

# The Journal of Reading Recovery®

Spring 2015 Vol. 14 No. 2



## **An Anniversary Focus on Reading Recovery in North America and the Contributions of Marie Clay to Early Literacy Instruction**

*Patricia L. Scharer*

*Mary Anne Doyle*

*Gay Su Pinnell & Irene Fountas*

*Salli Forbes & Linda J. Dorn*

## **Why Not Sound It Out?**

*Robert M. Schwartz*

## **The Power of Story**

*Joy Cowley*

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YEARS  
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**SPECIAL SECTION ON SUMMER READING**  
featuring an article by Richard Allington

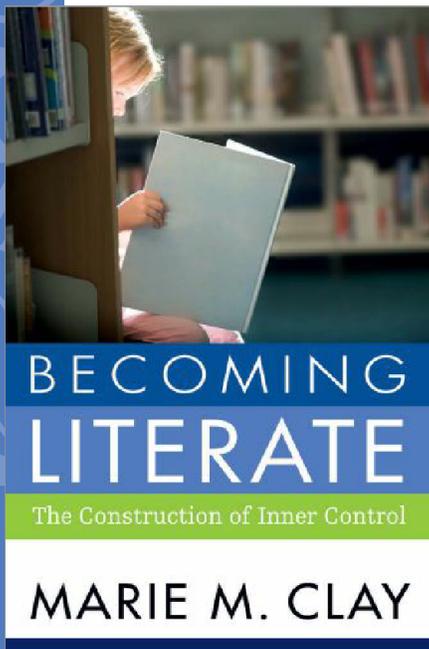
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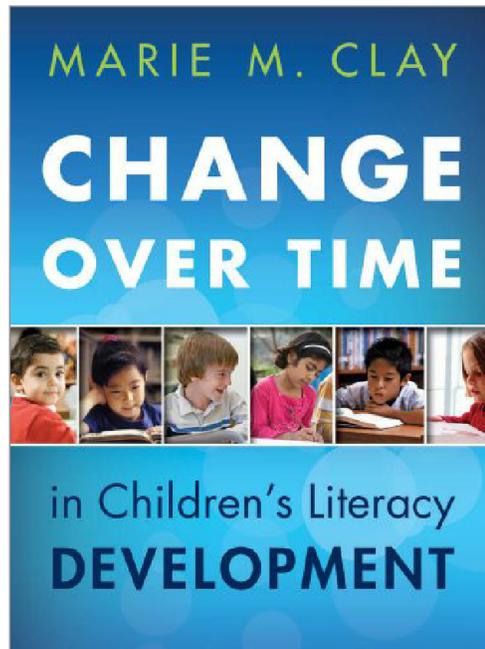
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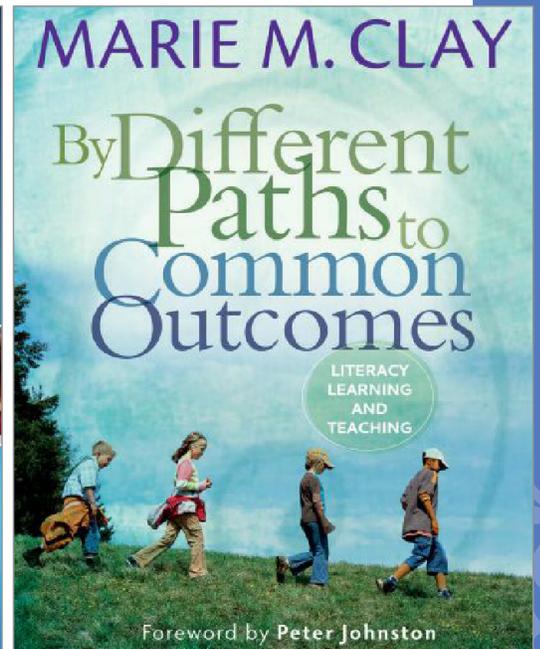
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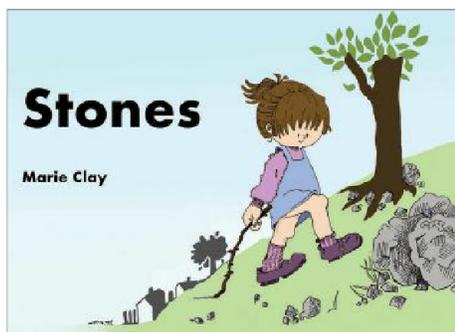
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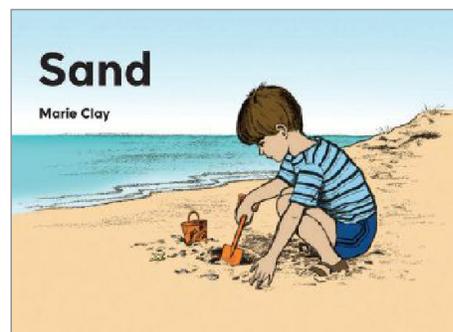
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## Editor's Corner

*Connie Briggs, Editor-in-Chief*



The celebration of the 30th Anniversary of Reading Recovery continues with this issue of *The Journal of Reading Recovery*. Any 30th anniversary is noteworthy, but for an educational innovation to withstand the changing winds of politics, educational pendulum swings, and economic challenges over 30 years is exceptional. In celebrating 30 years of Reading Recovery, we especially recognize

that 2 million-plus children have received successful literacy interventions that put them on a trajectory to becoming literate. I think it is fitting that we also celebrate the legacy of Dame Marie Clay. Through her pioneering research, vision, and collaborative spirit, she led and inspired the work of others that literally changed the landscape of literacy—not only in the United States—but across the world.

As with any celebration there is usually a bit of nostalgia and reflection of the past paired with excitement and hope for the future. Joy Cowley helped us celebrate at the 2015 National Conference by presenting a keynote address and writing a book just for Conference attendees. In an excerpt from her speech she shares how memories of childhood can be an asset to an author and that entertainment, child-centered content, and magic are the things that lay the foundation of literacy learning for young readers. Her clever books have delighted children around the world, giving them a good start toward literate lives. Her article is both nostalgic and hopeful.

In interviews with Carol Lyons, Gay Su Pinnell, and Diane Deford, Pat Scharer provides a glimpse into the early years of Reading Recovery implementation in Ohio. We can celebrate these women for their pioneering efforts in bringing Reading Recovery to the United States and their subsequent contributions to literacy teaching and learning.

The foundation of our work in Reading Recovery is based upon Clay's view of literacy as a complex theory. In this issue, Mary Anne Doyle has written a beautifully crafted primer of Clay's theory of literacy processing that encapsulates the essence of our work with students who struggle to learn to read and write. I know this article will become a standard to share with anyone interested in early literacy acquisition. An additional research-to-practice article by Bob Schwartz provides an explanation of the complexity of word recognition learning based on cognitive research. This article provides new ways of thinking about why we teach for multiple sources of information in the service of meaning.

What we have learned from Reading Recovery contributes to teacher expertise in the service of all children. Two articles included in this issue discuss the contribution of Clay's work in broader settings. Gay Su Pinnell and Irene Fountas share the ways in which Reading Recovery has influenced guided reading instruction in classrooms, and Salli Forbes and Linda Dorn discuss key concepts that support opportunities for children to read and write with small-group teaching.

Reading Recovery can level the playing field for the lowest children in first grade, but it is the combined efforts of everyone involved in the children's lives that help them continue to progress as literate individuals. A trio of articles focuses on ways to extend reading opportunities for children through summer reading programs. Richard Allington advocates for summer reading programs to help close the achievement gap for low-income children. C.C. Bates and Maryann McBride share their success with a summer reading program and provide advice that will help readers implement similar programs. In a third article, Allison Briceño and Descubriendo la Lectura colleagues across the nation also stress the importance of summer reading and share ways of making home-school partnership connections to support accelerated student learning. The spirit of collaboration can be celebrated in the partnerships forged around the common mission to ensure literacy for all children.

In the annual IDEC summary report, Jerry D'Agostino and Sinéad Harmey share that during the 2013–2014 implementation year, students posted the strongest outcomes experienced since data collection began in the U.S. Reading Recovery student data closed the achievement gap with the average random sample students, and the average discontinued DLL students surpassed the average of the random sample.

We have so much to celebrate! Through Marie Clay's visionary work we are joined as an educational community of learners, researchers, and teachers who make a difference in the world. We celebrate passionate Reading Recovery professionals who engage in the work of learning and teaching in behalf of children. And we celebrate the children whose lives have been changed because of those teachers.

*A special thank you from the JRR editorial team*



*RRCNA Director of Communications Marsha Studebaker will retire at the end of June. Marsha has been a guide, an advisor, an effective communicator, and a passionate advocate for Reading Recovery for 15 years. Her integrity, wisdom, and grace have been true gifts to the people who have been privileged to work with her. Congratulations on your well-deserved retirement, Marsha!*

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## Reading Recovery Council of North America

### Vision

*We ensure that children who struggle in learning to read and write gain the skills for a literate and productive future.*

### Mission

*We achieve reading and writing success for children through partnerships that foster:*

- *Reading Recovery in English, Spanish, or French as an essential intervention within a comprehensive literacy system*
- *Teaching of children that is expert and responsive*
- *Professional development for teachers that is specialized and continuous*
- *Ongoing development of knowledge and practice based on research, data, and the theoretical framework that has underpinned Reading Recovery since its founding*

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## *Write for The Journal of Reading Recovery*

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

### Blind Peer Review Process

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

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

### Guidelines for Authors

1. Select a topic of interest to our Reading Recovery audience.
2. Write clearly, concisely, and use an active voice.
3. Be sure the message is clear and has a consistent focus throughout.
4. Include dialogue or samples of children's work when possible.
5. 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.

### Submitting Articles for Publication

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

For original manuscripts, please follow the most-recent APA style guidelines. Manuscripts must be double-spaced and should be no more than 30 pages (excluding reference list, tables, and figures). No identification of the author(s) and affiliations should appear anywhere in the manuscript, including running headers and footers. A cover page identifying corresponding and contributing authors, affiliations, and email contacts should accompany the manuscript.

For questions about or help with the submission process, contact Vicki Fox, communications manager, at [vfox@readingrecovery.org](mailto:vfox@readingrecovery.org) or call 614-310-7332.

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# The Power of Story

Joy Cowley, Children's Author, Wellington, New Zealand

*Editor's note:*

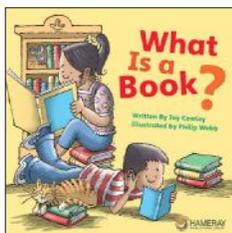
*This article is based on Joy Cowley's keynote address at the 2015 National Reading Recovery & K-6 Literacy Conference in Columbus, OH. In honor of Reading Recovery's 30th Anniversary in North America, Joy has written another delightful story, What is a Book?*

*Following is Joy's foreword:*

*"Thirty years ago, New Zealander Dame Marie Clay took Reading Recovery to the United States, where it quickly became a home-grown product helping young readers at risk. To celebrate thirty years of child empowerment, it seems appropriate that another New Zealander who sees the United States as a second home should write a book for the 2015 National Reading Recovery and Literacy Conference. With award-winning illustrator Philip Webb and educational publisher Raymond*



*Yuen of Hameray, I am very happy to offer you What is a Book? The author's royalty is donated to the Reading Recovery Council of North America, whose work is above price."*



*On behalf of the editorial team of JRR and the members of RRCNA, we thank all involved for this generosity.*

This is a wonderful celebration, dear friends, and it's a huge honor to be here with you all at this conference. I look out from this lectern and see the power of Reading Recovery® in front of me. You are the instruments of change for thousands of students. And if we could also gather in all those individuals whose lives you've changed, the crowd would fill this city. Many of those people are now parents themselves, and your influence is influencing a second generation. When you empower a child, that will be passed on and effectively you will be empowering that child's children. So, I say happy 30th birthday, Reading Recovery. Thank you for making a difference to the future of the world.

You and I know where all this began, don't we? She was my friend and yours, Marie Clay, a New Zealand educational lecturer and reading specialist who was a passionate advocate for children who were reluctant readers. Marie was a good friend and we had this joke amongst us that we never met in New Zealand; always we met in other countries. It would be in Singapore or Hong Kong, Australia, the United States more often than not, and always we would sit down, have a good old cup of tea and talk about children. And always it was about pleasurable learning and how pleasurable learning leads to pleasurable recall. I'll give you an example of that in my own life.

A couple of years ago, I was in Wellington city, running to catch a bus. I dropped my wallet on the pavement and didn't realize it was missing until I arrived home and found my husband, Terry, on the phone to someone at the Central Police Station. My wallet had been handed in at the lost and found office. I immediately went back to the city and encountered a serious young officer behind the lost property desk. "Are all the cards in this wallet yours?" he asked. "Yes," I replied, aware that there was a whole bunch, some shop and appointment cards, a few credit cards, all in my married name which is Coles. The officer thrust a pen and paper at me. "Please write your name here." I wrote C. J. Coles. His face tightened. "So they are not all yours!" he said. It was then I remembered a business card in my own name — J. Cowley. I explained this. "Not Joy Cowley!" he said. "Not the author!" I admitted that I was she. His expression changed and with a huge grin, he bounced up and down, chanting, "I'm the king

of the mountain! I'm the king of the mountain!" He then told me that had been his favorite book at school.

To see that stern police officer suddenly relive a happy moment of childhood reinforced for me the awareness that we learn everything in an emotional context, and that pleasurable learning leads to pleasurable recall. We can teach children to read and at the same time, hate reading, if the process is difficult and without meaning.

I sometimes tell children that when I was young, I thought that people aged like apples. The small green fruit grew larger, they ripened, then they got wrinkly and fell off the tree. But now I know we are not apples but onions. We put on the years in layers, sometimes literally, but always we keep that little green shoot of our beginnings. At any time, I am not only my current age but all the ages I have ever been, and with a little practice, it's not too difficult for the memory to probe and expose any year of my life back to about two and a half. A memory that can do that is an asset to an author, to a teacher, and to a parent. I can remember doing some sewing on the dining room table and listening to my children in the kitchen. Their conversation died and in the ensuing silence I called, "I told you not to eat those dried apricots." There was a small, mouse-like scuffle and then a shocked voice said, "How did you know?" How did I know? Easy. Garden of Eden stuff. In the kitchen there was only one tempting food that was forbidden. My reply was, "I have a good memory."

But right now, I am going to ask you to do a memory probe. Go back through your onion layers to the green shoot of your beginnings. Go back to the time when the world was fresh and new. When a simple buttercup or dandelion was the most beautiful flower on the planet. When words had a magic that you could feel on your tongue. In fact, everything was magic. You made games and rituals out of your daily routine. Your porridge or pudding was an island surrounded by a milky sea and you were the giant who consumed it. The space under your bed was the hiding place of monsters. The bed itself was friendly, a land of hills and valleys and caves. Comforter country. Your treasure was stored in the secret place under your pillow. Remember those days? Then you will remember that this rich land of the imagination was also shaped by some book—or books—that you absolutely loved. That book was not simply information. Not just a story. It was a friend that entered your life. You knew it well. It had a certain feel. The pages had a smell you inhaled.

And although you had heard the story so many times that you knew what was on every page, you still had to have it again and again. You felt that the characters from the book inhabited your land. Sometimes you were the main character in the book. You dressed like that character. You put on the voice. You acted out your part with toys. Maybe you were the Grinch or Sam-I-Am with a plate of green eggs and ham. Perhaps you were Max dancing with the wild things, or Tinkerbell or Pooh or Tigger. You may have been sitting in a box as a nest, chanting, "I meant what I said and I said what I meant. An elephant's faithful, one hundred per cent!" But I don't hear you chanting, "Run, Spot, run!"

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**The foundations of literacy are laid by entertainment. Story comes first. Magic. Marie Clay knew this. She knew that the power of the story came first, that spark of delight that fires the mind with enthusiasm.**

---

That lengthy preamble brings us to a truth that should be obvious but it can get buried by our adult layers. The foundations of literacy are not laid by basals or phonics or any other method of teaching children to read. The foundations of literacy are laid by entertainment. Story comes first. Magic. Marie Clay knew this. She knew that the power of the story came first, that spark of delight that fires the mind with enthusiasm. The mind that has delighted with story is a mind receptive to learning. Then the skills are introduced within the context of meaning, according to the child's learning needs. But we cannot teach language skills to closed, confused, or indifferent minds. The structures of learning are built on the foundation of interest — in other words, we learn through pleasure.

There is a very good chance that if I ask you to detail what you did on a routine evening one day last month, you will not be able to tell me. The details will have blurred in your memory. But, perhaps last year you went out to a dinner party and had a fabulous time. Now, a year later, you can not only remember who was there and what they were wearing, you probably remember every

dish that was served. So what made one date forgettable yet the other unforgettable? The same principle that brings a child alive to the *Very Hungry Caterpillar* but not to Dick and Jane or “can the man fan Dan.”

What, then, are the components of a good story?

### Component Number One: Entertainment

I say that entertainment comes first. But what kind of entertainment do I mean? There is always available entertainment that will appeal to the simpler animal instincts — stories and films which cater to aggressive tendencies in young children who are learning to control their emotions. There are macho hero tales that reinforce the child’s “me first” attitudes. Stories which, in some way, condone prejudice. We need to be aware of entertainments that do not help children to grow in character. In a classroom discussion some boys told me about a video game in which the good guys killed all the bad guys. “Why?” I asked. “Because they were evil,” a boy replied. I asked, “Which were you? The good guys or the bad guys?” They were all the good guys. So I asked them if they had noticed that when we talked about good guys and bad guys, that we were always good and other people were evil. “Why do you think this is?” I asked. They didn’t know. So then I asked, “What do you suppose those other people think about us?” Again, there was a silence, but this time a thoughtful one, and then the subject was changed.

So yes, children do get a lot of entertainment of this kind, especially on TV and in video games, and I don’t think they do much harm as long as there is guidance and children are taught to see beyond stereotypes.

At the opposite end of the spectrum is the plethora of children’s message stories written by well-meaning authors who want all children to grow up more virtuous than their generation. You know the kind of stories I mean. They are about children who make noble sacrifices, children who are good and kind and helpful and truthful and honest, etc., etc., etc. Adults can find that sort of sermon boring. So can children. The sentiments are worthy, but are they housed in an entertaining story which belongs to the child’s world?

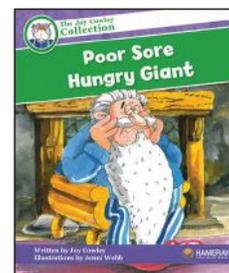
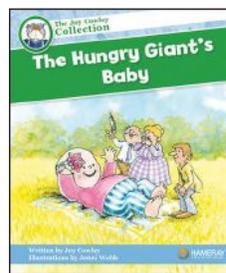
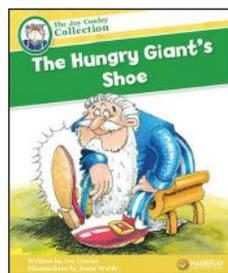
Think of the loyalty of *Horton the Elephant*, the patience and persistence in *Green Eggs and Ham*, the conquering of fear in *Where the Wild Things Are*. A book has entertainment that is character building but not preachy. The message is in the entertainment.

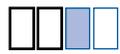
### Component Number Two: Child-centered Content

A good book is child-centered. It affirms and nurtures the child. Many of those dull message stories I mentioned demand that the child sacrifices himself for the greater good. That’s an adult message. Only a fully developed ego can sacrifice itself. Social responsibility is the product of a mature individual and it comes from good self-esteem. To the young child who may or may not have adequate parenting, a story that affirms and nurtures is a gift of love in that child’s life.

There are many children’s picture books that are not child-friendly. They are written from an adult viewpoint and while adults might appreciate them, they do nothing to enhance a child’s self-esteem. These are the stories that get laughs from children’s mistakes, stories that have

*Young and old readers love learning about familiar characters. Joy Cowley has extended the story of The Hungry Giant to continue the fun with books like the ones shown here.*





adults solving children's problems, stories that try to make children conform to a world of adult values. In other words, stories that see children as adult investment and not as authentic people in themselves. I can't show you examples because that would be unfair to well-meaning authors who simply lack awareness. But you know the kind of stories I mean.

Books that are child-centred honor and value the reader as a worthy person in her own right. They do not portray children as adult investment or as objects of fun. I mentioned that child-centered books are a gift of love in that child's life. But that doesn't mean love from a sentimental adult point of view. There are books in which adult characters tell children how much they love them, while at the same time they show the children as powerless.

---

**A good book has magic — magical story, delicious language. Right there at the beginning of the story is the baited hook that grabs the reader. When we were children, we loved those books. They were our friends that we read over and over again.**

---

Children usually identify with the smallest character in a book. If the story is about a child and a cat, the reader will want to focus on the cat. If it's about a cat and a mouse, the reader will want the mouse to be the winner. Small needs to win and the small character in a book should always empower the reader. This can be done in several ways.

In my books I try to always make "small" the winner. In *The Hungry Giant*, who is the winner? Little bees. The giant's a bully. That book might seem a little violent to adults, but all children have at some stage known what it is to be bullied and that's the appeal of that giant. He gets his comeuppance from the smallest characters in the

book, the bees. Small is the problem solver. We see that in the best loved books and folk tales. The small one is wise. The small one is powerful. Small is allowed to make mistakes with the understanding that this is a way of learning. That is so for big people, too. As the artist Pablo Picasso said, "I tried things I couldn't do, and that is how I did them."

### **Component Number Three: Magic**

A good book has magic — magical story, delicious language. Right there at the beginning of the story is the baited hook that grabs the reader. When we were children, we loved those books. They were our friends that we read over and over again. We can identify with children today who want to hug a book, take it home, and sleep with it under the pillow. But we also know that there is some not-so-good early reading material that is being given to children. Many children are given meaningless drills as an introduction to reading. Why are we still doing this? That system has never worked. It won't work now. Children readily learn language skills, including the sound of letters and chunks, when there is a meaningful context. By meaningful we understand that the context not only makes sense, it engages, it entertains, and it creates positive emotions.

For centuries, researchers have been able to study dead brain tissue. It is only since the advent of microchip technology that scientists have been able to study live brain function. The results of this research have been around long enough to be common knowledge among publishers and educators. We are hot-wired for pleasure, and we learn most efficiently and effectively through pleasure.

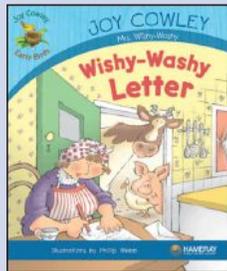
Teachers who work with children every day, in a child-centered way, don't need scientific evidence. You have all seen how children open up like flowers to learning through the magic of meaningful story. My heart feels very full as I leave here today. I take back with me so many memories of such warmth and positive feelings about the future. Thank you for the way you are shaping it.

## Joy Looks at Books Children Love to Read

So, what are the books you loved as a child? I'm sure those books were not works of instruction. They didn't preach. They didn't talk down to you. You remember them with pleasure because pleasurable experience means pleasurable recall. So, what was it about those

books that you enjoyed? They came alive inside you. They made you feel part of a story. Somehow the book was a friend that stayed with you. It empowered you in a special way. For example...

*Wishy-Washy Letter* is about a word that has two meanings. Sometimes children get confused about words that have two meanings, but this can be made into a joke.



Mrs. Wishy-Washy said my letter needs a stamp.

"We can fix that," said the cow to the duck.

The duck flew up and got the letter.

The cow stamped on it.

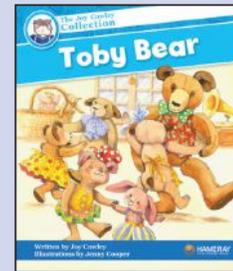
The pig stamped on the letter.

Then the duck went stamp, stamp, stamp.

"Mud," cried Mrs. Wishy-Washy. "Who put mud on my letter?"

I tried not to explain away jokes. Children are smart at picking up illustration cues and I just let them work out the joke.

The last series is about my visit to a Teddy Bear museum. It had a wonderful arrangement of all ages and types and I decided to do a series about Teddy Bear and different characters. And this is about *Toby Bear*. Because all children know Teddy Bears. It was dance night at the Teddy Bear museum.



The music box was playing and old Toby Bear wanted to dance. Oops. Toby bumped Ruby Bear who fell over. "You are clumsy, Toby," said Ruby Bear. "You are too clumsy to dance."

"Sorry," said Toby. "Let me let you up."

You may notice something about Toby. He's only got one eye.

The music was fast, old Toby Bear still wanted to dance. Bump.

This time Toby bumped Fred Bear. Fred Bear bumped Ruby Bear. Ruby Bear bumped Bobby Bear. Over they went.

Soon there was a heap of Teddy Bears on the floor.

"Why are you so clumsy?" Ruby Bear cried.

"I can't see," said Toby Bear. "Today I lost one of my eyes."

"Oh, poor Toby," everyone said.

The bears looked and looked for Toby's lost eye, but it was not there.

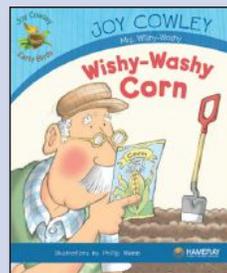
Ruby Bear said, "I have a gold button on my gold jacket. Will that do for an eye?"

"It will be better than nothing," said old Toby Bear.

"Stay still!" said Ruby "and I'll sew it on,"

"Amazing!" cried Toby Bear. "Now, I can see you all and you all look like gold."

Here's another from the Wishy-Washy books: *Wishy-Washy Corn*.



Mr. Wishy-Washy planted some corn seeds.

The corn seeds grew into corn plants.

Corn plants grew and grew and grew.

"Corn," said the cow.

"Corn," said the pig.

"Lovely corn," said the duck.

Mr. Wishy-Washy said to Mrs. Wishy-Washy, "Come and see my corn."

"What corn?" said Mrs. Wishy-Washy.

And of course, the children know what happened.

# “Get Your Running Shoes On:” Reading Recovery Moves to the U.S.

Patricia L. Scharer, *The Ohio State University*

*Author’s Note: The following article is based on interviews done with Gay Su Pinnell, Carol Lyons, and Diane DeFord about the beginning of Reading Recovery® in the U.S. Picture these three pioneers answering my questions and reminiscing with me about how each got involved in Reading Recovery and how it grew in ways none of them had imagined.*

## How did each of you first come to know Marie Clay’s work?

**Carol:** In 1979, when I was a masters’ student, Marie Clay came to OSU for a meeting with grad students. She talked about Reading Recovery, what it did for children, and the importance of understanding learning theory. By 1983, I had read everything I could of Clay’s work. I got hold of the blue guidebook and even fooled around a little bit with it with my son who was already reading. Some people would say—“all we need is the books”—and I was one of them at first.

**Gay:** I had read *Reading: The Patterning of Complex Behaviour* (Clay, 1977) and was very interested in how she observed children. Dr. Martha King, a colleague of mine, had been invited to speak at a conference in New Zealand so I went with her. We had already started a proposal for working with struggling readers in the U.S. but, as we delved into Reading Recovery, we realized that the proposal we had wasn’t going to work so we threw it out and decided to try to actually replicate Reading Recovery in this country. Marie and Barbara Watson (Marie’s New Zealand colleague) weren’t sure it would work in another country, but we wanted to try.

**Diane:** I first encountered Marie Clay’s work while I was a doctoral student at Indiana University (1974–1978). Martha King came to Indiana and did several presentations that I attended. She presented her research on children’s writing and cited Marie Clay’s research published in *What Did I Write?* (1975). I continued to follow Clay’s writing and when her new book, *Reading: The Patterning of Complex Behavior* was published in 1977, I was hooked

on her theories. They explained so much of what I had experienced with young children as a classroom teacher, which is what led me to engage in doctoral studies — to find ways to help children at risk of failure. I took a position at Ohio State in 1983 and was excited to be able to work more closely with Dr. King. When Martha and Gay went to New Zealand during my first year at OSU, they began to plan ways they might bring Reading Recovery to OSU. I had seen it as a new faculty member and became interested. When the Ohio Department of Education became interested and funding became available, Carol, who was on the Newark campus, and I were trained as trainers during that first teacher leader training class, so OSU then had three university trainers.

## So how did the Ohio Department of Education become involved?

**Gay:** When I returned from New Zealand, I went down to talk with Bob Bowers at the Ohio Department of Education. I knew that he was a visionary and would be interested. Charlotte Huck, another colleague at OSU, had also talked with Evelyn Luckey at Columbus Public Schools. The enthusiasm grew for accelerated progress that was unheard of before Reading Recovery. I remember that Bob called me one day and said, “Get your running shoes on!” And, with funding from an NCTE grant, Jennings, Columbus Foundation, and ODE, Reading Recovery began in the U.S.

**Carol:** In the summer of 1985, Ray Williams, our department chair, invited me to become part of Reading Recovery as an administrator. I was intrigued by that but was most intrigued that I could take the university trainer training from Gay and two graduate students. Clay kept coming back, so I got a little taste of her, too. I approached Reading Recovery from a learning perspective. I had taken graduate courses on neuropsychology, so on my guidebook I had written “the reticular activating system” and “intention”— all these things from that background and applied it to literacy.

**Diane:** Gay, Charlotte Huck, and Martha King had a long history of working with the Columbus Public Schools and were well connected to key administrators in CPS and the Ohio State Department of Education. Word of the early successes of Reading Recovery with teachers and students in Columbus reached key people in the state department of education, and the question of how much money it might take to plan and execute a statewide implementation of Reading Recovery arose. I was listening in with my fingers crossed, as my early observations of Reading Recovery had given me a sense of the possibilities for so many more children.

### What was it like to work in those first years of Reading Recovery at OSU?

**Carol:** I was thrown in feet first because the second year, we had 24 teacher leaders, and there was a lot to do! I am a fairly organized person and phone calls started coming in. All of a sudden I was on the phone answering questions: Why do you have to come to OSU? Why do you have to teach children behind-the-glass? Why do we have to give credit? We have state department credit, why do we need university credit? That's how it emerged that I became the first administrator of Reading Recovery at OSU. We had a very good team; we all pitched in and were problem solvers and I think the problems drove the job. I don't want to say problems — they were legitimate school-based issues. I was committed to Reading Recovery, and I knew it worked.

**Diane:** It was very exciting! We had a new group of teacher leaders involved in a new concept for us in education — investing in early intervention and preparing leaders of teachers who would guide new Reading Recovery teachers in working with children who were the lowest in their first-grade class. It was a dream for me that came true! We saw immediate results from Reading Recovery with the Ohio teacher leaders. Word traveled fast, and soon we had visitors interested in sending candidates to Ohio.

**Gay:** By Year 3, Carol, Diane, and I had become a team. We had another 24 teacher leaders. We didn't know then that we needed to provide continuing contact. If you don't learn more, it becomes robotic. So, we brought them together for a summer refresher and we began to define the role of the teacher leader in the U.S.

### What was your first impression of the teaching and learning during lessons?

**Gay:** What struck me is that here was a struggling reader who was behaving as a proficient reader. The teacher provides the scaffold to make this child a confident reader. There is a smoothness and skill to the teaching. It's like a beautiful dance.

