourage and schedule meetings of Reading Recovery teachers and classroom teachers to collaborate and find instructional levels and easy reading books for the children who need many more opportunities for familiar reading and rereading. Center or seatwork activities should include independent reading during each school day. Anyone should be able to pick a random book from a child’s basket that he will read with ease and enjoyment. If the book is too hard, teacher collaboration should be the response.

These are a few examples of the wider impact of Marie Clay. Whole books have been written (e.g., Watson & Askew, 2009) which capture many more of Clay’s contributions. In the brief summary above I have tried to capture representative examples of the impact that Clay has had and will continue to have on our ongoing learning as primary or early intervention teachers.

Knowing the History and Research is Part of Our Learning Community

Knowing the history and early research of Reading Recovery is part of our learning community. As time passes some research is considered outdated; however, I want to take this opportunity to give an updated review of the original study of Reading Recovery in the United States. The study was published 26 years ago and may be older than many of the teachers currently working in Reading Recovery! The Study of Instructional Models for the Literacy Education of High Risk First Graders was completed in 1988–89. The results of the study and the implications for teaching are presented in Lyons, Pinnell, & DeFord (1993). This research was funded by the John D. and Katherine T. MacArthur Foundation and still meets the gold standard of research design. Table 1 summarizes the research procedures applied to this seminal Reading Recovery study.

An additional aspect of the study procedures for measuring reading achievement, the outcome measures, was the use of two subtests from The Early Detection of Reading Difficulties, 3rd Edition, Clay’s (1985) Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words and Running Records of Text Reading Level.
The study involved four treatment groups and a control group. The design of the treatment groups illustrate the collaboration of the university researchers with the teachers and school districts to solve implementation issues. One example is the consideration given the following question: How can research help school districts evaluate options for making wise investments of their scarce funding sources? Thus, two of the treatment groups were planned to address common questions administrators who were considering implementing Reading Recovery posed:

1. Reading Recovery works but why can’t we just do it in small groups?
2. Why is the training a full academic year; can’t you condense the training?

A separate treatment group was added to address the common belief that any one-to-one, teacher-child instruction would generate higher achievement. This separate treatment became not only a study of another one-to-one instructional design, but the design also incorporated a highly supported belief that teaching phonics and skills would successfully remediate the majority of current reading problems for children who were lagging behind. The phonics/skills treatment was designed by faculty at another Ohio university. This treatment was called Direct Instruction Skills Plan (DISP). The teachers who taught the DISP were trained and supported by faculty members who designed the treatment. Table 2 summarizes the four treatment groups.

After 70 days of instruction, participating children were assessed on both the standardized reading test and Clay’s measures (Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words and Text Reading Level). The analyses revealed that the children in the Reading Recovery treatment group with the standard 30-minute lessons achieved the highest gains. These findings answer the administrators’ questions and confirm that individual instruction by a teacher trained in Reading Recovery over a full academic year are key to accelerating the learning of first-grade children struggling with early literacy.

An intriguing second finding was that the treatment group taught by the traditionally trained Reading Recovery teachers (RWG) instructing small groups (3–4 children) had the next-highest student gains. This finding is very relevant today. The research data quantifies the value and cost effectiveness of Reading Recovery-trained teachers working individually with the lowest first-grade students while also applying new learning and skills for teaching early literacy quite effectively to small groups of students who need support but are not as far behind in literacy achievement as the very lowest readers.

### Table 1. Characteristics of the Research Design

| Large Scale | 10 school districts in Ohio (6 urban, 2 suburban, 2 rural)  
4 schools per district = 40 schools |
| Control Group | 1 control group per school  
Regular Title I first-grade group |
| Random Assignment | The lowest-achieving first graders were randomly assigned to one of the four treatment groups or the control group at their school |
| Long Term | Each student had 70 lessons  
An observation of change over time |
| Standardized Measure | Gates-MacGinitie Test of Reading Skills (Pre and Post) |

### Table 2. Four Treatment Group Procedures

| Reading Recovery | • Reading Recovery teacher in a one-to-one setting  
• 30-minute Reading Recovery lesson daily |
| Reading and Writing Group | • Reading Recovery teacher in a small group of 3–4  
• 30–45-minute lessons daily |
| Reading Success | • Teacher in a one-to-one setting  
• 30-minute Reading Recovery lesson daily  
• 2-week compressed Reading Recovery training  
• No behind-the-glass lessons but equivalent hours of class time |
| Direct Instruction Skills Plan | • Teacher in a one-to-one setting  
• 30-minute lessons daily  
• Skills program designed and supported by another university  
• 3-day intensive in-service training course |
Reading Recovery-trained teachers are an asset when working with lower-achieving groups of students in the primary grades. On the average, Reading Recovery teachers who follow the instructional model that combines individual intervention lessons with teaching small groups, or half-day classroom instruction, serve more students in a school year than a regular classroom teacher. Cost effectiveness is apparent as student achievement increases for the primary grades. Prevention and extra support with a highly trained teacher can make an impact on early literacy learning for many students.

Data have been collected for every student who has received Reading Recovery lessons over all years, and the most-recent data demonstrates consistent high outcomes. Formerly struggling, first-grade readers (72%) reach the average achievement of their classes in 12–20 weeks (D’Agostino & Brownfield, 2016, p. 25). What makes the difference for the students in Reading Recovery lessons? One answer is a well-trained teacher, and this directs our attention to training.

Teachers in the Reading Success treatment condition for the MacArthur-funded study were trained to use the Reading Recovery lesson framework, but their training lacked two important elements. First, live lessons simultaneously observed and discussed were not part of their training and second, their training was compressed to an equivalent amount of time delivered over 2 weeks, not the academic year. The data suggests that teachers make changes in their understandings over time but not within 2 weeks. The Reading Success teachers followed the Reading Recovery lesson framework as they taught individual children, but there was not as much power in their teaching as observed in the teachers trained using the standard Reading Recovery teacher training processes. Using the same framework of literacy activities the questions still remain today: Why are some teachers more effective than others? What makes a difference? A review of data across the four treatment groups provides some insight into these questions, but further study is needed.

As the teachers in the study of instructional models taught their lessons, videotapes of complete lessons were made at three points in time. These VHS tapes became the basis of investigating the persistent question of researchers: Why are some teachers more effective than other teachers? There is a great deal to learn from closely analyzing the teaching interactions of high-outcome teachers.

DeFord (Lyons, Pinnell, & DeFord, 1993) led the study to analyze the writing segments of all the video lessons to try to determine any differences in teaching that might inform our understandings of effective, early literacy teachers. The first part of her study was an analysis of the investment in time for writing in each lesson (p. 35), displayed in Table 3.

The first three groups had similar amounts of time devoted to the child writing during the lesson. Teachers in these three treatment groups provided instruction based on Marie Clay’s theoretical constructs. They learned a basic tenant of Clay’s perspective — reciprocity. Clay (2001) helps teachers understand reciprocity as a flow of knowledge; what children know in writing will help them in reading, and what they know in reading will help them in writing (pp. 11, 32, 216.) This concept was captured by a teacher in training a few years ago when she wrote in response to a survey:

> I have been blown away by the connection between reading and writing. It is amazing how strengths in one of those areas can help build a strength in the other area if we, the teachers, take the time to show the child these connections.

Classroom teachers, intervention specialists, and teachers who work with students learning English as a second language could easily incorporate more writing as children are learning to read, respond, and write stories and information reports. Before, during, and after reading, and when reacting to the story, teachers can help readers attend to letters, letter-sounds, spelling patterns, and vocabulary learning embedded in the text.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Treatment Group</th>
<th>Time on Task</th>
<th>Percent of Lesson Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Recovery</td>
<td>8 minutes</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading and Writing Group</td>
<td>7 minutes</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Success</td>
<td>9 minutes</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Instruction Skills Plan</td>
<td>5 seconds</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>1 minutes</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Average Percent of Lesson Time Devoted to Writing
they are reading or have just read. For example, before the story is read the teacher might ask, “What letter do you expect to see first for the word river? Write river on your paper.” By writing, every child in a group responds to every teacher question. In addition the teacher has a quick way to check on each student’s response.

For a higher group preparing to read Commander Toad in Space (Yolen, 1996), the teacher can incorporate vocabulary learning into the introduction of the story as the following example illustrates:

Think about the word *porthole*. Clap *porthole*. It has two parts. Try to write *porthole*.

Now let’s look on page 14. Check the picture, then read the sentence that has the word *porthole*.

What do you think a *porthole* is? Talk to a partner about a *porthole*.

The vocabulary to learn is embedded in the context of the story to be read. It is not presented in an unrelated poem, chart, song, or isolated worksheet. The concept of *embedded vocabulary* learning with the support of writing before reading is especially important for students needing more opportunities to talk and make personal connections to the texts and the print they are expected to read.

DeFord’s study of the writing activities of the four different treatment group teachers also revealed characteristics about the quality of the teaching interactions. Using the Reading Recovery framework, which is specific in the sequence of literacy activities but flexible in teaching decisions, interactions, and levels of challenge within the various activities, the teachers who were the most successful in helping the greatest number of students achieve average first-grade expectations at an accelerated rate:

- spent more time on writing in early lessons than in later lessons;
- had more evidence of working with words, letter formation, spelling patterns, and sound to letter analysis on the child’s practice page; and
- had greater variety and complexity of sentences/stories composed and written by the students with teacher support. (Lyons, Pinnell, & DeFord, 1993, p. 71)

These results suggest the high value of connecting writing and reading especially in early lessons with beginning learners. The teachers with the higher outcomes devoted, on average, 44% of the lesson time to writing in early lessons compared to the less-effective teachers who, on average, devoted 29% of the lesson time to writing. Over time, as lessons continued, the higher-outcome teachers shifted to increased lesson time in reading to 61% of the time on average, while less time was spent in writing, 28% on average. The lower-outcome teachers’ average time in writing throughout the series of lessons did not vary as much. In early lessons 29% of the time was in writing on average and in later lessons 31% of the lesson time was spent in writing on average (Lyons, Pinnell, & DeFord, 1993, p. 72).

Now let’s look at the time spent writing for the Direct Instruction Skills Program and the control group. For the DISP treatment group, the average time observed in writing was 5 seconds; for the control group it was an average of 1 minute per lesson. The teachers in these two groups were teaching with theoretical perspectives different from Clay’s Reading Recovery-based treatment groups.

The results of student achievement gains were the lowest for the DISP treatment group. DISP instruction was not a published program but did center on teaching phonics and skills focusing on words in isolation. I was surprised when as part of a group that analyzed and timed a video of one DISP lesson, I found that 14 minutes were spent having the student try to write different words, dictated by the teacher, in shaving cream spread on the top of the table. The student practiced four or five words in that 14 minutes but then spent a chunk of lesson time cleaning up the shaving cream. Remember, this video was made in 1988–89, and this could now be classified as ineffective practice. I wish that I did not have to mention that in 2014, when I visited my student’s classroom to get him for a Reading Recovery lesson, I saw a whole classroom of first graders up to their elbows in shaving cream, writing words as dictated by their temporary, student teacher. From my point of view all the shaving cream accomplished was cleaning the tops of the desks and the students’ hands.

Many years of evidence and research have shown that a focus on skills in isolation can improve specific skills and or items of knowledge. You can even teach children to decode nonsense words in isolation and teach children to read and mumble over words so fast that nothing makes sense. But concentrated, isolated skill practice and rate of reading has little impact on reading comprehension and writing achievement. (See Allington, 2013.)
In Reading Recovery we understand the importance of the child’s attention to letters, letter-sounds, spelling patterns, word recognition, and fluent, phrased reading when learning to read and write. To maximize this learning in Clay’s theoretical perspective, most teaching is done while children are reading and writing continuous text. For some teachers, this is a new discovery, and I remember one teacher who, in early training, shared this in class:

If I had not seen it with my own eyes I would never believe a child could read without knowing all their letters and sounds. But she did it. Carlie is my lowest in knowing her letters but she is reading these little books and loves the stories.

Teachers have prior experiences and knowledge of pedagogy when they come into Reading Recovery coursework. It sometimes takes new, personal experiences to break through prior knowledge and change teaching practices. Clay (1998) foreshadows that experience by stating, “An interesting change occurs in teachers who observe closely. They begin to question educational assumptions” (p. 107).

The teaching of letters, letter-sounds, spelling patterns, word recognition, and fluent phrased reading and writing are not incidental in Reading Recovery lessons. There are many procedures outlined by Clay (2005), and titles of complete sections of her book, Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals Part Two, give attention to Hearing and recording sounds in words, Linking sound sequences to letter sequences, Taking words apart while reading, etc. Teachers use these sections and others to select procedures and customize the teaching based on the unique needs of each child. Customizing lessons might be impractical for whole-class teaching or even small-group reading instruction, but customizing—which is based on assessed and observed needs—is highly accelerative for a struggling reader. This is a design requirement that helps struggling readers progress to the average of their classrooms with 12–20 weeks of daily, individual instruction.

Quality of Teaching

How do teachers interact with children to support the development of reading and writing?

The above question introduces the last part of the research study that was funded by the MacArthur Foundation in 1988–89. As part of the study, Ohio State faculty offered a summer course to experienced teachers. Many were primary classroom teachers or Title I teachers who were not trained in Reading Recovery, some were recently trained Reading Recovery teachers, and several were trained teacher leaders. All of the participants were trained to observe teaching interactions recorded on videos. The video lessons were from teachers in all four of the treatment groups, and a rating scale was used with the following category headings: Organization/Management, Intensity, Interaction, Feedback/Praise, Engagement, Enthusiasm, and Report. I will not go through the details of each category; however, there were definitions for each of the ranking categories and preliminary group practice for establishing reliability. Lyons & Pinnell (2001) developed the scale further and entitled it General Aspects of Teaching (p. 113).

