Being Intentional in Our Teaching and Professional Lives

C. C. Bates

What’s the Fuss About Phonics and Word Study?

Patricia L. Scharer

A Close Look at Coaching Conversations in Reading Recovery

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The Sweet Spot of Coaching: Where Teachers and Administrators Find Common Ground While Developing a Comprehensive Literacy System

Jill A. Baker
Kathleen A. Brown

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Editor’s Corner

Mary Anne Doyle, Editor-in-Chief

Reading Recovery educators are recognized as valued professionals who are both knowledgeable and skillful in teaching literacy to our most vulnerable first-grade learners. Their expertise is pivotal to our Reading Recovery interventions as there are no materials, no curricular guides, no scripted programs that substitute for or replicate the instruction delivered and the success demonstrated by a trained Reading Recovery teacher. School districts electing to implement Reading Recovery do so by investing in the professional development of their designated teachers; there is no equal alternative. Importantly, the district's Reading Recovery teachers become respected resources for their colleagues and district. (Note: While the term Reading Recovery® is used here, these understandings apply equally to teachers of DLL, IPLÉ and Literacy Lessons.)

Reading Recovery professional development is recognized as superb, and there are layers of complexity that create and sustain its effectiveness. Reflecting on Clay’s (1994) hierarchy of expertise—a reference to the multiple levels of professional responsibilities shared by Reading Recovery professionals—we recognize that teacher leaders are key to both initial and sustained teacher development. They create the conditions that support teachers in constructing new understandings and developing proficient skills. They do this through instructional sessions, directing discussions of live lessons, and coaching teachers in their school settings.

As a result of such experiences, Reading Recovery teachers are recognized as reflective, knowledgeable, independent problem solvers. They are careful observers who base their instruction on documented observations, and they continue to learn via both independent actions and participation in communities of practice (May et al., 2016). This discussion of professional development and the contributions Reading Recovery teachers make to their schools resonate with the stories, research, and recommendations offered by our authors.

C. C. Bates shares perspectives on being intentional in our personal and professional lives. The behaviors that she links to being intentional parallel aspects of a Reading Recovery teacher’s decision making and actions. These include close observation of learners, the recording all observations, the continued growth of one’s knowledge and practice through independent study and collaboration with peers, and the importance of reflection. The examples she presents detail the actions of an effective professional.

Patricia Scharer adds to our knowledge of phonics instruction by presenting historical perspective and identifying misunderstandings apparent in the literature over time. She confirms how Reading Recovery teachers provide instruction in phonemic awareness and word analysis in both the reading and writing activities of every lesson. She also suggests recommendations for Reading Recovery teachers and coaches to share with classroom teachers.

Jill Baker and Kathleen Brown present exciting detail of their district’s journey to establish a collaborative approach to professional development that they describe as reflecting the strength and practices of their Reading Recovery implementation. These professionals have created a culture of coaching that is allowing them to ensure continuous improvement at all levels and realize systemwide effects.

Coaching, key to Reading Recovery professional development, is the focus of Journey Swafford’s research report. Applying discourse analysis techniques, she shares inferences regarding supportive coaching and interactions that reveal the development of effective teacher decision making and teacher accountability.

Jeff Brymer-Bashore’s report of the annual national evaluations confirms that Reading Recovery and DLL teachers continue to maintain effective implementations. The data show that our teachers are highly effective with the diverse range of learners they instruct.

In conclusion, these articles detailing the potential effects of being intentional, the power of coaching for an individual’s development, and a district’s systemwide improvement efforts, are offered to inspire and support the efforts of Reading Recovery professionals who are making outstanding contributions to their colleagues and schools.


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Being Intentional in Our Teaching and Professional Lives

C. C. Bates, Clemson University

Editor’s Note: This article is based on a keynote address presented by Dr. Bates at the 2019 National Reading Recovery & K-6 Literacy Conference in Columbus, Ohio. All names are pseudonyms.

The latest pop psychology catch phrase seems to be intentional living. I was in the Barnes & Noble store recently with my son, and I found a section divider entitled ‘Intentional Living.’ Behind it, were no fewer than 50 books on being intentional. Intentional is a word I have been looking to define for quite some time, and in the last year it has consumed a lot of my thinking as I worked to develop the keynote for the 2019 National Reading Recovery® & K–6 Literacy Conference. As I pondered the word, I thought about students I have taught over the years. The accelerated progress they made and their ultimate success was not haphazard; it was intentional. And this led me to ask the question, What does it mean to be intentional in our teaching and professional lives?

There are three key elements I identified as contributing to being intentional: (a) close observation and recording those observations; (b) professional knowledge and practice; and (c) reflection and collaboration (Figure 1). These elements all led to the development of a rationale for why I am doing what I am doing. I think as educators, these are all concepts with which we are very familiar, but it’s constantly recommitting to these ideals despite the hurried pace of our work that is most challenging. In the remainder of this article, I will discuss each of these elements in relation to the aforementioned guiding question.

Close Observation
One my biggest challenges as a teacher is not to jump to conclusions. I am quick to identify what I think may be difficult for a child or teacher and immediately set about trying to fix it. When this happens, I have to step back and think about the purpose of my observation. I have to ask myself, are my assumptions preventing me from seeing a complete picture? Am I wearing blinders?

In Change Over Time in Children’s Literacy Development, Clay (2001) strongly warns us “not to overlook observation;” in fact she states, “I would argue that teachers DARE not overlook observation” (p. 268). Clay goes on to say we should use “systematic observation as a discovery or fact-finding technique to establish what exists.” If I am not careful, I will only observe for what I think already exists and preconceived ideas will prevent me from truly understanding what a child knows and controls.

Figure 1. Key Elements That Contribute to Being Intentional

![Diagram showing key elements: Close Observation, Professional Knowledge and Practice, Reflection and Collaboration, Being Intentional]
Instead, using neutral observation to establish what exists, as Clay suggests, ensures that I am open to what the child reveals as he or she reads and writes continuous text.

In the keynote address, I shared an image of the moving illusion, *Rotating Snakes* by Akiyoshi Kitaoka (2003). A moving illusion is a static image in which you can see motion due to color contrasts and shape position. When you visit the link (see references), notice how the image moves. Then focus on just one circle. By isolating one of the circles, and concentrating on it specifically, you can stop the illusion and stop the circle from moving. When we work with children, especially those for whom literacy is presenting some challenge, there can be a lot of moving circles or parts. If we get overwhelmed by this, it can be difficult to capture the child’s reading behaviors, let alone support the child's progress. If, however, I am systematic in my observation and if I approach observation as a fact-finding mission to establish what exists, my records have clarity and focus. Clarity and focus allow me to make sure my planning is intentional and my instruction is responsive. Figure 2 is an example of a lesson record that lacked intentional planning, and as a result, there are few anecdotal notes. When my lesson records are sparse, it may be a reflection of an unproductive lesson. Perhaps it was too hard for the child and so there wasn’t much in my lesson records because I was so busy supporting the child that I didn’t record anything. Sometimes it’s a reflection of time; I waited until the last minute to plan the lesson and didn’t devote enough attention to selecting the right text. Sometimes, I have thoughtfully selected what I think is the right text and it still falls apart.

Regardless of the reason why I may not have captured anything on my lesson records, I have to intentionally remind myself to write down what I am seeing, because I know I won’t be able to recall the information at the end of the day. In fact, the more children for whom I am responsible, the more likely I am to forget what happened at 9:15 am. So, I can be a great observer, but if I don’t record the observations, chances are, they are lost.

The evaluation of the $55 million Investing in Innovation (i3) grant showed Reading Recovery as having impressive effect sizes (May, Sirinides, Gray, & Goldsworthy, 2016). As part of understanding the large gains in students’ reading skills, the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) investigated the instructional strength in Reading Recovery. They defined instructional strength as the extent to which a teacher instructs for maximum learning in each and every lesson. Instructionally strong teachers, according to May et al., “convert their subtle observations into data and rely heavily on that data in instructional planning” (p. 92). For these teachers, “instruction becomes a cycle of continual collection, reflection on, and response to observations” (p. 93). Based on this understanding, Reading Recovery teachers “form instructional plans that enable them to teach for maximum impact in every lesson” (p. 93). These findings further make the case for recording my observations so that I have the necessary data to make informed instructional decisions.

### Professional Knowledge and Practice

To be intentional in my teaching, I then have to combine the close observation of my students with my professional knowledge. I can read about theory all day long, but it is another thing altogether to connect it to my teaching. For me, professional knowledge is the intersection of my understandings of the theoretical...
underpinnings of literacy processing and my practical understandings.

Every year, I select one aspect of my teaching that I need to dig into deeper and that will be generative for my instruction; it always bubbles up from a child with whom I am working and is closely tied to the ongoing cycle of close observation. Further, it is a recursive generative process connecting theory to practice and practice to theory. This process helps establish an instructional rationale. I recently taught a child by the name of José. José was an emerging bilingual student, and I soon realized that his reading and writing vocabularies were not growing at a rate consistent with children who successfully discontinue their series of lessons.

In order to assist José in these areas, I worked on connecting professional knowledge and practice by rereading the section in Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals (Clay, 2016) entitled “What Does It Mean to ‘Know’ a Word” (p. 75). Clay states:

Here is a framework which teachers find useful. It assumes that for children having difficulty with aspects of literacy learning it usually takes several encounters to learn a new word or letter. We can think of a new response coming into a child’s repertoire of literacy behaviors as being …

• new
• only just known
• successfully problem-solved
• easily produced and easily thrown
• well-known and recognized in most contexts
• known in many variant forms.

When I revisited Clay’s scale of knowing, I thought about times when a child knew the word here with a lowercase h but not when it appeared with a capital H. I also thought about times when the word was known in most contexts, but when it was embedded in an unfamiliar structure, it caused the child to balk. I thought about what “known” in many variant forms really means. Yes, it means the child knows the word with little or no attention in both reading and writing, but it also means the child can use the known to assist in problem solving the unknown. It was this thinking and professional reading that I then connected to my practice. When I started being more intentional about supporting José in expanding and extending his word knowledge, I stopped myself from saying, “You know that word.” If José knew the word, he would read it or write it and me saying “You know it” just put unneeded pressure on him. To hold myself more accountable, I started keeping a ‘roving sticky note’ that I moved each day from lesson record to lesson record to ensure I wasn’t haphazard with the words on which I asked José to work. I also paid close attention to where the words fell on Clay’s scale of knowing, and I was intentional in supporting José as he made them known in many variant forms.

Further, I worked on creating “echoes from one part of the lesson to another part” (Clay, 2016, p. 70). Since we know the importance of children reading and writing continuous text, these opportunities occur “all the time” (p. 70). Both my parents were teachers, and I spent my summers on a beautiful pond in New England. I could go to the water’s edge and yell out “hello” and hear it repeated exactly seven times. An echo is a sound that is repeated or reverberated after the original sound stops. In Reading Recovery, these echoes are important because our children need repetition. The words need to be reverberated within the lesson and from one lesson to the next in order to move them from new to known.

According to Clay, “The art is to expose the children to opportunities to deal successfully with certain words so that they become familiar, and like old friends” (p. 156). An old friend is an old friend because after being around a while, we can count on them. I wanted José to understand he could count on the familiar, the known, his old friend, because this supported him in his acquisition of the English language. This recursive, generative process of connecting professional knowledge and practice with the literature and again returning to practice requires reflection and sometimes, depending on what I am trying to better understand, collaboration with a colleague.

Reflection and Collaboration

Being intentional requires me to engage in reflection and collaboration. In an article in The Reading Teacher, Wetzel, Maloch, and Hoffman (2017) discussed using retrospective video analysis as a means of reflection. They stated that recording our teaching or our coaching (p. 535) can

• document the teaching practices that happen in classrooms,
• zoom in on particular situations that grab our attention,
• capture moments of surprise and tension,
• move from evaluation to rich description in our reflection, and
• find patterns and relationships between teacher moves and learning.

To engage in retrospective video analysis, I have to intentionally make time for it. When Jeff Williams introduced me at the conference, he shared the following quote:

Our lives, and our teaching lives especially, are stuffed with expectations, requirements, things. But, instead of more, better, faster, slowing down and looking closely at our teaching can provide opportunities for identifying and honoring what really matters in our instruction. (Bates & Morgan, 2017, p. 113)

The quote is from an article Denise Morgan and I wrote about creating time for reflection and collaboration. We are all busy, and the article discusses how we need to create moments of stillness to reflect and collaborate. Basically, we have to be intentional about it or, odds are, it won’t happen.

When we reflect on our teaching both alone and with others, it allows us the space to check on any assumptions that may not be grounded in data. It allows us to think through our hypotheses and connect them back to theory. Again, we have to create time for this to happen; the video for the retrospective analysis doesn’t just start by itself and if I want to share the video with a colleague, I have to figure out how to send the file. Technology is a great thing, but sometimes just figuring out how to use it takes time.

Collaborative conversations are all about being vulnerable and finding a trusted colleague who listens when I won’t stop talking, who pushes me to keep thinking about alternatives, who takes me into the literature and contributes to me being able to be intentional. This year I have really been puzzling over one particular student. Dhin is Vietnamese, and I have been working diligently to support his use of English. I have taken Dhin behind the glass several times and have had Maryann McBride, teacher leader in residence at Clemson, conduct two colleague visits. Following one of the visits, Maryann and I discussed the ways in which I was supporting Dhin’s use of language. During our conversation, we explored Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals (2016) and landed on the section “Introducing the New Book.” Clay states, “The teacher must plan for the child to have in his head the ideas and the language he needs to complete the reading” (p. 115). While I had certainly thought about this during Dhin’s lesson series, going into Clay’s text with a trusted colleague and using this quote to think through my lesson records helped me see places that I could be more intentional in supporting his use of language. I went through and made additional notes in my records about structures that were coming under control, which in turn helped me engage in oral conversation after the reading of text to further scaffold “the use of language and ideas” (p. 115) that were presented in the reading. After reading No Snow Toys by Kris Bonnell (2010), I asked him, “What do you think Ben might have done in the snow?” Dhin responded, “Play some snowballs.” I then extended his statement by saying, “Yes, he made some snowballs. He also made some other things. What else did he make?” The conversations I had with my colleague helped me be more intentional in the conversations I had with Dhin. I am now keeping close record of the language he controls and where I see glimmers, and I am careful to pave the way for language he will be seeing in upcoming text. In the example of No Snow Toys, I used and put in his ear the past tense of an irregular verb (make – made) that does not contain the suffix -ed. Knowing what has occurred in our conversations and in his writing is a key source of support when selecting texts for him. In many ways this year, I have likened his control of the English language to Clay’s scale of knowing a letter or a word (2016). Some language and structure for Dhin is “new and only just recently known;” some is “easily produced and easily thrown” (Clay, 2016, p. 75). In other words, Dhin controls many commonly used past tense verbs like looked and ran, but his control will lapse if these come alongside new structures that may be a little tricky for him.

Reflection and collaboration with my colleagues has supported my teaching of Dhin this year. During these conversations, my records as well as Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals have been instrumental and that is because the outer circles in Figure 1 don’t exist by themselves. Instead, it is a combination of close observation and my records of these observations, professional knowledge and practice, and reflection and collaboration that lead me to being intentional. Simulta-
neously, I also have to be intentional within each of the circles in order to be systematic in my observation, connect professional knowledge and practice, and create time for reflection and collaboration.

Design-Based Research
In addition to being a teacher, I am also a researcher. When I think about how the question, “What does it mean to be intentional in our teaching and professional lives?” impacts my work, I also think about it in relation to my university responsibilities. For me that means engaging in intentional research projects. I am particularly interested in design-based research because it is “aimed at addressing practical problems, developing workable solutions, and accomplishing valued goals” (Reinking & Bradley, 2008, p. 5).

In Reading Recovery, we have long answered questions about our longitudinal results. We are also well aware of what the research says about summer reading loss and how this impacts the children we teach. A teacher leader recently shared with me that Reading Recovery is like losing weight. I can get to my goal weight, but maintaining that weight means I need to continue making the right food choices and exercising regularly. Reading Recovery is a short-term early intervention, with children receiving individually designed and delivered lessons. We have a long track record of strong and consistent results, but I want to make sure that the children who have had Reading Recovery continue to grow as readers. If we liken this to weight loss, it simply means we have to help them make the right book choices and encourage them to read. This support means partnering with classroom teachers to strengthen the relationship between intervention and classroom practice.

To this end, we have used grant funding to build a free virtual professional learning library (https://readingrecovery.clemson.edu/home/k-2-literacy-resources/) that hosts six different modules. Each module is accompanied with a set of facilitator notes that allows users to tailor their professional learning at the individual or group level. The modules showcase South Carolina teachers teaching real lessons to ensure that when our teachers view the modules they can relate to the context.

As we work to ensure children have strong classroom instruction, we are also providing support over the summer. We have partnered with Dabo’s All in Team Foundation and Scholastic to send books home with students who were in Reading Recovery. Dabo is the head football coach at Clemson University. This year, under Dabo’s direction, the Clemson Tigers finished the season 15–0. This record-breaking season, which included a 44–16 win over Alabama in the National Championship, hasn’t happened in college football since 1897. College football in South Carolina, like in many states, is huge. Children are excited to cheer for their teams and identify with all aspects of the game. From the coaches and the players to the band and the cheerleaders, everyone seems to rally around their favorite team. Through the partnership with Dabo’s All in Team Foundation and Scholastic we have sent over 34,000 books home with children in the last 3 years. Additionally, each year since we began the project, we have invited the children to campus to interact with the players and coaches. The players read to the children and in addition to the 10 books they receive, they also get to take home the book the players read.
Each year we intentionally reexamine the initiative to figure out how we may increase the likelihood that the children will read the books over the summer. We’ve worked with teachers to introduce the books before summer vacation to increase interest and motivation and we have planned bigger kick-off celebrations on campus. In 2018, we tied in the book the players read, *The Pigeon Finds a Hot Dog!* by Mo Willems (2004), with a hot dog lunch. We also included a postage-paid postcard with the books, so the children could write to the team over the summer.

Last year after sharing our results with the All in Foundation, they agreed to fund book sets for 100 additional children who had discontinued from Reading Recovery, received summer books, and who were now completing second grade. This created the opportunity for us to observe the impact of summer reading opportunities on these children during consecutive summers, that is following first and then second grade.

Their reading levels were identified using the Text Reading Level task of An *Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Clay, 2013) at the beginning and end of each summer.

As shown in Figure 3, these discontinued students had made accelerated gains in first grade while participating in Reading Recovery and this is represented by the first blue line. The first green line shows that the students maintained that growth over the summer following first grade and assuaged the summer reading setback that research states can be up to a 3-month decline (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003; Kim, 2004; Mraz & Rasinski, 2007). The second blue line shows their progress in second grade, and the second green line depicts the reading growth observed during the summer following their second-grade year and suggests that they not only maintained but importantly progressed in reading achievement during that summer. This project has taken a practical problem and through intentional partnerships enabled us to provide a workable solution and accomplish a valued goal — addressing the loss of reading proficiency during summer vacations.

