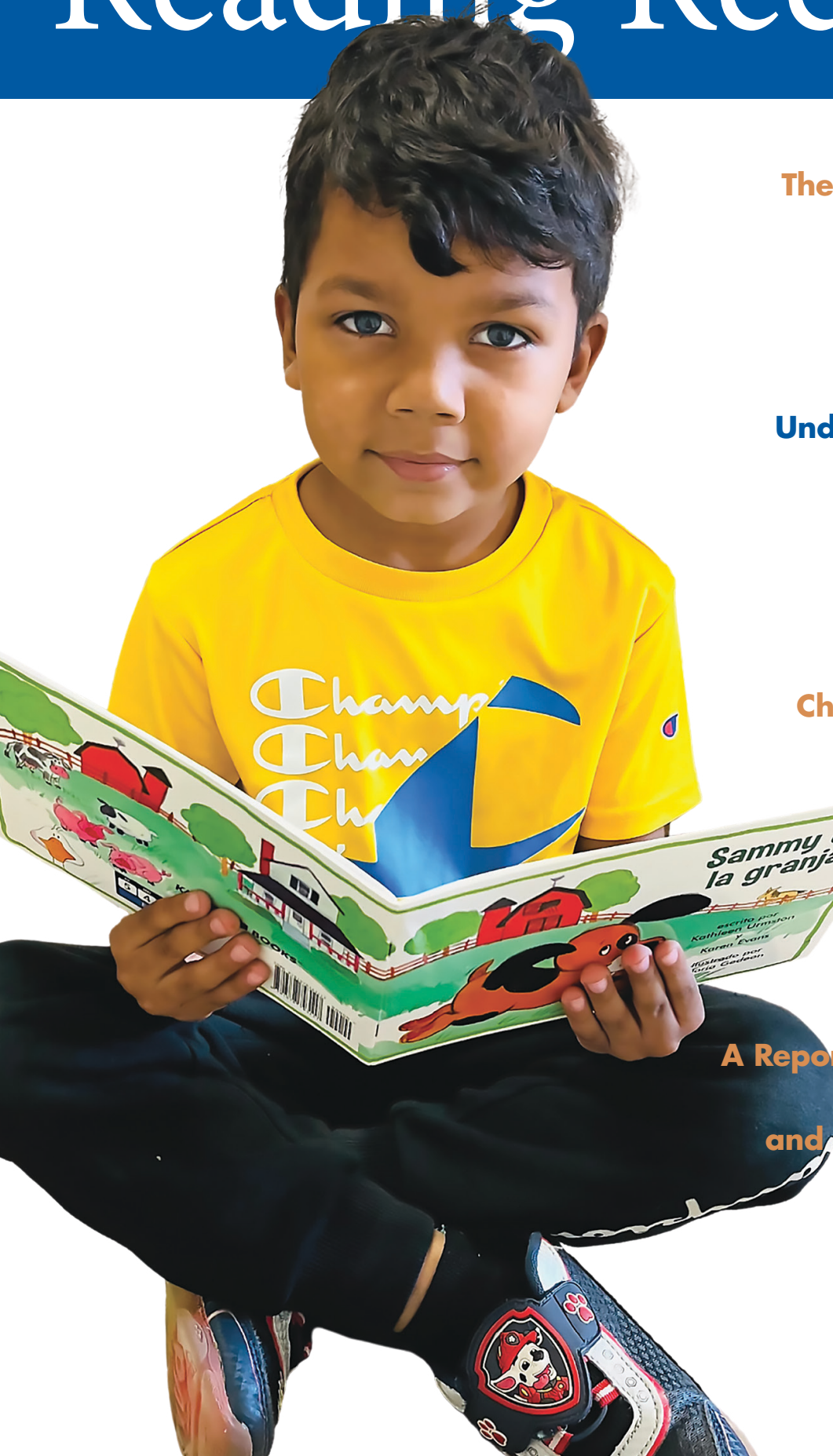


The Journal of Reading Recovery[®]

Spring 2023 Vol. 22 No. 2



The Science of Reading Era: Seeking the “Science” in Yet Another Anti-Teacher Movement

Paul L. Thomas

Understanding Marie Clay’s Perspective on Phonics

Mary Anne Doyle

THE PAST INFORMING THE PRESENT

Selection of Children for Reading Recovery: Challenges and Responses

Mary K. Lose and

Eva Konstantellou

Let’s Talk About It: The Composing Conversation

Jamie R. Lipp

A Report of National Outcomes for Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura

Susan A. Mauck,

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| | |
|---|----|
|  Teaching | |
| <i>Distinguished Scholar Series</i> | |
| The Science of Reading Era: Seeking the “Science” in Yet Another Anti-Teacher Movement..... | 5 |
| <i>Paul L. Thomas</i> | |
| | |
| Let’s Talk About It: The Composing Conversation | 19 |
| <i>Jamie R. Lipp</i> | |
| | |
| Dancing in the Sky With Ava | 32 |
| <i>Sonya Roe, Kendra Tlusty, Nicole Tschohl, and Jen York</i> | |
| | |
| <i>Intervention Essentials</i> | |
| Empowered Teachers: Key to Reading Recovery | 39 |
| <i>Elizabeth L. Kaye</i> | |
| | |
| Understanding Marie Clay’s Perspective on Phonics | 41 |
| <i>Mary Anne Doyle</i> | |
| | |
| Trademarks: Protecting Clay’s Literacy Interventions | 43 |
| <i>Lisa Pinkerton</i> | |
| | |
|  Implementation | |
| <i>The Past Informing The Present</i> | |
| Selection of Children for Reading Recovery: Challenges and Responses | 45 |
| <i>Mary K. Lose and Eva Konstantellou</i> | |
| | |
| <i>Where Are They Now?</i> | |
| Denton Celebrates 20 Years of Descubriendo la Lectura..... | 61 |
| <i>Carmen Cantú Lipscomb and Juanita Ramirez-Robertson</i> | |
| | |
|  Research | |
| A Report of National Outcomes for Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura for the 2021–2022 School Year | 64 |
| <i>Susan A. Mauck, Lisa Pinkerton, and Kate Nelson</i> | |

continued

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RRCNA

President's Message

Sense of Belonging Strengthens Reading Recovery Community 74
Maeghan McCormick

2023–2024 Board of Directors Election Results 75

Executive Director's Message

New Website Reflects Member Priorities to Connect and Serve 76
Billy Molasso

2022–2023 Board of Directors 77

Awards Support Professionals 78

Volunteers Essential for Book List Update 79

The Last Word 80

Advertising Index

International Reading Recovery Institute inside front cover

RRCNA Associate Members 38

Pioneer Valley Books 79

LitCon 2024 back cover

Editor's Corner

Patricia L. Scharer, Editor-in-Chief



Many Gifts!

One of my professors once advised our class to “save every reference list you find. A good reference list is a gift!” I thought of this while working on the newly updated article on selecting children for Reading Recovery by Drs. Mary K. Lose and Eva Konstantellou. Their article is part of our new series, *The Past Informing The Present*, where we will feature articles from the past, updated by their authors. The reference list in this article is truly a gift — nearly four pages of references supporting our standard to take the lowest children first, early in the year.

This issue of *The Journal of Reading Recovery* offers many more gifts to readers. Those of you who attended LitCon this year will be excited to read Dr. Paul L. Thomas' Distinguished Scholar article on the science of reading (SOR). It is an excellent complement to his presentation. His article is followed by a list of “shoulds” and “should nots” related to SOR published by the National Education Policy Center. This single page could initiate a mighty discussion at your next faculty meeting or meeting with your school administration. Both are gifts with ideas about how to respond to legislation proposed in many states regarding phonics instruction, the use of decodable texts, and the banning of leveled texts.

Dr. Jamie Lipp has presented her ideas and observations about the composing conversation at several conferences, followed by requests for an article on this topic. In “*Let's Talk About It: The Composing Conversation*,” readers will find many gifts to deepen their teaching during the writing portion of the lesson. Lipp offers examples, language suggestions, and data collection possibilities which would be excellent to discuss at ongoing professional development or a cluster visit.

Be sure to have a tissue near while reading about how Ava, a 16-year-old nonreader with Down syndrome, was taught to read using Clay's Literacy Lessons. A touching letter from Ava's brother explains how important it was to Ava to learn to read. Her story reminds us of the impact of Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons for students who struggle learning to read. For some, we are the only hope.

We hope you have found our FAQ series, *Intervention Essentials*, helpful as you share information about Reading Recovery. The articles are purposely written on a single topic and formatted to be printed on both sides of a single sheet of paper. The piece written by Dr. Mary Anne Doyle on Clay's perspective on phonics is particularly timely and links quite well with the Thomas article in this issue. Please let me know if you have ideas for future *Intervention Essentials*.

Happy reading!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patricia L. Scharer".

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We construct collaborative partnerships to change the trajectory of literacy achievement by:

- *implementing Reading Recovery® in English, Spanish, or French as an essential, research-based early literacy intervention within a comprehensive literacy system*
- *expanding the application of literacy processing theory through Literacy Lessons® with special education students and English learners*
- *delivering expert teaching that is equitable and responsive to children's strengths and needs*
- *providing sustained, specialized professional development focused on continuous improvement and literacy leadership*
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Every Reading Recovery teacher, teacher leader, administrator, site coordinator, and parent has a good story to tell. Please consider sharing your Reading Recovery experiences, ideas, and surprises by writing for *The Journal of Reading Recovery* (JRR). We need to hear from you because readers have told us they want to hear more about people like themselves — especially those on the front lines working with children.

Blind Peer Review Process

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

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

Guidelines for Authors

- Select a topic of interest to our Reading Recovery audience.
- Write clearly, concisely, and use an active voice.
- Be sure the message is clear and has a consistent focus throughout.
- Include dialogue or samples of children's work when possible.
- Articles will be edited to fit space and style requirements; published length ranges from short anecdotes to longer, more technical articles.
- RRCNA publications follow the style designated by the most-recent edition of the Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association.

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All manuscripts, feature items, photos, and original artwork must be submitted electronically (see website for photo and artwork requirements) via email to vfox@readingrecovery.org. For original manuscripts, please follow the most-recent APA style guidelines. Manuscripts must be double-spaced and should be no more than 30 pages (excluding reference list, tables, and figures). No identification of the author(s) and affiliations should appear anywhere in the manuscript, including running headers and footers. **A cover page identifying corresponding and contributing authors, affiliations, and email contacts should accompany the manuscript, as well as an abstract of not more than 250 words.**

For questions about or help with the submission process, email vfox@readingrecovery.org.

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DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR SERIES

The Science of Reading Era: Seeking the “Science” in Yet Another Anti-Teacher Movement

Paul L. Thomas, Furman University

About the Author

Paul L. Thomas is a professor of education at Furman University. Before moving to teacher education and teaching first-year writing, he taught high school English for 18 years in South Carolina. He is the author of *How to End the Reading War* and *Serve the Literacy Needs of All Students: A Primer for Parents, Policy Makers, and People Who Care* 2nd ed (IAP). Follow him at <http://radicalscholarship.wordpress.com/> and @plthomasEdd.



If you are paying attention to traditional or social media, you are aware of the following stories being told about U.S. public school teachers in 2023:

- Elementary teachers are failing to teach reading effectively to U.S. students.
- That failure is “because many deans and faculty in colleges of education either don’t know the science or dismiss it,” according to Hanford (2018).
- Elementary, literature/ELA teachers, and history teachers are brainwashing students with Critical Race Theory (Pollock & Rogers et al., 2022).
- Elementary and literature/ELA teachers are grooming children to be gay or transgender by allowing them to read diverse books and stories.

Except for teachers themselves and some education scholars, these new bad teacher myths are both extremely compelling and almost entirely false.

Although the “science of reading” (SOR) movement has been continually and uncritically perpetuated by mainstream media since 2018, beneath the call for “science” is both the myth of the bad teacher and the missionary zeal that has driven education reform throughout the 2000s and 2010s. Below, I unpack the bad teacher myth and the flaws in missionary zeal fueling education reform in order to build to a critical examination of the SOR movement, which falls apart when the central claims of SOR advocates are weighed against the full research base currently available on teaching reading.

Finally, we must face the lessons we have failed to learn from decades of education reform that targets exclusively in-school policy and practices while ignoring the more substantial impact of out-of-school factors on both teacher effectiveness and student achievement.

The Myth of the Bad Teacher: 2023

Writing during a peak bad teacher movement in the U.S., Adam Bessie (2010) explains about the bad teacher stories represented by

Michelle Rhee and perpetuated by the Obama administration and Bill Gates:

The myth is now the truth.

The Bad Teacher myth, [Bill] Ayers admits, is appealing, which is why it's spread so far and become so commonly accepted. Who can, after all, disagree that we "need to get the lazy, incompetent teachers out of the classroom?" Even Ayers agrees that he, like all of us, "nods stupidly" along with this notion. As a professor at a community college and former high school teacher, I nod stupidly as well; I don't want my students held back, alienated, or abused by these Bad Teachers.

This myth is also seductive in its simplicity. It's much easier to have a concrete villain to blame for problems school systems face. The fix seems easy, as well; all we need to do is fire the Bad Teachers, as controversial Washington, DC, school chancellor superstar Michelle Rhee has, and hire good ones, and students will learn. In this light, Gates' effort to "fix" the bug-riddled public-school operating system by focusing on teacher development makes perfect sense. The logic feels hard to argue with: who would argue against making teachers better? And if, as a teacher, you do dare to, you must be "anti-student," a Bad Teacher who is resistant to "reforms," who is resistant to improvements and, thus, must be out for himself, rather than the students. (n.p.)

Bessie (2010) concludes, "The only problem with the Bad Teacher myth, as anyone involved with education is intimately aware of, is that problems in education are anything but simple," (n.p.) and ultimately, in 2023, these myths are not supported by the evidence.

For example, as the authors of a report out of UCLA assert about anti-Critical Race Theory (CRT) attacks on teachers:

We put 'CRT' in quotation marks throughout this report because so often the conflict campaign's definition of 'CRT' (like its description of actual K-12 practice) is a caricatured distortion by loud opponents as self-appointed 'experts.' The conflict campaign thrives on caricature — on often distorting altogether both scholarship and K-12 educators' efforts at accurate and inclusive education, deeming it (and particularly K-12 efforts to discuss the full scope of racism in our nation) wholly inappropriate for school. (Pollock & Rogers et al., 2022, p. vi)

The bad teacher myth in 2023 "thrives on caricature" and anecdotes (Hoffman et al., 2020) that, as noted above, are very compelling but ultimately not only lack credible evidence (Valcarcel et al., 2021) and logic, but also cause far more harm than good in terms of reforming education, serving student needs, or recruiting and retaining high quality teachers.

The bad teacher myth in 2023 is targeting K-12 educators who are 70-90% women, and those teachers under the most intense attacks

tend to be elementary teachers who are even more disproportionately women—all K-12 teachers/76% women versus elementary teachers/89% women and the lowest paid educators—elementary/\$58,700 versus high school/\$64,300 (USAFacts, 2020).

Further, there is little evidence that *students today are uniquely underperforming in reading achievement*, yet the bad reading teacher myth is perpetuated by misrepresenting reading achievement through incomplete messages around National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading data. Hanford (2018), for example, cites NAEP data as evidence of a reading crisis without explaining that NAEP proficiency is far higher than grade-level reading, as Loveless (2016) explains:

NAEP does not report the percentage of students performing at grade level. NAEP reports the percentage of students reaching a 'proficient' level of performance. Here's the problem. That's not grade level. ...

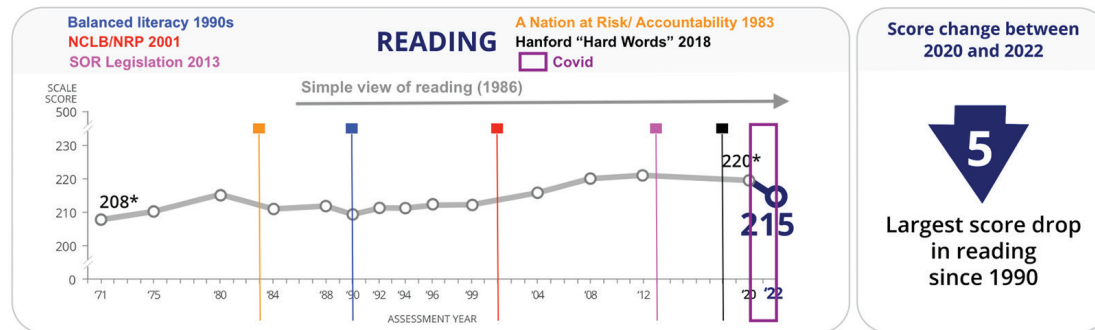
1. Proficient on NAEP does not mean grade level performance. It's significantly above that.
2. Using NAEP's proficient level as a basis for education policy is a bad idea. (n.p.)

And the so-called low levels of reading proficiency are historical, not a recent set of data that constitutes a reading crisis (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.)

If we want to rely on NAEP reading scores, however flawed that metric, the historical patterns shown in

Figure 1. Long-Term Trends of NAEP Grade 4 Reading Scale Scores and Key Historical Events, 1971–2022

Average reading and mathematics scale scores on the long-term trend National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP): Selected years, 1971 through 2022



SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics trends chart with historical events added by author

Figure 1 with key events suggest a relatively flat state of reading achievement with some trends of improvement in the 1970s (which was followed by the manufactured myth of schools failing with “A Nation at Risk”) and flat to improving from about 1990 until 2012 (an era demonized as a failure due to reliance on balanced literacy). Notably, the SOR movement tends to be connected to legislation starting around 2013 and Hanford’s journalism beginning in 2018, and that NAEP data has remained relatively flat except for the COVID drop (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d).

Again, as Bessie (2010) acknowledged over a decade ago, the real problems with education, teaching, and learning are very complex and far larger than pointing fingers at teachers as “villains.” For most of the history of U.S. education, student reading achievement has been described as “failing,” and vulnerable student populations (minoritized races, impoverished students, students with special needs such as dyslexia, and multilingual learners) *have always been underserved*.

The ignored issues with teacher quality (see the final section) related to student reading proficiency is that those vulnerable students are disproportionately sitting in classes with early-career and uncertified teachers who are struggling with high student/teacher ratios. Are too many students being underserved? Yes, but this is a historical fact of U.S. public education, not a current crisis. Are low student achievement and reading proficiency the result of bad teachers? No, but these outcomes are definitely correlated with bad *teaching/learning conditions* and bad living conditions for far too many students (Benson, 2022).

In 2023, just as in 2010, the myth of the bad teacher is a lie, a political and marketing lie that will never serve the needs of students, teachers, or society. Teacher and school bashing, shouting “crisis” — these have been our responses to education over and over, these are not how we create a powerful teacher workforce, and these will never serve the needs of our students who deserve great teachers and public education the most. The myth of the bad teacher

is a Great American Tradition that needs to end.

Along with setting aside the myth of the bad teacher, if we are seeking authentic and effective education reform, we should also be skeptical of missionary zeal driving advocacy for that reform, especially in the current SOR movement.

The Return of Missionary Zeal in Education Reform: “Science of Reading” Edition

A teacher who contacted me has been a literacy educator well over a decade and also has earned a doctorate. A few years ago, this teacher had a first experience with Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training being required for university faculty where they were on 1-year contracts. After asking why LETRS was being required and noting that the research base doesn’t support that training as effective (Hoffman et al., 2020), the teacher was shunned by their administrator and then their contract wasn’t renewed.