In the group practice sessions during that summer class, one category stood out as a controversial area — Intensity. The Reading Recovery teachers and teacher leaders ranked some of the teachers on the video high in Intensity while the classroom teachers and Title I teachers ranked these same teachers low. Why low? The rationale for the rating by the classroom and Title I teachers was that some of the video lesson teachers were too intense. Their explanations for this included comments like, “She wouldn’t let it go.” “She badgered him.” “She kept coming back again and asking, are you right?” “She made her try that again three times. Why didn’t she just tell her the word?”

Working for reliability, the group came to this consensus: If you saw a lot of intensity, you had to rank it high if you liked it or not. With that guidance, the Reading Recovery teachers in the video lessons were consistently ranked high on Intensity. Lyons and Pinnell (2001) defined intensity of teaching as “[t]he teacher is actively teaching on some important aspect of learning throughout the lesson and teaches in a persistent and intensive way” (p. 113). Being persistent and teaching intensively on “some important aspect of learning” implies the teacher knows what is important for the child to learn how to do now. This was just one aspect of teaching that Lyons and Pinnell examined; but, because of the clear lines of separation in judgment between the classroom teachers and the Reading Recovery teachers, this one stood out in my memory.

I did my own, one-question survey of teaching and learning across some trainers, teacher leaders, and teachers,
including teachers-in-training: What have you learned from teaching children in Reading Recovery that you think has made you a better teacher?

I have already shared some of the responses in the quotes throughout this paper, and I am sure there would be wide diversity and high value in all the responses throughout our learning community. Here is one example to consider. I was talking with my friend, Linda Scott, who was a teacher leader for many years, about teachers that consistently make an impact on their students’ learning, and about my one-question survey. She responded, “I can answer both of your questions with one word: Monitoring!” Then she added, “How to recognize monitoring, teach for it, and prompt for it consistently … am I right?”

I do not think there is any one right answer to identifying the most important attribute of effective teaching, and, of course, what we learn from teaching children who are having difficulties learning to read and write will vary widely for individual teachers. But Linda did identify a powerful aspect of teaching in Reading Recovery lessons that I would like to discuss further.

Clay (2005) succinctly defines self-monitoring for teachers as “checking on oneself” (p. 108). Schwartz (1997) has helped many teachers build understandings about the importance of monitoring and the complexity of teaching for this type of strategic action as young children are learning to read and write (pp. 40–48). McGee, Kim, Nelson, and Fried (2015) defined monitoring as “a mental activity in which students seemed to notice something was not right, which caused them to make a decision to take some further action” (p. 11).

If you are a teacher who understands the importance of monitoring, you are well on your way to fostering strategic actions and making an impact on accelerated progress and student achievement. Highly effective teachers have flexible ways of focusing on monitoring as it changes over time. For example:

- Recognize monitoring and reinforce monitoring in early lessons.
  Good you stopped. You must be thinking. What did you notice? What could you try?
- Teach or demonstrate how to monitor in early lessons.
  You said cat. What do you expect to see at the beginning? Look at this letter (points). It can’t be cat. Check the picture. Read that again and try something else.
- Prompt and expect the child to check or verify their own responses (self-monitoring).
  Check to see if you’re right? or Does that make sense? or simply Are you right?

In order to foster a child’s self-monitoring once he is more secure, Clay (2005) recommends prompting with “Try that again.” (p. 108). In using this powerful prompt Clay states, “all you need to say is ‘Try that again,’” and adds, “Make sure that your voice carries two messages. You require him to search because you know he can, and you are confident he can solve the problem” (p. 109).
Highly effective teachers are not just teaching items of knowledge; they are teaching children how to think. Monitoring is a cognitive, strategic activity. Self-correction implies self-monitoring. Evidence of self-monitoring is one strategic action we should be looking for as we analyze running records. The analysis of running records is more than computing the scores and circling the MSVs. Self-monitoring, or noticing that something is not quite right, may begin with just stopping and waiting for help, but over time self-monitoring should lead to searching for more information, trying again perhaps resulting in a self-correction, and often triggering a cycle of searching again, trying again, monitoring again, and making another decision.

This cycle results in the construction of a problem-solving unit; what McGee et al. (2015) identified as flexible, complex action chains (p. 16). Complex action chains always include evidence of self-monitoring and multiple attempts. Flexible action chains also show evidence of using multiple sources of information, and often, but not always, result in a self-correction. Complex action chains are important markers of strengths in a child’s developing processing system. Complex action chains are not the ultimate goal of problem solving while reading but are evidence of what Clay (2007) called for — “records of the changes” in processing as children are “en route to perfect performance” (p. 74).

I recommend two questions to ask yourself as you reflect on the impact of your teaching:

1. Are you looking for evidence of self-monitoring when you listen to oral reading or analyze a child’s running record or observe a child writing a story?
2. Are you taking teaching actions to teach for monitoring or to prompt for self-monitoring when you don’t see it?

Learning from My Own Teaching

I want to close this article the same way I closed the keynote address at the 2015 national conference by sharing my personal learning from my own teaching. In the last 16 years I have been teaching Reading Recovery lessons at a school with many children who are also learning English as a second language. This has given me the opportunity to learn about their languages and cultures such as Shona, Arabic, Bengalese, Spanish, Chinese, and Kurdish. From my teaching I learned the value of oral language as a foundation for literacy learning. I learned very quickly the value of using Clay’s (2007) Record of Oral Language to inform my teaching. I also shifted the support of my teaching interactions in order to help children extend their oral language as we had fun using small stuffed animals and Beanie Babies to talk, reenact, and write about the stories. We took turns helping Baby Monkey get away from the tiger when we yelled, “Baby Monkey, Come up here! Come up here!” (Tiger, Tiger, PM). I learned to be an expert at nonverbal prompts: a touch of the hand or finger, a gentle tap of the page with a pencil, or a tap on the working page of the writing book for a trial attempt. My prompts to take action became more succinct. For familiar reading I only had to say to Lizzeth, “Eyes only, read fast.” At other times Lizzeth successfully responded to “Try that again” and “Are you right?” Clay (2005) calls this a teacher’s “economy of words” (p. 87) and warns us that too much teacher talk can be overwhelming for some children. I think that every time the teacher talks it has the potential to interrupt the child’s processing. As my colleague at Ohio State, Jim Schnug, responded so clearly in his survey question response, “I learned to listen more and talk less.”

I hope this rendition of “Learning from Our Teaching” has established more insights from the original study of Reading Recovery teaching in the U.S. and has verified that the understandings from that “oldie-but-goodie” research are still applicable. I know some of the questions the MacArthur-funded study answered are still being asked today. More importantly, I hope you will take the time to reflect on your teaching and learning. What have you learned from teaching children in Reading Recovery that has made you a better teacher? And lastly, keep on contributing to our learning community as we continue to work and learn together.

References


**About the Author**

Mary Fried is a trainer of teacher leaders in the Reading Recovery Center at The Ohio State University. Trained by Marie Clay and Barbara Watson during the original pilot study of Reading Recovery in the U.S., she has been actively engaged in teaching, presenting, conducting research, and writing about Reading Recovery for more than 30 years.

One of the youngest students in her school’s engineering enrichment class, Natalie has always been a hard worker. She loves books and she is always excited to find out what will happen at the end of the story. Once she started her Reading Recovery lessons with teacher Sara Imerman, Natalie quickly gained confidence and began to take more risks in reading and writing both during her lessons and in the classroom setting. Natalie enjoys camping, going to Disney World, and spending time at the beach. And she wants to be an insurance worker with her family’s agency.
When I entered first grade I knew I could not read. Right away I felt very different from my classmates and school peers. My sister, a fifth grader at the time, always excelled in school and made it look so easy. My parents were concerned about my development in letter recognition, sound segmenting, and book correspondence. My parents fought for my education and for the attention I needed. Looking back, I would not have grown as a reader, student, or teacher without them being my advocates.

After many conversations back and forth, I was recommended for Reading Recovery lessons. I remember my teacher’s name was Mrs. Otto and that she made me feel successful every day. In my regular classroom, I rarely felt pride or accomplishments over my actions or work completed. I felt like I was in the spotlight as “the girl who can’t participate in that activity,” or “the one who can’t read like the rest of us.” That year is when I decided to be a teacher. I remember going home and telling my mom I wanted to be a teacher so I could treat students equally and have them feel proud of their work.

Although my reading journey is a bit of a blur, I know that in fifth grade I was reading at the top of my class in both fluency and comprehension. I graduated from high school in 2010 and set off for Wheelock College in Boston to study elementary education. My experiences in first grade were still driving me to be an educator. After graduating in 2014, I continued at Wheelock to earn my masters degree in elementary and special education.

In the summer of 2015, I was offered my first job, coincidentally as a first-grade inclusion teacher at Indian Brook Elementary School in Plymouth, MA, where I had eight students receiving Reading Recovery.

It wasn’t until I saw one of my student’s “Blue Books” that I became overwhelmed with where I came from and where I ended up. Seeing that book brought me back to working with Mrs. Otto and creating my sentences, cutting them up, putting them back together, and feeling successful. I believe I was meant to be in that classroom so I can accomplish the goal I set long ago; provide students the opportunity to feel proud.
Heinemann is proud to be the US distributor of Marie Clay’s work. To influence new generations of teachers, the Marie Clay Literacy Trust is refreshing her most important books. Marie’s words remain untouched, while the Trust has updated references and surrounding features as appropriate.
Effective Implementation: What We Can Learn from the i3 Study

Connie Briggs, Texas Woman’s University
Barbara Honchell, University of North Carolina Wilmington

In the final i3 report, Reading Recovery: An Evaluation of the Four-Year i3 Scale-up Report, researchers noted that “The i3 funded scale-up of Reading Recovery was one of the most ambitious and well-documented expansions of an instructional program in U.S. history, and it was highly successful” (May, Sirinides, Gray, & Goldsworthy, 2016, p. 4). Because this large-scale study was externally evaluated, rigorous in research design, and represented a comprehensive review of Reading Recovery® across the nation, it yielded a goldmine of information relating to implementation including the training of teacher leaders and teachers, communication, teaching of children, and school-level influence.

The purpose of this article is to review the design and goals of the i3 study, provide detail of how the researchers examined implementation factors, and present the findings relevant to implementation in terms of training and teaching and at the school level. Additional implementation areas that were identified as not meeting fidelity will also be discussed. Through discussion of the information shared in this article it is hoped that Reading Recovery professionals will celebrate our identified strengths and engage in dialogue about how to problem solve areas of challenge.

Design of the Study
This multiyear mixed methods study involved all 19 university training centers in the United States. Qualitative data included 334 interviews of trainers and teacher leaders, 23 field-based case studies conducted at the school level, the review of over 50 lesson records, 70 lesson observations, teacher and teacher leader surveys, and activity logs over the course of the study. Researchers analyzed quantitative outcome data on 6,888 students in 1,122 schools.

The Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) published reports for Year 1, Year 2, and for the final 4-year results (May et al., 2013; May et al., 2014; May et al., 2016). This article is based on the data reported from the final 4-year research report and includes findings from interviews, online surveys, lessons observations, activity logs, and examination of lesson records.

Following are the primary goals of the CPRE study:

1. Provide experimental evidence of the short- and long-term impacts of Reading Recovery on student learning in schools that are part of the i3 scale-up.

2. Assess the implementation of Reading Recovery under the i3 grant, including fidelity to the program model and progress toward scale-up goals. (May et al., 2016, p. 1)

While there are many studies of evidence-based programs, there are relatively few studies examining the implementation of the programs, particularly implementation scale-up (Fixen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). Yet, it is the quality of implementation that ensures children have the opportunity to learn to read. Thus a careful review of the information compiled about implementation is essential. The i3 researchers were aware that variation among educational program implementations has not been adequately examined in previous research (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, & LeMahieu (2015; May et al., 2016). To inform a richer description of factors related to implementation at the school and site levels, researchers applied procedures to gather extensive qualitative data (observations, interviews, etc.). This included an examination of fidelity to Reading Recovery implementation processes and procedures.

For the purposes of the i3 study design, researchers looked to the Standards and Guidelines of Reading Recovery in the United States, 6th Edition (Reading Recovery Council of North America [RRCNA], 2012) as indicators of fidelity. These standards provide requirements for training and implementation that were established to ensure adherence to implementing Reading Recovery with consistency and fidelity. These standards have upheld the fidelity of Reading Recovery for over 30 years.
in the United States. All schools must be in compliance with the standards in order to be granted an annually issued royalty-free trademark by The Ohio State University. The trademark and standards are directly tied to data submitted by each school and provide assurance of quality and consistency of the intervention throughout the United States. Researchers turned the standards, totaling 51 discrete statements, into “clear and measurable program indicators” (May et al., 2016, p. 73) and based the fidelity of the intervention on these signposts. The indicators were considered by the i3 researchers to be implemented with fidelity if 80% of respondents (Reading Recovery teachers, teacher leaders, site coordinators) reported complying with a standard as presented in the standards document. Reading Recovery professionals at all levels recognize that standards are deemed essential for assuring a quality intervention for children and effective implementation at the school level; therefore, using standards as the litmus test for program effectiveness provided a true measure of the quality of our work across the United States.

Implementation of Reading Recovery at the Teacher and Teacher Leader Level

Two elements of Reading Recovery at the teacher and teacher leader level were addressed by the i3 report to examine implementation: (a) initial training and ongoing professional development for teachers on all aspects of Reading Recovery, and (b) teaching of Reading Recovery children on a daily basis.

