



#2 Literacy Teaching and Learning

Guiding Principle

All classroom literacy and intervention initiatives involve children in active, constructive learning during the process of reading and writing continuous texts. (See the Guide, pages 15–16.)

The emphasis in this toolkit is on teaching and learning and is specifically designed for classroom teachers, interventionists, and all other professionals involved in literacy instruction. Administrators will gain a better understanding of teaching practices that strengthen a comprehensive plan that promises literacy for every child.

The number of sessions needed for this toolkit will depend on the current understandings and interests of staff members. For all sessions, a crucial component will be opportunities for participants to apply what they learn in their own settings and then to share experiences with others in the professional learning community.

Reading Recovery-trained teachers will be a valuable resource for ways to support and promote high-quality literacy instruction for all children. As appropriate, they may take a role in structuring the learning while involving participants to explore ideas together. The Reading Recovery teacher leader may be a resource as well.

BEFORE THE FIRST SESSION

Classroom Teachers

- Read page 3 in the Guide to consider how the principles and assumptions underlying Reading Recovery match your theory of literacy learning.
- Read pages 31–32 to examine characteristics of effective classroom literacy instruction.
- Evaluate your literacy practices using the self-assessment on pages 33–35.

Interventionists

- Read page 3 in the Guide to consider how the principles and assumptions underlying Reading Recovery match your theory of literacy learning.
- Read pages 40–43 to examine characteristics of effective literacy interventions.
- Evaluate your literacy practices using the self-assessment on pages 42–44.

Professional Learning Toolkits

are an extension of *Promising Literacy for Every Child: Reading Recovery and a Comprehensive Literacy System*, Second Edition (RRCNA, 2022), referred throughout this document as the Guide. Be sure to read “An Introduction to RRCNA Professional Learning Toolkits” prior to using this specific toolkit.

Intended Participants

Classroom Teachers

Good first teaching is an essential component of a comprehensive literacy system. Students in every classroom should receive expert instruction every day. (See the Guide, page 3 and pages 31–35.)

Interventionists

Even with good classroom programs, some students will require more intensive, extra instruction. (See the Guide, pages 40–44.)

Administrators

This toolkit offers general information about literacy teaching and learning. The activities would be appropriate for school administrators, coaches, and literacy teams to get an overview prior to Professional Learning Toolkits that address specific literacy topics.

PLANNING YOUR SESSIONS

► Session One — Making It Easy to Learn

1. Participants share their ideas about how the principles and assumptions underlying Reading Recovery match their theory of literacy learning. (See page 3 in the Guide.)
2. Participants can work in job-alike groups of 3–5 to promote discussion (e.g., first-grade teachers, special education teachers, etc.).

Classroom Teachers

- Discuss the status of effective literacy instruction in your school and/or grade level. Use the list of characteristics listed on pages 31–32 in the Guide to focus the discussion.
- Use the self-assessment on pages 33–35 to continue the discussion of characteristics of effective classroom literacy instruction.
- Choose two or three characteristics that you or your team would like to explore further.

Interventionists

- Discuss the status of effective literacy interventions in your school. Use the list of characteristics listed on pages 40–41 in the Guide to focus the discussion.
 - Use the self-assessment on pages 42–44 to continue the discussion of characteristics of effective instruction for children who struggle with literacy activities.
 - Choose two or three characteristics that you or your team would like to explore further.
3. Share the ideas from each discussion group with the whole group. Consider similarities and differences.
 4. Introduce a short video, “Making It Easy to Learn,” demonstrating one of the characteristics of effective literacy instruction. It is important to build on a child’s strengths to set up situations in which the child is in control and will experience success while enjoying challenges within reach. Use the reference guide that accompanies the video for further discussion. Both are available at no charge on the RRCNA website. (See RRCNA Resources: Videos and Reference Guides.)
 5. Share experiences related to this topic as time permits. Encourage the group to take note of things they do over the next few days to make it easy for children to learn.
 6. End with an emphasis on this general principle that applies to all teaching and learning. Encourage the group to think about how making it easy for children to learn relates to the principle of active, constructive learning.
 7. Tell participants that at the next session, the emphasis for teaching and learning is going to be “Teaching for Transfer: Strategic Activity.” Participants could choose some articles to read and give a brief summary at the next meeting. Possibilities include these two articles from *The Reading Teacher*:

Schwartz, R. M. (1997). Self-monitoring in beginning reading. *The Reading Teacher*, 5(11), 40–52.