Before leaving that school, they noticed some faculty had simply stopped attending the training, but the administrator sought other faculty to log in to complete that training. The teacher grew concerned that there seemed to be some incentive for simply having many faculty trained. At a new school, that teacher was immediately required to go through LETRS training. They described the

And that new policy is often unscientific and harmful, such as the pervasive implementation of grade retention (Thomas, 2022a). Further the SOR movement fails to ground the narrative in the history of the field of reading and education reform. For example, during the “miracle” school/teacher era spanning from George W. Bush through Barack Obama, missionary zeal drove Teach For America

the media story (Aukerman, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c) and the political reaction to that false narrative (Thomas, 2022c). Reading proficiency in the U.S. is about the same now as well before anyone implemented balanced literacy or current popular (and demonized) reading programs (see Figure 1 in the previous section). And persistently over the last 80 years, scholars have lamented the “considerable gap” (LaBrant, 1947) between research and practice in all aspects of K–12 education.

However, the media-driven SOR movement and the political consequences of that advocacy resulting in SOR-labeled policy are oversimplified and misguided versions of that research base.

Throughout those 80-plus years, no one has ever been satisfied with student reading achievement regardless of the reading theory being implemented or the reading programs being adopted. And teacher preparation has been significantly hampered for the past 40 years by top-down accountability mandates that have reduced most teacher education and certification to more bureaucracy than preparation. Something that SOR advocates ignore is that how teachers are prepared to teach reading matters little because most teachers are bound to reading programs and reading standards (or more pointedly, raising reading test scores) once they enter the classroom. A huge gap exists between how teachers are prepared and how they are *required* to teach.

training as a “cult” experience in which professional educators were handed pipe cleaners and asked to make models of the “simple view” of reading (Scarborough’s rope).

While I have repeatedly documented along with several other scholars that the SOR movement is primarily over-simplified narratives and misinformation (Thomas, 2022b), I want here to address that the central flaw in the movement is one we have seen in recent history regarding education reform: missionary zeal. It is important to emphasize that I am aware of no one who rejects that a body of reading science/research exists, and that should be a significant part of what informs classroom practice. However, the media-driven SOR movement and the political consequences of that advocacy resulting in SOR-labeled policy are oversimplified and misguided versions of that research base.

(TFA), charter schools, “miracle” school claims, and value-added methods (VAM) for evaluating teachers. At the core of these connected elements of education reform is a missionary zeal that ultimately failed to produce what was guaranteed, primarily because the reformers misidentified the problems and offered misguided solutions. In the case of the SOR movement, the same mistake is being made by claiming that reading science is simple and settled.

Currently, the SOR movement has fallen into the missionary zeal trap as represented by The Reading League (n.d.), which advocates people to “Join the Movement” and identifies “Our Mission.” Therefore, the zealotry in these two recent movements are important and damning (see Table 1).

The criticisms I have raised are directly targeting the missionary zeal and misinformation found in

But manufacturing a crisis, perpetuating melodramatic stories, and casting simplistic blame are doing the same things we have done in education reform for decades without ever truly supporting teachers or better serving all students. Just like the TFA and charter/“miracle” school era immediately behind us, the SOR movement is anti-teacher and anti-schools. The public and political leaders have been well

primed since the 1980s to believe that schools are failing and that teachers are incompetent. Regardless of what SOR advocates intend, that is what most people hear.

SOR advocates have falsely attacked teacher expertise, both that of K–12 teachers and that of teacher educators (many of whom had long careers as K–12 teachers); these attacks are often grounded in agendas and reports that are not themselves scientific (such as reports from the National Council on Teacher Quality), and solutions offered (LETRS) lack scientific grounding as well. Just as there is a robust and deep body of reading

science, there are sincere educators who are engaged with that research base but also recognize that the SOR movement and SOR policy are not aligned with the complex and still developing reading science.

The SOR movement and much of SOR implementation are *corrupted* by missionary zeal that creates a veneer for the essentially anti-teacher elements—scripted curriculum (structured literacy), mandated retraining (LETRS), and *caricatures* of teacher educators, teacher education, balanced literacy, three cueing, and reading programs (Hoffman et al., 2020). An authentic embracing of reading science would

acknowledge that current research is complex and evolving; that the causes of students struggling to read are also complex and include influences *beyond* and *in* the classroom (not just teacher practice but teaching/learning conditions such as class size and education funding); that professionals engaging with research should raise questions and challenge conventional wisdom and traditional assumptions in order to serve the individual needs of students; that one-size-fits-all solutions for students and teachers don’t exist; and that educational practices should be grounded in teacher expertise — not journalists, parents, and politicians (Thomas, 2022c).

Table 1. “Missionary Zeal” and Education Reform

| | TFA/Charter Schools/ “Miracle”Schools/VAM | Science of Reading |
|---|--|--|
| “Crisis” Narrative of Educational Failure | U.S. public education a failure; international comparisons | Student reading proficiency a failure due to ill-equipped teachers and negligent teacher education |
| Non-Educational Reform Leaders | Wendy Kopp (TFA), Michelle Rhee | Emily Hanford, Natalie Wexler |
| Media Misinformation, Endorsement | David Brooks (NYT), Jay Matthews (WPo) | APM, NYT, Forbes, etc.; Hanford, Wexler, Goldstein |
| Melodramatic Messaging, Popular Media | Waiting for “Superman” | Sold a Story, The Truth About Reading |
| Teacher Blame, Teacher Reform | Value-added methods of teacher evaluation, stack ranking dismissal of teachers, replacing TPS with charter schools/restaffing with TFA (New Orleans) | LETRS; scripted curriculum |
| Teacher Education Bashing | NCTQ | NCTQ |
| Missionary Zeal | TFA | The Reading League (“join the movement”) |
| Veneer of Social Justice/Equity | “No excuses” charter schools | Structured literacy (scripted programs) |
| Market Element | Common Core-aligned education materials | SOR/SL-aligned reading programs |

Missionary zeal creates tunnel vision and arrogance while casting blame and judgment toward anyone or anything that dare raise a valid question or concern. Just as TFA lured thousands into the program and thousands more to champion the idealistic (and unrealistic) blame-game as well as promises of miracles only to collapse under the weight of its own propaganda, SOR is following the same guaranteed-to-fail strategy. And, yes, many good people jump on bandwagons with good intentions (I have several people I greatly admire who came through TFA), but eventually, we must all come to terms with the deeply flawed elements of this SOR movement. We must remain committed to individual student needs and teacher autonomy — not movements, slogans, and marketing campaigns. From the TFA/“miracle” school era to today’s SOR movement, these false narratives are compelling because they are simple (simplistic), but they are destined to cause far more harm than good to students, teachers, and schools.

The reasons students have struggled for decades to acquire reading as well or as soon as we’d like are multifaceted and mostly grounded outside of schools; therefore, the solutions are also complex and quite large. We should beware of missionary zeal — especially when dealing with why our schools and students struggle and what solutions advocates offer with passionate certainty. Once we move beyond the myth of the bad teacher and the compelling advocacy driven by missionary zeal, however, we need to confront the actual “science” in the SOR movement.

Which is Valid, SOR Story or Scholarly Criticism? Checking for the “Science” in the “Science of Reading”

From November of 2022 through February 2023, I presented at six major literacy conferences, both national and state level. Two dominant literacy issues have been curriculum/book bans and the SOR movement. A few important patterns occurred with the latter. Many teachers are overwhelmed and discouraged about the negative messaging around SOR, but I also interacted with teachers not fully aware of the magnitude of this movement and who are puzzled by the controversy. Further, the media, public, and political story around reading and teaching reading is the primary message reaching both educators and the public. The robust scholarly criticism of SOR (Aukerman 2022a, 2022b, 2022c, for example) is often welcomed by teachers and administrators, but unless they are attending conferences, these critiques go unnoticed.

Scholars and educators have been backed into a corner since the SOR story is grounded in a great deal of blame, hyperbole, misinformation, and melodrama. The media SOR story is simple to the point of being false, but simple in a way that is very compelling for people outside the field of literacy. Here, I want to put some pieces together, and offer a place to hold the SOR movement/story to the same standards demanded by advocates of SOR (specifically The Reading League). First, let’s start with the core of the scholarly critiques of mainstream media’s story:

It is clear that the repeated critiques of literacy teacher preparation expressed by the SOR community do not employ the same standards for scientific research that they claimed as the basis for their critiques. However, to dismiss these critiques as unimportant would ignore the reality of consequences, both current and foreseen, for literacy teacher preparation. Consider the initiatives underway despite the fact that there is almost no scientific evidence offered in support of these claims or actions. (Hoffman et al., 2020, p. S259)

While scholarly critiques are far more nuanced and substantive than the central point above, this is a manageable way to interrogate whether or not the SOR story is valid based on the standards the movement itself established.

The debate, then, is well represented by conflicting evaluations of SOR and SOR criticism on social media. A literacy scholar and co-author of an SOR reading program called the scholarly criticism “stupid,” and a policy scholar not in literacy noted that the media story is “facile.”

To determine which is valid—the SOR story or the scholarly criticism—that story must be checked against the standards for science established by the movement itself; for example, The Reading League (n.d.) argues that scientifically based research must be experimental/quasiexperimental, generalizable, and published in peer-reviewed journals (p. 11).

Next, the components of the SOR story must be identified in order to

check the science behind the claims and the anecdotes; consider this overview:

From how much of the media tells it, a war rages in the field of early literacy instruction. The story is frequently some version of a conflict narrative relying on the following problematic suppositions:

- science has proved that there is just one way of teaching reading effectively to all kids – using a systematic, highly structured approach to teaching phonics;
- most teachers rely instead on an approach called *balanced literacy*, spurred on by shoddy teacher education programs;
- therefore, teachers incorporate very little phonics and encourage kids to guess at words;
- balanced literacy and teacher education are thus at fault for large numbers of children not learning to read well. (Aukerman, 2022a, n.p.)

And my analysis:

An article titled *Hard Words* by Hanford is ground zero of the current science of reading movement. Based on the example of a Pennsylvania school that implemented reading science and raised test scores, the article offered an extended analysis and criticism of reading instruction across the U.S. The analysis established several points of debate about the teaching of reading.

Reading science, Hanford claimed, is limited to the

simple view of reading (detailed above) and is characterized as settled science. Other claims in her coverage are that “science” is restricted to the field of cognitive psychology and experimental/quasiexperimental research (like the scope of the National Reading Panel). The sources of low student reading achievement are that teachers do not know or fail to implement reading science and that teacher educators either do not understand or “dismiss” reading science. The movement’s advocacy also blames low reading achievement on popular commercial reading programs, notably those by Lucy Calkins (Units of Study) and Fountas and Pinnell.

Advocates in this science of reading movement include journalists (including Hanford, Goldstein, and Natalie Wexler), cognitive scientists (including Seidenberg and Daniel Willingham), and literacy scholars (including Louisa Moates). However, many literacy scholars and researchers have challenged the media-based movement for exaggerating and oversimplifying claims about reading, science, and research; for depending on anecdotes and misleading think-tank claims about successful implementation of reading research; and for fostering a hostile social media climate around reading debates. (Thomas, 2022c, p. 15)

Below, I outline the SOR story and identify current scientific research, or lack thereof, limiting the evidence to The Reading League’s guidelines

(experimental/quasiexperimental, published in peer-reviewed journals).

For the rest of the SOR story to meet scientific scrutiny, we must establish whether or not there is a *unique reading crisis* in the last 10–20 years in which students are failing to learn to read at acceptable rates; this must be true for the blame aspects of the SOR movement to be true. What is the status of scientific research supporting this claim? There is *no current scientific research to support this claim*; most scholars have identified that NAEP (Loveless, 2016) and other measures of reading achievement have remained flat (see Figure 1 in the first section) and achievement gaps have remained steady as well for many decades predating the key elements blamed for reading failures.

The SOR story also claims teachers are not well prepared to teach reading and teacher educators either fail to teach evidence-based methods or willfully ignore the science. What is the status of scientific research supporting this claim? There is *no current scientific research to support this claim* although scholars have demonstrated that credible research is available on teacher knowledge of reading and teacher education, including identified needs for reform (Hoffman et al., 2020).

The media story asserts the current settled reading science is the “simple view” of reading (SVR). What is the status of scientific research supporting this claim? Scientific research *challenges* this claim since several literacy scholars have proposed that the active view of reading is more comprehensive than SVR (Duke & Cartwright, 2021;

Burns et al., 2023) and that SVR is inadequate for teaching reading comprehensively (Barber et al., 2021; Cervetti et al., 2020; Compton-Lilly et al., 2020; Filderman et al., 2022).

The SOR story centers a claim that systematic phonics instruction is superior to all other approaches for teaching beginning readers and thus necessary for all students. What is the status of scientific research supporting this claim? Current scientific research *challenges* this claim, showing that systematic phonics is no more effective than other approaches (balanced literacy, whole language) and confirming that systematic phonics can increase early pronunciation advantages but without any gains in comprehension and with that advantage disappearing over time (Bowers, 2020a, 2020b; Burns et al., 2023; Education Endowment Foundation, 2022; Wyse & Bradbury, 2022).

Mississippi has been heralded in the SOR story as a key example of the success of SOR reading policy, based on 2019 Grade 4 reading scores. What is the status of scientific research supporting this claim? There is *no current scientific research to support this claim*, and the SOR story omits that Mississippi has had steady Grade 4 reading improvement since the early 1990s (well before SOR) and that Mississippi Grade 8 scores have remained low, suggesting the Grade 4 gains are inflated (Thomas, 2019, 2023).

The source of low reading proficiency, the SOR story claims, is the dominance of balanced literacy and popular reading programs. What is the status of scientific research

supporting this claim? There is *no current scientific research to support this claim*. In fact, some of the most criticized programs are only adopted in about one in four schools suggesting that the variety of programs and practices make these claims overly simplistic at best. Journalists also often misidentify reading programs as balanced literacy that explicitly do not claim that label (Aukerman, 2022b).

Often the SOR story includes a focus on dyslexia, claiming that multisensory approaches (such as Orton Gillingham) are necessary for all students identified as dyslexic (and often that all students would benefit from that approach). What is the status of scientific research supporting this claim? Current scientific research *challenges* this claim and cautions against universal screening (Hall et al., 2022; ILA, 2016; Johnston & Scanlon, 2021; Romeo et al., 2022; Stevens et al., 2021).

Thus, the claims made in the SOR story are not supported by scientific research, and the criticisms offered by scholars appear valid. The media story is overstated and oversimplified even though nearly all literacy educators and scholars agree that too many marginalized students (minoritized students, special needs students, impoverished students, multilingual learners) are being underserved (which is a historical fact of U.S. education).

The SOR movement has created a predicament for the media story in that the standards being required for teachers and reading policy is an incredibly high and narrow threshold that (as I have shown above) the movement itself has not reached.

Again, scholarly criticism of the SOR story is nuanced and substantive, but at its core, that criticism is best represented by demonstrating that SOR advocates—especially the media—cannot meet the standard they propose for the field of teaching reading. Simply put, U.S. reading achievement is not uniquely worse now than at nearly any point in the last 80 years, and therefore, blaming balanced literacy, teachers, and teacher educators as well as popular reading programs proves to be a straw man fallacy. Reading instruction and achievement, of course, can and should be better. But the current SOR story is mostly anecdote, oversimplified and unsupported claims, and a lever for the education marketplace. Journalists and politicians are failing students far more so than educators by perpetuating a simplistic blame-game that fuels the education marketplace.

We are left, then, with needing to find a different story and a different way to reform education, specifically how we teach and understand reading. A first step would be to learn lessons from the very recent value-added methods (VAM).

Lessons Never Learned From VAM to SOR

The U.S. is in its fifth decade of high-stakes accountability education reform. A cycle of education crisis has repeated itself within those decades, exposing a very clear message: We are never satisfied with the quality of our public schools regardless of the standards, tests, or policies in place. The 16 years of the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations were a peak era

of education reform, culminating with a shift from holding students (grade-level testing and exit exams) and schools (school report cards) accountable to holding teachers accountable (VAM).

The Obama years increased education reform based on choice and so-called innovation (charter schools) and doubled-down on Michelle Rhee's attack on "bad" teachers (see the first section) and Bill Gates's jumbled reform-of-the-moment approaches (in part driven

paralleled by the recent culture war fought in schools with curriculum gag orders and book bans stretching from K–12 into higher education.

Education crisis, teacher bashing, public school criticism, and school-based culture wars have a very long and tired history, but this version is certainly one of the most intense — likely because of the power of social media. The SOR movement, however, exposes once again that narratives and myths have far more influence in the U.S. than data and

but likely pertain to income/poverty). Observable and unobservable schooling factors explain roughly 20 percent, most of this (10–15 percent) being teacher effects. The rest of the variation (about 20 percent) is unexplained (error). In other words, though precise estimates vary, the preponderance of evidence shows that achievement differences between students are overwhelmingly attributable to factors outside of schools and classrooms. (Di Carlo, 2010)

Education crisis, teacher bashing, public school criticism, and school-based culture wars have a very long and tired history, but this version is certainly one of the most intense — likely because of the power of social media. The SOR movement, however, exposes once again that narratives and myths have far more influence in the U.S. than data and evidence.

by stack ranking to eliminate the "bad" teachers and make room for paying great teachers extra to teach higher class sizes). Like Rhee and Gates, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan built a sort of celebrity status (including playing in the NBA all-star celebrity games) on the momentum of the myth of the bad teacher, charter schools, and arguing that education reform would transform society. None the less, by the 2010s, the U.S. was right back in the cycle of shouting education crisis, pointing fingers at bad teachers, and calling for science-based reform, specifically the SOR movement. Reading legislation reform began around 2013 and then the media stoked the reading crisis fire starting in 2018 (Thomas, 2022c). However, this new education crisis is now

evidence. In this final section, let's look at a lesson we have failed to learn for nearly a century.

Secretary Duncan was noted for using "game changer" repeatedly in his talks and comments (Farmer, 2013), but Duncan also perpetuated a distorted myth that the teacher is the most important element in a child's learning. As a teacher for almost 40 years, I have to confirm that this sounds compelling, and I certainly believe that teachers are incredibly important. Yet decades of research reveal a counter-intuitive fact:

But in the big picture, roughly 60 percent of achievement outcomes is explained by student and family background characteristics (most are unobserved,

Measurable student achievement is by far more a reflection of out-of-school such as poverty, parental education, etc., than of teacher quality, school quality, or even authentic achievement by students. Historically, for example, SAT data confirm this dynamic:

Test-score disparities have grown significantly in the past 25 years. Together, family income, education, and race now account for over 40% of the variance in SAT/ACT scores among UC applicants, up from 25% in 1994. (By comparison, family background accounted for less than 10% of the variance in high school grades during this entire time) The growing effect of family background on SAT/ACT scores makes it difficult to rationalize treating scores purely as a measure of individual merit or ability, without regard to differences in socioeconomic circumstance. (Geiser, 2020).

Let's come back to this, but I want to frame this body of scientific research (what SOR advocates demand) with the SOR movement

claims that teachers do not teach SOR (because teacher educators failed to teach that) and student reading achievement is directly linked to poor teacher knowledge and instruction, specifically the reliance on reading programs grounded in balanced literacy (Aukerman, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c).

This media and politically driven SOR narrative is often grounded in a misrepresentation of test-based data, NAEP, as examined above (Loveless, 2016). Again, SOR claims do not match Grade 4 data on NAEP in terms of claiming we have a reading crisis (NAEP scores immediately preceding the 2013 shift in reading legislation were improving), that SOR reading policies and practices are essential (NAEP data have been flat since 2013 with a COVID drop in recent scores), and that 65% of students aren't proficient at reading (NAEP proficiency is higher than grade-level reading).

Now if we connect the SOR narrative with NAEP data and the research noted above about what standardized test scores are causally linked to, we are faced with a very jumbled and false story. Teacher prep, instructional practices, and reading programs would all fit into that relatively small impact of teachers (10–15%), and there simply is no scientific research that shows a causal relationship between balanced literacy and low student reading proficiency. Added to the problem is that balanced literacy and SVR have been central to how reading is taught for the exact same era (yet SOR only blames balanced literacy and aggressively embraces SVR as “settled science,” which it isn't).