In Closing

Intentional living doesn’t just happen; it requires discipline. We have to make plans and set goals. In education, we have learned that goals need to be measurable. For example, instead of stating “I want to lose weight,” stating “I want to lose 4 pounds in the next month” ensures my goal is something I can quantify.
Using the elements that engender intentionality (Figure 1), begin by setting a goal for close observation. Perhaps the goal is developing a more efficient system for how to record observations. Or perhaps the goal is to focus in on one moving part to better understand what a child knows and controls. In the area of professional knowledge and practice, maybe it is participating in one of RRCNA’s Sunday Twitter chats and connecting it to practice or reading an article from *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, reviewing it with a colleague, and discussing what it means for instruction. In the area of reflection, set a goal to videotape your hardest-to-teach child or the conversation before writing for each of your students. Finally, think about ways to develop intentional partnerships or relationships that support children during the summer. Make arrangements with the media specialist to periodically open the school library during the summer so children have access to books, or set up a lending library in a local neighborhood or on school property.

Being intentional in our teaching and professional lives can directly impact our students. Clay reminds us that “acceleration depends upon how well the teacher selects the clearest, easiest, most memorable examples with which to establish a new response, principle or procedure” (2016, p. 20). When we use the power of close observation, connect professional knowledge and practice, and engage in reflection and collaboration we are able to intentionally select the easiest, most memorable example to which Clay refers. Clay cautions us about wasting the learner’s time, and being intentional prevents this from occurring.

**References**


**About the Author**

Dr. C.C. Bates is an associate professor of literacy education, a Reading Recovery trainer, and director of the Clemson University Reading Recovery and Early Literacy Training Center for South Carolina. Her work has been published in journals such as *The Reading Teacher, Young Children*, and *The Journal of Reading Recovery*. She began her career in education as a kindergarten and first-grade teacher. She is a former Newton County Teacher of the Year and was a semifinalist for Georgia Teacher of the Year.

**Children books cited**


As a middle school principal and former middle school math teacher, I came to elementary school not understanding how challenging it is to teach reading and how complex reading instruction is.

I thought it was easy to learn to read. It’s just letters and sounds, right? Letters, sounds, and sentences make stories. Easy. I had no idea just how hard it is to get kids to not only learn to read, but LOVE to read.

My first feeling that it was more than sounds and letters happened when Addi, the youngest of my three kids, was in kindergarten. We had reading homework, and I approached it like I would math homework. It was so hard for Addi. Here I was, a skilled teacher and principal, and I couldn’t teach her how to read? What should I do? How could I help? Should I read to her? I remember writing notes of desperation to the teacher.

When they called about Reading Recovery, I was worried there would be a stigma attached. I didn’t expect this. I felt like Dad had given up on her. She didn’t want to read. She didn’t like it. But all that changed when her Reading Recovery lessons began in February of first grade.

“Addi loved stories but thought that reading was about reading the letters,” recalls her Reading Recovery teacher Betsy Buerk. “When she brought the letters and the stories together, a whole new world opened up for her. She was one of the most fluent, expressive readers I have taught.”

Betsy sent books home with Addi that were on her reading level. Addi would sit with her book bag and just read — often 5–7 books every night. She wanted to do it. She would want to read another book and would see that there were no more books in the bag. All of a sudden, she knew all these words. There were so many new texts with tough words. This was such a positive portion of her life. Now it was like reading had always been easy.
There is something about watching your elementary age kid reading in the car and then laughing, gasping, or even crying all because of something they are reading. Literacy is no doubt one of the most critical components of a child’s success.

Reading Recovery leveled the playing field for Addi. When her Reading Recovery lessons ended, I could support her as a parent in the way that I knew how. She was happily reading 30–40 minutes every night and continues to be an avid reader. Her teachers in second and third grade kept the books coming and now she reads an entire series of chapter books.

“Reading with Ms. Buerk in first grade was really fun,” Addi remembers. “I loved the Big Hungry Giant series. Now I’m reading the Harry Potter series. The first one got me hooked because it was a cliffhanger. I knew there was going to be another year and I was like, ‘I have got to find out what happens next.’”

Reading Recovery was a like a switch that flipped. I’m not a reading teacher. I was frustrated. I tell this story at the Reading Recovery parent meeting every spring and fall. Reading Recovery really helps our parents engage with reading and with their child’s reading progress in a positive way. They can help with the cut up story and talk with their child about the stories they write. They can listen to the child read successfully. And they come to school for the parent meeting and to watch a lesson which is another positive experience.

We have faced so many cuts at our school because of declining enrollment, but we keep Reading Recovery intact. We have the highest needs in first grade each year in terms of literacy support needed to make growth. Quantitative data isn’t the only source we use to make decisions about staffing and budget.

We watch the growth in first grade very carefully. We want to capitalize on it and keep the growth happening for kids. Reading Recovery helps us hit our purpose: proficient readers who are lifelong readers. Like my daughter, Addi, and my two other kids.

Editor’s note
Joel Rivera has been the principal at Silverthorne Elementary School since 2017. In his 6 years as middle school principal, the school received some of its highest-ever performance ratings for academic growth and achievement. In 2015, Joel was named Colorado Middle Level Principal of the Year by the National Association of Secondary School Principals who sponsor the program. The award recognizes principals who succeed in providing high-quality learning opportunities for students and demonstrate exemplary contribution to the profession. He was selected by the Colorado Association of Secondary School Principals and Colorado Association of School Executives based on rigorous criteria.

Joel Rivera and his kids—Addi, James, and Autumn—enjoy hiking in the mountains of Summit County, Colorado.
Explore Marie Clay’s guidance in a new video learning series!

Building Independence in Reading

is the first session in the Deepening Reading Recovery Expertise online series from RRCNA

Drawing on the second edition of Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals, this series will include sessions on developing independence in writing and other important messages from Marie Clay. Read, view video clips, discuss with colleagues, and strengthen your understandings in both training classes and in your ongoing professional development sessions.

About the Cover

Bryan Coleman started first grade with some areas of literacy knowledge higher than others. He came to his daily Reading Recovery lessons with a smile on his face and ready to learn. Linda MacNaughton, his Reading Recovery teacher, remembers that Bryan loved to challenge himself and enjoyed talking and writing about his family. Bryan successfully discontinued his lessons after 16 weeks and continued to gain literacy knowledge, ending the year reading at grade level.
What’s the Fuss About Phonics and Word Study?

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Editor’s Note: This article is based on a keynote address presented by Dr. Scharer at the 2019 Southeastern Reading Recovery & Early Literacy Conference in Myrtle Beach, SC.

Introduction

Headlines like ‘The Great Debate’ or ‘Reading Wars’ or ‘Whole Language Versus Phonics’ have polarized conversations about phonics and word study in newspapers, journal articles, and, more recently, in web-based formats. Writers often position the issue of phonics and word study as having two sides—diametrically opposed—phonics or no phonics. In this article, I argue that such ‘wars’ are often based on half-truths or exaggerations and should be replaced with more productive conversations.

Regrettably, this kind of dialogue is often inflammatory and does not thoughtfully examine the four most important questions surrounding phonics and word study:

1. The question is not if phonics is taught; it’s how is phonics taught? There is wide agreement that understanding letters, sounds, and how they work in English is an essential part of learning to read and write. Important, deeper questions include: How do children learn the complexities of English orthography? and What are the best teaching methods to help students read and write continuous text? Educators must move beyond oppositional arguments to study and identify the characteristics of effective and efficient phonics and word study instruction.

2. How are individual needs met? The needs of individual students must be part of the discussion. This is a daunting task when teachers are responsible for 25 or more children, each with their own knowledge base and needs. Clearly, one-size-fits-all is not appropriate. Students benefit from their teachers’ careful documentation of students’ knowledge and teachers’ intentional teaching designed to meet their individual needs.

3. How does instruction change over time to meet individual needs? The discussion must also include how students build on their growing orthographic knowledge over time and what instruction best supports individuals to learn the complexities of English, a language which is not orthographically regular. I agree with Robert Schwartz who writes that, “The literacy profession would be well served to abandon the debate over whether phonics knowledge is a necessary component of early literacy learning. The science of early literacy needs to focus on change over time in children’s word recognition strategies as children build their phonic and orthographic knowledge…” (2015, p. 5).

4. What do teachers need to know about English orthography to ensure students learn the complexities of English to support reading and writing proficiency? Although English is a complex language, there is no need for students to learn individual words by rote memorization. Rather, equipped with conceptual understanding of English, teachers can help students discover important insights into how words work which will support their reading and writing achievement (Scharer, 1992).

There are six “D Words” I offer which will inform those four questions: Debated, Developmental, Document, Diverse, Describe, and Discuss. The first will set the stage for the fuss about phonics and word study using examples from both Reading Recovery® and classroom studies which illustrate how the conflict has been described in the literature for decades. The other five words will help Reading Recovery teachers and classroom teachers collaborate to design high-quality phonics and word study instruction which meets the needs of each child.

Debated

Chall’s 1967 book, Learning to Read: The Great Debate, is often credited with coining the headline ‘The Great Debate.’ I remember Jeanne Chall visiting The Ohio State University early in my career. She introduced herself as “the grubby old phonics lady” in a wonderfully self-deprecating manner. Clearly, her publications and workbooks
for children positioned her as a phonics advocate. However, after viewing a Reading Recovery lesson, she said that it was the best example she had ever seen of quality phonics instruction. I recall thinking that this was someone who really understood the complexities of both children and learning English.

Concurrent with Chall’s publication, Bond and Dykstra (1967) published their findings of the ‘First-Grade Studies,’ concluding that they could find no clear best basal program or instructional approach for beginning reading instruction. Phonics was an important component of instruction, but it was the teacher who truly made the difference in children’s literacy acquisition, not a published program. Later, the debate escalated into ‘The Reading Wars’ and by the 1990s, the sound bite was ‘Phonics versus Whole Language.’ Whole language advocates wrote a response to this dichotomy and clearly argued that there was, indeed, quality phonics instruction in whole language classrooms (Newman & Church, 1990).

To provide scholarly evidence of phonics instruction in whole language classrooms, Karin Dahl and I conducted federally funded research to document phonics instruction in eight whole language first-grade classrooms for an entire year. We found that students not only learned a great deal about letter-sound relationships but phonological and phonemic awareness as well (Dahl, Scharer, Lawson, & Grogan, 1999). My fingers were typing constantly documenting all the ways students were learning about letters and sounds through ABC books, shared reading, poetry, word sorts, word collections, and, in general, a celebration of how words work. The teachers used both formal and informal assessments to fine-tune instruction to meet students’ needs. Our publications in Reading Research Quarterly and The Reading Teacher (Dahl & Scharer, 2000), however, did not stem the debate. Although we argued that the instruction we documented in eight first-grade classrooms was systematic (intentionally and carefully planned to provide instruction to meet student needs) and intensive (instruction as present during most every part of the literacy block in large group, small group, and individual contexts), there were still critiques of both our methodology (qualitative and no control group) and our findings.

The studies, articles, and critiques below provide a crucial context for understanding the dialogue and context surrounding phonics and word study over the past 20 years, particularly as it relates to Reading Recovery.

National Reading Panel
The findings of the 2000 National Reading Panel (NRP) offer important insights about phonological awareness and phonics instruction which provide a backdrop for the critics of Reading Recovery I will describe.

Phonemic awareness. The panel concluded that there is a positive relationship between phonological awareness and learning to read. However, the panel did not endorse any particular method of teaching children phonological or phonemic awareness (PA). The panel specifically noted that “…children will acquire some phonemic awareness in the course of learning to read and spell even though they are not taught PA explicitly” (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], National Reading Panel Reports of the Subgroups, 2000a, p. 2-43). This conclusion is contrary to those who use the panel’s report to argue that children must first learn phonological awareness before learning to read. The panel also noted that programs lasting more than 20 hours were less effective than programs 20 hours or less (p. 2-6) and that there are many ways to teach phonemic awareness. PA instruction was found to be most effective when instructing preschool children, less effective in kindergarten, and even less effective in first grade. In terms of struggling students, the panel found that “the effects of PA training on spelling for disabled readers was minimal, as indicated by effect sizes that did not differ significantly from zero” (p. 2-4).

The panel also offered three cautions regarding phonemic awareness instruction: (a) PA training is not a complete reading program; (b) there are many ways to teach PA effectively; and (c) “the motivation of both students and their teachers is a critical ingredient of success. Research has not specifically focused on this” (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], National Reading Panel Report Summary, 2000b, p. 8). The panel concluded that “the NRP findings should not be used to dictate any oversimplified prescriptions regarding effective PA instruction… There are many factors that govern the effectiveness of instruction” (Reports of the Subgroups, 2000a, p. 2-7).

Thus, the panel carefully identified the most appropriate age for PA instruction, argued for limiting instruction to 20 hours of all instructional time for literacy, and noted the importance of the motivation of both teachers and students relative to selecting an instructional method.
Phonics. It’s important to describe the context of the work on phonics to appropriately interpret the panel’s findings. Joanne Yatvin was a principal who was a member of the panel and the phonics subgroup. She wrote with concern that there was only one research librarian assisted by several doctoral students to do electronic searches for all of the panel’s subgroups. She described the effort as “every man for himself” (2002). In addition, only 38 studies met the criteria for inclusion in the phonics meta-analysis. Only 14 studies were on typically developing students, and the definition of reading measured in the studies varied from reading words in isolation to reading phonetically decodable words with few studies using connected text. In addition, Yatvin wrote that “contrary to the guidelines specified by NICHD at the outset, an outside researcher who had not shared in the panel’s journey was commissioned to do the [phonics] review” (Yatvin, 2002, p. 368). She added that “The phonics report in its completed form was not seen, even by the whole subcommittee, of which I was a member, until February 25, four days before the full report was to go to press. Thus, the phonics report became part of the full report of the NRP uncorrected, undeliberated, and unapproved” (p. 369). Yatvin worried that the report had been carelessly read and misinterpreted and that “government agencies at all levels are calling for changes in school instruction and teacher education derived from the ‘science’ of the NRP report” (p. 369).

One of the concerns is that the extensive work of the subgroups had been inappropriately interpreted in some of the shorter versions of the report (NICHD, 2000b). Elaine M. Garan provided the following example of inaccurate reporting of the panel’s findings in her book, Resisting Reading Mandates: How to Triumph with the Truth (2002):

- The summary concluded that “…systematic phonics instruction produces significant benefits for students in kindergarten through 6th grade and for children having difficulty learning to read.” (NICHD, 2000b, p. 9)
- However, the reports of the subgroups concluded that “There were insufficient data to draw any conclusions about the effects of phonics instruction with normally developing readers above 1st grade.” (NICHD, 2000a, p. 2-117)

Using the findings from the summary, arguments could be made for systematic phonics instruction through sixth grade. However, the actual findings of the panel contradict that.

The panel also noted that children enter school with varying funds of knowledge about letters and sounds suggesting individual instructional needs. “However, it is common for many phonics programs to present a fixed sequence of lessons scheduled from the beginning to the end of the school year” (NICHD, 2000a, p. 2-97). The panel cautioned that “phonics instruction should not become the dominant component in a reading program, neither in the amount of time devoted to it nor in the significance attached” (p. 2-97). In addition, the panel noted that “very little research has attempted to determine the contribution of decodable books to the effectiveness of phonics programs” (p. 2-98).

Similar to the panel’s findings about phonemic awareness, the Reports of the Subgroups offered cautions about the potential mismatch between the individual needs of students and published phonics programs, that the panel’s analyses were unable to determine the effect of phonics instruction beyond first grade, and that use of decodable books was not supported by sufficient research. These are important cautions to keep in mind when considering the critiques of Reading Recovery which use the work of the NRP to substantiate their claims. These are also important points to keep in mind in light of the current demand for systematic programs of instruction in word recognition, or phonics, by the International Dyslexia Association for any child presenting signs of dyslexia at any age.

Reading Recovery critics

Reading Recovery as whole language. Reading Recovery has been characterized by critics as a whole language program with little attention to phonics. For example, in 2007, Louisa Moats wrote an article published by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute entitled Whole-Language High Jinks: How to Tell When “Scientifically Based Reading Instruction” Isn’t. Moats ignored over 30 years of data on every Reading Recovery child by claiming that Reading Recovery drops 25–40% of the students who don’t do well from their data set and that without systematic phonics, students’ gains are almost zero. Richard Allington responded through the Education Policy Studies Laboratory online think tank review of research:
Moats would have the reader believe that the presence of systematic phonics lessons—explicit, scripted, sequential, and paced—has been found to be critical in fostering beginning reading development. But, in fact, what the NRP found is that systematic phonics provided a small benefit, primarily on reading lists of words and non-words…even those findings have been seriously challenged by subsequent analyses of the NRP data base. (Allington, 2007)

Allington also writes with concern about Reading Recovery: “Consider the Reading Recovery intervention program that Moats savages. This intervention has stimulated sufficient research (36 studies) that D’Agostino and Murphy (2004) were able to conduct a meta-analysis of that program’s effects on reading achievement” showing that Reading Recovery gains were statistically significant on every measure. The researchers concluded that Reading Recovery students were reaching their classroom peers.

Allington continued by comparing the depth of data on Reading Recovery to the scarcity of data on Moats’ Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) professional development program: “This sort of research support stands in stark contrast to the products that Moats endorses, which have almost no published research to support their use” (Allington, 2007). Allington’s claim is supported by the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) which concluded that LETRS “did not increase the reading test scores of their students” (WWC, 2009).

International Dyslexia Association. In 2011, each of the five articles in the themed issue of Perspectives on Language and Literacy, published by the International Dyslexia Association (IDA), discounted various aspects of Reading Recovery. Perhaps Reading Recovery was singled out because of its scientific evidence of effectiveness and the international scalability of the intervention which had been awarded a $45 million federal grant to scale up in 2010 (D’Agostino, Rodgers, & Scharer, 2010). This entire journal was devoted to diminishing Reading Recovery’s effectiveness; yet, the Reading Recovery community was not provided the opportunity for rebuttal within the journal. In response, Dispelling Misrepresentations and Misconceptions About Reading Recovery (RRCNA, 2012) was published on the RRCNA website.

In 2016, the International Literacy Association (ILA, formerly the International Reading Association) published a Research Advisory regarding dyslexia and approaches to teaching dyslexic children. The advisory concluded that “research does not support the common belief that Orton-Gillingham-based approaches are necessary for students classified as dyslexic ... Rather, students classified as dyslexic have varying strengths and challenges, and teaching them is too complex a task for a scripted, one-size-fits-all program” (ILA, 2016a, p. 3).

The IDA responded, arguing that the field was unified in beliefs and approaches and asserted “there is no difference of opinion about the best method for teaching children with dyslexia to read. That method is systematic, explicit, phonics-based reading instruction. It is the same approach to reading instruction that was recommended for all children by the National Reading Panel (2000) in its landmark report” (IDA, 2016, p. 1).