Implementation Issues Related to Training

Teachers in the study reported that the initial training they received in the form of graduate-level coursework provided by teacher leaders was intensive, rigorous, and transformative. Both trained and in-training teachers reported that their teacher leaders provided support for their training and ongoing professional development and were a continual resource for their work with children. They also reported that the behind-the-glass sessions were an important part of their training and offered opportunities for them to receive feedback on their own teaching, while contributing to the learning of others in their group.

While results indicated that teachers reported receiving adequate training and support from their teacher leaders, the study found great variability in the way university trainers supported and supervised teacher leaders. In the analysis of one year’s results, Year 2, fidelity to the standard stating that trained teacher leaders should receive a minimum of two site visits from a trainer during the field year (RRCNA, 2012, p. 21), dropped below the benchmark to 78%.

Implementation Issues Related to Teaching of Reading Recovery Children

Teachers met the standards by teaching four students daily with one-to-one lessons. Findings reported that Reading Recovery teachers varied in assignments the other half of their day. Some taught small literacy groups, taught in a regular classroom, or served as literacy coaches. Often teachers commented on the demanding nature of their work and difficulty finding adequate time for planning or collaborating with other teachers during the school day. They also met standards of daily instruction for their Reading Recovery students. Despite the challenges of student absences and teacher unavailability, many of the teachers were flexible in the ways they found to make up lessons — either coming in early, staying late, or altering their schedules to make sure all four students received daily lessons.

Lesson records indicated “teachers adhered closely to the lesson structure and procedures” (May et al., 2016, p. 91). As teachers gain more experience working with students they learn how to plan, deliver, and adjust to idiosyncratic needs of individuals within the framework of the lesson structure and procedures of Reading Recovery. The report quoted a trainer who said, “…one mark of a strong Reading Recovery teacher-in-training is the desire to acquire as much knowledge as possible in order to provide every student with the best instruction she can” (p. 95). The researchers contributed this type of commitment and engagement in continual learning to participation in “community-enhanced reflective practice” (p. 95).

Purposeful observation, ongoing reflection, engagement with continued learning, deliberateness, and instructional dexterity were identified as part of the instructional strengths noted as an emerging theme in the i3 report.

Instructional strength—defined as “the extent to which a teacher instructs for maximum learning in every lesson” (May et al., 2016, p. 90)—is an aspect of teaching of particular interest to the researchers. The researchers identified the concept as part of the training to become a Reading Recovery teacher and also a focus during ongoing professional development.
development. Deliberateness (thoughtful practice) and dexterity (flexible application of deep skill) were noted aspects of instructional strength. Deliberateness occurs outside of the lesson, and deliberate teachers engage in
- analysis of student progress based on observation,
- ongoing reflection about teaching, and
- active engagement in continual learning both independently and within the community.

Instructional dexterity, on the other hand, takes place within the context of teaching. Dexterity could be considered to be an outgrowth of deliberate practice. Elements include
- rapport which enhances maximum growth,
- moment-by-moment decision making within the lesson,
- careful use of language (prompting), and
- urgency in the lesson pace and instructional moves.

Teachers follow the lesson structures and procedures with fidelity, but within these structures individual teacher moves are made based on teacher expertise and the needs of individual students. Teachers who were perceived as strong exhibited both deliberativeness and instructional dexterity.

In order for a Reading Recovery teacher to plan for and engage in teaching with instructional strength, the professional experiences provided by teacher leaders need to include learning about how to be both thoughtful in planning (deliberate) and flexible (dexterous) during teaching. Reading Recovery teachers are better able to grow into this level of practice with support from the teacher leader, but also support from administrators at the school and district level. This leads us to what was revealed in the report about the importance of school understanding and support for Reading Recovery.

Levels of Understanding and Commitment at the School Level

The goal of the school-level research component, based on 23 case studies, was to “explore the processes and successes of implementation at the school level” (May et al., 2016, p. 107), particularly since there were few qualitative studies available on the impact of Reading Recovery lessons on students’ literacy skills. By looking at individual schools, researchers were able to view Reading Recovery implementation in depth and in context, as well as document how the intervention served as an impetus of reform and improvement of the educational system when implemented well.

The data were collected over a period of 2- to-3-day site visits at schools that scaled up the training of teachers with i3 grant money. Researchers observed Reading Recovery lessons, took detailed field notes, shadowed the Reading Recovery teacher, observed instruction in first-grade classrooms, observed teacher leader visits, and conducted a series of one-to-one semistructured interviews with teacher leaders, teachers, and principals (May et al., p. 110). School data were examined, first individually, and then synthesized across cases to look for themes and patterns across and within cases.

At first glance, it appeared that all schools were implementing Reading Recovery with fidelity to the best of their ability and implementation looked similar across all 23 case studies. However, a more in-depth analysis revealed that there was great variation in the way “relationships formed around Reading Recovery, how well the program was understood by those outside of it, how deep a commitment teachers and administrators expressed to supporting and sustaining the program, and how much it appeared to be part of the school’s broader approach to literacy” (May et al., 2016, p. 115). All of these factors played an important part in influencing the levels of success each school achieved. Through the cross case analyses, researchers identified four schemas of understanding and commitment identified as Isolation, Obstruction, Endorsement, and Integration, summarized in Table 1.

Isolation Schema

The results of the analyses revealed that only two schools’ implementations were identified as Isolation.

In discussion of the low number of schools in this category, the researchers surmised that perhaps when implementation was this weak, Reading Recovery did not last within the school. Or, perhaps any schools with weak implementations did not volunteer to be part of the research. Researchers determined that in these schools, little groundwork had been laid prior to implementing Reading Recovery. Interviews revealed that principals had little buy-in and viewed Reading Recovery as too costly. The Reading Recovery teachers reported working in isolation with little support, communication, or validation from classroom teachers or the principals.
Implementation

Table 1. Four Schemas of Implementation Identified in the Final i3 Scale-Up Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Isolation</th>
<th>Obstruction</th>
<th>Endorsement</th>
<th>Integration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Understanding</td>
<td>Variable Understanding</td>
<td>Variable Understanding</td>
<td>High Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Commitment</td>
<td>Variable Commitment</td>
<td>High Commitment</td>
<td>High Commitment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Little or no shared understanding of Reading Recovery
- Little or no problem solving to ensure program fidelity
- No emphasis on the schoolwide impact of Reading Recovery
- Reading Recovery instructional time not protected
- Little Reading Recovery/classroom teacher communication
- Reading Recovery teacher not positioned as literacy leader or resource in the building
- Classroom instruction generally not supportive of Reading Recovery

- Variable understanding of Reading Recovery
- Variable commitment to Reading Recovery
- Limited principal engagement with Reading Recovery
- No emphasis on schoolwide impact of Reading Recovery
- Variable Reading Recovery teacher/classroom teacher communication
- Reading Recovery teacher not positioned as literacy leader or resource in the building
- Classroom instruction variably supportive of Reading Recovery
- Classroom instruction generally not supportive of Reading Recovery

- Variable understanding of Reading Recovery
- Active schoolwide problem solving to ensure program fidelity
- Principal passively engaged with Reading Recovery
- Little emphasis on schoolwide impact of Reading Recovery
- Reading Recovery instructional time protected
- Frequent Reading Recovery teacher/classroom teacher communication
- Reading Recovery teacher positioned as literacy leader or resource in the building
- Classroom instruction variably supportive of Reading Recovery

- Variable understanding of Reading Recovery
- Active schoolwide problem solving to ensure program fidelity
- Principal actively engaged with Reading Recovery
- Highly emphasized schoolwide impact of Reading Recovery
- Reading Recovery instructional time protected
- Frequent Reading Recovery teacher/classroom teacher communication
- Reading Recovery teacher positioned as literacy leader or resource in the building
- Classroom instruction generally supportive of Reading Recovery

- Schoolwide shared understanding of Reading Recovery
- Schoolwide active problem solving to ensure program fidelity
- Principal actively engaged with Reading Recovery
- Highly emphasized schoolwide impact of Reading Recovery
- Reading Recovery instructional time protected
- Frequent Reading Recovery teacher/classroom teacher communication
- Reading Recovery teacher positioned as literacy leader or resource in the building
- Classroom instruction generally supportive of Reading Recovery

SOURCE: May et al., 2016, pp. 118–137

Obstruction Schema

In schools whose schema of implementation was identified as Obstruction, there was variable commitment and understanding for a variety of reasons. Reading Recovery teachers often reported they had difficulty balancing their roles as Reading Recovery teachers with their roles the other part of the work day. Either the principal wasn’t protecting their instructional time, or in the case of teachers working in a shared classroom model, they felt conflicted about responsibility to individual students and responsibilities to the classroom of students they were leaving when they taught individual Reading Recovery lessons. In some schools, administrators and teachers talked about the ‘lack of fit’ between Reading Recovery and state or district curriculum and instruction priorities. Examples of lack of fit could be constraints on staffing models, or a perceived lack of fit between Reading Recovery and the needs of a school. Most often lack of fit was seen as an issue of competing priorities.

Endorsement Schema

Schools that were identified as having Endorsement schemas of implementation had administrators and teachers who were highly committed to Reading Recovery but knew little about the intervention itself. Classroom teachers reported that they recognized that children benefitted greatly from receiving Reading Recovery lessons and valued the program, but had no idea of what was involved in teaching the students. In Endorsement schools, Reading Recovery teachers were valued for their expertise by both the administration and classroom teachers. There was regular communication between Reading Recovery and classroom teachers about the students they had in common, but these conversations took place informally.
Looking closely at these categories of implementation could help administrators and Reading Recovery professionals evaluate their own schools in terms of what is working well and what could be improved to not only increase the outcomes for their Reading Recovery students, but also impact their total school literacy programs.

There were no formal structures for conferencing about students. Many of the principals were supportive, but took a hands-off approach; not taking an active role in implementing structures that would maximize the expertise of the Reading Recovery teachers, collaboration, or knowledge sharing.

Integration Schema
Almost half of the schools were implemented at the Integration level. This is the level of implementation that yielded the greatest impact, not only to the students, but to the schoolwide literacy initiative in general. It didn’t seem to matter how long Reading Recovery had been implemented since schools in this category ranged from 2–20 years of implementation. In these schools, Reading Recovery was used as an impetus to build capacity for literacy achievement. Reading Recovery teacher leaders and teachers were valued as having expertise, and both formal and informal structures were built to facilitate collaboration and knowledge sharing. Literacy team meetings were scheduled to discuss particular students or share planning time. Reading Recovery and classroom teachers worked as collaborative partners to benefit all students. Classroom instruction often aligned theoretically with literacy processing theory, and teachers used common language and strategies to make Reading Recovery and classroom instruction seamless for students who struggled. Principals were actively engaged in promoting collaboration, commitment, and resources to promote teamwork. They were vigilant in protecting Reading Recovery time, setting structures and opportunities for collaboration to ensure that Reading Recovery was well integrated into the whole school’s approach to literacy instruction. In these schools, Reading Recovery had become institutionalized.

Using the Implementation Schema Findings
Looking closely at these categories of implementation could help administrators and Reading Recovery professionals evaluate their own schools in terms of what is working well and what could be improved to not only increase the outcomes for their Reading Recovery students, but also impact their total school literacy programs.

Make an appointment with your site coordinator or principal to discuss the i3 implementation findings and work to problem solve areas that could be improved.

Additional Implementation Issues
There were three areas that researchers identified as not meeting fidelity in the area of school-level implementation: (a) commitment to implementation, (b) student selection, and (c) timing of the start of lessons.

Commitment to Implementation
The standards for selection of teachers states that, “[Teachers] be employed in a school that has a commitment to implementation” (RRCNA, 2012, p. 9), and this was interpreted by the researchers to mean that the school be committed to train enough teachers to reach full implementation or the capacity to serve every student who needs Reading Recovery as a literacy intervention. In interviews, Reading Recovery teachers were asked if their school was fully implemented or had plans to train more teachers in the future. If they responded positively to either question the standard was considered met. The standard was not met at the 80% criteria in 3 of the 5 years of the study. The research suggested “many schools in the scale-up fell short of full implementation or the capacity to serve every student who needs Reading Recovery as a literacy intervention” (May et al., 2016, p. 78). Fidelity, or commitment to full implementation, is often a long-term commitment to the standard, taking years to work toward full implementation due to staffing and financial constraints. It was not evident in the report if follow-up questions gave case study participants the chance to
explain their long-term commitment to fully implement Reading Recovery, even though in the short term their schools fell short of the standard.

**Student Selection**
The second area of concern at the school implementation level had to do with student selection, and this was discovered in Year 2. Based on teacher interviews, 78% of teachers reported that children with the lowest scores were selected for Reading Recovery. The Year 2 CPRE report (May et al., 2014) stated that students were often excluded from the intervention based on high absenteeism or special education status.

Reading Recovery has always mandated the selection of the lowest children (Clay, 1991; Clay, 1993; Clay, 1998; Forbes, 2001; Lose & Konstantellou, 2005; *A Principal’s Guide to Reading Recovery, 2002, 2012*), but the second-year report prompted Reading Recovery trainers to respond with a formal reminder for all implementations to recommit to this non-negotiable tenet. Trainers adopted a compilation of past guidance from a variety of Reading Recovery resources to provide further rationale for selecting the lowest students, now incorporated into *Standards and Guidelines of Reading Recovery in the United States, 7th Edition*, as Appendix C. As a result of this reaffirmation, in Years 3 and 4, fidelity was up to 84% and 88%, respectively.

**Timing of the Start of Lessons**
The third area of concern at the school implementation level had to do with the timing of the start of lessons. In Years 3 and 4, 25% of teachers reported that they were unable to meet the standard of administering the Observation Survey and beginning Reading Recovery lessons within 2 weeks of the start of school. Teachers reported that schoolwide assessment and support of teachers at the beginning of the school year made it difficult for them to test and begin Reading Recovery student lessons.