One of the worst aspects of the SOR movement has been policy shifts in states that allocate massive amounts of public funds for retraining teachers, usually linked to one professional development model, LETRS (which isn't a scientifically proven model). Once again, we are mired in a myth of the bad teacher movement that perpetuates the compelling counter myth that the teacher is the most important element in a child's education. However, the VAM era ultimately failed, leaving in its ashes a lesson that we are determined to ignore:

VAMs should be viewed within the context of quality improvement, which distinguishes aspects of quality that can be attributed to the system from those that can be attributed to individual teachers, teacher preparation programs, or schools. Most VAM studies find that teachers account for about 1% to 14% of the variability in test scores, and that the majority of opportunities for quality improvement are found in the system-level conditions. Ranking teachers by their VAM scores can have unintended consequences that reduce quality. (American Statistical Association, 2014)

Let me emphasize: “[T]he majority of opportunities for quality improvement are found in the system-level conditions,” and not through blaming and retraining teachers shown to have only “about 1% to 14% of the variability in test scores.”

The counterintuitive part in all this is that teachers are incredibly

important at the practical level, but isolating teaching impact at the single-teacher or single-moment level through standardized testing proves elusive. The VAM movement failed to transform teacher quality and student achievement because, as the evidence from that era proves, in-school only education reform is failing to address the much larger forces at the systemic level that impact measurable student achievement. Spurred by the misguided rhetoric and policies under Obama, I began advocating for social context reform as an alternative to accountability reform (Thomas et al., 2014).

The failure of accountability, the evidence proves, is that in-school only reform never achieves the promises of the reformers or the reforms. Social context reform calls for proportionally appropriate and equity-based reforms that partner systemic reform (healthcare, well-paying work, access to quality and abundant food, housing, etc.) with a new approach to in-school reform that is driven by equity metrics (teacher assignment, elimination of tracking, eliminating punitive policies such as grade retention, fully funded meals for all students, class size reduction, etc.).

The SOR movement is repeating the same narrative and myth-based approach to blaming teachers and schools, demanding more (and earlier) from students, and once again neglecting to learn the lessons right in front of us because the data do not conform to our beliefs. I have repeated this from Martin Luther King Jr. (1967) so often I worry that there is no space for most of the U.S. to listen, but simply put: “We are likely to find that the

problems of housing and education, instead of preceding the elimination of poverty, will themselves be affected if poverty is first abolished.” Ultimately, as Gore (2023) concludes: “Blaming [teachers] means governments do not have to try and rectify the larger societal and systemic problems at play” (see Gore et al., 2023).

While it is false or at least hyperbolic messaging to state that 65% of U.S. students are not proficient readers, if we are genuinely concerned about the reading achievement of our students, we must first recognize that reading test scores are by far a greater reflection of societal failures — not school failures, not teacher failures, not teacher education failures.

And while we certainly need some significant reform in all those areas, we will never see the sort of outcomes we claim to want if we continue to ignore the central lesson of the VAM movement; again: “the majority of opportunities for quality improvement are found in the system-level conditions” (American Statistical Association, 2014). The SOR movement is yet another harmful example of the failures of in-school only education reform that blames teachers and makes unrealistic and hurtful demands of children and students. The science from the VAM era contradicts, again, the narratives and myths we seem fatally attracted to; if we care about students and reading, we’ll set aside false stories, learn our evidence-based lessons, and do something different.

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NEPC's Guiding Principles for "Science of Reading" Legislation

According to their website, The National Education Policy Center (NEPC), a university research center housed at the University of Colorado Boulder School of Education, provides high-quality information in support of democratic deliberation about education policy. NEPC publications are written in accessible language and are intended for a broad audience that includes academic experts, policymakers, the media, and the general public. The following is an excerpt from the *Policy Statement on the Science of Reading* (2020). This joint statement from NEPC and the Education Deans for Justice and Equity provides guiding principles for what any federal or state legislation directly or indirectly impacting reading should and should not do (see page 18).

It's time for the media and political distortions to end, and for the literacy community and policymakers to fully support the literacy needs of all children. Much of the legislation beginning to emerge is harmful, especially to students living inequitable lives and attending underfunded, inequitable schools. ...

... At the very least, federal and state legislation should not continue to do the same things over and over while expecting different outcomes. The disheartening era of NCLB provides an important lesson and overarching guiding principle: Education legislation should address guiding concepts while avoiding prescriptions that will tie the hands of professional educators. All students deserve equitable access to high-quality literacy and reading instruction and opportunities in their schools. This will only be accomplished when policymakers pay heed to an overall body of high-quality research evidence and then make available the resources necessary for schools to provide our children with the needed supports and opportunities to learn.

Since several states have passed or are rushing to pass education legislation targeting reading practices and policies, here are guiding principles for what any federal or state legislation directly or indirectly impacting reading **should** and **should not** do:

- **Should not** fund or endorse unproven private-vendor comprehensive reading programs or materials.
- **Should not** adopt “ends justify the means” policies aimed at raising reading test scores in the short term that have longer-term harms (for example, third-grade retention policies).
- **Should not** prescribe a narrow definition of “scientific” or “evidence-based” that elevates one part of the research base while ignoring contradictory high-quality research.
- **Should not** prescribe a “one-size-fits-all” approach to teaching reading, addressing struggling readers or English language learners (Emergent Bilinguals), or identifying and serving special needs students.
- **Should not** prescribe such a “one-size-fits-all” approach to preparing teachers for reading instruction, since teachers need a full set of tools to help their students.
- **Should not** ignore the limited impact on measurable student outcomes (e.g., test scores) of in-school opportunities to learn, as compared to the opportunity gaps that arise outside of school tied to racism, poverty, and concentrated poverty.
- **Should not** prioritize test scores measuring reading, particularly lower-level reading tasks, over a wide range of types of evidence (e.g., literacy portfolios and teacher assessments), or over other equity-based targets (e.g., access to courses and access to certified, experienced teachers), always prioritizing the goal of ensuring that all students have access to high-quality reading instruction.
- **Should not** teacher-proof reading instruction or de-professionalize teachers of reading or teacher educators through narrow prescriptions of how to teach reading and serve struggling readers, Emergent Bilinguals, or students with special needs.
- **Should not** prioritize advocacy by a small group of non-educators over the expertise and experiences of K–12 educators and scholars of reading and literacy.
- **Should not** conflate general reading instruction policy with the unique needs of struggling readers, Emergent Bilinguals, and special needs students.

And therefore:

- **Should** guarantee that all students are served based on their identifiable needs in the highest quality teaching and learning conditions possible across all schools:
 - Full funding to support all students’ reading needs;
 - Low student/teacher ratios;
 - Professionally prepared teachers with expertise in supporting all students with the most beneficial reading instruction, balancing systematic skills instruction with authentic texts and activities;
 - Full and supported instructional materials for learning to read, chosen by teachers to fit the needs of their unique group of students;
 - Intensive, research-based early interventions for struggling readers; and
 - Guaranteed and extensive time to read and learn to read daily.
- **Should** support the professionalism of K-12 teachers and teacher educators, and should acknowledge the teacher as the reading expert in the care of unique populations of students.
- **Should** adopt a complex and robust definition of “scientific” and “evidence-based.”
- **Should** embrace a philosophy of “first, do no harm,” avoiding detrimental policies like grade retention and tracking.
- **Should** acknowledge that reading needs across the general population, struggling readers, Emergent Bilinguals, and special needs students are varied and complex.
- **Should** adopt a wide range of types of evidence of student learning.
- **Should** prioritize, when using standardized test scores, longitudinal data on reading achievement as guiding evidence among a diversity of evidence for supporting instruction and the conditions of teaching and learning.
- **Should** establish equity (input) standards as a balance to accountability (output) standards, including the need to provide funding and oversight to guarantee all students access to high-quality, certified teachers; to address inequitable access to experienced teachers; and to ensure supported, challenging and engaging reading and literacy experiences regardless of student background or geographical setting.
- **Should** recognize that there is no settled science of reading and that the research base and evidence base on reading and teaching reading is diverse and always in a state of change.
- **Should** acknowledge and support that the greatest avenue to reading for all students is access to books and reading in their homes, their schools, and their access to libraries (school and community).



National Education Policy Center & Education Deans for Justice and Equity (2020, updated Jan. 26, 2022). *Policy statement on the “science of reading.”* (pp. 4–10). CC-BY 4.0 license. <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/fyi-reading-wars> [See online document for notations and references.]

Let's Talk About It: The Composing Conversation

Jamie R. Lipp, *The Ohio State University*

Writing is a critical part of each Reading Recovery® lesson. However, preceding the writing (or recording) of a message lies another critical component: the composing conversation. In fact, Clay confirms, “writing is as much about composing as it is about recording,” and, like many other skills, “composing must be learned” (2016, p. 78). Within the Reading Recovery lesson, learning to compose is strongly supported through conversations between student and teacher centered around the ideas, sentences, and stories the students wish to communicate that will then be constructed. This composing conversation can create the path for the much needed flexible and varied word-solving opportunities in writing that strongly support acceleration (DeFord, 1994). While writing itself is a commonly explored topic throughout publications, composing may be one aspect of writing in need of greater consideration. This article is a reflection upon the composing conversation as a powerful tool to support both reading and writing. Connections to Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons® students, and the classroom setting will be highlighted.

Oral language and storytelling

Oral language is vital to the writing process, serves as the foundation for literacy learning, and is closely linked to the processes of learning to read and write. Clay (2016) describes oral language as, “the child’s ultimate resource” (p. 24) and informs us that all new learning is linked in the brain with what has already been learned about the spoken language. Composing and supporting students to compose well require careful consideration of the ways in which oral language, storytelling, and powerful conversation support the composing process. Confirming Clay’s statements, Fountas & Pinnell (2017) consider language to be a child’s “most powerful learning tool” (p. 326). Clay (2016) further links reading, writing and oral language by noting, “reading and writing are two different ways of learning about the same thing — the written code used to record oral

language” (p. 77). This is true, even for the child whose oral language is still in the process of developing.

Although children arrive at school with varying ways of expressing themselves through oral language, Clay (2016) continues to regard oral language as a support to literacy learning writing, “while the child has only limited control in writing and in reading he can be encouraged to search for information in his memories of oral language, reading and writing...establishing reciprocity between all aspects of learning about printed language” (p. 23). Lindfors (2008) describes competencies of oral language as enabling children to lead from strengths as they begin to read and write, drawing on the known to learn something new. Even a child’s earliest scribbles, drawings, and symbols are forms of written language, demonstrating a meaning-making written expression tied to their earliest understandings of oral language (Dyson, 1990). In summary, oral language is the first self-extending system a child will develop (Clay, 2015), regardless of how limited or meager it may be. Oral language is both a support and extension of learning to read and write.

Because of how closely oral language is linked to learning to read and write, it is important for teachers to identify ways oral language can be supported and further developed within the Reading Recovery lesson. Clay (2001) recognizes children who do not enjoy talking with the teacher or who have difficulty understanding the teacher as those who may be at risk of finding reading and writing difficult. Therefore, it is beneficial for teachers to carefully consider ways to engage children in powerful conversations which are easily understood by the child. According to Clay (2016), “*there are no quick ways to extend language* but the best available opportunity for the Reading Recovery teacher lies in the conversations she has with the child in and around his lessons” (p. 79). Considering this, the conversations that occur between a teacher and a child who is composing a

message for writing are considered powerful opportunities to support that child's oral language development. Reading Recovery teachers support children to engage in conversations in which their ideas and oral language are valued, accepted, and extended.

Storytelling is an oral language skill which contributes powerfully to the act of composing. It is at the heart of the composing process, and Clay (2016) acknowledges that "students who have learned to be storytellers, whether their stories are original or not, have an advantage" (p. 78). Storytelling and being a storyteller can be considered as language skills that link thinking, language, and messaging in both reading and writing.

While many of our Reading Recovery students may excel at storytelling, we may also work with children who have not yet developed a capacity for storytelling. It is important for teachers to recognize when children have strong storytelling abilities and know how to scaffold those children to use these strengths in writing. Likewise, teachers should be prepared to support the composing acts of those children for whom storytelling is not an apparent part of their repertoire. To do so, it will be important for teachers to learn about the storytelling experiences of the children they work with. Teachers may seek to understand the ways that storytelling is part of this child's culture and what the act of storytelling means for this child. In addition, identifying who talks with the child at home and how the child uses/interprets dialogue can provide important information necessary to support the child to continue to grow as a storyteller. Clay (2014) confirms the importance of knowing our children well and listening closely to their oral language as to understand them as talkers and storytellers to best extend their language abilities. One way teachers may do this through conversations within and around the Reading Recovery lesson.

Powerful conversations

What is it, exactly, that makes a conversation a conversation, or better yet, what makes a conversation a powerful one? While there are varying definitions of the word "conversation," a commonality among definitions can be summed up in this way: A conversation is an informal exchange of ideas between two or more people through spoken words. Clay (2014) identifies features of powerful conversations by considering how two speakers communicate:

- Two speakers cooperate.
- Speakers draw on their knowledge and their language ...
- Speakers make listeners contribute ...
- Listeners have to bring considerable information to bear on the conversation ...
- Speakers check to make sure they have been understood ...
- Speakers and listeners cooperate. (p. 14)

Clay (2014) continues, noting that "teachers often have to play both roles; speaker and listener" (p. 14). Teachers, both as speakers and listeners, must also consider the child's social language as well as the way language may differ based on the varied cultural rules applied to communication to ensure powerful conversations, often described as discourse (Gee, 1999).

Powerful conversations can engage and extend a student's oral language in both a genuine and personal way. In line with powerful conversations, conversations that are personal can produce positive results. A personal conversation can be achieved when the teacher and child seek "shared territory" (Lindfors, 1999, p. 170). According to VanDyke (2006), conversations are made personal when

- The child is able to talk about what he or she finds interesting.
- The teacher is able to talk about the child's own experience with a topic.
- The teacher accepts the child's view on a subject. (p. 31)

Powerful conversations with children throughout the composing process are important to support and develop oral language and aid in the construction of the child's spoken message. In fact, Konstantellou & Lose (2016) argue, "Conversations are key to helping the child talk about his ideas that will then lead to the formulation of a message that he will write in all its detail" (p. 16). The composing conversation within the Reading Recovery lesson should consider all that is known and understood about powerful and personal conversations, oral language, and storytelling to power-up and support writing.

Talking about talking

How should a composing conversation look, sound, and feel within the Reading Recovery lesson? Genuine conversations between teacher and child should occur with a clear direction in mind: to arrive at a message the child wishes to share. This direction centers on the ideas and oral language of the child and is supported by the teacher through the composing conversation. Like a conversation between friends, the exchange between teacher and student should move back and forth genuinely (Konstantellou & Lose, 2016). Composing conversations should feel comfortable and the teacher must value and support the child's ideas and oral language, thus further supporting literacy learning.

While the intent of the composing conversation is an engaging exchange between teacher and child, this may be a place where unexpected challenges are met due to structure and flow of these conversations. Encouraging and supporting the child's writing may sometimes prove difficult, specifically when teachers observe a child's potential discomfort or avoidance of writing.

For children identified for early intervention—including a few children with early oral language acquisition, emergent bilingual learners, children who are reluctant to engage in conversation, and children who often feel unsure about their message—it is important to reflect on the composing conversation with a critical eye. The remainder of this article will consider ways to support successful composing conversations that pave the way for powerful writing opportunities.

Reflections and Considerations of the Composing Conversation

Because responsive teachers are continually learning, growing, and refining their craft, there could be many experiences in which teachers engage in composing conversations that do not end in the powerful outcome they intended to achieve. The following five reflections about the composing conversation and the considerations of possible adjustments may support teachers who work with children who find composing to be challenging, and teachers who are challenged by time constraints due to the writing section of the Reading Recovery lesson demanding more effort with composing. However, this article is not aimed to advise teachers to engage in the composing conversation in certain, specific ways, nor does it imply that all children will benefit or respond

to these adjustments to the composing process. In the following discussion, key reflections are identified based on my personal experiences engaging in my own composing conversations, as well as many observations of composing conversations between a child and teacher. In addition, ways to adjust to support the child's learning for both Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons are proposed.

Conversations over interrogations

Before our children begin to write, Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons teachers, with good intentions, set out to engage children in thoughtful conversations that lead the way for them to share their messages. Clay (2016) directly instructs us to “create the conversation and ask meaningful questions (it should not be an interrogation)” (p. 81). Upon reading this, one may wonder what exactly Clay meant when she used the word “interrogation.” And so, it is important to consider how the composing conversation may seem from the child's perspective. Could this portion of the lesson feel different because there is a noticeable break between the lesson segments prior to the composing conversation, meaning the lesson does not seem to flow with ease from one segment to the next? Is the conversation one-sided, meaning it is simply a series of rapid-fire questioning from the teacher? Answering “yes” to either of these questions could support the notion that the conversation at hand is not as effective as one had intended it to be. Through experience, time, and many observations, I have begun to form an idea of what Clay was referring to. Conversations that seem one-sided, uncomfortable, stiff, or a simple series of questions asked by the teacher, may feel (to the child) more like an interrogation, rather than the personal conversations we had the best intentions of achieving.

Out of sight, out of mind

I have also come to realize that the physical appearance of the writing journal being placed in front of the child *before* the composing conversation occurs may influence the conversation and beyond. Putting the writing journal on the table before the conversation occurs may signal, “we will be having a conversation about this” in much the same way the writing journal signals, “we will be writing now.” One plausible issue with this signal is that some children quickly begin to associate the writing journal with the stories they tell, and further, the

stories they are then responsible for writing. If the child beside us is hesitant toward writing, this may lead to the child crafting as simple a message as possible, knowing they will be responsible for recording what they've just offered up. A wise colleague Leslie McBane once said, "our children may not be great at reading *yet*, but they are great at reading us (their teacher)." By keeping the writing journal out of sight (and out of mind) until after the composing conversation has occurred, we may avoid our children bypassing an authentic conversation in order to simplify the message they are then expected to write.

Subtle, but important differences

Clay (2016) describes the process of the composing conversation on the part of the teacher to be inviting, genuine, encouraging, brief, and a time to 'talk with' the child. Further, she reminds us to help our children create a context from which they can construct a message. The prompt, "What could you write about that?" is given as an example (Clay, 2016, p. 81). However, what I've often heard, and admittedly said myself at the beginning of the writing segment: "What do you want to write about?"

I've frequently considered how the prompts, "What do you want to write about?" and "What could you write about that," are different. To start, "What do you want to write about?" is a statement that would be used before a conversation has taken place. In addition, this statement may imply all the effort to compose has been transferred solely to the student. Further, if the child answers "nothing" to this question, the composing conversation may become stalled and require more effort on the teacher to persuade the child to share their spoken message.

Likewise, we may find ourselves spending a considerable portion of the lesson trying to figure out "what" to write about. While "What do you want to write about?" appears as an open invitation to write (or not), "What could you write about that?" signals that *we are* writing about the conversation we already had. Clay (2016) reminds us that the two main areas of focus for the composing conversation are that the child composes the message and that they feel some ownership of it. This may not be accomplished if we inadvertently transfer all the responsibility on the child to determine what they will be writing each day. This subtle difference in

wording has pushed me to strongly consider my opening questions, and ultimately, avoid saying, "What do you want to write about?" This question may stall the path to writing for some children, especially if it precedes a genuine and powerful conversation.

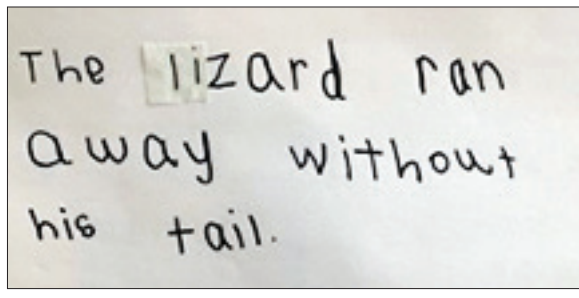
Similarly, when a teacher engages in a composing conversation which reveals a possible message to construct, the goal should be to help the child to move from conversation to construction, rather than away from it. As an example, after a powerful composing conversation takes place, saying something like, "Let's write about that!" is more likely to move the lesson forward than the question, "Do you want to write about that?" If the child answers no to that question, it may "stop the conversation in its tracks" (Clay, 2014) and then require the teacher to abandon the powerful conversation. "Let's write about that" does not present an invitation to decline. Simply put, if the teacher and child have already invested time and energy into a successful conversation that yielded a message that is within the child's control to construct, avoid the option to abandon this message.

