



President's Message

It's Time to Take Action

RRCNA President Lindy Harmon

If you attended the National Conference in January (and if you didn't attend you missed one of the best professional learning opportunities in the country), you may have heard Abigail Gray, a senior researcher for the Consortium for Policy Research in Education. Abby was a coprincipal investigator of the \$55 million, 5-year i3 scale-up of Reading Recovery that involved all of our university training centers across the country. Findings in one of the most ambitious and well-documented expansions of an instructional program in U.S. history reveal the impact of Reading Recovery on early literacy learning.

Regardless of what happens with the Trump administration, one thing is certain – there will be change. Educators will need to rely on proven strategies to improve student outcomes. And evidence-based strategies have never been more important as ESSA, the Every Student Succeeds Act, turns control back to the states for testing, standards, school accountability, and more. As you know, ESSA largely restores control to states for accountability and policymaking decisions and allows them to set their own performance standards. It requires states to put into place locally designed evidence-based strategies and develop strong systems for school improvement to meet the unique needs of their students.

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Advocacy at the local and state levels becomes even more critical, as control moves out of the hands of the federal government and back into the hands of state lawmakers and district decision makers — many with little or no background in education. According to an *Education Week* analysis, half of the nation's state legislatures have at least one new education committee chairperson this year; some having experience with K-12 and others who are veteran lawmakers with no specific education background. In addition, a quarter of state schools chiefs are less than a year into the job.

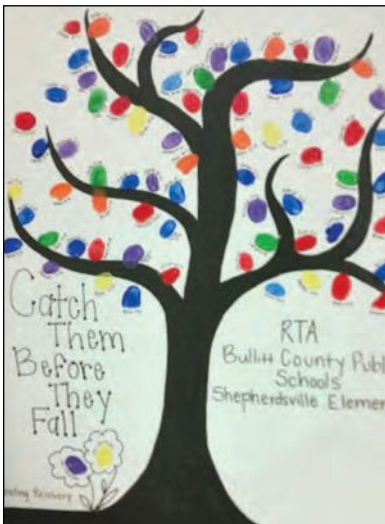
Everyone involved in Reading Recovery knows that all things begin with a child. So it was a few weeks ago when I was invited to attend a behind-the-glass session in a nearby training site.

The teachers and teacher leader had been working before I arrived to get a legislator in to see a lesson. This type of outreach is a continual focus in Kentucky and takes place throughout the year and across all sites. As legislators are changing so often, it allows us to constantly educate and update our state government representatives about the great work we are doing for Kentucky's children and the long-term impacts this can have for our state.

The legislator took part in the circle discussion as the teachers talked about their children and answered questions that arose. He watched the behind-the-glass lesson with excitement and awe. The child had been serviced in a small literacy group since the beginning of the year and had gained only two text levels. In February, he was picked up for Reading Recovery and had already gained 5 text levels in only 15 lessons. The teachers explained that many children can be reached through small-group instruction but many—our most tangled readers—require that one-to-one attention that only Reading Recovery can provide.

When the lesson was finished, he thanked us for the opportunity to see such a wonderful example of a professional learning community focused on direct services to children. He continued by sharing his own personal story about why he viewed

learning to read as so crucial for all children, and indeed, for our state. He had a family member who had never learned to read. From that one meeting came an invitation for a follow-up meeting and a request to help draft legislation for reading grants to support our work.



Kentucky teacher leaders created this canvas of thumbprint, first name, and school year of all the children served in Reading Recovery in a single elementary school over the past few years.

Every year, the university training center in Kentucky spends an entire day at the State Capitol with teacher leaders as one of our professional development days. The teacher leaders begin early in the school year requesting letters, notes, pictures, and cards from parents, teachers, and children to share with their site's local legislators in February. I am always in awe of the fresh ideas that our teachers come up with to impress upon our legislators how their youngest constituents appreciate their support in helping all of Kentucky's children learn to read. The photo at left is an example of one such fresh idea from this year's visit.

When those teachers made that invitation to watch a behind-the-glass lesson or when those teachers tracked down their past students to create the painting above, they had no idea how legislators would be touched by what they witnessed, or where it would take us, or how it might impact even their own future in Reading Recov-

ery. They did it anyway. They did it because they are passionate about teaching children to read and because they know that in times of budget cuts to education—as money gets tight at the district and school levels—Reading Recovery can often be the first to go.

So my message today is this; the federal education budget is facing cuts, many state education budgets will in turn be forced to cut, and so on down to the district and school level budgets. There is no better time for those of us who are passionate about teaching our most-vulnerable students to take action than now. Focus your attention on the state and local levels. Remember, everything in Reading Recovery begins with a child. Invite your legislators, superintendents, principals, teachers, parents, and community leaders in to see a lesson. Explain to them what we do and why it is so important to the children we teach and the communities in which we all live.

RRCNA Board of Directors Election Results

We are pleased to share results of the recent election for terms beginning July 1, 2017.



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