**Conclusion: Lessons Learned and Work to Do**
Just as Reading Recovery teachers work from a complex theory when teaching students, implementation requires a more-complex systems approach in schools. The i3 study has contributed to the field of education by providing a close look at the many aspects that contribute to a successful, national implementation of an intervention engaged in scaling up. The i3 study confirmed what Reading Recovery educators know from research and observations of the over 30 years of Reading Recovery implementation in the United States. In *Changing Futures* (Schmitt, Askew, Fountas, Lyons, & Pinnell, 2005), the authors identified critical factors of implementation that are parallel to the critical factors related to high-quality, successful implementation discussed in the i3 report (May et al., 2016). A summary of these factors includes the following:

- Informed, committed, and supportive leadership, formal opportunities for collaboration and communication, and resources are essential to successful implementations of Reading Recovery within a comprehensive literacy approach.
- Shared understandings of the purposes and process of Reading Recovery and responsibility for each child served are necessary for Reading Recovery’s success.
- Adequate coverage, or a fully implemented Reading Recovery intervention realized over several years, leads to a dramatic reduction in the numbers of children with literacy difficulties.
- Reading Recovery is an investment in teachers’ expertise. Reading Recovery provides both excellent initial and essential ongoing professional learning for Reading Recovery teachers.
- Data drives decision making and problem solving at every level in Reading Recovery. 

**Reading Recovery is a collaborative venture.**
Marie Clay (2001) knew that for Reading Recovery to survive, the implementation model would have to take a systems approach — a redirecting system of support that would involve networks of people working together to problem solve issues focused on the needs of struggling readers.
The final i3 report provides yet another type of data which Reading Recovery professionals can examine to introspectively evaluate their own implementations and to discover suggestions for deriving the most benefit from their investment in teachers and children. Findings from the report have provided Reading Recovery stakeholders an opportunity to revisit these factors, problem solve, and take action.

The second lesson we might learn from the i3 report is that everyone has responsibility for fidelity to training, ongoing professional development, and teaching of children. Reading Recovery is a collaborative venture. Marie Clay (2001) knew that for Reading Recovery to survive, the implementation model would have to take a systems approach — a redirecting system of support that would involve networks of people working together to problem solve issues focused on the needs of struggling readers.

This i3 report provides another opportunity to objectively look at data at every level and work together to improve outcomes for the most educationally vulnerable learners.

References


About the Authors
Dr. Connie Briggs is a professor and chair of the Department of Reading Education at Texas Woman’s University. She has served in many leadership roles for the Council as well as the North American Trainers Group and International Reading Recovery Trainers Organization.

Dr. Barbara Honchell is the trainer and director of Reading Recovery at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. She is currently the chair of the North American Trainers Group Implementation Committee and has served on that committee for over 10 years.
Parents, teachers, educational and political leaders have long recognized the need and continually strived to ensure that all of our nation’s children enjoy the benefits of early literacy learning (Chall, 1996; Flesch, 1955; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Despite widespread concern, the educational community has failed to sufficiently support 2 out of 3 children by fourth grade to reach literacy levels we define as proficient, with our highest failure rates among children from poor Black, Latino, and American Indian families (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016).

While every commercial reading program promises to bring the latest scientific research to bear on this problem, even well-funded scale-up attempts have had little to no effect. One exception to this pattern is the independent evaluation of the Reading Recovery® scale-up grant. This research demonstrates that it is possible to widely implement an early intervention approach, based in professional development, intended to prevent reading difficulties for 70–80% of the lowest-performing first-grade students with 12–20 weeks of individual, daily 30-minute lessons (Clay, 2005a, 2005b). Reading Recovery also aims to identify the strengths and needs of children requiring additional long-term literacy support (Clay, 1987; Jones, Johnson, Schwartz, & Zalud, 2010; Vellutino, 2010). A more-detailed description of Reading Recovery’s theoretical base, professional development, assessment, progress monitoring, and instructional practices can be found in Changing Futures: The Influence of Reading Recovery in the United States (Schmitt, Askew, Fountas, Lyons, & Pinnell, 2005).

In 2010, The Ohio State University, in partnership with 18 Reading Recovery university training centers, received an Investing in Innovation (i3) scale-up grant. The grant totaled $45 million, with an additional $10.1 million raised from private sources, to cover the expansion of Reading Recovery around the U.S. (See Rodgers & D’Agostino, 2012 for a description of the project.) Of this, $4 million was earmarked for the completion of the independent evaluation of the scale-up effort between 2011 and 2015 (D’Agostino, personal communication, May 9, 2016).

Scale-up grants were awarded to innovations with the strongest evidence of effectiveness to determine whether similar results could be demonstrated in a variety of schools, demographic groups, and implementation conditions. The scale-up goal for the Reading Recovery grant was “training 3,675 new Reading Recovery teachers; providing one-to-one Reading Recovery lessons to an additional 67,264 students; and, delivering other instruction—generally classroom or small-group instruction—to 302,688 more students via teachers trained in Reading Recovery during the scale-up” (May, Sirinides, Gray, & Goldsworthy, 2016, p. 2).

Scale-up outcomes
The Reading Recovery network was very successful in meeting these targets. The evaluators (May et al., 2016) report that the scale-up surpassed its goals for the number of Reading Recovery teachers trained (3,747 or 102% of the scale-up goal),
The major goal of the independent evaluation was to provide experimental evidence that the intervention continued to demonstrate a strong impact on the literacy learning of the lowest-performing first-grade students as the Reading Recovery community expanded.
level using ‘‘broad scope’’ standardized tests as outcomes found the average effect size was 0.08 standard deviations. So, at 0.37 standard deviations the Reading Recovery effect on the ITBS Total Reading score ‘‘was 4.6 times greater than average for studies that use comparable outcome measures’’ (p. 42).

- A meta-analysis of Title I programs (Borman & D’Agostino, 1996) posits the Reading Recovery impact was 3.5 times the average effect of Title I interventions.

- Finally, the norms for the ITBS Total Reading score indicate an additional 1.6 months of learning for the Reading Recovery group, a growth rate that is 31% greater than the national average for first grade (p. 43).

This impact is sufficiently large to close the achievement gap between many of our most-at-risk students and their average peers by the end of first grade.

Previous Attempts to Address Low Literacy Achievement

The Reading Recovery i3 grant is certainly not the first attempt to address the individual and societal costs of low literacy achievement. These problems persist despite extraordinary investments of state and federal resources.

Reading First

The Reading First component of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (PL. 107-110, Title I, Part B, Subpart 1) mandated $1 billion per year to invest general education and Title I funds in support of these early intervention services. The 2011–2012 evaluation studied ‘‘a reference sample of schools representative of elementary schools in the 13 states included in the evaluation and an impact sample of 146 elementary schools with 3 or more years of implementing RTI approaches in reading’’ (p. ES-1).

The impact sample showed a high rate of implementation of the assessment, staffing, and data-based decision processes related to RTI. The effectiveness of these RTI practices were evaluated using an RD design that ‘‘compared the difference in reading outcomes between students whose fall screening test scores were just above the cut point for Tier 2 intervention set by the schools and those whose scores were just below’’ (p. ES-6). No statistical differences were found for children who received RTI services versus children who did not on measures of word recognition in Grades 1 or 2, and no differences on state reading tests at third grade after multiple years of RTI services. Surprisingly, the evaluation indicated a significant negative impact on reading comprehension for children receiving RTI services in first grade!

Can Early Literacy Gains Be Sustained? Exploration and Expectations

Reading Recovery is an RTI approach that was not evaluated in the Balu et al. (2015) study. Given the large, positive impacts on literacy learning in first grade demonstrated by Reading Recovery, the i3 evaluation attempted to go beyond assessing the immediate impact of the intervention by using an RD analysis to estimate the sustained effects, 2 years after the intervention in third grade. The
design and analysis used to examine sustained effects was considerably weaker than that used to examine the immediate impact of Reading Recovery (May et al., 2016).

This design required comparing outcomes for students who received the Reading Recovery intervention relative to students who scored slightly higher on the first-grade screening tasks and therefore did not receive the intervention. Only students from schools assigned to the RD study in the first 2 years of implementation had reached third grade by the final year of the grant and therefore had outcome scores on a state assessment test. Attrition, due to various causes, further reduced the number of schools available for this analysis from 325 to 77.

An additional complication in this exploration of sustained effects is that low-performing students in these schools could continue to receive small-group instruction from Reading Recovery trained teachers for 2 years after the intervention period ended. These continued RTI services could reduce any differences between the treatment and comparison group over time. Thus, it was not surprising that the overall RD analysis showed no effect on third-grade state tests.

Even with these design problems, a subgroup analysis of students judged to have made accelerated progress during the intervention period (those students whose programs were considered successfully discontinued) showed a marginally significant ($p < .10$, but $>.05$), positive effect of .19 standard deviations on the third-grade state tests.

Annual Reading Recovery national evaluations (see D’Agostino & Brownfield, 2016 or Gómez-Bellengé & Thompson, 2000 for examples) continually demonstrate that children who make accelerated progress during Reading Recovery interventions in the fall continued to make gains across the 3–5 months following the intervention. The question for schools and school districts is not whether these children will sustain their gains relative to a control group receiving literacy support over the next few years, but rather under what conditions these children will continue to benefit from classroom instruction so we are successful in helping them become proficient readers.

**Effectiveness and Cost**

It is worth noting that neither the Reading First study nor the RTI evaluation attempted to examine sustained effects since they were not able to demonstrate a positive immediate impact on a measure of reading comprehension and very minimal effects on word level reading. Because the i3 program differs considerably from the conditions involved in these legislative initiatives, it is more appropriate to compare the Reading Recovery i3 evaluation to the independent evaluation of Success for All’s (SFA) i3 scale-up grant (Quint, Zhu, Balu, Rappaport, & DeLaurentis, 2015).

**Success for All**

In the overview, the evaluators described SFA as “one of the best-known school reform initiatives. Combining a challenging reading program, whole-school reform elements, and an emphasis on continuous improvement, it seeks to ensure that every child learns to read well in the elementary grades” (p. iii). SFA used the grant to expand to 447 new schools and reached 276,000 students. The evaluation used an RCT design to compared student performance in 19 schools that
implemented SFA to students in 18 similar schools that used alternative reading programs (but not Reading Recovery).

The primary analysis examined effects for second-grade students who had participated in the SFA schools since kindergarten and compared them to students in the control group schools. This 3-year treatment resulted in no significant differences from the control group on

- a comprehension measure (Woodcock-Johnson Passage Comprehension),
- a measure of word reading efficiency (TOWRE2), or
- measures of letter and word identification (Woodcock-Johnson Letter-Word Identification).

The only significant difference was on a measure of nonsense-word reading (Woodcock-Johnson Word Attack), with a .15 standard deviation effect (Quint et al., 2015).

The evaluators further break down this analysis to look at second-grade students in the SFA or control group who were identified as high or low performers based on their kindergarten reading level. For the initially low-performing students, this analysis resulted in a slightly larger effect on the nonsense-word reading task (.23 standard deviations), with marginally significant gains (p < .10, but > .05) on the Woodcock-Johnson Letter-Word Identification (.17 standard deviations) and the measure of word reading efficiency (.19 standard deviations).

There were no significant effects on any of these measures for the high-performing students in this analysis and neither high-nor low-performing SFA students showed significant gains on the comprehension measure relative to students in the control group schools (Quint et al., 2015).

**Comparative Costs**

Cost and cost-effectiveness estimates are always complex. In their executive summary, the evaluators claim “scale-up findings show that, for a modest investment, SFA reliably improves the decoding skills of students in kindergarten through second grade, and that it is especially beneficial for students who begin in the lower half in these skills” (Quint et al., 2015, pp. ES5–6). The SFA scale-up provides considerable information on the cost of implementing SFA relative to the costs of the literacy program in control schools within one district. Again in the executive summary, they report “program group schools spent about $227 worth of resources per student per year more than control group schools to implement their respective reading programs” (p. ES5). Of course, this is $227 per student per year for every student in Grades K–5, with the only effect shown for second-grade students reading nonsense words. For students in third, fourth, and fifth grades, after 3 years of SFA there were no effects favoring the SFA group, and one marginally significant difference (- .13 standard deviations) on the fourth-grade state test that favored the control group (see Table 5.6, p. 86).

The information in the SFA evaluation (Quint et al., 2015) provides a way to compare the relative cost of scaling up Reading Recovery and SFA. The funding for the SFA i3 grant was approximately equivalent to the Reading Recovery grant, about $50 million dollars over 5 years. With these funds, SFA served some 276,000 students enrolled in 447 schools over the first 4 years of the grant, and estimate that they will serve an additional 34,000 in the final grant year. Dividing the grant funds by the total students served yields a cost of $161 per student served in SFA schools.

The Reading Recovery final evaluation (May et al., 2016) indicates that teachers who received Reading Recovery professional development served 61,992 first-grade children in one-to-one Reading Recovery interventions and an additional 325,458 students in other contexts. Dividing the grant funds by these totals yields $807 per child served in the Reading Recovery intervention, and $129 per student served, in any context, by Reading Recovery i3 teachers. The higher per-student estimates of Reading Recovery intervention costs in previous studies (Shanahan & Barr, 1995; Hollands et al., 2013) included the portion of the intervention teacher’s salary devoted to one-to-one instruction. As in the SFA implementation, most schools did not hire new teachers to implement Reading Recovery. Rather, principals re-assigned teachers to participate in the professional development and provide intervention services.