**Carol:** I only picked LD kids since that's an area of interest, so I asked for children who were on the LD wait list. No amount of knowledge can help prepare you like teaching children. You don't learn from reading the book; you learn from children as you read the book because the child has shown you something.

**Diane:** I studied with Jerry Harste and Carolyn Burke at Indiana, so I was aligned with the theoretical base. I was familiar with miscue analysis and observing young readers, so doing a running record was not a big shift. But I was just astonished at my observations of lessons taught behind-the-glass and the dynamic conversations held by the teachers observing the lesson. The way that the conversations lead by a Reading Recovery trainer helped teachers see and understand things that were very hard to accomplish in a regular university course was intriguing to me. Seeing the early assessment data of the child, and the progress that was made in a short time of one-on-one tutoring, was what convinced me I needed to be involved.

### How did Reading Recovery grow so fast?

**Carol:** Parents were very important early on; they saw their children learning and told other people. A secretary in the House of Representatives had a grandson who learned to read quickly through Reading Recovery — this was support for continuing state funding.

**Gay:** Yes, I remember calling Marie and telling her that we got this money and now had 24 teacher leaders to train. Marie said, "You have it and you have to do it." Both Marie and Barbara Watson came over from New Zealand several times to help us.

**Diane:** The article written by Mary Fried, Rose Mary Estes, and Gay that was published in *The Reading Teacher* in 1990 was instrumental in making Reading Recovery available in the professional literature so that other people became interested. We started setting up observations where people would come and see Reading Recovery in operation, and we devised a way to train teacher leaders at OSU by being in residence for a year. Then, we had an article published by the National Diffusion Network

and it got a lot of press because it was intended for superintendents and principals as a target population. We had people come to OSU from Texas, New York, North Carolina, and Georgia. Soon we had to consider other options for training because it wasn't feasible for all teacher leaders to be trained at OSU, so we started training trainers for other universities like Cliff Johnson, Noel Jones, Colin Dunkeld, and Trika Smith-Burke.

**Carol:** We had calls from across the U.S. People who read about Marie's work noticed that there was one place you could go and see it, so OSU started to get visitors. A group would come as an exploration. These were school-based people; they always had the same questions — Why do you need credit? Why does it cost so much? So, we did cost-effectiveness studies. You're going to pay for struggling readers one way or another. But then factor in the cost of the child's educational career — you can't measure that! There are other children who are written off. There are throw-away kids in this country! Too many kids falling through the cracks than we want to admit.

### What happened as more teacher leaders were trained across the U.S.?

**Gay:** The whole idea of teaching in front of your peers was frightening in the U.S. It was hard to convince teachers that watching someone behind-the-glass and teaching behind-the-glass was something you had to do. Even using the term "training" was offensive to many people — they associated it with animal training. You train a horse. I remember Mary Fried explaining that training means that you know what you're doing! Being expected to talk about your observations was also foreign, as well as the idea that you were trying to get the child out of Reading Recovery in a short amount of time. The common belief was that when a child is in Title I, he has to be in Title I for the whole year or even all of elementary school.

**Diane:** The success of the program brought more and more people as representatives of districts wanting to change their own results and reduce failure in the early grades. But it also generated more and more questions! The key components of this innovative way of teaching children was really like a wedge — it disrupted accepted practice and was so different that administrators pushed back as they considered the possibilities. Why not take children who were guaranteed to quickly become successful readers rather than serving the lowest children, who

were sure to fail? Why not teach small groups of children rather than having teachers work with children in one-on-one settings? Why can't you train a teacher leader during the summer so they can come back and start the program right away? Why do teachers continue to have contact with a teacher leader? Once they are trained, that should be sufficient!

**Carol:** We started to see that some people wanted to be creative in how to put Reading Recovery in the schools. We saw that we needed to have a trademark, so we worked with OSU lawyers, who had never heard about trademarking an educational program! Once we got the trademark in place, it was a lot easier to say to people, here are the standards which guarantee the integrity of the program. Marie really liked that it was trademarked in the U.S. We wanted to guarantee that the children and teachers would receive the program as designed. We're a big country; we had a lot to try to manage. I think the trademark saved us. I don't think it would have lasted 5 years if it hadn't been trademarked. There were too many people who wanted to create something else.

### What do you remember most fondly about Marie Clay?

**Carol:** I remember sitting next to Marie at a reception even before I was working in Reading Recovery. When I leaned over and talked with her, I said that I was very interested in the brain and Reading Recovery and she said, "What! You know about the brain?" So I told her. I look back on Reading Recovery very fondly as an opportunity to work with children and apply what you have learned.

**Diane:** The most poignant stories I remember are of Marie Clay's ability to listen to teachers' questions as if she had never heard that question before, and her answers were being formed as if she had never thought of that answer before. She had the ability to be a listener and she had such a warm personality.

**Gay:** I think that she was constantly learning. Marie read voraciously and examined a wide range of research on learning and literacy. She constantly re-examined her own ideas in the light of the understandings she gained. It is not that she changed her basic theory so much as she refined and polished it to reveal deeper understanding. She continues to be an example for us all.

### How has being involved in Reading Recovery affected you personally and professionally?

**Carol:** It helped me respect more and more the importance of teachers and what they are doing. The ones who really care about kids, they will dig to know what to do. That's what I learned about adult learning. Adults are just like children — they need to have reinforcement for the good work they are doing, they deserve to be stretched. Give them a chance to talk about their children so you know where they are in their own learning. It's not so much book knowledge; it's listening hard to what the teachers are saying and giving them credit for what they know.

**Diane:** My involvement in Reading Recovery made a big difference in my professional life because it's an ongoing way of learning. Every time you see a child or teacher or take a leadership role and you train university trainers, you see revolutionary change taking place. It was a different role for all of us in the sense that we began to see change as limitless, and that is transforming for everyone involved!

**Gay:** Personally, it's been a joy. I've made so many wonderful friends and colleagues. There's something uplifting about being part of Reading Recovery. It adds to your life.

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#### About the Author

Pat Scharer is a professor of education and human ecology at The Ohio State University. A Reading Recovery trainer, she also is actively involved in Literacy Collaborative. Dr. Scharer's research interests include early literacy development, phonics and word study, and the role of children's literature to foster both literary development and literacy achievement. Her research has been published in numerous publications and in the yearbooks of the National Reading Conference and the College Reading Association.



*Diane Deford, Gay Su Pinnell, and Carol Lyons continue their work and friendships forged 30 years ago at OSU. Most recently they gathered to celebrate at the Anniversary Reception during the 2015 National Conference.*



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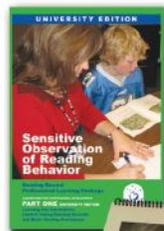
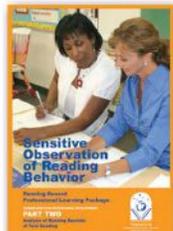
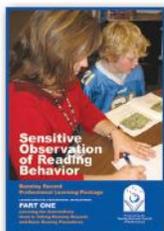
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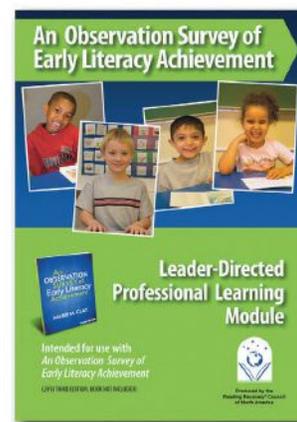
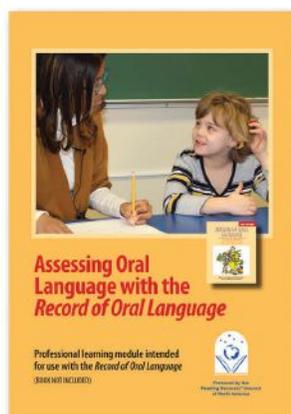
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# Marie Clay's Theoretical Perspectives and Powerful Messages for Teachers

Mary Anne Doyle, University of Connecticut

The purpose of this discussion is to reflect on Marie Clay's quest for explanations of early literacy development, the literacy processing theory that her research revealed, and the implications of her theoretical constructs for teachers. She summarized her work as developmental, preventative, and provocative, and this stems from the unique perspectives she brought to the study of literacy acquisition and instruction. Her theoretical stance and significant contributions have enhanced our perceptions of literacy, young learners, and early intervention and have created promising opportunities for children and teachers, her profound legacy.

Clay's theoretical understandings guide Reading Recovery® teachers' work with young learners and support her intention to enhance teachers' effectiveness through discussion of theory on two levels: "a theory of what occurs as children become proficient readers and writers . . . and a theory of how to interact with what occurs" (2001, p. 77) in order to provide powerful instruction. The following discussion reviews Clay's literacy processing theory, constructive learners and related learning theory, and implications for literacy instruction that will ensure a self-extending system, the key to guaranteeing ongoing development and success.

## A Developmental Theory of What Occurs

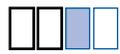
In multiple contexts Clay (1991, 2001, 2014) has shared that her academic discipline was developmental psychology with its focus on the study of development of cognitive competences by "active learners *changing over time* within their contexts" (Clay, 1991, p. 2). She chose to study children acquiring early literacy and focused initially on documenting observable behaviors and changes in how children work in reading and writing continuous texts during the earliest phase of literacy acquisition and instruction, their first year of schooling. She interpreted changes in literacy processing (meaning in-the-head processing) as signals of change in psychological processes such as perceiving, linking, and decision-making. This was considered an appropriate first step, as descriptive accounts of children's progress and emerging cognitive competences during literacy acquisition had not been reported in the research literature (Clay, 2001). Clay was embarking on new territory.

While delineation of behaviors changing over time was her first objective, her related goals were explanations of observed changes and considerations of how to modify instruction in order to optimize development for all individuals (Clay, 2004). For struggling learners, she described this as "leading children . . . back to a more-secure developmen-

tal track, that is, to the *recovery of a more normal trajectory*" (Clay, 2001, p. 288–289), and this brought her to the study of intervention.

Clay initiated her inquiry by studying new entrants, nonliterate learners, engaged in reading and writing instruction designed by their teachers to focus on text processing. She conducted her research by applying an approach common in developmental psychology, the careful recording of behaviors (oral reading behaviors) collected in frequent intervals over an extended period of time. In that her participants were immersed in reading authentic, continuous texts and writing personal messages from the start, she was able to capture children's text processing behaviors from their earliest attempts to read and write. The resulting data entailed records of oral reading behaviors and samples of children's writing products collected longitudinally during their first year of instruction. These procedures allowed her to describe and analyze changes in the performance of learners acquiring early literacy.

One of the provocative aspects of her research was her approach to data collection and her development of alternative means for securing behavioral evidence, i.e., student performance. Clay rejected use of traditional, existing instruments for assessing reading achievement as she found standardized test scores inappropriate for addressing her questions. She, therefore, developed procedures



for capturing and recording oral reading performance sequentially using reliable techniques, her first running record. Her approach, which yields information differing from that provided by test scores, is referred to as *an unusual lens*. More specifically, she defines any observational tool or research methodology that gathers “detailed data on changes in literacy processing over short intervals of time from subjects engaged in reading or writing continuous texts” (Clay, 2001, p. 16) as an unusual lens.

A recent observation regarding Clay’s approach to researching the development of literacy behaviors in beginning readers is how it stands as a precursor of the microgenetic method used by development psychologists currently. As described by Siegler (2006), microgenetic analyses involve the study of the genesis or very beginnings of learners’ strategic behaviors, how children’s learning occurs, and how it unfolds or changes over time. Specially, the methods of study include observations that are conducted throughout the period of rapidly changing competencies. The result is a high density of observations, meaning a high amount of observations in relation to the rate of change. The resulting observations are analyzed with the goal of inferring in-the-head processing. This reflects Clay’s approach and intent. She studied how children work in reading and writing continuous texts in order to describe the emergence of cognitive competencies for literacy and to clarify the sequence of changes in ways learners process information. Clay’s research uniquely addresses emerging literacy.

To meet her goal of discovering how children’s literacy performance and processing behaviors change over time, Clay examined the reading and

writing behaviors of the proficient learners in her study. These were the learners making expected, age-appropriate progress. Her findings were definitive: Children’s progress in reading and writing performances is marked by clear behavioral, or literacy processing, changes. Clay also discovered that over the course of the academic year, children making successful progress become literate at varied points in time and in idiosyn-

Through her study of acts of processing in writing and reading, Clay determined that behaviors observed in the earliest records of reading performance were found to be rudimentary and not particularly effective. However, over time, with ongoing opportunities to read and write continuous texts, children’s reading and writing behaviors signaled enhanced effectiveness. Clear shifts in both the awareness of information sources in

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Clay discovered that over the course of the academic year, children making successful progress become literate at varied points in time and in idiosyncratic ways. This led her to conclude that there is more than one route to learning how to read and write. There is no single, fixed, developmental path along which every child must travel to gain literacy.

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cratic ways. This led her to conclude that there is more than one route to learning how to read and write. There is no single, fixed, developmental path along which every child must travel to gain literacy. In addition, she had behavioral evidence revealing that those children who were not making expected progress in learning to read and write were developing differently.

There are two important consequences of these research discoveries. First, her documented accounts of the reading and writing behaviors of proficient learners provided the basis of her complex theory of literacy processing and her definition of reading. And, second, she began to determine rather specifically what low-progress children need to learn in order to become successful readers and writers.

text and the application of strategic processing behaviors were captured. In a longer chapter (Doyle, 2013), these observations are discussed in some detail. The summaries below serve to highlight evidence of readers’ changing attention to different kinds of information and observed changes over time in processing.

*Children begin to read or write using very simple working systems borrowed at first from different kinds of learning prior to school.*

Clay found that children often read their first books using low-level strategies acquired from experiences with talking, writing, and listening to stories prior to entering school. They appear to rely on auditory memory of predictable sentences or stories, and they are aware of concepts of books including awareness of the connections between pictures and text and

the benefits of anticipating and using a repeated sentence pattern. Many Reading Recovery teachers find this type of processing on the earliest levels of text reading on the Observation Survey (Clay, 2013).

Following 6 months of school, Clay observed that proficient learners attended to many aspects of text and exhibited a range of new behaviors. Specifically,

- they responded to print with a series of utterances,
- they checked with pictures for agreement,
- they matched pointing and word utterance on 50% of the text,
- they increased attention to words using the spaces between words to guide them, and
- they located one or more words on request. (Clay, 2001, p. 59)

While these early processing behaviors are not very effective, they do represent an adequate, initial starting place. And, the development of more-effective working systems and literacy processing strategies result from ongoing instructional opportunities and exposure to little books.

***Proficient learners use their knowledge of oral language.***

Proficient readers/writers engaged in literacy activities successfully by drawing on their existing language knowledge. Their oral language provided a reliable source of information for predicting meaningful texts and for detecting errors. Gradually, the readers' awareness of semantic and syntactic information in text was augmented by visual perceptual learning, including increasing knowledge

of letters, letter-sound associations, words, and subwords. Thus, their literacy development proceeded "in the direction of more and more receptiveness to visual perception cues which must eventually dominate the process" (Clay, 1982, p. 28).

***Early writing experiences serve as a significant source of new learning, a beneficial reciprocity.***

Children's personal writing experiences served as a significant source of new learning that contributed to the child's construction of more-effective literacy processing systems. Writing experiences helped build the working systems needed to search for information in print, an awareness of how to construct a message, and awareness of the sources of information available in written language. Clay (1975) observed that beginning writers "do not learn about language on any one level of organization before they manipulate units at higher levels. When they know a few letters they can produce several words, and with several words they can make a variety of sentences" (p. 19). In writing messages, children learn/work on all levels of the language hierarchy, and this learning contributes to their construction of early literacy systems and acquisition of language knowledge that extends processing in both reading and writing. This represents the reciprocity between reading and writing.

***Proficient learners exhibit changes in essential, foundational reading behaviors neglected by most theorists of initial reading acquisition.***

Clay discovered that in the earliest instructional contexts, the teacher-scaffolded reading and writing activities supported learning in four

areas essential for proficient early reading: (a) consistent left-to-right movement across words and lines of text; (b) awareness of letter and word forms (visual perception of print); (c) construction of appropriate speech responses (syntax); and (d) matching spoken word units to printed word units. "Directional behaviors manage the order in which readers and writers attend to anything in print. Gaining control of them is a foundational step in literacy as oral language is matched to written language" (Clay, 2001, p. 118).

Where to look, what to look for, how to fixate and move eyes across print (sentences and individual words) involve coordinating the body, hand, and eye movements needed for literacy processing. And, in fact, such motor behaviors (e.g., one-to-one matching) create an early working system for processing text. These foundational aspects of early literacy acquisition are paramount to and a residual of reading and/or writing continuous texts. Because Clay examined early reading behaviors meticulously, she clarified these essential requisites unexplored by other theorists.

***Self-correction of reading errors is tutorial for the young learner.***

Spontaneous, unprompted self-corrections of reading errors was a pattern of behavior that appeared in very early records of oral reading and revealed a reader's self-monitoring and correcting on the basis of appropriate one-to-one matching. Over time and with acquisition of more knowledge of the information sources, self-correction behaviors revealed that readers could independently search and check print in more detail to confirm

and correct their reading. Clay suggests that a learner's "willingness to choose between alternatives leads to a search for more information and this can potentially take processing to new levels of complexity" (2001, p. 120). Thus, self-correction behaviors and the problem solving involved in monitoring, searching, choosing, evaluating, and confirming are tutorial for the reader who is reinforced internally for his efforts.

*Early processing behaviors evolve into more efficient decision-making, strategic behaviors.*

Clay (2001) found that from the beginning, proficient readers use language and visual and motor information so that "what on the surface looks like simple word-by-word reading . . . involves children in linking many things they know from different sources (visual, auditory/phonological, movement, speaking/articulating, and knowledge of the language)" (p. 79) to read a precise message. She discovered that readers were constructing a network of strategic behaviors, or action systems, or cell assemblies for processing text. "These cognitive terms describe what readers do as they work sequentially on the information sources in print to get the author's message" (Clay, p. 198).

The proficient readers had learned how to search and check information, how to go back to search again, and how to monitor their reading and confirm their decision making. She describes the types of strategic behaviors they applied as

- controlling serial order according to the directional rules for the script being read, across lines and within words;

- using what you know about in reading to help writing and vice versa;
- problem solving with more than one kind of information;
- actively searching for various types of information in print;
- using visual information;
- using language information;
- drawing on stored information;
- using phonological information;
- working on categories, rules, or probabilities about features in print;
- using strategies which maintain fluency;
- using strategies which problem solve new features of printed words and meanings; and
- using strategies which detect and correct error. (Clay, 2001, p. 199)

Additionally, by studying the patterns of oral reading behaviors collected over time, Clay (2001) discovered changes indicative of primitive literacy processing systems evolving into more-efficient literacy process systems. Her depiction of such changes from initial reading to more-efficient processing includes these:

1. Move across print selecting some letters or words for attention or making up sentences to match the pictures.
2. Discover how what they know relates to anything about the print on a page.
3. Pick up different kinds of information in sequence.

4. Focus on one type of information but can be prompted to take another kind of information into account.
5. Gradually attend to more than one kind of information to solve words and phrases.
6. Check one source of information against another.
7. Mix slow sequential processing on hard words with faster processing on easy words.
8. Exhibit searching, choosing, and rejecting behaviors.
9. Adjust their processing to the demands of the task, processing differently when reading easy, instructional, and challenging texts — after 1 year of school. (Clay, 2001, p. 125)

Gradually, readers demonstrated the ability to construct what a line of text might say, locate the sequence of information to attend to, and detect or monitor mismatches between their seeing and saying (Clay, 2001). At the point when proficient learners moved into more-formal beginning reading instruction, the records of behaviors revealed the following:

- They could not read, but they identified the words in text with 80% accuracy.
- They selected words one after the other to construct viable sentences.
- They could reject a response and try a different one.
- They began to self-correct.
- They knew a few words in reading and/or writing.

- They could bring two kinds of behaviors together (e.g., verbal and pointing behavior).
- They often stressed the separation (juncture) between words. (p. 59)

In summary, Clay (1982, 2001) found that their literacy processing behaviors had evolved from primitive forms of problem solving to behaviors indicative of more-expert solving approximating the processing of a mature reader. Thus, she had a description of early literacy acquisition revealing a transformation in learners' processing behaviors over the first year of instruction. This serves as a transformative model of growth and an alternative view of progress, and this depiction of literacy acquisition gives a depth of understanding that could not be secured by collecting scores on any achievement measure. It also allows identification of instructional recommendations.

### A Theory of How to Interact: More Provocative Hypotheses

Clay's analyses of early literacy behaviors led to what she called a *literacy processing theory*, "a theory of assembling perceptual and cognitive working systems needed to complete increasingly complex tasks" (Clay, 2001, pp. 269–270). Her provocative hypotheses are that perceptual and cognitive systems are constructed independently by the learner, and once established, enable one to learn to read by reading and to learn to write by writing. In effect, the active, independent learner has continued access to new learning, and this creates the self-extending system (Clay, 2005a). Thus, she suggests that the "goal of teaching is to assist the child to construct effective networks in his brain for linking up all the strategic activity that will be needed to work on texts" (Clay, 2005a, p. 44).

Therefore, the focus of development and instruction must involve considerations of how the child's brain develops, what transpires, and what influences growth.

Clay's theory of how teachers should interact with learners to ensure the acquisition of effective, cognitive processing systems is based on understanding the child as a constructive learner and on instruction as co-construction — the child engaged with a knowledgeable, responsive teacher. What does it mean to construct one's own learning? In relation to literacy acquisition, it means that the learner is the sole architect of the internal, neurological networks of working systems for reading and writing. This is understood to result from experience and from the mind's engagement in forming, testing, and revising hypotheses.

Zull (2011) states, "It is the capacity of the brain to organize and change itself through experience that leads to development of the mind. By sensing, recording and reproducing our experiences, the brain gains the capacity to think, decide, and act" (p. 10). Lyons (2003) and Zull concur that "the brain is molded by experience—by the sensory input it receives, by problems it has solved, and by the emotions it has experienced" (Zull, p. 21). Therefore, "carrying out of an activity builds more competence in the activity" (Clay, 1991, p. 318), and this realization creates understanding of the active learner constructing the neural networks for reading and writing as a result of literacy experiences.

The engagement of the young learner in hypotheses formulation, testing, and revising is apparent in a young child's ability to acquire oral language. A young learner actively con-



*Rejecting standardized test scores as inappropriate for addressing her questions, Clay developed procedures for capturing and recording oral reading performance sequentially using reliable techniques—the first running record.*

structs a complex system of language rules that govern his oral language production as a result of engagement in communicative acts. The processes involved further explicate how language learning is constructed independently and individually.

Language is acquired by the learner's active participation in communicating meaning to others. As the child engages in conversations, he formulates hypotheses regarding rules for language production, receives feedback, and confirms or modifies his hypotheses on the basis of the feedback. Very often, the earliest utterances do not reflect the rules of proficient speakers; however, progress results from his independent hypothesis formulation, reformulation, and refinement. In effect, "children act on their own theories of how things work and change these theories slowly in the face of conflicting evidence" (Clay, 2014, p. 203).

The active, constructive learner is a risk taker whose mind strives to make order of complexity by problem solving with his current understanding and theories. He learns when engaged in tasks that are within his zone of development and not overwhelming. Difficult, hard tasks cause frustration and thwart learning. He is active, engaged, and successfully making new discoveries when he feels in control, i.e., capable of managing the task, motivated to meet new challenges, and reinforced for his efforts. Such experiences build positive emotional responses, a key factor in a child's learning (Lyons, 2003).

The acquisition of complex literacy processing "begins when a child is expected to compose and write a simple message or read a simple continuous text" (Clay, 2001, p. 97) for

it is in processing complete messages that the perceptual/cognitive working systems for literacy are formed, developed, and linked. For the child actively engaged in reading and writing, the learning proceeds on multiple dimensions involving and connecting functional systems of the brain (Lyons, 2003) key to perceiving, recognizing, and storing perceptual information (perceptual learning), integrating different kinds of information, and searching, monitoring, evaluating, confirming, reacting, comprehending, and taking action (cognitive learning). Perceptual and cognitive systems are connected via neural networks that are constructed and linked at the time they are needed and these are strengthened through use.

Literacy processing is a reader's decision making during reading and writing. Our awareness of the neurological functioning of the brain clarifies how this processing involves "many working systems in the brain which search for and pick up verbal and perceptual information governed by directional rules; other systems which work on that information and make decisions; other systems which monitor and verify those decisions; and systems which produce responses" (Clay, 2001, p. 1).

Initially, the learner constructs and applies very simple action systems (working systems established prior to schooling). He uses his existing knowledge of oral language and knowledge of the world and initial hypotheses of how books work (e.g., predicting text from pictures) to read simple texts. Each reading experience is an act of construction (Clay, 2001) creating opportunities for new learning, i.e., hypothesizing, trialing, eval-

uating, and refining with meaning the goal. In the process, knowledge of information sources is expanded and problem-solving abilities become more proficient, or more expert. Thus, as children read and write continuous texts and are presented with many opportunities for more and more perceptual comparisons, new items of information—including words, roots, prefixes, patterns, clusters, chunks—are discovered and added to the recognition, or perceptual working systems (Clay, 2001). Likewise, the child will construct inner strategic processing systems.

Qualitative changes in strategic processing that occur as readers integrate information and bring different systems together are suggested by these examples:

1. They make unstable, newly learned responses to print (locating, or looking, sounds parts and making letters), and these occur erratically, make unpredictable appearances and gradually become consistent.
2. New integrations appear, such as when the teacher notices that most error substitutions have an appropriate initial sound.
3. Observable behaviors (like pointing or self-correction) once used, disappear into some other integration, no longer needed as props most of the time but still available if there is a need to draw them into the solving process momentarily. (Clay, 2001, pp. 131–132)

These observations serve as behavioral evidence of how over time and after many opportunities to read and

write, the learner constructs complex working systems to support reading for meaning (Clay, 2001).

The neural networks for literacy evolve and transform as teachers provide opportunities to read and write a gradient of texts with increments of increasing challenges. The child's opportunities to work at slightly higher levels of complexity create the problem-solving experiences that extend the efficiency of the neural processing system.

As readers become competent the strategies that make up the linking and decision-making systems encounter new problems and novel features, and these become 'known' and available in the repertoire of problem-solving strategies. . . This is the independent learning engaged in by the 'system in use,' the processes carried out by the brain for the reading and writing to occur. (Clay, 2001, p. 224)

In all instances, the reader needs the kind of texts and level of text difficulty on which his existing processing systems work well. "A small amount of error in a predominantly correct text leads the child to notice new differences" (Clay, 1991, p. 248), attend to new information, and make new discoveries. This is accomplished by teachers who balance new text choices with repeated readings of familiar texts read with fluency and ease. "It is the quantity of successful reading that builds the assured independence of the competent reader" (Clay, 2005b, p. 98).

The novice reader constructs the neural systems as a result of his independent efforts in reading or writing texts of appropriate challenge, and the orchestration of problem-solving

behaviors is unique for each reader in each situation. Teachers cannot teach the learner how to construct or orchestrate the complex neural systems for processing; however, teachers do serve as coconstructors who support the child's learning through their interactions and instructional support. They create appropriate learning conditions, judge how the learner's literacy processing is developing, make it easy for the child to be successful, and offer beneficial scaffolding through contingent teaching.

Complex literacy learning is accomplished by instruction that starts with a child's strengths and builds on his

for the child allows high rates of correct responding with appropriate challenge. These reading experiences create the opportunity for the in-the-head processing systems to strengthen and extend through successful problem solving. Teachers choose each new book to match and strengthen the child's emerging awareness and working systems, not to test.

All interactions in both reading and writing contexts provide opportunities for the teacher to support the child's construction of effective working systems. One important goal is independent problem solving revealed by the learner who takes initiative,

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**The teacher creates powerful, supportive learning opportunities by basing instructional decisions on detailed observations of daily performance. Analyses of daily running records confirm that the level of text chosen for the child allows high rates of correct responding with appropriate challenge.**

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existing processing systems (Clay, 1997, 2005a). Therefore, teachers select or write texts that allow the child to engage his existing working systems to read successfully. From these experiences, tentative responses strengthen and more-efficient working systems emerge. Concomitantly, the child experiences success, feels in control, and takes risks in his attempts to problem solve. These are key aspects of constructive learning.

The teacher creates powerful, supportive learning opportunities by basing instructional decisions on detailed observations of daily performance. Analyses of daily running records confirm that the level of text chosen

actively engages in solving challenges, makes some links, and works at difficulty (Clay, 2005b). These actions confirm that the learner is becoming self-reliant with self-monitoring and self-correcting strategies in both reading and writing. And, this independence is established from the first lessons.

To support the learner's constructive processes, effective teachers focus on "process variables (how to get and use information) rather than on mere correctness and habitual responses, and . . . temporarily value responses that were partially correct for whatever they contributed toward correctness" (Clay, 2001, p. 225). Teachers

interact with a constructive child by prompting judiciously. To encourage the learner's construction of effective processing systems, the teacher may call on the learner "to form a hypothesis somewhere in the processing system and make a decision" (Clay, p. 122). Examples of prompting to encourage processing include these: What do you think? Which is it? What did you notice? You try it. You solved the puzzle; how did you know? Teachers also call on readers to take action by prompting them to search for information, to attend, to monitor, to check, to confirm, and to revise (among others). The resulting action sequences lead to self-correction, the ultimate goal of instruction.

As a child engages his strategic processing systems to problem solve new challenges, miscalculations, errors, and self-corrections will occur. Self-correction behaviors confirm that the child is continuing to develop an emotional and cognitive self-extending system.

Teachers who reflect on what errors and self-correction behaviors reveal about the child's processing strengths and what he might be neglecting have rich indications of how to respond, or interact. A powerful teaching move is to honor the partially correct and create success by providing the most-beneficial scaffolding at this time for this learner, accounting for the cutting edge of his emerging processing systems.

At the early stages of literacy acquisition, the child's engagement in writing personal messages involves the

learner's construction of knowledge and processes apparent in both writing and reading. This includes knowledge about letters, sounds, and words, how to use phonological information, how to control serial order, how to search, monitor, self-correct, and make decisions about words and messages, and how to integrate different kinds of information to solve problems (Clay, 2001). Teachers build on the rich potential of this reciprocity, expanding and strengthening neural networks for literacy, by supporting the learner to use his competencies in one area to support learning in the second area.