In response, the ILA’s Research Advisory Addendum quoted the NRP and argued that, while phonics instruction was more effective than non-phonics approaches, the panel reported sufficient limitations to be cautious in interpreting their findings. For example, only 24% of the effect sizes computed for the review had outcomes that measured reading of continuous text. For the rest, the outcome was single word reading or spelling. The ILA addendum continued by focusing in on the effectiveness of the Orton-Gillingham approach reported by the NRP:

[T]he Orton-Gillingham (O-G) program had the lowest average effect size (0.23). Looking further, only two of the O-G studies assessed comprehension, and the average effect size on comprehension was -.03. Only one study reported a delayed assessment of comprehension, and the effect size was -0.81 (six months after the completion of the intervention). That is negative 0.81 — thus participation in an O-G program appears to have had a large negative impact on reading achievement in comparison with other intervention methods evaluated in the study. (ILA, 2016b, p. 3)

More recently, a team of researchers interviewed dyslexia interventionists and were struck by their use of authoritative discourse (Worthy, Svrek, Daly-Lesch, & Tily, 2018). Even though there is still much debate about the definition of dyslexia and appropriate instruction, “…dyslexia policy and practice are steeped in authoritative discourse that speaks of a definitive definition, unique characteristics and prescribed intervention programs that are not well supported by research” (p. 359). The following quotes from dyslexia interventionists illustrate their findings:
• “We begin on day one because we don’t want to assume their brain knows anything necessarily.”

• “As long as I stick to this [program], I know this works and I know if I make sure to say everything it says to say, then it will all turn out good.”

• “We know for a fact.” “A dyslexia therapist knows.” “We know the neurobiology of it.” (Worthy et al., 2018, p. 377)

When asked about students who did not make progress an interventionist replied, “It broke my heart that he didn’t make more progress, but he just, he was dyslexic, he was ESL and he didn’t have home support.” (Worthy et al., 2018, p. 372). During 60-minute sessions, the interventionists reported that comprehension, vocabulary, and writing are often skipped. Texts students read were limited to decodable materials provided by the intervention. Yet students were “excited because it’s the only thing they get to read” (p. 372).

In contrast, Reading Recovery students read multiple books with natural language during each 30-minute lesson, write their own story, have phonics lessons based on student needs, and take books home that they can read every night. The structure of the Reading Recovery lesson is based on Clay’s complex literacy processing theory enabling children to develop working systems for reading and writing as they read and write continuous texts with the support of a knowledgeable teacher.

Writing in The Journal of Reading Recovery, Doyle (2018) provides an elegant description of Clay’s theories in contrast to “a critical, or single, variable theory of literacy acquisition (visual information) and a deficit model of learning and remediation” (p. 37). Doyle also offers important suggestions for Reading Recovery and classroom teachers to support conversations with colleagues holding the single theory of reading. In the same journal issue, Gabriel (2018) describes the laws and policies surrounding dyslexia-specific legislation. Both are key articles for Reading Recovery and classroom teachers to inform conversations about dyslexia.

The Reading Wars and Reading Recovery. In 2017, an article was published in Learning Disabilities: A Multidisciplinary Journal written by Cook, Rodes, & Lipsitz entitled “The Reading Wars and Reading Recovery: What Educators, Families, and Taxpayers Should Know.” Two key claims made by the authors were (a) that “Reading Recovery teachers are not trained to provide explicit and systematic instruction in the essential foundational components of reading” (p. 19) and further that (b) “If all K–3 students were taught with evidence-based methodology from their first days in school, there would be far fewer students who would need to be retained in first grade or need special education” (p. 19). The Reading Recovery community knows that the first claim is false and no research was cited to support their second claim. The Reading Recovery community responded to the multiple misleading false claims to discredit Reading Recovery, the world’s most widely researched early reading intervention, in a subsequent issue of the same journal (Reading Recovery Council of North America, 2017), on this journal’s website, and on the RRCNA website.

Deprivation argument. Phonics proponents often argue that teachers are depriving students of the opportunity to learn to read because there’s not enough systematic, intensive phonics instruction. The same argument could be made that spending too much time on systematic, intensive phonics instruction denies students sufficient time to read books, listen to quality children’s literature, and write in response to their reading! This is, perhaps, why children with more than 20 hours of phonemic awareness training do not score as well as those with 20 hours or less; they are missing quality literacy instruction that includes reading and writing continuous texts. The phonics argument must change from ‘either-or’ to the questions posed at the beginning of this article. We need to study and discuss how to teach English orthography, how to meet individual needs, how those needs change over time, and what teachers need to know to support learners. The rest of this article will focus on those questions by considering the remaining D Words: Developmental, Diverse, Document, Describe, and Discuss.

Developmental

In the early 1970s, researchers began to document how young children represented their meaning while writing. This meant looking at what children could do rather than what they could not. Marie Clay’s 1975 text What Did I Write? and Charles Read’s 1971 seminal work with preschoolers studied and presented the logic behind children’s spelling attempts. Clay discovered and shared how logical children are in writing words to record their messages. Read learned that children systematically matched the names of letters they knew to speech sounds and that less prominent sounds (such as short vowels) were easily overlooked. Examining spelling errors, in fact, provided a window into children’s thinking.
Read’s work was followed by an impressive line of research coming from the University of Virginia where Edmund Henderson (1990) and his colleagues identified a set of developmental spelling stages and found similar developmental paths for children learning other alphabetic languages such as French, Portuguese, and Spanish (Templeton & Bear, 1992). The stages are not intended to be tightly defined; rather, Henderson argued that the stages could inform teachers about what a child understood conceptually so the teacher could plan what to teach next. He identified four stages of development: letter name (sound), within word (pattern), syllable juncture (meaning), and derivational constancy (derivation). Understanding students’ developmental learning of spelling concepts can help teachers identify what students might already know and what to teach next. Reading Recovery teachers have the advantage of observing children’s writing and spelling attempts daily while supporting more and more awareness and independence. They therefore are able to monitor a child’s increasing control of concepts of word construction, or spelling, over time.

What follows is a brief description of letter name (sound) and within word (pattern), the expected conceptual understandings observed among first-grade readers that can found in books such as Word Journeys (Ganske, 2013) and Words Their Way (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2015). This information is presented to provide our Reading Recovery teachers who work as literacy coaches with helpful information for classroom teachers.

Letter name (sound)
Unlike Spanish, English is not a transparent language with each letter representing a consistent sound. English is a mixture of German, Danish, Norman French, Church Latin, classical Latin, and classical Greek as well as words from Arabia, India, the Americas, Spain, Polynesia, Russia, & Tibet! Henderson noted that “… our use of the alphabet appears to be as confusing to learners as possible” (1990, p. 9). So, teaching a child that T always sounds like /t/ will not be useful for words like the or caution. Rather than teaching a rigid relationship between sounds and letters, our instruction needs to support a lifelong interest in words with the recognition that, while English is complicated, there are principles that can help individuals move toward conventional spelling.

Sound is the first principle children use as they attempt to write words. Using the names of the letters they know young children will spell cat as KT and may identify long vowels correctly spelling boat as BOT (Henderson, 1990). Understanding how they represent more complex sounds requires you to think like a 5-year-old. For example, consider why a young writer may spell when as YN. The name of the letter Y is the first sound a child hears; the less prominent sound of the vowel is overlooked; and the final sound is represented correctly as N. Children need to learn about words that start with a W so they can connect a known word to a new one. It really helps to have a child named William or Winifred in the class as children often use what they know from their name and the names of others to spell unknown words (Bloodgood, 1999). Name charts used by classroom teachers make excellent supports for children as they are learning about letters and sounds so they can connect the spellings of friend’s names with sounds heard. Reading Recovery teachers support children to flexibly use letters and sounds to arrive at conventional spelling by using sound boxes during the writing portion of the lessons and magnetic letters (if you know like, you can write bike, etc.)

Affricates are often tricky as children may spell drum beginning with a J due to how they articulate the initial sounds. Children also may notice that certain letters, when side-by-side, sound different — like TH, SH, or CH. Teaching that shoe begins with a /sh/ sound must be tempered by learning over time that /sh/ can be represented in many ways in words such as sugar, conscious, chaperone, schist, fuchsia, issue, mansion, or ocean. Most of these words will not become a focus of attention until much later for students. The point is that it’s important to teach students to be flexible and consider multiple possibilities when reading and writing. Reading Recovery teachers value and teach for flexibility from the first lessons and may support classroom teachers with students struggling to monitor, cross-check, and make multiple attempts on unknown words.
A recommendation for classroom teachers is that children who spell using letter names benefit from sorting pictures by sound, listening to children’s literature which celebrates the sounds words make, learning about words through interactive and shared writing (McFerin & Woodruff, 2018), sorting short vowel words, and extensive reading and writing. Daily classroom writing workshop (McFerin, 2018) parallels the writing portion of the Reading Recovery lesson and offers time for children to create their stories and demonstrate what they know about how words work. Analyzing student writing helps teachers identify teaching points for future minilessons and other instructional contexts. Writing workshop begins with a minilesson which may focus on learning how words word by using sound boxes, working with generative words, or adding endings, much like the ways Reading Recovery teachers support their students to work with words (for example, using sound boxes, using known words to get to unknown words, working with words in isolation, etc.) throughout Reading Recovery lessons.

Analyzing student writing helps teachers identify teaching points for future minilessons and other instructional contexts.

Within word (pattern)
Children begin to notice patterns within words they are reading and will use those patterns in their writing. For example, they may notice that long vowels are marked by either another vowel next to it or a final E. This is the time when as part of classroom instruction, children might benefit from sorting words with different long vowel patterns because relying only a sound will not help. Do I spell bike as BIEK with two vowels together? Teachers must be cautious with rules such as “when two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking” since Clymer (1963/1996) established that this rule only works with about 45 percent of the words primary students are most likely to read and write. In contrast to a focus on rules, Reading Recovery teachers help children look for chunks or parts in words that can help them flexibly solve words in both reading and writing.

When children begin to notice short vowels, classroom teachers often present study of word families. However, Clay (2001) has cautioned:

... Knowing many different words enlarges one’s chances of getting to new words; knowing only short words, and regular spelling patterns provided by teachers who are ‘hooked on word families’ of the ‘cut, but, nut, and shut’ type, restricts options when constructing new words.” (p. 24)

Word families can be overused as vowels do not have a consistent sound. Short O, for example, is not always for octopus. Let’s look, for example, at just two letters: H and O. Following are examples Frank Smith (1985) offers of words using the same first letter and vowel, each with different sounds: hot, horse, hope, horizon, hook, honey, boot, hour, house, honest.

This is yet another reason why we must teach children flexibility when approaching words. Smith poses the following question (1985, p. 53) relative to the set words beginning with HO: “Can anyone really believe that a child could learn to identify these words by sounding out the letters?”

Wide reading will help children acquire correct spellings as many of the words in this pattern are commonly found in the stories they read so they will acquire a visual memory. Similarly, every time a Reading Recovery child rereads a familiar book, he has the opportunity to notice something new and to add to his visual memory. Word sorts used in classroom instruction at this level will focus on long vowel patterns, r-controlled vowel patterns, and more complex consonant clusters such as QU, STR, or combinations of a vowel followed by two consonants such as in find or cold.

Document
Historically, spelling instruction has been dominated by workbooks and a single spelling list for the entire class. Parents learned to allocate time on Thursday evening to prepare students for a Friday final spelling list. Student scores on the final test become the main assessment tool. But, were the scores accurate assessments of student understanding? A group of teachers I worked with posed this question: Why do they get it on Friday and misspell it on Monday? This became the title for an article Hil- lal Gill and I published in Language Arts (Gill & Scharer, 1996). The teachers found the answer as they assessed
students using Ganske’s Developmental Spelling Analysis (2013) and discovered the wide range of conceptual knowledge held by students in their classrooms. Teachers were amazed that students’ achievement on Friday tests were quite different from their actual knowledge about letters, sounds, and how words work if asked to spell words of increasing difficulty. They concluded that the spelling basal focused more on memorization than understanding English orthography conceptually and the basal was at the instruction level of only a small portion of their class — for some, lists were too hard and for others, lists were too easy. This has also been documented by research. For example, Stetson & Boutin (1980) assessed 25 second-grade classes and found that the children already knew 68% of the words in the spelling book. Similarly, Wilde (1988) found that students in Grades 3 and 4 who did a great deal of reading and writing could spell as well as students who had lessons from a textbook.

Teachers who abandon the daily spelling workbook lessons have more time to spend documenting students’ conceptual understanding by analyzing their writing and periodic assessments to determine instructional goals and student progress. The advantage of using assessments found in Word Journeys and Words Their Way is that the words students spell are not studied on Thursday evening but are lists of progressively more difficult words employing spelling principles based on the developmental levels described above. Reading Recovery teachers who support classroom teachers may suggest parts of Clay’s Observation Survey (2013) such as Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words, Letter Identification, and Writing Vocabulary along with an analysis of text reading and writing to learn more about one or more students in the classroom. Such assessments, when combined with analyzing student writing, provide a complete and much clearer picture of students’ conceptual knowledge of English orthography than Friday tests.

**Diverse**

When focusing on students’ needs and when working with individuals in a Reading Recovery lesson, teachers begin to question one-size-fits-all instruction and start to explore ways to tailor instruction to meet student needs. As they learn to analyze new assessments, teachers see their classrooms with a new sense of diversity which demands changes in their instruction. This may also lead to frustrations about time — how is it possible to organize classroom spelling instruction with such variation in spelling achievement? One possibility is to use the 20 minutes each day previously used for the spelling workbook and design an organization plan where the teacher meets with one group for instruction and the other groups are working independently using either personal spelling lists or lists matched to their spelling achievement. This will require a high level of organization and deep teaching of routines.

The chart below provides an illustration of how this might work (Steele, Scharer & Rowe, 2018). For 20 minutes each day, one group has a teacher-led minilesson and the other groups are working independently doing various sorts, activities, and independent assessments. Key to the effectiveness of this approach is teaching students the routines for each independent activity so the teacher is not interrupted. This may require several days of demonstration and practice before the rotation can begin. I once saw an excellent example of students who had learned routines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>Student Names</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Teacher-Led Mini-lesson</td>
<td>Progress Monitor OR Assess</td>
<td>Blind Sort</td>
<td>Making Connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Closed Sort and Write</td>
<td>Teacher-Led Mini-lesson</td>
<td>Progress Monitor OR Assess</td>
<td>Blind Sort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Making Connections</td>
<td>Closed Sort and Write</td>
<td>Teacher-Led Mini-lesson</td>
<td>Progress Monitor OR Assess</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Blind Sort</td>
<td>Making Connections</td>
<td>Closed Sort and Write</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Progress Monitor OR Assess</td>
<td>Blind Sort</td>
<td>Making Connections</td>
<td>Closed Sort and Write</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Designing an organization plan allows the teacher to allocate instruction time among groups of children at different levels of achievement. This example is a 5-week rotation plan for four groups of students.
when I visited a kindergarten classroom with a group of administrators. Each principal was assigned a 5-year-old to follow. I overheard one child talking with her adult when he indicated interest in what another group was doing. She looked him in the eye and quite clearly told him, “You can’t go there. It isn’t your day.”

Describe

Classroom teachers need to be able to describe how they are teaching phonics, spelling, and word study, and measuring student successes. This is particularly important to parents who may now be seeing their children come home with words to sort or a word study notebook where the student has gathered words for a particular spelling principle.

In kindergarten and first-grade classrooms, much learning about letters and sounds takes place during interactive writing, writing workshop, and word study during guided reading lessons.

Young children also learn about how words work as they learn a new poem each week which they paste in their poetry notebooks and illustrate. The poem may have rhyming words to note or many words beginning with the same letter or letter combination.

For our youngest literacy learners, nursery rhymes are important shared reading experiences which support phonological awareness and learning about how words work. For example, a child may be introduced to the *Itsy Bitsy Spider* during a shared reading and meaningful discussion followed by looking closely at the text to find words that rhyme (*spout, out*) or words with a P in them (*spider, up*). When the poem is well known, students can take home individual KEEP BOOKS (www.keepbooks.org) to read to their family.

Quality word study begins with developing an appreciation, curiosity, and a love of words. Opportunities for learning about phonics and word study are found in every instructional context in a responsive literacy classroom and must also include intentional teaching based on student needs. Parents want to know more about their students than a percentage on a Friday test. Is my child able to write increasingly more difficult words accurately? Does my child edit his or her work? Does my child fully participate in word study activities in the classroom? Answering these questions will contribute to describing how teachers provide quality, intentional instruction in phonics and word study.
Discuss
The final D word is Discuss, which is a charge to all education professionals to create opportunities to talk about research, critiques, and children. The debate as described in this article includes many significant misunderstandings about phonics and word study from the interpretation of research to the understanding of Reading Recovery. It’s our responsibility to be knowledgeable and prepared to have thoughtful conversations with colleagues who may have been influenced by such critiques. The only way we can overcome these challenges is by being part of the conversation.

Consider submitting a proposal to the IDA’s annual meeting to share clear information about Reading Recovery. I was part of a panel from The Ohio State University presenting at IDA and found the conference to be both insightful and challenging. It was my hope that my part of the presentation cleared up a few of the myths about Reading Recovery for the audience. Be part of the conversation. A colleague who was a certified Orton-Gillingham instructor once asked if she could sit in on my doctoral seminar on English orthography. We were amazed at the overlap between our two perspectives — the biggest difference being in terms of instruction. This was an important conversation to have. A special educator once told me that 30% of all children are dyslexic. This comment gave me a chance to talk about Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons.™ So, if Reading Recovery can bring over 70% of the lowest first graders up to the class average in 12–20 weeks, how can 30% be dyslexic? Or, perhaps Reading Recovery is truly the answer for most dyslexic students. This reinforces the importance of offering Reading Recovery to struggling first graders and Literacy Lessons to older struggling readers.

So, be part of the conversation by being both knowledgeable and professional (Doyle, 2018; Gabriel, 2018). I believe that creating opportunities to cross paths with colleagues from various perspectives will contribute to having fewer misunderstandings and more efforts placed on the important questions posed at the beginning of this article.

The Impact of Reading Recovery Ten Years After Intervention
Finally, it’s important to celebrate some recent news coming out of England where a study of the economic impact of Reading Recovery over 10 years found that “…every £1 spent on Reading Recovery since 2005/6 will create a potential societal benefit of £3.30-4.30” (Hurry & Fridkin, 2018). The study also included the results of the Phonics Screening Check where researchers found that 75% of students who had Reading Recovery prior to taking the Phonics Screening Check passed. The percentage of all children nationally who passed the phonics check was 81% in both 2016 and 2017. Thus, the Reading Recovery pupils from the bottom 5-10% of the class when they were selected for Reading Recovery were performing only 6% below the national average after they completed their series of lessons. But, only 19% of the children who had not received Reading Recovery instruction prior to the testing passed the phonics test. Clearly, children learn a great deal about phonics during their Reading Recovery lessons and are nearly 4 times more likely to pass the Phonics Screening Check after a series of lessons.

Having a deep knowledge of how children learn about English orthography will help educators respond to critics who use ‘authoritative discourse’ in a professional, informed manner. I believe that these conversations are required to move the field away from either-or sound bites to focusing the field on how to support students as individuals in classroom, small group, and individual instructional contexts. Reading Recovery educators, working as members of their schools’ literacy teams, are poised to engage in these important collaborative conversations on behalf of their students and to offer productive literacy support to classroom teachers.