While salary is a very real cost for districts, it is not an additional cost for schools that are currently using literacy coaches and intervention teachers to provide the far less-effective services described in the SFA,
Reading First, or RTI evaluations. The persistent literacy crisis in our schools strongly warrants investing resources in interventions, like Reading Recovery, that have demonstrated the ability to produce a large impact when broadly implemented.

Implementation and Variation
In each of these evaluations, there was considerable variation in outcomes both among students and schools. In the RTI evaluation, for example, 38 of the 119 schools had positive effect estimates and 81 had negative effects estimates (Balu et al., 2015, see Table ES.5). Many of these school effect estimates were small and not statistically different from zero, though the average effect across all these schools was significantly negative. Similarly, some schools used Reading First funding to improve literacy outcomes for their students, even though the program evaluation showed no average effect on comprehension measures (Gamse et al., 2008).

The Reading Recovery evaluation (May et al., 2016) also shows significant differences among schools on student outcomes. Since the school effect is slightly less than the treatment effects, over 84% of the schools would have positive treatment effects and about 16% would have negative treatment estimates. This variation in effectiveness across schools highlights the difficulty of bringing even a highly effective intervention to scale (Bryk et al., 2015). The evaluators note that “while the effects of Reading Recovery overall were positive and medium to large (See Chapter 2: Immediate Impacts of Reading Recovery), we observed considerable variation in school-level impact estimates that is not explained by our main finding that the program was consistently implemented with high fidelity across the scale-up” (May et al., p. 82).

The evaluators devote several chapters to discussion of implementation issues. This is important information for school administrators. Based on lesson observations and 23 field-based case studies, the evaluators identified factors that can contribute to school-level variation in outcomes, including variations in teachers’ deliberateness and instructional dexterity, as well as “patterns of communication about Reading Recovery within the school and the principal’s engagement with the program” (May et al., 2016, p. 4).

Variations in student outcomes across schools could be related to variations in the selection of teachers to participate in the Reading Recovery professional development, possible difference in the quality of the professional development teachers received, and/or how the program was positioned within the school community during initial adoption and subsequent implementation (May et al., 2016).

Learning to Improve
Implementing a complex, intensive intervention is hard work. It is hard work for the intervention teachers who participate in the professional development and teach struggling beginning readers. It is hard work for primary classroom teachers who support these children before, during, and after the intervention. It is hard work for administrators who manage the implementation in their school and within the district’s professional community. It is hard work for the teacher leaders, university faculty, and the staff of the Reading Recovery Council of North America (RRCNA) who support multiple levels of learning within the Reading Recovery community.

Richard Allington and others have repeatedly warned that there is no quick fix for the literacy challenges of our nation, nor for the needs of our most at-risk children (Allington & Walmsley, 1995; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). No set of materials, computer programs, or even professional development experiences will meet this challenge. If you are looking for a quick fix, don’t look to Reading Recovery! The good news from the Reading Recovery i3 evaluation is that if we are willing to do the work, we can make a meaningful impact on the literacy learning of many of our most at-risk students (May et al., 2016).
Anthony Bryk, as president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, has challenged educators to learn to improve through networked communities that identify, adapt, and successfully scale up promising interventions (Bryk et al., 2015). Reading Recovery has a 40-year history of scaling up internationally. The impressive results in the i3 evaluation reflect the lessons we learned as the Reading Recovery community problem solved implementations across schools, districts, and countries with unique strengths and challenges (Clay, 2001). The variation in outcomes among schools shown in the i3 evaluation reafirms Clay’s belief that there is always more to learn.

Bryk et al. (2015) argue that reducing negative variation and improving overall quality is the primary goal of a networked improvement community. This orientation “directs attention away from simplistic thinking about solutions in terms of ‘What works?’ toward a more realistic appraisal of ‘What works, for whom, and under what set of conditions?’” (p. 13–14).

RRCNA will continue to learn with teachers and administrators across the educational community as we build on the i3 scale-up research to further optimize early intervention services for young children and construct systems to support their ongoing literacy success (Askew, Pinnell, & Scherer, 2014; Atteberry & Bryk, 2011; Dorn & Schubert, 2010). We encourage new districts and professionals to participate in the scale-up of Reading Recovery, contribute to and learn from our Reading Recovery network, and join us in ensuring that all students gain the literacy skills needed for the 21st Century. Additional information about Reading Recovery may be found on the RRCNA website at http://readingrecovery.org.

References


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**About the Author**

Bob Schwartz is an emeritus professor in the Department of Reading and Language Arts at Oakland University in Rochester, MI. He is a past president of and current research consultant for, the Reading Recovery Council of North America. His research interests include self-monitoring in beginning reading, early literacy intervention, research design, and professional development for literacy teachers. In the What Works Clearinghouse 2007 review of 887 studies from 153 beginning reading programs, Dr. Schwartz’s Reading Recovery research was one of only 27 studies that met WWC’s standards without reservations.

Contact: rschwart@oakland.edu
Making Instructional Decisions: Deepening Our Understanding of English Learners’ Processing in Reading

Allison Briceño, San José State University
Adria F. Klein, Saint Mary’s College of California

While both classroom teachers and Reading Recovery teachers may use running records every day, it can be difficult to know if they are acquiring the most important information. Since running records are intended to guide instruction, the skillfulness of a teacher’s analysis can significantly impact the instruction a student receives and therefore her reading development (Clay, 2013; Fried, 2013; Kaye & Van Dyke, 2012). English learners (ELs) are learning to read and write while simultaneously learning the language of instruction (English), and little research has been done on analyzing ELs’ running records. Since oral language is the foundation of beginning reading (Clay, 2001), young ELs’ reading behaviors are likely to develop in differently patterned ways than monolingual English students’ behaviors.

In order to better understand the reading behaviors of struggling EL students who are learning to read in English while learning the English language, we analyzed 123 running records from nine EL students’ Reading Recovery lesson series, looking for language-related patterns across the whole series of lessons. In this article we explore the existing research on running records, the role of oral language in reading acquisition, and some aspects of second language acquisition (SLA) that may impact young EL students’ literacy acquisition. We then share the five most common language-related errors found in this study and make instructional suggestions for supporting ELs as they simultaneously acquire English language and literacy. Our aim is to help teachers of ELs reexamine running records with a second language lens so they can better craft targeted scaffolding for the needs of their EL students.

Running Records
Clay’s (1967, 1982) running record provides a consistent pattern of recording reading behaviors that can be used to infer changes in processing over time. Teachers code the sources of information (meaning, syntax, or visual — M, S, or V) that students use at point of difficulty (Clay, 2011, 2013). Running records are intended to reduce the error of personal bias in the observer to a minimum (Clay, 1982, 2013), and when analyzed are

When coding running records we infer what sources of information a child was using at point of difficulty. Second language acquisition research can help to predict some reasons for common errors among ELs based on what is known about how English is commonly acquired as a second language.
evidence of students’ in-the-moment literacy processing which increases in complexity as students become more proficient readers (McGee, Kim, Nelson, & Fried, 2015). An effective means of identifying changes in children’s processing of text, running records show that beginning readers significantly increase their use of productive strategic actions (e.g., self-monitoring, cross-checking, self-correcting) over time, while their use of unproductive actions and incorrect attempts decline (Schmitt, 2001).

Running records have also been used to determine that emergent struggling readers tend to use primarily meaning and structure but neglect visual information (Kelly, Klein, & Neal, 1993). Since “detailed observations can provide feedback to our instruction,” (Clay, 2013, p. 4) running records have long been used to plan more-targeted lessons (Clay, 1967, 1982; Fried, 2013; Kaye & Van Dyke, 2012). In fact, running records were identified as a best practice in effective schools (Pressley, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Block, & Morrow, 2001), and one study found 12% greater student achievement in reading in schools that used running records compared with schools that did not (Ross, 2004). Additionally, deeper analysis of running records, and the subsequent ability to better identify language-related versus literacy-related learning difficulties, could potentially decrease the over-dentification of EL students as requiring special education for reading difficulties (Harry & Klinger, 2006).

One possible reason for the positive impact of running records may be the type of information they provide to teachers and the resulting instruction. When taking running records, teachers observe the child’s reading behaviors and infer from those observations how the child processes text (Clay, 2013; Doyle, 2013). The teacher then looks for patterns to determine what the child is able to do independently, what needs reinforcement, and what needs to be taught. The coding of running records, therefore, directly impacts instruction: If the teacher does not consider language-related errors, the instruction may not adequately address the EL’s needs.

Clay (2001) found that students’ cognitive and perceptual working systems strengthen when they work on continuous texts. Changes in these working systems can be observed over time using running records, “for it is in processing complete messages that the working systems for literacy are engaged and developed” (Doyle, 2013, p. 637). Therefore, our study did not focus on item knowledge such as letter identification or even vocabulary knowledge. Instead, we used running records to explore how children process text to make it meaningful.

The Role of Oral Language in Reading

One of the sources of information children use when reading, and the one relied upon most heavily by beginning readers, is language (Clay, 1982, 2001). Clay wrote, “The successful early reader brings his speech to bear on the interpretation of print. His vocabulary, sentence patterns and pronunciation of words provide him with information which guides his identification of printed words” (2013, p. 51). Young children rely on their syntax at points of difficulty when reading, using their oral language to anticipate what words might come next and using visual information to filter possibilities (Clay, 1982). Consequently, self-monitoring and self-correcting may be challenging for emergent ELs who are learning about serial and hierarchical order while still unsure if what they are attempting to read sounds right in English (Clay, 1991). Despite Clay’s (2004) suggestion to “look more closely at language behaviors … Knowing what the pupil does leads to more significant teaching” (p. 105), running records traditionally have not been used to consider specifically the impact of EL’s language on their early literacy progress. ELs may still be developing some of the structural and vocabulary knowledge that could help them read, and less English linguistic knowledge may interfere with their ability to predict text (Johnston, 1997). For example, if a child is unfamiliar with a vocabulary word, he may be able to decode it, but the ability to decode the word will not help the child comprehend text unless he also knows the word’s meaning in continuous text.

Unfamiliar book language may interfere with the reading process (Clay, 2001, 2004, 2013). It is critical, therefore, that in the earliest stages of emergent reading teachers observe the oral language students control and match the books and instruction to the child’s language, scaffolding book language that might hinder literacy processing (Clay, 2004). Very quickly teachers can begin to introduce new language structures within the child’s zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Clay (2004) reminds us that children learn new structures as they negotiate meaning both in conversation and while reading texts. Experience and practice with different types of language are
necessary for students to develop a wide repertoire. Cazden (1983) wrote, “Ideally we should provide opportunities for children to practice a growing range of discourse functions (explaining, narrating, instructing) first in situations where models and supports are available, then gradually with less help” (p. 13).

Second Language Acquisition
Clay reminds us to value children’s home language:

Children who come to school speaking any language will have a preparation for literacy learning that is to be valued, whatever that prior language is … We need to see them as competent children who speak and problem-solve well in their first culture. (2005a, p. 6)

Oral language helps children transition to written language. Consider the similarities between the acts of negotiating meaning when reading and when in conversation. In conversation, an EL can ask her interlocutor a clarifying question; this negotiation of meaning through conversation facilitates language acquisition. As Long (1996) stated, “Negotiation for meaning, and especially negotiation work that triggers interactional adjustments by the [native] speaker or more competent interlocutor facilitates acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways” (pp. 451–452). Negotiation of meaning, or communicative competence, is the goal rather than accuracy in the use of language; accuracy may or may not develop over time.

In reading, students cannot ask the author clarifying questions. Instead, they must learn other ways to self-monitor for comprehension, including rereading, using pictures, and relying on visual cues, which are absent during speech. Similar to the concept of communicative competence, we argue that active comprehending—rather than 100% accuracy—should be the goal of reading. When accuracy is emphasized over fluency and comprehension, a child’s understanding of the text may be inhibited (Pikulski & Chard, 2005).

When coding running records we infer what sources of information a child was using at point of difficulty. Second language acquisition research can help to predict some reasons for common errors among ELs based on what is known about how English is commonly acquired as a second language (Larsen-Freeman, 2010). Since the 1970s, it has been known that most ELs acquire the -ing ending before the -ed and -s endings on verbs (Brown, 1973; Hakuta, 1976; Krashen, 1977; Larsen-Freeman, 1975). However, an EL’s first language impacts how they acquire English. ELs who speak languages that add an -s to denote a plural are likely to acquire the plural -s in English sooner than ELs who speak languages that mark plurals in other ways or that do not use the sound /s/ in the final position (e.g., Mandarin, Korean, and Japanese speakers) (Hakuta, 1976; Luk & Shirai, 2009).

Irregular past tense verbs also tend to be difficult for ELs (Hakuta, 1976; Rumelhart & McClelland, 1985), as well as for some native English speakers. Yet, early reader texts are full of words like came, ran, and went. Many teachers have heard incorrectly generalized versions of those verbs: “comed,” “runned” and “goed.” While it may be somewhat counter-intuitive, young EL students tend to acquire irregular verbs that vary significantly from the root verb (e.g., was, were, am, is and are all are from the verb to be) sooner than irregular verbs that conjugate similarly to the root verb. In other words, a child will likely include said (past tense of to say) and went (past tense of to go) in their oral repertoire sooner than says or goes (Ionin & Wexler, 2002). As students begin acquiring the regular -ed endings, they may also overgeneralize and say words such as “singed” and “swummed” instead of sang and swam (Clay, 1983; Rumelhart & McClelland, 1985).