The goal of instruction for our constructive learners is development of literacy processing systems that are self-managed, self-monitored, and self-extending. Thus,

the reader can potentially draw from all his or her current understanding and all his or her language competencies, and visual information, and phonological information, and knowledge of printing conventions, in ways which *extend both the searching and linking processes as well as the item knowledge repertoires*. Learners pull together necessary information from print in simple ways at first . . . but as opportunities to read and write accumulate over time, the learner becomes able to quickly and momentarily construct a somewhat complex operating system which might solve the problem. (Clay, 2001, p. 224)

## Summary

Clay wove her theories of literacy and of how to interact with young learners engaged in acquiring literacy processing systems for reading and writing in her texts *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals Part One* and *Part Two*. The teaching procedures account for what occurs, signaled by transformations indicative of developmental changes over time, and reflect a theory of learners as active constructors of their own knowledge. Teachers provide their Reading Recovery children with "lessons directed to making them constructive — to actively process information, to find and relate information from different sources, to bring it together, construct a decision, and monitor the effectiveness of that decision" (Clay, 2005b, p. 101).

For struggling readers, this is accomplished in individual lessons with teachers who react to observed behaviors with contingent responses supportive of the learner's emerging, cognitive competencies. Knowledgeable, observant teachers are key, and Clay (2001) considered Reading Recovery teachers adept at interpreting and applying complex, theoretical understandings.

Clay's developmental, provocative, preventive perspectives resulted from her many studies of literacy acquisition, her documented accounts of observed changes, and her theoretical explanations of complex processes. The result is an effective intervention creating the promise of optimal development for children in need of more-supportive interactions and a more-secure developmental track (Clay, 1991, 2001).

### Endnotes

1. To gain more understanding of how the brain functions in relation to the acquisition of literacy, read Carol A. Lyons' 2003 text, *Teaching Struggling Readers*.
2. To learn more about the connections between microgenetic analyses of learning and Clay's research, read the 2011 article referenced below by Schwartz and Gallant.

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### About the Author



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# Contributions of the Works of Marie Clay to Guided Reading Instruction

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Guided reading is an instructional setting that allows teachers to help individual children learn how to use strategic actions to process texts successfully. Our interest in guided reading was propelled by our work with Don Holdaway, an Australian writer and educator, who published *The Foundations of Literacy* in 1979. Holdaway promoted storybook reading with enlarged texts along with guided reading of little books and drew upon Clay's complex theory of reading to support engagement and effective processing of texts.

We found further description of guided reading in *Reading in Junior Classes* with guidelines to the revised Ready to Read series, published by the Department of Education in Wellington, New Zealand, in 1985. This volume defined guided reading as "an approach which enables a teacher and a group of children to talk, read, and think their way purposefully through a text, making possible an early introduction to reading silently" (p. 69). The practice of guided reading in New Zealand dates back at least to 1972, when the Department of Education published *Reading: Suggestions for Teaching Reading in Primary and Secondary Schools* which reported "mainstream" thinking on the teaching of reading.

The basic structure of guided reading is presented in both Holdaway's 1979 book and *Reading in Junior Classes*, along with suggestions for expanding

children language through talk about texts. Both present guided reading as an important instructional context within a comprehensive set of literacy practices including reading aloud to children, independent reading, shared reading, writing, and extension through art and other media. Both cite works by Marie Clay, including *Reading: The Patterning of Complex Behavior* (1979), the first edition of which was published in 1972. Holdaway also cites an earlier article by Clay titled, "The Reading Behavior of Five Year Old Children: A Research Report," which appeared in the *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies* in 1967. All of this points to the conclusion that across New Zealand, a powerful constellation of researchers and practitioners, working together, laid the foundation for an instructional design that built on children's language knowledge and lively curiosity and presented reading as a meaningful and rewarding experience from the time of school entry. It was an approach built on every child's right to have rich experiences with many different kinds of texts and the support of a "noticing" teacher whose keen observation lead to skilled teaching.

Of course, small-group reading instruction had been around for a long time. In a review of the research on grouping students for reading instruction, Barr and Dreeben (1991) describe *between-class* and *within-class* grouping, both of which

emerged early in the 20th Century. In the 1950s and 1960s, studies showed that grouping for reading instruction was prevalent across the United States and in many other parts of the world (Barr & Dreeben). In this same review, Barr and Dreeben draw no definitive conclusions as to the effectiveness of any kind of grouping; however, they mention several criticisms that have been leveled at the then-current practice of teaching reading in small groups, including

- basing grouping on insufficient evidence (often including prejudicial observations such as race or economic status),
- creating static groups that do not change over time and so result in a kind of tracking, and
- differential treatment of low and high groups so that children in the lower groups have less true reading experience and more worksheets and tasks.

To these cautions we would add

- basing instruction on a theory of reading that focused almost solely on letter-sound analysis or word recognition (rather than a theory of constructive learning that incorporates all systems of strategic actions), and
- a concept of teaching that involves standardized group delivery rather than the use of

facilitative language and conversation to allow individuals to build self-extending systems.

It makes sense to teachers that children need skilled guidance to build on their strengths, the opportunity to learn in social groups with others, and texts that meet their current abilities and simultaneously offer opportunities to learn more. Small-group instruction provides a context within which we as teachers can accomplish those goals. When we studied the implementation of guided reading in New Zealand, we knew we were looking at something that was quite different from current small-group instruction we had experienced; and we knew also that Marie Clay's theory contributed hugely to those differences.

Next, we comment on Marie's contributions to the instructional practice of guided reading in three categories: (a) readers and the reading process, (b) texts, and (c) teaching.

## Readers and the Reading Process

Throughout her long career, Clay as a scholar conceptualized and developed a theory of literacy learning that conceived of reading as "a message-gaining, problem-solving activity, which increases in power and flexibility the more it is practiced" (Clay, 1979, p. 6). From the first experiences with print, learners build "working systems" that enable them to problem solve written texts. Her theory leads teachers to view children as *constructive* in that they are constantly putting together information from different sources—including meaning, language syntax or structure, and the visual features of

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Whether they are fast progress literacy learners or those who need intervention to make fast progress, all children should be viewed as active constructors of learning who deserve the best of texts and instruction we can give them in schools. Without fanfare, that is the principle that Clay stood for throughout her professional career, and so her impact is without measure.

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print—in pursuit of processing a meaningful text. This view is quite different from a theory that suggests children learn the smallest items first (letters and sounds) and then progress to large items (words) and finally to sentences and meaning of a whole text.

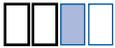
Clay recognized the role of partially correct responding as an indication not of deficit but as evidence of problem-solving behavior. In *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (2002), she presented a powerful set of assessment measures that enabled teachers to draw a portrait of a child's current strengths in precise detail. Assessment provides teachers with a sound basis for grouping and for precise selection of texts that are suited to current strengths. The running record—the most powerful of the observational techniques—allows teachers to capture reading behavior "on the run" in a way that enables them to respond to and support learners with facilitative language. Use of assessment, observation, and the running record are integral to the implementation of guided reading.

Clay's intense focus on the individual child and her continuous observation of the reading and writing behavior of

individual learners led to the exposition, refinement, and more elaborated explanation of her theoretical point of view of the years; but the essence of her thinking was there in her first works. "What I end up with is not a theory of instruction, but a theory of the construction of an inner control of literacy acts" (Clay, 2001, p. 46). The more we understand Clay's theory, the more we believe that literacy learning is not simply additive. It consists of transformations in an ever-increasing complexity as we have described in *The Continuum of Literacy Learning: A Guide to Teaching* (Pinnell & Fountas, 2011). Reading instruction, therefore, must support the child in the process. The goal of instruction is to support and guide children in the development of a self-extending system of literacy behaviors, with which they can learn more about reading from every text they process. This is the goal of guided reading in the early grades; and, even when children have the beginnings of such a system, guided reading supports them in further growth as literate people.

## Texts

The close study of children's reading behaviors inevitably shines a light on the texts they are given to read.



Through Clay, we learned just how important text selection is. It is a sobering thought that

the texts which a teacher chooses for a child can facilitate or constrain the opportunities that a child gets to process text information, and the difficulty level of those texts relative to a child's current skills will create or constrain the opportunities for the child to use what he or she knows in the service of independently learning more through reading, making errors, and self-correcting. (2001, p. 207)

Clay used a very powerful tool—a gradient of text—to help teachers select texts that would support rather than constrain children's reading progress. This means that the 'just right' text is one the child can process with proficiency *with the support of a skilled teacher* and one that offers the opportunity to learn more. The idea is that the text must not be so hard that the reader struggles through it, comprehending little, but it must be challenging enough to engender problem-solving behavior. In answer to the question, "Can a gradient of text difficulty induce change?" Clay says this:

Children can use their control of oral language and knowledge of the world, and as-yet-limited literacy knowledge to move up through a gradient of difficulty in texts. They are aided by teachers who arrange their opportunities and support their efforts. As texts are read and written different kinds of learning are drawn together, coupled, integrated or changed. New items of vocabulary are added, frequently constructed from familiar bits,

roots, prefixes, patterns, clusters, chunks and analogies. In the short time it takes a budding reader to read through many texts on an increasing gradient of difficulty...the network of strategic activity gets massive use, expands in range of experience, and increases in efficiency. This happens providing the reader is not struggling. (2001, pp. 132–133)

This quote captures an essential principle of guided reading: *Teachers select books with readers in mind*. Based on close observation and systematic assessment, teachers select from a rich collection organized by level of difficulty, those that will best support their readers at this point in time. As Clay says, "richer texts themselves provide supporting structures" (2001, p. 105).

## Teaching

Though she did not specifically set out to define methods or processes of instruction, Clay's theory reveals the dynamic interactions through which teachers can support children in developing the self-extending systems. In *Change Over Time in Children's Literacy Development*, Clay summarizes necessary features of instruction for learners to be successful:

- Teachers work to make maximum use of each child's strengths.
- Teachers select appropriate tasks, share them with children, and engage in conversation that supports their efforts.
- Teachers expect and support active problem solving on the part of the child.

- Teachers set the level of difficulty to ensure both high rates of correct responding and appropriate challenge. (2001, p. 225)

These principles are the foundation of teaching in guided reading. Adding to this, Clay helps teachers see how the careful and thoughtful use of language supports children's thinking. She describes an "economy of language" with prompts and questions that respond precisely to the child's actions. As Clay says, "teaching . . . can be likened to a conversation in which you listen to the speaker carefully before you reply" (1985, p. 6). Teachers of guided reading select and use questions and prompts that evoke thinking on the part of their students.

In an unusual move for the time, Clay applied these principles to individual tutoring in early intervention, with the remarkable achievement of Reading Recovery. Thus, we can see that underlying principles of learning apply to the support of all children. We do not teach them all in the same precise way. We see them as individuals. And whether they are fast progress literacy learners or those who need intervention to make fast progress, all should be viewed as active constructors of learning who deserve the best of texts and instruction we can give them in schools. Without fanfare, that is the principle that Clay stood for throughout her professional career, and so her impact is without measure.

*Not armies, not nations have advanced the race; but here and there, in the course of ages, an individual has stood up and cast his shadow over the world.*

– E. H. Chapin

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## About the Authors



Gay Su Pinnell is professor emerita in the School of Teaching and Learning at The Ohio State University. She has extensive experience in classroom teaching and field-based research, and in developing comprehensive approaches to literacy education. She received the International Reading Association's Albert J. Harris Award for research in reading difficulties, the Ohio Governor's Award and the Charles A. Dana Foundation Award for her contributions to the field of literacy education. She is a member of the Reading Hall of Fame.



Irene C. Fountas is a professor in the School of Education at Lesley University in Cambridge, MA. She has been a classroom teacher, language arts specialist, and consultant in school districts across the nation and abroad. She has been involved in extensive field based literacy projects and has received several awards for her contributions to literacy. She works extensively in the literacy education field and directs the Literacy Collaborative in the School of Education at Lesley.

## About the Cover

In addition to helping the lowest-achieving students make progress in reading and writing, Reading Recovery-trained teachers also share their expertise by providing extra support in literacy learning during the other part of their day. Alora Stafford, who began first grade reading at Text Level 3, now reads

fluently and has good comprehension. In addition to her classroom literacy instruction, Alora and three other students met for daily half-hour sessions with Marcia Scales. "I remember that Alora always showed an eagerness to read and reread her books," Marcia said.

"She also enjoyed writing stories about the holidays and things she did with her brother (who was a Reading Recovery student) and with her family." Now a successful second grader, Alora is active in karate and enjoys art class — when she's not reading, of course!



# Marie Clay's Search for Effective Literacy Instruction: A Contribution to Reading Recovery and Small-Group Teaching

*Salli Forbes, University of Northern Iowa*

*Linda J. Dorn, University of Arkansas at Little Rock*

This year Reading Recovery® celebrates 30 years in the U.S., where more than 50,000 Reading Recovery-trained teachers have served over 2.2 million children in Reading Recovery lessons during this time period. In addition, these Reading Recovery teachers have instructed approximately 8.8 million other children in small group or classroom settings during the same 3 decades. Reading Recovery has a solid research base that is recognized by the USDE What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) as the strongest of all beginning reading programs reviewed (WWC, 2008, 2013). The benefit and effectiveness of Reading Recovery are widely recognized—as demonstrated in reviews by the WWC, the National Center for Response to Intervention, and the National Center for Intensive Intervention—as well as by other researchers in the field of literacy (Allington, 2005; Johnston, 2005a, 2005b).

Several research studies reveal the effectiveness of the instruction Reading Recovery teachers provide, in which the teacher must “design a superbly sequenced series of lessons determined by the child’s competencies, and make highly skilled decisions moment by moment during the lesson” (Clay, 2005a, p. 23. See also Pinnell, DeFord, & Lyons, 1988; Pinnell, Deford, Lyons, Bryk, & Selt-

zer, 1994; Schwartz, 2005). Reading Recovery teachers provide powerful one-to-one instruction for the lowest-performing students at the optimum time in their literacy development and schooling (Schwartz). While the most-effective literacy intervention by far is Reading Recovery, the influence of Marie Clay’s discoveries goes beyond the one-to-one Reading Recovery intervention. The theories and processes upon which Reading Recovery is based have wider implications for reading instruction in general, including instruction in small-group settings.

The reality is that most Reading Recovery-trained teachers provide instruction to children in other settings the other part of their teaching day, including small-group reading intervention, special education, ESL, and classroom. They deliver instruction to struggling readers across multiple grade levels and they share specific principles, procedures, and assessments with classroom teachers. The Reading Recovery teachers’ expertise, developed through Reading Recovery training and their experience in teaching many children with unique paths to literacy, informs the teaching they do in other settings and their interactions with other teachers. In a research study by Pinnell et al. (1994), Reading Recovery was the most effective of the four intervention

treatments, but small-group instruction taught by trained Reading Recovery teachers was the second most effective. The expertise of the teachers, developed through Reading Recovery training, also contributed to the effectiveness of the teachers’ instruction of students in small groups.

## Strategic Activity Versus Items of Knowledge

In order to recognize the influence of Clay’s contribution to the instruction of struggling readers, it is important to revisit what is known about the instructional practices for struggling readers prior to implementing Reading Recovery in the U.S.

Richard Allington’s (2011) examination of reading interventions over time provides educators with a historical glance at the influence of policy and research on instructional programs for struggling readers. In his study of remedial programs, Allington (2006) identified common beliefs and practices associated with teaching low-performing students. From his early observations, he concluded that remedial practices consisted primarily of students’ completing skill lessons in workbook or worksheet activities with the teacher serving as a manager. In this role, the remedial reading teacher offered little or no construc-

tive feedback to promote students' self-correcting behaviors. And to make matters worse, struggling readers were asked to read texts that were too difficult, thus denying them the opportunity to develop reading proficiency through successful practice. Based on this simple theory, remedial instruction focused on curing deficits within the student, in contrast to building on the student's strengths. The notion of observing students' reading behaviors to inform teaching decisions was simply not a part of the instructional landscape.

Beginning with her dissertation study, completed in 1966, Marie Clay's research focused on the observation of children's reading of continuous text. In that study she collected data from 100 students in their first year of formal schooling. These observational data revealed the reading behaviors and patterns of high-, high-middle-, low-middle-, and low-performing students (Clay, 1966, 1991). By observing and recording students' reading of little books (continuous text), she was able to capture patterns in the reading behaviors of both proficient and low-performing students. The patterns of the readers in the high group revealed that they read long stretches of text correctly, making only one error in 37 or more words. "Error was embedded in long stretches of correct reading," (Clay, 1991, p. 297). The high-performing readers also self-corrected errors far more frequently than the lower-performing readers.

As a result of this study and other research she conducted, Clay emphasized the importance of providing all students with the same experiences that the better readers had been given. This included providing

students with the opportunity to read continuous text, which they could read at 90% accuracy or better, and valuing their self-correcting efforts. These recommendations have influenced instructional and assessment practices in both small groups and classrooms, as well as in Reading Recovery. Teachers use running records, which Clay developed as a research data collection tool for her dissertation study, to not only iden-

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### Prior to the implementation of Reading Recovery, the notion of observing students' reading behaviors to inform teaching decisions was simply not a part of the instructional landscape in the U.S.

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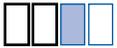
tify students' accuracy percentage and instructional text levels, but also their self-correcting ratios. The objective is for students to have a self-correction ratio between 1:2 and 1:5, the range that Clay found that the good readers in her dissertation study exhibited (Clay, 1966, 1991).

Clay introduced the concept of observing closely reading behaviors to determine what sources of information a child may be using or neglecting to self-monitor, problem solve at point of difficulty, and self-correct while reading continuous text. This systematic observation provides the teacher with the opportunity to prompt the reader to use neglected sources of information, which also

encourages the reader to engage in strategic activity. Instructional decisions, based on the observation of a student's reading, allow the teacher to scaffold the student's development of independent self-regulation of strategic activity and development of inner control of the reading process.

There are several key instructional concepts, which Clay included in the development of Reading Recovery, that support the reader's development of effective strategic processing. Those concepts include creating ample opportunity for the student to read and write continuous text; facilitating the reciprocal learning from reading and writing; providing book introductions to orient the reader to the text in order to provide the optimal opportunity for a successful first reading; teaching with precision and an economy of language; and organizing for the development of fast recognition or production of letters, letter clusters, and words that the reader knows. All of these concepts, which are features of Reading Recovery instruction, are also important components of effective small-group instruction.

Only through reading continuous text does the reader have the opportunity to develop early behaviors (one-to-one matching, directionality, and locating known words) and to develop strategic activities (self-monitoring, searching, cross-checking, and integrating sources of information). While reading continuous text, the reader practices problem-solving and decision-making processes using different kinds of information. Through this frequent practice, the reader acquires automaticity in assembling strategic working systems, which leads to more-efficient and flexible



processing (Clay, 2001). Effective group instruction embraces ample opportunities for students to read continuous text, including rereading familiar books to develop orchestration of these working systems and applying decision-making strategies for solving problems in new texts. The reader then becomes self-regulating and the learning is self-extending.

Reading Recovery teachers develop their understanding and practice to support each student's active engagement with reading work and development of independence on what the student knows and knows how to do. Reading Recovery teachers continuously work on observing teaching and learning to refine their scaffolding of each student's development of independence. Teachers of reading intervention groups can also teach for students' active learning and development of independence and mastery of what they learn. Interventions, such as those in the Comprehensive Intervention Model (Dorn, Soffos, & Doore, 2015), teach within a cognitive apprenticeship approach that includes explicit teaching and modeling, guided practice, scaffolding, and independent practice.

In Reading Recovery and effective small-group instruction, teachers provide scaffolded instruction which both calls on students to use what they know independently and to develop independence with new learning. Teachers provide opportunities for students to engage in independent work throughout the series of lessons. "In Reading Recovery independent work in reading and writing is passed to the child in the first week of the programme for any part of the child's tasks that he or she already controls," (Clay, 2001, p. 220). The



*The influence of Marie Clay's discoveries goes beyond the one-to-one Reading Recovery intervention. The theories and processes upon which Reading Recovery is based have wider implications for reading instruction in general, including instruction in small-group settings like this one in Texas.*

focus on developing independence is extremely important for all intervention instruction. Developing independence with new learning requires the teacher to both support each student's reading and writing work and to continuously teach in such a way so that there is a release of responsibility for the learning to the student.

Providing introductions to new books orients children so that their first reading is successful and they can extend their problem-solving competencies. The teaching on that new book is purposeful, with the intention of determining the level of contingent support that each child needs to both produce a successful reading and learn strategic activities and skills that can later be transferred to other reading. Taking a running record of the second reading of the new book provides the teacher information about whether the student assumed responsibility for the learning that

was the focus of the teacher's instruction before, during, and after the first reading. While this description of instruction is familiar to Reading Recovery teachers, it is also applicable to effective small-group instruction.

Reading volume is essential to reading success. Struggling readers need to read a lot because it is during the actual reading that they can practice flexible strategies and skills for constructing meaning from the text. The theory of volume reading is evident in the Reading Recovery lesson, where Reading Recovery children read 4–5 books daily with the potential to read over 400 books during a 20-week series of lessons. In the process, reading proficiency develops through strategic activity on texts that increase in complexity and difficulty over time. Clay's theory of text reading has influenced small-group interventions in significant ways, including the need for students to read whole

books with teacher scaffolding and to practice fluency and independence on easy texts.

Effective literacy instruction includes a writing component to optimize the advantages of the reciprocal learning between reading and writing. Several models of group instruction do include writing. Some of those models recognize the changing reciprocal benefits of writing to reading development as students advance in literacy achievement. In early interventions, such as those which include a version of interactive writing, the writing facilitates the emergent and beginning reader's learning of early behaviors of one-to-one word-print matching, directional movement, left-to-right visual scanning, and sound analysis to problem solve unknown words. As the reader progresses or for those students who receive intervention beyond the early levels, writing provides opportunities for learning and using various language structures, particularly those that are literary or genre specific. Writing also gives the learners opportunities for using and developing knowledge of new vocabulary, expanding and clarifying distinctive features of various genres, and deepening their understanding of the topics or concepts from their reading.

All of these contributions from Marie Clay have shifted instructional practices of many teachers from a remedial model for low-achieving readers—as described by Allington (2011) in which progress was slow—to the intervention model which focuses on accelerated learning and closing the gap between not proficient and proficient readers and writers. Accelerated learning must be

the goal of any literacy instruction for students who are not proficient in reading and writing. To achieve accelerated learning, teachers must reflect daily on their teaching decisions and students' responses to their teaching moves. Teachers must reflect on the level of independence students demonstrate in all of the items and processes they are learning, with a focus on looking for change over time in students' control of what they know and processing they can do. Simply put, teachers must teach for independence and transfer, which means avoiding a strict sequence, while acknowledging the scope of what students need to learn. They must continuously bear in mind the capabilities of proficient readers and writers at that grade and age level, as a goal for the learning of the students they teach in interventions.

### Closing Thoughts

From the beginning, Clay incorporated the observation of teaching and collaborative learning in the design of teacher training in Reading Recovery. The coconstructed understanding, checked against actual observation of teaching and learning, develops the expertise of teachers' understanding and instructional decision making. This same approach to teacher training has been included in effective small-group training models. It is essential for teachers to engage in collaborative learning communities in which they observe teaching and learning, while developing and expanding their understandings and expertise through articulating what they observe.

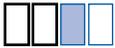
Over the past 3 decades, thousands of Reading Recovery-trained teachers

have served in reading positions as interventionists, classroom teachers, literacy coaches, and special educators. These individuals have assumed leadership roles in supporting effective literacy instruction in the classroom and designing small-group interventions for struggling readers. Their influence within schools can be observed in instructional decisions such as matching books to readers, using observational data to inform instruction, prompting for strategic activity, teaching for independence, and building on the strengths of the learner.

Teaching and learning are reciprocal processes, and any meaningful change within a school begins with a significant change within the teacher. The teacher's beliefs about low-performing students will affect the methods she uses to assess and instruct her students. Ask most any Reading Recovery teacher, whether former or current, about how Reading Recovery has influenced her instructional practice and you will frequently hear, "I will never view teaching in the same way." We believe that to focus only on Reading Recovery as a one-to-one intervention for low-performing first-grade children is to overlook the systemic nature of its professional development design and the wider implications of teacher knowledge on reading instruction.

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## About the Authors



Dr. Salli Forbes is the director of the Richard O. Jacobson Center for Comprehensive Literacy at The University of Northern Iowa, where she oversees both the Reading Recovery Program of Iowa and Partnerships in Comprehensive Literacy Model program for Iowa. Dr. Forbes' interests include teaching for and assessing fluency, student engagement and motivation, responsive teaching, and educational change. She is co-editor of the books *Changing Minds*, *Changing Schools*, *Changing Systems: Comprehensive Literacy Design for School Improvement* (Hameray, 2015) and *Research in Reading Recovery Volume Two* (Heinemann, 2004), and the author of several articles on topics related to early literacy. She is currently vice president of the North American Trainers Group.



Linda Dorn is a professor of reading education at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, where she is the director of the Center for Literacy. She is a Reading Recovery trainer and is former president of the Reading Recovery Council of North America. Dr. Dorn is recognized nationally for her contributions to literacy education and has presented at over 300 conferences at international, national, and state levels. She has published widely with eight books on literacy instruction, book chapters, articles, and media publications. Among her most-recent books is *Changing Minds*, *Changing Schools*, *Changing Systems: Comprehensive Literacy Design for School Improvement* (Hameray, 2015), co-edited with Forbes, Poparad, and Schubert.

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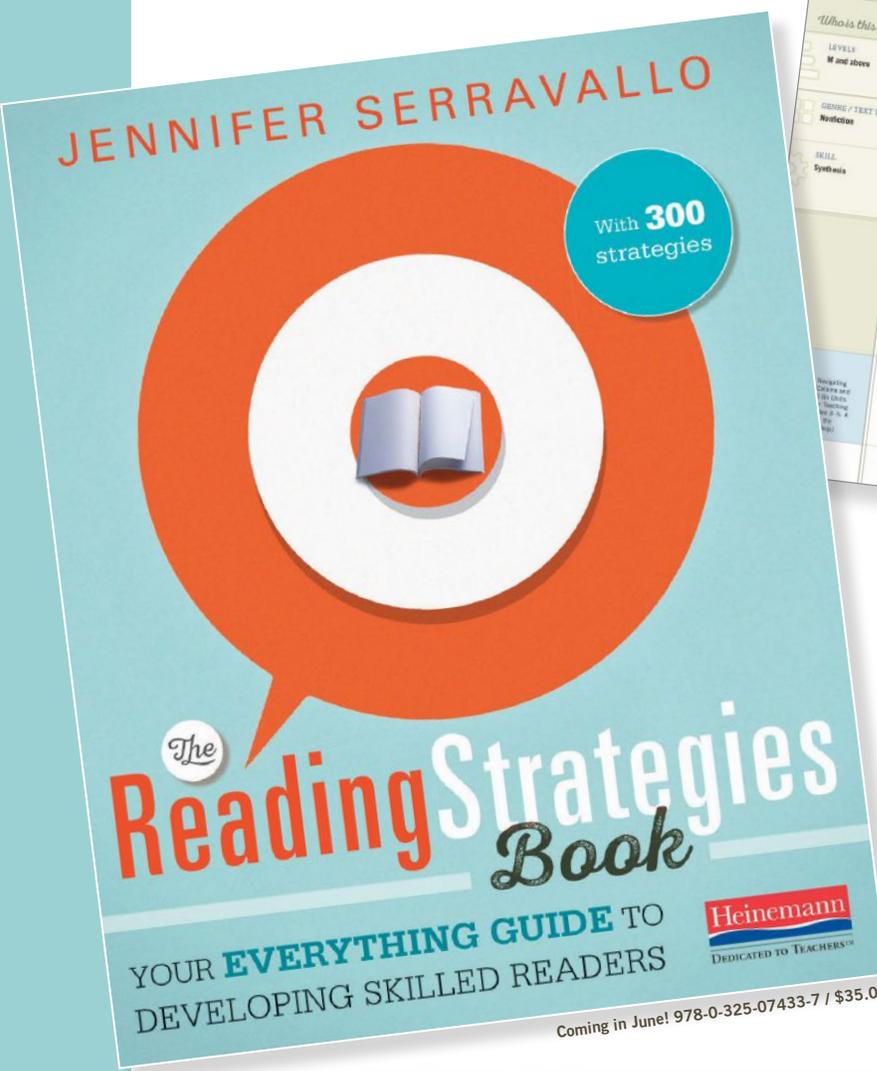
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# Where Are They Now?

## Two Former Students Join 30th Anniversary Celebration

*by Graham Bowling*

When I was in kindergarten and first grade, I was aware that I could not read. I remember being called to the front of the classroom by my kindergarten teacher to lead my peers in reading a simple sentence on the board. I failed miserably and was quite embarrassed. Later, in the first grade, I recognized the distinction between the reading levels. My best friend was in the accelerated group and I was in the lowest level. My parents read with and to me each evening. We tried Hooked on Phonics. We owned a trove of wonderful children's books. Despite my parent's involvement and our resources, reading simply did not come easily. My teachers were convinced I had a learning disability.

I was enrolled in Reading Recovery with Mrs. Becky Koval at Carlisle Elementary in Delaware, OH. I distinctly remember one of my first lessons. I was frustrated and looking up at the ceiling. Mrs. Koval gently reminded me that the words were not on the ceiling but rather in the book on the desk. Looking back, I believe that was the turning point in my reading struggles. I realized it would be a lot of work to master reading, but I wanted it badly so I practiced and made a conscious effort even as

a child. I progressed rather quickly and was invited to participate in a behind-the-glass session in Marion, OH. My Reading Recovery training continued and in the second grade, I was reading and comprehending the Harry Potter series. When the results of my standardized tests came out, my second-grade teacher was ecstatic because I received advanced scores in reading! What a fantastic transformation from one year earlier! I was thriving in school because of my new reading ability. Today, I count reading as one of my greatest joys.

I am grateful to Reading Recovery for giving me the tools for success. In high school, I was privileged to graduate as the class valedictorian with an entire year of college credit. Currently, I am finishing my senior year at Miami University in Oxford, OH. I will graduate with a business management and entrepreneurship degree. I am a national finalist for a Fulbright U.S. Student Program grant to teach the English language in Taiwan next year. In the future, I hope to pursue a graduate program, own a personal business, and run for public office. Reading Recovery is a phenomenal program that changed the trajectory of my life, and it is my hope that it will continue for many years in the future.



*Graham Bowling was a Reading Recovery student at Delaware City Schools in 1999–2000. His Reading Recovery teacher, Becky Koval, now lives in New Orleans.*

*Graham received a standing ovation after sharing his story at the 30th Anniversary Reception.*

### Bradley Chandler, 1992–93

Bradley Chandler is a nurse in the surgical intensive care unit at Riverside Hospital in Columbus, OH. He received his RN with an associate’s degree from Central Ohio Technical College and has continued his education while working nights in the hospital. This summer he will complete a bachelor’s degree at Ohio University and hopes to begin master’s degree coursework this winter. Brad and his wife, Katie, have two boys, ages 6 and 2 with a third child expected this summer.

It’s hard to imagine that this successful, dedicated man struggled with early reading and writing, but both Brad and his twin brother were Reading Recovery students at Fairbanks Local School District in Milford, OH. His now retired teacher, Nancy Bowman, taught both Brad and his brother and says they had “totally different learning styles.” She also recalls that Brad worked hard and had supportive family to help him.

