

Students Shine in International Read Aloud

Last year, the UCL Institute of Education’s International Literacy Centre in England launched a very successful event to raise the profile of Reading Recovery® and celebrate the success of Reading Recovery children by arranging for them to read to “someone special.”

This February, RRCNA partnered with our United Kingdom colleagues for an international Reading Recovery Read Aloud. In December, we asked trainers and teacher leaders to spread the word to their teachers. And even though there wasn’t much time to prepare, the response was enthusiastic!

A Read Aloud webpage provided downloadable resources — suggestions for how to organize the event, a template letter and fact sheet, a postcard to send to a celebrity with a video clip of the child reading, and a certificate for each child. We asked teachers to send us photos and stories, invite local press to celebrate some good news, and post the achievements on social media. We also asked teacher leaders to email a list of teachers who were interested in setting up a Skype session with fellow students overseas.

RRCNA posted, shared, tweeted, and retweeted dozens of photos of students reading to law enforcement officers, bus drivers, former teachers, U.S. congressmen, school principals, and more — including fellow students.

Kelly McDermott, a teacher leader in Boston Public Schools, said several schools participated, with some children reading to fifth graders in their buildings and others visiting their former kindergartens as guest speakers. On March 14, just in time for St. Patrick’s Day, students did a 40-minute Skype session with first graders in Ireland. Colleen Mitchell, reading specialist and Reading Recovery teacher at Henderson Inclusion Lower School, organized the event with Aoife O’Malley, a Reading Recovery teacher in County Clare, Ireland.

“The call went great! The whole first-grade class in Ireland was a part of the call and the classroom teacher has been to Dorchester and stayed with friends on Dorchester Avenue, which is the street we are on,” Colleen said. “The Irish students [the whole first grade] sang a song for us in Irish, which was awesome!”



Colleen Mitchell and her Reading Recovery students in Boston—Leo, Samuel, Saoirse, and Violette—shared stories with students in Clare County, Ireland. Below, Candise from St. Senan’s takes her turn at reading while Leah and Joseph (and teacher Aoife O’Malley who is not pictured) watch the Boston students react and listen.



Students introduced and told a little about themselves. They took turns reading—American then Irish—and gave positive feedback to each other. A Q&A session followed, where the conversations explored differences of Boston and Clare County geography, climate, favorite foods, sports, and more.

“It was great to hear our students taking teacher prompts, used universally, and turning them into positive feedback statements. For example, ‘You read that story like a story teller’ and ‘I liked how you read that story so smoothly. It was a story I loved listening to.’ ...The opportunity to read to each other was so special, but the greater piece of allowing the kids to learn about each other’s similarities and differences through their student-led conversation was paramount,” Colleen noted. “It took our reading work at our small schools and connected it to a far greater concept.”