Consider the lesson transcript highlighting teacher and child interaction during a composing conversation after reading the story, *Lizard Loses His Tail* (Randell, 2004):

- T: That lizard got lucky. Show me your favorite part.
- C: (pointing to the last page) The lizard ran away.
- T: Oh, I see that. Why do you like that part?
- C: He left his tail.
- T: Yes, he did. That is strange. I didn't know lizards could do that. Did you?
- C: No, but I do now. It's weird!
- T: It is! That would make a great message to write. Let's write about that part you like at the end. (Teacher takes out writing journal.) What can we write about that?
- C: The lizard ran away without his tail.
- T: He sure did. Let's write that. How do we start?

As you can tell, this conversation is centered around a familiar, shared story. The teacher, after discussing lizard losing his tail, does not ask the child if he "wants to write about that," but rather, invites the child to write this message that evolved through a genuine conversa-

Figure 1. Writing In Response to *Lizard Loses His Tail* by Beverley Randell



tion about the book (Figure 1). No time has been wasted here; the message is the child's and the lesson moves forward swiftly. Sticking with the genuine story that emerges through a thoughtful, shared conversation can eliminate wasted time or a retraction of that message by the child. Moving along by simply encouraging a child to run with that story can swiftly bridge composing to constructing.

Value the power of composing on the run

DeFord (1994) shares with us the power of writing to support acceleration in Reading Recovery and confirms that allocating more time to writing may yield higher outcomes for children. Further, DeFord notes acceleration is also supported by using the working page often and effectively. Knowing this, it is important for students to compose a powerful message that allows for great use of the working page to support their learning. This does not mean we must draw out lengthy spoken messages from the child from the start. As Clay (2016) reminds us, this is their message, and it may change and evolve as it is being written. Part of that change can include the message continuing beyond the initial thought, as often happens when writers write. As to not waste precious time during the composing process, begin with the message at hand and move forward as time permits. Keep the focus on the conversation and the message, and encourage the message to grow as the conversation continues. Clay (2016) refers to this as "composing on the run" (p. 82).

After the initial message has been constructed, continue the conversation and encourage the child to add more to their writing, when applicable, and with a strong scaffold that encourages the writer to take a risk of writing more knowing the teacher is there to support him. Consider the transcript of teacher and child construct-

ing multiple sentences on the run after reading *Along Comes Jake* (Cowley, 1996):

C: That story is funny.

T: I think so too. What's the funny part for you?

C: He won't do his chores.

T: Who won't?

C: Jake won't do his chores.

T: You are right. He's not helping with any of the chores. Let's write about what you said about Jake. (Teacher retrieves writing journal and the message is constructed. When finished ...) What else is funny about Jake?

C: He makes a big mess!

T: He sure does. Go ahead and add that to your story. I'll help you. (Next message is constructed.)

In this composing conversation the teacher supported the child to actively construct and then extend his thinking about funny Jake. After the first part of the story was constructed (Jake won't do his chores), the teacher offers a friendly, direct invitation to the child to add to his message (Figure 2) but also doesn't give the option to decline.

Valuing composing on the run can support the child to write complex stories very early in their lesson series. Writing complex stories is a possibility not limited to the child's text reading level. With teacher support to compose on the run, this child has written a multisentence message about the story, *The Farm Concert* by Joy Cowley (1990). Despite this child reading at a relatively early text level, the constructed message represents a

Figure 2. Writing In Response to *Along Comes Jake* by Joy Cowley

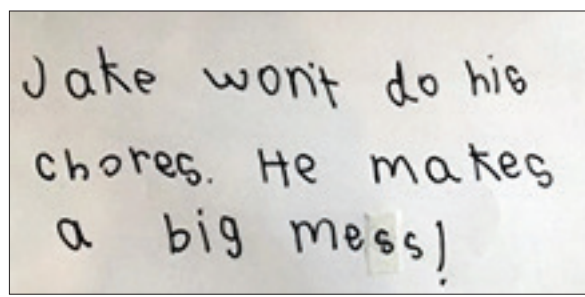
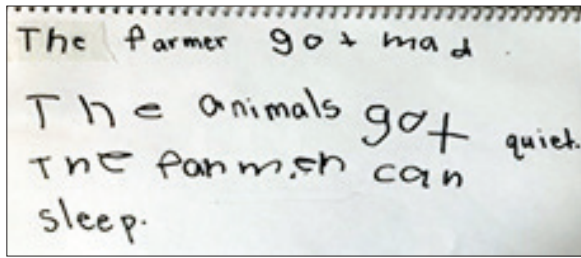


Figure 3. Writing In Response to *The Farm Concert* by Joy Cowley



solid summary of the story read with more than one thought composed and constructed (on the run).

As the child grows in the areas of composing and constructing, his messages should show an increase in complexity and some “skillful packaging of ideas” (Clay, 2016, p. 81). Then, as the child continues throughout lessons, growing complexity would be expected as the teacher is helping the child skillfully package the ideas, and the sentences would likely flow from one to the next, without much prompting from the teacher. For example, *The Farm Concert* story (Figure 3), while already complex, may shift to read something like, “The farmer got mad and yelled, so the animals got quiet. Now, the farmer can sleep because they are whispering.”

Lesson record reminders

Lesson records serve as powerful planning, observation, and reflection tools. Clay (2016) encourages us to give careful thought prior to the lesson about the ways in which we will support our child to compose. When considering the composing conversation, the lesson record can serve as a reminder of conversations once had, or conversations that may be engaging for the child. During familiar reading, when teacher and child are talking briefly about the stories read, it is important to make a note of anything the child reveals about his thinking regarding the reading. As the teacher and child move along within the lesson to the running record and word work, the teacher may want to revisit and expand on these ideas with the child when it is time for the composing portion of the lesson. Realistically, the teacher may not remember the child’s ideas if time was not invested in quickly jotting these ideas onto the lesson record. Other lesson components such as the running record and word/letter work often occur and create a break between a powerful conversation and the

writing segment. There is no need to abandon these conversations, nor is there a need to completely reenact them once it is time to write. Teachers simply could make a note to return to these conversations. Consider the conversation between teacher and Reading Recovery child centered around the text, *Ben’s Treasure Hunt* (Randell, 1993):

C: He found it in her pocket!

T: Yes, he found a plane. He must like planes.

C: Yeah! (smiling)

T: What would you want to find in your mom’s pocket?

C: An LOL doll. I like LOL dolls.

T: That would be so fun if she had one of those in her pocket for you.

(Teacher and child move on to the word work portion of the lesson. Once completed, the conversation begins again.)

T: You told me you would love for mom to have an LOL doll in her pocket for you. What could we write about that?

C: I will look in mommy’s pocket for a LOL doll.

T: That is such a fun story. Let’s write that. (First sentence is constructed.)

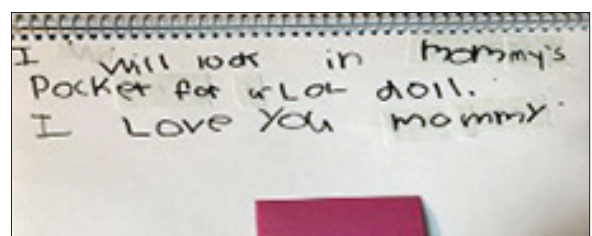
T: What would you say if you really did find an LOL doll in Mommy’s pocket?

C: I love you, mommy!

T: How sweet. Let’s write that, too. (Note composing on the run opportunity; see Figure 4.)

The teacher and child engage in a genuine conversation about the story and the child makes a meaningful con-

Figure 4. Writing In Connection to *Ben’s Treasure Hunt* by Beverley Randell



nection to Ben's excitement, stating that she would want her mom to have an LOL doll in her pocket. The teacher acknowledges this statement and returns to it after the word work portion of the lesson by quickly reminding the child of their prior conversation.

If the teacher is taking the time to (briefly) discuss the stories read in the lesson, there may be multiple ideas from the child that could yield a message for writing. If this is the case, it is important for the teacher to record these 'leftover' ideas on the lesson plan for tomorrow. Doing so could provide several options for conversation starters to support the next day's composing conversation. In summary, allow the lesson record to serve as a guide to instruction and the notes recorded about possible messages to construct help to guide the composing process. While the lesson plans can help to focus these conversations, we must also remember that our suggestions should be no more than that, and some children will simply be ready to move on from an idea, and not want to return to it in future days.

Five areas of reflection have now been discussed in detail: Engaging in conversations, not interrogations; keeping the writing journal out of sight until the child's message has been spoken; considering our questioning to support the composing process; valuing and teaching for composing on the run; and using the lesson record to support the composing process. Likewise, considerations of ways in which to strengthen composing based on these areas of reflection have been explored. While these considerations aim to support teachers to examine composing conversations in a careful manner, there are other ways in which to support children to compose. Using familiar texts to support the composing process has positive implications for students in Reading Recovery, Literacy Lessons, and within the classroom setting. Designing composing conversations to center around familiar texts will now be investigated as a further suggestion to support children who are finding it difficult to compose.

How Familiar Texts Support Composing Conversations

There are many places one can turn for ideas of what to write about during the writing portion of the Reading Recovery/ Literacy Lessons lesson. Clay (2016) offers several ideas to guide the composing process:

- A classroom theme or event
- Something that captures his attention
- Something you have brought along to spark his interest
- A shared experience
- A discussion of one of his books, or
- Some other source (p. 80)

Each of these suggestions can certainly lead to a great message and many children readily compose interesting stories with little prompting. However, some children may write as little as they can by choosing simplistic, safe sentences (i.e., "I like ...," "I play ..."). For these reluctant writers, it may be particularly helpful to center conversations around a recently read story. Clay (2015) reminds us that the urge to write often comes from a story. Because writing traditionally occurs after multiple stories have already been read in that day's lesson, talking about these stories should occur naturally and still give the child a choice of which story and message to write about.

Writing about familiar stories is especially supportive for emergent bilingual learners and less confident talkers or emerging storytellers whose teachers must find the best ways to engage them in powerful conversations. These conversations not only support the writing process but extend comprehension opportunities and help to further develop oral language. Likewise, children who are emergent bilingual learners are still learning more about the syntactic structures of one or more languages. The composing conversation may be an opportunity to extend language and support the child as they can rely on structures that were recently rehearsed while reading familiar stories. Further, this link between reading and writing confirms the need to carefully select texts for our students for a variety of reasons such as interest, motivation, and specific challenges and opportunities for new learning. Clay (2016) notes, "(t)he books she chooses for the child to read provide other opportunities for extending language" (p. 79).

In a study by Pierce (2006), the only article I could find solely dedicated to the composing conversation in *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 15 teachers and one teacher leader explored developing a message for writing by engaging students in conversations about familiar texts for a set period of time. The teachers in this study

shared insights on how shifting children to writing about the books they've read supported the processes of both composing and constructing:

- A lot of useless questions are avoided and we can get on with reflections about what is happening.
- It's easier to help the child shape the story and think about more exciting words.
- I find it so much less threatening to have the book to talk about with the child. I can be genuine and supportive.
- I didn't realize how the questions I was asking were closing the child down. (p. 18)

As seen in Pierce's experience (2006), writing about a familiar text can be a helpful way to support the composing conversation to stay within shared territory and allow for personalized conversations to emerge. In addition, writing about a familiar text is not just a strategy for beginning learners. Familiar texts can support and extend both the composing and writing process for learners at varying levels of text reading. In addition to the study by Pierce (2006), writing about a recently read text was also explored in the context of Literacy Lessons with similar findings.

Literacy Lessons® is an intervention designed to reach young children (generally Grades 1–4) in special education or ESL settings who are struggling with beginning reading and writing but are not eligible for Reading Recovery. Specialist teachers in these two settings are trained to use Reading Recovery instructional procedures to design individual lessons for their students with the goal of accelerating their literacy learning. (Reading Recovery Council of North America, n.d.)

For more information about Literacy Lessons training, please see the *Standards and Guidelines of Literacy Lessons in the United States* (2013, updated 2015) or contact a university training center near you.

Mary Fried's 10 Lesson Challenge

In this portion of the article, I will highlight the 2017–2018 unpublished work of now retired trainer emerita Mary Fried (The Ohio State University) and teacher leader Jennifer Layne from the Marion (Ohio) site, who worked closely when training special education teachers in Literacy Lessons. As Mary neared retirement, I had both the privilege and opportunity to informally examine the results of this challenge and summarize the findings, sharing this information with both Mary and Jennifer. Up until now, these findings have not been recorded or published but have been referred to in presentations focusing on strengthening composing opportunities.

Both Mary and Jennifer noticed a pattern of very meager messages emerging during the composing and writing time while observing teachers-in-training teaching behind-the-glass. Noticing differences in language structures led to further discussions about writing. At that time, Mary initiated an approach she called the “10 Lesson Challenge.” Six special education teachers being trained in Literacy Lessons agreed to accept Mary's challenge and share the writing journals of one student, both before and after the challenge. Teachers-in-training were instructed to do the following:

For the next 10 lessons have the child write about one of the books read in the lesson. Either one book from familiar reading or the Running Record book for that lesson. The child should have free choice about what story or informational text he/she was most interested in writing about. The message could continue over more than one day.

The challenge aimed to determine the following:

Does the complexity of the child's story increase as a result of talking and writing about a story or information text he/she has just read (familiar or running record text)?

Although a small sample of writing journals were compared, the results of this challenge proved very informative, and several key ideas emerged.

First, when looking quantitatively at the number of words per sentence, this number did not necessarily increase on the whole from before to after the challenge. As these children were receiving special education services and being instructed in Literacy Lessons, they were typically older than first grade and wrote more

than a Reading Recovery child would to begin with. However, the challenge created a consistent increase in the complexity of the messages produced. “Complexity” was defined as well-developed messages spanning beyond simple sentences consisting of only a few words. Before this challenge, messages were observed to have been complex one day and simple the next. Once writing centered around familiar stories, the complexity of sentences remained fairly constant.

In addition, writing about familiar stories yielded multiple sentences regularly. These messages now

contained varied sentence beginnings, whereas before the sentences frequently began with phrases such as, “I went ...,” “I got ...,” “I like ...” (see Figure 5). Writing about a familiar story revealed students using more complex phrasing and vocabulary as they wrote, taking on language from the text. Further, some messages explored the use of dialogue as shown in Figure 6 where a character from a familiar story is talking to another character. Often, these messages extended over multiple days as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 5. Writing Before (Left) and During (Right) the 10 Lesson Challenge – Example 1

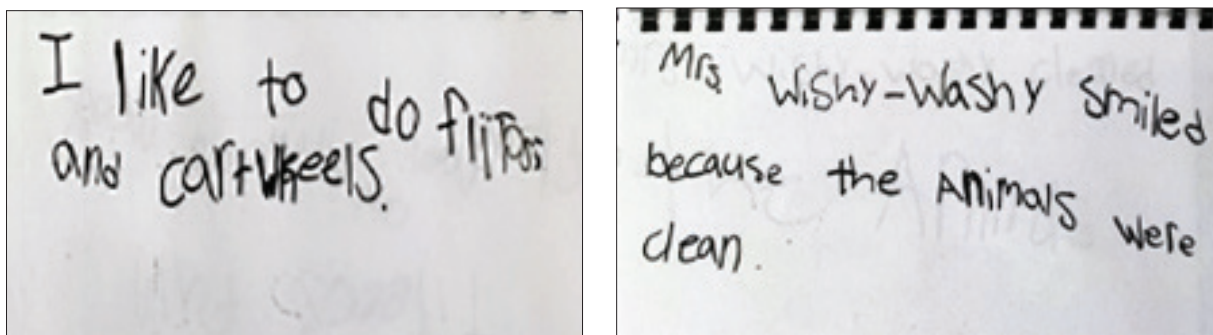


Figure 6. Writing Before (Left) and During (Right) the 10 Lesson Challenge – Example 2

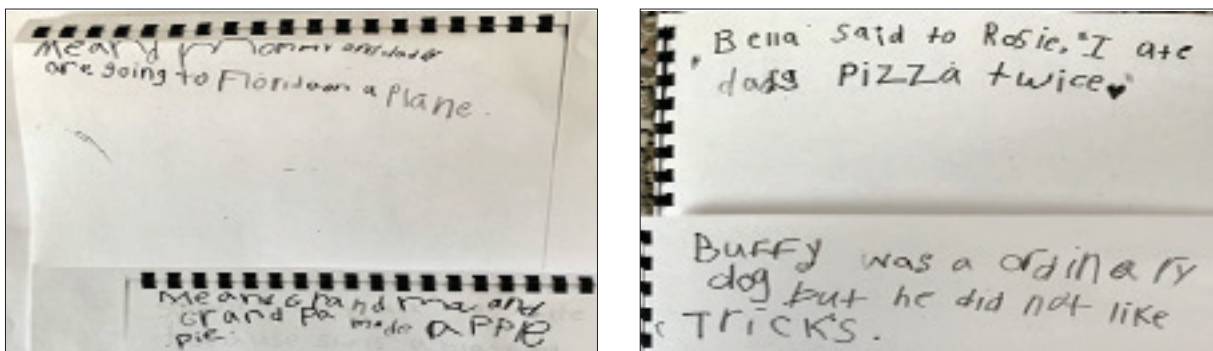
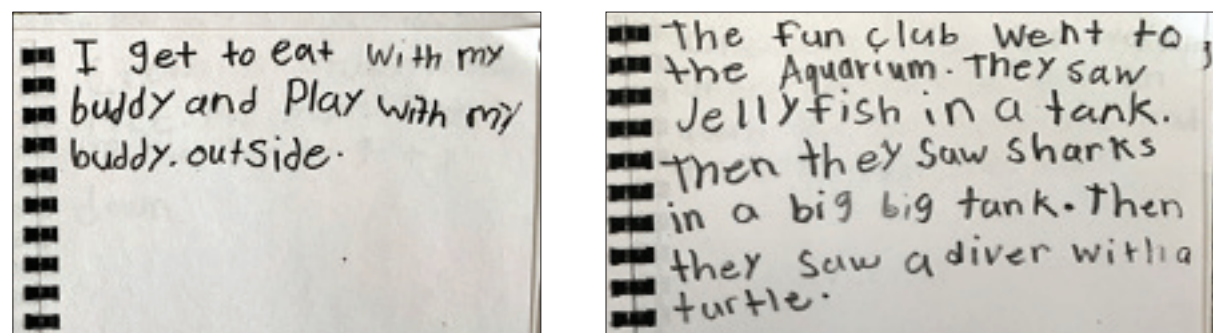


Figure 7. Writing Before (Left) and During (Right) the 10 Lesson Challenge – Example 3



For Mary and Jennifer and the Literacy Lessons teachers-in-training, writing about familiar stories proved to be a beneficial act of engagement that led to more complex writing for the children being taught. Not only did the messages the children constructed become more complex, but this type of writing was more closely related to the kind of writing required in the students' classroom setting. This is an important aspect to consider as a link between using familiar texts to support the composing and writing process was found to be beneficial in both Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons settings. Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons students, as with all students, are expected to construct complex messages in the classroom, often related to passages read. Story summaries, learnings from informational texts, explorations with genre, opinion pieces, explanatory texts, and narratives are all required forms of writing for these children in Grade 1 and beyond. Supporting students with composing and constructing these types of writing samples can strongly support their transition back to the classroom setting while also supporting acceleration in reading and writing in the Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons settings. While this challenge does not present specific recommendations for children receiving Literacy Lessons, it does support the use of the 10 Lesson Challenge to demonstrate and share the benefits of using familiar texts to positively impact the composing process for both children receiving Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons instruction.