Asked about Reading Recovery, Brad says he doesn’t remember much, but does recall being behind in first grade and feeling disheartened. He says he learned that “it’s okay to go back if you don’t understand,” and his Reading Recovery lessons got him on track. Specifically, he remembers reading through many little books that helped give him confidence.

In a small-world coincidence, Brad’s supportive father, Dwain Chandler, now is the systems manager at the International Data Evaluation Center at The Ohio State University, annually reporting evaluation research data for thousands of students like his son.



*Brad Chandler knows the importance of a supportive family. Joining him at the 30th Anniversary Reception in Columbus were his wife, Katie, and his mom and dad. When he was in first grade, (top) both he and his twin brother were Reading Recovery students.*

# Where Are They Now?

## High School Junior Emerges as Aboriginal Youth Leader

Ethan McKay came into Reading Recovery as a quiet, shy boy in Grade 1 at Wellington School in Winnipeg. It wasn't long before his eyes began to twinkle and his quirky sense of humor began to surface as oral stories were shared in reading and writing.

Ethan's mother, Colleen, recalls that at first she had felt a little let down and sad about Ethan needing additional support in learning to read and write. As an elementary school teacher, she talks about how she and Ethan's father were actively involved in the school parent council, the Mother Goose and home reading programs, as well as being a family involved in many literacy activities around the oral stories and traditional ways of their aboriginal culture.



*Ethan was a shy, quiet boy when he began his Reading Recovery lessons in 2003.*

However, she says with a smile, "It wasn't until the Reading Recovery teacher and the classroom teacher were able to identify the missing piece that Ethan needed ... that one-to-one support by the Reading Recovery teacher. It made me so thankful that Ethan got this additional support which has really helped him for the long run."

Colleen was so interested in the Reading Recovery intervention that had been successful for her son that she went on to take the Reading Recovery training. Now she is using those new understandings about literacy processing to guide her teaching in a Grade 1 classroom.

Ethan reflects on the good start that individualized lessons gave him. He recalls feeling more confident and successful back in the classroom knowing that he had learned strategies to use when reading and writing. He also recalls with a smile the goldfish crackers shared at the end of each Reading Recovery lesson. It is this good start that his mother feels gave Ethan the feeling that anything is possible for his future.

Ethan is now in Grade 11 at Daniel McIntyre Collegiate Institute and is an emerging youth leader in the aboriginal community. Recently, he was selected as part of an aboriginal youth exchange program between Northern Quebec and Manitoba bringing students together to experience the traditional Inuit ways. Always constant in his life is a love of reading, and on breaks during this part-time job at the Norway House



*Now a high school junior, Ethan hopes to attend university and become a social worker to help make a difference with at-risk youth in his community.*

Cree Nation Medical Treatment Access Program, he can be found engrossed in a good book.

The "good start" he received in the Reading Recovery intervention, along with thinking that "anything is possible," leads Ethan to anticipate with eagerness the goal of going to university after high school graduation. He wants to be a social worker and work in inner city Winnipeg with aboriginal and at-risk youth to make a difference in his community.

— Holly Cumming, teacher leader  
Sir William Osler School  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

# Where Are They Now?

## Fifth-Grade Author Receives Rave Reviews on Amazon

Kautilya Jammalamadaka, a Missouri fifth grader, has written an 88-page adventure story. Published by Amazon in June 2014, *The Warriors of Wridor: The Doomed Quest*, is now available online and receiving rave reader reviews: “This is a fast-paced book written by a 9-year-old kid. It is epic!” and “One can visualize the characters and setting through the excruciating details. The reader experiences intensity and curiosity in every scene until the last page of the book.”

No one could have predicted this success when Kautilya began first grade

as a struggling reader and writer. Kautilya was selected for first-round individual lessons with Reading Recovery teacher, Kank Schwarz, in Parkway School District, Missouri. Schwarz remembers the qualities that led Kautilya to his recent success — love of writing, and a wild imagination!

“Kautilya loved to write, and he would get upset when I had to stop him so we could get to the new book for the day,” she said. “He had a wild imagination and was always writing stories about dragons and other make-believe characters. He was so

passionate about his stories and his writing, it is not surprising that he has a published piece at such a young age.”

And what does Kautilya remember about Reading Recovery lessons?

“Well, I do remember reading a book, then writing words down on the board. To make it competitive, we raced each other writing the word. We also cut out tiny pieces of paper and wrote words on them. At home I had to create the sentence. Then I went home and reviewed the new book with my mom. It was kind of fun. But then one day at the library, I saw a book that seemed really interesting, but looked really hard. I read it anyway, and then suddenly I was eating up books.”

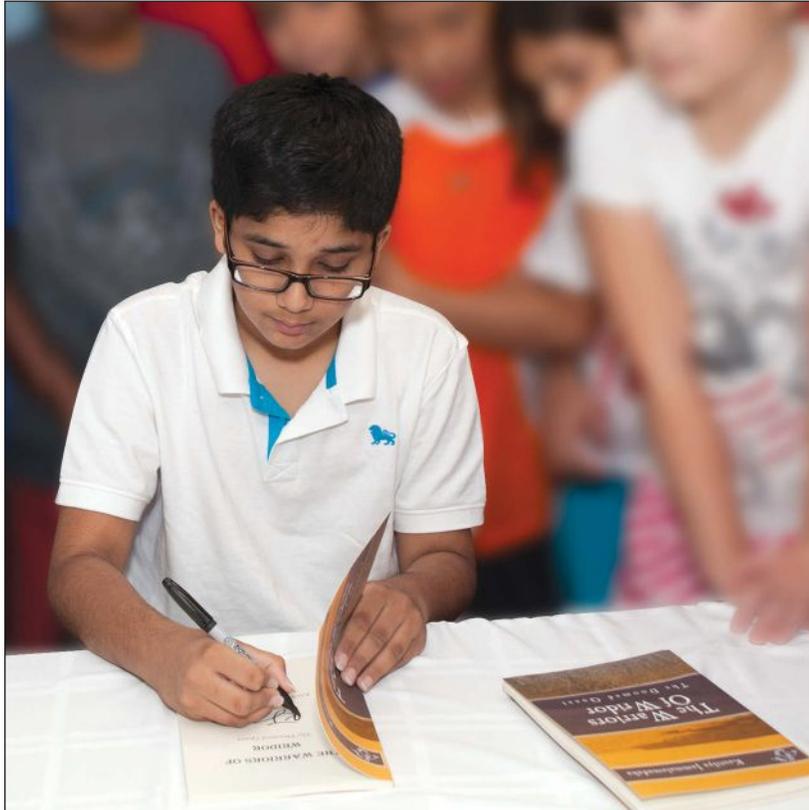
Kautilya says ideas come randomly, often when he’s bored. He says he often updates stories as he writes to incorporate a new character or event he has imagined. He has ideas for other books, but wants to finish this series first.

“My motivation is thinking of the epic battle twists that will happen throughout the series,” Kautilya said. “If I write, then I’ll get to that part. If I don’t write, I won’t get to the exciting parts I want to write.”

— Melinda McDill, teacher leader and Kank Schwarz, teacher Parkway School District Creve Couer, MO



*Kautilya at age 6*

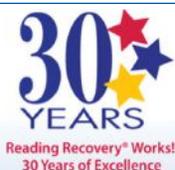


*Kautilya autographs copies of his book for his Shenandoah Valley fifth-grade classmates. Photographer Michael DeFilippo captured the moment for a recent issue of the school newsletter.*

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# Why Not Sound It Out?

Robert M. Schwartz, Oakland University

Camden, a beginning first grader, is rereading a book that his teacher introduced the previous day. He knows the pattern of this easy reader, *I Can Draw*. He accurately reads the sentence on each of the first two pages before facing a challenge.

Child: I can draw a bird.  
I can draw the body.  
I can draw the [pause before the word *beak*] –  
What is that again?

Teacher: You try it.

Camden takes another look at the picture, then throws his head back and lets out a long “Awhhhh,” prompting the teacher to tell him the word.

This is a familiar interaction for any teacher who works with beginning readers. As children build a sight vocabulary and develop word recognition strategies, they often encounter words that are unfamiliar to them in print. Some of these words may also be unfamiliar or only partially familiar in the child’s oral language. Camden understands that *beak* is the word he was searching for, but he was unable to generate this word from the clues provided by the picture or the print.

When Patricia Gallant and I (Gallant & Schwartz, 2010) showed this video interaction to teachers in our undergraduate and masters level reading methods classes, their responses differed based on their experiences and perspectives on teaching beginning readers. The undergraduate students were, however, almost unanimous in

their analysis and interpretation of Camden’s needs. “He needs to learn how to sound it out, and the sooner the better!”

Future teachers are skeptical when I suggest this is not what Camden—or any other beginning reader—needs to learn and that a prompt to “sound it out” is both inappropriate and potentially detrimental to his learning. Even novice teachers are aware of the “reading wars” between advocates of phonics and whole language, and they assume I’ve just made my bias

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**My goal here is to describe a perspective that combines current understandings of word recognition based on experimental research with theory from close observation of children’s early learning.**

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clear (Pearson, 2004). Why should they believe me, when they frequently encounter experienced and effective mentor teachers who consistently urge their students to sound it out?

My goal in this article is to describe a perspective that combines current understandings of word recognition based on experimental research with theory from close observation of children’s early learning (Clay, 2001; Schwartz & Gallant, 2011). The instructional recommendations sup-

port a key aspect of this perspective and help move early literacy instruction beyond the polarized positions and programs that have characterized the great debate (Chall, 1996).

## A Different View

Rather than start with the voluminous research on word recognition that has contributed to our current understandings (Adams, 1990; Cunningham, Nathan, & Raheer, 2011; Foorman & Connor, 2011; Roberts, Christo, & Shefelbine, 2011; Tunmer & Nicholson, 2011), it might be more productive to begin with a relatively independent view on thinking and learning. My summer reading last year included Daniel Kahneman’s (2011) book, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. Kahneman is a cognitive psychologist who won a Nobel Prize in economics. His book covers the wide range of topics he has researched across his career, focusing on what he has learned about how our mind makes decisions.

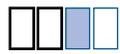
Here is an example Kahneman uses early on to demonstrate his perspective on cognitive processes. As you read this problem, don’t try to solve it mathematically, but rather listen to your intuitions (Kahneman, p. 44):

A bat and ball cost \$1.10.

The bat costs one dollar more than the ball.

How much does the ball cost?

In presenting this problem to many thousands of university students, he finds the intuitive but incorrect answer is generated by 50–80% of



the students. Across his book he contrasts the fast, intuitive type of thinking that suggests 10 cents as the puzzle answer—called System 1 thinking—with the more-deliberate and effortful System 2 processing that could monitor and control thoughts suggested by System 1.

These systems are usually highly efficient in working together to minimize mental effort and optimize performance in most situations. System 1 thinking is quick and accurate in perceiving familiar situations, making short-term predictions, and reacting swiftly, and generally appropriately, to challenging situations. System 1 thinking, however, is prone to making systematic errors, sometimes substituting a simplified question for a more-complex one.

In the bat and ball problem, many respondents used System 1 thinking to simplify the question to what amount added to a dollar makes \$1.10. They failed to invest the small amount of additional attention needed to check their answer in the original problem. By using System 2 thinking to monitor their initial response, respondents might notice that if the ball cost 10 cents and the bat a dollar more (\$1.10), then together they can't cost \$1.10. The more-sequential and effortful System 2 might then consider what if the ball cost 5 cents. Give it some thought!

Kahneman paints a picture of thought processes that have evolved to meet the survival needs of our species. We monitor our environment for signs of danger and can react quickly to a perceived threat, but often fail to recognize logical contradictions in our thoughts and decisions. Although he acknowledges that human beings are capable of extraordinary acts of

cognition, he views everyday thought as governed by the *law of least effort*.

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

This laziness applies to the thinking of stockbrokers, politicians, the voting public, as well as Nobel-winning psychologists, as Kahneman (2011) is fond of demonstrating, with personal examples. In a section on “The Planning Fallacy,” Kahneman describes how a team he led fell victim to ‘delusional optimism’ and his failure to consider available evidence. They had been asked to develop a high school curriculum on judgment and decision making. After 2 years of work on the project, Kahneman unearthed evidence that their insider estimates of 4 years to program completion were likely to be off by more than half. Despite this evidence, the team continued on with the project, maintaining their delusional optimism for 10 years, only to find that enthusiasm in the ministry of education had waned and the program was never used!

In relating the curriculum-planning story over many years, Kahneman's view of his role in this disaster shifted from “clever questioner and astute psychologist” to “chief dunce and inept leader.” He acknowledges that even when you're writing the book on decision making, it is easier to ignore new data than make the effort to confront the complications this information creates.

## Laziness and Learning to Read

So what role might laziness, or System 1 thinking, play in the acquisition of reading skills? My experience working with struggling beginning readers (Schwartz, 1997, 2005) suggests that sounding-it-out is seldom, if ever, a least-effort approach to word recognition. Children like Camden, who are just developing letter-sound knowledge and a high-frequency sight vocabulary, will often substitute *woman* for *lady*, *bunny* for *rabbit*, or *water* for *river* when reading simple books that support meaning. Their System 1 processing has simplified the word recognition question from “What is this word?” to “What word would make sense here?” This simplification allows a least-effort solution to an immediate problem within the more-complex task of reading a book for meaning.

To adults, sounding out may appear to be a logical and highly effective approach to breaking an alphabetic code (Moats, 2007), but I'd suggest this is another example, like those Kahneman (2011) describes, where the logical answer is not the correct answer. A more-complex view is supported by the work of Marie Clay and other literacy researchers who have used close observation of change over time in children's beginning reading behavior to infer the strategic processing used for word recognition (Clay, 1982, 2001; Kaye, 2006; McGee, Kim, Nelson, & Fried, 2015; Schmitt, 2010).

As children like Camden learn to read and write, they are also learning how to look at print (Clay, 2001). This is a complex cognitive task. It involves coordinating what they know about the conventions of directional

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By sounding it out I mean an approach where the child moves left to right across the word, assigning a sound to each letter or digraph and then blending those sounds to recognize a known word in their oral language, for example /b/ /ea/ /k/.

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movement across a page of print and pictures, their knowledge of words in oral language and in print, and the correspondence of sounds and letters within words, all while attending to the syntax and meaning they hold in their minds from previous encounters with the text. In economic terms, attention to any of these components is a cost, and these costs can easily exceed a child's cognitive resources.

Different approaches to beginning reading instruction attempt to reduce these costs by controlling various aspects of the texts children will read. The *Dick and Jane* readers controlled the number of new words introduced across stories. Linguistic readers created text around word families, (e.g., *Dan, man, fan, can, ran*). Decodable texts control the introduction of new letter-sound relationships to correspond with systematic phonics instruction. Leveled readers use a rough gradient of difficulty based on familiar concepts, language patterns, and picture support for meaning and unfamiliar vocabulary like *beak* in the *I Can Draw* story. These materials and related instructional approaches to beginning instruction have a history of success for 70–80% of learners. As Clay (2001) points out, successful students learn what the program teaches and independently infer everything else they need to read efficiently.

Within each of these approaches, however, 20–30% of students struggle with literacy learning. Often these students have entered school with less knowledge, experience, and/or interest related to literacy. They may attend to the components of literacy the particular approach emphasizes, but remain blind to other components that could make learning more efficient.

### Blinded by Effort

Kahneman (2011) cites a variety of cognitive studies that demonstrate how focusing our attention on a demanding cognitive task can blind us to even highly surprising events in our environment. If you're not familiar with this type of research, I suggest you pause now and watch a demonstration of this effect: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQmdoK\\_ZfY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQmdoK_ZfY).

*The Invisible Gorilla* (Chabris & Simons, 2010) and similar research on attention and effort (Kahneman, 2011) have strong implications for beginning reading, learning, and instruction. Each of the various approaches to beginning reading instruction has recognized the need to reduce the number of unfamiliar elements that require novice reader's attention. Directing attention and effort to one element of the reading

task may actually blind a child to other aspects of the task. Asking a struggling reader to sound out a word with three or more letters may, temporarily, blind them to meaning of the text they're reading.

Sounding it out is not what Kahneman would view as a least-effort approach. By sounding it out I mean an approach where the child moves left to right across the word, assigning a sound to each letter or digraph and then blending those sounds to recognize a known word in their oral language, for example /b/ /ea/ /k/. If the child was reading words in isolation, or perhaps the first word in a sentence, and if larger clusters of letters within the word are unfamiliar, then sounding it out may be the only way to recognize the word. For a novice reader, this type of sequential processing requires considerable System 2 attention and effort. When, however, the word is encountered within a series of known words comprising a story, there are a number of additional sources of information and ways to use that information that require less effort and can generate a word recognition attempt (Schwartz, 1997, 2005; Stanovich, 1980).

Schwartz (2005) describes how a child like Camden might respond to a pattern change in a simple pattern book. In the book, various animals suggest something a boy might like on his sandwich.

A cat asks, Would you like a mouse? No I wouldn't.

A lizard suggests, Would you like a grasshopper? No I wouldn't.

A chicken inquires, Would you like a fat worm? No I wouldn't.

The worm page is particularly interesting because of the addition of an adjective to the language pattern used on the previous pages.

A few weeks after the opening scenario, Camden reads, “Would you like a worm?” This response uses the familiar language structure and picture clue on the page to generate the word recognition attempts. Camden could continue with the boy’s “No I wouldn’t” response, but he notices that the first sentence contains an additional word. So he stops and rereads the sentence and searches for an additional clue. As he rereads, he again looks at the picture for a clue and notices the worm is bright purple, leading to this attempt: “Would you like a purple worm?”

Having satisfied the constraint of matching one word in oral language to one word in print, Camden may finish the page and attempt to go on. From recent observations, however, his teacher knows that if Camden attempted to write the word *purple* he would include at least one *p*. So before he turns the page she says, “That makes sense, but check to see if it looks right.” This request for additional System 2 processing leads him to notice that *purple* doesn’t look right and he rereads the page as, “Would you like a funny worm? No I wouldn’t.”

Now he can turn the page, because the goal of the interaction was not to produce accurate reading but to initiate a new way of checking on the least-effort attempts generated by Camden’s current word recognition strategies. These temporary but efficient strategies change over time as Camden increases his knowledge of letters, sounds, and words while he

also develops new ways of searching information sources to generate least-effort attempts, and uses System 2 thinking to monitor and refine these attempts (Clay, 2001).

## Building on Strengths to Reduce Effort

Beginning readers who adopt a meaning only, or print only, approach to word recognition are drifting off course for further literacy learning. Helping these struggling beginning readers to integrate what they know about print and meaning will keep them on track toward fast and efficient word recognition strategies. This *recovery* of the normal developmental trajectory is the goal and meaning of the Reading Recovery® early intervention.

Reading Recovery-trained teachers help struggling readers refine a series of least-effort approaches to word recognition that build on their increasing language strengths and print knowledge (Clay, 1998; Schwartz & Gallant, 2011). A large body of scientific research has established that the end goal of this learning is a highly efficient, context-free word recognition process that requires little directed attention (Adams, 1990; Roberts, Christo, & Shefelbine, 2011; Stanovich, 1980; Tunmer & Nicholson, 2011).

Kahneman (2011) cites this proficient word recognition skill as a prime example of System 1, least-effort thinking. He describes several examples, including the Stroop Effect, to demonstrate how this System 1 processing can cause conflict with a System 2 task. In the Stroop task, subjects are asked to name the color each word is printed in. This becomes

difficult when a word like *green* is printed in red ink (see <http://www.apa.org/science/resources/stroop.aspx>). This proficient processing is the result of considerable learning and experience with print.

Siegler (2006) has studied change over time in a variety of cognitive tasks. He describes the pattern of change he’s observed as series of overlapping waves like those shown in Figure 1.

Clay (2001) describes a similar type of change over time in the searching and monitoring processes involved in word recognition.

- Early processing approaches are reflected in meaning based errors with no visual similarity to the target word.
- Changes in these processes will be reflected in attempts that incorporate the meaning and the initial letter, but for a time both approaches will coexist.
- Eventually, the final wave will represent proficient processing, with rapid visual processing of orthographic units in the target word and monitoring to evaluate the fit to meaning.

Reading Recovery teachers have the opportunity to observe and foster these changes over time in the one-to-one intervention setting. Both this context and professional expertise of these teachers are necessary components of this highly effective early intervention (Schwartz, Schmitt, & Lose, 2012; IRA, 2010).

Primary classroom teachers have fewer opportunities to provide prompting support during guided reading groups (Schwartz, 2005).

Cunningham and Allington (2011) describe an effective instructional routine that supports this type of learning in whole-class or small-group settings. The routine illustrates the goal of word recognition processing for novice readers and helps them construct and refine an implicit theory to guide their strategic activity. For a reader like Camden, the word recognition task is to determine which of the 6,000 or so words from his oral language he is looking at in print. This is a daunting task, so he needs a clue. Since Camden has considerable oral language skill, the first clues are the syntax and meaning of a sentence in which the word occurs. Presenting a sentence in written form with the target word covered invites the group to use their language skill to narrow the possible options.

To introduce the routine you might use a sentence like, Rasheed likes to play soccer, with the word *soccer* covered (Cunningham & Allington, 2011, p. 68).

1. After you read the other word within the sentence, students offer a number of intuitive guesses, or predictions, for the covered word, based on the sentence and what they know about their classmate Rasheed.
2. The next step is to uncover the initial letters up to, but not including, the first vowel. This will further narrow the set of options, perhaps to *soccer* and *softball*.
3. I suggest adding one more step to the routine described by Cunningham and Allington. Before you uncover the rest of the word, ask students to predict an easy-to-hear letter or a known pattern they expect to see if their guess is correct. This additional step will gradually extend the visual information used for self-monitoring and build orthographic knowledge.

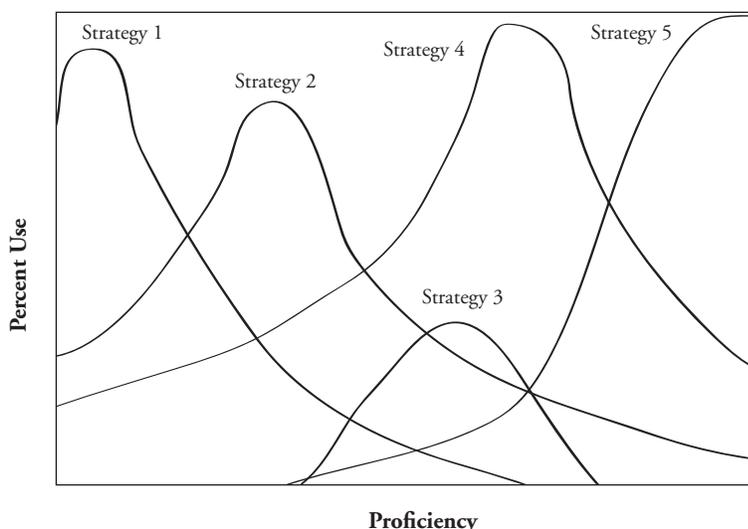
## Word Recognition Instruction as a Thinking Routine

In his discussion of *intellectual character*, Ritchhart (2002) explains how “thinking routines generally adhere to the same criteria as other routines. They consist of a few steps, are easy to teach and learn, are easily supported, and get used repeatedly” (p. 90). The above procedure is a thinking routine that can be used with the morning message, a big book as part of a shared reading, or in small groups with guided reading. Cunningham and Allington (2011) suggest that the difficulty can be adjusted for different students. For example, you can vary the position in the sentence, or part of speech of the target word, or you can select target words with initial consonant blends or digraphs, or cover several words in a passage from an informational text. Since each step in this routine requires students to draw on various information sources, I’ll refer to the modified procedure including the final monitoring check as “Thinking Through a Word” (TTW).

A kindergarten teacher tried the TTW activity using a big book in a whole-class setting. The first sentence said, “Six *flowers* sit in the box.” She covered *flowers* initially. Based on her reading of the rest of the sentence and the picture clue, the group guessed *flowers*, *plants*, and *roses*. When she uncovered the *fl*, they settled on *flowers*. This exemplifies the early cross-checking of a prediction based on meaning against the initial visual clues that Cunningham and Allington’s (2011) routine promotes.

A bit later in the same book, the sentence was “A dog *steps* in the box.” The teacher covered *steps*. Her class

**Figure 1. Overlapping Waves Showing Change Over Time in Strategic Processing. (Based on Siegler, 2006.)**



predicted *stands*, *waits*, and *looks*. These are all good predictions that fit the meaning and syntax. She uncovered the *st* blend. The group settled on *stands* as their choice. The teacher said, “All our guesses ended with a /z/ sound. If the word is *stand*, what letter do you expect to see near the end?” A few students predicted it would end with a *d*. When she uncovered the word, the class decided it wasn’t *stands*.

This final monitoring check before the word is uncovered can also vary in difficulty from checking for an easy-to-hear final consonant, to other easy-to-hear sounds, to familiar word patterns, to using more-complex orthographic knowledge. Consider the text, “Fred wasn’t happy. He had *few* toys.” Some students might guess *few* after the *f* is uncovered. The teacher could then wonder aloud with the group about what letters she might expect to see when the rest of the word is uncovered. “It sounds like the end of some words I know. I wonder if it ends like *zoo* or *boo*? It could end like *to*, but I know three ways to spell the sounds in *to*. Maybe it ends like *blue*. Let’s see! Were we right? Do you know any other words that end like that and sound like *few*?” As children are given an opportunity to think through unfamiliar printed words, and build the disposition to monitor correct and incorrect attempts, they learn more about complex orthographic patterns.

### Change Over Time

Recognizing that an attempt didn’t work is an excellent step toward promoting self-correction and learning to look at more of the visual information (Clay 2001; Schwartz,

1997, 2005). Clay (1991) observed that children

were using ‘predict and check’ in many cases as a substitute for letter-sound decoding, in situations where their print knowledge was inadequate. These intermediate skills enable a reader to use prediction to narrow the field of possibilities and to reduce the decoding load. (p. 254)

Checking both correct and incorrect attempts against sound-to-letter expectations helps build automatic access to sight words and phonics knowledge, including consonant sounds and vowel patterns.

Many novice readers make predictions based on meaning and do not use their developing phonics knowledge to cross-check information sources (Clay, 2001, Schwartz, 1997). For a child at this level, checking requires additional effort, System 2 thinking. If 50% of the Harvard students didn’t check their answer to the bat and ball problem described at the beginning of this article (Kahne-man, 2011), why would we expect novice readers to check their word recognition attempt? They have already used a strategy to generate an initial attempt within the difficult task of reading a book for meaning. Even fourth-grade, struggling readers are much less likely than their grade-level peers to notice visual discrepancies once they have generated a meaning-based attempt (Schwartz & Stanovich, 1982). We need to help these students build a disposition to engage with and check the visual information.

In terms of cognitive cost, it is much easier for a novice reader to check the

visual clues against the sounds in a predicted word than to sound out a word. Phonological awareness enables a child to hear the individual sounds in a word. Checking those sounds against the visual information develops phonics knowledge by matching sounds to orthographic patterns in printed words. Self-monitoring, not letter-by-letter sounding out, provides the mechanism for novice readers to refine their word recognition strategies and move toward the fast perceptual processing that characterizes skilled readers’ word recognition (Clay, 2001; Kaye, 2006; McGee et al., 2015; Schwartz & Gallant, 2011; Share, 2004).

### Learning to Read

As Camden read the *I Can Draw* book, he successfully used a least-effort strategy to read many of the words in this text. He would not be able to recognize *draw* or *body* in a word list or set of flash cards. Within the context of this book he reads *draw* as part of the language structure he expects on each page. He reads *body* and the other nouns that complete the sentence on each page by searching the picture for the new part added to the drawing. He attempted this least-effort strategy for *beak*, but was not able to quickly access a word for this part of the bird.

Over the next few years, Camden will learn how to look at print and integrate his growing knowledge about letters, sounds, words, syntax, and meaning into efficient, least-effort processes for word recognition (Clay, 2001; Schwartz & Gallant, 2011). Phonemic awareness, phonics, and orthographic patterns are important knowledge sets that will support him

as he gradually develops word recognition strategies similar to those by proficient readers. These skilled readers do not depend on letter-by-letter sounding out, but rather on a large set of sight words and words patterns used to decode unfamiliar words in larger chunks.

Notice that phonics is knowledge the reader brings to print and can access as part of various word recognition strategies. Letter-by-letter sounding out is a particular approach for using phonics knowledge that is not a least-effort strategy for either novice or expert readers. There is no conflict in a position that maintains that phonics is an important knowledge set, but that sounding it out letter-by-letter is not an efficient way to use that knowledge. Building on students' strengths to support change over time in their word recognition strategies will help more students learn to read.

By the middle of first grade, Camden has progressed to reading a much more-complex story about a giant, a ghost, and a witch's new house. After a brief book introduction he reads the first sentence, "A ghost and a giant came to see her new house." He substitutes *giant* for *ghost* and *ghost* for *giant* and doesn't seem to notice. Deciding that this substitution didn't change the meaning of the story, his teacher doesn't interrupt Camden's reading. He reads the next 61 words accurately, including the word *ghost*, with one self-correction (*no* initially for *knob*). The next sentence was, "The ghost hid behind the giant." After looking at the picture he tried, "The giant had bended" and stops to work on his last attempt. He tries "be/hid" as two parts and then reread from the beginning of the line read-

ing *hid* and *behind* correctly, but leaving *giant* for *ghost*. Having already said *giant* once in this sentence he tried *gains* and *gint* for the final word before the teacher told him *giant*. He finished the story with four more self-corrections and one additional error of *giant* for *ghost* again.

It is clear that Camden still has more to learn about looking at print. He likely already knows how to read and write *most*, but he is not yet using that knowledge to support his initial attempt to recognize *ghost* or to monitor an attempt that fits the sentence meaning, and begins and ends with letters expected from his sound-to-letter analysis. Camden's word recognition strategies have changed over the past few months. Although letter-by-letter sounding out was never one of Camden's searching strategies, if you ask him how he figured out *behind*, he's likely to say, "I sounded it out!" (Clay, 2001).

Camden doesn't need to be aware of how he integrated various types of information to generate his initial attempts, monitored those attempts, and then recombined this information to solve the unknown word. What is important is that those of us who teach beginning readers aren't blind to the complexity of word recognition learning, and know how to support change over time toward fast and efficient processing!

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## About the Author



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*IDEC Evaluation Report 2013–2014*

# Annual Results Show Strongest Outcomes Experienced to Date

*Jerome V. D’Agostino and Sinéad Harmey, International Data Evaluation Center*

The 2013–2014 school year marked a special milestone for data collection and evaluation of Reading Recovery® in the United States. Beginning with the 1984–1985 pilot year in Columbus City Schools, the intervention reached its 30th year of implementation and evaluation in 2013–2014. With funding from the National Diffusion Network, IDEC (then NDEC) began operations with the evaluation of Reading Recovery data from the 1987–1988 school year, making 2013–2014 the 27th year of IDEC data analysis. Descubriendo la Lectura (DLL) has been evaluated for 21 years given that IDEC’s first evaluation of the intervention was in 1993–1994. Over the years, many things have changed, including computer data entry, evaluation designs, and analytic methods, but one fact has remained constant; both interventions have consistently produced strong evidence of effectiveness. Students in Reading Recovery and DLL consistently made greater yearly gains relative to their respective random samples, and Reading Recovery students made gains relative to their respective similar comparison group, reflecting a substantial closing of the literacy gaps at year-end testing.