Askew, B. J., & Fountas, I. C. (1998). Building an early reading process: Active from the start! *The Reading Teacher*, 52(2), 126–134.

► Session Two — Teaching for Transfer: Strategic Activity

The child must learn to take the initiative, make some links, and work at a difficulty by checking on himself or self-monitoring, checking one source of information against another, searching for information of any kind (e.g., meaning, structure/grammar, visual information, sounds), making a decision, and evaluating the response. Analyzing a child's errors and self-correction behaviors on running records of text reading gives teachers a glimpse of the child's use of strategic activities (Clay, 2005, pp. 107–113).

1. Invite the Reading Recovery teacher or the Reading Recovery teacher leader to start the session, sharing her own understandings of strategic activities and her thoughts about the suggested readings.
2. Participants may share their own thoughts about the readings or the definitions in the sidebar on the right to explore the question “What does strategic activity mean?”
3. Introduce a short video, “Teaching for Transfer: Strategic Activity,” demonstrating another characteristics of effective literacy instruction. Participants should discuss the notion of strategic activity (within the child as a learner). Use the reference guide that accompanies the video for further discussion. Both are available at no charge on the RRCNA website. (See RRCNA Resources: Videos and Reference Guides.)
4. Share experiences related to this topic as time permits. Encourage the group to take note over the next few days of ways they teach for strategies so that children can take control of their learning.
5. End with an emphasis on this general principle that applies to all teaching and learning. Encourage the group to think about how teaching for strategic activity relates to the principle of active, constructive learning.
6. Encourage participants to read more about strategic activity. Possibilities include two articles from *The Journal of Reading Recovery*. (See RRCNA Resources: Journal Articles)

Askew, B. J., & Doyle, M. A. (2008). Reflecting, refreshing, and resolving. [The article focuses on selected principles learned from Reading Recovery that can be translated to other teaching contexts.]

DeFord, D. (2013). Teaching through student strengths: Supporting teachers as they embrace new learning.

The Early Literacy Learning page on the RRCNA website is also helpful. (See RRCNA Resources: RRCNA Website.)

Helpful Definitions

Literacy Processing refers to all the activities happening in the learner's head, brain, mind or neural networks, often analyzed through error and self-correction analysis of running records. (See Clay, 2001, p. 124.)

Strategic Activity

“in the head neural activity initiated by the learner, and hidden from the teacher's view” (Clay, 2001, p. 128).

Teachers may tentatively infer from a child's behavior how a child is processing information (Clay, 2001, p. 130).

Strategic activity involves the “sense of knowing how to work on words, sentences, and texts to extract the messages they convey” (Clay, 2001, p. 127).

Strategic behavior is observed when the brain picks up information, works on it, makes a decision, and evaluates the response (Clay, 2001, p. 127).

► Session Three — Teaching for Transfer: Strategic Activitiy

1. Begin with a discussion of experiences in which participants have had opportunities to promote strategic activity.
2. Introduce the webcast, “Teaching for Tomorrow: Creating Strategic Learners Through Challenging Work,” presented by Linda Dorn, available at the RRCNA Store. The accompanying handout should be printed before the session. The webcast lasts 1 hour and 16 minutes, but time should be allowed for discussion. (See RRCNA Resources: On-Demand Webcasts.)
3. Choose articles at the end of this toolkit to supplement this topic.

► Ongoing Sessions

Select from the RRCNA resources at the end of this toolkit to extend conversations about literacy teaching and learning. Possible ideas for using resources include the following:

1. Sessions may involve whole-group interaction with webcasts or discussion of selected articles. Plan ways to actively use the information in teaching and schedule a time to return to share experiences with the group.
2. A jigsaw arrangement allows individuals or small groups to select different resources and bring information back to share with the larger group. Journal articles are a good resource to share with the jigsaw approach.

All activities should be followed with active learning experiences, applying the knowledge to teaching. Participants’ experiences may be shared with the greater professional learning community in the school.

► Final Session

Participants will return to the Guide, *Promising Literacy for Every Child: Reading Recovery and a Comprehensive Literacy System*, Second Edition. Classroom teachers may use pages 31–35 to consider current thinking about classroom literacy teaching and student learning in the school. Literacy interventionists may use pages 40–44 to think about current interventions and their impact on literacy teaching and learning in the school. What changes have been made? What changes need further exploration? What is next? What else do we need?