Replicating the 10 Lesson Challenge

Seeing the results of this challenge with Literacy Lessons teachers and children encouraged me to engage in a study session focused on the composing conversation with Reading Recovery teacher leaders-in-training at The Ohio State University when they were early in lessons with second round students in the 2017–2018 school year. I then asked the teacher leaders-in-training to code the last 10 writing samples of from one of their current Reading Recovery students. The stories were recorded and coded as either FS (conversation/writing emerged from discussions of a familiar story), P (conversation/writing emerged from the child sharing a personal experience or story) or C (conversations/writing was a continuation of a previously written story). Upon completion of our study session, I then asked the teacher leaders-in-training to take on the 10 Lesson Challenge. For the next 10 lessons, teacher leaders-in-training were asked to engage in composing conversations centered around familiar stories unless the child's choice of conversation naturally produced a personal story. After 10 lessons, the teacher leaders were tasked with examining the before and during daily writing records and to reflect on any shifts in composing/writing they had seen with their children. Consider the example of one teacher leader-in-training's daily writing record of writing before and during the 10 Lesson Challenge (Figure 8).

The before and during example (labeled as "AFTER" in the figure) shows similar findings as did the 10 Lesson

Figure 8. Example of Daily Writing Record of Writing Before (Left) and After (Right) the 10 Lesson Challenge

| "BEFORE" Daily Writing Record | | | |
|--|----------|--|----------------|
| RR Teacher _____XXX_____ | | Student Name _____XXX_____ | |
| Use the following codes to note composing process: FS= Composing/writing emerged from a familiar story read (familiar read, running record, new book the following day) P= Composing/writing emerged from an experience the child shared or a personal story produced during conversations C= Continuation of story (note date) | | | |
| Date | Lesson # | Story Produced in Writing | Composing Code |
| | 13 | "I can see a bear," said (student name). | FS |
| | 14 | The duck has big feet. | P |
| | 15 | My dog can look like Spiderman. | P |
| | 16 | I'm going swimming with my mom. | P |
| | 17 | My cat is furry. | P |
| | 18 | I'm going to be a ninja. | P |
| | 19 | I am going to be a Dojo winner. | P |
| | 20 | Who is a better wrestler? (student name) is! | P |
| | 21 | The blue power ranger has a mask. | P |
| | 22 | I got treats at people's houses. | P |

| "AFTER" Daily Writing Record | | | |
|---|----------|--|----------------|
| RR Teacher _____XXX_____ | | Student Name _____XXX_____ | |
| Use the following codes to note composing process: FS= Composing/writing emerged from a familiar story read (familiar read, running record, new book the following day) P= Composing/writing emerged from an experience the child shared or a story produced during conversations C= Continuation of story (note date) | | | |
| Date | Lesson # | Story Produced in Writing | Composing Code |
| | 23 | Baby Chimp is brave to climb up a tree. | FS |
| | 24 | They think she is coming through the gate. | FS |
| | 25 | He makes me happy because he is singing. | FS |
| | 26 | My mom had a baby! My mom went to the hospital. | P |
| | 27 | Jake kept messing up stuff. Mom, Dad, brother, and sister are mad. | FS |
| | 28 | She left her bag and book. | FS |
| | 29 | It was fun at the circus. They had all kinds of games. | P |
| | 30 | Pat got a new puppy for her birthday. | FS |
| | 31 | The little girl made the little princess smile. | FS |
| | 32 | The big boys let Tim play soccer because he was a good kicker. | FS |

Challenge with Literacy Lessons teachers and children. Composing conversations that led to writing about familiar stories allowed this child the opportunity to explore a variety of vocabulary, use varied sentence starters, complex phrasing, and write complex stories more consistently than before. For example, in the before example, the child typically started the story with “I,” “I’m,” and “My.” But, during the challenge, this same student started stories with names and descriptive examples such as “The little girl” or “Baby Chimp.” The teacher leaders-in-training shared reflections of the overall process of deeply studying composing conversations and recording the writing produced by the child both before and during the 10 Lesson Challenge. The teacher leaders in training revealed that considering the composing conversation in an in-depth manner based on the reflections described throughout this article, writing about familiar stories, and examining student records in writing, had great impact on their thinking about the importance of composing and the power of the composing conversation to impact writing opportunities for the children they serve.

As it was for both Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons children, it may be beneficial to examine the writing journals of children currently being taught to determine what types of messages are being constructed. In fact, I believe this examination of writing often occurs, but for a different, yet related purpose. Teachers often examine the writing and working pages to look for evidence of flexible word solving, independence, child initiation, and beyond. However, when examining the working page, it may be equally as important to consider how the actual stories themselves, as a result of the composing conversation, are what pave the way for the important constructing opportunities we are searching for. If the composing conversation does not go well, it will likely lead to constructing opportunities that do not support the independence and flexibility we are working towards with children, thus warranting a further examination like what you read about with the 10 Lesson Challenge and the daily writing record examples.

For children whom it is difficult to accelerate, a careful examination of the writing journal over the course of a week to 10 days could reveal some patterns that need attention. Does this child write simple and safe sentences regularly? Is there a mixture of the types of writing this child is constructing (personal story,

writing about a familiar story, etc.)? Is this child constructing longer, more complex messages? If so, how often? Because reading and writing are reciprocal processes, the writing a child constructs daily is an important informal assessment of their progress. If the analysis of the writing journal reveals that the child is writing mostly simple sentences with little variation, the teacher may want to voluntarily engage in the 10 Lesson Challenge to see if writing about a familiar story (the child’s choice) over time could increase the complexity and depth of the messages that child is composing and constructing, leading to more powerful writing opportunities.

Similarly, it will be important to monitor these children in the classroom setting to further understand the ways in which they approach composing (and constructing) opportunities. Are they able to use familiar reading as a vehicle for written response in the classroom setting? If so, do these children utilize the same strengths supported throughout the Reading Recovery lesson to share written messages outside of Reading Recovery. Continuous conversation and collaboration between the Reading Recovery and classroom teacher may reveal important similarities (and differences) that inform teaching decisions both within the Reading Recovery lesson and classroom setting.

Likewise, even after children exit the Reading Recovery setting, monitoring their ongoing progress in the classroom is important for both the child and the teacher(s). Writing behaviors, particularly during independent writing time, may prove especially beneficial to observe (Van Dyke, 2006). Several questions may guide these observations:

- How do Reading Recovery children bridge their learning between composing conversations to talking about/sharing their ideas in the classroom?
- How can experiences such as writing about familiar texts translate to more abstract ideas such as writing texts like the familiar stories they experience?
- Have the child’s many experiences engaging in composing conversations supported their abilities to develop and organize the content for their written stories?

These observations may inform both the Reading Recovery teacher and the classroom teacher of specific areas of instruction that remain important to revisit and support, thus continuing to build and extend oral and written language development.

Cautionary considerations

Writing about familiar stories can strongly support the composing conversation for children with oral language challenges, emergent bilingual learners, children reluctant to speak and write, as well as children who have strong oral language and storytelling abilities but difficulty narrowing down their ideas to move into the construction portion of the writing segment. Additionally, writing about familiar stories supports a link from writing instruction in the Reading Recovery lesson to writing in the classroom, where children are often asked to respond to texts through various writing activities. Supporting Reading Recovery or Literacy Lessons students to become comfortable reflecting, responding, questioning, and connecting to texts read is consistent with classroom expectations of these students.

In contrast to the child who needs specific support and teacher ingenuity to compose, there will be children who initiate and engage in conversation easily and regularly. There will be children who may take their teacher's hand upon meeting them in the classroom and engage in storytelling all the way down the hallway. They are the children who can't wait to talk about their day or their weekend. These children may not necessarily need the scaffold of a familiar book to prompt a message to write; and learning to compose from their oral language may be just what they need. In other words, not *all* children need to write about the books they've read *all* of the time. Important to note, in a study reported in Lyons et al. (1993), teachers of high outcomes students in Reading Recovery engaged in composing conversations that prompted children to write about familiar stories as well as write from personal experience. In contrast, teachers producing low outcomes most often engaged in composing conversations that led to children writing about personal experiences. This further highlights the importance of a combination of composing conversations to occur throughout the lesson series, both those

focused on familiar stories and personal experiences. As with every move made in a Reading Recovery or Literacy Lessons lesson, teacher decision making is based on the particular child in that moment.

Final Thoughts

Oral language development is the building block to both spoken and written language. Clay has consistently placed value on a child's oral language calling it a "gateway to new concepts, a means of sorting out confusions, a way to interact with people, or to get help, a way to test out what one knows" (2014, p. 11). Children will come to us with varied oral language experiences, "spread out like runners in a marathon as they gain control over language" (Clay, 2004, p. 14). Given that no two children will be exactly the same when it comes to their experiences with language and considering the importance of language as a contributor to both reading and writing, the composing conversation within the Reading Recovery lesson should be an enjoyable opportunity to support students to develop oral language, to evolve into storytellers, and to discover the messages they are invested in sharing and recording.

There are many factors to consider throughout the composing conversation to ensure the power intended is the power revealed. While the composing conversation may appear as simply a time to talk, reflecting on the many intricacies I have discovered about composing, as well as integrating Clay's theory to further develop my responsiveness as a teacher has supported me to consider the composing conversation as much more than just "talk." These reflections and considerations discussed here are just a sampling of teaching moves that may impact the composing conversation, and thus, the written stories then constructed. It is my hope that teachers will thoughtfully reflect on their personal experiences with children around the composing conversation, and consider if any of the reflections, ideas, or considerations highlighted within this article could lead to positive shifts in their teaching, and ultimately, enhance student learning through powerfully composed and constructed messages that children are excited to share with the world.

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About the Author

Dr. Jamie Lipp serves as the Mary Fried Endowed Clinical Assistant Professor and a Reading Recovery trainer at The Ohio State University. Through over 20 years in education, she has served as a classroom teacher, literacy specialist, Reading Recovery teacher, elementary curriculum specialist, and university instructor.



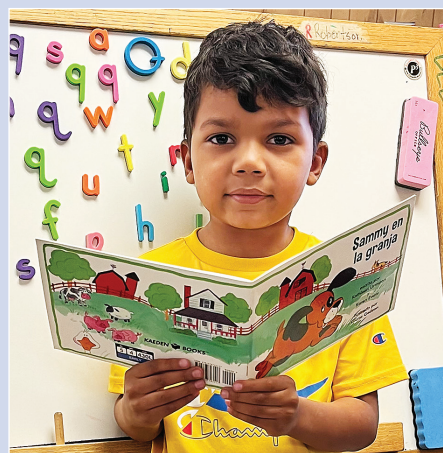
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About the Cover

Yorlin is a recent immigrant from Honduras and loves coming to school every day. He is eager to learn, enjoys his Descubriendo la Lectura lessons, and wants to be a teacher when he grows up. A natural storyteller, Yorlin's favorite book is *El dinosaurio perdido* (*The Lost Dinosaur*). And his favorite thing about living in America — McDonald's french fries.



Dancing in the Sky With Ava

Sonya Roe, Kendra Thusty, Nicole Tschohl, and Jen York
Independent School District 196: Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan, Minnesota

The impact of one student's story can become a bright shining star dancing in the sky. It can provide hope in situations where we may have lost the belief that all children have the potential to become literate.

Hope is not just an emotion. Hope happens when we have the ability to set realistic goals, when we are able to figure out how to achieve those goals, including the ability to stay flexible and develop alternative routes and when we believe in ourselves. (Brown, n.d.)

This story is a powerful example of how hope, curiosity, and collaboration between two teachers during the pandemic came together to create an opportunity for teaching and learning to occur. It is the story of how a high school student named Ava began to build an early literacy processing system. It is a story of exploring the question: What is possible for a student with Down syndrome who has not yet learned to read and write?

Background: Training Middle and High School Teachers as Early Literacy Interventionists

Marie Clay, founder of Reading Recovery,[®] developed the intensive, individualized reading and writing intervention designed to serve the lowest-achieving first graders — general education students who have not yet caught on to the complex set

of concepts that make reading and writing possible. Yet she also said, “There are other groups of children who would probably benefit from the use of Reading Recovery teaching procedures. It is because these procedures are designed for adapting the instruction to the learning

This story is a powerful example of how hope, curiosity, and collaboration between two teachers during the pandemic came together to create an opportunity for teaching and learning to occur.

needs of individual children that they can be applied to many *beginning readers who are in some kind of special education*” [emphasis added]. (Reading Recovery Council of North America (n.d.).

Complementary to Reading Recovery, Literacy Lessons[®] was designed to ... “reach young children (generally Grades 1-4) in special education or ESL settings who are struggling with foundational reading and writing but are not eligible for Reading Recovery. Specialist teachers in these two settings are trained to use Reading Recovery instructional procedures to design individual lessons for their students with the goal of accelerating their literacy learning” (Reading Recovery

Council of North America, n.d.). Literacy Lessons intervention specialists primarily serve students who continue to experience difficulty with early literacy learning beyond first grade, usually up to age 9. They also select children from their regular caseloads and use knowledge acquired from Literacy Lessons training with small groups and classrooms outside the one-to-one individual lessons. Like Reading Recovery, Literacy Lessons includes a strong professional development component, implementation standards and guidelines, and data collection.

Our district, Independent School District 196: Rosemount-Apple Valley-Eagan, the fourth largest in the state of Minnesota, has trained special education and English language development (ELD) teachers to implement Literacy Lessons since 2015. While we started small, training only a handful of teachers each year, in 2018–19 we set a goal to have at least one Literacy Lessons teacher trained in each of our 19 elementary schools. Although children selected for Literacy Lessons are in the beginning stages of learning to read and write in Grades 1–4, we also wondered how we could better meet the needs of our older students who had not yet developed essential early literacy skills in reading and writing. We had years of evidence that strong professional development transforms existing staff into literacy intervention experts. We wanted that for more of our special

education professionals, regardless of the age of the children they teach.

Our district's affiliation with National Louis University (our university training center) gave us the professional learning opportunity we sought for our middle and high school special educators. The early literacy support (ELS) certification program at National Louis is designed for classroom teachers teaching in a school already implementing Reading Recovery. ELS teachers enroll in Reading Recovery or Literacy Lessons courses to understand theories and practices related to early literacy instruction and improve communication within the school community. Since ELS teachers function outside the national standards for Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons, they are not authorized to access or enter national data into the International Data Evaluation Center database. In our school district's implementation of ELS, teachers participate in the same course work as Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons teachers. In the first 12–20 weeks of the school year they teach two Reading Recovery-eligible first graders, while in the second half of the school year they teach students within their classroom or special-population caseload.

With a visionary leap, in 2019–20 our school district decided to train one of our secondary special education teachers on special assignment, Jen York, as an early literacy support teacher. Her role was to support all secondary special education programs with implementation, due process, and evidence-based teaching practices. The goal of training Jen as an ELS teacher was

to deepen her knowledge of and expertise in teaching struggling readers and writers so she, in turn, could support teachers who teach students who have not yet developed an early literacy processing system. Simultaneously with her ELS learning, Jen began to coach a high school special education teacher at Eastview High School, Sonya Roe, who provides services for students with Down syndrome and other cognitive disabilities. What began as a coaching cycle to help Sonya identify books for her emergent readers at the high school turned into a life-changing partnership as Jen and Sonya collaborated to teach a 16-year-old young woman named Ava to learn to read and write for the first time in her life.

Jen and Sonya's Collaboration and How It Became the Catalyst for Systems Change

Our school district's English language arts (ELA) department has undertaken the work to implement the Common Core standards and shift our practices to use inquiry units of study and integrate rich resource libraries in our schools since 2012. Jen and Sonya first crossed paths through Jen's role as an ELA lead teacher before moving to teach at the same high school. While Jen and Sonya are both special education teachers, Jen's role at Eastview was to support students in a resource model — primarily to provide service to students with learning disabilities, other health disabilities, or autism who spent most of their time in the general education setting. Sonya was a center-based teacher working with

students with cognitive disabilities who spends most of time in a special education setting.

As a member of the ELA lead team to support teams in developing inquiry units of study that supported all students in making growth towards ELA standards, Jen relied on Sonya and other colleagues' perspectives on the barriers or gaps in our professional learning approaches or instructional resources that were not effectively supporting the needs of our most academically challenged students. Through this collaboration and partnership over time, the ELA work continued to evolve to better support all our learners.

As units were developed, the center-based teachers continued to face a big problem. They noticed they did not have unit-related books their students could read. As a solution, the team creatively collaborated with vendors to hand-select books that would support the units' real-world learning, such as Community and World of Work units. These shifts and developments in our system's learning began to address some of the barriers of instructional resources.

In the 2020–21 school year, Sonya began to organize guided reading groups and plan instruction incorporating many of the new unit texts. Ava was in the most emergent reading group in her classroom as she had demonstrated very limited reading skills. Additionally, Ava's instruction was delivered in a distance-learning format for her entire day due to her multiple health risks and the threat of COVID exposure at school. Sonya began virtual lessons with Ava and one other student from her program

three times a week for 50 minutes to provide these guided reading lessons. Characteristic of the poor attendance many school districts faced while implementing online learning during the pandemic, the other student's attendance was very inconsistent. While unfortunate for that student, it allowed Ava and Sonya the unique opportunity to have one-to-one lessons for the first time. This individual teaching and observing scenario enabled Sonya to recognize more clearly how difficult taking on the tasks of reading and writing were for Ava. Sonya, having been a high school special education teacher for her entire teaching career, did not have a strong knowledge of how to teach a student to read. She felt stuck. She reached out to her colleague Jen who she knew had been credentialed as an ELS teacher in the 2019–2020 school year: "I have a literacy question for you. I want to pick your brain about a student. I have a student Ava, she is a junior in my center-based class. We are reading on Zoom this book called 'Bonnie the Baker.' She keeps getting stuck when the words in the story change from 'bake' to 'make.' It doesn't matter how many times we go through it she keeps missing these words."

Jen offered to join a lesson. Sonya remembers being really nervous about having Jen join a lesson and telling Jen, "No judgment. I don't know how to teach reading!" This was the catalyst to challenge the instructional practices we used with our high school students with cognitive disabilities.

More About Ava

Ava was born with Down syndrome and the common heart issues that

go along with it. She was a young lady who had received special education services beginning in early childhood. Ava had many teachers along the way who tried to teach her to read, but she did not receive Reading Recovery instruction as a first grader. According to the *Standards and Guidelines* (2017) for Reading Recovery, "A child who has already been admitted to a special education program for reading instruction may or may not be selected for Reading Recovery" (Appendix C, p. 45). Ava was severely cognitively impaired and any new skill she took on required many repetitions before it was truly learned. Ava was identified for special education services under the category of developmentally and cognitively delayed (DCD). Under federal special education law, to qualify in this category a student needs to demonstrate needs in functional and adaptive areas and have a score on a normed intelligence test of 70 or below, or two standard deviations below the norm. Ava's score of 42 placed her in the severely cognitively impaired range.

In her center-based high school classroom Ava was able to write her first name and the first three or four letters of her last name consistently. She also enjoyed writing letters and could be seen filling pages of notebook paper with them. These letters did not form words but rather a pattern on the page Ava liked. Ava's reading skills were similar to her writing skills. She inconsistently demonstrated letter identification for upper and lowercase letters as well as inconsistency with the sounds these letters made. All her difficulties aside, Ava was very motivated to learn to read and write

and had a noticeable interest in print. Regarding her oral language, Ava often spoke in one- or two-word statements.

Jen was anxious to see if the acceleration talked about in Clay's (2016) theory through learning in the context of continuous text and the structure of Reading Recovery/Literacy Lessons might support Ava's ability to engage in and take over the learning process.

When given the *Record of Oral Language* (Clay et al., 2007) Ava consistently recalled a noun from the sentence, if it was the subject or an object within the sentence, and she occasionally recalled an action from the sentence.