From 2005–2011, IDEC used a low-random sample, students who scored in the bottom 20% of the random

sample distribution, to produce a “similar comparison group” in order to evaluate the progress of Reading Recovery and DLL students. That method, however, had certain methodological flaws. Because only two students per school were randomly chosen for the random sample—including students who received Reading Recovery—many schools

children who are either eligible and would have been selected if teaching slots were available, or slightly more proficient than eligible Reading Recovery students. Thus, they are the closest students (achievement wise) at each school to the treatment children, and as such, they form the best possible comparison group at each school sampled to collect TNI data. The

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Perhaps the most-important finding from the 2013–2014 evaluation was that Reading Recovery students closed the achievement gap on two measures that have been historically difficult to change: Writing Vocabulary and Text Reading Level.

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did not have a student in the bottom 20%, and the schools that did were not representative of all Reading Recovery schools. Also, the distribution of outcome scores for the low-random sample was not similar to the Reading Recovery student distribution because it artificially had a ceiling at the 20th percentile.

To address these issues, IDEC randomly assigned half of the schools to employ the tested-not-instructed (TNI) approach beginning in the 2011–2012 school year. The TNI students represent a subgroup of

other half of the Reading Recovery and all DLL schools are asked to implement the extant method of testing two randomly chosen students (random sample children) in order to generate estimates of average student performance. The schools alternate between the TNI and random sample method each year. We report the general participation rates for Reading Recovery and DLL in 2013–2014, along with the basic outcomes such as students’ end-of-treatment statuses and Observation Survey outcomes compared to TNI and random samples students.

## Summary of Reading Recovery Outcomes

### *Characteristics of participants*

Reading Recovery was implemented by 19 university training centers in schools located in 41 states nationwide (see Table 1). There were over 47,000 children who were selected and participated in the one-to-one intervention. On average, the 5,982 teachers trained in Reading Recovery also worked with an additional 40 students during the school year. These teachers were supported by 305 teacher leaders from 252 training sites that served nearly 1,250 school districts. Reading Recovery was implemented in 3,736 schools, for an average of 1.60 teachers per building.

The Observation Survey was administered to Reading Recovery, random sample, and TNI students in fall, mid-year, and spring. As can be seen in Table 1, 3,213 random sample and 7,105 TNI students were tested.

**Table 1. Participation in Reading Recovery in the United States 2013–2014**

Entity	n
University Training Centers	19
Teacher Training Sites	252
States and Federal Entities*	41
Districts	1,250
Schools	3,736
Teacher Leaders	305
Teachers	5,982
Reading Recovery Students	47,263
Random Sample for RR	3,213
Tested-Not-Instructed for RR	7,105

\*including Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of Defense Domestic, and Department of Defense Overseas

Among the Reading Recovery participants from 2013–2014, 57% were boys, and 67% were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Children were from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds, including 57% White, 17% African American, 18% Hispanic, 2% Asian American, 1% Native American; and 4% that represented multiple races or other ethnic backgrounds.

Among the Reading Recovery students,

- 17% (n = 8,010) were still in lessons at year-end without enough time in the school year to complete the intervention.
- 4% (n = 1,817) moved during the school year while they were enrolled in lessons.
- 2% (n = 1,100) were removed from the intervention by someone other than the Reading Recovery teacher.

Of the remaining students who had a complete intervention (N = 36,338),

- 72% (n = 26,108) reached average levels of reading and writing and their programs were successfully discontinued.
- 28% (n = 10,229) made progress but not sufficient enough to reach average levels of reading and writing. They were recommended for consideration of a more-intensive intervention.

### *Observation Survey results*

The comparison groups (random sample and TNI) served to address two fundamental questions regarding the effectiveness of Reading Recovery. One key question is whether Reading

Recovery students reach average levels of literacy achievement at the end of first grade relative to all other first-grade children who do not receive the intervention. The Observation Survey scores of all random sample students, including those that received Reading Recovery, were used to compute average achievement levels. A second key question relates to whether Reading Recovery students performed better than how they would have performed if not provided the intervention. TNI students' scores were used to address that research question.

The total score scale was created based on 2009–2010 random sample student data (including the random sample students who received Reading Recovery). Students' Observation Survey scores on all six subtests from fall, mid-year, and spring, were used to create the measure. Instead of using the Observation Survey scores of each student from the three time points, the random sample was divided into three randomly assigned groups, and the fall, mid-year, or spring Observation Survey scores were chosen from each group, respectively, to represent a sample of students from the three time points during the school year. The six Observation Survey subtasks were treated as partial credit "items" in a Rasch-based IRT analysis to convert the total raw scores to log odd values that ranged from about -4 to 4. Those values were converted using a linear transformation to create the final 0 to 800-point scale. Because student scores were from various test points during the school year, the scale reflects yearlong growth. Hence, a score such as 500 indicates the same literacy achievement level at any time point.

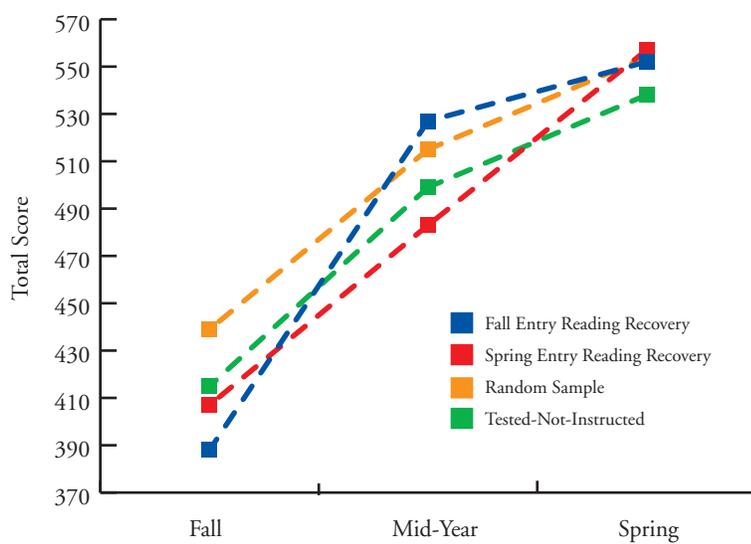
Figure 1 presents the mean total scores for successfully discontinued Reading Recovery students who were served first (fall entry), during the school year, Reading Recovery students served second (spring entry),

random sample, and TNI students. Only students with valid scores at all three test points were included in the analysis. As expected, the TNI group had a slightly larger fall mean score relative to fall and spring entry

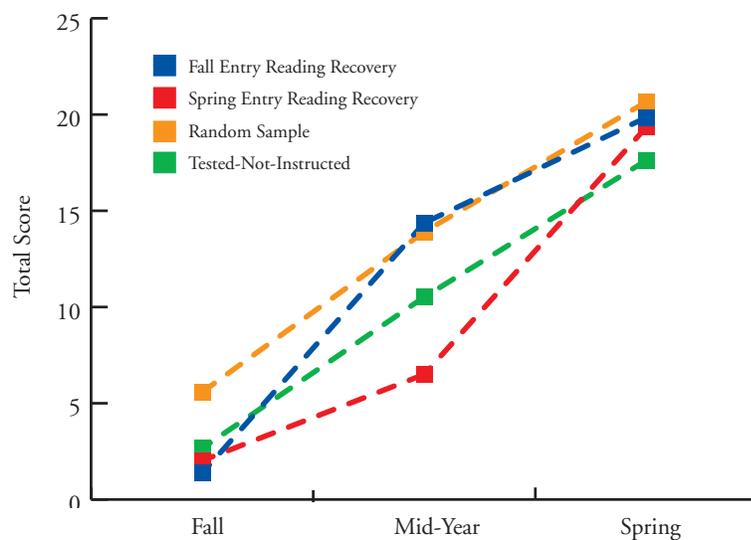
Reading Recovery students, but less than the random sample students. By mid-year, fall entry Reading Recovery students had a significantly greater mean gain than spring entry students, TNI, and random sample students. From mid-year to spring, the average growth rate of the Reading Recovery fall entry students was less than the average random sample growth rate over the same period, but the two groups finished the year at about the same achievement level, and both groups were considerably higher than TNI students.

Note that spring entry students had a significantly smaller fall-to-mid-year mean gain than TNI students. This finding is critical to strengthen the inference that Reading Recovery is an effective intervention for three reasons. One, it may indicate that Reading Recovery teachers accurately identify and provide the treatment to the students most in need. On average, the students served in the second round are those who are falling behind the TNI group. Two, one possible explanation for the larger fall to mid-year gain for fall entry students is that their scores regressed more to the mean than TNI or random sample students. If that explanation were true, however, one would also expect the spring entry students to regress more toward the mean given their lower fall mean score. As can be seen from Figure 1, their growth rate in the first half of the year does not reflect greater regression. Three, spring entry students essentially serve as another (even more similar) comparison group for fall entry students at least in the first part of the year to address the question; “What would happen to the achievement levels of Reading Recovery students if

**Figure 1. Mean Observation Survey Total Score for Successfully Discontinued Reading Recovery (fall and spring entry), Random Sample, and Tested-Not-Instructed Students in the United States, 2013–2014**



**Figure 2. Mean Text Level Score for Successfully Discontinued Reading Recovery (fall and spring entry), Random Sample, and Tested-Not-Instructed Students in the United States, 2013–2014**



**Table 2. Mean Fall and Spring Total Scores with Effect Sizes for Successfully Discontinued Reading Recovery and Random Sample Students 2013–2014**

Observation Survey Task	Discontinued (n = 18,305)		Random Sample (n = 2,874)		Effect Size Difference	
	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
Total Score	395.41	553.80	438.96	553.81	-.83 (21)	0.00 (50)
Text Reading Level	1.68	19.71	5.58	20.66	-.78 (19)	-.14 (44)
Writing Vocabulary	12.84	56.65	21.09	56.65	-.67 (25)	0.00 (50)
Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words	23.42	35.98	28.78	35.72	-.68 (25)	+.09 (54)
Letter Identification	49.58	53.49	51.17	53.39	-.33 (37)	+.05 (52)
Ohio Word Test	4.56	19.17	9.60	18.92	-.82 (21)	+.11 (54)
Concepts About Print	13.52	21.03	15.36	20.78	-.61 (27)	+.09 (54)

they did not receive the treatment?” Clearly, the growth rate for fall entry students would be considerably lower without the treatment, as reflected in the spring entry student fall to mid-year growth. During the time of their intervention in the second half of the year, spring entry students had the largest growth rate.

Figure 2 (on the previous page) presents the same group comparison method at three time points during the year (fall, mid-year, spring) on Text Reading Level. The general trends depicted in Figure 2 were similar to those for the total score, except

for spring testing, where it is evident that Reading Recovery discontinued students did not entirely close the achievement gap between themselves and random sample students (although the gap reduction improved slightly compared to 2012–2013, which is discussed further below).

The magnitude of mean differences (effect sizes) in fall and spring between Reading Recovery and random sample or TNI students was examined. Tables 2 and 3 present the mean total and Observation Survey task scores of fall entry and spring entry Reading Recovery discontinued

students pooled together and random sample and TNI students, respectively. In both tables, the right-hand columns provide the effect sizes in terms of standardized mean differences (positive values indicate that the Reading Recovery mean was greater than the comparison mean value) and the percentile standing of the average Reading Recovery child in the comparison-group distribution (in parentheses). As expected, the mean Reading Recovery scores in fall ranged from the 19th to 37th percentile, with the latter value likely due to an apparent ceiling effect of Letter Identification in the random sample.

**Table 3. Mean Fall and Spring Total Scores with Effect Sizes for Successfully Discontinued Reading Recovery and Tested-Not-Instructed Students 2013–2014**

Observation Survey Task	Discontinued (n = 18,305)		Tested-Not-Instructed (n = 6,322)		Effect Size Difference	
	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
Total Score	395.41	553.80	415.28	538.43	-.52 (30)	+.38 (65)
Text Reading Level	1.68	19.71	2.66	17.62	-.13 (45)	+.31 (62)
Writing Vocabulary	12.84	56.65	16.32	51.48	-.40 (34)	+.25 (60)
Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words	23.42	35.98	26.61	35.18	-.41 (34)	+.30 (62)
Letter Identification	49.58	53.49	50.60	53.27	-.23 (41)	+.12 (55)
Ohio Word Test	4.56	19.17	6.62	18.39	-.47 (32)	+.27 (61)
Concepts About Print	13.25	21.03	14.11	19.81	-.28 (39)	+.46 (68)

By year-end, the effect size differences decreased significantly, indicating the closing of the achievement gap. On the total score, the average Reading Recovery student performed comparable to the 50th percentile random sample student, indicating a complete closure of the achievement gap. In 2012–2013, the average Reading Recovery student scored at the 47th percentile of the random sample on the total score, so the gap closed to a greater extent in 2013–2014. On Concepts About Print, Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words, Letter Identification and the Ohio Word Test, the mean Reading Recovery score was slightly larger than the average random sample value. On Writing Vocabulary and Text Reading Level, the average Reading Recovery students were at the 50th and 44th percentiles, respectively. The year prior (2012–2013), the average Reading Recovery student was at the 48th percentile for Writing Vocabulary, and the 43rd for Text Reading Level. Positive changes over the 2 years on those measures contributed greatly to the complete closure of the total score achievement gap in 2013–2014.

The fall and spring test scores for Reading Recovery discontinued students (fall and spring entry combined) and TNI children are provided in Table 3. In fall, the Reading Recovery total score mean was at the 30th percentile in the fall TNI distribution, indicating the greater initial proficiency of the TNI group. The Reading Recovery and TNI students, on average, were the most comparable on Text Reading Level, as indicated by the smallest fall effect size difference among the measures. By spring, Reading Recovery students outperformed the TNI students on all

six tasks and the total score. Reading Recovery students started the year below the TNI group and surpassed them by the end of the year. The average Reading Recovery student scored at the 65th percentile in the TNI group distribution on the total score, reflecting a sizable end-of-year achievement gap in favor of Reading Recovery.

### Summary of Descubriendo la Lectura Outcomes

Descubriendo la Lectura (DLL), the reconstruction of Reading Recovery in Spanish, is for first graders who receive their initial literacy instruction in Spanish. Table 4 provides basic descriptive information about DLL implementation in the country. During the 2013–2014 school year, 632 DLL children were taught by 90 teachers. The students were from 85 schools in 25 school districts located in nine states. The teachers received professional development support from 29 teacher leaders. Of the total DLL students, 58% were boys, 99% were Hispanic, and 98% qualified for free or reduced lunch costs.

Among all children served in DLL, 49% reached the average reading levels of their peers and their lessons were discontinued successfully. Another 27% were recommended for further evaluation, 3% moved, and 19% received incomplete interventions. Among the students who completed the intervention (discontinued and referred), 65% were discontinued.

Two students per participating DLL school were administered the Instrumento de Observación in fall, mid-year, and at the end of year in half of the schools assigned at random. Those students combined represented the random sample. DLL schools had collected TNI data in 2011–2012, but due to very small samples and thus uninterpretable average scores, IDEC decided to forgo DLL TNI testing.

DLL random sample students' score on the six tasks of the Instrumento de Observación across multiple years were combined as was done for Reading Recovery to create a 0 to 800-point total score measure that reflected literacy development throughout the school year. Note that, although this measure was developed using the same methods, a score of the same value on each measure should not be interpreted to indicate the same degree of literacy achievement (the tests contain different items and were scaled on different random samples).

Figure 3 presents the mean scores for both fall entry and spring entry successfully discontinued students and all DLL random sample participants on the total score at each time point, and Figure 4 provides the average scores for the same groups at the same

**Table 4. Participation in Descubriendo la Lectura in the United States 2013–2014**

Entity	n
University Training Centers	7
Teacher Training Sites	25
States	9
Districts	26
Schools	85
Teacher Leaders	29
Teachers	90
DLL Students	632
Random Sample for DLL	292

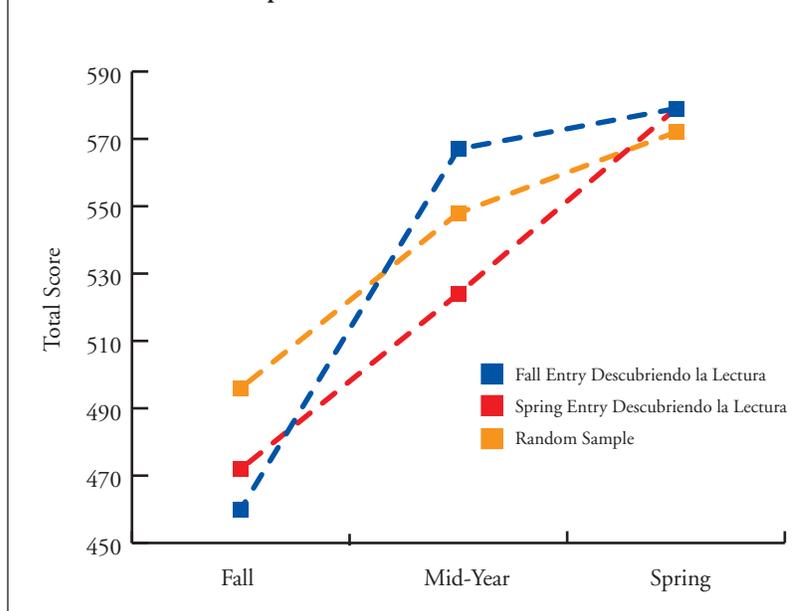
time points on text reading level. The trends for DLL on the total score were similar to the Reading Recovery results presented in Figure 1 with some differences. DLL students had

considerably lower total scores than random sample students, on average, in fall, but by the end of year, the two DLL groups surpassed the random sample.

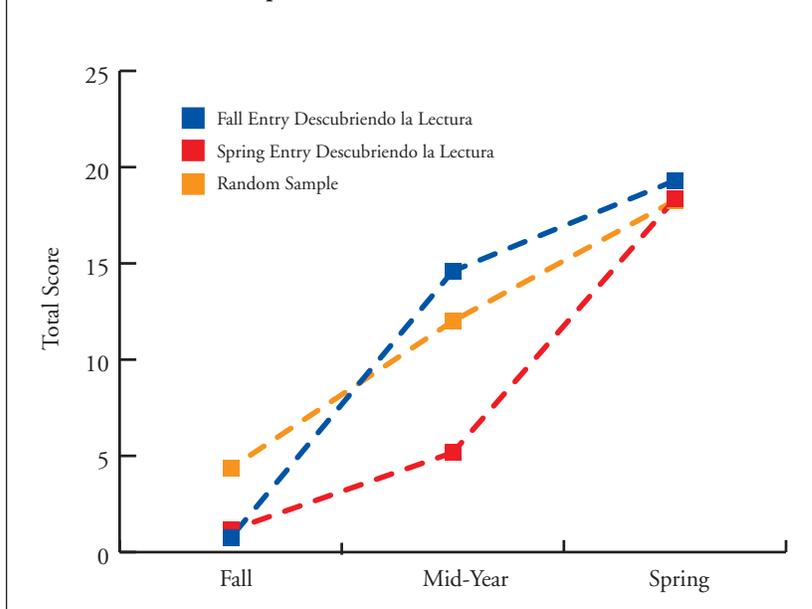
The greatest growth of any group was fall entry DLL students from fall to mid-year, followed by spring entry DLL students from mid-year to spring, indicating that gain was greatest during the intervention periods. Spring entry DLL and random sample students gained about the same amount from fall to mid-year, but from mid-year to spring, the spring entry DLL students outgained the random sample, indicative of a predictable growth pattern during the treatment period. The trend for text level (Figure 4) was similar to the total score trend (Figure 3) except for one difference; spring entry DLL students did not, on average, make comparable fall-to-mid-year gains relative to the random sample. Instead, the spring entry DLL students had considerably lower growth rates in the first part of the year without the intervention. During the second part of the year, they caught the random sample and the DLL discontinued students who received the intervention in the fall. Both DLL groups started the school year behind the random sample but caught up to them by the end of the year.

Table 5 consists of the mean scores and effect sizes for fall and spring entry DLL discontinued students combined and random sample students in fall and at the end of year. It can be seen from the table that the average discontinued DLL student performed at the 58th percentile of random sample students on the total test in spring. Discontinued DLL students equaled or outperformed the random sample on all of the Instrumento de Observación tasks in spring. These average score differences reveal strong effects for DLL.

**Figure 3. Mean Instrumento de Observación Total Score for Successfully Discontinued Descubriendo la Lectura (fall and spring entry), and Random Sample Students in the United States, 2013–2014**



**Figure 4. Mean Análisis Actual del Texto Score for Successfully Discontinued Descubriendo la Lectura (fall and spring entry), and Random Sample Students in the United States, 2013–2014**



**Table 5. Mean Fall and Spring Total Scores with Effect Sizes for Successfully Discontinued Descubriendo la Lectura (DLL) and DLL Random Sample Students 2013–2014**

Instrumento de Observación Task	Discontinued (n = 221)		Random Sample (n = 265)		Effect Size Difference	
	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
<b>Total Score</b>	<b>465.10</b>	<b>579.65</b>	<b>496.45</b>	<b>572.88</b>	<b>-.82 (21)</b>	<b>+.21 (58)</b>
Análisis Actual del Texto	.98	19.04	4.36	18.27	-.71 (24)	+.11 (54)
Escritura de Vocabulario	11.01	49.74	18.65	46.62	-.69 (25)	+.18 (57)
Oír y Anotar los Sonidos en las Palabras	23.78	38.32	30.80	37.85	-.71 (24)	+.92 (82)
Identificación de Letras	46.44	58.93	51.85	58.50	-.61 (27)	+.14 (56)
Prueba de Palabras	7.37	19.70	12.51	19.09	-.75 (23)	+.25 (60)
Conceptos del Texto Impreso	10.61	19.36	13.12	19.30	-.66 (25)	+.02 (51)

## Conclusion

The list of educational interventions that have had the effect on student learning and program longevity in the United States compared to Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura is very small. In its 30th year of implementation during 2013–2014, students in the intervention posted perhaps the strongest outcomes experienced to date. On the total score, the achievement gap was completely closed as indicated by the

average discontinued Reading Recovery student being at the 50th percentile of the random sample in spring. In DLL, the average discontinued student surpassed the average of the random sample.

Perhaps the most-important finding from the 2013–2014 evaluation was that Reading Recovery students closed the achievement gap on two measures that have been historically difficult to change: Writing Vocabulary and Text Reading Level. For

both measures, the average Reading Recovery student inched closer to catching the average random sample levels than had been seen in prior years. These findings reflect the strong commitment of Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura trainers, teacher leaders, and teachers to persistently strive to improve their practices. Their hard work and engagement are paying off in terms of greater student literacy success.

## About the Authors

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# 2016 National Reading Recovery & K-6 Literacy Conference

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Linda Dorn is a professor of reading education at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and is the director of the UALR Center for Literacy. She is a Reading Recovery trainer and past president of the Reading Recovery Council of North America. Dr. Dorn is recognized nationally for her contributions to literacy education and has presented at over 300 conferences at international, national, and state levels. She has published widely with seven books on literacy instruction, book chapters, articles, and media publications. Her most recent book is a collaboration with colleagues, *Changing Minds, Changing Schools: A Comprehensive Literacy Approach for School Improvement*.



## Anthony Muhammad

Recognized as a leading expert in the areas of school culture and organizational climate, Anthony Muhammad has consulted with school systems around the world. He is the CEO of New Frontier 21 Consulting, a company dedicated to providing cutting-edge professional development to schools throughout the world. Dr. Muhammad served as a practitioner for nearly 20 years; his tenure includes middle school teacher, assistant principal, middle school principal, and high school principal. He is also a best-selling author of several books. His most recent are *The Will to Lead*, *the Skill to Teach* and *Transforming School Culture: How to Overcome Staff Division*. To learn more visit <http://newfrontier21.com/consulting/anthony/>.



## Steve Jenkins

Children's author and illustrator Steve Jenkins has written and illustrated over 30 picture books for young readers, including the Caldecott Honor-winning, *What Do You Do with a Tail Like This?* Other well-known books include *Actual Size*, *Move*, and *The Animal Book*. His newest book is *Eye to Eye*. His books have been called stunning, eye-popping, inventive, gorgeous, masterful, extraordinary, playful, irresistible, compelling, engaging, accessible, glorious, and informative. He lives in Colorado with his wife and frequent collaborator, Robin Page, and their children. To learn more about the author and his books, visit [www.stevejenkinsbooks.com](http://www.stevejenkinsbooks.com).



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# Summers Are Critical If We Want to Close the Rich/Poor Reading Achievement Gap

*Richard L. Allington, University of Tennessee*

The evidence is clear: Reading Recovery® is an effective early literacy intervention. In fact, Reading Recovery was the *only* intervention found to have strong positive evidence of effects in promoting reading development according to the federally sponsored What Works Clearinghouse ([WWC], 2008). Given that the WWC reviewed the research available for over 150 different reading programs, one could ask just how it was that “scientifically based reliable, replicable research” was supposed to be the key quality that guided the design of reading instruction under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), especially in guiding the selection of reading instructional programs. In other words, had the comprehensive review of research conducted by the WWC on reading programs been completed before NCLB was implemented, it seems that Reading Recovery would have been the only intervention allowed to be funded with NCLB funding!

However, for all the success that Reading Recovery interventions have demonstrated the truth of the matter is that while many at-risk beginning readers are recovered with Reading Recovery instructional services and have their reading levels brought up to the standard of their peers in their classroom, too many students—

particularly the students who are members of low-income families—still enter sixth grade with their reading development lagging well behind their more economically advantaged peers. Nationally and internationally the children who are commonly lagging behind in reading proficiency are the children who live as members of low-income families. It is these children that are the focus of this article. I write about them because while American teachers and schools have reduced the Black/White reading achievement gap by almost half since 1966—when the federal Title I remedial reading program of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was implemented in schools serving large numbers of low-income children—American schools and teachers have not been so successful ensuring the development of reading proficiencies with children from low-income families.

## The Rich/Poor Reading Achievement Gap

The rich/poor reading gap has actually widened over the same period that the Black/White gap narrowed (Reardon, 2011, 2013). The reading achievement gap between kids from the 90th and 10th percentile income families, the rich and the poor children, grew from 0.90 SD to 1.25 SD, an increase of 40%. At

the same time period, the reading achievement gap between Black and White kids shrank from close to 1.25 SD to less than 0.75 SD. The reading achievement gap is present when kids begin school, and schooling currently does not remove the achievement gap. Basically, this widening of the rich/poor reading achievement gap occurred because while the performance of low-income children in reading has risen over time; their reading proficiency has just not risen as much as the proficiency of children living as members of higher-income families.

If one uses the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading outcomes, it is easy to see the growing achievement gap between rich and poor children (NAEP, 2013). By 4th grade, when the NAEP is first administered, the rich/poor reading achievement gap is about 1.5 years wide; by 8th grade that gap is approximately 3 years; and at 12th grade the rich/poor reading achievement gap is 4 years wide. In other words, free lunch-eligible students in 12th grade read as well as other children read in 8th grade! It is the ever-widening reading achievement gap that has fostered so many efforts to reduce it, most recently mandates to identify teachers whose students fail to perform well on such reading assessments.

The NAEP achievement data, like most other achievement measures, do make it look as though teachers in high-poverty schools are not doing a very good job in developing their students' reading proficiencies. However, what almost everyone ignores when looking at such data is what has been labeled "summer reading loss" or "summer reading setback."

### Summer Academic Loss

Summer academic loss has been a topic of educational research for over a century. White's early study of summer academic loss in 1906 along with Aason's 1959 report on summer reading loss both reported the same findings: Students performed more poorly after summer vacation than they did before they took the summer break. Heyns (1978) wrote responding to the criticism of American schooling leveled by Coleman (1966). Heyns suggested that educational outcomes were far more equal than one would expect given the range of family incomes and ethnic origins of American students. She studied sixth- and seventh-grade students enrolled in the Atlanta public schools over an 18-month period.

Heyns (1978) noted that student learning grew much slower during the summer months than during the school year. However, she also noted that students from low-income homes registered summer reading losses, while students from middle-income homes registered small summer reading gains. In addition, students from middle-income families were far more likely to read during the summer months than students from low-income families. She suggested that ease of access to trade books was the most reasonable explanation for

explaining the differences observed in children from different family socioeconomic levels.

In fact, Heyns noted that, "The presumption, which is rarely tested, is that reading influences achievement" (1978, p. 164). I suggest that this presumption is still rarely tested, at least experimentally. As the National Reading Panel (2000) noted, while much correlational research evidence exists demonstrating that better readers read more than struggling readers, correlational research does not imply causation.

However, Lindsay (2013) recently conducted a meta-analysis on the outcomes of rigorous experimental studies of increasing children's access to trade books; where access was manipulated amongst populations of randomly assigned subjects, the impact of increasing book access on reading achievement produced an effect size of  $d = 0.435$ . Improving access to books also increased motivation to read with an effect size of  $d = 0.967$ . In other words, just improving the access that children had to trade books, especially children from low-income families, also improved voluntary reading activity and student reading achievement.

Lindsay's (2013) meta-analysis is important if only because other meta-analyses have demonstrated that, as was the case in the Heyns' study, children from low-income families lose reading proficiency over the summer months while middle-class children add reading proficiencies (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay, & Greathouse, 1996). Cooper and his colleagues noted, "On average, summer vacations created a gap of about 3 months between middle- and

lower-class students" (p. 261). This 3-month gap was the result of poor children losing about 2 months of reading development and middle-class children adding about 1 month of development. They also argued that the summer reading loss among poor children seemed linked to the differential access to books that poor kids experience during the summer months as compared to their more economically advantaged peers. "The income differences may be related to differences in opportunities to practice and learn (with more books and reading opportunities available to middle-class students)" (Cooper et al., p. 265).

Phillips and Chin (2004), drawing from the federal Prospects study data, also note that poor children lose reading growth during the summer while middle-class children add reading growth during this same period. They also reported that children who read at least 30 minutes daily during the summer months had significantly higher reading comprehension gains during the summer than those who read less, even when holding family income, parental education, and similar factors constant.