References


**About the Author**

Dr. Patricia L. Scharer is professor emeritus of the College of Education and Human Ecology at The Ohio State University where she was actively involved in both Reading Recovery and Literacy Collaborative. Her 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 *Reading Research Quarterly, Research in the Teaching of English, Educational Leadership, Language Arts, The Reading Teacher, Reading Research and Instruction, The Journal of Reading Recovery, Literacy Teaching & Learning*, and the yearbooks of the National Reading Conference and the College Reading Association. She recently edited a book titled, Responsive Literacy: A Comprehensive Framework (Scholastic, 2018).


Imagine yourself visiting an urban elementary school as one member of a team of teachers and administrators learning about effective literacy practices and pondering how to better support teachers and students at the school. After watching a skilled first-grade teacher being coached by a Reading Recovery® teacher/literacy coach, your team (teachers, school administrators, and central office leaders) explores what’s been observed. Since all team members have a background in coaching, they ask thoughtful questions, listen to each other, and explore thoughts about the observed instruction. This collaboration involves trust, vulnerability, a spirit of risk taking, a commitment to continuous improvement, and is a model available for any district to cultivate in its schools.

After many years working to establish such a model, that is, a collaborative approach to coaching and professional development, we want to share the story of our journey. We seek to illustrate how a culture of coaching, combined with expertise that has resulted from our district’s implementation of Reading Recovery, is building the capacity of teachers and school leaders in our schools and across our school system. Our aim is to have a comprehensive literacy model in every elementary school.

In the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD), the Intensive Intervention Model (Baker & Brown, 2018) seeks to support student growth through the development of a comprehensive literacy system. It combines the expertise of literacy teachers, instructional leaders (principals, assistant principals), and supportive central office staff, all of whom embrace and use effective coaching techniques to help one another continuously improve their craft. This story, which was developed over time, illustrates the sweet spot that can be created through the intentional development of people and a coming together as teachers and leaders.

The positive effects of coaching on employee performance, organizational culture and professional rela-
tionships are well documented across industries, including in the context of schools and school district central offices. Coaching often impacts individuals in their own performance and in their contribution to their team or organization. Coaching has been found to “facilitate employee development and performance, can have a positive impact on productivity, and can guide and inspire improvements in an employee’s work performance to master their projects and tasks” (The Ken Blanchard Companies, 2017, p. 1). The opportunity to work with a coach contributes to an employee’s sense of self-efficacy, which may also contribute to an entire organization’s achievement.

While coaching is often conducted in a one-on-one setting between two individuals, the impact of effective coaching can meet the needs of a variety of people who serve in different roles, thereby having an impact on an entire organization or school. In a global study of different types of professional coaching, researchers found that the benefits of coaching are many; 80% of people who received coaching reported increased self-confidence. Improved work performance, relationships, and more effective communication skills were also reported by more than 70% of participants. Additionally, 86% of companies reported a return on their investment in coaching (International Coach Federation, 2009).

In the educational setting, these benefits include an impact on both teacher and leader performance, which can then be connected to the success of students. Elena Aguilar, author of The Art of Coaching, cites a watershed study on coaching in schools (Annenberg, 2004) to report a number of findings specific to the use of coaching in the school setting. Aguilar writes:

> Coaching encourages collaboration and reflective practice, allows teachers to apply their learning more deeply, frequently and consistently than teachers working alone, is effective embedded professional learning that promotes positive cultural change, was linked to increased use of data to inform practice and results and promotes collective leadership across a school system. (2013, pp. 8–9)

**The Long Beach Way**

The third largest district in California, LBUSD serves approximately 72,000 students in the 2018–2019 school year. The district serves its 31,000 elementary students across 54 elementary and K–8 schools. Among its students, more than 40 languages are spoken (in addition to English), the most common of which is Spanish and the second most common being Khmer. The LBUSD takes pride in its high teacher retention rate (95%+) and the promotion of almost all of its administrators (98%) from within the teacher ranks in the district. These data illustrate why an investment in coaching is also an investment in the long-term success of teachers and leaders and the organization at large.

Over the past decade, research and observations of the impact of coaching influenced decision making within LBUSD. While coaching was once an isolated activity between two teachers, it is now used across the district between teachers, between administrators, between administrators and teachers, and as the foundation of all district evaluation systems.

In “The Long Beach Way,” coaching is no longer just a transactional or improvement-oriented activity. Rather, it is a way of being among people. Gallwey states that, “coaching is the art of creating an environment, through conversation and a way of being, that facilitates the process by which a person can move toward desired goals in a fulfilling manner.” (as cited in Aguilar, 2013, p. 24). This way of being can be observed in relationships where questions are asked instead of directives given, where multiple potential solutions are explored instead of jumping to one solution, where trust is considered an accelerator to every relationship, and where reflection and ownership are considered important aspects of improvement efforts. The development of this way of being has taken time, intentionality, persistence, and a commitment to adaptive change.

In the initial years of widespread coaching in LBUSD, coaching was based upon cognitive coaching (Costa & Garmston, 2002). This coaching was primarily used between two teachers, most often when a veteran teacher was assigned to coach a new teacher who was participating in the district teacher induction program. As Reading Recovery expanded across LBUSD, professional coaching conversations between Reading Recovery teacher peers or Reading Recovery teachers and the Reading Recovery teacher leader became an integral component of the district program’s development. Professional coaching conversations incorporated observational data, Reading Recovery theory, and high-quality literacy practices (Anderson, 2011) all in support of teachers working effectively with students. The skills of professional coaching conversations were

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reinforced during behind-the-glass sessions and through the Reading Recovery teacher leaders’ visits to schools. Simultaneous to the use of coaching to support teachers in their development, LBUSD strategically introduced blended coaching (Bloom, Castagna, Moir, & Warren, 2005) to assist and develop new principals. After almost a decade of slowly expanding administrator coach training, now, multiple types of coaching are used across both teacher and administrator groups. Each of these individual efforts contributed to opportunities to nurture employee development through effective coaching skills (relationship building, questioning without judgment, empathy, listening). However, each kind of coaching existed in isolation.

Throughout the remainder of this article, we illustrate how a culture of coaching, combined with high degrees of literacy expertise resulting from schools’ implementation of Reading Recovery, are being combined to build the capacity of teachers and leaders in schools to achieve a whole school and system-level effect.

Background on Teacher and Leadership Coaching
LBUSD believes that growing great teachers and leaders is the recipe for student success and that is demonstrated by a number of specific initiatives. A long-standing focus on high-quality professional development, which began more than two decades ago with the inception of a teacher-focused Professional Development Center, was first dedicated to growing effective instructional practice. In its continuous improvement efforts, the district then used its internal success in developing teachers as the model for how to approach leadership development. In 2005, the district launched an administrator leadership development program and included specific coach training for administrators.

An important aspect of the district’s approach to high-quality professional development for teachers was supporting the implementation of instructional practices with classroom coaching support. From the 1990s to the present, a number of teacher leaders have served as central office curriculum leaders and coaches, many assigned to provide in-class support to teachers who are working on the implementation of district curriculum and instructional practice. These curriculum leaders and coaches provide coaching and expertise and they gather insights on district training efforts through their work with classroom teachers. This coaching provides the bridge between theory, training, and implementation, bolstering teachers’ skills through job-embedded learning and reducing the implementation gap that often exists with traditional professional development efforts.

Reading Recovery Teachers as Literacy Coaches
In addition to curriculum coaches, LBUSD built upon the expertise of Reading Recovery teachers—respected for their depth of knowledge, experience, and expertise in literacy teaching and learning—and trained a group of them as literacy coaches. In this expanded role, half of the day is...
dedicated to teaching Reading Recovery students, while the other half of the day is spent in classrooms coaching primary-grade teachers. Prior to becoming literacy coaches, Reading Recovery teachers pulled students from first-grade classrooms to provide the daily Reading Recovery intervention. During the remaining portion of each Reading Recovery teacher’s day, a typical schedule included seeing small groups of students outside of their classroom for literacy intervention. While this had a direct impact on a small number of students, the services were often disconnected from the classroom instruction and had little impact on classroom teachers’ literacy practices.

After more than a decade of focusing on effective Reading Recovery teaching, teachers and leaders sought to develop new ways for using this expertise to advance whole school effects. Without hesitation, the first place they turned was back to Dr. Marie Clay’s research:

The intensity and the methods utilized by RR in training and the insistence on high level RR performance provided an almost singularly attractive model for future staff development efforts, regardless of the program type. As schools systematize and create opportunities for serious staff development, the thoroughness of the RR model seems to be well worth emulating. (Herman and Stringfield 1997, p. 86)

In service to impacting student achievement across a school, Reading Recovery teachers studied and began to implement coaching strategies to engage with peers and other teachers. This expanded role of Reading Recovery teachers as literacy coaches was cause for considering ideas such as these:

- How do I build peer relationships that will allow me to be an effective coach?
- What do I need to know about adult learning that will contribute to my ability to help a peer?
- What early literacy best practices can support a classroom teacher?

Through the study of coaching methodology, actively practicing the skills of coaching and reflecting upon this work, an Intensive Intervention Model was developed as illustrated in Figure 1.

This model includes three pillars/components (Reading Recovery, Classroom Coaching, and Staff Development), each requiring professional development in order to shift from a Reading Recovery-centered coaching conversation to collaborative side-by-side coaching focused on creating a comprehensive literacy system across a school.

In order to prepare Reading Recovery teachers for the expanded role of literacy coach in the Intensive Intervention Model, regular and in-depth trainings were provided by the Reading Recovery teacher leader. In addition to the required ongoing professional development sessions for Reading Recovery teachers, training sessions were conducted to help Reading Recovery teachers become literacy coaches. Full days were set aside to accomplish this goal; the morning portion dedicated to Reading Recovery training and the other half of the day focused on literacy coaching. The trainings involved defining the role of a coach, studying professional books, developing an understanding of adult learners, role playing, engaging in hands-on experiences with classroom teachers, and participating in coaching walkthroughs at school sites.

In the initial years of functioning as literacy coaches and as the Intensive Intervention Model was being introduced and implemented, the Reading Recovery teachers naturally relied on their experiences of being coached in Reading Recovery. Although Reading Recovery-centered coaching is effective in the Reading Recovery world, this type of coaching wasn’t always the best match for coaching classroom teachers. So, time was spent...
studying and learning about different coaching strategies so that the Reading Recovery teachers/literacy coaches would develop a broader repertoire of coaching strategies and structures to choose from, ultimately allowing for differentiated coaching. With time, experience, coaching and ongoing training, the Reading Recovery teachers have evolved into highly expert literacy coaches who are able to nurture the growth of a comprehensive literacy system in a variety of school environments.

According to Askew, Pinnell, & Scherer (2014), a comprehensive literacy system is made up of six essential components:

1. A vital professional learning community
2. High-quality classroom instruction
3. A system for assessing and monitoring literacy progress
4. Effective and timely literacy interventions
5. A strong leadership team
6. Family and community collaboration

Teachers may have excellent professional development and perform well in their separate roles, but the goals of a comprehensive system cannot be fully achieved unless educators in the school see themselves as a learning community — working together within a common vision and shared goals. (p. 30)

Before “coaching” was a norm and established as a valuable asset or resource to the education system, Marie Clay intuitively and intentionally built in coaching at every level of the Reading Recovery training, as shown in Figure 2. Professional coaching conversations occur within each level of Reading Recovery. Common coaching and training experiences may include school site visits, cluster visits, long distance learning using technology, ongoing professional development sessions, analysis of student records and data, and behind-the-glass lesson observations. All of these coaching and training experiences serve as opportunities to notice and refine observation skills, deepen theoretical understandings and how that relates to teacher practice, and teacher decision making.

Reading Recovery creates a self-renewing system that requires everyone involved to reexamine their own teaching of children and adults. Data feedback helps implementers to reevaluate the systems on a yearly basis; colleague feedback is valued. Participants report that their training varies from year to year as teacher leaders and faculty learn more through their own teaching and through research. The expectation to change is part of a culture of learning that everyone involved in Reading Recovery tries to keep alive. Given this situation, it is expected that the program will continue to evolve and change. (Lyons, Pinnell, & DeFord, 1994, p. 204)

Similar to the use of coaching to support new teachers, LBUSD initiated coach training for administrators in order to provide support to first- and second-year principals through an integration of blended coaching (Bloom et al., 2005) and evocative coaching (Tschannen-Moran & Tschannen-Moran, 2010). Like teacher induction support programs, the LBUSD then developed its own principal induction program, where coaching was used as the primary mechanism for ensuring the success of every new leader. In this environment, coaching was separated from performance evaluation and provided by a trained active or retired principal acting solely as coach.

As central office leaders observed the positive impact of coaching on principal development and a number of former principals moved to central office
leadership roles (including becoming principal supervisors) and demonstrated their coaching skills, coaching as a support and continuous improvement strategy was elevated. After several years of slowly expanding coach training to more and more principals and central office leaders, ultimately a decision was made to include coach training in the fabric of the district’s leadership development strategy and career professional development sequence for all principals, thereby taking it to scale, a necessary aspect of the expansion of the work.

Now, what was once seen as training for some, is considered a way of developing all. What once was a way of interacting in specific relationships is now a way of interacting with everyone. LBUSD principals have received training in a number of coaching methodologies because as Aguilar reminds us:

> Coaching is a form of professional development that brings out the best in people, uncovers strengths and skills, builds effective teams, cultivates compassion, and builds emotionally resilient educators. Coaching at its essence is the way that human beings, and individuals, have always learned best. (2013, p. 6)

The coaching training that principals now receive can be used to enhance peer relationships, to nurture high-quality teaching among their teaching staff, to provide effective coaching in formal coaching relationships, and to promote a reflective school culture that nurtures continuous improvement.

The Sweet Spot of Teacher and Leader Coaching
Coaching happens in many different forms and within many different structures in LBUSD, reflecting a coaching culture. The coaching that takes place within the Intensive Intervention Model among teachers, administrators, and central office leaders demonstrates the power of this coaching culture. In the model, coaching (strategies and behaviors) transcends “rank,” allowing for everyone to maintain a learner stance. For example, this results in an assistant superintendent being able to actively learn from a literacy teacher and a literacy teacher to actively learn from a peer or administrator.

In the Intensive Intervention Model, each participating school hosts three to four coaching walkthroughs a year. The walkthrough is an internally developed tool for nurturing continuous improvement, honoring individual school team’s progress, surfacing challenges, and sharing the responsibility for collaboratively developing potential solutions. Each coaching walkthrough includes an upbriefing, observations in classrooms where coaching is taking place, discussion and learning, and a debrief with all participants.

The coaching walkthroughs include classroom teachers and literacy teachers working side-by-side to share their authentic work and to seek feedback that may contribute to their own and their students’ success. Participants include classroom teachers, literacy teachers, Reading Recovery teacher leader, principal/assistant principal, principal supervisor, assistant superintendent, and deputy superintendent, as represented in Figure 3. The significance of the roster of participants is that each brings a different perspec-

Figure 3. Participants in the LBUSD Coaching Walkthroughs

![Figure 3. Participants in the LBUSD Coaching Walkthroughs](image-url)
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A powerful example of a team building collective efficacy was illustrated during a coaching walkthrough at an Intensive Intervention Model site with a team of Reading Recovery teachers/literacy coaches that had been working together for several years. The Reading Recovery teacher leader was filled with joy and excitement as she observed this team embrace the coaching walkthrough process and decide to truly make it their own. The school’s team of coaches decided they wanted to change the structure of their upcoming coaching walkthrough. Since so much of coaching happens behind the scenes, they decided to film a series of lessons and coaching conversations between a classroom teacher and one of the Reading Recovery teachers/literacy coaches. This gave the other coaches an opportunity to observe, learn, and collaborate with one another. The series of film clips led up to a live demonstration and observation on the walkthrough day, showcasing the work that had been done between the classroom teacher and coach. From this experience, the coaches evolved as individuals and grew as a team, building their collective efficacy. Not only was this a powerful time of learning and reflection for teachers, every other participant (deputy superintendent, assistant superintendent, principal supervisor, principal, and Reading Recovery teacher leader) was able to learn from the entire video sequence and culminating observation.

The role of the Reading Recovery teacher leader and trainer of literacy coaches was to gradually release responsibility to the coaches by trusting and supporting the process, their expertise, and experience in order to create a new sense of ownership and deeper level of trust and collaboration. As Aguilar guides us to understand,

“The end product is only one part of what makes a great team, and you can’t be great if that’s all you do because process counts. A great team strengthens its way of working together as a unit, which sets it up for future success.” (2013, p. 4)

The structure of the coaching walkthroughs has evolved over time based on the needs of the students, classroom teachers, literacy coaches, input from central office staff, and school site administration. Continuous improvement is not only a driving force in LBUSD; it is a way of being and a strong held belief by all.

A second example of the impact of the coaching walkthrough process comes from the perspective of the deputy superintendent of schools and highlights the system level effect of the process. Job-embedded learning isn’t always easy to orchestrate. Often, principals are provided an executive summary of a training that their teachers received, but then must determine on their own how to help teachers implement, problem solve,

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**Figure 4. LBUSD Coaching Walkthrough Protocol**

**Upbriefing (30 minutes):** Literacy teachers share the goals of their coaching partnerships and discuss implementation progress.

**Classroom Observations (1 hour):** Team visits classrooms to see coaching in action, where the coach’s coaching moves are the focus of the observation.

**Discussion and Learning:** Short conversations about each observation, noting impact of coaching on the classroom teacher or students.

**Debriefing (30 minutes):** Extended conversation that helps to identify ideas for continuous improvement, clarification of learning, ideas to ponder, and potential next steps.

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tive to the walkthrough process and each participant has been trained as a coach. Through the coaching walkthrough protocol (Figure 4), these coaching skills are illuminated and every participant walks away having learned something that will enhance their job.

What is incredibly unique in the LBUSD coaching walkthrough process is the level of engagement and opportunity for learning for all participants (teachers, administrators, central office leaders) demonstrating a sweet spot within an organization that has built a culture of coaching. So, what does this look like in action?

**Continuous Improvement: Coaching Walkthrough Exemplars**

The Reading Recovery teachers/literacy coaches have grown in a leadership capacity at an accelerated rate in recent years because of their immersion in effective coaching. Not only have they grown as individuals, but as coaching teams. The Reading Recovery teacher leader and trainer of the literacy coaches has had the opportunity and privilege to watch the coaches change over time.
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and determine the efficacy of their work. The opportunity for a principal supervisor and principal to participate in a coaching walkthrough increases the likelihood that the principal will gain the knowledge necessary to ensure that teachers are effectively coached and that all teachers will benefit from the principal’s learning.

At a recent coaching walkthrough, the deputy superintendent of schools (and Reading Recovery site coordinator), decided to take a step back to observe the process in action. From the doorway of a first-grade classroom, she stood and took notes about the learning that was taking place. She could see the Reading Recovery teacher leader sideline coaching (i.e., labeling the aspects of effective literacy practice that were taking place in the moment and clarifying any wonderings that emerged) with the principal and principal supervisor. They looked on as a Reading Recovery teacher/literacy coach whispered in the ear of the classroom teacher about the next move she might try with her guided reading group and then took notes as the students responded to the classroom teacher’s instruction. The literacy coach then stepped back to take some notes that would later be shared with the coaching walkthrough team. After about 10 minutes of observation, the team turned to leave the room. The deputy superintendent of schools smiled because she knew that what had been observed was the power of coaching across ranks, across roles (teachers and administrators), and the impact that job-embedded learning has on adults. In the coaching walkthrough debriefing, the principal supervisor revealed his new learning and how that learning will allow him to more effectively coach the principal at the specific school and the other principals he supervises, increasing his ability to influence collective efficacy across schools.