The professional learning community will likely explore many other aspects of teaching and learning beyond those listed here. Ongoing study of effective first teaching and high-quality interventions will strengthen the possibilities for meeting the needs of all children.

RRCNA RESOURCES FOR USE IN PLANNING SESSIONS

On-Demand Webcasts (*Available for RRCNA members only)

Webcasts are available from RRCNA. Click on the titles to access the webcasts and see more details.

NOTE: Webcasts by Leslie McBane, Nancy Anderson, and Sue Duncan focus on two sources of information children use when reading — meaning and structure. These webcasts will also be appropriate for use with the Text Reading and Comprehension Professional Learning Toolkit. Webcasts with an asterisk indicate preferences; others could be optional according to interests and needs. **The time listed for each webcast should be extended to allow for participant discussion and involvement.**

***Teaching for Tomorrow: Creating Strategic Learners Through Challenging Work** 75 minutes

Linda Dorn

Discover how children develop decision-making efficiency during meaningful and authentic learning experiences. This webcast includes downloadable slides and transcripts of videos of teaching and learning interactions to illustrate these principles.

***Activating Strategic Action in Guided Reading** 90 minutes

Leslie McBane

What do your students do at difficulty during guided reading instruction? Using student work samples and videos, learn to teach children to take strategic action while maintaining meaning.

***Making the Invisible Visible: The Role of Meaning in Effective Literacy Processing** 90 minutes

Nancy Anderson

Meaning is the most important source of information for literacy learners; however, it may be hard to value ‘invisible’ information over ‘visible’ letters on the page. Understand the critical role of meaning as the guiding force of strategic activity and explore how reading and writing weave together to support effective comprehension instruction that engages learners. This webcast includes downloadable PowerPoint presentation and a bibliography.

***Structure is an Important Source of Information That Can Be Hard for Both Children and Teachers to Work With** 75 minutes

Sue Duncan

Structure or syntax is an important source of information for readers as they read texts. It assists children to solve words in reading, and it gives them a feed-forward and feedback mechanism as they read. A child who does not have control of the oral language patterns of English or has little experience with book language is probably less able to predict and use the language structures in books.

***How Understanding the Learner’s Brain Can Improve Our Teaching** 80 minutes

Janet Bufalino and Elaine Stine

Learn about how the brain operates and how teachers can best help children learn. Many facets of learning are addressed, with specific attention to literacy processing and knowledge.

Negotiating the Literacy Lives of Boys Through Building a Literacy Community 42 minutes

David Booth

An expert in this field, David Booth helps educators understand issues involved in boys’ literacy learning and then provides proven methods to engage them as readers and writers. This webcast includes downloadable handouts.

Closing the Achievement Gap for English Language Learners 87 minutes

Yvonne and David Freeman

The presenters first describe three types of English learners and then explain four research-based keys that lead to academic success for limited formal schooling and long-term English learners. For each key, they share strategies, culturally relevant materials, and teacher stories.

Videos and Reference Guides (see Introduction document for Technical Note)

Making it Easy to Learn (link to video)

8 minutes

This video focuses on building on a child's strengths to set up situations in which the child is in control and will experience success while enjoying challenges within reach. A 2-page PDF reference guide accompanies this video and includes definitions and other important information, key points for teachers, and resources.

[Direct link to PDF](#) option

Teaching for Transfer: Strategic Activity (link to video)

8 minutes

This video explores strategic activities initiated by children and actions teachers can take to encourage those behaviors. A 2-page PDF reference guide accompanies this video and includes definitions and other important information, key points for teachers, and resources.

[Direct link to PDF](#) option

Journal Articles (click titles to open/download)