Finally, the amount of actual reading activity that students engage in during their reading instruction has been shown to be an important factor in explaining their reading development. Foorman, Schatschneider, Eakins, Fletcher, Moats, and Francis (2006) reported that the key factor in the reading instruction offered by over 100 observed first- and second-grade teachers was the time allocated to students for text reading. I say a key factor because it was the number of minutes of reading activity during the observed reading instruction that

explained any variance observed on any of the outcome measures, including word recognition, decoding, and reading comprehension. None of other aspects of the observed lessons were related to reading growth; including time spent on phonemic awareness, word recognition, or decoding. This study suggests that teachers should design their lessons such that student reading volume is expanded, perhaps by reducing the time planned for other and not very useful (here think of workbook work and round robin oral reading) activities, that too often replace reading activity in American classrooms and interventions.

## Children's Access to Trade Books

The relationship between easy access to books and reading achievement was first noted in 1937 by Waples who studied access to print as a variable in the lives of poor families during the depression. He documented that the proximity of libraries to homes, the supply of printed materials available in stores and newsstands in communities, and the number of books in the home were related to voluntary reading activity. He also noted that low-income families had more restricted access in each area than did more economically advantaged families.

A half century later, Neuman (1986) also noted that the number of books available in the home had an important positive relationship with the reading achievement of children. Neuman and Celano (2001) later found that in low-income neighborhoods, fewer books were available in stores, childcare centers, and local elementary school and public libraries.

Also, in low-income neighborhoods, the books that were available were both older and of lower quality than the books available in middle-class communities. Similar findings about the limited access poor children have to books at school and at home is also reported by McGill-Franzen, Lanford, and Adams (2002), Constantino (2005), and McQuillan and Au (2001).

Most recently, Schubert and Becker (2010) reported that the number of books in the home was a significant predictor of student reading achievement even when family income, parental education, language used in the home, and other factors were controlled. The relationship of the home environment to reading achievement was almost as large as family income in predicting reading proficiency. A similar finding was reported by Evans, Kelly, Sikora, and Treiman (2010) in their analysis of access to reading materials for 70,000 children in 27 nations. While statistically controlling for differences in family income, father's occupation, and parental education, they reported the size of the effect of home access to books on reading achievement was about the same size as parental education — twice as large as father's occupation and stronger than family income.

Thus, the research now available indicates that poor children often live in homes and neighborhoods that could be thought of as print deserts (Tracey, 2015). But, of course, these poor children also attend school and that fact, we often think, should ameliorate the access to print problem in their homes and communities. However, the research tells us differently.

Pribesh, Gavigan, and Dickinson (2011) examined differences in school libraries including staffing and hours of operation plus the numbers of titles available. They found, “alarmingly, that the students most in need—those attending schools with the highest concentrations of students living in poverty—had the fewest school library resources to draw upon” (p. 143). Various reasons have been offered as to why schools enrolling many poor children have substantially inferior classroom and school library collections, but I have found none of the reasons offered to be very compelling. Such schools spend more money than middle-class schools do on workbooks and test preparation materials, items that have never demonstrated any role in improving reading achievement. It seems that it isn't a lack of funding that limits the access children have to books in high-poverty schools.

Of course there remains the possibility that classroom libraries in high-poverty schools are rich and large, perhaps offsetting the lack of school library resources. However, Duke (2000) noted that classroom access to books was far higher in schools that served children from middle-income families than in schools that served children from low-income families. It wasn't just that middle-class children had greater access to books either, because when compared to the contexts and experiences of poor students she found that middle-class children had

- more books and magazines in classroom libraries,
- more books and magazines displayed in classrooms,

- more opportunities to use the classroom library,
- more opportunities to read extended texts during the school day, and
- more opportunities to choose the books that they did read.

On the other hand, students from low-income families attending school where many other poor children also attended had more opportunities to do worksheets than did middle-class children. Unfortunately, unlike wide reading, doing worksheets is one of those aspects of schooling that has never been proven to have a positive effect of reading development (Anderson, Brubaker, Alleman-Brooks, & Duffy, 1985; Cunningham, 1984).

### Why Do Students from Low-Income Families Lag Behind Their More-Advantaged Peers?

Duke (2000) also noted that very early in the schooling process students attending schools where the majority of other children are children from low-income families have “very different educational experiences than their peers who come from higher-income families and attend schools with mostly higher-income students” (p. 471). Duke suggests that such environmental and instructional differences seem better explanations for the observed differences in reading achievement than many of the traditional explanations that dominate current discussions of needed educational reform.

While I basically agree with Duke’s assertion, she does not mention summer reading loss. Perhaps this should not be surprising, since almost no one

else mentions summer reading loss as a significant source of the rich/poor reading achievement gap either. However, it is my data-based belief that summer reading loss largely explains why children from low-income families fall further and further behind their more-advantaged peers with each and every year of schooling. It is also my belief that the teachers working in high-poverty schools are typically equally as effective in developing reading proficiencies as the teachers working in schools serving middle-class children. Finally, I believe that lack of access to books, during the summer months, is the primary cause of summer reading loss. Each of these beliefs is also supported by the data provided by several studies.

We can begin with the original Heyns (1978) study where there were few differences in reading development between rich and poor children during the school year but differences were found for reading development during the summer vacation periods. Hayes and Grether (1983) reported the same outcome in their analyses of reading achievement between Grade 2 and Grade 6 in 600 New York City schools. They estimated that 80% of rich/poor reading achievement gap occurred during the summer months when schools were not in session. In other words, the 2-year 7-month rich/poor reading gap that existed at the end of sixth grade was mostly accumulated year after year during the summer school vacation periods.

Likewise, Alexander, Entwisle, and Olson (2007) report that their analyses of the longitudinal achievement data from a Baltimore County school system indicated that rich and poor children do indeed acquire the same amount of reading growth during the

school year in Grades K–9. However, they also noted that there seems to be

a widespread impression that poor children are routinely shortchanged by their schools. *In fact, poor and middle-class children make comparable achievement gains during the school year* [emphasis added]. But while middle-class children make gains during the summer when they are out of school, poor or disadvantaged children often lose ground academically. (Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2001, p. 11)

My point here is simple: In too many school systems we seem to have identified the wrong basis to explain the rich/poor reading achievement gap. This is not to say that improving reading instruction in high-poverty schools is unnecessary. Given the rich data supporting the importance of providing all children with high-quality reading instruction, it only makes sense to ensure that teachers in high-poverty schools are well prepared and well supported to offer such lessons. In fact, there is good research evidence on the power of high-quality professional development and initial reading development (McGill-Franzen, Allington, Yokoi, & Brooks, 1999; Scanlon, Gelzheiser, Vellutino, Schatschneider, & Sweeney, 2008). In both studies, substantial and effective professional development for kindergarten teachers resulted in dramatic reductions in the numbers of children experiencing difficulties with early reading acquisition. In the McGill-Franzen et al. (1999) study, kindergarten teachers in the books-plus-professional-development classrooms participated in 3 days of professional development

before school began and then continued participating in monthly professional development sessions across the school year. Literacy coaches provided in-classroom support to assist teachers in implementing more-expert early literacy lessons including reading books aloud to children at least twice each day. Kindergarten teachers in the books-only (no professional development) classrooms received the same supply of children's books for their classroom libraries as the books-plus-professional-development teachers. End-of-year outcomes indicated enormous differences in early literacy development for the teachers in the books-plus-professional-development classrooms compared to the student outcomes in the books-only classrooms.

Of particular interest also, was the fact that in the Scanlon et al. (2008) study, fewer kindergarten children were at risk for reading failure after teachers participated in the professional development program than students who were provided small-group expert reading intervention in classrooms where teachers did not receive professional development.

Thus, it looks as if most struggling early readers are struggling because their classroom teachers simply lack the expertise needed to teach them to read successfully. It also seems that classrooms that enroll many children from low-income families present a greater number of children who need more-expert reading instruction. The major lesson we should draw from the research is that virtually every child could be developing reading proficiencies in kindergarten and first grade. If there are beginning readers who are experiencing difficulty we should probably ensure, at the very least, that the classroom teachers of

those children have acquired the level of expertise necessary to teach every child to read.

Here is where Reading Recovery teachers could, and probably should, play important roles. When Reading Recovery is fully implemented in a school, Reading Recovery teachers could be working with small groups of at-risk kindergarten students to accelerate their early literacy development. One model that Reading Recovery teachers might use is described by Owens (2015). In this case, Interactive Writing (IW) activities are provided in the classroom, and in addition to the classroom lessons, the IW process is also used in the interventions that are provided to at-risk kindergarten students. Building on Clay's (2005) argument that reading and writing development are reciprocal processes, IW provides lots of opportunities for literacy development in both small group and instructional one-to-one settings. As Owens noted, implementing IW with at-risk readers led to most at-risk readers developing advanced literacy proficiencies.

The second possible role for Reading Recovery teachers is working with primary-grade classroom teachers to support at-risk beginning readers. Schaefer (2015) describes such a model for fostering the expertise of primary-grade teachers. This is a collaborative inquiry-based form of professional development led, typically, by Reading Recovery teachers. I think it is the "collaborative" aspect of this effort that largely accounts for its success. By "collaborative" the model expects everyone involved to engage in planning, or rethinking, the literacy lessons and lesson segments the classroom teacher provides to at-risk beginning readers.

The goal in both roles is enhancing the reading instruction such that fewer children have difficulty with reading acquisition. Working with kindergartners will reduce the number of first-grade students who will need a Reading Recovery intervention. Working with primary-grade teachers should also reduce the numbers of at-risk children because enhanced reading lessons are more commonly available in the classroom following the collaborative professional development.

Beyond inexpert classroom reading lessons lies the now verified problems of ease of access to books for children from low-income families, which the data suggests leads to summer reading loss and largely explains the rich/poor reading achievement gap (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2013). While the research is quite clear about the impact of summer vacations on the reading development, especially the loss of reading development in children from low-income families, there is less research on what teachers and schools might do in addressing summer reading loss effectively. Nonetheless, that research evidence is reviewed next along with suggestions for what that research says schools might do to interrupt summer reading loss.

## What the Research Says About Interrupting Summer Reading Loss

As noted earlier in this paper, ease of access to reading material during the summer months, especially ease of access to trade books, seems to be a primary difference between children from low-income and other types of families. Thus, attempts to address summer reading loss have largely

focused on improving the access children have to trade books. Our study (Allington et al., 2010), for instance, supplied children—beginning with first- and second-grade students from low-income families—with 15 self-selected trade books each year over a 3-year period. Book fairs were offered in 17 high-poverty elementary schools each year in April. Randomly selected children attended the book fair and selected the books they wanted from roughly 500 book titles. On the last day of school each year the self-selected summer books were distributed to the summer books children.

Roughly 90% of the summer books students were African American or Hispanic and over two-thirds of the students were eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Thus, the children participating in our study were typically beginning readers who lived in a low-income family setting and most were minority students.

In this study, there were no other requirements; it was simply designed to ensure these children from low-income families had access to a supply of self-selected trade books to read during the summer months. After three summers of distributing the self-selected trade books, the summer books children had reading achievement performances significantly better than the control group students from their schools (who received no summer books). In fact, the observed difference in reading performance on the Florida state assessment was a bit larger than a half-year at the end of the 3-year study favoring the children who received self-selected summer books. Basically, then, simply distributing self-selected books for summer voluntary reading largely interrupted summer reading loss. We also learned

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The message for Reading Recovery teachers and the administrators in the schools where they work with children seems clear to me. Establish a summer book distribution program for Reading Recovery students. In fact, if you are a Reading Recovery teacher in a school with many children from low-income families enrolled, establish a summer book distribution program for all students.

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that the poorest children benefited the most from ease of access to summer books since the overall impact on achievement for the free lunch-eligible children was substantially larger when compared to the growth in reading achievement of the other more economically advantaged children.

The study was rated as providing “near top tier” evidence of the effects of summer book distribution by the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy (2011). Near top tier was the rating because it was only a single study done in a single state.

What we learned (Allington et al., 2010) was that solving the book access problem largely solved the problem of summer reading loss, particularly when working with children from low-income families. Because earlier research had identified self-selection of books as an important factor in determining whether children would voluntarily read the books that were available (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Lindsay, 2013), we allowed children to choose each of the 15 books they received for summer reading. Thus, our study was rather unique because the students were (a) beginning readers when

the books were first distributed, (b) primarily minority students drawn mostly from low-income families, and (c) given the opportunity to choose books for summer reading that appealed to them.

In addition to our longitudinal study of summer book distributions, several single-year studies add to the database of studies addressing summer reading loss. In several of the studies reported by Kim (Kim, 2007; Kim & Guryan, 2010) they distributed summer books but report no positive effect on reading achievement. In these studies, though, students participating were not necessarily children from low-income families nor were they beginning readers, and the number of books that could be chosen to be distributed to children was smaller than was the case in our study. However, Kim and Quinn (2013) along with White, Kim, Kingston, and Foster (2014) both report positive effects for distributing books for summer reading, with Kim and Quinn also noting that distributing books seems to have a larger impact on the reading development of children from low-income families but a reduced effect, if any effect, on students from more economically advantaged families.

The message for Reading Recovery teachers and the administrators in the schools where they work with children seems clear to me. Establish a summer book distribution program for Reading Recovery students. In fact, if you are a Reading Recovery teacher in a school with many children from low-income families enrolled, establish a summer book distribution program for all students. If children from low-income fami-

lies spend little or no time reading voluntarily during the full summer vacation period, the research indicates that these children will experience summer reading loss. This summer reading loss is a rather small loss each year; but, cumulatively, summer reading loss is the reason too many children from low-income families enter high school with reading proficiency substantially lower than middle-class children.

The results of the meta-analysis on summer academic loss done by Cooper et al. (1996) indicates that, in general, the reading proficiency of children from low-income families falls, on average, 2 months every summer due to summer reading loss. This produces roughly a negative 3-month difference in annual reading growth when compared to middle-class children (the result of an annual average 2 months loss for poor children plus a 1-month gain for middle-class children). This accumulation of small annual losses largely explains the 4-year reading achievement gap one finds between free-lunch students (poor) and other students on the 12th grade National Assessment of Educational Progress (2013)! That is, after 12 years of schooling, a loss of 3 months reading growth each summer produces the 4-year reading gap.



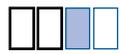
## Summer Reading Challenge

In May 2014, teachers at Lebanon Elementary School in Kentucky distributed six books and a writing journal to each of the approximately 420 students enrolled in the K-5 public school. The students were encouraged to read and write about books during the summer months and were promised a picnic if they completed at least six journal entries. When they returned to school last fall, 110 students — including 18 former Reading Recovery students — had read 724 books and were invited to a Reading Celebration Back to School Picnic. Reading Recovery students and teachers pictured here (left-to-right) in the front row are Rashaud Brown, Aubrey Price, Chanse Smith, Elizabeth Price, Brooklyn Thomas, Layne Ramey, and Tyler Smith. In the back row are Mary Leo Wimsatt, Abby Clark, Daylee Joglewicz, Clayton Whitlock, Rhea Fisher, MaShayla Furmon, and Melissa Murphy.

## Summary and Conclusion

The research evidence is clear, at least for children from low-income families. Improving these children's access to books they can read and books they actually want to read during the summer months can largely disrupt summer reading loss. We accomplished this by running book fairs in high-poverty schools where children selected trade books for summer voluntary reading. Others (Kim & Quinn, 2013; Lindsay, 2013; White et al., 2014) have also demonstrated the positive effects that summer book distributions for children from low-income families can have on reading achievement.

We know a lot now about summer reading loss and how to disrupt it. What we also know is that few schools or school districts have taken any efforts to ease the problem of access to books that children from



low-income families routinely experience. Reading Recovery teachers often work with children from low-income families and so I hope that this article stimulates action toward ensuring that all students—but especially students from low-income families—have easy access to books to read over their summer vacation periods.

We can defeat summer reading loss, and defeating it is not particularly expensive (in our study the annual cost was just under \$50 per student each year). However, someone has to develop the plan that will ensure all children from low-income families have easy access to books they can read and that they want to read during the summer months.

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## About the Author



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# Fulfilling the Promise of Literacy: A Summer Book Project

*C.C. Bates and Maryann McBride, Clemson University*

*A month into the new school year, a second-grade teacher stopped me in the hallway to ask about Kyle, one of my former Reading Recovery students. The teacher said he was in the lowest reading group, and she didn't see how his Reading Recovery intervention could have been discontinued last year. I couldn't understand it; he finished strong at the end of the year, reading a level 18 text with ease. I tried to explain this, but she looked skeptical. I told her I would work with him in a booster group to get him back up to speed, but I was disappointed that the classroom teacher didn't see the same child I saw at the end of the year. What could I do to prevent this in the future?*



The What Works Clearinghouse reviewed the Year 1 results of the federally funded Investing in Innovation (i3) scale-up of Reading Recovery® (May et al., 2013), and the results confirm the findings of earlier studies (Pinnell, DeFord, & Lyons, 1988; Pinnell, Lyons, DeFord, Bryk, & Seltzer, 1994; Schwartz, 2005) showing Reading Recovery has a positive effect on the general reading achievement and reading comprehension of struggling first graders. The effects, which enable children to make the accelerated progress needed to catch up with their peers, are the result of 12–20 weeks of individualized instruction with a highly trained literacy professional. It is important to bear in mind, however, that Reading Recovery is only a short-term intervention and while children return to the regular classroom with literacy processing systems that are independent and strategic, they still need the support of high-quality classroom instruction and summer reading material.

Over 25 years ago, Stanovich (1986) used the term *the Matthew effect* as a metaphor for the achievement gap. The idea that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer comes from the Parable of the Talents in the Gospel of Matthew. The story relays how two workers invested and grew money entrusted to them and how another hid his money, and as result, received no return on it. Stanovich likens this to readers growing their reading ability. In other words, the more a child reads, the better reader he becomes. Summer is certainly a time when some children choose to read, read more, and become better readers while others do not invest time in reading and therefore receive no return. Compounding this problem, especially for children from low-income homes, is the lack of access to print, leaving them without a choice or the opportunity to invest (Neuman & Celano, 2001). Further, Allington and his colleagues (2010) showed that the “reading achievement of economically disadvantaged students slides back a few months every summer” (p. 412). This is alarming and has great implications for children who receive the Reading Recovery intervention, since many come from impoverished homes (Brymer-Bashore & McGee, 2010).

## Implementing a Summer Book Project

From time to time, Reading Recovery teachers are asked about the progress of children with whom they have worked. Questions like “Are you sure this child had Reading Recovery?” imply the short-term intervention is solely responsible for a child’s reading level at the beginning of second grade. Knowing Reading Recovery should be one component of a comprehensive literacy program (Askew, Pinnell, & Scharer, 2014; Bryk, 2010; Dorn & Henderson, 2010), the Clemson University Reading Recovery Training Center for South Carolina (CUTC) has placed an emphasis in recent years on providing support for classroom teachers. While the increased collaboration between Reading Recovery and classroom teachers has been beneficial, we recognized a need to attend to the summer months as well.

In 2012, there was an increasing sense of urgency to find ways to support children during the summer months. We wanted to focus on maintaining the gains students made during the year, while at the same time fostering a love for reading. We wanted our vision of children sitting under a shade tree with a good book on a hot summer’s day to become a reality. In order to achieve this, we joined in conversation with the state department of education about the importance of summer reading. As a result, we were included in part of a larger statewide summer reading initiative that ultimately allowed us to purchase sets of 12 leveled texts for every child served in Reading Recovery. This article describes the project, results for the first cohort to receive books, lessons learned, and suggestions for starting a similar initiative on a large or small scale.

### *The schools and students*

The 152 schools involved in the summer book flood are located across the state in 21 school districts; 28.4% of the schools are classified as urban, 19.2% as suburban/large town, and the remaining 52.4% are schools in small towns or rural areas. The majority of schools receive Title I funding.

The students participating in this project had all received Reading Recovery. Students in Reading Recovery comprise the lowest 20% of first graders in a given school and begin first grade ranked by their classroom teachers as well-below average. Student selection for Reading Recovery is confirmed by *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Clay, 2013), a valid and reliable tool (Denton, Ciancio, & Fletcher, 2006) that provides

evidence that Reading Recovery children are significantly behind their average peers at the beginning of their lesson series. Of the students in the first cohort, 79.3% received free or reduced-price lunch. Socioeconomic issues coupled with the fact that these students are categorized as “struggling” placed them at greater risk of summer reading loss. Mraz and Rasinski (2007) remind us that struggling readers like those served in Reading Recovery are the ones who can least afford to fall behind.

### *The preparations*

The first year we implemented the project, we had an accelerated timeline to select and purchase two sets of texts. We selected one set for children who had successfully completed the intervention (*discontinued*) and the other set for those who had made progress but did not discontinue (*recommended*). The discontinued set had text levels ranging from 12–20, and the recommended set contained texts ranging from levels 8–12. The average discontinuing text level for the state hovers around 18, and the recommended text level is typically a 10. Based on this information, we selected texts that would be in the children’s independent and instructional ranges. Additionally, we selected texts with familiar characters that would provide some support for children while reading independently. To save money, the books were not packaged in individual sets but instead were sent to districts in bulk to sort and distribute. When the books arrived, we immediately received phone calls from some of the larger districts expressing disbelief at the palettes of books. While the arrival of the books was a little overwhelming, the teacher leaders and teachers were so excited about the benefits for children that they immediately began working to organize and prepare the books for delivery. This included finding local businesses to donate “book bags” that assisted children in carrying the books home. Included in each bag was a summer reading log and personalized letter explaining the importance of summer reading.

### *The results*

At the end of the first summer when the children returned to school, the Reading Recovery teachers were ready and waiting. As part of our arrangement with the state department of education, we agreed to test every child within the first 2 weeks of school. We used the Scott Foresman Leveled Text Reading Passages to show spring-to-fall text level gains. In the United States, these passages are used for the Text Reading task of the Observation Survey and



*Boxes of individual books were sorted and distributed in book bags donated by local businesses. Included in each child's bag was a summer reading log and personalized letter explaining the importance of summer reading.*

are considered a standard measure for reporting students' progress. The Text Reading passages consist of Levels 1–10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, and 30, with alternative passages at levels 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, and 16. The teachers used the alternative passages when possible, but there were times when children may have encountered a text they read at the end of the previous school year. In addition to administering the leveled passages, the teachers also collected student summer reading logs, but less than 50% were returned. (In subsequent years, we have not required teachers to send home reading logs, however, some continue to use them.)

The overall results for the first cohort showed a slight summer decline (see Table 1). It is important, however, to further examine how certain subgroups fared by looking at the disaggregated data. For example, the discontinued subgroup declined but maintained an average text level of 18.7, which would be considered on grade level at the beginning of second grade. Our greatest concern surfaced when examining the results for the free and reduced lunch and Black male and Black female subgroups. Even though these subgroups included all children served, both discon-

tinued and recommended, we were especially sensitive to the change in text reading level from end of first grade to the beginning of second.

### Reconsidering the Selected Texts

We discussed many possible reasons for the decline in text reading level and hypothesized it related to the texts we selected including the type and level. We were especially cognizant of Clay's considerations for choosing new text and we reexamined our selections to determine if they were "facilitative, highly motivating books" (Clay, 2005, p. 89). During data analysis, we revisited chapter 3, "Reading Continuous Texts, Whole Stories, and Information Books" in *Literacy Lesson Designed for Individuals Part Two* (Clay, 2005). As part of this process, we reframed several of the statements Clay presents in this section (p. 90) into question form to help us rethink the texts we had selected and to inform future text selection: Did we select books that children (a) will want to read? (b) can relate to some personal knowledge? and (c) will succeed with and enjoy?

In answering these questions, we realized we had selected texts we knew teachers loved, but we were not 100% certain children loved. The social and emotional dimensions of learning are an integral part of the Reading Recovery lesson, and the supportive relationships teachers build with their students are crucial (Lyons, 2003). In light of this, we discussed the familiar reading component of the lesson and talked about comments we make when children select books. We wondered how statements like, "I was hoping you would pick that book, it is my favorite!" influence children's subsequent book choices and teachers' perceptions about the types of text in which a child may be interested. In other words, are students more

**Table 1. 2011–2012 Cohort Average Text Reading Level at End of Grade 1/Beginning of Grade 2**

Cohort	End of Grade 1	Fall of Grade 2	Change
All children	16.9	16.1	-0.8
Discontinued	19.5	18.7	-0.8
Free Lunch	16.3	15.3	-1.0
Reduced Lunch	18.1	17.5	-0.6
Black Males	16.2	14.7	-1.5
Black Females	16.2	15.1	-1.1

**Table 2. Changes in Grade 1 Book Sets and Text Levels from 2011–2012 to 2012–2013**

	Discontinued	Not Discontinued/Recommended
2011-12	Levels 12–20 Familiar Themes & Characters	Levels 8–12 Familiar Themes & Characters
2012-13	Levels 10-18 Familiar Themes & Characters <i>Victor and the Martian</i>	Levels 6–10 Familiar Themes & Characters <i>Sleep Tight, Spaceboy</i>
Boys		
Girls	<i>The New House</i>	<i>Best Friends</i>
Boys	Nonfiction <i>Skateboarding, Working Dogs</i>	Nonfiction <i>Snakes, The Great White Shark</i>
Girls	<i>Butterflies, Penguins</i>	<i>Horses, Dolphins</i>
Boys	Culturally Relevant <i>Martin Luther King, Pickles &amp; The Hole</i>	Culturally Relevant <i>Pickles Helps Out</i>
Girls	<i>Rosa Parks</i>	<i>Friends on Earth</i>
Boys	By Authors Easily Found in Libraries <i>Dinosaurs, Dinosaurs</i> by Byron Barton <i>Just Me and My Dad</i> by Mercer Mayer	By Authors Easily Found in Libraries <i>Foot Book</i> by Dr. Seuss <i>All By Myself</i> by Mercer Mayer
Girls	<i>Great Day for Up</i> by Dr. Seuss <i>Just Grandma and Me</i> by Mercer Mayer	<i>Foot Book</i> by Dr. Seuss <i>Just Me and My Babysitter</i> by Mercer Mayer

likely to pick a particular title because they know their teacher likes it? Upon further examination of the texts we selected, we realized we needed to provide more culturally relevant (Boyd, Causey, & Galda, 2015; Jimenez, 1997) and informational texts (Duke, 2004).

As a result, we refined our book selection for the following summer. We expanded from two text sets, one for

discontinued and one for recommended subgroups, to four sets. By expanding the book sets, we were better able to answer the questions raised about book selection, and although we still included texts with familiar themes and characters, we also included more culturally relevant and informational texts. Table 2 provides an example of how the first-grade set expanded. As the project has grown, and additional grade levels have been added, we have continued to carefully select texts based on what we learned.

**Table 3. 2011-2012 Cohort Average Text Reading Level at End of Grade 2/Beginning of Grade 3**

Cohort	End of Grade 2	Fall of Grade 3	Change
All children	23.6	24.1	+0.4
Discontinued	25.9	26.5	+0.6
Free Lunch	22.9	23.3	+0.4
Reduced Lunch	24.9	25.1	+0.2
Black Males	22.1	22.4	+0.3
Black Females	22.8	23.3	+0.5

In addition to the changes we made in the book sets, we also encouraged teachers in the second year to preview the books with children as a means of increasing student engagement with the texts (Kim, 2007). To do this, some teachers met individually with children to provide an overview of the plot and to share a few pages aloud. Others used a small-group format and some invited their students and parents to a meeting to give them the books and explain the importance of reading during the summer months. Following the second summer book flood, all groups showed gains and we feel these were attributed to the types of books and the levels we selected (see Table 3).



*Students in 152 schools in 21 districts participated in the Clemson summer book flood project. They were part of a larger statewide summer reading initiative in conjunction with the state department of education that ultimately allowed Clemson to purchase sets of 12 leveled texts for every child served in Reading Recovery.*

In fact, when teachers were interviewed about the project, they commented that the books selected were beneficial for students. “The children were very excited to get the books. They loved receiving books with characters they already knew (Rosie, Bella, etc.),” shared one Reading Recovery teacher in Rockhill, SC. “Also, the books were high interest books of both fiction and nonfiction. Students commented these were books they could read and were excited to keep them at home.”

These same sentiments were echoed by parents, like this one in Anderson, SC: “The books were treasured by my child and he shared them with his brother and sisters. We are so happy to have books that he enjoys. Everyone has loved them, read them, listened to them, and looked at the pictures. In fact, I know the Little Dinosaur book by heart!”

### Lessons Learned

In *Change Over Time in Children’s Literacy Development*, Clay (2001) wrote:

The texts which a teacher chooses for a child can facilitate or constrain the opportunities that a child gets to process text information, and the difficulty level of those texts relative to the child’s current skills will create or constrain the opportunities for the child to use what he or she knows in the service of independently learning more through reading. (p. 207)

Examining how the texts we selected facilitated or constrained opportunities for the child was the most important lesson we learned. Our experiences in Read-

ing Recovery confirm the notion that to build and refine a processing system, children need access to “just right” books, and this was doubly important during the summer months. We found using texts children can read well and want to read assists in moving their systems forward and may prevent summer reading loss. McGill-Franzen stated in an interview in the June/July 2010 issue of *Reading Today* that struggling readers often self-select books that are too difficult, and the first summer we were involved in this project, we did, too. We realized the first book set contained texts that may have presented challenges to some of our students, especially those who did not have home support. The following summer, we included easier books in the sets for all children. Since the average discontinuing text level at the end of the year is approximately an 18, we included books ranging from levels 10–18 in the sets. For our recommended subgroup, who on average completed the series of lessons reading at level 10, we included books ranging from 6–10.

We also made different sets for boys and girls so we could tailor our selections to better reflect student interests. Since two of the major subgroups—discontinued Black males and discontinued Black females—did not make the progress we had hoped, we added more culturally relevant text. In addition, we expanded the sets to not only include books with familiar themes and characters but informational text as well. In summary, the book sets after the first year of the project contained lower levels and more diverse and nonfiction texts. We also included books by authors the children could find in the library; Mercer Mayer and Dr. Seuss, for example. Teachers from all over the state shared their excitement about the new books:

“LOVE LOVE LOVE it! Our kids are always thrilled to get their hands on books that will belong to them. Many of our kids don’t have opportunities to go to the library or to get new books, so they love this project. I love how the books are on their levels and they are able to actually read them!” Statements like this helped us know the books we selected were supportive.

## Starting a Summer Reading Project

Reducing the effects of summer reading loss was accomplished with a budget of approximately \$50 dollars a child, which is significantly less expensive than most summer school programs — especially when factoring in expenses like bus transportation and teacher salaries. While we were and continue to be involved in a large-scale ongoing state initiative, an individual Reading Recovery teacher, school, or site could easily implement a similar project. Sharing the effects of summer reading setback with local boards of education may help bring awareness to the need for summer reading material. There are also several grant opportunities (see endnote) that could assist. Once funding is secured, consider the lessons we learned when implementing the project like the importance of including culturally relevant and nonfiction text in the book sets. Finally, we recommend sharing a customizable book with each child when they return in the fall. As part of the project, Maryann McBride created two books about summer reading (shown at right) that can be personalized with the child’s name and are available for free. When children come back to school, sharing this custom-made text is a great way to celebrate the project and is yet another opportunity to send a book home!