Reflections from Our Experience

The Reading Recovery teacher leader has grown alongside the Reading Recovery teachers/literacy coaches. One such example is how she conducted the coaching walkthroughs in the first few years of implementing the Intensive Intervention Model (Baker & Brown, 2018). She believed her role was to organize and direct the coaching walkthrough upbrief, classroom observations, and debrief. She felt like she was responsible for the entire experience and outcome for all participants. As she has learned from others and reflected on her role during the coaching walkthrough process, she made a gradual and con-
science effort to let go and allow the group to orchestrate the discussion, reflections and outcomes. In the last year or two, the Reading Recovery teacher leader has noticed she is no longer in the role of a facilitator; she is just one voice in a highly collaborative process — just as it should be.

As the saying goes, “It takes a village to raise a child.” In thinking about whole-school improvement and the development of comprehensive literacy systems from the perspective of the deputy superintendent of schools/Reading Recovery site coordinator, the village must include teachers, school administrators, and central office leaders — all of whom collaborate, communicate, and contribute to the sweet spot that reveals itself from working together.

While it wasn’t apparent when our efforts first began, the work of our Intensive Intervention teams has grown exponentially over the past few years, in large part due to the shared coaching skills of teachers and administrators and a willingness to use those skills in concert with one another. In her role, the deputy superintendent has learned that having an engaged principal supervisor learning alongside teacher leaders and then providing coaching support to the principal cannot be underestimated. Having a Reading Recovery teacher who opens up her coaching practice to observation and feedback from the deputy superintendent, allowing for reciprocal learning, cannot be underestimated. Having a principal supervisor feel comfortable enough to reveal her own lack of understanding about guided reading during a coaching walkthrough speaks to an environment where risk taking is valued and cannot be underestimated. And, having a classroom teacher successful-

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Lessons Learned in Developing a Comprehensive System in a Coaching Culture

**One size does not fit all.** Coaches needs to be knowledgeable, flexible, and experienced to work effectively with administrators and teachers. Coaching is for teachers, site administrators, and central office leaders.

**Shifts in beliefs, theory, and practice take time.** Adults have many different learning styles and varying rates of development. Change will happen. Celebrate both the baby steps and giant steps to keep the work moving forward.

**Buy-in is best.** When administrators and teachers request or welcome a coach into their daily work, the collaborative efforts and gains develop at an accelerated pace. Seek buy-in whenever possible.

**Coaches need ongoing support and training.** Coaching other adults/peers can be a very challenging and complex process. Without guidance, support, accountability, and training, coaches will not be as successful or satisfied in their role.

**Administrative support is essential to coaching success.** School site administrators who are closely involved with the work through planning, regular classroom observations/ supervision, and attending professional development sessions see an increase in teacher efficacy and improved classroom instruction.

**Central Office participation can accelerate whole-school impact** and help to spread best practices across school sites. The changing role of principal supervisors calls upon them to be highly engaged in classroom instruction. Involve principal supervisors in your efforts, both as learners and coaches.
ly participate in side-by-side coaching with their Reading Recovery teacher/ literacy coach, while a team observes, cannot be underestimated. We are at our best in this culture of coaching where our educators’ strengths are being uncovered and developed as part of their everyday experience.

We leave you to reflect upon what coaching looks like in your school, district, or organization. Is it an activity sequestered to a small number of people? Is there room for expanding coaching toward the creation of a coaching culture? We encourage you to consider how a tool, such as the coaching walkthrough that we’ve described, might be used to design a process in your own organization that brings together teachers and administrators, without rank, to learn from one another, to express their expertise, and to use their coaching skills as a propellant to learning. Lastly, we leave you with the wise words of West & Cameron who help us to think about moving ourselves to action because all global change starts locally — and locally might just end up being in one classroom, one school, and/or one district:

If we coaches can be courageous and find our own unique voices, if we can learn to communicate clearly and effectively, we can have a powerful impact on those with whom we work. By simply changing the conversation, we can ultimately change the cultures in which we work! All global change begins locally. If we start influencing the school or district in which we work, before we know it, we’ll have created a movement that reshapes twenty-first century education. (2013, p. 86)

About the Authors

Over the last 27 years, Dr. Jill A. Baker has served as a teacher, principal, and central office administrator in the Long Beach Unified School District. She currently serves as deputy superintendent of schools, supporting a number of preK to high school initiatives including early learning and the alignment between preschools and elementary schools.

Kathleen A. Brown has worked in the field of education for 34 years as a teacher, literacy specialist, and Reading Recovery teacher; serving as the Reading Recovery teacher leader in Long Beach Unified School District for the last 19 years. She provides early literacy training for the district and serves on a variety of early intervention/early literacy committees.

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A Close Look at Coaching Conversations in Reading Recovery

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Editor’s note: All names are pseudonyms.

Introduction
Today literacy educators who are interested in teacher professional development have access to an extensive body of literature detailing recommendations for creating high-quality learning experiences for educators. From this body of research, a number of key characteristics of high-quality professional development have emerged, with the following four appearing to be most salient.

High-quality professional development
1. is ongoing and sustained over time.
   (Borko, 2004; Dall’Alba & Sandberg, 2006; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009; Gilrane, Russell & Roberts, 2008; Neuman & Cunningham, 2009; Richardson, 2003; Speck, 2002; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss & Shapley, 2007)

2. is grounded in real teaching experiences.
   (Borko, 2004; Dall’Alba & Sandberg, 2006; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Hill, 2009; Morrow & Casey, 2004; Neuman & Cunningham, 2009; Richardson, 2003; Speck, 2002; Yoon et al., 2007)

3. is differentiated to address the concerns and needs of individual learners.
   (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Richardson, 2003; Yoon et al., 2007)

4. often includes professional learning communities.
   (Borko, 2004; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Richardson, 2003; Speck, 2002)

Additionally, professional development initiatives that appear to impact student achievement positively often include outside facilitators (Borko, 2004; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Gilrane, Russell, & Roberts, 2008; Hill, 2009; Richardson, 2003; Yoon et al., 2007) or coaches (Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2010; Garet et al., 2008; Porche, 2012; Vernon-Feargans, Kainz, Hedrick, Ginsbeg, & Amendum, 2013).

As a Reading Recovery® professional, I find the four characteristics of high-quality professional development identified above apparent in Reading Recovery professional development at all levels of training. However, I have found that the existent literature lacks studies of the Reading Recovery professional development model that explore coaching, more specifically the language of coaching in the Reading Recovery context. Thus, I designed this study to address the gap. My goal was to explore and describe what happens within literacy coaching conversations with Reading Recovery teacher leaders-in-training in order to add to the conversation regarding high-quality professional development for teacher leaders and provide meaningful insights for Reading Recovery educators.

Purpose and Questions of Study
The purpose of this study was to understand the nature of the discourse in literacy coaching conversations within the context of training as a Reading Recovery professional. I investigated the language recorded during the literacy coaching sessions conducted by a university trainer with teacher leaders-in-training. Additionally, the teacher leaders-in-training recorded their conversations during their colleague visits, and this afforded the opportunity to explore peer coaching experiences. Importantly, I suggest that this study of coaching will allow Reading Recovery professionals serving as coaches at any level of professional development (i.e., training Reading Recovery or classroom educators and providing ongoing support to them) to glean insights into the important contributions coaching makes to a teacher’s thinking, decision making, expertise, and skill.
My original study was extensive and involved multiple data collection points across the entire academic year during the wide range of teacher leader training experiences. The current discussion focuses on one aspect of this larger study: the conversations and coaching occurring after Reading Recovery lessons taught by the teacher leaders-in-training.

This report addresses two questions:

1. What is revealed in analyses of coaching conversations, or interactions, between a teacher leader in training and her university trainer/coach collected at multiple times during the training year?

2. What does an analysis of conversations about instruction between peers, two teacher leaders-in-training, reveal about the nature of peer coaching?

In this discussion, I explore the implications of the findings to offer recommendations for coaching in the Reading Recovery context.

**Methods**

**Participants**

Two teacher leaders-in-training volunteered to participate in this study. Catie had 3 years of experience as a Reading Recovery teacher and was training as a Reading Recovery teacher leader in a newly established Reading Recovery site. Jill had 6 years of experience as a Reading Recovery teacher and was training as a Reading Recovery teacher leader after being out of Reading Recovery for 5 years working as a literacy coach at the primary grade level. Sally, a university trainer, served as the coach of both teacher leaders-in-training. She had 20 years of experience training teacher leaders and volunteered to participate in this study.

**Data collection and management**

Data sources for this report included (a) audio recordings of coaching sessions, (b) transcripts of audio recorded coaching sessions, and (c) three extracts from conversations about instruction conducted by participants following Reading Recovery lessons. Two of the extracts include a teacher leader-in-training (Catie) and the university trainer (Sally); the third extract is a post-lesson conversation held by the two teacher leaders-in-training during a colleague visit (Catie and Jill). This conversation focused on their joint problem solving of issues related to their instruction of Reading Recovery children and is therefore referred to here as a peer coaching conversation.

**Audio recordings.** The conversations that took place during the instructional coaching sessions were audio recorded. The conversations between Catie and Sally include two interactions regarding a Reading Recovery child’s lessons. One lesson occurred and was recorded within the early weeks of the teacher leader’s training year, and the second was recorded after almost 20 weeks of training. The third recorded conversation analyzed and reported here was a peer coaching conversation between the two Reading Recovery teacher leaders-in-training, following a Reading Recovery lesson taught by Catie.

**Transcripts.** Each of the coaching conversations was recorded by the participants independent of me. Upon receiving the audio files, I used Inqscribe to transcribe the audio recordings, resulting in verbatim transcriptions. I saved the transcripts as Microsoft® Word documents in a folder on my computer. When I completed all verbatim transcripts, the audio files and the verbatim transcripts were both uploaded into ATLAS.ti™ — a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software package used to manage such data. They were synced and remained available for the analyses.

**Tools applied to examine the coaching conversations**

Reading Recovery professionals are members of a “discursively mediated community” where concepts such as best practices in literacy instruction, the effective teaching of struggling readers, and the establishment of one’s identity as a Reading Recovery professional are socially constructed (Hruby, 2001, p. 51). For this study, I applied three tools to examine the coaching conversations and to look deeply at these naturally occurring interactions. These included discursive psychology, the Discursive Action Model, and conversation analysis which are described below.

Discursive psychology is concerned with events of everyday life and the social interactions between people that take place in both natural and institutional settings. Discursive psychology is a version of psychology that frames psychological concepts as discursive practices (Potter, 2012). Within discursive psychology, individuals make meaning through interactions with others. Ontologically, discursive psychology focuses upon what is made visible through interaction, and not what might reside internally for individuals. Thus, the focus in discursive psychology is
on talk as action and not on cognitive constructs. According to Potter (2012), talk, or discourse, is the primary means of human understanding and action.

The Discursive Action Model focuses on how individuals use language for a variety of functions including supporting their versions of events and managing accountability (Edwards & Potter, 1992). I chose to analyze my data using this model because both Reading Recovery and the model’s focus on accountability and responsibility.

Conversation analysis focuses on how talk is organized and allows for close examination of discourse, attending not only to what is said, but how it is said. Conversation analysts attend to micro aspects of speech such as pausing, intonation, rate of speech, and overlapping speech (Jefferson, 2004) to look for patterns within conversational interactions. I applied this technique to my analyses to allow further discoveries.

Data analysis
My data analysis was guided by the Discursive Action Model, conversation analysis, and attention to my two research questions. My analysis included the following phases: (a) repeated listening to audio recordings; (b) verbatim transcriptions of audio recordings; (c) open noticing and annotation of chunks of conversations, or statements; (d) memoing and coding of transcripts within with attention to the Discursive Action Model, conversation analysis, and the research questions; and (e) selecting extracts to include in this discussion.

Completion of the initial data analyses processes (open noticing and annotation of chunks of conversation, or statements) revealed 136 different codes and 525 instances of coding. The process of memoing and coding the 136 identified codes involved grouping like terms to form categories of related codes. Through this process, I discerned five categories of data: Questioning, Accountability, Fact and Interest (Discursive Action Model), Research Process, and Other. Finally, for this discussion of results, extracts representative of the category of Accountability were selected and analyzed further. This analysis included indicating very specifically my observations of the various speech aspects apparent in each person’s dialogue. As is typical in studies with a discursive psychology framework, I have used the symbols of Jeffersonian transcription to highlight particular aspects of speech including emphasis, volume, elongation of sounds, rate, and pauses (Jefferson, 2004).

Table 1. Jeffersonian Transcription Symbols and Meanings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[]</td>
<td>Brackets indicate overlapping talk and sections of overlap are aligned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>↑</td>
<td>Vertical arrows indicate an increase in pitch and are presented prior to pitch deviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>__</td>
<td>Underlining indicates emphasis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UP</td>
<td>Uppercase letters denote loud speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>°</td>
<td>Degree symbol before and after a selection notes quieter speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>Latching, or unbroken talk, is indicated by equal signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(.)</td>
<td>Indication of a pause shorter than .2 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(.5)</td>
<td>A longer pause with the length in seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; &lt;</td>
<td>Greater than and less than symbols indicate sped up talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; &gt;</td>
<td>Less than and greater than symbols indicate slowed down talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>A question mark indicates rising intonation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heh</td>
<td>Heh indicates laughter without words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(h)</td>
<td>Laughter within a word is noted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>me::</td>
<td>Colons note extended sounds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These symbols are displayed in Table 1, and the interpretation of these features are shared in the discussion of the extracts. It is suggested that noting the meanings of the symbols before reading the extracts will enhance interpretation of the dialogue.

Results
To detail results of this study, three areas of findings are presented. First, key, relevant observations revealed by consideration of all transcripts analyzed are presented to establish initial understandings. Second, this discussion is followed by display and discussion of extracts collected both early in one teacher leader’s training year and then again later in the training year to explore changes observed over time in the instructional/coaching experiences shared by the teacher leader in training and the trainer coach. And third, one transcript of peer coaching

in the context of a colleague visit shared by the two teacher leaders-in-training is presented. To facilitate this discussion of results, the teacher leaders-in-training are referred to as teachers, representative of their role as teachers of Reading Recovery children, and the university trainer is referred to as a coach.

**General observations**
The analyses of the recorded coaching conversations revealed that the discourse of coaching conversations within this Reading Recovery teacher leader training context categorized as *Accountability* focused on teacher decision making which included teacher responsibility taking.

Within the overall finding of teacher decision making, I found that coaches often probed for teachers’ rationales for decisions. Teachers also offered their accounts of decision making and rationales in response to comments made by a coach, and sometimes, they offered rationales spontaneously, without being prompted by questions or comments.

These findings, reflecting the larger discourse analyses of the data collected during this study, are also observed in the following extract discussions.

For the purposes of this discussion, I present specific extracts of coaching conversations from the large data set to explore teacher-coach interactions and the potential of coaching to support and extend teacher proficiencies in both decision making and instructional moves. Before each extract is presented, I provide minimal but necessary contextual information. After each extract is presented, I offer a line-by-line analysis of the language of the coaching conversation (discourse analysis), highlighting the accountable talk of the teacher, discursive resources employed by the participants, and noted aspects of speech. I share implications and reflections on the coaching experience.

**Extract 1**

**Coaching conversation following a lesson**
The first excerpt (Figure 1) is drawn from a coaching conversation held following Catie’s lesson with a Reading Recovery child, a lesson that occurred early in Catie’s training year and within the first weeks of the child’s series of Reading Recovery lessons. The coach, Sally, and Catie are discussing the actions Catie took to ensure that the student wouldn’t incorrectly build the word can as she worked with magnetic letters during the breaking portion of the lesson (Clay, 2016). The magnetic letters are used so that students have opportunities to construct words letter by letter. This task for the child involves correct letter orientation, correct sequencing (the word is constructed with the initial letter first, the middle letter next, and the final letter last), and correct directional movement (the word is constructed left to right following the constraints of printed English). In this extract, Sally asks a series of very direct questions that require Catie to articulate rationales for the multiple teaching actions she applied.

**Discourse analysis**
In Line 1, Sally asks Catie to think about specific actions she took to help the student construct the word correctly with magnetic letters. Sally uses the question words of “can you” and “what.” She also signals that the teaching was effective by saying “make sure she couldn’t go wrong” (Lines 1 and 2). After a brief pause, Catie uses a discursive marker (“I mean”) that indicates expansion of previous talk (Schiffrin, 1987). Sally offers “yeh” which in this case serves as a continuer (Schegloff, 1982). Catie’s continuation of her turn of talk in Lines 5 and 6 serve as confirmation of “yeh” as a continuer. In this turn of talk, Catie highlights the action of the student in response to her teaching action. In Line 7, Sally agrees that the teaching action taken by Catie was “helpful.” She then prompts Catie for another example of teaching that helped the child in “getting it correctly” (Lines 8 and 9). Catie pauses slightly before, with rising intonation that is common when asking a question, she offers another example of her teaching that contributed to the student’s success (Line 10). According to Schriffin (1987), the rising intonation from a speaker is a solicitation for recognition from the hearer. Sally provides that recognition on Line 11 and there is some overlapping speech. Overlapping speech can occur when one speaker is ending a turn and another is beginning a turn (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974) and shows participants’ attention to the turn-by-turn nature of talk (Jefferson, 1988). In this case, the overlap seems to indicate the receipt of the information from Sally, while Catie says “or” which might mean she is going to offer another teaching decision.

Just after the overlapping talk, Sally asks a specific question about an action Catie took (Lines 11 and 12). In Line
13, Catie responds by providing the specifics of the action. The rest of Catie’s turns (Lines 15 and 17) are agreements with the summary offered by Sally (Lines 14 and 16). Sally ends the exchange with a compliment (Line 18).

**Discussion**

In this extract, Catie articulates specific instructional moves she made in her responses to the direct questioning and the confirmations of the coach. In naming her specific teaching actions, Catie is taking responsibility for her teaching decisions. She articulates clear thinking about her teaching actions as she responds to the coach; and, Sally used a variety of questions and prompts to engage Catie in reflecting on the child and her teaching. In Reading Recovery, effective teacher decision making is highly valued. If coaching conversations are a means of improving teacher decision making by allowing teachers to talk through their decisions and take responsibility for their decisions, this type of interaction appears to have been effective with Catie.

Catie’s responses represent accountable teacher talk. I suggest that not only is she taking responsibility for her teaching; she demonstrates knowledge of the theory and procedures detailed in Clay’s (2016) text, *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals*. Even though she does not attempt to quote the text in this conversation or to reference specific theory, her teaching and comments reflect her grasp of Reading Recovery theory and procedures, and the coach does not discuss procedures directly as it does not appear necessary.