Second language acquisition research has also recognized how difficult prepositions can be for ELs (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005). Prepositions perform many functions in English and are used to express where, when, and with whom something is done. Often the choice of preposition is seemingly arbitrary (e.g., why do we get on a plane rather than in a plane?), making them exceedingly difficult for English learners. While SLA research has identified some common patterns of language acquisition, individual students’ English acquisition will vary, as students take different paths to common outcomes (Clay, 2014).
Methods
This study explored teachers’ use of running records with EL first graders who were struggling to learn to read. We collected ELs’ lesson data across a Reading Recovery lesson series and asked ourselves: What types of language-related errors do EL students make when reading? To answer that question, we gathered weekly running records, lesson plans, and postlesson notes from nine monolingual English Reading Recovery teachers in California and Texas. The teachers in the study had between 2 and 15 years of experience in Reading Recovery. Each teacher submitted weekly running records and analyses for one first grader; running records for a total of nine students were analyzed. To maintain confidentiality we refer to the teachers as T1, T2 … T9.

The students were first-grade ELs who were struggling with English literacy and, therefore, were receiving Reading Recovery lessons. All students were native Spanish speakers classified at the emerging or expanding stage of English language proficiency at the beginning of the lesson series per the California English Language Development Standards (2012) and were in English-only instructional programs. Emerging and expanding actually represent six EL designations, as students can be classified as beginning, middle, or exiting each designation. The selection of the California designations was arbitrary; the students were from two states. Texas teachers assigned a level to their students based on the results of the Texas English language development assessment, their knowledge of the student, and the California language level descriptors.

We coded 123 running records containing 649 errors and identified 349 language-related errors based on codes we had identified from the literature (e.g., Gibbons, 1993; Nemecek, Klein, Briceño, & Wray, 2011; Weber, 2008). Specifically, we focused on the linguistic knowledge required for reading tasks. We each independently coded all of the running records and then discussed our analysis of each error. Only errors were coded; self-corrections, repetitions, and other markings are outside the scope of this study.

Findings
Of the 123 running records, 117 (95%) contained language-related errors, and 54% of the 649 total errors were language-related. For each student, 44–69% of errors were language-related, with an average of 54%. The text levels ranged from 3–16, with a mean and median of 9. For the purposes of this paper, we will discuss the five most common reasons, which comprised 94% of all language-related errors: Tolds, inflectional endings, irregular verbs, contractions, and prepositions. The largest group of errors (31%) was instances in which the teacher had to tell the child the word (give a Told) because the child was unable to read a word and did not continue. Irregular verb tenses (e.g., came, fell) comprised 19% of language-related errors, and inflectional endings (e.g., –ing, –ed, –s) were the cause of another 19%. Contractions (e.g., I’ll, he’s) constituted 13% of language-related errors, and prepositions (words that show spacial, temporal, or other relationships) comprised another 12%. There was relative consistency across the nine students. Table 1 summarizes the findings.

Table 1. Language-Related Errors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language-Related Error</th>
<th>Percent of Total Language-Related Errors</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tolds</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>When a student comes to an unknown word, stops, and is told the word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregular Verb Tense</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>Verbs that conjugate in nonstandard ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflectional Endings</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>Word endings that (1) determine verb tense (–ing, –ed, and –s, and (2) denote plurals on nouns (–s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractions</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>A word produced by connecting two or more words together and leaving out some of the letters or sounds (e.g., isn’t is a contraction of is and not)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepositions</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>Words that express relations to other words, such as “He went to the park.” “It was under the chair.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Tolds**

The majority of Tolds (62%) were likely due to unknown vocabulary such as thermos, roller skate, log, barked, net, detective, hippopotamus, biscuits, whiskers, and galaxy. It is unclear how these Tolds impacted comprehension. Figure 1 is an example of a student needing two Tolds within an eight-word span. Not knowing the words log or flowers, the student needed to be told both words on this page.

The remaining 41 Tolds (12% of total language-related errors) seemed to be a result of structural patterns that were not yet part of the EL’s language, including the use of question words at the beginning of a sentence such as what, where, and why. Other syntactical items that resulted in Tolds were the use of the conditional would; sight words such as come or here when they occurred at the beginning of a sentence and page; and the uncommon word shall.

**Irregular Verb Tense**

Irregular verb tenses caused another 19% of language-related errors. For example, instead of reading the word fed, two individual students read food, feed and continued on. There were multiple instances of students reading come for came, run for ran, wake for woke, make for made, take for took, and get for got, among others. In Figure 2, the student struggled specifically with two irregular verbs, ate and cried.

Her attempts for ate were eat, at, a final result which made use of visual information but not meaning or structural information. She attempted “cried” and crying for cried, this time focusing on visual information and meaning but not structural information.

Students seemed to use the present tense instead of the irregular past tense. Interestingly, there were only two instances in which the student overgeneralized the -ed ending to an irregular verb, reading “falled” for fell and “shooked” for shook. Irregular verbs can be a particular challenge for EL students, as the past tense –ed rule, which they are learning to use with other verbs, typically does not apply.

**Inflectional Endings**

Inflectional endings were the cause of another 19% of language-related errors. We divided inflectional endings into two subcategories — those that attach to nouns, such as the plural –s, and those that attach to verbs. Almost two-thirds (64%) of inflectional ending errors were associated with regular verbs. In many cases, the ELs left off the inflectional ending, which shows the tense, and it was usually the -ed ending. For example, ELs commonly read like for liked, look for looked, and shout for shouted. Students also dropped the final –ing or –s, reading shake for shaking, run for running, fish for fishing and look for looks. These errors may be due to the EL student being familiar with the verb but not yet able to conjugate it consistently.

Other instances of inflectional ending errors also reflected SLA research, which states that most students acquire the –ing ending before the –ed, with the third person singular –s coming last (Hakuta, 1976; Krashen, 1977; Larsen-Freeman, 1975). Accordingly, students replaced an –ed or –s ending with an –ing ending such as fishing for fished, jumping for jumped, painting for painted, running for runs, and smelling for smells. If a child cannot determine that the verb does not sound right in the sentence, he cannot monitor for syntax and self-correct. The impact of verb ending errors on comprehension is unclear. Do students know...
who is doing the action if the verb is misread? Or when the action happened/is happening/will happen? For example, in Figure 3, the student left off the final –s in grows four times.

While it is difficult to infer how a child is processing based only on correct responses, there is evidence that this student is looking to the end of words, as she read planted and into correctly, so it is possible that the student had not yet acquired the –s on third person singular verbs.

The other 36% of inflectional ending errors were made on nouns. ELs omitted the plural –s, reading the singular noun instead of the plural, for example, flower instead of flowers, duck instead of ducks, etc. In one running record, a child overgeneralized the plural –s, adding it to the collective noun children (childrens), but just a few pages later the same child left off the –s, reading eye instead of eyes. Seemingly, the child was beginning to acquire the plural –s but was still uncertain about its usage. Inconsistency and overgeneralization with linguistic rules also aligns with first and SLA theory as children begin to construct their understanding of how language works (Clay, 2004; Krashen, 1981).

**Contractions**

There are three stages of a learning a contraction: (a) the affirmative term (e.g., do); (b) two words either as a transformation to a negative statement (do not) or a combination of two words without a transformation (I am), showing an understanding of meaning but not of pragmatic language used in speech and some books; and (c) the contraction (e.g., don’t), where the learner maintains meaning, pragmatics, and when reading, is consistent with the visual information on the page.

Some students appeared to be at the first stage and seemed not to notice, or ignored, the contraction, reading it for it’s, I for I’ll, I for I’m, and that for that’s. Students in the second stage made contraction errors that were less likely to impact comprehension, such as I am instead of I’m, I will for I’ll, didn’t for did not, won’t for will not and don’t for didn’t. There was no measurable difference in contractions that transformed the statement to a negative and those that did not. In Figure 4, the student did not identify the first contraction, reading It for It’s, and then noticed, but was unable to fix, the contraction, let’s.

In one case the child seemed to struggle to coordinate the meaning and visual cues of a contraction. The word in the text was didn’t. The child read don’t, maintaining meaning but not structure or visual information, and then decided on did, maintaining visual information and structure but not meaning. Similarly, other students made contraction errors that likely impacted comprehension, such as can’t for can, wouldn’t for would, and did for don’t. A few contractions resulted in Tolds when the child could not continue (e.g., wasn’t and isn’t). Finally, some students made errors in possessives with proper names (e.g., reading Kate for Kate’s). These errors were not studied for the purpose of this analysis, and are linguistically different from contractions and the inflectional –s.

**Prepositions**

Prepositions show relationships such as time, place, and direction. As such, they can be important to comprehension; whether someone sits in a car or on a car may be relevant to one’s safety. However, children commonly mixed prepositions that shared some visual information, such as of and for, to and at, and, as in Figure 5, on and in.

While in a pig, duck, or horse sounds
funny to a native English speaker, it is common for EL students to confuse the prepositions in and on.

When a child read to for at, or vice versa, or into for onto, the EL may not yet have been able to identify that the sentence was not structurally standard, so it may not have impacted comprehension. On the other hand, the preposition miscue may also indicate that the sentence was more complex than the student was able to understand at that time. Other times students omitted prepositions entirely. The impact on comprehension in these and other cases, such as reading under for in or for after, is unclear. In this analysis it appeared difficult to determine with assuredness when some language-related preposition errors impacted comprehension.

For the purposes of this article we have isolated different language-related errors in the running record samples above. However, as in Figure 6, we often saw multiple types of language-related errors on the same running record.

Figure 6 is an example of how all five language-related errors might appear in one running record. We suggest discussing this running record with a colleague.

**Instructional Implications**

The following suggestions can be used by all teachers of emergent EL readers, from classroom teachers to interventionists to Reading Recovery teachers to teachers of students identified specifically as dyslexic. And, while this study explored EL students’ reading acquisition, these recommendations may also be relevant for students who speak different English dialects and registers. For example, speakers of African American Vernacular English have specific language patterns that may impact their early literacy behaviors (Compton-Lilly, 2005). While the patterns between different linguistic groups—and different individual children—may differ, the key ideas of considering the role of students’ language in reading acquisition and valuing the home language are the same.

**Check for understanding frequently.** Simple conversations about books will often provide a lot of information about what a student did and didn’t understand, and explicit instructional conversations about language (Briceño, 2014) can help students and teachers clarify the language-related issues. Clay (2013) wrote, “Conversation with a child about the story after taking Running Records adds to the teacher’s understanding of the reader in useful ways, and leads the child into discourse about stories” (p. 63). In addition, analyzing running records for language-related errors can help a teacher identify potential sources of confusion. Teachers can ask themselves a few questions, like those that follow, about language-related errors to check a student’s understanding.

_Could the Tolds have impacted understanding?_ For example, if a student read a book about Geoffrey the Giraffe and needed to be told the word detective a few times, it is possible that detective is a new word and might need explaining (or additional clarification, if the book orientation already addressed the word and concept). If the teacher simply gives a Told without explaining what the word means—in the book introduction, after the running record, or both—the child may be able to mimic the word but comprehension will not be.
aided unless the child already knows the word’s meaning. However, if the teacher explains and defines the word after the running record, it will likely support a student’s understanding of future readings of the text.

Teachers can check on their use of Tolds by asking themselves questions such as these:

- Why did the student require a Told?
- Did I provide sufficient wait time?
- Did the student try something? Why or why not?
- When not taking a running record, do I prompt for action before giving a Told?
- Is the student relying on me for a Told instead of trying something himself? (Fried, 2013)

Does the EL understand who is doing the action and when it is happening (past, present, future, etc.)? Inflectional endings relate to who does the action (e.g., I/we/you/they walk, he/she/it walks) and identify when the action is done (past, present, future, etc.). If a student is misreading inflectional endings, check that he knows who is doing the action and when the action is happening. Similarly, irregular verb tenses may confuse students. A student who knows the word shake might not understand shook, even if she decoded it accurately. Consistent conversations about who and what is happening in the text could support the student’s understanding of both language and stories.

Were there any contraction or preposition errors that may have led to a misunderstanding?

For example, if a student read can instead of can’t, a misunderstanding might have ensued. However, the common error in for on (and vice versa) may be less likely to lead to confusion. Checking in about the story related to these particular errors might shed light on students’ understandings.

Finally, Clay (2013) reminds us to adapt the complexity of our own language so that it is understandable to children: “The answers to comprehension questions depend more upon the difficulty of the sentence structure of the question than on the child’s reading” (p. 63). ELs, in particular, will only be able to answer questions they understand.

Ongoing Language and Literacy Assessment

Reanalyze running records with a focus on language.

Similar to Fried’s (2013) recommendation to complete additional analyses on running records to check for Tolds, high-frequency words, self-monitoring, and to summarize problem-solving actions, we suggest reanalyzing running records through a language lens. Teachers can look for the following types of language-related errors:

- Tolds that were necessary due to unknown vocabulary or unfamiliar syntax
- Irregular verb tenses
- Inflectional endings
- Contractions
- Prepositions
- Other errors that the teacher thinks might be language-related

Noticing language-related errors enables teachers to begin to distinguish them from literacy-related errors and to remain tentative. Instruction can then be more focused and better meet the individual student’s needs.

Consider all sources of information when analyzing running records and stay tentative.

We often hear teachers say the child is not looking through the word, implying the student needs to do more visual work. If the child is looking through words consistently with the possible exception of inflectional endings, the error may be language-related rather than visual. As a result, the teaching would differ significantly. If the child is not looking through the word, the teacher might focus on left-to-right scanning of visual information. She might say, “Look at that word again and check it with your eyes.” If the error is language-related, the teacher might model, “We say it this way in English.” Or, if there is evidence that the child is somewhat familiar with the structure, the teacher may offer two alternatives and ask which sounds better. Of course, it is not helpful to ask if something sounds right if the child is unfamiliar with the structure or vocabulary word — it would be similar to asking a child to use the first letter of a word when the letter is unknown.