## Final Thoughts

In *Promising Literacy for Every Child: Reading Recovery and a Comprehensive Literacy System* (Askew, Pinnell, & Scharer, 2014), we are asked how we will fulfill the promise of literacy for every child. This question is really a charge for Reading Recovery professionals to contemplate how to contribute to children’s long-term success. In response to the question, the authors call us to work collaboratively and communicate with families, both of which have a direct connection to summer reading. By adopting a team approach that involves interaction with families, we can unite to ameliorate summer reading setback and champion children’s ongoing literacy learning.

"I like pizza, but remember you got put in a crate for eating Dad's pizza."

"That's not why I got in trouble and it's not a pizza party!" said Bella.  
"Come on. We have to hurry. We can't be late."

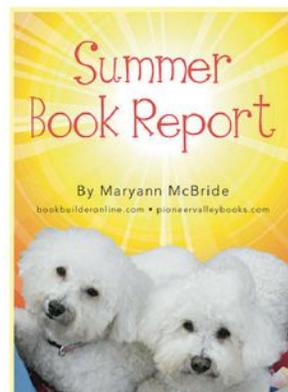


<http://bookbuilderonline.com/books/the-celebration/builds/new>

Dear Shay,

We are proud of you and we hope you enjoyed reading books especially about us. Have a great school year and keep reading.

Your Friends,  
Bella and Rosie



<http://bookbuilderonline.com/books/summer-book-report/builds/new>

"I hope Griff read about cool high-speed trains or nasty spider that use sticky webs made out of silk to catch their prey," said Bella.  
"I'd like to hear about that!"



*Sharing custom-made text is a great way to celebrate a summer reading project. Personalized books like these can be created and printed using a free online service, like this one provided by Pioneer Valley Books.*

Endnote:  
Assistance for summer reading programs

- NEA Student Achievement Grants — \$2,000–\$5,000  
February 1, June 1, October 15 deadlines  
<http://www.neafoundation.org/pages/nea-student-achievement-grants/>
- Target — \$2,000; April 30 deadline  
<https://corporate.target.com/corporate-responsibility/grants/early-childhood-reading-grants/>
- Donors Choose — Amount varies; ongoing  
<http://www.donorschoose.org/about>
- First Book — Provides books; ongoing  
[www.firstbook.org](http://www.firstbook.org)

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# Valuable planning tools for administrators, coaches, teachers, and others who guide literacy learning



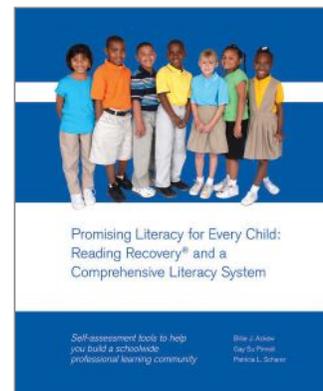
## *Promising Literacy for Every Child: Reading Recovery and a Comprehensive Literacy System*

Written by Billie J. Askew, Gay Su Pinnell, and Patricia L. Scharer

The guide connects self-assessment tools with the strengths of Reading Recovery-trained teachers to build professional learning communities that support high-quality literacy instruction.

Self assessment and planning forms to guide literacy teams or school staff in-service training (interactive forms also online)

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“A learning community shares and reflects on practice to enhance the learning of both students and teachers.”

# Deepening the Home-School Connection: Collaborating with Diverse Families to Accelerate Student Learning

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As reading interventionists, we often have the difficult tasks of telling parents that their children need extra help learning to read and write, and requesting their help at home.

This conversation can be particularly challenging when the parents and teacher do not speak the same language. Communicating with parents is critical, however, as research indicates that a positive relationship exists between home support for literacy activities and students' school achievement levels (Darling & Westberg, 2004; Lareau, 1989).

In this article, we first address two perspectives on working with parents: the deficit model, which looks at families' perceived weaknesses, and the sociocultural model, which focuses on strengths. We discuss how to support children's transition from home to school by focusing on cultural and linguistic strengths, and we suggest that considering the parents' perspective is key in home-school communication. We then share effective practices that teachers from across the country use to work collaboratively with families of all students at the beginning of the Reading Recovery<sup>®</sup> lesson series, throughout lessons and at the end of the year. The practices described can be used with all students, regardless of race, gender, culture, or home language, but we focus on English learners (ELs) because language can be perceived as an added barrier to communication and because we have

many years of experience successfully working with EL families. We use the terms *parents* and *families* to denote guardians, caretakers, and people close to the child.

## Building on Students' Strengths

Home-school literacy programs often stem from one of two perspectives: a deficit model or a sociocultural perspective. A deficit model focuses on what is lacking in children's homes from an academic perspective, such as a variety of reading materials. Home-school partnerships that are based on the deficit model may try to "fix the problem" at home rather than respect the home culture. Deficit model-based partnerships are often characterized by one-way communication from the school to the home, so parents' input may not be sought (Dudley-Marling, 2009). In addition to showing a lack of respect for families' home lives, one-directional communication (school to home) also diminishes the impact of parents' help at home, as the parents may not buy into what they are being asked to do (Paratore, Krol-Sinclair, Páez, & Paratore Bock, 2010). For example, some Native American cultures have quiet homes without a lot of talk (Plank, 1994). Telling parents to increase the amount of talk at home would contradict their culture and therefore would not be a respectful approach to partnering with the family.

In contrast, a sociocultural perspective builds on families' cultures—including their use of talk and literacy in the home—in order to transition to academic literacy (Dudley-Marling, 2009). This perspective reflects the principles of Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura (DLL) that (a) value what students know and can do, and (b) build on the students' abilities and home language to bridge to school literacy. For example, if a family member reads the news every day, he could read a brief article aloud or ask the child to identify known letters or words. Interventions that build on what is already part of the family's normal routines and culture are easier to implement and more likely to last (Paratore et al., 2010).

## Children's Transition from Home to School

How do teachers approach home-school relationships through a sociocultural perspective? One way is to build on the family's "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992, p. 139). Before children arrive at school they have already learned a lot about their world and their home language from parents, preschools, and other important people in their lives (Clay, 1991, 1998). However, some children's home learning may not correspond well with the content or expectations of school (Compton-Lilly, 2007, 2009; Moll et al., 1992; Paratore et al., 2010; Purcell-Gates, 1996). For example, Purcell-Gates found that low-income families primarily read food containers such as milk cartons and cereal boxes, the TV guide, and parts of the newspaper such as adver-

tisements and coupons. The families often wrote shopping lists and to-do lists. The genres of text Purcell-Gates found in the low-income homes she studied are typically not introduced in school in the first few years; consequently there may be a disconnect between what children experience as reading and writing in school versus at home.

Just as Purcell-Gates (1996) found that families of low-income students practiced literacy in ways that differed from schools, Moll et al. (1992) and Compton-Lilly (2007) found that working-class Latino families had knowledge and resources that could be strategically incorporated into classrooms. Using students' home knowledge sources validates their culture and allows them to focus on new conceptual learning.

Clay (2005a) echoes Moll et al.'s (1992) concept of funds of knowledge, stating this:

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 and who are lucky to be learning a second language while they are young and active language learners. It is surprising how rapid their progress can be. (p. 6)

It is the teacher's responsibility to help children use what they know to learn to read and write. Reading Recovery/DLL teachers may use students' funds of knowledge when composing a story, making an alphabet book, or orienting a student to

a new book. Teaching with content that is familiar to the child, or using the known to get to new, can help to accelerate the student's learning (Clay, 1998, 2005b).

## Considering the Parents' Perspective

Parent-teacher communication can be challenging even when parents are English speakers and well-versed in school systems. For example, Purcell-Gates and Strickland (2005) share Purcell-Gates' experience as a mother of a child being evaluated for special education. Despite her experience as a special education teacher and as a director of two university-based literacy centers—including one at Harvard University—Purcell-Gates "unwillingly but inevitably fell into the role of an observer and a mother of the child being talked about by others" (p. 277). Purcell-Gates spoke the same language as the teachers, including the specific language of special education, but still felt marginalized at the meeting. Her personal example sheds light on how schools' interactions can unintentionally marginalize parents, especially when children are not doing well in school.

We have found that some parents may feel nervous or defensive when a child is identified as needing Reading Recovery or DLL. Clay (1991) reminds us that the child is a reflection of his home, so some parents may feel judged rather than appreciated based on their child's school performance:

The school represents external evaluation; opportunities for success and failure ... *Beliefs and practices which are followed in the home will come under the scrutiny*

*and challenge of community norms and values* [italics added for emphasis]. The personal hopes and aspirations which parents have for their children now will be tempered by the reality of performance. (p. 55)

Parents may be concerned about how teachers perceive their child's academics (Clay, 1991) or behavior (Doyle & Zhang, 2011). Parents from different cultures, whose norms and values may not correspond to those of the school, may be particularly susceptible to the school's scrutiny (Compton-Lilly, 2007).

Sensitivity to parents' feelings may facilitate more-collaborative parent-teacher relationships. For example, "Your child is reading below grade level and needs extra help," is different than a more supportive, "Your child has a lot of strengths. I understand that you're concerned about her progress in reading. Let's discuss ways we can work together to support her." In our experience, simply acknowledging parents' feelings can open the door to collaborative communication about how to help the child be successful.

#### ***EL parent-teacher communication***

When teachers and parents do not share a language and culture, there are added complexities to parent-teacher communication. Teachers may unknowingly expect diverse parents to conform to mainstream expectations of which the parents may be unaware (Colombo, 2004). Some teachers who do not know the parent's language or culture may be hesitant to communicate (Tuten & Jensen, 2013). Typically, teachers

receive little training on how to collaborate with parents (Wright, Bouchard, Bosdotter, & Granberg, 2010), so they may not know how to implement effective parent communication systems (Jensen, 2011).

On the other hand, families who don't speak the same language as the school may not feel comfortable approaching teachers, and parents from certain cultures tend not to interfere with schooling (Valdés, 1996). For example, Valdés found that the Mexican immigrant families she studied had an immense respect for teachers and would not think themselves qualified to question the teacher. Instead, their role in "educando a los hijos" (educating the children) "included teaching children how to behave, how to act around others and also what was good and what was moral" (p. 125). Parents trusted the school to manage the academic aspect of their children's development.

Regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, language, or culture, all parents care about their children's success in school (Paratore et al., 2010). In fact, research has shown that immigrant families' main purpose in moving to the United States was for their children to have a better education and job prospects than were available in their home country (Dudley-Marling, 2009). Communicating with these families is one way to help them achieve these goals for their children. Below we share practices Reading Recovery and DLL teachers use to build partnerships with EL students' families in a variety of districts across the country, from New Jersey to Washington state.

## **Practices to Foster Home-School Partnerships**

### ***Getting started: Reaching out to families at the beginning of the lesson series***

Reaching out to parents at the beginning of the intervention sets the stage for working collaboratively to support student learning. Whether meeting with parents individually or in a group, positive initial communication is key.

**Bilingual parent-teacher individual conferences.** One way Reading Recovery/DLL teachers in Pasco School District, Washington, reach out to families is by holding a face-to-face, individual conference with each student's parent or guardian at the beginning of the intervention. The meeting takes place regardless of the language spoken at home. If the teacher does not speak the same language as the parent, she asks a parent liaison, DLL teacher, paraeducator, district translator, community member, or another colleague to translate. The families are grateful for the effort the teacher makes to meet and communicate with them, and the result is an open door of communication from the start of the lesson series. During the conference

- teachers discuss strengths they see in the student;
- teachers provide parents with a general overview of Reading Recovery/DLL and emphasize the importance of daily attendance;
- parents are encouraged to share information about their child during this meeting, including literacy activities already taking place in the home;

- homework is explained and modeled to avoid confusion at home; and
- parents are invited to observe a lesson.

The conferences provide families with the opportunity to see where the Reading Recovery/DLL lessons will take place and the materials the student will be using. They also highlight the importance of two-way communication and enable teachers to connect their instruction to what the child already knows and can do in the home. For example, children's books and lists were two genres most often found both in low-income homes and at school (Duke & Purcell-Gates, 2003). Building on these genres or other literacy activities used in the home might ease the child's transition to school literacy.

The initial face-to-face meeting with parents emphasizes the importance of working collaboratively to support the child's literacy progress and makes parents feel welcome in the school setting. Speaking with parents provides an opportunity for the teacher to dialogue about ways parents can best support their children. Teachers stress the vital role parents play in the education of their children and the many ways they can help at home based on the family's strengths. The conversation helps parents understand the Reading Recovery/DLL intervention, why their student was selected, and what they can expect along the journey. Most importantly, it begins to build a relationship between the Reading Recovery/DLL teacher and the parent, opening the door for future communication. Families often take the initiative to contact

teachers with concerns or questions after this initial communication. As Reading Recovery/DLL teachers, we can help ensure the success of the intervention by facilitating the home-school connection.

#### **Bilingual group meetings for Reading Recovery/DLL parents.**

Denver Public Schools had a similar strategy for opening dialogue between parents and Reading Recovery/DLL teachers. They held group meetings, with translators, for parents of DLL and Reading Recovery students when parents may already be at school to drop off or pick up their child. The teachers provided coffee, fruit, or sweets, and allowed parents time to network among themselves and share how they work with their children at home. This created a network of support among parents who may speak the same language. The teachers shared an overview of Reading Recovery/DLL, and spent the bulk of the time asking parents about their children to learn more about their interests and home literacy activities. Teachers used this information to select books that might appeal to the children or to help them compose an interesting sentence to write.

At a mid-year meeting, parents of first-round students demonstrated working with their child on the cut-up sentence and reading homework for second-round parents. This empowered the parents and provided them with a network of peers to whom they can talk about supporting their children's literacy growth. Colombo (2004) found that over time, parents help other parents get better at working with their children at home.

Whether meeting with parents individually or in groups, the initial conversation can set the stage for a productive, collaborative relationship.

#### *Supporting families' work at home*

Once productive, collaborative relationships have been established with parents, we have found that ongoing communication supports families. Three creative ways of continuing to support families as they begin working more intentionally with their child around literacy are using video, making books to be read and illustrated at home, and asking parents to share family and cultural stories with children.

**Building a shared understanding of reading through video demonstration.** Madison Metropolitan School District in Wisconsin began its work with parents through inquiry. They were curious about how technology might help build a shared understanding of reading among parents and teachers of EL students. Reading Recovery and DLL teachers sought out parent beliefs about reading through a home visit, conference, or a phone call. Monolingual teachers created a short survey that was translated and sent home. Questions asked included these:

- What are your hopes for your child as a reader?
- What is your approach to teaching reading at home?
- How can the child's strengths be built upon in Reading Recovery/DLL?
- How might technology help you help your child?

Almost unanimously, parents of ELs expressed the importance of their child becoming a proficient reader and identified reading as being the means to greater career opportunities. While many parents included reading comprehension in their definition of reading, when asked about how they help their children most parents only spoke about the need to “sound it out” or “di la primera sílaba” (“say the first syllable”). This finding corroborates Compton-Lilly’s (2005) study which found “sounding it out” to be a “pervasive cultural model of reading” (p. 441) among parents of her urban first-grade students in Reading Recovery. While the Reading Recovery/DLL teachers in Madison agreed with parents that attending to visual information is important, they suggested that students develop multiple strategies for solving words in text in order to develop a more-balanced processing system.

Madison teachers decided to use video to share with the EL parents the strategy the child was working on in lessons. In one case, a Reading Recovery teacher filmed her student, Miguel, performing a slow check of a word in order to confirm his attempt. She sent the clip through text messaging to the cell phone of the parent. When Miguel returned home from school that day, he was able to explain in Spanish how he runs his finger slowly under the word in order to check to see if the word looks right. Miguel’s mom learned a new way to support her child, Miguel’s confidence increased, and his learning solidified. In addition, Miguel’s mother feels that reading at home is fun for them as a mother and son because they learn together. She said she never imagined it would be this way.

In another case, a DLL teacher engaged in conversations with the mother of her student, José, about the many things that José can do to help himself when he gets stuck in his reading. The teacher taped a few minutes of her lessons with José over a series of days. In these lessons, the teacher prompted José to integrate multiple sources by rereading and sampling the first part of the word. The teacher created a DVD of the clips for José to take home and present to his family. When asked how José’s mom felt about her child’s reading, she responded, “I noticed how much more quickly he figured out the new words when he went back and reread parts of the story. . . . There have been a few times when he has been reading at home and we’ve noticed that he does go back and rereads on his own!” In this example, parent and teacher developed a shared understanding of reading support, and José could apply his reading strategy in both school and home contexts.

Madison teachers knew the value of demonstrations over talk from Clay (2005b), and applied this concept to their work with both English-speaking and non-English-speaking families. Video demonstrations for parents align with research by Padak and Rasinski (2006) who recommend using clear demonstrations with parents. In addition, video both builds on the child’s strengths and is considerate of the parents’ feelings as it is an example of the child doing something well.

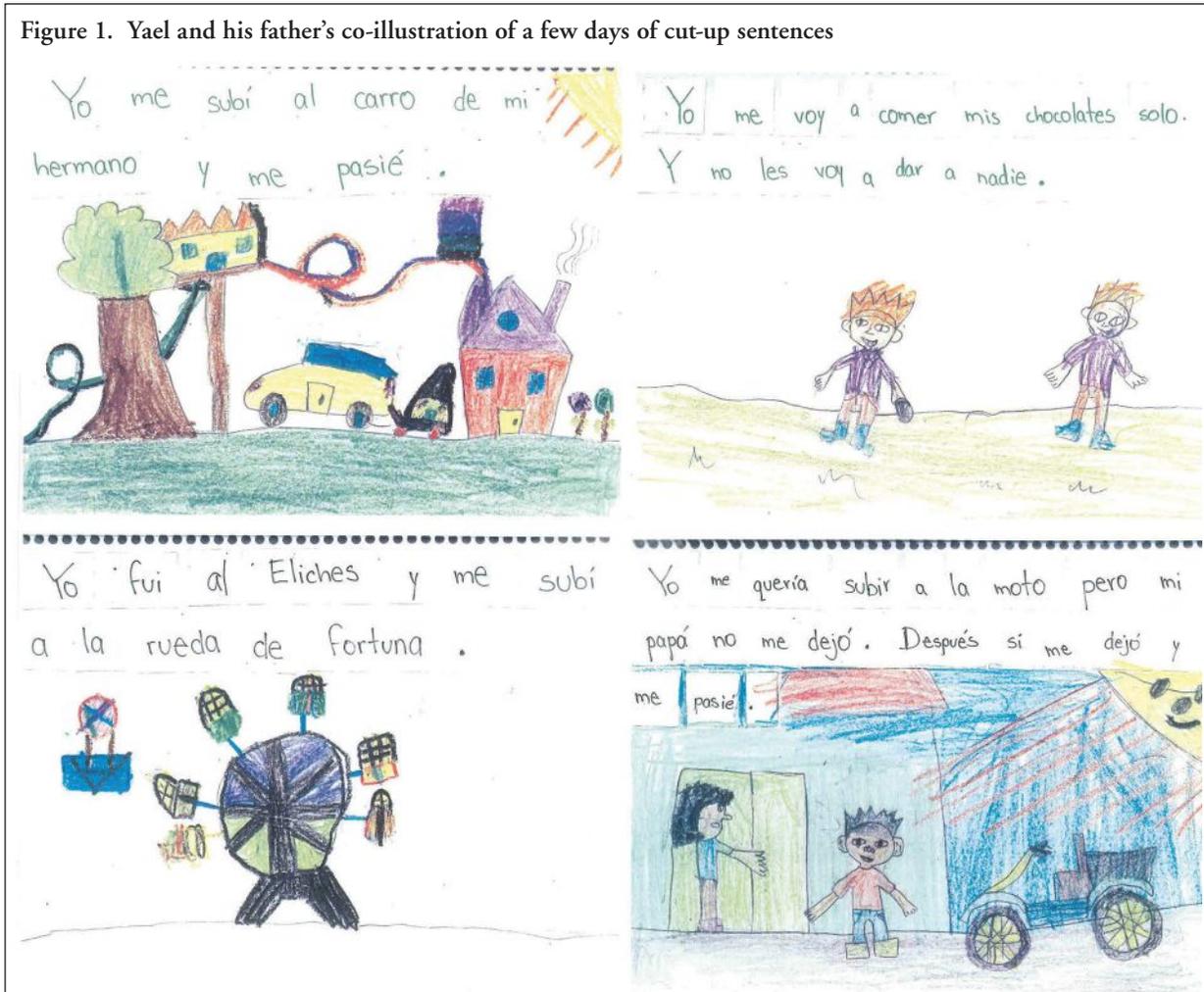
**Making books for home with the cut-up sentence.** The writing and cut-up sentence homework component of the Reading Recovery/DLL lesson is a low-tech way to connect school to home and builds on children’s funds

of knowledge, as the stories come from their lives and experiences. After *Roaming Around the Known*, teachers invite parents to observe a lesson and demonstrate the homework tasks of reading books and sentence reconstruction. Then Reading Recovery/DLL teachers extend their daily “stories” across a week. After the child has reconstructed the stories, teachers type them and send them home in a book format to be co-illustrated by the child and family member. Teachers in Denver Public Schools have found this to be a motivating experience for emergent readers. An added benefit is that these illustrated books become part of home or classroom libraries, allowing struggling students to join the literacy club in the classroom.

Practices such as making books out of the child’s cut-up sentences follow Padak and Rasinski’s (2006) guidelines for home-school partnerships for emergent readers, such as these:

- Set goals and use effective, research-proven strategies that make the most of families’ precious time.
- Train parents, as communication and support increases the efficacy of the intervention.
- Demonstrate what you want parents to do and opportunities for parents to ask questions.
- Ensure that home activities are easy, enjoyable, consistent and brief (10–15 minutes) so that routines can be easily maintained.
- Provide ways for parents to document activities that can help teachers and parents to assess effectiveness and adapt the parent-child collaborative work accordingly.

Figure 1. Yael and his father's co-illustration of a few days of cut-up sentences



Parents have also extended the cut-up sentence task. Yael's father extended the cut-up sentence homework by illustrating the messages with his son, scaffolding the task and transferring it to his son (see Figure 1).

**Oral language development in the home language.** Just as the cut-up sentences (the child's stories written down) are used for reading practice, parents' oral stories can also be used to support language and literacy development. Clay (1998) identified the importance of valuing and developing students' home language, stating, "It is important that children

develop a rich control of their home language as their first language, even when the language of the school is English; schools can build from there" (p. 11). Some children may require a series of lessons that pays special attention to their oral language development regardless of their home language or the language of instruction. DLL teachers from Jersey City Public Schools in New Jersey determined that the students' oral language was an untapped and underdeveloped resource. Escamilla, Andrade, Basurto, and Ruiz (1996) stated:

The best preparation for literacy learning is learning to talk and having many opportunities to talk. For Spanish-speaking students, learning to talk has meant learning to talk in Spanish, and it makes sense for schools to continue to encourage these children to speak and develop Spanish and to use Spanish as their springboard to literacy. (p. 26)

Knowing that language is children's primary emergent literacy resource, DLL teachers met with parents to map out a collaborative plan to foster students' oral language. The plan was

simple: Tell your child *los cuentos de su niñez*, the stories of your childhood. Some parents felt intimidated by the request, but teachers were responsive to parents' feelings and together they decided to use traditional folktales as well as family stories. In addition to being easy and fun for parents and students, telling folktales provided opportunities for students to hear complex oral language structures and new vocabulary. Learning the traditional stories strengthened the child's cultural identity, as parents tapped into their childhood memories and shared stories with deep cultural significance. It also built on the family's linguistic and cultural funds of knowledge, as their stories became academic content used in Reading Recovery/DLL lessons.

A similar at-home strategy to develop the native language is shared book reading in the family's language. Reading in any language provides students with background and concepts that will support them in school. Hearing complex language structures and sophisticated vocabulary of books in their home language may also support English language learning (Paratore et al., 2010).

The DLL teachers supported the parents' work at home by planning for more student talk during the 30-minute DLL lesson, as Clay (2005b) notes that if storytelling is difficult for a child, it "will be an area of learning that early lessons must develop" (p. 162). Teachers limited their talk and prompted the child to produce more language. Often, the student would retell a folktale to their DLL teacher, requiring students to comprehend the story and convey it in an effective way. At first students

could only retell fragments of the story. Later they began to summarize stories from beginning to end. Both parents and teachers focused their efforts on activating the use of the Spanish language to facilitate Spanish reading, composing, and writing. While the focus was on Spanish oral language in Jersey City, this intervention could be used in any language.

Developing oral language in both the home language and English is important. Clay (2005b) reminds us that extending a child's language is critical and recommends writing down the child's longest utterance as it "provides a rough indication of this child's control over the structure or grammar of his oral language" (p. 68) at a certain point in time. Similarly, Escamilla et al. (1996) wrote, "Early intervention programs in Spanish guide children in their development of the universal aspects of literacy and provide a foundation that can later be used to develop literacy in English" (p. 26). With focused effort, well-prepared, culturally knowledgeable teachers can bridge dissimilarities between school and home.

*End-of-year celebrations and ongoing literacy support at home*

After a successful year of parent-teacher collaboration, how do you celebrate your joint success and help families continue their literate practices over the summer to ensure the student continues to progress? This last piece is critical, as "summer learning loss" (Allington et al., 2010, p. 412) can cause a child to regress several months in literacy performance. Two ideas used in a California district are to hold a year-end celebration and to inexpensively mail home new books weekly over the summer break.

**Reading Recovery and DLL student success celebration.** Belle Haven Elementary School in the Ravenswood City School District in California hosts an annual, year-end celebration to spotlight the children who were the most struggling readers at the beginning of the year and allow them to exhibit their newly acquired literacy skills. Teachers call all families of Reading Recovery/DLL students to personally invite them to attend. Bilingual administrative staff, paraprofessionals, and DLL teachers call families who do not speak English at home. School and community members such as librarians, district office staff, school board members, private philanthropists, paraprofessionals, and older siblings are also invited. Bilingual flyers are sent home with students (see Figure 2), but personal contact has been much more effective at ensuring attendance. The Reading Recovery/DLL teachers decorate the room with streamers and ensure there is sufficient seating.

On the special day, everyone gathers in a room at the school and Reading

Figure 2. Spanish translation of the year-end Reading Recovery/DLL celebration flyer



Recovery/DLL students read familiar books to the various guests. A child will read a book to his aunt, for example, and then move on and read a book to another adult, who may be the school principal or may be his classmate's mother. Light refreshments (fruit, cookies, and juice) are served. Toward the end of the hour-long celebration each student is called by name to receive a medal and the gift of free (donated) books.

The Reading Recovery/DLL celebration allows the children to feel special and show off their reading skills as they successfully read their familiar books to anyone and everyone who will listen. Parents appreciate the opportunity to celebrate their child's success, and it helps them to realize the enormous impact Reading Recovery/DLL has had on their child. The public celebration also provides Reading Recovery/DLL with positive visibility among the school and local community. It is a fun experience for everyone who attends — from the students and their families to the teachers and school board members.

**Summer reading program.** The Reading Recovery and DLL teachers at Belle Haven also implemented a summer reading program for Reading Recovery/DLL students. They purchased KEEP BOOKS, published by The Ohio State University, for 25 cents each and mailed one home to every Reading Recovery/DLL student weekly over the summer. The books were in the range of each child's independent reading level. The Reading Recovery/DLL teachers purchased the books, postage, and envelopes, and compiled the mailings before the end of school so no work was needed over the summer break. One of the

teachers simply dropped a few envelopes in the mail once a week over the summer.

Each mailing contained a bilingual (Spanish/English) flyer, translated to Spanish by a DLL teacher. The flyers had different tips for how parents could work with their children over the summer, such as

- reading signs when you're in the car;
- reading about places you or your child might want to go;
- reading to your child in any language;
- encouraging kids to look at pictures and predict what might happen next;
- visiting the public library and allowing the child pick out books; and
- allowing your child to write a letter to a family member or write in a journal, saying words slowly and writing the sounds they hear.

The total cost to eliminate the summer reading slump for 24 Reading Recovery/DLL children was just over \$300. The first year the teachers wrote a grant to pay for their summer reading program. Due to the success of the summer reading program, the school funded the cost the following year.

In fact, the data were impressive! In the first year, about 80% of the students maintained or improved their reading level and avoided the dreaded summer slump. The next year, 95% of the students maintained or improved their reading levels. We attribute the increase to improved

communication with parents about the purpose and importance of the summer reading books before the summer break. Our data corroborates Allington et al.'s (2010) research, which shows that providing books to low-income students, whom "summer reading setback" (p. 412) most impacts, significantly reduces summer learning loss.

Parents appreciate the summer reading program because it solves the problem of students not having a variety of reading materials, and children are motivated to read their new books each week. Since the children are able to read the books independently, it is low stress for parents. It also reinforces the importance of reading over the summer to parents, students, teachers, and administrators.

## Conclusion

We have shared several practices Reading Recovery/DLL teachers use to engage families as partners. As you consider what you will do to further engage parents at your school, ask yourself these questions:

- Do your parent partnerships build on the families' strengths? Or are you wishing the parents had different strengths than they actually have?
- Are you considering the parents' perspective? Are you empowering and respecting parents? Or are you expecting parents to comply with school requests without explaining why or how?
- How are you getting feedback from parents? Or is the communication one-way only (from school to home)?

While the practices we shared can be used with all children, we urge teachers to be culturally sensitive when working with parents of English learners, whose background and perspective may be different from their own. If you have questions about working with English learners, RRCNA publishes a valuable resource, *Achieving Success with English Language Learners: Insights, Assessment, Instruction* (2009), edited by Cynthia Rogríguez-Eagle. RRCNA is also supporting teachers' work with parents by expanding the Resources for Families section of their website.

(<http://readingrecovery.org/reading-recovery/resources-for-parents>)

As Reading Recovery and DLL teachers, we have the enormous gift of significantly impacting students' lives on a daily basis. Sometimes we also positively impact the entire family, which more deeply impacts the students. A mother in Denver who observed her daughter's DLL lessons frequently told the teacher leader, "Yo aprendí a leer con usted y con Brenda" ("I learned to read with you and with Brenda"). Everyone is more successful when we work more closely with the home.