In their article, “Fostering Teacher Learning Through Dialogue in Training Sessions” (2006), Forbes and Briggs highlight various dialogue techniques used to foster socially constructed learning: clarifying, challenging, directing/redirection attention, eliciting, extending, shaping language, linking, instructing, reinforcing/affirming and summarizing (p. 43). Sally’s comments and questions in the extract above clearly demonstrate these techniques. In Line 4, Sally says “yeh” in response to Catie’s decision to provide a model. Her comment serves as a reinforce-
Catie's confidence in sharing her thinking and concerns about her student and her instruction. Catie's experiences teaching for and dis-

Extract 2

Coaching conversation following teacher’s instruction

Figure 2 displays the conversation between Catie and Sally following Catie’s lesson recorded almost 20 weeks into her training year with a child who was reading at a level nearing the average level of proficiency for his grade. Thus, discontinuing the student’s series of lessons became the focus of this coaching conversation. Catie leads this conversation by sharing her re-evaluation of the child’s reading proficiency, her observations and interpretation of the child’s reading behaviors, and her thinking about the instruction needed to enhance the child’s independent problem solving. Catie’s experiences teaching for and discussing lessons with Sally appear to have established Catie’s confidence in sharing her thinking and concerns about her student and her instruction.

Discourse analysis

The extract begins with Catie initiating the discussion of her student, Amanda, with her coach (Line 1). Sally responds by connecting to Catie’s statement by the use of “and,” and in a loud voice offers, “about to go” (Line 2).

With this statement, Sally is referring to Amanda successfully completing her series of Reading Recovery lessons, as she was demonstrating a literacy processing system and reading grade-level materials strategically. In her response, Catie does some hedging (“well,” “I hope so,” “um”) and pausing. Her use of “well” at the beginning of the turn is setting up a contrast, or dispreferred response, to the earlier statement made by Sally (Pomerantz, 1994). Sally’s comment related to Amanda being ready to leave Reading Recovery might be in contrast to Catie’s assessment, as evidenced by Catie’s hesitations and hedging.

In Line 3, Catie refers to the type of text the child was reading (“she was in some 14s” — meaning Level 14 text). In response to how the child was reading the text, Catie comments (Lines 3 and 4) on the action she felt she needed to take as a teacher: “I felt like I just needed to slow it down a little bit.” This comment was offered spontaneously and suggests the teacher is taking responsibility for her decision.

In Line 5, Catie mentions the influence of “something we talked about in class.” The mentioning of this connection to the formal graduate classes she is engaged in may be an effort to support her earlier teaching decision (of needing to “slow it down a bit”) and add credibility to her decision. As Edwards and Potter (1992) discuss, building consensus and collaboration is a way of “warranting the factuality of a version” (p. 163).

Catie’s turn of talk in Line 5 ends with her voice trailing off in laughter. For Catie, the laughter may be attached to her vulnerability around her teaching decision now being linked to new information she gleaned in class. According to Glenn (2003), when a first speaker offers “laughs” it may be in a self-deprecating way and may indicate a speaker’s ability to laugh at oneself (p. 104). In Line 6, Sally takes up the invitation to laugh from Catie and laughing as well. Glenn (2003) notes that laughter is sometimes an indication of agreement. In Line 7, Catie highlights an action the child took, and that is: “using her finger to do the whole” (Line 7 and 8). Sally seems to be offering another descriptor of the same child action in Line 9. Sacks (1992) offers an explanation of this type of feature, i.e., a description from one individual eliciting further description or an extension from another. More specifically, this interaction demonstrates the joint nature of this conversation in which understanding is being built by both participants. The teacher, Catie, is leading the interaction, and the coach, Sally, is contributing.
In Lines 10–12, Catie highlights two problematic student actions (“really slow” and “looking at me”) and the decisions she made in response to the problematic action (“I had to say what can you do to help yourself” and “baby her through this”). In response to Catie’s comments, Sally offers “yeh” which serves as an invitation for Catie to continue (Schegloff, 1982). In Line 14, Catie does continue by commenting on her thoughts and what she wants the child to do. Interestingly, she uses the pronoun “we” in this comment, saying “this is not what we want.” Catie seems to be speaking of the Reading Recovery “we,” as the type of student dependency she describes is not what is valued or endorsed in Reading Recovery instruction. Catie then demonstrates responsibility taking by offering what she wants the child to “know.” In her turn of talk on Line 16, Sally adds to Catie’s comments about what the child needs to do by saying “do it.”

In Line 17, Catie begins her turn of talk by repeating what Sally has just stated. This interaction between Catie and Sally on Lines 14–17 displays more joint construction and agreement around teacher decision making and goals for student action. In Line 17, Catie continues her list of actions that she wants the student to take “to know if she is right or wrong,” “needs to change it,” and “move on.”

In Line 18, she offers her thoughts regarding her decision making and takes responsibility by deciding to “make it a little easier.” She also reports that she is still “questioning” her teaching (Line 19). In Line 20, Sally asks a clarifying question about what Catie is questioning (“whether it’s still too hard”) and Catie, in Line 21, takes it up as a question and answers affirmatively that she is still questioning if it is too hard for the student to “do the work.”
Discussion
This extract allows consideration of Catie’s development over time as this post-lesson/coaching conversation occurred almost 20 weeks after the coaching conversation presented in Extract 1. In this instance, Catie is clearly directing the coaching conversation and operating with a higher degree of confidence; willing to share her reflections, her observations, her doubts, and her next moves rather spontaneously. Sally does not ask many direct questions but encourages Catie to reflect on her teaching and clarify her thinking and the student’s instructional needs. Their interaction suggests that Catie may now view Sally as a colleague to collaborate with in her problem solving. As Jones (1995) has noted, such relationships are concomitant with increased independence and autonomy displayed by the teacher who is being coached. Catie exhibits the traits of a reflective teacher able to evaluate and direct her instructional decisions and actions independently.

Extract 3
Conversation between peers following instruction
Figure 3 displays a conversation shared by Catie and Jill, peers in teacher leader training. During their training experiences, the two engaged in many opportunities to teach for one another and problem solve instructional challenges together. When sharing lessons, their conversations created peer coaching experiences. In this extract, Catie has just taught her Reading Recovery student and Jill is serving as her coach. Interestingly, as the postlesson sharing unfolded, Jill shifted the focus of the conversation to her own recent teaching and the difficulties she had experienced. At this point, Catie responded as a coach and the extract displays her coaching of Jill.

Discourse analysis
This extract opens with Jill sharing with Catie her concerns about a lesson she taught previously, and this prompts Catie to assume the role of coach. Jill uses the phrase “you know” which brings Catie into a shared knowledge experience (Schriffin, 1987). She refers to her lessons as “really awful” (Line 2). Catie responds with a ‘why’ question (Line 4). In her response to the question, Jill’s pitch is elevated and she emphasizes the word “because” (Line 5). In this instance, both “Why” (the first part) and “because” (the second part) are an adjacency pair (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). Jill pauses before offering a reason for why the lesson was awful. There is some laughter in her response (Line 5). This laughter may serve to soften the discomfort involved with acknowledging a mistake in teaching (Glenn, 2003). Catie’s turn of talk in response to Jill’s statement is laughter (Line 6), so she may be joining in the laughter to ease Jill’s acknowledgement. Jill continues her explanation (Line 7) to which Catie offers a comment in agreement that sounds somewhat sarcastic in its tone. Having books that are too hard would make the reading very difficult for a Reading Recovery student, and her sarcastic comment is also minimizing the difficulty a bad book choice would create. In her turn of talk beginning on Line 9, Jill discusses her planning for the text and her understanding that her book choice was “horrible.”

When describing her student, Jill uses a three-part list, as she describes her student with “vim and vigor and awesomeness” (Jefferson, 1990; Potter & Edwards, 1992). This discursive device denotes completion (Jefferson, 1990) and lends credibility to her fact construction (Potter & Edwards, 1992). Jill takes responsibility for her teaching actions, as she describes the behavior of her student in response to the text choice and her acknowledgement that “it wasn’t good” referencing her book choice and her student’s subsequent reading of the text. In a lower tone, she reports looking on the back of the book to see the level 4. She is laughing as she mentions the action she will take as a result of this experience (Line 13). Catie responds with laughter again (Line 15) and then repairs when discussing the notion of “fault” (Line 17) (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 2008). The use of laughter in both instances may be smoothing over the difficulty of the notion of fault (Glenn, 2003). Catie concludes (Line 17) and Jill agrees (Line 18) that the poor reading by the student due to the bad book choice was Jill’s “fault.”

Discussion
In this extract, the two teacher leaders-in-training display comfort sharing their perspectives and questions, and Jill responded to all questions posed by Catie in a productive way. Without hesitation or seeming discomfort, Jill offered several examples of her teaching decisions and discussed her responsibility in making the reading difficult for the child, and that was due to her text selection. According to Heritage (1997), the symmetry in their relationship (i.e., both are teacher leaders-in-training) may have allowed Jill to respond with little hesitation, explain her actions, and take responsibility for her teaching decisions.
The interaction above reinforces the importance and potential of teacher colleague visits to support teacher’s professional learning and development. With their peers, it appears that teachers take responsibility for their actions, provide explanations for their decisions, and share important questions. Colleague visits allow teachers the opportunity to problem solve collaboratively and bring alternative perspectives to conversations focused on multiple aspects of teaching and learning. These observations align with Clay’s (2016) suggestions of the power and importance of colleague visits.

Summary and Conclusion
The goal of this study was exploration of coaching in the context of Reading Recovery training, a professional development model recognized for high quality. Discourse analysis techniques were applied to recorded coaching conversations to discern implications revealed by examination of the language used by both a coach and those in training. The results include specific findings that may have important implications for those engaged in coaching practices to enhance the professional development of any educators.

Implications of this study are limited in that the teachers studied were Reading Recovery teacher leaders-in-training and they had prior experience as Reading Recovery teachers. This suggests that they entered their current training with more knowledge of procedures and theory than one would expect of a teacher engaged in any level of Reading Recovery training for the first time. Likewise, they would have had previous experiences being coached both during their training year and during subsequent professional development opportunities. This experience may have contributed to their engagement in and their contributions to their current training and coaching situation. Nevertheless, this study revealed the multiple ways a coach

| Figure 3. Extract of Conversation Between Peers Following Instruction |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Line | Turns of Talk |
| 1 | Jill but I you kno-w when I'm sitting there (.) like in my lessons (.) my really |
| 2 | awful lessons on Thursday or whenever it was Tuesday or yesterday it seems like |
| 3 | forever ago |
| 4 | Catie why did you say that? |
| 5 | Jill ↑ because (.) first of all(h) my basket of 3s were reall(h)y 4s |
| 6 | Catie heh heh heh heh |
| 7 | Jill so three out of the four (.) books = |
| 8 | Catie = that could make some things challenging |
| 9 | Jill were way too hard even though I'd planned for em and I looked through em |
| 10 | (.) when I did the first one and I was like oh my gosh this is horrible and my little |
| 11 | girl who is full of vim and vigor and awesomeness when ugh and I'm like OK OK |
| 12 | right there I knew this is not good and oh it wasn’t good and then (.) I looked back |
| 13 | it said = heh so guess what I am going to check all the books heh from now(h) |
| 14 | on(h) |
| 15 | Catie heh heh heh |
| 16 | Jill and |
| 17 | Catie well that was partly not your fault I mean it was your fault |
| 18 | Jill well it was ugh |
| 19 | Catie but that I mean was just a miss (.) whatever |
(university trainer) and teacher leader-in-training (teacher) engage and benefit from coaching experiences in relation to decision making and accountability. I therefore suggest that such understandings are of benefit to all Reading Recovery professionals engaged in supporting the professional learning of any teacher through coaching.

**Contributions of the coach during post-lesson conversations**

Reflecting on the discourse of the coach participating in this study, specific techniques were found to promote teacher reflection, decision making, and responsibility-taking. These coaching techniques reflect the dialogue techniques offered by Forbes and Briggs (2006) discussed previously as well as

- engaging teachers in sharing their observations of student’s responses and behaviors;
- restating teacher’s comments and linking observations to theory;
- seeking the teacher’s reasons for specific instructional procedures;
- reinforcing responses by agreement or by offering extensions;
- extending teacher’s comments with links to procedures;
- confirming teacher’s observations; and
- validating teacher’s thinking and contributions.

When considering evidence of changes in coaching conversations over time, it was apparent that the coach studied assumed a shared, positive, problem-solving stance with the teacher leader-in-training and this was most clearly revealed in the coaching conversation occurring after multiple weeks of training, and therefore after multiple coaching opportunities. At this later time, the coach honored her teacher’s independent decision making and responsibility-taking and followed the teacher’s lead without the need to pose questions to direct her thinking or engagement.

The data, gathered at two points during the training year, do not allow documentation of the precise changes that may have occurred incrementally during the intervening coaching experiences. However, with this evidence we might hypothesize that this coach was effective in supporting the development of teacher leaders-in-training who became more effective observing their students, analyzing instructional needs, considering the implications of theoretical understandings, and adjusting instruction independently and effectively. It appears that the coach and those in training built a level of trust that allowed them to grow together and resolve any challenges that arose.

**Contributions of the teacher leaders-in-training during post-lesson conversations with the coach**

The examination of the discourse of the teacher leaders-in-training during post-lessons coaching conversations were observed engaging with their coach by

- explaining actions and decisions;
- stating understandings of appropriate instructional procedures;
- linking instruction and decisions to theory demonstrating understandings of connections between theory and practice;
- building on their understandings by referencing specific reader’s behaviors;
- demonstrating accountability by identifying their mistakes;
- sharing confusions, seeking advice, asking questions;
- leading the conversation after multiple experiences; and
- demonstrating autonomy.

In summary, this analysis of accountable talk identified in the conversations of two teacher leaders-in-training confirms the power of coaching to impact and support decision making and responsibility-taking. Not only did the coaching experiences lead to their efficacious engagement in professional problem solving with their coach; their experiences with their coach led to more insights, more self-awareness, and more possibilities. Finally, the important benefits for those in training to share peer coaching and problem-solving opportunities afforded by colleague visits was apparent. Colleague visits afford peers opportunities to further explore theory and teaching procedures in order to improve opportunities for children’s learning.
In conclusion, this study adds some clarity to our understanding of coaching in the context of Reading Recovery and more specifically in the context of teacher leader training. It confirms that coaching involves two-way communication that is powerful in enhancing the thinking, professional growth, and problem solving of both the teacher leader-in-training and the coach. This realization adds nuanced understanding of the high quality ascribed to Reading Recovery professional development model at all levels of training.

References


About the Author

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IDECEvaluation Report 2017–2018

Students Continue to Generate Strong Outcomes

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

This report features the results of the 2017–2018 school year for the Reading Recovery® and Descubriendo la Lectura interventions in the United States. As described herein, Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura have continued to maintain strong outcomes, both in terms of progress across the length of the intervention, and as contrasted against comparison groups. These results are also comparable to those of the 2016–2017 school year (Lomax, 2018).

Summary of Reading Recovery Outcomes

Characteristics of participants
During the 2017–2018 school year, Reading Recovery was implemented by 16 university training centers responsible for overseeing the intervention in schools located in 42 states (as shown in Table 1). More than 35,000 children were selected to participate in the one-to-one intervention. There were 4,526 teachers trained in Reading Recovery, and they delivered the intervention with support from 266 teacher leaders in 211 training sites serving over 900 school districts. There were a total of 2,975 schools implementing Reading Recovery, and these schools were located in urban (27%), suburban (33.8%), and rural areas (39.2%).

Demographic information for the participating Reading Recovery students reveals that 54% were boys and 70% were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Children represented different ethnic backgrounds, including 56% White, 19% Hispanic, 17% African American, 2% Asian American, 1% Native American, and 5% representing either multiple races or other ethnic backgrounds.

The professional experiences of Reading Recovery teachers participating in the annual data collection process and reported as means include a mean of 20.2 years of teaching experience and a mean of 8.4 years teaching Reading Recovery and/or Descubriendo la Lectura. On average, these teachers taught 7.5 Reading Recovery children during the current school year, and 42.1 children beyond their Reading Recovery load. Thus, they instructed a mean total of 49.7 children accounting for all teaching roles/assignments during this academic year.

Results
The assessment used in this analysis of outcomes for Reading Recovery was An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement (Observation Survey) (Clay, 2013). This was administered to Reading Recovery students, a random sample of comparison students, and a sample of tested-not-instructed (TNI) students at fall, mid-year, and year-end. TNI students were those students considered for Reading Recovery, tested with the Observation Survey in the fall and again at mid-year, but not selected to receive Reading Recovery by the middle of the school year. They were also tested at year-end and comprised a second comparison group.

Of the students who received a complete series of Reading Recovery
lessons, end-of-program outcomes were as follows:

- 70% (n = 18,852) reached at least average levels of reading and writing achievement and their intervention programs were successfully discontinued.
- 30% (n = 7,989) made progress, but did not demonstrate proficiency at average levels of reading and writing. These students were recommended for consideration of additional interventions. Most notable were 5,412 students who were recommended for small-group literacy instruction or intervention other than special education, and 1,790 students who were recommended for literacy-related special education services.

Of the students with incomplete Reading Recovery interventions, outcomes were as follows:

- 18% (n = 6,441) were still in lessons at year-end without enough time in the school year to complete the intervention.
- 4% (n = 1,303) moved during the school year while still enrolled in lessons.

The data were further examined to explore two critical questions regarding the effectiveness of the Reading Recovery intervention. The first question is whether Reading Recovery students reach average levels of literacy achievement at the end of first grade as compared to all other first-grade children who did not receive the intervention. Here the average Observation Survey scores of Reading Recovery students were compared against all random sample students.

The Observation Survey is one metric of literacy achievement level.) The second question is whether Reading Recovery students performed better at the end of the intervention than they would have performed if they were not provided the intervention. Here the average Observation Survey scores of Reading Recovery students were compared to the Observation Survey scores of TNI students.

These analyses were conducted using a Total Score derived from the Observation Survey. The Total Score scale of the Observation Survey 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 tasks from fall, mid-year, and year-end were used to create the total measure. The six tasks are Text Reading Level, Writing Vocabulary, Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words, Letter Identification, Ohio Word Test, and Concepts About Print. 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 year-end Observation Survey scores were chosen from each group, respectively, to represent an independent sample of students from the three time points during the school year.

The six tasks were treated as partial credit ‘items’ in a Rasch-based item response theory (IRT) analysis to convert the total raw scores to log-odd values ranging from approximately -4 to 4. Those values were then converted through a linear transformation to create the final 0 to 800-point scale. As student scores were from various test points during the school year, the scale reflects yearlong growth. Thus, for example, a Total Score of 500 indicates the same literacy achievement level at any time point. Additional details on the Observation Survey (e.g., scale construction, reliability and validity evidence, normality,

![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, 2017–2018](image-url)
Strong effects such as these would not be possible without the strong commitment of our Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura trainers, teacher leaders, and teachers, who consistently seek to improve their teaching craft.

equal interval scales, unidimensionality) are described in D’Agostino (2012) and D’Agostino, Rodgers, and Mauck (2017).

Figure 1 shows the mean Observation Survey Total Scores for successfully discontinued Reading Recovery students served first (fall entry) during the school year, Reading Recovery students served second (spring entry), random sample students, and TNI students. Only students with valid scores at all three tests points were included in the analysis. As in past years, the TNI group had a slightly higher fall mean score relative to fall and spring entry Reading Recovery students, but not as high as the random sample students.