Closely examine Tolds and remember to code attempts.

Tolds are lost opportunities for problem solving. It is important to consider why each Told was given, as
Prep朽 Students for Successful Problem Solving in Reading

Consider the EL's oral language when selecting books.
At the earliest levels the book should match the child's language so it is easier to match print to text (Clay, 1991). Soon, more complex structures can be introduced. Knowing the child's language is necessary to know which books to select and what language might be new. For example, has he shown evidence of using contractions in his oral language? If not, options include choosing to scaffold the contraction in the book introduction.

Provide a book introduction that takes out the bugs.
Clay (2005b) directs us to “Take the ‘bugs’ out of the text before he tries to read it” (p. 91) by providing an introduction that will help that particular child orient himself to the story and experience success with that particular book. Knowing the types of language structures and vocabulary that an EL controls will enable the teacher to provide a more targeted orientation to new books. A book orientation might include familiar words that are used in new or different ways, unfamiliar vocabulary, and tricky language structures, and the teacher may ask the student to practice new or unfamiliar language (Clay, 2005b). The book introduction should provide enough language support to enable the EL to focus on the task of reading.

Practice new language structures with students, and know when to back off.
This can be done at any point across a Reading Recovery or small-group reading lesson. Students should hear and practice saying new language structures before being asked to read or write them. Clay (2004) wrote,

Get the new phrase or sentence:
• to the ear (listening)
• to the mouth (saying)
• to the eye (reading)
• to the written product (creating text) (p. 5)

For example, if a student says he “goed” to the store with his mom, the teacher might rephrase the sentence to see if the child takes the hint to self-correct his speech. If the child is ready to take on the structure, he will likely change the sentence and use went. If not, the conversation may go something like this:

Student: I “goed” to the store with my mom and we “buyed” candy.

Teacher: Really! You went to the store with your mom and bought candy?

Student: Yes, that’s what I said, I “goed” to the store with my mom and we “buyed” candy.

In this case, Clay (2005b) strongly advises us to “back off” (p. 56), as the child may not yet be ready to incorporate the irregular verbs went and bought into his oral repertoire. The teacher can continue modeling standard English but should expect the EL’s independent writing to reflect his own oral language, not the teacher’s language.
Expand the Complexity and Flexibility of Students’ Language

There are many ways to expand students’ language complexity. Sentence combining, supportive book introductions, and shared reading of rhymes, songs, poems, and chants can develop students’ fluency with a variety of sentence structures. Knowing the types of structures the student controls will help teachers to determine how to progress. If a child gives a short nugget of a sentence, asking where, when, and with whom will add prepositional phrases to the sentence. Asking different types of questions, like ‘what else?’ or ‘why?’ might result in the student using conjunctions such as and and because (Clay et al., 2015; Gentile, 2003). The conversation should be of genuine interest to the child and not a quiz.

Saying things in different ways also encourages flexibility with language. For example, if the sentence a child wants to write includes a contraction or words that could make a contraction, the teacher could talk about whether the child wants to use can’t or cannot, and show that they are different ways of saying the same thing. Similarly, transforming a child’s statement into a negative, question, or command/exclamation also builds flexibility. For example, if the child says, “I went to the park,” the teacher might say, “How could we turn that into a question? You ask me if I went to the park.” The negative would be “I did not [didn’t] go to the park,” and the command might be “Go to the park!” (Clay et al., 2015; Gentile, 2003). Table 2 summarizes the instructional recommendations.

Conclusion

While this study had a small sample and the findings were never intended to be generalizable, the large percentage of language-related errors found reflects the importance of the topic for future exploration. To reiterate, 94% of the 123 running records analyzed contained language-related errors, over half (54%) of all of the 649 errors analyzed were deemed language-related, and almost one-third of the language-related errors were Tolds. This has significant instructional implications:

Identifying and analyzing LR errors could help teachers determine when, where and why comprehension breaks down, and whether or not the child’s difficulty is literacy related, language related or both. The resulting teacher talk could more effectively support monitoring, searching and cross-checking with a particular EL’s strengths and needs in mind. (Briceño & Klein, 2015, p. 17)

The findings from this study argue for the systematic observation of children’s language for the purpose of literacy instruction and for supporting ELs’ language alongside literacy development. Many of the findings are consistent with SLA theory, underscoring the importance of teachers of emergent EL readers being familiar with SLA. As we further develop our Literacy Lessons™ programs specifically designed for English learners, we will need to work together to learn how to best serve this linguistically diverse group of students in ways that acknowledge, value, and respect students’ home culture and language.

Authors’ note: We would like to thank the Reading Recovery teachers in California and Texas who contributed their lesson records to this study.

Table 2. Summary of Instructional Recommendations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Check for understanding</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Did the Tolds impact understanding?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Did the student understand who was doing the action and when it happened (tense)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Were contractions understood?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Were relationships understood, even if prepositions were not read correctly?</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Use ongoing language and literacy assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Reanalyze running records with a language lens.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Consider all sources of information and stay tentative.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Closely examine Tolds and remember to code attempts</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Continually assess oral language.</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>Prepare students for successful reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Consider the student’s oral language when selecting books.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Provide a book introduction that takes out the bugs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Practice tricky language.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expand the complexity and flexibility of students’ language</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ask questions that support language expansion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Practice different ways of saying something.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Transform sentences from statements into their negative forms, questions, and commands.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References
Briceño, A. (2014). Instructional practices for academic language development in Spanish and English in a hyper-segregated dual immersion program. In R. Brown & A. Briceño (Eds.), *Selected papers* presented at the meeting of the Literacy Research Association, Carlsbad, CA.


**Children’s Books Cited**


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**About the Authors**

Allison Briceño is a Reading Recovery/DLL teacher leader and assistant professor at San Jose State University in San Jose, CA, where she coordinates the reading and literacy leadership specialist credential and MA program. She can be reached at allisonbriceno@sjsu.edu

Adria F. Klein is the Reading Recovery trainer and center director at Saint Mary’s College of California in Moraga. Her research interests focus on early literacy intervention as part of a comprehensive literacy design, English language learners, and oral language development. She can be reached at aklein@stmarys-ca.edu
When he launched My Brother’s Keeper in February 2014, President Obama charged the initiative with “building on what works — when it works, in those critical life-changing moments.”

I think this statement describes what we do with children across this country every day in Reading Recovery. We do what works, when it works and we, as teachers, get to glimpse critical, life-changing moments each and every day with the children we teach. Actually, the child I am teaching had one yesterday and it literally brought tears to my eyes when he looked up at me from his book and said, “I always wanted to read this book but I couldn’t, and now I am doing this!”

As I’m sure you know, Reading Recovery was invited to participate in the MBK What Works Showcase at the White House in October. You can read more about the visit in Executive Director Jady Johnson’s message in this issue. Only four other reading programs and interventions were selected under the goal of “Reading on Grade Level by Third Grade,” and only Reading Recovery was ranked with strong evidence. Our strong evidence is cited on the What Works Clearinghouse website, where we received high marks across the board, and in the Investing in Innovation (i3) final research report.

Highlights of the findings and lessons learned from the final Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) report are shared in articles written by Robert Schwartz and by Connie Briggs and Barbara Honchell in this issue.

Along with all the professional learning articles you will find in this issue of the journal, I want to remind you of the upcoming 2017 National Conference promises to change the way you think about the children you teach and the lives you touch.

The 4-day 2017 National Conference promises to change the way you think about the children you teach and the lives you touch.

New this year is a full-day Leadership Institute on Saturday led by Dr. Anthony Muhammad. The remaining sessions focused on leadership and typically held on Monday will instead be embedded within the conference program from Sunday through Tuesday, with a special school administrator’s luncheon still taking place on Monday. Our goal is to meet the needs of school administrators as they learn alongside their teachers.

There are four additional full-day Preconference Institutes on Saturday led by Janice Almasi, Nancy Anderson, Adria Klein and Allison Briceño, and Jan Burkins and Kim Yaris. With topics ranging from comprehension to oral language to independence, there truly is something for everyone. Our featured speakers include Mary Fried, C.C. Bates, and Betsy Kaye for the Reading Recovery strand, and Lucy Caulkins, Sharroky Hollie, and Kylene Beers and Bob Probst for the classroom strand. These speakers will focus on topics important to all of us in our work with children, from self-monitoring to vocabulary development to cultural responsiveness.

Please join us for a professional learning experience that promises to change the way you think about the children you teach and the lives you touch.
Increasing the visibility of Reading Recovery and our members’ work is an important role for RRCNA. We are conducting outreach to organizations that share similar values and priorities — building bridges with school principals and administrators, state education agencies, and organizations focused on getting children reading on grade level.

It was thrilling, then, to receive an invitation from the White House to participate in President Obama’s My Brother’s Keeper (MBK) event in mid-October, hosted along with the White House Office of Social Innovation, U.S. Department of Education, Campaign for Black Male Achievement, Laura and John Arnold Foundation, and Results for America.

Dante Marshall, one of the first children in the U.S. to receive Reading Recovery lessons, accompanied me and RRCNA President Lindy Harmon to the event. Mr. Marshall was chosen to participate in a morning panel discussion, livestreamed from the White House, titled “What Works in Action.” Our interactive exhibit featured behind-the-glass and advocacy videos, Where Are They Now success stories, children’s artwork, What Works Clearinghouse fact sheets, and more.

White House officials, federal agency representatives, foundations, nonprofits, private sector, and members of the media attended and interacted with program representatives from across the country, learning of their positive impact across MBK’s cradle-to-college-and-career-goals.

From the moment RRCNA announced the visit on social media our Facebook and Twitter pages were flooded with excitement. On Facebook we reached over 47,500 users in one day along with over 100 retweets and 2,200 Twitter impressions. During the livestream, we kept followers updated with to-the-minute posts and tweets.

The MBK What Works Showcase featured 33 evidence-based program models and interventions — Reading Recovery was one of just six with strong evidence of effectiveness — that address the seven core tenets of the MBK initiative:

1. Getting a healthy start and entering school ready to learn
2. Reading at grade level by third grade
3. Graduating from high school ready for college and career
4. Completing postsecondary education or training
5. Successfully entering the workforce
6. Keeping kids on track and giving them second chances
7. Empowering parents and engaging caring adults and mentors

This special opportunity to showcase Reading Recovery was a team effort. Our thanks to all of you who helped make it happen and spread the word!

Photo highlights of the visit

*top* — White House Cabinet Secretary Broderick Johnson shakes hands with RRCNA President Lindy Harmon.

*Joining the conversation are Dante Marshall, Dave Wilkinson, director of the White House Office of Social Innovation, and Michael Smith, special assistant to the President, My Brother’s Keeper.*

*middle* — The What Works in Action panel presentation featured Dante and other beneficiaries of evidence-based programs across the country.

*bottom* — Videos and printed examples were on display during the afternoon exhibit. Reading Recovery was one of only five reading interventions featured, and the only one rated with “strong” evidence.
When Dante Marshall shared his story on the MBK panel, he fondly remembered his Reading Recovery teacher, Rose Mary Estice, as the person in his corner who made the difference on his pathway to success. It was bittersweet to acknowledge her recent passing. Rose Mary died October 2, following a 5-year battle with cancer. Dante was among the speakers at her memorial service. The two had stayed in touch for more than 30 years.

Rose Mary was one of the original Reading Recovery teachers trained by Marie Clay and Barbara Watson in 1984–85 at The Ohio State University, and she taught Dante during the pilot year in Columbus Public Schools. She was most proud of that pioneering work in Reading Recovery. An ardent supporter of RRCNA, Rose Mary provided leadership during the organization’s early days and continued that support throughout her career — serving on Development and National Conference committees, writing articles for Council publications, and most recently narrating the running record professional learning modules.

It was Rose Mary’s wish that donations be made to RRCNA, and more than $4,000 has already been donated. You can honor her devotion and commitment to children by making a gift to the Reading Recovery Fund in her memory.
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 Growing Readers One by One campaign, we 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.

Sharing Our Evidence Story

RRCNA Advocacy Committee Chair Amy Smith and Executive Director Jady Johnson took the opportunity to visit Senate offices during the Committee for Education Funding’s annual conference, September 20-21.

Accompanied by RRCNA’s legislative consultant, Reggie Felton, they shared information about Reading Recovery and discussed the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act. With more state-level decision making built into the law, RRCNA’s primary focus is on communicating with state education agencies—through all means possible—that Reading Recovery’s research evidence meets the highest standards included in ESSA.
Generous Donors Help Fund Training of Four Teacher Leaders

Four new teacher leaders are in training thanks to generous Reading Recovery donors and advocates whose contributions totaled $60,000. Teacher leader scholarships are granted to school districts that have demonstrated a commitment to Reading Recovery and selected a suitable teacher leader candidate. Funds for the 2016–17 training year were provided by Hameray Publishing Group/Yuen Family Foundation, Kaeden Books, and MaryRuth Books to train three teacher leaders in the United States and one in Canada.

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 two teacher leader scholarships in two states.

Marion County School District, Marion, SC
Susanne Elvington is training at Clemson University. Her 17-year teaching career includes 6 years with first graders. Susanne has not only provided professional development to her peers, but has mentored several young teachers and served on the district literacy team. The recipient of school, district, and regional awards, Susanne represented Easterling Primary School as Teacher of the Year for the 2015–16 school year.

Marion County School District has 3,588 students enrolled in K-8, with 411 first graders in five elementary schools. In addition to the $15,000 awarded to the district, Susanne will be able to select $1,000 worth of Hameray little books as part of the scholarship. A Reading Recovery teacher is also being trained at a nearby site for this new implementation.