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*A Descubriendo la Lectura student works at home with her grandmother and younger sister.*

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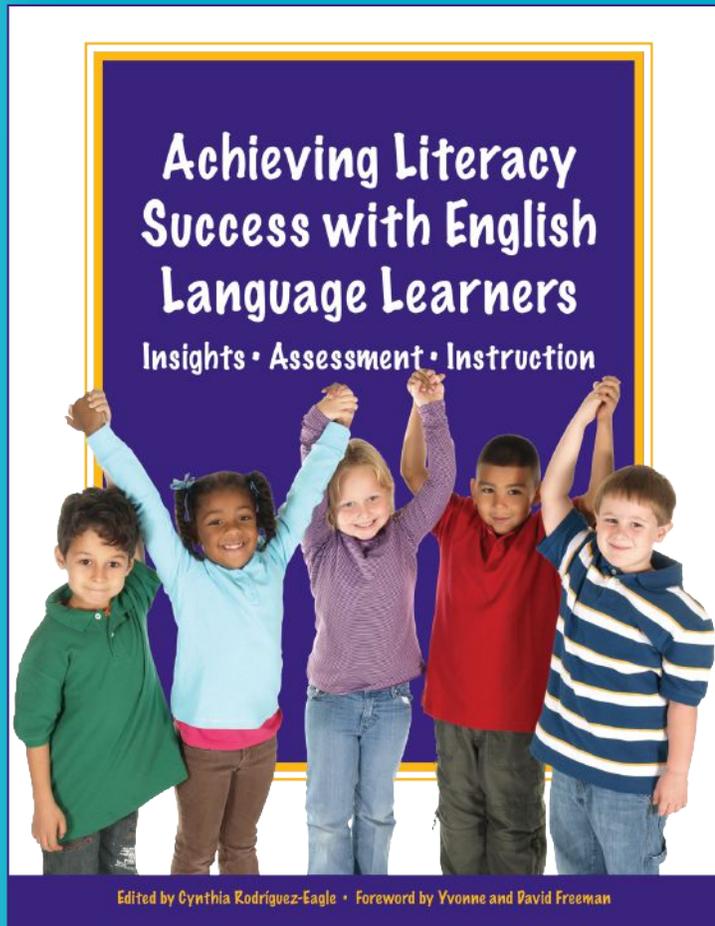


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# A Valuable Teaching Resource for Working with Diverse Families



This book combines the practical experience and insights of 16 authors who have successfully worked with ELL students from a variety of cultural backgrounds and settings. As authors tell their stories, you'll learn not only what works, but why!

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*Each chapter in this book gives teachers ideas for ways to help their ELLs achieve literacy success. The authors help teachers understand how to provide the kind of literacy instruction students need to comprehend and write texts in English. Teachers who follow the ideas presented in Achieving Literacy Success can move their ELLs beyond simply being word callers and help them become engaged readers and writers.*

— from the Foreword by Yvonne and David Freeman

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*President's Message*

# Moving Forward with Confidence

*RRCNA President Janet S. Behrend*

Andy Hargreaves, researcher, scholar, and presenter at several Reading Recovery conferences, co-authored *Uplifting Leadership: How Organizations, Teams, and Communities Raise Performance*. The term “uplifting” was chosen because it distilled the leadership quality that authors identified after a 7-year study of diverse organizations across the world. They define uplift as “the force that raises our performance, our spirits, and our communities to attain higher purposes and reach unexpected levels of achievement” among people and organizations.

While Reading Recovery educators are widely recognized for reaching unexpected achievement levels with individual hard-to-teach students, fewer people understand how Reading Recovery-trained teachers can lift literacy achievement throughout a school or district. Yet each of us can name multiple examples of uplifting leadership sparked by Reading Recovery educators. A few follow.

**2015 National Reading Recovery & K-6 Literacy Conference** This year’s School Administrators Institute held during the conference had record attendance! Among the sessions were presenters from Ohio, Wisconsin, and Minnesota where Reading Recovery educators played leadership roles in strengthening schoolwide comprehensive literacy. Special congratulations go to Minnesota presenters from Brainerd ISD #181; each of their six elementary schools received 2014 National Blue Ribbon Awards!

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

This 2014 guide, available from RRCNA, details how Reading Recovery educators can play an important role in building schoolwide professional learning communities. The self-assessment tools in the guide, and the new toolkits with organized professional development resources, are being used in many school districts this year. A third toolkit on text reading and comprehension is under development and we expect its release by the end of this school year.

***New emphasis on leadership training for Reading Recovery teachers***

At many Reading Recovery training sites, teacher leaders are working with Reading Recovery teachers to strengthen leadership skills.

For example, in North Little Rock School District, teacher leader Gretchen McCoy works with the Reading Recovery teachers to build

professional development sessions that they can then present to the classroom teachers in their building.

Michelle Dorsey, Reading Recovery teacher at Seventh Street Elementary, said, “Last year, we met weekly with teachers in Grades K–3 and once a month I presented a PD topic that was selected by Gretchen using Reading Recovery teacher and classroom teacher input. Some of those included analyzing running records, fluency, working with words, helpful ways to prompt, change over time, and others,” Michelle said.

“Gretchen was an integral part of the literacy learning process at Seventh Street Elementary. Her presence and participation at our collaboration meetings bridged the gap between Reading Recovery, coaching, and classroom teaching. The staff became one team working towards the same goal. Teachers had a new trust in the team idea and apprehensiveness



*Gretchen McCoy, a teacher leader in Arkansas, works with Reading Recovery teachers in North Little Rock to build professional development sessions that they can present to classroom teachers in their buildings.*

dissipated as we all learned and implemented new ideas. Gretchen's role was multifaceted as she served as a teacher leader, mentor, colleague, and peer. Teachers began asking more questions, making reflections, and asking for suggestions to help struggling learners. Everyone gained valuable knowledge that enriched student learning throughout this series of collaborations!"

**2015 Teacher Leader Institute & Leadership Academy** This year's conference, June 23–26 in Kansas City, MO, offers examples of how several training sites have worked with Reading Recovery teachers to

expand outreach and increase collaboration to support schoolwide comprehensive literacy. Reading Recovery teacher leaders, trainers, and literacy team members including administrators, coaches, and language arts directors will attend. Richard Allington, keynote speaker, will address this question: We could teach every child to read, but will we?

All of these events and initiatives illustrate an expanded focus on leadership. We can move forward with confidence because we are supported by Reading Recovery's sound theoretical and scientific base. And for those of us who knew Marie

Clay, she was THE shining example of uplifting leadership.

Hargreaves and his colleagues close their study with these words: "When we eventually step aside and complete our final journey, the good works and the good work should still go on. Our life's work is to help raise others up — our children, our colleagues, and our communities. This becomes our legacy."

Hargreaves, A., Boyle, A., & Harris, A. (2014). *Uplifting leadership: How organizations, teams, and communities raise performance*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.



## Join us in Kansas City for the 2015 Teacher Leader Institute & Leadership Academy

June 23-26 at the Westin Kansas City at Crown Center, Missouri

### *Leadership That Supports Collaboration and Leadership*

- Sessions focused on teaching and learning, leadership and outreach, and collaboration
- IDEC and i3 updates • Session for new teacher leaders • Session for DLL teacher leaders

#### WHO SHOULD ATTEND

- Required professional development for Reading Recovery teacher leaders
- Reading Recovery trainers
- School literacy teams – Reading Recovery site coordinators and teachers
  - Administrators – principals, superintendents and board members
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  - Literacy coaches, reading specialists, and special education professionals
  - Curriculum and language arts specialists



**Keynote Speaker**  
**Richard Allington**

Professor of literacy studies at the University of Tennessee and past president of the International Reading Association and the Literacy Research Association

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*Executive Director's Message*

# What Now?

*RRCNA Executive Director Jady Johnson*

The Reading Recovery community has inherited a rich legacy. No other literacy intervention has the strong theory base of Marie Clay and the definitive research base accepted by the What Works Clearinghouse. Our research evidence allowed Reading Recovery to earn the \$45.6 million Investing in Innovation (i3) Scale-Up Grant awarded in 2010 by the U.S. Department of Education. The i3 grant paid for training more than 3,700 new Reading Recovery teachers over the past 5 years.

The i3 initiative funded training for Reading Recovery teachers at a time when teacher expertise is increasingly recognized as the key factor in student success. Additional benefits of this grant are the independent research studies published by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE). These studies confirm and expand the knowledge we gained from earlier research. As the grant ends this spring, we can look forward to a third and final CPRE report on what is believed to be the largest educational research study ever conducted.

It's not surprising that as the i3 grant ends, many in the Reading Recovery community are asking, "What now?" There are still huge numbers of students and schools that need Reading Recovery. We still face the challenges of informing administrators and decision makers about Reading Recovery and helping them understand the value a Reading Recovery-trained teacher brings to their school. We still have critics who espouse a "phonics first" approach.

What we need to do now is to keep doing what we know is right. As we carry on, we have even more certainty of the benefits Reading Recovery brings to students, schools, and teachers. We must continue to share the evidence with funders and decision makers.

Funding for training and implementation have always included a mix of federal, state, and local dollars. Although the i3 grant infused funds for training in the past 5 years, for the 25 preceding years school districts found a way to fund training and professional development for the

benefit of their students. As we celebrate Reading Recovery's 30th anniversary, many school districts have sustained their implementation for 10, 15, and 20-plus years. Building that kind of sustained support requires constant outreach and team building.

One initiative being piloted now by the RRCNA Board—Leadership Awareness Programs—shows promise for building support. It is a strong person-to-person initiative to introduce local leaders to Reading Recovery. You can read more about this effort on page 86.

I encourage you to use the resources for outreach in the Members Only Resource Center on the RRCNA website and to call on us if there are additional resources we can create to help you in your efforts. And, if you are like many others who believe that RRCNA's work is crucial in keeping Reading Recovery strong in the U.S. and Canada, please maintain your membership and encourage your colleagues to do the same!



## RRCNA Board of Directors Election Results

*We are pleased to share results of the recent election for terms beginning July 1, 2015.*



**Vice President  
Janice Van Dyke**

Trainer  
Canadian Institute of  
Reading Recovery



**Secretary  
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Teacher Leader  
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**Teacher Leader  
Representative  
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Jackson Independent  
School District, MI



**Site Coordinator  
Representative  
Davis Eidahl**

Ottumwa Community  
School District, IA

## Friend-Raising Events Showcase Reading Recovery

When RRCNA Board members and supporters gather, talk often turns to the need to raise awareness, money, and increased support for Reading Recovery and RRCNA. This winter, RRCNA leadership in three communities turned that talk into action when they invited friends and community leaders to attend Leadership Awareness Programs and learn more about Reading Recovery. The hosts of the events believe the initial response is promising, particularly for Reading Recovery schools and districts.

While each gathering and setting was unique, all had common elements. The invitation letter instructed people to “leave their checkbooks at home” because the intent was for invitees to learn more about Reading Recovery. Each event included 12–20 people who heard a 20-minute presentation to kick off a broader discussion.

Gay Su Pinnell and Pat Scharer, OSU Reading Recovery trainers, hosted the first event at Pinnell’s home. The Worthington Arts Center was the location of the second Columbus area event organized by Kellie Ehlers, Reading Recovery teacher and Board member, and local resident Lori Overmeyer. The third event was hosted by RRCNA Development Committee Chair Cathy Duvall and Board member Mary Jackson in



*Parents of former Reading Recovery students shared their children’s experiences and progress during and after lessons with attendees at the Leadership Awareness Program in Worthington, OH. Pictured here left-to-right are Susan Hilbert, Reading Recovery teacher Kellie Ehlers, Jody Schomaker, Frederica Stupka, and Larry Stupka.*

Houston. In all cases, a diverse group of attendees included individuals such as foundation representatives, attorneys, real estate agents, university faculty, executives of nonprofit organizations serving the needs of young people, and current and former school board members.

“These people came to the table with a deep understanding of the impact literacy has on quality of life for a community,” Jackson said. “Their ‘listening ear’ was with us as we discussed how Reading Recovery had benefitted children locally and nationally. As a result of our meet-

ing, their positive voice for Reading Recovery is already being heard in the community.”

RRCNA Executive Director Jady Johnson also previewed the session with deans from the Reading Recovery university training centers. Their interest is in using the presentation for college of education faculty meetings and with various advisory boards the college convenes.

Please contact Johnson for additional information about the Leadership Awareness Programs.



*These are just a few of the slides from the 20-minute PowerPoint presentation to introduce Reading Recovery and the work of the Council.*

# Pioneer Valley Rallies Colleagues to Create Expansion Grants for UTCs

What happens when you retire from Reading Recovery? For many former Reading Recovery-trained teachers and teacher leaders, leaving their school-based positions means continuing to use knowledge and skills on behalf of children and teachers. Consider Michele Dufresne, former Massachusetts teacher leader and the publisher of Pioneer Valley Books. She not only writes and publishes books for Reading Recovery and classroom use; she still makes time to volunteer in Florida schools 2 days a week.

“Unfortunately, these are schools without Reading Recovery,” Michele said. “It’s frustrating to see children that need Reading Recovery and don’t have that help available. I do what I can in the time available

and have donated books for their classrooms, too.”

In this second career, Michele has also contributed time and dollars to RRCNA to fund teacher leader scholarships and make funds available to help support and expand Reading Recovery. This past fall, she approached RRCNA with another expansion idea. In honor of Reading Recovery’s 30th Anniversary in North America, Michele decided to donate \$30,000 to make 30 teacher training scholarships available for university training centers to support schools training new (not replacement) Reading Recovery teachers.

Michele contacted other RRCNA associate members who supply Reading Recovery’s little books and other

teaching products, and two quickly agreed to also fund expansion grants. Kaeden Books headed by Craig Urmstom and his wife, Kathleen, a former Reading Recovery teacher, agreed to donate \$10,000 for 10 teacher training scholarships. SongLake Books, owned by former Reading Recovery teacher Carol Levine, donated \$5,000 for 5 teacher training scholarships.

Five other publishers also agreed to donate books and teaching resources to create starter sets for the 45 new teachers-in-training. In addition to Pioneer Valley and Kaeden, publishers providing starter sets are Blueberry Hill Books, MaryRuth Books, Reading Reading Books, Resources for Reading, and Richard C. Owen Publishers.

## Congratulations to the 2015–2016 Expansion Grant Recipients



**Georgia State University**  
Gwinnett County Public Schools

**Oakland University**  
Detroit Public Schools  
Grand Blanc Community Schools  
Walton Charter Academy



**The Ohio State University**  
Washington DC Public Schools



**National Louis University**  
School District of Waukesha  
North Pekin Marquette Heights District 102

# Scholarship and Grant Recipients Attend National Conference

Five teacher leaders in five states are in training thanks to generous donors whose contributions totaled \$60,000. Teacher Leader Scholarships are granted to schools that have demonstrated a commitment to continue Reading Recovery and have selected an excellent teacher leader candidate.



## Hameray Publishing Group and the Yuen Family Foundation Scholarships

The Hameray Publishing Group is dedicated to publishing innovative literacy materials for today's educators. The Yuen Family Foundation—a private charitable organization—in conjunction with Hameray Publishing Group contributed \$35,000 to fund three teacher leader scholarships in three states. Pictured are (standing left-to-right) **Laura Juarez Codicetti**, San Francisco Unified School District, San Francisco, CA, training at Saint Mary's College; **Jennifer Batchellor**, Anderson County Schools, Clinton, TN, training at Georgia State University; and **Carla Bauer-Gonzalez**, School District of Waukesha, Waukesha, WI, training at National Louis University; with Ray and Christine Yuen of Hameray Publishing Group.



## Pioneer Valley Books Scholarship

Pioneer Valley Books offers a wide variety of fiction and nonfiction books and other resources at affordable prices for Reading Recovery, primary classroom, and literacy teachers. Pioneer Valley Books funded one \$15,000 teacher leader scholarship. Pictured with Michele Dufresne (left) of Pioneer Valley Books is **Andrea Overton**, Anderson School District Five, Anderson, SC, training at Clemson University.



## Reading Recovery Teacher Leaders Scholarship

Reading Recovery teacher leaders raised \$10,000 during a 2-year campaign to fund a 30th Anniversary teacher leader scholarship. **Nichole Kuhn**, Topeka Public Schools USD 501, Topeka, KS, training at Emporia State University, is pictured here with RRCNA Development Committee Chair Cathleen Duvall (left).



**The Geri Stone Memorial Fund** was established by family and friends in memory of Geri Stone's leadership and work as a Michigan Reading Recovery teacher leader. Grants and scholarships are awarded to Reading Recovery professionals to help offset the cost of training, professional development, or other literacy efforts. Recipients are (left to right) **Julie Alley**, Port Huron Area School District, Port Huron, MI; **Sarah Pubal**, Columbus City Schools, Columbus, OH; **Jaime Dawson**, Spartanburg District 3, Cowpens, SC; and (not pictured) Kasie Allen, Lapeer Community Schools, Lapeer, MI.



**The Minnesota Professional Development Grant** was established in memory of Reading Recovery teacher leader, Diane Holum. This award honors her commitment and passion for literacy and learning. Recipient **Kelly Seibert**, Maple Lake #881, Maple Lake, MN is pictured with Tonya Person (left) representing the fund.



**Tenyo Family Foundation** provided 10 National Conference grants. The Foundation was founded by the late Sophie Tenyo to support charitable, religious, scientific, literary, and educational endeavors for the public welfare and well-being of mankind. Recipients are (left to right, standing) **Cynthia Craft**, San Diego Unified School District, San Diego, CA; **Angela Hobson**, Hanover County Public Schools, Ashland, VA; **Syndie Haaland**, Kingston City Schools, Kingston, NY; **Mary Collins**, Papillion-La Vista School District, La Vista, NE; **Lisa Silva**, Beaufort County School District, Chocowinity, NC; (seated) **Molly Sutherland**, San Juan Unified School District, Sacramento, CA; **Sharon Brown**, Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, KY; Patti Maier, representing the Tenyo Family Foundation; **Jamie Nelson**, North Mahaska Consolidated School District, New Sharon, IA; **Kathryn Moll-McAllister**, Brainerd Public Schools ISD 181, Brainerd, MN; and (not pictured) Paula du Vair, DC Everest School District, Mosinee, WI.



**SongLake Books** hand selects the best books from the best companies and organizes them into leveled book sets for guided reading and Reading Recovery. Book collections include fiction and nonfiction selections with a variety of genres at each level and are culturally diverse and gender fair. The grant recipient is **Karen Maruoka**, San Francisco Unified School District, San Francisco, CA pictured with Carol Levine (left) of SongLake Books.



**KEEP BOOKS** are designed as a school/home book program that addresses the need for inexpensive but interesting books for young children to read at home. Pictured are grant recipients **Stephanie Crowe**, Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, KY; and **Mary Foster**, Topeka Unified School District 501, Topeka, KS; with Patricia Scharer (seated) representing KEEP BOOKS.



**Reading Reading Books, LLC** is an educational publisher located in Reading, PA. They offer a variety of fiction and nonfiction leveled books specifically designed for beginning readers. Pictured with Matt Bonnell of Reading Reading Books is grant recipient **Tara Kachelriess**, Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools, Scotch Plains, NJ.

Grant opportunities for the 2015–2016 year and for the 2016 National Conference will be posted on the Scholarships & Grants page of the RRCNA website later this summer.

## Hameray and Authors Donate Royalties from Kaleidoscope Collection Sales

Some gifts keep on giving! For the fourth year since publication, the Hameray Publishing Group and authors of its Kaleidoscope Collection contributed a portion of their sales revenue and royalties to RRCNA. Hameray President Kevin Yuen and his parents, Ray and Christine Yuen, presented a check for \$9,694.44 to RRCNA Executive Director Jady Johnson during the National Conference.



The Kaleidoscope Collection is comprised of 150 titles—leveled readers written by a team of experienced Reading Recovery teachers, teacher leaders, literacy coaches, and reading specialists—all members of RRCNA. The series contains both fiction and nonfiction books. Children’s author Joy Cowley provides editorial guidance for the series that has now generated more than \$35,000 in royalties! Thanks go to Kaleidoscope authors and to the Yuen family who have a history of generous support for Reading Recovery!



*Cathy Duvall, chair of the Development Committee, urged Conference attendees to contribute to the Reading Recovery Fund. Gay Su Pinnell matched each contribution dollar for dollar.*

## Gay Su Pinnell Matches Contributions in Reading Recovery Fund Challenge

Although spring seemed far away at the 2015 National Reading Recovery & K-6 Literacy Conference, butterflies landed on nametags for many attendees who contributed to the Reading Recovery Fund. The butterfly, a symbol of transformation, has become the recognized symbol of the change that occurs in children, families, schools, and teachers through Reading Recovery’s power. The Reading Recovery Fund allows RRCNA to continue its work supporting education policy, adequate

school funding, meaningful professional development, ongoing research, and outreach to school decision makers.

This year, Gay Su Pinnell issued a challenge to donors, matching each dollar contributed. In all, donors contributed nearly \$15,000. That’s nearly \$30,000 for the 30th Anniversary! Thank you, Gay, and thank you to all generous donors who allow us to continue to support the transformation that occurs through Reading Recovery.

### *Teacher Leader Training Scholarship Opportunity Extends to Canadian Districts*

Hameray Publishing Group/Yuen Family Foundation is funding two \$15,000 teacher leader training scholarships for the 2015–2016 training year. The scholarship provides support for the initial training of teacher leaders at one of the Reading Recovery training centers. School districts located in the United States and in Canada are eligible to apply for the scholarship. Teacher leader candidates must be members of RRCNA. Deadline to apply is May 30. Application is online at the link below.

<http://readingrecovery.org/rrcna/philanthropy/scholarships>

## Looking for Donation Opportunities?

### Shop Amazon and Help Support RRCNA

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way you can support RRCNA every time you shop, at no cost to you. When you shop at AmazonSmile, you'll find the exact same low prices and selection with the added bonus that Amazon will donate a portion of the purchase price to your favorite charitable organization.

You use the same account on Amazon.com and AmazonSmile. Your shopping cart, Wish List, wedding or baby registry, and other account settings are also the same. On your first visit to AmazonSmile you will select a charitable organization to receive donations from eligible purchases before you begin shopping. Then, every eligible purchase you make will result in a donation.

The AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price from your eligible AmazonSmile purchases. The purchase price is the amount paid for the item minus any rebates and excluding shipping and handling,

gift-wrapping fees, taxes, or service charges. If you shop Amazon, go to [www.smile.amazon.com](http://www.smile.amazon.com) for additional information.

### Thrivent Clients Can Recommend Grants to RRCNA

Thrivent is a financial services organization that helps its 2.4 million clients be wise with money and live generously. In addition, Thrivent provides opportunities for members to be even more generous with organizations they value. The company maintains a member-advised charitable grant program, Thrivent Choice,<sup>®</sup> that gives eligible members the power to recommend where some of Thrivent's charitable outreach funds are distributed. RRCNA is a participating organization. If you are a Thrivent client and would like to learn more, visit their website at the link below.

<https://www.thrivent.com/making-a-difference/living-generously/thrivent-choice/>

## Everybody Wins at 2015 Annual Membership Meeting

One of the many high points of the national Conference is RRCNA's Annual Membership Meeting. This event offers an opportunity for hundreds of members to gather to hear updates on the work of RRCNA's committees, meet their elected representatives, and offer their feedback on RRCNA's membership benefits.

Board members Maryann McBride and Pat Scharer "emceed" the door prize drawing, providing lots of laughs and entertainment. Before the meeting was over, 30 lucky attendees like the one shown here won a variety of prizes including books, gift baskets, plush toys, jewelry, classroom resources, and more. As is the case every year, no attendee left empty-handed, thanks to the generosity of our Conference exhibitors.

A special thank you to the following companies whose donations helped to make this year's meeting a success: Abrams Learning Trends, Blueberry Hill Books, Candlewick Press, Capstone Classroom, Heinemann, Junior Library Guild, Kaeden Books, KEEP BOOKS, Lakeshore



Learning, Lego Education, MaryRuth Books, National Geographic, Pioneer Valley Books, Primary Concepts, Reading Matters, Really Good Stuff, Resources for Reading, Richard C. Owen Publishers, Short Tales Press, SongLake Books, Steps to Literacy, The Silver Lady, and WPS Publishing.

# Free Digital Resources: Take Advantage of All the Benefits of Your RRCNA Membership

Haven't had a chance to check out the Members Only Resource Center? Log in today and discover all the digital benefits of RRCNA membership, including these:

- **Reading Recovery Book List**  
with searchable title, level, and publisher; includes Descubriendo la Lectura titles. Print your own custom-sorted list or the entire Book List in PDF format.
- **Searchable Journal Archive**  
of full text articles from *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, *Literacy Teaching and Learning*, *Running Record*, *Network News*, and *Council Connections*
- **Listening Library**  
of over 75 audio recordings on topics of interest to Reading Recovery and early literacy professionals (downloadable mp3 files)
- **Copymaster Forms**  
for Observation Survey (English and Spanish) and Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals
- **Speaker Handouts**  
for many National Conference sessions over the past 5 years
- **Decision-Maker Resources**  
to help administrators understand the power of Reading Recovery



- **Parent and Family Materials**  
including template permission and exit letters, home-school communications forms, customizable text for newsletters, parent brochure, and more
- **Reading Recovery Photos**  
including professional images to use on your website, in presentations, and in print materials
- **New Learning Modules coming soon!**
- **New for Canadian Members!**  
Print book labels directly from RRCNA's website! Just download the PDF files, pop your blank labels into your printer, and click "print." Labels are sorted by book title or by level and will print 80 labels per page.

Visit [members.readingrecovery.org](http://members.readingrecovery.org) to access these and other resources. If you're new to the site, take a few seconds to set up your user account and profile. All you need is your member ID number, located on the address label on this journal.

## Don't forget the 30th Anniversary resources!

Logo, banner, poster, press release template, and more to help you celebrate our anniversary year. And please keep sending your stories and photos for the 30th Anniversary website!



## Celebrating the 30th Anniversary of Reading Recovery in North America 2015 National Reading Recovery & K-6 Literacy Conference

*This year's Conference joined literacy leaders and educators from around the world in a quest to better serve the literacy needs of kindergarten through sixth-grade students. Dedicated to improving literacy, attendees were abuzz with new understandings and the impact this would make on their teaching and their students' learning.*



*Our keynote speakers, who have made a significant impact on literacy in their lifetimes, ignited each day with their knowledge and inspiration.*

*ABOVE — Mary Fried (center) opened the conference with her keynote that demonstrated powerful teaching is grounded in research, theory, and history. She is pictured with Janet Behrend, RRCNA president and chair of the 2015 National Conference (left), and Jady Johnson, RRCNA executive director.*

*ABOVE RIGHT — Lucy Calkins affirmed Reading Recovery's contributions across the world during her keynote and challenged all educators to re-set their thinking to lift student achievement.*

*RIGHT — Joy Cowley, delighted us with the commemorative book she wrote in honor of our 30th anniversary. During her keynote, she shared her insights as an author and reminded us that pleasurable learning leads to pleasurable recall.*



***We can, therefore we must!** This memorable toast to the next 30 years was offered by Gay Su Pinnell and Patricia Scharer during the special anniversary reception that celebrated Reading Recovery's past, present, and future. Former student Graham Bowling, now a student at Miami (Ohio) University and Sharon Gilbert, teacher leader, shared the impact of Reading Recovery on Graham's life. His story deeply touched and inspired us.*



*The School Administrators Institute had the highest attendance ever! It provided administrators from around the country the opportunity to share issues and ideas for solutions. The Institute opened with a session on core values led by Gay Su Pinnell and Patrick Callaghan and his district's leadership team, shown above.*



*The 2015 National Conference offered 115 sessions that balanced theory with practice, the newest books and educational tools in the exhibit hall, and a wealth of sharing.*



*What attendees are saying ...*

*I attend the conference every year, not only to learn new approaches and strategies, but also to re-center. I always leave with renewed resolve to stay true to best practice in the face of increasing testing demands.*

*Every year I come away with a challenge to evaluate my teaching, and every year I do. I am amazed at how this one conference can change my teaching.*

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# The Last Word

*Please enjoy these gems from previous issues.*

## Connecting to Text!

*Kay Emmons, San Luis Obispo, California  
Spring 2003*

I was working with one of my students in familiar reading. Kayla was reading *I'm King of the Mountain*. When we got to the part about the cow going down the road, Kayla looked up at me and asked, "Shouldn't that say, 'I'm queen of the mountain'?" Pretty good thinking!

## Using Analogy!

*Emily Jordan, West Bend, Wisconsin  
Fall 2003*

I had just begun *Roaming Around the Known* with Hannah, and I was introducing her to a book that used the word *mum* instead of *mom*. Knowing that this could be confusing for her since she knew *mom*, I explained to Hannah that some people use *mum* instead of *mom*. Hannah listened to my explanation, then asked, "So do they call their dads *duds*?"

## More Important Learning?

*Linda Rak, Lydonville, New York  
Fall 2004*

The mother of one of my Reading Recovery children had just observed a very successful lesson with him. As the child was leaving the room, his mother sighed heavily and said, "Come back here and let me tie your shoes. You *really* need to learn how to tie these things." "Yeah, I know," replied the child, "but I can read!"

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 Manager Vicki Fox: [vfox@readingrecovery.org](mailto:vfox@readingrecovery.org)

## Out of the Mouths...

*Jan Kuennig, DoDDS, Stuttgart, Germany  
Spring 2006*

To discourage the word-by-word reading of one of my students, I used the prompt, "Read it with your eyes," to which she quickly replied "But then you can't hear me."

## Spelling Bee

*Ginger Hill, Fargo, North Dakota  
Fall 2008*

During the Writing Vocabulary component of the Observation Survey assessment this year, a child said, "I can write *we*." He wrote *Wii*. Our language is dynamic for sure!

## This One Will Make You Cheep

*Julie A. Christensen, Exira, Iowa  
Fall 2009*

I was doing a familiar read the other morning with one of my little ones. He was reading the story about Kitty and the birds. As he was reading the last page which says, "Cheep, cheep, cheep, kitty is asleep. Kitty is asleep, cheep, cheep, cheep," he turns and says to me, "That's my dad!" I asked him what he meant. His reply, "My dad, he's cheap, my mom always has to buy and she gets tired of it!" I couldn't keep a straight face and he was just as serious as can be! I wish I could have started a diary 33 years ago to keep track of all their funnies. I would be sharing them with their children by now!

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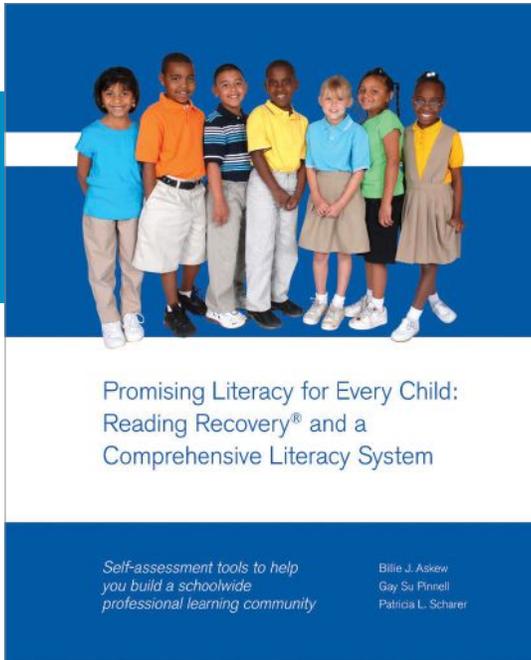
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that support high-quality instruction.**

**Written by Billie J. Askew,  
Gay Su Pinnell, & Patricia L. Scharer**

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- Section II** Six Essential Components of a Comprehensive Approach
- Section III** Designing Your Comprehensive Literacy Plan

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