To examine the results, first consider the fall entry Reading Recovery students. By mid-year, these students had a greater mean gain than spring entry students, TNI students, and random sample students. Thus, the fall entry scores of Reading Recovery students, whose mean Observation Survey score was the lowest of all groups initially, were highest by mid-year. From mid-year to year-end, the average growth rate of the Reading Recovery fall entry students was slightly less than the average random sample student 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.

Consider next the spring entry Reading Recovery students. These students had a smaller fall-to-mid-year mean gain than TNI students. Their lower performance was to be expected as this group did not receive the intervention until the second half of the school year. Thus, during the fall, the spring entry students serve as an additional control. Once they begin their intervention in the second half of the year, spring entry students had the largest growth rate. In addition, the fall entry, spring entry, and random sample means were approximately the same at year-end testing, indicating that the Reading Recovery students had caught up to their random sample peers.

Figure 2 shows the results for the same four groups across the same three time points for Text Reading Level. The general trend as shown in Figure 2 is similar to that for the Observation Survey Total Score. The Reading Recovery discontinued students (both fall and spring entry) at year-end testing had not totally caught up to the random sample students. Note, however, that Reading Recovery students (both fall and spring entry) had reached grade-level expectations and had nearly achieved the text reading level of the random sample students.

Further analyses examined the means and magnitude of mean differences (effect sizes) at fall and year-end testing between the Reading Recovery students and the random sample or

![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, 2017–2018](image-url)
TNI students. Tables 2 and 3 display the total and individual task scores of fall entry and spring entry Reading Recovery discontinued students pooled together as compared with the random sample and TNI students respectively. For both tables, the far right-hand columns denote the effect sizes in terms of standardized mean differences. (Positive values indicate that the Reading Recovery mean was greater than the comparison mean value.) The effect size measure utilized was Cohen’s $d$ (Cohen, 1988; Lomax & Hahs-Vaughn, 2012) which can be thought of in the metric of a standard deviation. Thus, a value of $d = +1.00$ would indicate that the Reading Recovery children had a mean score of one standard deviation above the comparison group. A common standard to judge $d$ is that .2 is a small effect size, .5 a medium effect size, and .8 a large effect size.

As displayed in Table 2, mean Reading Recovery students’ fall scores on all measures were substantially lower than the random sample, with medium to very large effect sizes (ranging from -.33 to -.83). By year-end testing, there were relatively small effect sizes in favor of the Reading Recovery students (ranging from .04 to .20), except for Text Reading Level (-.06). Thus, the Reading Recovery sample began substantially below the random sample in the fall and by year-end had surpassed them on all but the Text Reading Level measure. More specifically, the effect size changes from fall to year-end were as follows: Total Score (0.89), Text Reading Level (0.58), Writing Vocabulary (0.71), Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words (0.84), Letter Identification (0.40), Ohio Word Test (1.02), and Concepts About Print (0.79). Thus, the Reading Recovery sample, as compared to the random sample, increased by three-quarters of a standard deviation unit from fall to year-end across the measures (an average effect size change of 0.75).
The fall and year-end test scores for Reading Recovery discontinued students (fall and spring entry combined) and TNI students are shown in Table 3. In fall testing, the Reading Recovery sample Total Score mean and individual task means were all lower than the comparison TNI group’s scores, with effect sizes ranging from -.20 (small) to -.50 (medium). By year-end testing, the Reading Recovery students had surpassed the TNI students on all measures, with effect sizes ranging from .14 (small) to .55 (medium). Thus, the Reading Recovery sample began in the fall substantially below the TNI sample and by year-end had surpassed them for all measures.

More specifically, the effect size changes from fall to year-end were as follows: Total Score (0.94), Text Reading Level (0.81), Writing Vocabulary (0.76), Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words (0.68), Letter Identification (0.34), Ohio Word Test (0.78), and Concepts About Print (0.81). Thus, the Reading Recovery sample, as compared to the TNI sample, increased by nearly three-quarters of a standard deviation unit from fall to year-end averaged across the measures (an average effect size change of 0.73).

In addition to these results, examination of the national data reveal the following outcomes of interest:

• First, on the Observation Survey Total Score, the discontinued students demonstrated acceleration from the 22th percentile in the fall to the 45th percentile at year-end.
• Second, in regard to classroom teachers’ reports of their reading group placements of Reading Recovery students, the discontinued students’ placement in average or higher reading groups increased from 15% in the fall to 85% in these groups by year-end.
• Third, only 2% (N = 328) of all discontinued Reading Recovery students (N = 18,644) were referred to and placed in special education services following the intervention.

These are indications of the efficacy of the Reading Recovery intervention. At year end, discontinued students (a) have accelerated their literacy learning and have demonstrated performance within an average range on the Observation Survey Total Score, (b) have moved to the average, above average, or well above average reading groups, and (c) are not found to be referred for special education services in large numbers.

Summary of Descubriendo la Lectura Outcomes

Characteristics of participants
The Descubriendo la Lectura intervention, the reconstruction of Reading Recovery in Spanish, is designed for first graders who receive their initial literacy instruction in Spanish. Table 4 provides details about participation in Descubriendo la Lectura in the United States. For the 2017–2018 school year, 470 Descubriendo la Lectura children were instructed by 72 teachers. These Descubriendo la Lectura students attended 72 schools in 29 school districts located in eight states. These teachers were supported by 29 teacher leaders. In addition, of all Descubriendo la Lectura students served, 56% were boys, 96% were Hispanic, 95% qualified for free or reduced-price lunch. The schools these students attended were located in urban (53.6%), suburban (39.3%), and rural areas (7.1%).

Trained teachers had a mean of 19.2 years of teaching experience and 7.4 years of Descubriendo la Lectura and/or Reading Recovery teaching experience. These teachers taught from 2 to 8 Descubriendo la Lectura children on a daily basis (mode = 4), while teaching a mean of 6.3 Descubriendo la Lectura children across the school year. On average, they also taught 35.4 children in their other teaching roles for a mean total of 41.7 children assigned to them during this academic year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entity</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>University Training Centers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher Training Sites</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>States</td>
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<td>29</td>
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<td>School Buildings</td>
<td>72</td>
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<td>Teacher Leaders</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DLL Students</td>
<td>470</td>
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<tr>
<td>Random Sample for DLL</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tested-Not-Instructed for DLL</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Some students in the Control Group of the random assignment study did not receive Descubriendo la Lectura. Their data are excluded from results in other tables in this report but included here.
Results

The assessment used in this analysis of outcomes for Descubriendo la Lectura was *Instrumento de observación de los logros de la lecto-escritura inicial* (Instrumento de Observación) (Escamilla, et al., 1996). This was administered to both participating Descubriendo la Lectura students and a random sample of students for comparison purposes.

To secure a random sample, one half of the Descubriendo la Lectura schools were randomly chosen and two randomly selected students from each of these schools were administered the *Instrumento de Observación*. This random sample was the only comparison group available for the current analyses. Descubriendo la Lectura schools had last collected TNI data in 2011–2012, but due to very small samples in subsequent years leading to unstable average scores, IDEC has not continued ongoing, annual TNI testing and related data analyses.

Of all students served in Descubriendo la Lectura, 41% \((n = 193)\) reached the average reading levels of their peers and thus were discontinued successfully. Another 27% \((n = 125)\) were recommended for further evaluation, 2% \((n = 11)\) moved, and 27% \((n = 125)\) received incomplete interventions. Of the students who completed the intervention (both discontinued and referred students), 61% were discontinued. In regard to the referred students, of note were 69% recommended for small-group literacy instruction or intervention other than special education. Sixteen percent were recommended for literacy-related special education services.
For further analyses, the random sample students’ scores on the six tasks of the Instrumento de Observación were combined to create a Total Score (with a 0 to 800-point range) that reflects literacy development throughout the school year. This parallels the processes applied to Reading Recovery data described earlier.

Among the fall entry, spring entry, and random sample groups, the largest growth from fall to mid-year on the Instrumento de Observación Total Score was for the fall entry Descubriendo la Lectura students (see Figure 3). From mid-year to year-end, the largest growth was for the spring entry Descubriendo la Lectura students. Together these results indicate that the greatest gain for all students observed was during the respective Descubriendo la Lectura intervention periods. Spring entry students and random sample students showed approximately the same gain from fall to mid-year. However, from mid-year to year-end, the spring entry Descubriendo la Lectura students outgained the random sample.

The trend for Text Level scores (see Figure 4) was very similar to the Total Score trend. By year-end testing, both fall and spring entry Descubriendo la Lectura students had substantially surpassed the scores on both measures as compared to the random sample group. In other words, both Descubriendo la Lectura groups began the school year behind the random sample, but caught up to and exceeded the random sample group by the end of the year.

In Table 5 are the mean scores and effect sizes (Cohen's $d$) for fall and spring entry Descubriendo la Lectura discontinued students combined, as well as the random sample students at both fall and end of year testing.

In fall testing, the Descubriendo la Lectura sample, Instrumento de Observación Total Score mean, and individual task means were all lower than the comparison random sample group, with effect sizes ranging from -.24 (small) to -.65 (medium). By year-end testing, the Descubriendo la Lectura students had surpassed the random sample students on all measures, with effect sizes ranging from .21 (small) to .35 (small). Thus, the Descubriendo la Lectura sample began the fall substantially below the random sample and by year-end had surpassed them on all measures.

More specifically, the effect size changes for the Descubriendo la Lectura students and random sample students from fall to year-end were as follows: Instrumento de Observación Total Score (.86), Text Reading Level (Análisis Actual del Texto, .83), Writing Vocabulary (Escritura de Vocabulario, .85), Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words (Oír y Anotar los Sonidos en las Palabras, 0.73), Letter Identification (Identificación de Letras, 0.52), Ohio Word Test (Prueba de Palabras, 0.93), and Concepts About Print (Conceptos del Texto Impreso, 0.62). Overall, the Descubriendo la Lectura sample, as compared to the random sample, increased by slightly more than three-quarters of a standard deviation unit from fall to year-end averaged across the measures (an average effect size change of 0.76).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrumento de Observación Task</th>
<th>Discontinued Fall</th>
<th>Year-End</th>
<th>Random Sample Fall</th>
<th>Year-End</th>
<th>Effect Size ($d$) Fall</th>
<th>Year-End</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Score</td>
<td>465.1</td>
<td>580.2</td>
<td>488.3</td>
<td>566.8</td>
<td>-0.50</td>
<td>0.36</td>
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<td>Análisis Actual del Texto</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>-0.62</td>
<td>0.21</td>
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<td>Escritura de Vocabulario</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>-0.60</td>
<td>0.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oír y Anotar los Sonidos en las Palabras</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>38.4</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>-0.43</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identificación de Letras</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prueba de Palabras</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>-0.62</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptos del Texto Impreso</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>-0.36</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other results noted in the data include the following:

- First, on the Instrumento de Observación Total Score the discontinued students have accelerated their learning as shown in their progression from the 24th percentile in the fall to the 53rd percentile at year-end.
- Second, when considering the classroom reading group placements assigned by their teachers, the discontinued students’ placements increased from 12% in the average or higher reading groups in the fall to 92% in such groups by year-end.
- Finally, only 1% (N = 1) of all discontinued students (N = 189) were referred and placed in special education following the intervention.

These are additional indications of the efficacy of the Descubriendo la Lectura intervention, as discontinued students (a) have accelerated their literacy learning and have achieved an average Total Score at year-end, (b) have been advanced to the average, above average or well above average reading groups, and (c) are not referred for special education services in large numbers.

**Conclusion**

The results reported here for the Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura interventions, as well as prior results (e.g., Lomax, 2018), indicate that Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura continue to be amongst a very small list of educational interventions with strong impacts on student learning in the United States. Now in its 34th year of implementation in 2018–2019, students receiving these interventions continue to generate strong outcomes. Strong effects such as these would not be possible without the strong commitment of our Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura trainers, teacher leaders, and teachers, who consistently seek to improve their teaching craft. The efforts of these educators continue to result in outstanding literacy success for participating students.

**References**


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**About the Author**

Jeff Brymer-Bashore is the director and co-principal investigator at the International Data Evaluation Center (IDEC) and has worked at IDEC for more than 18 years. With a degree in mathematics from The Ohio State University, he specializes in designing and managing large-scale data collections systems. When he is not working with data, Jeff is a DJ and children’s entertainer.
As president of the Reading Recovery Council this past year, I have had the privilege and honor to see and hear about the important work of literacy teachers across the U.S. and Canada. By my estimate, I have personally worked with more than 2,500 in the past school year alone: K-12 classroom teachers, Reading Recovery professionals, literacy coaches, special education and ELL teachers, and administrators — all working hard to increase our understanding of literacy learning. This fact is humbling and led me to some deep reflection on how I got to be the teacher I am today.

Naturally, I went back to my childhood, where I know that my family instilled in me a strong work ethic and planted the belief that we are stronger together than we are as individuals. They also taught me that one of life’s greatest endeavors is to become helpful and useful to others. These priceless lessons remain with me today and guide my every decision.

My mother claims that my passion for learning was there when I was born. As she recalls, I was enthralled with knowledge and knew that there was more to be had at this place called school. My K-12 years were bursting with opportunities and I was in my element. But even if I had magically possessed a passion for learning at birth, it would have died without the constant feeding and support of my family and my K-12 teachers. What I saw in them, the ability to inspire and teach, led to my becoming a teacher myself.

My university years at The Ohio State University continued to be formative, with new and interesting information that I had not yet considered. And a new developing passion — being in love with how children learn to read. As a recent graduate, I felt well-prepared for my first job in Whitehall, Ohio. But, what I didn’t know yet, was how much I didn’t know yet!

During that first year as a first-grade teacher, I implemented a workshop approach to both reading and writing. Though there were no books yet on how to do comprehensive literacy in the primary grades, what I did have was an amazing group of colleagues in Whitehall: Sharon Esswein, Carole Heacock, Alisa Limbers, and Vicki Gartner. Along with the support of Dr. C. Ray Williams at Ohio State, we read, studied, planned, implemented, and revised together, and I learned firsthand the importance of being part of a learning community that forever shaped my path.

It was also during this time that the Reading Recovery teacher at our building, Cheryl Hayes, invited me to watch her work with one of my struggling students. I couldn’t believe what I was seeing — such elegance of prompting; the child in charge and active the whole time; and accelerated growth that I was not able to get alone. I was jealous of her ability and knowledge and begged her to teach me this alchemy. After she laughed at me, which I didn’t understand at the time, she shared a few articles and invited me to come back as often as I liked, a decision I’m sure she later regretted.

Recognizing our genuine desire to improve our literacy teaching, Cheryl invited me and the other teachers in our building to hear Marie Clay speak one day after school when Marie was in Ohio for an extended stay at Ohio State.

I remember the meeting was packed and I was mesmerized, not because Marie was particularly hypnotic or entertaining, but because she was so secure in her own beliefs shaped by research and her experience, and because her message resonated profoundly with me. Marie explained that all children CAN learn if we begin with their strengths, use assessments formatively to guide our next moves, and teach in measured ways using authentic reading and writing tasks. I took this message to heart but realized that enacting it was no simple task.

I wanted to know more about and be trained in Reading Recovery. Admittedly, I limped along across the next decade, grasping what I could of Marie’s work and seeking more information. And that led me back to Columbus...
I felt well-prepared for my first job in Whitehall, Ohio. But, what I didn’t know yet, was how much I didn’t know yet!

where I attended my first Reading Recovery conference in 1998. I was overwhelmed by the choices of speakers and topics and though I was a classroom teacher, I routinely ventured into Reading Recovery sessions. I was gobsmacked to learn that I still didn’t know squat.

So, I decided I just couldn’t wait any longer. Within 2 years, I changed jobs and districts, landing myself in a literacy coach position with Solon City Schools where I remain today. Solon is one of the most amazing places to work — where every teacher, administrator, and support person work hard to ensure that every child gets what s/he needs every day. And like my years in Whitehall, I had found another learning community to call home. In 2000, when Solon adopted Reading Recovery, I begged to be trained. And when my assistant superintendent, Debbie Siegel, gave me the go ahead, I felt I was the luckiest boy alive!

I was trained by a fantastic teacher leader, Libbie Larrabee, but was not at all prepared for how transformative that training would be. Now, instead of being in love with how children learned, I also became interested in how adults learn, grow, and change. I still wanted more knowledge and after just a few years, I found myself looking at the possibility of becoming a teacher leader who could help make transformations happen for children and adults alike. Fortunately, I received an RRCNA scholarship, funded by Hameray Publishing, for training and returned to Ohio State for more learning. I am forever grateful to Ray and Christine Yuen for what their generosity has done for me and for the other 20 teacher leaders their funds have helped since 2009. In the past 7 years, I’ve helped 75 more teachers make the transformation to become Reading Recovery professionals.

And now, after all this reflection and time, three things are remarkably clear to me:

Firstly, we need to expand our offering of Reading Recovery training to more people, a feeling shared by many within RRCNA. Now, beyond the official training model, there are options for classroom, special education, and ELL teachers at most university training sites to get access to the theories, principles, and procedures of Reading Recovery.

Secondly, literacy teaching is complex and requires continual study. As new and diverse problems crop up across our school settings, more research and refinement is needed to help Reading Recovery and classroom teachers as they support and teach learners. We must continue to look for answers, even when that means working in new and diverse ways.

And lastly, our best tool for dealing with this complexity and change is our ability to socially construct knowledge with colleagues. So, we must continue to grow and strengthen our professional learning communities with university partnerships and engage in cross-building, district, and site endeavors using available technologies to expand and capitalize from our learning network.

I hope you are as proud of your personal journey, as I am proud of the journey that led me to become a teacher, coach, Reading Recovery teacher and teacher leader, and president of RRCNA. As my leadership duties in this role come to an end, I know that my journey is not even close to being over. I still have more to learn, think about, and try, and I’m grateful that I will have your company as our journeys continue together.
Executive Director’s Message

Thank You for Your Partnership

RRCNA Executive Director Jady Johnson

For 16 years, I’ve had the privilege of leading the Reading Recovery Council. I’ve learned so much and had the honor of representing and advocating for the most effective reading intervention in the world! At the end of August, I am retiring and turning this work over to the next executive director who will have the benefit of working with a strong and talented staff team. They, along with others I’ve worked with during my time with RRCNA, have been not only colleagues, but wonderful friends!

The work has been the most challenging of my career, and has been extraordinarily meaningful. Though our Reading Recovery community crosses state and national boundaries, we are united by a commitment to literacy excellence and a shared knowledge of what works!

Please know that I admire and respect the work you do. You are a unique network of professionals working together to achieve remarkable things! No one knows better than you how important literacy is to students, their families, their futures, and to our collective future. Who hasn’t been amazed to watch the behind-the-glass teaching experience? Who can forget seeing a skillful teacher bring success to a struggling reader? What other reading program has the wealth of data and research that Reading Recovery has?

The field of literacy instruction is crowded and competitive. Controversy, especially in the field of beginning reading, has challenged us to be stronger in what we know and how we communicate it to others. I am proud to have worked with you on successful communications and outreach initiatives through the years. RRCNA has focused on building collaboration with respected literacy experts, organizations, school districts, and universities that share similar values and priorities. We have built bridges with school principals and administrators, federal and state education agencies, and others focused on helping children to read on grade level.