Deer Park ISD, Deer Park, TX
Elva Maldonado-Gonzalez is training at Texas Woman’s University. She has been teaching for 12 years, including teaching Descubriendo la Lectura lessons, and was named Teacher of the Year in 2012–13. She has presented workshops at the district level and, as an assistant principal, modeled and recorded a sequence of guided reading lessons.

An approved Reading Recovery site for 20 years, Deer Park currently has 17 Reading Recovery teachers. The district’s seven elementary schools serve 939 first-grade students and a total student population of 5,575. In addition to the $15,000 awarded to the district, Elva will be able to select $1,000 worth of Hameray little books as part of the scholarship.

Kaeden Books
Kaeden is the publisher and distributor of quality educational content used to teach children in Grades K–6 to become lifelong readers. For 26 years, Kaeden has worked with educators to improve literacy and encourage confidence of children in the reading process. With roots in the early years of Reading Recovery, Kaeden has grown with educators’ needs and now provides classroom libraries and bookrooms as well as leveled books. Kaeden contributed $15,000 to fund one teacher leader scholarship in an urban district this year.

Spartanburg District 7, Spartanburg, SC
Leigh Turmel is training at Clemson University. She brings 26 years of teaching experience to her training in elementary, early childhood, and special education. As the
Expansion Grants Continue to Fund New Implementations

Thanks to an initiative undertaken last year by a number of RRCNA’s associate members, teachers are once again being trained for a new implementation of Reading Recovery. The University of Arkansas at Little Rock was awarded a $7,000 grant to assist with the training of six new Reading Recovery teachers for the Normandy Schools Collaborative. This district is located in urban St. Louis, MO, with a population that is 100% free and reduced-price lunch and 4% ELL.

This is the first Reading Recovery implementation for Normandy Schools Collaborative, and the six teachers will bring the district close to full implementation. The school district has a plan for implementing a comprehensive literacy system, training not only the six new Reading Recovery teachers, but all of the first grade teachers in literacy processing. The hope is that the implementation of this comprehensive literacy plan will improve not only the outcomes for the children of the district but will contribute substantially to the removal of the district from the list of academically distressed schools.


PD Grants Defray Conference Costs

This year, generous donors have contributed 17 grants of $1,000 each to help offset the cost of registration, travel, meals, and hotel for the National Conference in Columbus. Grants will be awarded to 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), Reading Reading Books, SongLake Books, Debby Wood Memorial Fund, Dr. Julie Olson Professional Development Grant, and Minnesota Literacy Grants.

Geri Stone Professional Development grants were also awarded to help offset the cost of attendance at other professional development conferences, books, and more.
Meet Our New Trainers-in-Training

In keeping with the North American Trainers Group (NATG) priority of expanding existing training centers, RRCNA sets aside funding to assist university training centers in preparing new Reading Recovery trainers. This year, one grant in the amount of $20,000 was awarded to National Louis University.

In addition, the University of Northern Iowa is training two trainers this year. All three are training at Texas Woman’s University.

JaNiece Elzy
National Louis University

I currently serve as an assistant professor and co-director of the Reading Recovery Center for Literacy at National Louis University, where I recently completed my Ed.D. in reading and language development. Prior to accepting this role at the university, I served for 10 years in a variety of roles for various school districts in the surrounding suburbs of Chicago. These included district level support as a literacy curriculum coordinator, literacy support coach (Grades 3–5), reading specialist (K–5), Reading Recovery teacher, and classroom teacher. I have also worked as an instructor of graduate and undergraduate courses in early literacy methods and instruction. My areas of interest include establishing and cultivating partnerships between schools and families, family literacy, schoolwide comprehensive literacy models, and teacher professional development.

Tami Dean
University of Northern Iowa

I am currently an assistant professor of literacy in the Jacobson Center at the University of Northern Iowa (UNI). Prior to coming to UNI, I was a literacy specialist and director of the literacy center for University High School, as well as a clinical assistant professor for Illinois State University. In addition to teaching university courses, I have had the opportunity to work with students of all ages from PreK–12th grade as a middle school reading and language arts teacher, a district assessment coordinator as a part of a curriculum coordinator leadership team, and a K–12 literacy consultant for a regional office of education in Illinois. My research interests focus on literacy, literacy instruction, and literacy methods instruction for pre-service and in-service teachers; specifically in issues of social justice and cultural relevancy as it pertains to classroom instruction and literacy learning. My literacy work has been published in journals such as the Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy and Reading Research Quarterly, and I regularly present at national literacy conferences.

Debra Rich
University of Northern Iowa

I am the assistant director of the Richard O. Jacobson Center for Comprehensive Literacy at the University of Northern Iowa. I am also a Partnerships in Comprehensive Literacy university trainer and teach graduate courses for the literacy coach preparation program. My previous experience in education includes serving as an elementary principal, Area Education Agency K–12 literacy consultant, K–12 district curriculum coordinator, K–6 district language arts coordinator, building reading specialist, Reading Recovery and classroom teacher. I wrote curriculum for the Iowa Department of Education and taught university courses in assessment and evaluation of literacy, leadership in literacy, curriculum development, reading methods, emergent literacy, and language development. My research interests include classroom discourse, vocabulary development (including academic language), and the integration of literacy and mathematics. I currently serve on the RRCNA National Conference Committee. I am president of the (Iowa) AEA 267 Board of Directors and also serve on the executive board of directors for the Iowa Association for Area Education Agencies.
Members-Only Online Resource Spotlight

Digital Issues of The Journal of Reading Recovery

Have you ever needed to reference a JRRR but didn’t have a printed copy handy? Not a problem!

Beginning with the fall 2014 issue, *The Journal of Reading Recovery* can now be found in a digital format in the Members Only Resource Center. The digital version comes with all the bells and whistles you’d expect from an e-reader, including the ability to search on a keyword or quickly scan the interactive table of contents, then click on an article title and go directly to that article.

You can also adjust font size, save and print a PDF of a single article or entire journal, and if you don’t have time to read the whole journal cover-to-cover in one sitting, it will remember where you left off when you return to it!

Log in today and see these and other benefits you’ve been missing!

- Reading Recovery Book List
- Audio and video recordings on a variety of teaching topics
- Lesson forms
- Parent and family resources
- Searchable archive and PDFs of all journals and newsletters
- National Conference session handouts
- Research articles
- Reading Recovery implementation resources

If you haven’t yet set up a username and password, just follow these three easy steps.

1. From the readingrecovery.org homepage, click the top right column LOGIN button.
2. Enter your email address, then click the Reset my Password button.
3. You will receive an email with a temporary username and password that you can change anytime.

Don’t miss the fun!

2017 Annual Membership Meeting
Monday, January 30 at 4:30 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!
We’re Virtually Going Places!

If you’ve received an email from RRCNA lately you may have noticed the new look via Emma, our e-marketing service. Our goal is to keep content concise and easy to view on your phone or tablet. Your feedback has been great and we look forward to learning about even more fun ways to make sure you receive the Council news that keeps you connected. You’ll continue to see the monthly member Connections, product, and conference news coming to your inbox, so stay tuned!

Are you connecting?

Has anyone noticed we now have an Instagram page? Do you use LinkedIn? It is vital that we take advantage of these resources as a not-for-profit organization. Our tweets are reaching more followers than ever, and our Facebook page reached over 94,555 people from September 21–October 18 alone. The Facebook post announcing our visit to the White House reached over 15,000 people. These numbers are huge for positive outreach. What can you do to help? Share our Facebook and Instagram posts and re-tweet our tweets. Placing Reading Recovery in your LinkedIn profile is also a quick and easy way to network with other literacy professionals.

Help us share your stories

Social media is a fun and quick way to spread the word about the amazing work of Reading Recovery. Every single day you are making a difference in the lives of children. Back in July we sent an email requesting details on your accomplishments to share with the public. Our goal is to share one success story per week on social media, but we can’t do it without your help. Email your stories to chershey@readingrecovery.org.

Partners in Excellence – Our Associate Members

RRCNA offers a special associate membership level to companies that provide top-quality goods and services to the Reading Recovery community. Associate members support Reading Recovery through generous sponsorships, grants, donations, and by exhibiting at Reading Recovery conferences throughout North America. When you visit their booths at the next conference, be sure to say “thank you for all you do for Reading Recovery!”
More than 370 Reading Recovery professionals shared knowledge and learning at the 9th International Reading Recovery Institute, held July 20-22, 2016, in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. *Widening Circles: Literacy Learning for All*, the theme of the Institute, and the Inuksuk logo silhouetted against the Northern Lights represented guidance and unity towards common goals. The event provided deep professional development that incorporated perspectives from each Reading Recovery country. A team of Reading Recovery trainers from Canada, led by Institute Chair Allyson Matczuk, planned 35 sessions focused on improved instruction and student success. Keynote speakers were Jeremy Burman, Canada; Stuart McNaughton, New Zealand; Gay Su Pinnell, United States; Bridie Raban, Australia; and Iram Siraj, United Kingdom. The next International Institute will be in New Zealand in 2019.

### Highlights

- Sessions on the new *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals* book, TL guide, teaching and learning, i3 results, leadership, and more
- IDEC update
- Session for new teacher leaders
- Session for DLL teacher leaders

### Who Should Attend

- Required professional development for Reading Recovery teacher leaders
- Reading Recovery trainers

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**Watch the website for details**

**2017 Reading Recovery Teacher Leader Institute**

June 20–23 in Anaheim, CA
2017 National Reading Recovery & K-6 Literacy Conference
January 28-31 in Columbus, Ohio

Outstanding Professional Development for Classroom & ELL Teachers | Building & District Administrators | Interventionists
Literacy Coaches & Specialists | Title I Teachers & Coordinators | Curriculum & Language Arts Specialists | Reading Recovery Professionals

4 days 100+ sessions 150 speakers

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

SUNDAY
Peter Johnston
Author & professor emeritus, State University of New York at Albany, Albany, NY
What Do We Think We’re Doing–And Why?

MONDAY
Jan Richardson
Author & education consultant, Richland Center, WI
Uncomplicating Comprehension

TUESDAY
Mike Artell
Children’s author & illustrator, Covington, LA
Hooked on Humor

Flexible Registration Options
give you the ability to register for a Saturday Institute, the entire Conference, and/or a partial Conference, on a weekday or weekend.

TO REGISTER AND FOR MORE INFORMATION
www.rrcna.org/conferences
**Featured & Institute Speakers**

**Featured Sessions**

**Reading Recovery**
- **C. C. Bates**
  Creating Synergy: Word Work Across the Lesson
- **Mary Fried**
  Reading Recovery and Classroom Practice: Does Collaboration Make a Difference?
- **Elizabeth Kaye**
  Self-Monitoring in Writing: Have You Noticed?

**K–6 Classroom Literacy**
- **Kylene Beers & Robert Probst**
  Getting Our Least-Engaged Readers Engaged With Fiction and Nonfiction
  Vocabulary: Helping Kids Learn Words
  Reading Nonfiction: What Matters Most
- **Lucy Calkins**
  Critical Work: Help Your Students Write Well About Their Reading
- **Sharroky Hollie**
  Culturally Responsive Academic Vocabulary Development

**Preconference Institutes**

**Janice Almasi**
Interventions for Students Who Struggle: Designing Narrative Comprehension

**Jan Burkins & Kim Yaris**
Who’s Doing the Work: Reading Instruction That Transfers to Independence

**Nancy Anderson**
Sound Systems: Helping Children Construct Visual Processing Systems

**Adria Klein & Allison Briceño**
Oral Language Development and Literacy Learning: Understanding Language Structure to Provide Scaffolding for Students

**NEW! Leadership Institute**

**Bring your team and learn with school culture expert Dr. Anthony Muhammad**
Overcoming the Achievement Gap Trap: Liberating Mindsets to Effect Change
Attendees receive a copy of Dr. Muhammad’s most-recent book.

**OUR THANKS TO THESE CONFERENCE SPONSORS**

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You Should Know!
Cash was a kindergartner who had come to the assessment training class as a subject for the teachers practicing the first Observation Survey. When the teacher asked him on the Concepts About Print task, “Where do I start?” he replied, “Well you know that. You’re the teacher!!”

— Hollyanna Bates  
Reading Recovery Teacher Leader  
Summit School District, Colorado

Hairlines
I work with students in both English and Spanish. One day D’Angelo noticed one of my magnetic letters, the Spanish letter ñ, and asked, “Why does that letter have hair?”

Interpretation
Alejandro and I were talking about rattlesnake tails and I was trying to remember the Spanish word for shakes. Alejandro speaks a lot of English, so he asked me how to say the word in English. When I told him shakes he said the Spanish translation was smoothies.

— Joyce Romano  
Reading Recovery/DLL Teacher  
San Francisco, California

Perceived Value
After a colleague finished administering the Observation Survey at the conclusion of a student’s series of lessons, I was pleased with how much improvement the student had made, especially on the writing tasks. When I met with the student the next day, I decided to show him both his current and beginning Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words and Writing Vocabulary so that he could see the improvement. After showing him both sheets side-by-side for both assessments, he slammed his little hand on the table, looked me in the eye, and said, “Wow, they don’t pay you enough!”

— Kim Andresen  
Title I/Reading Recovery Teacher  
North Polk Community Schools, Iowa

The Last Word
Our readers say The Last Word column in The Journal of Reading Recovery is one of their favorite things to read. We need more of your great Reading Recovery stories. So take a minute to share one of your favorite moments with all our readers.
Just send a quick email to Communications Director Vicki Fox: vfox@readingrecovery.org
Empower responsive teaching for every literacy learner.

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More rigor, more clarity, and more insightful than ever.
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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!