Ava's Literacy Lessons

After completing the Observation Survey (Clay, 2019) over Zoom, lessons began in late October (see Figure 1). Jen supported Ava through early literacy support using the structure of Reading Recovery/Literacy Lessons twice a week and Sonya worked with Ava two other days of the week as she took on new learning related to this structure of literacy instruction. All of Ava's lessons were virtual and Ava's family was a great support in ensuring that she had all of her reading lesson materials, books, markers, whiteboard, and writer's notebook, as well as her technology tools ready to capture the lesson — her iPad to see and hear the lesson and an iPhone on a gooseneck holder to record her behaviors as she read and wrote. Ava hopped on Zoom every day with a smile, a joke, and ready to read.

In designing Ava's individual lessons, we incorporated her passions — her family, the ways they helped

Figure 1. October 2020 Observation Survey Summary for Ava

An instructional text level was not able to be identified for Ava. Ava recognizes that stories have meaning and uses pictures to help her construct meaning. While she demonstrates use of left to right and return sweep directionality in both reading and in writing, she does not yet appear to use 1:1 matching in words to effectively use visual information. With words in isolation, Ava seems to scan and search for familiar letters to help her make an attempt. She does not appear to use within word directionality, and most of her vocabulary of words she recognizes appear to be by sight or memorization. This is similar to her writing in that she would tend to capture a sound that she heard without necessarily slowly checking what she heard in a sequential manner (HRSIW). At the time of assessments, attempts in the HRSIW primarily included capturing a single letter to represent the word, but in WV, she would put together a string of letters. Ava will need to learn how to look at print to help her focus more productively on the words and letters within words. Based on analysis of errors in her running records for structural changes and in her results on the ROL, Ava will need support to take on and articulate more sophisticated language structures to help develop her own oral language to be a useful tool in reading and writing.

her, and the way she helped them. Many of the books were selected from within the Community unit or World of Work unit on different types of jobs and careers, and the texts created perfect links between Ava's life at home and learning at school. Ava's pride in helping at home brought a level of understanding and meaning to the stories she read.

We were thrilled when we began to see growth in Ava's literacy behaviors early in her lesson series. We requested permission from her family to record the lessons so we could share them with other secondary teachers who teach students with similar early literacy acquisition needs. While there were many hurdles navigating the lessons virtually and supporting Ava's understanding of what to do in the moment, Ava was always a

joyful, eager participant. The lessons frequently ran long, approximately 40–45 minutes. In the earliest of lessons, Ava embraced an identity as a reader. She was eager to read books to herself or with others at home.

Although digital tools brought many challenges, Ava began to notice things in books that she hadn't noticed before. Example, she now could see the "b" in "bake" when previously she had struggled with "bake" and "make" in *Bonnie the Baker* (Dubois, 2013, Text Level 1/A). She beamed with confidence as she took over reading more books within lessons, and in December we caught Ava's first clear example of self-monitoring and self-correcting reading behavior on video (<https://tinyurl.com/Ava-Clip-1>).

Writing was challenging to incorporate in many of the lessons due to the hurdle of virtual learning

and developing language for how to navigate the page, letters, and words. After assessing Ava with the tasks of the Observation Survey in March and reflecting on Ava's growth and ongoing needs related to constructing words and some letter awareness, we reattempted to integrate writing into her lessons. We used books about helping at home to support conversation and extend Ava's oral language beyond one- or two-word statements to construct stories about what her family did or how they helped one another. Ava's identity within her family shaped her interests and our book selections in lessons.

In one particular lesson, it was clear that Ava's learning was also shaping her identity. We reread through the pages of a story she was writing on how each member helps in her family. As we began talking about the last page and what she helps with at home, she proudly stated, "I can write books" (<https://tinyurl.com/Ava-Clip-2>).

With the addition of writing in Ava's lessons, we noticed a shift in her understanding of the purpose of writing. She would often ask us how to write a word. Previously, she would write endless letters filling a page with no connection to a word. She used this newfound interest and skill to write a valentine card for each student in her class as well as her teachers, staff, and even a few friends who were in college. It took a very long time to complete this task, and she was so incredibly proud of her writing. She was beginning to see the connection between letters and words and sending a meaningful message. After participating in

an ELS lesson with Jen and Ava, Sonya would often say with tears in her eyes, “You are changing Ava’s life!” The level of independence that Ava gained with her reading skills and the level of independence that can be gained by future students who learn to read using the theory and procedures of Reading Recovery is immeasurable.

The Zoom lessons that began in October continued until Ava returned for a brief time in person in May of 2021. After over 15 years of special education services, Ava had entered lessons struggling to read a self-generated piece of text as a part of the Observation Survey, to independently reading at Text Level 4 and working at Levels 6 and 7 after about 7 months of lessons. She

continued with once a week Zoom lessons in the summer as a part of her extended school year services before returning to school in person in the fall of 2021. Sonya was able to enjoy about 12 weeks of the 2021–2022 school year with Ava in person in the classroom. In November 2021, Ava went into the hospital for heart surgery. Due to unexpected complications following the surgery, Ava tragically died. Ava’s death was a heart-breaking tragedy for all who loved her; however, her learning legacy continues to live on.

Watching Ava learn to read and write and the confidence it gave Ava had a profound impact on Sonya. She wanted to expand this gift to as many students in her class as possible. Even though Sonya’s

students have cognitive delays, she knows that they can learn; it is just not at the same pace as neurotypical students. Starting with the summer of 2021–22, Sonya began her ELS training being highly motivated to change the lives of as many students in her special education classes as possible. In the fall, Sonya worked with two round one first-grade students at a nearby elementary school and continued to teach her own center-based high school classroom. Over the course of that school year, she gained the understanding of the theory and procedures to teach students in her classroom who needed help with early literacy acquisition.

For round two of Literacy Lessons training, Sonya chose two students in her special education classroom



Ava used her newfound interest and skill in writing to make a Valentine card for every student in her class, like the one shown here to Corrine (Corrine love Ava).

A bracelet her dad had made with Ava’s writing says I love you, Ava.

(Photos courtesy of LP Photography in Motion)

It is our hope that this story inspires other teachers and school districts to provide professional development for their teachers and allows them the chance to apply their learning with students who have not yet had the opportunity to become readers, writers, and importantly confident communicators.

to begin doing daily ELS. One of her students had a very similar academic background as Ava. He had a similar IQ as well as having Down syndrome. Like Ava, this student began lessons having difficulty with a Level 1 text on the Observation Survey. At the time of this article, Sonya was continuing lessons with this student during the extended school year. He is reading at Text Level 6 at 90% accuracy after having participated in 35 daily lessons.

Stories are the heartbeat, inspiration, and great provider of hope in our lives. As stated in the introduction, hope is not just an emotion. Hopefulness is about the ability to set a goal, to find innovative and creative ways of getting there (pathways), and believing we can do it (agency) (Brown, n.d.). This is a beautiful yet heart-breaking story about Ava, an incredibly loved young lady, who came to realize the power of sending out her messages into the world. One life impacting

another life and passing on an opportunity to others. It is the story of taking Marie Clay's suggestion of other groups of children beyond first graders benefiting from the theory and procedures for developing an early literacy processing system. It is our hope that this story inspires other teachers and school districts to provide professional development for their teachers and allows them the chance to apply their learning with students who have not yet had the opportunity to become readers, writers, and importantly confident communicators. Although the smiling, upbeat, hardworking Ava is no longer with us, her impact on the lives of each of the future students like her will continue to be felt for years to come. Ava is one of our many bright shining stars, dancing in the sky.

Hearing From Ava's Brother

When my parents were presented with the idea of Ava working one-on-one with someone to expand her reading ability, I was excited for Ava but wasn't sure how far it would go. We all tried to read with Ava, but it usually ended up with her frustrated. We quickly realized that something was different with Reading Recovery (early literacy support). She began to learn reading in a completely different way.

As Ava's skill level increased, we noticed that Ava was changing too. Her confidence really jumped and not just with reading — her whole self. She was eager to show off her new skills and loved to have us next to her on the couch while she read us a book. Learning to read also increased her drive. My parents often found Ava sitting with her books and reading them aloud.

This new gift also improved Ava's vocabulary. She was able to communicate more clearly and at a higher level which kept her confidence growing. Lastly, Ava was so proud of herself for learning to read. It brought her immense joy and she would beam with pride after reading a book to her teacher, her principal, and her family.

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About the Authors

Sonya Roe has been a special education teacher for 29 years, the last 20 of which have been at Eastview High School in Independent School District 196. When not teaching reading, she enjoys being faculty advisor for Best Buddies and spending time with her family.



Kendra Tlusty is a Reading Recovery teacher leader and Comprehensive Intervention Model coach in Independent School District 196. She provides professional learning, coaches, and supports passionate teachers as they strive to continually hone their ability to provide intensive, responsive teaching for learners at risk of reading and writing difficulties.

Nicole Tschohl is a Reading Recovery teacher leader in Independent School District 196 where she serves a diverse population of students in the suburbs of the Twin Cities in Minnesota. Prior to becoming a teacher leader in 2021, she was a Reading Recovery teacher for 9 years, literacy coach and classroom teacher in a Spanish-Immersion magnet school in St. Paul, and a Dual-Immersion classroom teacher in Denver. Nicole can be reached at nicole.tschohl@district196.org.



Dr. Jen York is a special education teacher on special assignment supporting middle school, high school, and transition age special education programs in Independent School District 196. An adjunct faculty member at St. Mary's University of Minnesota in the master of special education program, she was certified in early literacy support in 2020 and as Comprehensive Intervention Model district trainer in 2022.

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Intervention Essentials

Empowered Teachers: Key to Reading Recovery

Elizabeth L. Kaye, Texas Woman's University

What is the investment schools make?

For decades, Reading Recovery® teachers have been successfully teaching first-grade children who have had difficulty in their classroom literacy programs to read and write within a period of only 12 to 20 weeks. The key to Reading Recovery's success is not found in a box of purchased materials, a strictly sequenced curriculum, or a set of scripted lessons. To the contrary, the key to Reading Recovery's success is a knowledgeable, effective teacher. Thus, when schools select Reading Recovery, their investment is in developing teacher expertise. Participating teachers are provided professional development that empowers them to design and deliver high-quality, individual lessons for young learners in need of specialized support to acquire early literacy. The quality of this teacher training is an important guarantee of the Reading Recovery trademark, detailed in *Standards and Guidelines of Reading Recovery in the United States* (2017).

In this discussion, the term Reading Recovery refers to all implementations of this early literacy intervention and teacher training in the languages of instruction used in North America. These include English, Spanish (*Descubriendo la Lectura*), and French (*Intervention préventive en lecture-écriture*). Professional development activities

of all teachers affiliated with these implementations are identical, and thus the term Reading Recovery, used in the following discussion, encompasses all.

What makes Reading Recovery teacher training unique?

Reading Recovery teachers participate in year-long, graduate level coursework taught by highly knowledgeable teacher leaders in their district or region. Following an initial week of assessment training in which they learn to administer and interpret *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Clay, 2019), teachers actively participate in weekly, or biweekly, classes that consistently integrate theory and practice. Importantly, teachers apply new understandings and skills immediately as they instruct two consecutive cohorts of four Reading Recovery students daily during their training year. Thus, while they gain expertise in assessing and teaching early literacy with the guidance of their teacher leaders, they also provide valued benefits of Reading Recovery to their schools without delay.

During their initial year of professional learning, Reading Recovery teachers are engaged in learning experiences that transform their understanding about literacy teaching and learning. Teachers learn to observe closely and articulate

individual children's literacy behaviors, analyze children's responses to instructional interactions, and adjust their teaching to ensure students learn at an accelerated pace.

As part of teachers' professional learning, they teach individual lessons to children behind a one-way mirror, and this provides powerful learning opportunities for their colleagues to watch, discuss, and reflect upon teaching and learning in real time. This unique experience allows teachers to become astute observers, converse about student learning and effective teaching, evaluate their own instructional decisions, and apply new understandings to their own teaching. Because an accelerated pace of learning is essential for children, teachers must learn to select specific, well-researched teaching procedures that will ensure students continue their individual learning trajectories. Their learning opportunities with colleagues foster a community of collaborative problem solving while teachers deepen their knowledge of Clay's literacy processing theory and refine their teaching.

Reading Recovery teachers also receive multiple coaching visits from teacher leaders during their initial year of professional learning. Teacher leaders watch lessons and act as thinking partners to give personalized consultation about the students and their teaching. They may demonstrate explicit teaching

procedures, review records, or help the teacher gather more data about the student to support accelerated progress.

Across teachers' first year in Reading Recovery, learning opportunities with colleagues and coaching visits with teacher leaders create shifts in teachers' understanding about early literacy learning. Reading Recovery's unique model affords teachers many opportunities to "acquire a disposition about learning, teaching, and beginning reading instruction that is different from the one they had prior to the training. This model of learning enables teachers to internalize and transform psychological processes in learning how to learn into their own instructional repertoires" (Lyons et al., 1993, p. 165). Therefore, the year of graduate coursework that provides teachers the necessary experiences to achieve this deep learning is a critical element of Reading Recovery's design.

How is school collaboration involved?

With the support of their teacher leaders and administrators, Reading Recovery teachers also learn how to strengthen implementation in their schools. They collaborate with classroom teachers, principals, and specialist teachers to ensure children most in need are selected to receive the intervention first and that they are available for daily lessons. The classroom teacher is an essential partner who has firsthand knowledge of the child's literacy performance, so teachers collaborate to monitor students' progress, problem solve challenges, and communicate students' progress to their families.

Does professional learning continue?

Following the year of initial training, high-quality, ongoing professional development occurs on a regular schedule each academic year for as long as Reading Recovery teachers remain in their positions. This professional development includes both sessions with teaching at the one-way mirror and coaching visits to provide individual support and problem solve any challenges to the accelerated progress of each student. With every student they teach, Reading Recovery teachers gain more experience designing individual series of lessons for a variety of diverse learners. Thus, teachers become valuable resources for each other's learning and freely request their colleagues' input and support. These collaborative learning experiences ensure teachers are continually refining their expertise.

What are the additional benefits of Reading Recovery teacher training?

A highly qualified teacher makes an important difference in student outcomes, especially for children having difficulties. Reading Recovery's professional development is widely acclaimed as an investment in the professional skills of teachers and a model worth emulating (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Herman & Stringfield, 1997). Additionally, Reading Recovery teachers are a rich resource of research-based understandings of early literacy. As such, they contribute a wealth of expertise to school literacy teams charged with identifying students who need support, monitoring student progress, and collaborating to ensure students get high-quality

literacy instruction. The Reading Recovery teacher's professional knowledge provides key benefits for other teachers and administrators, potentially creating systemwide changes.

The decision to provide Reading Recovery for children in need of specialized support is an investment in teacher expertise, and this investment provides both measurable and immeasurable results for children, teachers, and schools.

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About the Author

Dr. Elizabeth Kaye is an associate professor and director of Reading Recovery/Descubriendo la Lectura at Texas Woman's University. She also serves as the U.S. representative to the board of the International Reading Recovery Trainers Organization. Her research interests focus on early literacy learning, early intervention, and assessment.

Intervention Essentials

Understanding Marie Clay's Perspective on Phonics

Mary Anne Doyle, University of Connecticut

How did Clay regard the use of phonics in Reading Recovery®?

We understand that Marie Clay's literacy processing theory is multifaceted, and we understand the place of phonics within her design of instructional procedures. This article reviews Clay's messages about alternative approaches to early literacy instruction, including phonics. This is important in light of recent assertions that Clay's procedures do not address phonics and that Clay considered phonics nonsense. In fact, Clay did use the word "nonsense" followed by the word "phonics" in *The Early Detection of Reading Difficulties* (See Clay, 1979, p. 7). However, to present this as the proof that she considered phonics unnecessary is inaccurate. Following is the complete story of Clay's use of the term nonsense, and the importance she assigned to phonics.

At the place in her 1979 text where this word, 'nonsense,' is found, Clay is reflecting on two alternative approaches to beginning reading instruction. One approach, the look-say method, was based solely on building the child's stock of known words recognized instantly. The second approach, the phonics method, focused on helping the child to identify sounds of single letters and letter clusters and blending sounds into words. These two, very

different approaches to beginning reading were implemented widely in our schools at one time. Critics, unassociated with Clay, found both approaches lacking.

What were the alternative approaches?

Look-say approach to beginning reading

First, in considering the look-say method, the assumption that the acquisition of a large sight vocabulary was the entrée to proficient reading was found faulty. Reading with understanding requires more than instant word recognition. As a brief example, we expect that a first-grade reader will recognize the words "is," "or," "not," "to," and "be" instantly and correctly. However, interpretation of the statement, "To be or not to be," will elude the young learner. Reading with comprehension is more demanding than identifying sight words.

Phonics approach to beginning reading

The phonics approach to beginning reading was focused on building the learner's knowledge of both letter-sound associations and sounding-out abilities needed to decode new words. The phonics curriculum offered an extensive number of rules, presented in what was labeled an appropriate sequence, with ample practice of each new rule. The curriculum was organized

to proceed from the easiest to the more-complex rules for identifying sounds and blending sounds to pronounce words. Again, the goal of the phonics approach was mastery of word recognition skills, and learners did acquire the rules. However, as with the look-say method, the effectiveness of the phonics method in supporting a learner's comprehension was questioned. For example, following a year of instruction, a reader would be expected to decode the words "bark," "rig," "main" and "mast" successfully; however, this would not ensure understanding of the statement: "The fore- and main-masts on this bark are rigged square." Reading for meaning requires more than using phonics rules to decode words.

An alternative view

Clay's assessment of these instructional approaches resulted from her study of the reading behaviors of beginning readers. She focused on documenting the emerging literacy behaviors of children making proficient progress in reading and writing. She discovered that even as beginners, those readers were attentive to multiple aspects of printed language, i.e., they used many sources of information to read for meaning. The sources of information they attended to include

1. the message, or meaning
2. sentence structures of written language

3. rules regarding the order of ideas, words, and letters
4. familiar words used often in the language
5. the alphabet, letters in words (alphabetic principle)
6. knowledge about books and literary experiences
7. knowledge of how the world works

(Clay, 1979, 2019)

What did Clay's evidence reveal?

Proficient readers

Clay's proficient readers attended closely to the print, scanning each letter in a word in serial order (left to right) and each word in text (#4 and #5 above) and combined that information with "information they carry in their heads from their past experiences with language" and their world (Clay, 2019, p. 14) (#2, #3, #6, #7). The proficient reader integrates information from all available sources, monitors the reading, and self-corrects when errors distort meaning. Clay was clear that command of sight words and knowledge of letter-sound relationships and proficient sounding and blending abilities are essential; however, neither is a sufficient explanation of the processing the capable young mind achieves while reading for meaning. Therefore, to base an instructional program, or a remedial program, on either of these single components (sight words or phonics) is an oversimplification.

Thus Clay's (1979) statement: "Such an analysis makes the terms 'look and say' or 'sight words' or 'phonics' nonsense as explanations of what we need to know or do in order to be able to read" (p. 7).

Oversimplified approaches to beginning reading instruction are what Clay calls nonsense (1979, 2019).

Clay's (2001) theory of literacy processing and instructional procedures to support the learner's acquisition of an effective processing system does not ignore the need for both an ever-expanding sight vocabulary and efficient phonics skills.

Low progress readers

In contrast, Clay observed that low progress readers used a narrow set of ineffective processes. These included relying on memory of the book, limited attention to print details (letters and words), guessing based on limited information (e.g., the first letter of a word). To address these inadequacies, Clay designed instructional procedures that incorporate specific attention to building fast, efficient word analysis skills in isolation, in writing stories, and during text reading. These procedures involve multisensory and systematic techniques to teach words, the alphabet, clusters of letters, letter-sound associations, and features of letters. The end goal for the learner is acquisition of a processing system that involves all language and print knowledge sources, including story structure, language structure, words and word structure, letter-sound relationships,

letters, and features of letters. Thus, sight words and phonics, while essential, involve a singular focus on item learning (e.g., sight words) and skills related to attacking, or decoding, new words (phonics). Each of these approaches, which reflect a limited theory of reading and learning to read, is only one component of a complex literacy processing system.