In addition to advocacy and outreach, RRCNA provides members with resources and a forum for professional learning and leadership development. Your Board of Directors and I have worked to be sure that this membership association meets the highest standards in nonprofit governance, management, fundraising, human resources, and operations. Since 2008, RRCNA has earned and maintained accreditation from the Ohio Association of Nonprofit Organizations under the national Standards for Excellence Institute® Ethics and Accountability Code for the Nonprofit Sector.

For all of you who are part of the great work RRCNA supports, I say thank you! Whether you are a teacher, teacher leader, trainer, administrator, publisher, or partner, know that you are valued. You have been generous in all the ways that matter, giving your time, sharing your experiences, and donating to support our important mission. I admire your dedication and commitment to children, teachers, and schools. And I am confident that this shared work will continue as the Board and a new executive lead the Council into the future.

As I retire, I will take with me great memories. More importantly, I will keep with me close friends and colleagues — and hold with me all the kindnesses and support so many of you have extended over the years. I thank you for your trust and your partnership!
2018-19 Teacher Leader Scholars

MaryRuth Books

MaryRuth Books offers instructional, clever books that provide reading practice using photos and illustrations to facilitate word recognition and engage the young reader. MaryRuth Books is the proud publisher of the Danny series of children’s books that not only provide reading practice but also support the development of a lifelong love of reading. MaryRuth Books provided one $15,000 teacher leader scholarship. Mallory Turner (left), Effingham County Schools, Springfield, GA, is pictured with donor Mia Coulton.

Pioneer Valley Books

Pioneer Valley Books is dedicated to producing the highest-quality books for early literacy learners. Their books have been carefully written to support students in gaining control over early reading behaviors and in becoming strategic in their approach to print. Pioneer Valley Books provided one $15,000 teacher leader scholarship. Mary Vreeman (right), Hillsborough County Public Schools, Tampa, FL, is pictured with donor Michele Dufresne.

Private Donor

A Private Donor contributed $30,000 to fund two teacher leader scholarships. The recipients are Katherine Herring (left), Chesterfield County School District, Chesterfield, SC, and Michelle Brown, Branson School District, Branson, MO.
Hameray Publishing Group and the Yuen Family Foundation

Hameray Publishing Group/Yuen Family Foundation is dedicated to publishing innovative literacy materials for today’s educators by combining a sound research-based approach with cutting edge classroom solutions. The Yuen Family Foundation—a private charitable organization—in conjunction with Hameray Publishing Group contributed $30,000 to fund two teacher leader scholarships. Donors Ray and Christine Yuen are pictured with Peggy Phillips (second from left) Lexington School District One, Lexington, SC, and Rachel Chappell, Sarasota County Schools, Sarasota, FL.

Many Thanks to Hameray Publishing and Kaleidoscope Series Authors

Over the last 8 years, Hameray Publishing Group and the authors of its Kaleidoscope Collection have donated sales revenue and royalties totaling $80,768 to RRCNA. These leveled readers were written by a group of experienced Reading Recovery teachers, teacher leaders, literacy coaches, and reading specialists — all members of RRCNA. Each year at the National Conference, Hameray President Kevin Yuen and his parents, Ray and Christine Yuen, have presented a check to RRCNA Executive Director Jady Johnson. Many thanks are extended to the authors listed below and to the Yuens!

Susan Antonelli
Elaine S. Belay
Nancy R. Brekke
Agatha Brown
Gregory H. Brown
Lillian Burris
Natalie Byerly
Lucetia Cahill
Sharyl M. Calhoun
JoAnne Demetrio
Karen B. Díaz
Paula Dugger
Jamie A. Duncan
Rebecca Gibson
Heather Goodacre
Anita Goodwin
Janelle Green
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Lisa Burnet Killebrew
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Elizabeth L. Larrabee
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Reva Lobatos
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Rita Nicolussi
Liza O’Neal
Gennifer Paul-Fetterman
Miguel Perez-Soler
Sharon R. Powell
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Jacqueline Russo
Susan Sellers
Rebecca L. Shoniker
Jan Shoupe
Elaine M. Simpson
Andrew Sommer
Steven V. Steele
Sandra S. Veach
Maren Wallenberg
Susan G. Weaver-Jones
Kimberly Ziemann

Three $15,000 Teacher Leader Training Scholarships are available for the 2019–2020 training year.

Our continued thanks to Hameray Publishing Group/Yuen Family Foundation, MaryRuth Books, and Pioneer Valley Books for each offering one scholarship.

Go to RRCNA Grants and Scholarships webpage for details and application.

Apply by May 31
Tenyo Family Foundation offered 10 grants. Founded by the late Sophie Tenyo, the foundation supports charitable, religious, scientific, literary, and educational endeavors for the public welfare and well-being of mankind. Recipients are (top row, left-to-right) Nancy Lane, LaRue County Schools, Hodgenville, KY; Briare Wynn, York Region District School Board, Aurora, Ontario, Canada; Sandy Meyer, Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD, Dallas, TX; (second row, left-to-right) Janine Stutt, York Region District School Board, Aurora, Ontario, Canada; Mary Jane Pelletier, Maine School Administrative District #54, Norridgewock, ME; Kellie Kelly, LaRue County Schools, Hodgenville, KY; Jessica Bach, Southern Boone County Schools, Ashland, MO; Wendy Benson, San Juan Unified School District, Citrus Heights, CA; and Michelle Ruggie, Clover School District, Clover, SC. Not pictured: Lori Evans, Cleveland Metro School District, Cleveland, OH.

Rose Mary Estice Memorial Fund was established in memory of Rose Mary Estice, one of the original Reading Recovery teachers trained at The Ohio State University in 1984–85. An ardent supporter, Rose Mary provided leadership during the early days of RRCNA and continued to serve in many capacities throughout her career. The recipient is Abby Chrismer, Buckeye Valley Local Schools, Delaware, OH.

Teacher Leader Professional Development Grant was funded by the generosity of teacher leaders and trainers during the 2018 Teacher Leader Institute. The recipient is Michele Barnes, San Juan Unified School District, Citrus Heights, CA.

Watch your email and the website for 2020 grant opportunities!
Private Donors provided a total of 12 grants. Recipients are (top row, left-to-right) Carolyn Pridemore, Southern Boone R1, Ashland, MO; Analiese Cravens, Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, KY; Elvi Cabrone, Vancouver School District #39, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; Lynn Newmyer, Rochester Community Schools, Rochester Hills, MI; Nicole Harrison, Vancouver School District #39, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; and Gretchen Gerhardt, Halifax Regional Centre for Education, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada; (second row, left-to-right) Jennifer Wicklow, Fargo Public Schools, Fargo, ND; Brittani Hoesche, Lincoln Public Schools, Lincoln, NE; Lisa Greif, Mount Vernon Community School District, Mount Vernon, IA; Jodi Kerns, Northwest Area Iowa Education Agency, Sioux City, IA; Wendy Rodrigues, New Haven Unified School District, Union City, CA; and Amy Traylor, Graham Local School District, St. Paris, OH.

KEEP BOOKS is designed as a school/home program that addresses the need for inexpensive but interesting books for young children to read at home. Rebecca Fritz (left), Fayette County School District, Lexington, KY, is pictured with donor representative Marsha Levering.

Debby Wood Professional Development Grant was established in memory of Debby Wood, teacher leader in Prince George's County, MD. Sheila Bieler (right), Prince George's County Public Schools, Hyattsville, MD, is pictured with donor representative Tiffany Garner.
**Pioneer Valley Books** offered 4 grants. Pictured (left-to-right) is donor Michele Dufresne with Trisha Warner, McLean County Unit District No. 5, Normal, IL; Jennifer Lewis, Graham Local School District, Saint Paris, OH; Lonydea Todd, Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, KY; and Cortney Pratorius, Carrollton-Farmers Branch ISD, Dallas, TX.

**RR Books** offers a variety of fiction and nonfiction leveled books specifically designed for beginning readers with a goal of providing quality, affordable books for young children. Valerie Gillombardo, Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Cleveland, OH, is pictured with donor Matt Bonnell (right).

**SongLake Books** hand selects and organizes books from a variety of companies into leveled book sets for guided reading and Reading Recovery. Collections include a wide variety of fiction and nonfiction genres, are culturally diverse and gender fair, and especially target at-risk readers. Andrea LeFever, Sarasota County Schools, Sarasota, FL, is pictured with donor Sarah English (right).
Dr. Julie Olson Literacy Professional Development Grant was established in honor of Dr. Julie Olson, retired director of ISD 196 elementary education and Reading Recovery site coordinator, to honor her commitment and passion for Reading Recovery, literacy and learning. Becky Dirksen, ISD 196, Rosemount, MN, is pictured with donor representatives Teresa Douglas (left) and Kendra Tlusty (right).

Blueberry Hill Books are carefully designed to enhance a child's strategic thinking and develop comprehension skills. Recurring characters inhabit stories filled with humor and excitement in the leveled storybooks. Trudy Puckett, Willard Public Schools, Springfield, MO, is pictured with donor Patricia Harrison (right).

Geri Stone Memorial Fund was established by family members 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, school supplies and projects, and other literacy efforts. Recipients (pictured clockwise starting at the top) are Carla Ginn, Trimble County School District, Milton, KY; Julie Maderer, Elba Central School District, Elba, NY; Lois Bailey, South Adams Schools, Berne, IN; Jaime Dawson, Spartanburg District 3, Spartanburg, SC; and Nancy Radley, Shelburne Community School, Shelburne, VT. Not pictured: Cynthia Craft, San Diego County Office of Education, San Diego, CA.
Annual Membership Meeting — Where Laughs and Little Books Abound!

After a full day of National Conference sessions, hundreds of members gathered to relax, enjoy a snack, and learn more about the work of RRCNA.

Featured at the annual membership meeting on February 11 was a guided tour of the RRCNA e-Learning Center by Membership Committee Chair Hollyanna Bates. As always, the dynamic duo of Pat Scharer and Maryann McBride provided entertainment during the annual door prize drawing. This year, 30 lucky attendees left with prizes and, thanks to the generosity of our exhibitors, everyone left with free little books and a smile. If you’re planning to attend the 2020 National Conference, this is one event you won’t want to miss. We hope to see you there!


Nancy Farmer, a Reading Recovery teacher from Goshen, KY, displays her MaryRuth Books gift basket with a winning smile.

RRCNA Board of Directors Election Results
We are pleased to share results of the recent election for terms beginning July 1, 2019.

Vice President
Leslie McBane
South-Western City Schools
Columbus, OH

Secretary
Mary Lou Petters
Charleston County School District
Ravenel, SC

Teacher Representative
Debbie Baker
Woodford County Schools
Versailles, KY

Site Coordinator Representative
Steven Foreman
Zanesville City Schools
Zanesville, OH

Site Coordinator Representative
Laura Kingsley
Sarasota County Schools
Sarasota, FL

Trainer Representative
Lori Taylor
University of Maine
Orono, ME

DLL Representative
Carmen Lipscomb
Denton ISD
Denton, TX
Manitoba Celebrates a Quarter Century

The Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery (CIRR) and the Manitoba Reading Recovery team marked 25 years of Reading Recovery implementation in the province of Manitoba with a series of April events and celebrations.

More than 360 educators gathered for the Canadian National Reading Recovery and Early Literacy Conference held in Winnipeg. During the conference, current and past Reading Recovery trainers, teacher leaders, and teachers joined CIRR Board members and friends of Reading Recovery in Manitoba for a gala evening celebration.

One highlight of this event was the opportunity to hear from a former Reading Recovery student from the very first cohort of students in Manitoba. Dr. Bola Famuyide, now the owner of her own dental practice in Winnipeg, spoke about the impact of Reading Recovery on her life. She offered her deep appreciation to everyone who brought Reading Recovery to Manitoba and the continued support of other students needing literacy assistance.

The Manitoba Reading Recovery team was presented with a certificate acknowledging 25 years of dedication and support. More than 50,000 students have received Reading Recovery lessons in Manitoba over the last quarter century.

We Appreciate Your Generosity

National Conference attendees opened their hearts and wallets in February, donating $8,900 to the Reading Recovery Fund. A matching gift from the M. Trika Smith-Burke bequest brought the total to $17,800. Providing updates during the general sessions, RRCNA Development Committee Chair Annie Opat encouraged attendees to make their gifts. The Reading Recovery Fund allows the Council to continue supporting education policy, adequate school funding, meaningful professional development, and outreach to decision makers. We thank our generous donors as we continue our United in Literacy Success campaign.
National Literacy Leadership Award Honors Excellence

Reading Recovery teacher leaders from across the country nominate individuals to receive this prestigious award. It is given annually to individuals not trained in Reading Recovery who have displayed a strong commitment to expand and maintain its high standards, and who made significant contributions to implementation beyond the local level. This year, the Excellence in Literacy Leadership Award was presented to two individuals during the opening general session of the National Conference.

Mary Grassi
Title I Director
Cambridge Public School District
Cambridge, Massachusetts

During her 40 year-career in Cambridge, Mary Grassi has worked as a substitute teacher, classroom teacher, Title I reading specialist, and Title I curriculum coordinator. She has been integral to the development and growth of Reading Recovery in the Cambridge area for the past 25 years. As site coordinator for five school districts, her efforts have helped create a strong model that allows for layers of intervention in response to literacy needs of all children.

Mary connects with other Title I directors across the state, working to ensure financing is available to support training and ongoing professional development for Reading Recovery teaching and implementation. She is a founding member of the Reading Recovery Council of Massachusetts and serves in a variety of roles at the district and state level, receiving numerous awards in her tenure.

“Mary Grassi is a tireless advocate for Reading Recovery,” said Teacher Leader Karen Tlili who, along with Teacher Leader Maureen Bobbin, nominated Mary. “She knows that having access to Reading Recovery is essential for the children who need it most, and she works to maintain...”
and extend implementation. She sits on the networking committee of the state council, focusing on recruiting new districts and increasing awareness across the state.”

Cambridge Public School District serves about 7,100 students who speak more than 70 languages; about 28 percent speak a first language other than English.

Dr. Karen J. Scott  
Executive Director of Elementary Learning  
Ozark School District  
Ozark, Missouri

For more than 4 decades, Dr. Karen J. Scott has provided progressive leadership to Missouri school districts and shared her passion for Reading Recovery with literacy professionals across the country. As a classroom teacher, college professor, elementary language arts coordinator, federal programs director, site coordinator, and in other roles, her focus has been on literacy instruction.

Dr. Scott has worked to expand the implementation and strengthen the literacy programs in districts across southwest Missouri — first introducing Reading Recovery in Springfield in 1991. Since becoming site coordinator in 2009, she has guided the Ozark School District to become a model of comprehensive literacy, with Reading Recovery-trained professionals sharing their knowledge to benefit the whole school. Her impact is evidenced through mentoring, coaching, conference presentations, advocacy, recognition by her peers, and more — at the local, state, and national levels. Dr. Scott currently serves on the board of directors and is president-elect of the Reading Recovery Council of North America.

“I cannot think of a person who has a greater love for literacy learning than Karen Scott. Her passion for and support of Reading Recovery is evident to anyone she meets,” said Teacher Leader Linda Fugate who nominated Dr. Scott. “Her tireless efforts at the local, state, and national levels have made a tremendous impact on student learning.”

Ozark School District serves about 5,800 K-12 students. With a focus on individual paths of instruction, the district annually reviews and revises a Comprehensive School Improvement Plan comprised of six student-driven goals.
Four days of professional development sparked the enthusiasm of more than 2,700 educators who shared their passion for learning and literacy instruction.

Keynote Speaker C. C. Bates (above left) kicked off the Conference on Sunday with a look at being intentional in our teaching and professional lives.

Lucy Calkins helped us sift through the clutter and hold fast to what matters most in her Monday keynote. Pictured with Lucy (center) are Jeff Williams, RRCNA president and chair of the 2019 National Conference, and Jady Johnson, RRCNA executive director.

Sharing her love of fantasy, Gail Carson Levine (above right) guided us through her world of dragons and fairies in Tuesday’s keynote.

Special thanks to our generous sponsors for their support

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Jenny McFerlin
@JennyMcFerlin

#ncbcbus supports teachers in expanding thinking and practice...this conference is about growing teachers and this is what will impact the reading and writing lives of children.
#teachersaredecisionmakers
#investinginteachers #literacy

Carla Castador
@cjreads

Hamilton City School District Reading Recovery teachers came to represent! I could not have asked for a better group to begin my career as a Teacher Leader! @ncna.org #ncbcbus #readingrecoveryworks

For the 34th year, speakers and sessions provided high-impact professional development for all attendees, delivering an important balance of theory and practice.

Dr. Cathy Toll helped administrators and coaches develop strategies and explore partnerships for effective literacy instruction in the day-long Leadership Institute.
Let’s Face It
Jason has solved the b/d confusion problem. When he was writing a ‘b’, he wrote a ‘d’ instead.
Me: That should be a ‘b.’
Jason: It is. It’s just facing forward.

Joni Robinson
Reading Recovery/Title I Teacher
Ohio

Speaking the Language
When I got this text from a Reading Recovery colleague I immediately thought of “You know you’re a Reading Recovery teacher if ....”

Colleague: Hey, I’m on my way — late because I had a mouse in my car. Used a snappy trap.

Vicki Foster and Brenda Burnell
Reading Recovery Teachers
Maine

Interesting Interpretation
On a school visit with a Reading Recovery teacher-in-training, a student had a witty interpretation of the story, Sammy at the Farm by Kathleen Urmston and Karen Evans (Kaeden Publishing, Level 5). During the new book introduction the student arrived at the page where Sammy is sprayed by the skunk and announced, “Ahhh … the skunk farted on him!” And then, when the student reached the end, where Sammy is soaking in tomato juice he exclaimed, “Oh no, someone’s cookin’ Sammy!”

Carla Castator
Reading Recovery Teacher Leader
Ohio

What’s In a Name?
I was teaching behind the glass and my student entered very enthusiastically because he had just learned so much about the Statue of Liberty.
Child: Can I draw a picture of the Statue of Liberty?
Me: You sure can. And when you finish you can label the parts. That’s what authors do in nonfiction texts.
Child: Ok. This is the torch, this is the crown, this is her foot, and this is her computer.
Me: Interesting, what makes you think the Statue of Liberty is holding a computer?
Child: My teacher told me that she is holding a tablet.

Rita Croteau
Early Literacy Interventionist
Massachusetts

The Last Word
Our readers say The Last Word column in The Journal of Reading Recovery is one of their favorite things to read. We need more of your great Reading Recovery stories. So take a minute to share one of your favorite moments with all our readers.
Just send a quick email to Communications Director Vicki Fox: vfox@readingrecovery.org
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Develop students’ deep knowledge of literacy concepts with these must-have reading minilessons from Fountas and Pinnell.
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Keynote Speakers

Sunday
Adria Klein

Monday
Douglas Reeves

Tuesday
Nikki Grimes

Confirmed Preconference and Featured Speakers
Kylene Beers & Robert Probst | Ralph Fletcher | Penny Kittle
Mary Fried | Allyson Matczuk | Journey Swafford | Leslie McBane | James Schnug

Register at 2019 Conference Pricing Until July 1!
rrcna.org/conferences