- Askew, B. J., & Doyle, M. A. (Fall 2008). [Reflecting, refreshing, and resolving](#). *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 8(1), 43–50.
- Askew, B., & Simpson, A. (Fall 2004). [Does one-to-one teaching really matter?](#) *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 4(1), 36–42.
- Clay, M. M. (Spring 2004). [Talking, reading, and writing](#). *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 3(2), 1–15.
- DeFord, D. (Fall 2013). [Teaching through student strengths: Supporting teachers as they embrace new learning](#). *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 13(1), 41–49.
- Konstantellou, E., & Lose, M. K. (Fall 2009). [The promise of Clay's theory of literacy processing: Training Literacy Lessons intervention specialists](#). *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 9(1), 62–69.
- Lyons, C. A. (1999). [Emotions, cognition, and becoming a reader: A message to teachers of struggling readers](#). *Literacy Teaching and Learning*, 4(1), 67–87.
- Lyons, C. A. (Fall 2004). [Applying principles of brain research to maximize every child's learning potential](#). *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 4(1), 1–11.
- Lyons, C. A. (Spring 2010). [Changing lives forever: Looking backward and forward](#). *The Journal of Reading Recovery* 9(2), 7–16.
- Lyons, C. A. (Fall 2012). [Opening minds: Using language to change lives](#). [Review of book by Peter Johnston]. *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 12(1), 54–55.
- Opat, A., & Caswell, R. (Spring 2013). [Professional capital: Transforming teaching in every school](#). [Review of book by Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan.] *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 12(2), 63–66.
- Pinnell, G. S. (Fall 2012). [Literate lives: The goal of educational excellence](#). *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 12(1), 5–13.
- Rodriguez-Eagle, C., & Torres-Elias, A. (Fall 2009). [Refining the craft of teaching English language learners](#). *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 9(1), 53–61.
- Schwartz, R. M., & Gallant, P. A. (Spring 2009). [Literacy learning and instruction: In search of complexity](#). *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 8(2), 61–65.
- Vellutino, F. (Fall 2010). [Learning to be learning disabled: Marie Clay's seminal contribution to the response to intervention approach to identifying specific reading disability](#). *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 10(1), 5–23.
- Wood, D. (2003). [The why? what? when? and how? of tutoring: The development of helping and tutoring skills in children](#). *Literacy Teaching and Learning*, 7(1&2), 1–30.

Audio Files

Audio files are conference presentations from past National Reading Recovery and Early Literacy Conferences sponsored by RRCNA. You will want to preview in advance to determine which ones would be helpful to your participants.

Developing the Emotional Life of Struggling Learners

91 minutes

Carol Lyons

Core emotional abilities that struggling learners need to control are discussed and translated into basic steps that teachers can take to support learners' emotional and cognitive development.

[Click to open/download mp3 audio file](#)

[Click to open/download presentation PDF](#)

RRCNA Website (click titles to open webpage)

[Early Literacy Learning](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Askew, B. J., & Gaffney, J. S. (1999). Reading Recovery: Waves of influence on literacy education. In J. S. Gaffney & B. J. Askew (Eds.). *Stirring the waters: The influence of Marie Clay* (pp. 47–74). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Cazden, C. B. (1999). Revealing and telling: The socialization of attention in learning to read and write. In J. S. Gaffney & B. J. Askew (Eds.). *Stirring the waters: The influence of Marie Clay* (pp. 187–196). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Clay, M. M. (1998). *By different paths to common outcomes*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
[See chapter 16 about accommodating diversity.]
- Clay, M. M. (2001). *Change over time in children's literacy development*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Clay, M. M. (Fall 2007). Learning to be learning disabled. *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 7(1), 54–66. [Reprinted from *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 22(2), 155–173. Not available in JRR online.]
- Clay, M. M. (2013). An observation survey of early literacy achievement (3rd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
[See pages 1–36 for information on literacy processing.]
- Doyle, M. A. (2013). Marie M. Clay's theoretical perspective: A literacy processing system. In D. E. Albermann, N. J. Unrau, & R. B. Ruddell (Eds.) *Theoretical models and processing of reading* (6th ed.). (pp. 246–256). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Fountas, I. C., & Pinnell, G. S. (1999). What does good first teaching mean? In J. S. Gaffney & B. J. Askew (Eds.). *Stirring the waters: The influence of Marie Clay* (pp. 165–185). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Lyons, C. A., & Pinnell, G. S. (1999). In J. S. Gaffney & B. J. Askew (Eds.). *Stirring the waters: The influence of Marie Clay* (pp. 197–220). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Schmitt, M. C., Askew, B. J., Fountas, I. C., Lyons, C. A., & Pinnell, G. S. (2005). *Changing futures: The influence of Reading Recovery in the United States*. Worthington, OH: Reading Recovery Council of North America.
[See chapter 4 on the theoretical base for Reading Recovery.]
- Watson, B. (1999). Creating independent learners. In J. S. Gaffney & B. J. Askew (Eds.). *Stirring the waters: The influence of Marie Clay* (pp. 47–74). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.



Reading Recovery
Community

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