A complex approach for struggling readers

Clay (2001) rejected simplistic approaches to instruction for those first-grade children struggling to acquire beginning reading. To ensure that struggling learners become proficient readers ready to benefit from their classroom literacy programs, they deserve instruction supporting their acquisition of a complex literacy processing system.

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About the Author

Dr. Mary Anne Doyle is chair of the International Reading Recovery Trainers Organization Executive Board and has served as consulting editor for the Marie Clay Literacy Trust. She is a member of the North American Trainers Group, a professor emeritus at the University of Connecticut, and former director of Reading Recovery in Connecticut.

Intervention Essentials

Trademarks: Protecting Clay's Literacy Interventions

Lisa Pinkerton, *The Ohio State University*

What is the Reading Recovery trademark?

Reading Recovery® is an early intervention designed to help first-grade children exhibiting difficulties learning to read and write. The intervention has been effective with young children in multiple countries and languages around the world. Each of the national entities that offers Reading Recovery holds or affiliates with a holder who was granted a Reading Recovery trademark by Marie Clay, the originator of this early intervention. Holders of the trademark are authorized to implement the intervention and offer the training that is required of Reading Recovery educators. In essence, the Reading Recovery trademark signifies the provision of the research-based training and implementation features that have been proven successful around the world.

Why did the Reading Recovery trademark develop?

As educators beyond New Zealand began to recognize the effectiveness of the intervention, Dr. Clay was invited to expand Reading Recovery to other countries. However, it is not easy to transplant an educational program designed for a particular context to foreign school systems (Clay, 2022). In her earliest work in new, international settings, Clay found that a variety of factors cause unwanted variations to arise (Clay,

2022). For example, a successful program often makes the teaching look easy, which leads people to copy the intervention superficially, failing to recognize the complexity of the theory and procedures. Translating programs to different educational systems with their own unique operational and funding constraints often causes shifts, diluting research-based, successful procedures. Substitutions also arise when different theoretical perspectives influence the program, disconnecting instructional procedures from the theory upon which they are based. Thus, Clay trademarked her early intervention to protect it from the procedural adaptations that threatened the effectiveness of Reading Recovery.

Currently, the process for securing the Reading Recovery trademark by any new country is conducted by the International Reading Recovery Trainers Organization (IRRTO) Executive Board with the Marie Clay Literacy Trust. Following Clay's plan, a system for disseminating the trademark intervention involves "protocols designed to ensure both the quality and the effectiveness of the research-based teaching and training procedures in new settings" (IRRTO, 2016). These protocols, or standards, detail the requirements of the trademarked intervention in each national context by specifying standardized procedures for implementation, teacher training, and

professional learning. This ensures that the central tenets of Reading Recovery are woven into the fabric of each new country's implementation allowing "Reading Recovery to be implemented in distinctive settings while at the same time providing a measure of consistency" (Bates et al., 2020, p. 12).

Who holds the Reading Recovery trademarks in North America?

In the United States, Clay granted The Ohio State University (OSU) the authority to apply for and hold the Reading Recovery trademark, which is protected by U.S. trademark law. The U. S. trademark for Descubriendo la Lectura, or DLL (for Spanish-speaking children whose literacy instruction is in Spanish), falls under the trademark doctrine of foreign equivalents and is also held by OSU. In Canada, the Canadian Institute for Reading Recovery (CIRR) holds the royalty free license for Reading Recovery in English and in French (Intervention préventive en lecture-écriture or IPLÉ).

Clay entrusted the trademark to OSU and CIRR with the expectation that each had the capacity for and commitment to engaging in research to ensure the ongoing viability of her research-based intervention. Permission to use the trademark is contingent upon compliance with Clay's stipulations, which have been

detailed in the set of standards and guidelines written and adopted by the Reading Recovery trainers in each country.

What does the trademark mean for implementations in the U.S.?

When she brought Reading Recovery to the U.S., Clay made two primary trademark stipulations. First, the trademark requires adherence to standards and guidelines designed for U.S. implementations (See *Standards and Guidelines of Reading Recovery in the United States*, 2017.) The second stipulation mandates the collection, analysis, and reporting of annual data. The International Data Evaluation Center (IDEC) at OSU, established and overseen by OSU faculty, collects and reports annual U.S. Reading Recovery/DLL data on each child served by the interventions. These data are analyzed to confirm and facilitate the accelerated progress of participating children. OSU grants an annual, royalty-free license to university training centers. Each center oversees their affiliated district-level training sites, monitoring implementation and data collection, along with preparing the mandated report of annual results. Those sites that meet Clay's requirements are permitted to use the term 'Reading Recovery' for their program.

If an implementation fails to meet the standards and guidelines, they are denied permission to use the Reading Recovery label. For example, according to U.S. Standard 2.05, Reading Recovery teachers must "[S]elect the lowest-achieving children for service first (based upon Observation Survey or

Instrumento de observación tasks)" (*Standards and Guidelines*, 2017, p. 7). It would be a violation of the trademark to select anyone other than the lowest performing students for service first. Likewise, if a program is called Reading Recovery but the providers are not affiliated with the trademark held by OSU through a university training center, they are informed that they are in violation of trademark law and must immediately stop using the Reading Recovery name. The trademark protects the intervention from variants that leave the lowest-achieving students vulnerable to oversimplified procedures disconnected from theory and research (Watson & Askew, 2009).

What does the trademark mean for Reading Recovery professionals?

As Reading Recovery continues to "transcend global boundaries in the areas of early literacy intervention and teacher professional development" (Bates et al., 2020, p. 22), the trademark ensures high quality in both teacher training and literacy instruction for participating systems across international settings. Thus, Reading Recovery professionals, charged with adherence to specific standards and guidelines, provide participating students research-based, effective literacy instruction, ensuring their success.

What about Literacy Lessons?

Literacy Lessons® was also trademarked by Marie Clay to ensure its effectiveness for participating children and schools (Poparad, 2022). The processes for both securing this trademark and implementing Literacy Lessons (e.g., adhering to standards for implementation,

teacher training, and annual data collection) parallel those of Reading Recovery. Both CIRR and OSU have been granted this trademark and the Literacy Lessons intervention is available to teachers and schools in multiple sites in Canada and the U.S.

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About the Author

Dr. Lisa Pinkerton is the Marie Clay Endowed Chair in Reading Recovery and Early Literacy at The Ohio State University, where she also works as a Reading Recovery trainer. She presents on a wide range of literacy topics at international, national, and state conferences.

Selection of Children for Reading Recovery: Challenges and Responses

Mary K. Lose, Oakland University
Eva Konstantellou, Lesley University

Authors' Note:

This refreshed version of our article by the same title (Lose & Konstantellou, 2005) aims to supplement that publication with research and scholarly articles that reiterate the key selection criteria put forth both in our original paper and in the subsequent revision of the *Standards and Guidelines of Reading Recovery in*

the United States (2017). Since the first publication of the

article, the North American Trainers Group reaffirmed fundamental understandings and offered guidance to schools and Reading Recovery® professionals about the selection of children (*Standards and Guidelines*, 2017, Appendix C), thus reinforcing Reading Recovery's commitment to the provision of the intervention for our schools' lowest-achieving first-grade students without exception.

Additionally, we address certain recent developments that relate to selecting children for the Reading Recovery intervention, such as the debate over whether children identified as dyslexic may be served and how the Literacy Lessons® intervention works together with Reading Recovery to further address the needs of the lowest-achieving students. However, and very importantly, the main premise of our original article—Reading Recovery's resolute commitment to the selection of the lowest-achieving students for service—has not changed.



Whether just establishing Reading Recovery and its development in other languages (Descubriendo la Lectura/DLL, Intervention préventive en lecture-écriture/IPLÉ), expanding the program toward full coverage, or maintaining a mature implementation, a range of questions commonly arises around the selection of children for Reading Recovery service. These are among the most commonly asked questions:

- Why don't we serve more children by selecting the higher end of the lowest-achieving group? Won't they make faster progress than the children with the very lowest scores who will end up in special education anyway?
- Should we serve children who have been or soon will be identified as learning disabled? What about children who are identified as dyslexic?
- Why not exclude children with attendance problems and save the space for children we know will come to school?
- Because there are so many students who need to be served, shouldn't we wait until the English learners become proficient in English first?

In addition, schools are often faced with a variety of other challenging situations when deciding which children should be selected for Reading Recovery. As a result, the following questions are also often raised when faced with student selection decisions:

- Shouldn't we serve only the children whose parents are willing to provide home support?
- Why don't we give children an extra year of kindergarten or first grade so they can mature and learn to respond to classroom instruction?
- Do we have to select children who did not attend kindergarten?
- Wouldn't it be better to save Reading Recovery for students who are likely to establish residency in our community?
- Because they are disruptive, shouldn't we exclude students with behavioral or emotional problems?
- Should we select children with physical, mental, or sensory challenges?

Regardless of the questions an individual school faces, research clearly indicates that if struggling readers and writers are left without individual specialist help even

for a few weeks it will be much harder to unlearn inefficient ways of responding to print (Doyle, 2019; Juel, 1988; Pianta, 1990; Slavin et al., 1992). In addition, such children will find it difficult to respond to classroom literacy instruction and will fall even further behind their average performing peers. Therefore, responding appropriately to the above questions is vital for administrators, classroom teachers, and Reading Recovery professionals. If some children are excluded from service they will never receive the intervention, or they will have their Reading Recovery lessons unnecessarily delayed until later in first grade. Equally, for school teams who select children based on careful responses to the above questions, a clear opportunity exists to spoil the predictions of failure for these lowest achievers.

In this article we (a) present the rationale for the selection of the lowest achievers for Reading Recovery service, (b) respond to the above questions concerning the challenges to the inclusion of certain children, (c) discuss the student selection process and the role of the school team, and (d) propose four core principles schools need to embrace to maximize the chances that the children who need Reading Recovery will receive the intervention.

We add an important caveat to any discussion of issues around student selection. Questions about excluding particular children most often arise when a school does not have an adequate number of Reading Recovery teachers to serve all students who need the intervention. “A school or district has reached full coverage or *full implementation* when sufficient

time and teacher support is available to serve all identified children” (*A Site Coordinator’s Guide to the Effective Implementation of Reading Recovery*, 2021, p. 31). In the process of achieving full implementation, full coverage in one or two classrooms will quickly allow schools, teachers, and their students to experience for themselves the benefits of Reading Recovery. This is a temporary measure that prevents the school from “spreading support thinly or attempting to provide coverage equally (e.g., one Reading Recovery teacher per school regardless of size or need)” (p. 32). As schools move towards full coverage, many problems including questions of exclusion from student selection disappear (Schmitt et al., 2005).

Rationale for Selection of the Lowest-Achieving Children for Reading Recovery

Reading Recovery is designed to serve the lowest-achieving first-grade children without exception (Clay, 1994, 1997). Achievement is measured by scores on the six tasks of *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Clay, 2019) and no eligible child should be excluded for any reason:

Exceptions are not made for children of lower intelligence, for second-language children, for children with low language skills, for children with poor motor coordination, for children who seem immature, for children who score poorly on readiness measures, or for children who have been categorized by someone else as learning

disabled. (Clay, 1991, p. 60; see also *Standards and Guidelines*, 2017, p. 6)

The list has since expanded to add that no child be excluded for any of the following reasons: high patterns of mobility; retention in grade; absence from school; behavioral or emotional problems; absence of home support; or minor visual, hearing, or speech problems (New Zealand Reading Recovery, 2010; *Standards and Guidelines*, 2017, Appendix C).

The primary rationale for selecting the lowest-performing children first for participation in Reading Recovery is to raise the literacy achievement of these children so that they can benefit from classroom instruction and build a solid foundation for later literacy learning (Borman et al., 2019; Clay, 2015b; D’Agostino & Harmey, 2016; International Data Evaluation Center, 2022; Mauck & Brymer-Bashore, 2022; Rowe, 1995; Sirinides et al., 2018). By moving children in the lower end of the achievement distribution into the average performance range, Reading Recovery also reduces the subsequent costs of these children to the education system (Dyer & Binkney, 1995; Gómez-Bellengé, 2002; Lyons & Beaver, 1995). For the few children who do not reach average performance levels as a result of participation in the intervention, Reading Recovery serves as a prereferral intervention for children who need longer term specialist help (Clay, 2005; Jones et al., 2005; Schmitt et al., 2005).

In particular, Reading Recovery must not be withheld from the lowest-achieving eligible children as

these are the least likely to respond to and benefit from classroom instruction. Clay clearly asserts that those who only want to serve the children who might seem to benefit the most are not using the full power of the intervention. According to Clay (1993):

If this step is taken the programme becomes one aimed at improving performance but not aimed at the prevention of reading and writing difficulties in the education system. It would be a case of selecting children into the programme who were most likely to succeed without it, and excluding from the programme the children least likely to succeed without it. It becomes a programme based on discrimination against a group of children compared with a programme based on equity principles. (p. 82; see also Watson & Askew, 2009, pp. 72–73).

An additional rationale for selecting the lowest-achieving eligible children for service first is that it is not possible to reliably determine who will and who will not meet the rigorous criteria for completion of Reading Recovery on the basis of entry scores. A study by Clay and Tuck found that individual children who had the lowest scores on some of the entry measures became part of the *Discontinued* group (children who met the rigorous criteria for completion of Reading Recovery and returned to the classroom) while there were examples of children who became part of the *Recommended* group (participated in Reading Recovery for the maximum 20 weeks and were recommended for longer term support) even though

they scored relatively well on some of the entrance tests. They concluded it would be unwise to exclude individual children on the basis of entry scores (Clay & Tuck, 1991). Of note, as of 2020, the term *Discontinued* was changed in the United States to the term *Accelerated Progress: Achieved Intervention Goal* (Doyle, 2020).

While these rationales for selection of the lowest achievers for Reading Recovery service are clear, we also must consider detailed rationales for arguments that arise to exclude particular groups of children, because such arguments are invalid. In the next section we present recommendations for each of the student designations schools commonly consider an issue when selecting children for Reading Recovery.

Serving children labeled learning disabled

For nearly 60 years, controversy has surrounded the term *learning disability/disabled* (LD). Early theories and definitions assumed an organic or neurological basis for learning disabilities although researchers have been unable to find differences among LD students, low achievers, and normal peers on tests of psychological functioning (Stanovich, 1988). Clay (1987) has argued that the majority of children labeled LD have in fact learned to be learning disabled through ineffective classroom teaching, inappropriate instructional feedback, or isolated and decontextualized skills instruction. As a result of instruction that is unresponsive to the child and perhaps also the LD label itself, the child may be socialized to become a passive learner who does not attend to or engage with whole-class or

small-group instruction. Vellutino (2010) has made similar arguments stressing that reading instruction for children labeled LD needs to be “responsive and contingently delivered” (p. 19) and described Reading Recovery as “the prototype for RTI approaches to identifying children at risk for long-term reading difficulties” (p. 22).

Other definitions of LD point to a 2-year discrepancy between academic achievement and potential as measured by intelligence tests, or a difference of at least 2 years between the child’s chronological age and reading age (Clay, 1987; Lyons, 2003).

Historically, schools have been required to provide educational interventions to students labeled LD. Because ample federal and state funds are available to schools that identify students as LD, some schools administer a battery of several assessments over a period of time until a 2-year gap is established. The reauthorized Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004), allows, but does not require, states to continue the use of the discrepancy model and adds that they must permit the use of a process for the child’s response to proven research-based reading intervention (RTI). Also permitted is the use of other alternative research-based procedures for determining if a child has a specific learning disability.

Research supports the need for early intervention before identifying children as LD. According to Vellutino et al. (1996), “to render a diagnosis of specific reading disability in the absence of early and labor-intensive remedial reading that has been

tailored to the child's individual needs is, at best, a hazardous and dubious enterprise, given all the stereotypes attached to this diagnosis" (p. 632). Research also shows that with Reading Recovery, an achievement gap is not allowed to develop in the first place (Center et al., 1995; Iversen & Tunmer, 1993; McEneaney et al., 2006; Schwartz, 2005). Instead, many children who would be predicted to develop these gaps are helped to increase their reading achievement level to the average of their age group and

should consider offering Reading Recovery as the child's reading intervention if the child meets the criteria for Reading Recovery selection. For children who have not made accelerated progress after 20 weeks of Reading Recovery instruction, additional intervention is available through Literacy Lessons, a one-to-one intervention provided to children in Grades 1–4 identified for longer-term specialist support in reading and writing (Harmon & Williams, 2017; Konstantellou & Lose, 2009; Lipp &

Debates on dyslexia and challenges to the ability of Reading Recovery to serve "dyslexic" students effectively have recently resurfaced. Yet, research on dyslexia has not made a clear distinction among *dyslexia*, *learning disabilities*, *reading disabilities*, and *reading difficulties* (International Literacy Association, 2016). Clay's own research (1987) has also shown that "it is not possible to identify causes of difficulties or to distinguish between experientially and constitutionally impaired readers" (Reading Recovery Council of North America, 2015, p. 4).

Indeed, Clay has suggested an open definition of learning difficulties that, regardless of the assigned labels or classifications, would "encourage researchers, educators and policy-makers to get on with providing early intervention for low-achieving children and specialized teaching responsive to individual strengths in reading behaviours that is so badly needed" (Clay, 1987, p. 170).

Likewise, contemporary literacy scholars have also pointed out that the lack of clarity in definitions of dyslexia does not establish a difference between those classified as dyslexic and other students who experience difficulty with learning to read. Like Clay, they propose that most learners who encounter difficulty with the reading process "can overcome those difficulties with early and appropriately targeted instruction and intervention that is not limited to an exclusive phonics focus" (Johnston & Scanlon, 2021, p. 122). Gabriel (2018) has commented on dyslexia laws and policies and the absence of agreement on an official definition of dyslexia among researchers, and urges educators to avoid debates about labels and,

Decades of successful implementation of Reading Recovery have demonstrated that all kinds of learners—regardless of the labels attached to their literacy learning difficulties—have benefited from early intervention that addresses their unique individual needs.

continue their progress in later grades (Hurry et al., 2021). Given this evidence there is no reason to delay Reading Recovery service for these children. As Clay states, "A wide acceptance of a large category of learning-disabled children is no longer tolerable in the face of successful early interventions" (Clay, 2015a, p. 344).

Therefore, schools should refrain from identifying children as LD until they have had an opportunity for a full Reading Recovery intervention. Schools can meet these students' literacy learning needs early while the potential for learning success is greatest, not later after they have experienced failure and feelings of low self-efficacy related to literacy (Lose, 2007, 2008). In the case of students who have already been identified as LD, the school

Elzy, 2022; Lose & Konstantellou, 2017; Poparad, 2021, 2022; *A Site Coordinator's Guide to the Effective Implementation of Reading Recovery*, 2021; *Standards and Guidelines of Literacy Lessons in the United States*, 2015).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 and its reauthorizations have changed the way schools view struggling literacy learners. Under the Act, school districts use funds to assist in the identification and assessment of students and do not need to label students first before providing services. Instead of an incentive to wait to serve these children until they fail, the guidelines of the IDEA encourage schools to implement early interventions such as Reading Recovery with a proven record of success (Lose, 2005, 2007, 2008).

instead, engage with “the emerging vocabulary of dyslexia” (p. 32) to consider a range of pedagogical approaches that may benefit all students who experience reading difficulties.

Importantly, decades of successful implementation of Reading Recovery have demonstrated that *all kinds of learners*—regardless of the labels attached to their literacy learning difficulties—have benefited from early intervention that addresses their unique individual needs. The underlying theory and instructional procedures of Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons and evidence of their effectiveness “communicate the efficacy of Clay’s work for all struggling readers, including dyslexic learners” (Doyle, 2018, p. 47).

Serving children with high patterns of absence

Among the factors that place children at risk for low reading achievement are school attendance and time on task. Therefore, the lowest-achieving literacy learners who also have a history of poor school attendance are doubly at risk of failure. Sometimes educators have argued that preference for Reading Recovery services should be given to regular school attendees over those who are frequently absent, but such a practice would unfairly prejudice the poor attendee. Young children do not have control over their school attendance and eligible children should not be excluded from Reading Recovery because of poor attendance (New Zealand Reading Recovery, 2021; *A Principal’s Guide to Reading Recovery*, 2012).

In the case of a child with a previous history of poor attendance who is selected for participation in Reading Recovery, teachers and administrators are encouraged to use a wide range of strategies to promote a higher level of attendance, including the following:

- Attempt to arrange attendance for the child. For example, the child’s advocate may be interested in transporting the child to ensure that they are able to receive Reading Recovery lessons and participate in classroom literacy instruction at school.
- Often the parents of children who do not attend school regularly have had negative school experiences themselves and may not feel comfortable interacting with school personnel. The school needs to initiate and maintain regular contact with parents to explore the reasons for lack of attendance and to explain why it is important for their child to attend school.
- A special problem may exist in the family (e.g., a child taking care of younger siblings) that prevents the child from attending school. The school’s child welfare advocate might look at ways to get the child to school at least for their Reading Recovery lesson until school attendance becomes habituated. The school nurse might be asked to make home contact. Often parents will respond positively to a person in the medical profession, viewed as

a member of a helping profession, versus a social worker or school administrator who may be seen as adversarial authority figures.

- The Reading Recovery teacher can schedule a home visit or invite the parents to school to view their child participating in the Reading Recovery lesson. Parents will be encouraged to see their child succeeding. This is also a good time to discuss how they can be of help to their child at home.

Whatever strategies are used, no child need be excluded from Reading Recovery services because of a history of poor school attendance. Rather, the selection of the child for participation in Reading Recovery should be considered the beginning of a renewed effort to promote increased school attendance on the part of the child and thus increase their chances of success in literacy. Anecdotal evidence from various sites has illustrated how Reading Recovery service has improved the attendance of once chronically absent children.

Serving English learners and children with low language skills (The terms *emergent bilingual learners* and *emergent multilingual learners* are also used with reference to children learning English.)

Regardless of their native language, children who are the lowest achievers in the first grade are eligible for Reading Recovery in English if they are receiving classroom literacy instruction in English and if they can understand the directions to

the six assessment tasks of the Observation Survey. However, while Clay has stated emphatically that the exclusion of children who are learning English has never been the practice wherever Reading Recovery operates, she also acknowledges, “it is not widely understood that RR has no problem with the selection of ESOL children as suitable for the intervention” (Clay, 2015b, p. 279). She further clarifies that the only reason to delay entry of English learners to Reading Recovery is the child’s inability to understand the teacher’s directions when administering the tasks of the Observation Survey. As Clay (2015b) advises,

[E]ntry to RR may be delayed a few months if a child is unable to understand what he or she is being asked to do when given the tasks of the Observation Survey. As long as the child knows enough language to be able to engage with the tasks it can be predicted that his or her literacy achievement will be helped by RR’s approach in spite of low or zero entry scores. (p. 279)

In addition, evidence documenting the positive impact of Reading Recovery on the literacy learning of English learners has created an increasing awareness among Reading Recovery professionals of the value of serving these children. For example, in the inaugural issue of *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, rationales for the inclusion of English learners in Reading Recovery were presented (Forbes, 2001) and accounts were reported of the success of English learners in Reading Recovery (Diaz, 2001; Kelly, 2001; Neal, 2001; O’Leary,

2001). Additional studies have shown that Reading Recovery narrows the achievement gap between native and non-native speakers of English in the United States and Canada (Ashdown & Simic, 2000; Flight, 2017; Gentile, 1997; Kelly et al, 2008; Neal & Kelly, 1999; Rodríguez-Eagle, 2009; Rodríguez-Eagle & Torres Elías, 2009). Similar findings have been reported in the United Kingdom (Hobsbaum, 1997) and New Zealand (Smith, 1994).

Therefore, Reading Recovery school teams must ensure that English learners are not excluded from service in Reading Recovery. For English learners the framework of the 30-minute Reading Recovery lesson provides rich opportunities for conversational exchanges between teacher and child which will lead to an expansion of the child’s linguistic competencies (Konstantellou & Lose, 2016). However, if during assessment children indicate they do not understand the tasks, the team should wait for a brief period of time while the child is provided with ample support for language learning in a rich language program. The progress of these children needs to be continuously monitored and a subsequent determination made whether to reassess them for participation in Reading Recovery. (See *A Principal’s Guide to Reading Recovery*, 2012, and *A Site Coordinator’s Guide to Reading Recovery*, 2021.)

Regardless of their proficiency level, the best way to offer oral language support to first grade children who are not native speakers of English or children who have some pronounced lag in language acquisition

is to provide extensive opportunities for conversation between the child and a competent adult speaker of English (Van Dyke, 2006). In addition, arranging opportunities for all English learners—even those who are placed in language immersion programs—to interact and converse with English speaking students is important to their progress. For English learners served by Reading Recovery an important question to ask ourselves is whether we find opportunities in the lesson to extend the child’s control over language structure to support his reading and writing (Clay, 2004; Briceno & Klein, 2016; Kelly, 2009; Neal, 2009; Rodríguez-Eagle, 2009). For older English learners, the Literacy Lessons intervention offers an important source of support for literacy learning (Clay, 2016).

Serving children without home support

Reading Recovery works with any classroom literacy program. It relies upon teacher expertise and does not require home support for children to be successful in the intervention. Home support can, however, provide some of the additional practice for reading and writing lesson activities. For example, one recommendation is that a parent or caregiver assist the child at home with the reassembly of the cut-up story from that day’s Reading Recovery lesson and listen to the child reread two or three familiar stories. While this form of additional support is very valuable to the child’s learning, it can also be provided by an adult or an upper grades student volunteer before, during, or after school either at the school or at an after school care program. Regardless of the

source of this support, Reading Recovery need never be denied to a child who is unlikely to receive home support for whatever reason.

Serving retained children

Retention in grade and other versions of nonpromotion—often referred to as transition, booster, or enrichment classrooms—function as a form of early intervention. However, research does not support the effectiveness of retention (Shepard & Smith, 1990). Retention can result in low self-esteem and later school problems for the child (Crothers et al., 2010). In addition, retention is costly to the school: By keeping a child in the system 1 year longer it adds a full year of educational expense to the district's budget (Assad & Condon, 1996; Dyer & Binkney, 1995; Gómez-Bellengé, 2002). Moreover, a full year of the child's life has been spent in instruction that did not work the first time it was tried. In contrast, Reading Recovery has been shown to be a very effective intervention and is much less costly. In particular, Reading Recovery requires only an average of 30–45 hours of the child's time as opposed to spending a year's retention in grade (Gómez-Bellengé et al., 2005). Therefore recommendations for retention should rarely be made and Reading Recovery should be chosen as the alternative.

In a case where a child has been previously retained this need not be used as a reason to exclude a child from Reading Recovery service unless nonretained children are waiting to be served. In the case where two children both qualify for Reading Recovery services the child who has not yet received an

early intervention—the nonretained child—ought to be selected first for service. If a school has the advantage of full implementation of Reading Recovery no restriction need be put on serving previously retained children (*A Principal's Guide to Reading Recovery*, 2012).

In summary, schools need to allocate resources for the early prevention of literacy failure with Reading Recovery rather than adding a year of repeated classroom instruction that comes at a higher cost and which has been shown to be ineffective.

Serving immature or developmentally delayed children

Sometimes arguments are made that certain children may not be ready yet for literacy learning and that educators need to wait before they start exposing them to literacy activities. Such arguments are informed by a particular interpretation of developmental learning that understands development in terms of maturation and readiness. According to this interpretation the timetable and direction of a child's development is biologically fixed and teachers are asked not to tamper with the child's naturally unfolding ability to learn (Bodrova & Leong, 2007; McGill-Franzen, 1992).

Contrary to the unfolding flower metaphor, Reading Recovery professionals embrace a Vygotskian concept of development. This view emphasizes the interaction between instruction and development and holds that appropriate, scaffolded instruction moves ahead of development and promotes the acquisition of more advanced performance levels (Lyons, 2003). Teachers provide a stimulating, literacy-rich

environment for all children and then support each individual child's learning through instruction appropriate to each child's needs.

The scaffold metaphor of developmental learning influences the selection of children for Reading Recovery service. It implies that first graders are at different points of an emerging literacy process, and therefore, the lowest among them should be assisted by a well-trained teacher to reach the outcome of literacy learning: "The goal is to help children move from where they are to somewhere else by empowering them to do what they can do and helping them engage in activities through which they can learn more" (Clay, 2014b, p. 83). This view is consistent with current research in early literacy practices (International Reading Association and National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998; National Association for the Education of Young Children and International Reading Association, 2009).

If teachers do not intervene early to help children who are most in need of support in their literacy learning, they prevent children from making accelerated progress to meet grade expectations. As Clay (2015a) states,

To relax and wait for 'maturation' when it is experience that is lacking would appear to be deliberately depriving the child of opportunities to learn. To fail to observe that the child's early reading progress is blocked either by inadequate prior learning or by current confusion, and not provide the required complementary activities, must be poor teaching. (p. 22)

Serving children who did not attend kindergarten

Reading Recovery is designed for children who have had at least 1 year of school. In the United States, that year is kindergarten. However, some U.S. states do not require kindergarten attendance. Regardless, schools need not deny Reading Recovery services to the child who did not attend kindergarten or who attended only sporadically. In effect this would be punishing the child for something over which they have no control. Instead, schools need to include those children in the initial screening, assessment, and selection process for Reading Recovery. The key is to not further jeopardize literacy learning for children who did not attend kindergarten if they need the Reading Recovery intervention.

Serving children with high patterns of mobility

Reading Recovery serves children with high patterns of mobility including the children of migrant workers and children who are semihomeless, who live in shelters, or who are temporarily displaced from their home residence. Reading Recovery also serves the children of incarcerated parents and children who move frequently because their family's supplemental assistance or social services support has expired. Like the child with frequent absences, the child with high patterns of mobility does not have control over their life circumstances.

Every effort needs to be made to provide Reading Recovery service to the child with high patterns of mobility. For example, with assistance from social services personnel the school can make arrangements

with the parent, caregiver, guardian, or host family for permanent residency for the child during the time they are served by Reading Recovery. This will increase the likelihood of regular school attendance and access to Reading Recovery lessons. During a period of interrupted residency, the school can also arrange to resume the child's Reading Recovery lessons and double up on lessons as needed.

Finally, the school can arrange for additional familiar reading opportunities during school hours in the absence of practice time at home. The key issue for the school is to support the child in multiple ways so as not to further jeopardize access to a much-needed intervention that will be available to the child only during 1 year of a possible 13 years of schooling.

Serving children with lower intelligence

Intelligence test scores are generally not available when children are being considered for Reading Recovery. However, in the rare instances when IQ scores are available to educators, we recommend they not be used to exclude children from Reading Recovery service. As Stanovich (1991) has noted, the concept of intelligence has been so controversial that most developmental and educational psychologists have given up the belief that IQ test scores measure potential. As a result, most researchers have declared suspect any research that uses IQ tests as indicators of reading and writing potential.

Overall, the learning theory that informs the development of Reading Recovery sees intelligence itself as

a form of achievement. Contrary to the view that argues that intelligence does not change as an individual develops—that it is a stable, inborn human characteristic—information-processing theorists view intelligence as a by-product of the child's more sophisticated cognitive processing as they interact with stimuli in their environment (Wood, 1998). Based on this understanding, early interventions in reading should not be withheld from children with lower intelligence as poor reading achievement may itself be a direct cause of the lower intelligence. As Stanovich (1991) argues, "we must allow the possibility that poor listening comprehension or verbal intelligence could be enhanced by better reading" (p. 22). Clay's own research also shows that "self-correction rate was more closely related to reading progress scores in the first three years of instruction than either intelligence or reading readiness scores" (Clay, 2015a, p. 305).

While it is possible that a child with significantly low measured intelligence may be served by Reading Recovery, schools are advised to provide the most appropriate intervention that will best meet each child's immediate and long-term educational needs. For the child with extreme mental challenges, the optimum intervention will be a program staffed by a special educator certified in the area/s of the child's special needs. For these children, the Literacy Lessons intervention also provides a suitable option. Essentially, there is a continuum of services that can be provided by teachers trained in Reading Recovery or Literacy Lessons.

Serving children with behavioral or emotional difficulties

Reading Recovery serves children who experience behavioral or emotional challenges or who have been labeled *behavior disordered* (BD) or *emotionally disabled* (ED). Children identified BD or ED may appear inattentive, disinterested or disruptive, and may have pronounced and idiosyncratic responses to learning tasks too difficult for them. Other children labeled BD or ED have been physically abused or neglected or sexually molested making it extremely difficult to attend to literacy instruction. They may scream, cry or raise their voices when frustrated, or may refuse to interact or respond to their teacher's invitations to participate in reading and writing activities. Concurrently they develop feelings of low self-worth that result from the repeated experience of failure to learn. Reading Recovery teachers note these children may experience difficulty learning letters, following the left-to-right direction of print, and remembering previously learned information (Lyons, 2003). Yet for many children with emotional or behavioral difficulties the underlying source of their difficulty is often the struggle to learn to read and write (Coles, 1998; Fullerton, 2001; Lyons, 2003). Indeed, "a child's emotional response to error may be so strong that it blocks attention to the rest of the lesson. Or if a child is hyperactive or impulsive his attention may flit from one thing to another and make it difficult for him to pay close attention to detail" (Clay, 2016, p. 181).

Whatever the origin of the child's behavioral or emotional difficulties,

Reading Recovery provides an optimum framework within which to support and improve behavior and literacy learning. The sequenced and predictable 30-minute lesson framework provides security to the child. The Reading Recovery teacher selects books of just the right difficulty, easy enough tasks explained with clear teacher language, and carefully crafted scaffolded support. Because the teacher is highly trained and observes the child's progress very closely, they can make moment-to-moment highly effective teaching decisions tailored expressly for that particular child. Not only does the child experience success in learning to read and write, but they also become skilled at learning how to learn. As a result their behavior and adjustment to school improve dramatically.

Schools can do a lot to support the Reading Recovery student with behavioral or emotional problems. The school should not deny or suspend Reading Recovery service to children who experience emotional difficulty. Rather, schools must structure the learning environment to create a nurturing and supportive climate for all children, especially those who are at risk for learning difficulties complicated by emotional factors. Schools need to also provide students with reasonable expectations for appropriate behavior to maximize their literacy learning and social, emotional, and cognitive development (Lyons, 2003). In the case of children with extreme behavioral and emotional problems the school team—under the guidance of the teacher leader—may find it necessary to seek specialist support for the child.

Serving children with minor visual, hearing, or speech problems

Experience in Reading Recovery suggests children should not be excluded for services in Reading Recovery because of minor visual, hearing, or speech problems. Reading Recovery teachers work closely with other specialists in the school to find ways to better accommodate children with certain physical conditions. Adjustments to the size of print or to the positioning of materials on the workspace have been found to work well with children with visual problems.

In the cases of children with severe physical challenges the school team should consider carefully the best way to proceed because the children's condition may require extra resources and/or considerable modifications in the delivery of the lessons. Clay has advised:

Children who are profoundly deaf, or have cerebral palsy, or other severe disabilities affecting eyesight, hand movements or language performance, could probably benefit from Reading Recovery instruction but they would be ideally served by a teacher with special training for the child's condition and, additionally, trained in Reading Recovery. (New Zealand Reading Recovery, 2010)

For children with special needs who may need longer-term support beyond the provision of Reading Recovery, the Literacy Lessons intervention is appropriate because "it involves longer-term treatments delivered to individuals but it uses the same literacy processing theory as RR to guide instruction

for individuals who have a cluster of individual handicaps” (Clay 2015b, p. 218).

Serving children with poor motor coordination

Children who have been identified as having motor coordination difficulty and who may also need occupational or physical therapy need not be excluded from Reading Recovery. Good readers have developed controlled eye movements for scanning print and can generate and write words quickly. In contrast, poor readers may experience difficulty pointing to and matching one word at a time while reading, forming letters in writing, and coordinating the hearing and recording of sounds in words in writing (Lyons, 2003).

Therefore Reading Recovery teachers can address the needs of the child with motor coordination difficulties. The teacher may take the child’s hand and point their finger to guide directional movement across text, use Elkonin boxes to help them coordinate the task of Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words in writing, or guide their hand to form a letter while providing verbal directions to sequence the action. Over time, the child learns to focus their attention and achieve greater control over the motor tasks associated with reading and writing. In addition to the support the child receives from the Reading Recovery teacher, the school also needs to enlist the support of physical and occupational therapists and arrange for the teaching staff to coordinate interventions and treatment to benefit the child.

In summary, no good reasons exist to exclude any eligible child

from Reading Recovery service for reasons of intellect, behavior, oral language proficiency, home support, school attendance, or sensory and physical abilities. To do so goes against evidence that has shown benefits to these children. If a school makes a decision to exclude an eligible child, predictable negative consequences will follow for that child. Many of the types of questions that arise around student selection can be effectively addressed when schools have sufficient teacher time to serve every child who needs the intervention. However, we acknowledge that not every eligible child can be chosen on the first day of school. In the next section we present the process by which the school can make informed decisions about the selection of children for Reading Recovery.

The Reading Recovery School Team and the Student Selection Process

Reading Recovery school teams consist of staff and specialists in the school (the principal, the Reading Recovery teacher(s), the first-grade teacher(s), a kindergarten representative, and other appropriate personnel such as special education representative, school psychologist, reading specialist, etc.). The Reading Recovery teacher leader also plays an important role in the function of the team. Early on they help the school team set goals and organize itself to address issues related to the school’s Reading Recovery intervention (*A Principal’s Guide to Reading Recovery*, 2012; *A Site Coordinator’s Guide to the Effective Implementation of Reading Recovery*, 2021).

When the team is up and running the teacher leader serves as a consultant on an as-needed basis when particular issues arise. The school principal’s active participation in the Reading Recovery school team as the school’s instructional leader is essential to the work of the team as well as to the success of the Reading Recovery implementation.

The Reading Recovery school team is vital to the effective implementation of Reading Recovery in a school system. The role of the team is to oversee the implementation of Reading Recovery in an individual school by discussing selection of children, monitoring the progress of children in Reading Recovery, following up on children after they leave Reading Recovery, examining data and preparing a school report at the end of the year, and overall by providing a forum for professional conversations among the school’s Reading Recovery teachers and the rest of the school staff around the progress of children. (For a more detailed overview of the role and functions of Reading Recovery school teams, see *A Principal’s Guide to Reading Recovery*, 2012, pp. 60–62, and *A Site Coordinator’s Guide to the Effective Implementation of Reading Recovery*, 2021, pp. 118–120, 123–124.)

Children in need of Reading Recovery service are selected from Grade 1 classrooms containing children who are heterogeneously grouped. Children served by Reading Recovery need a suitable classroom program to extend and support their continued learning. This is best facilitated in a heterogeneous classroom with other average performing readers (*Standards and Guidelines*, 2017, p. 7). Reading

No good reasons exist to exclude any eligible child from Reading Recovery service for reasons of intellect, behavior, oral language proficiency, home support, school attendance, or sensory and physical abilities. To do so goes against evidence that has shown benefits to these children.

Recovery teachers work with classroom teachers asking them to rank order children according to their current competencies in reading. First-grade classroom teachers do an alternate ranking of the class with the most competent reader entered at the top of the list and the least competent at the end of the list. Then, the second most competent child is entered, and so on until all children from that class are rank ordered. At the beginning of the year this ranking task may be difficult because teachers are working with limited information. The school's kindergarten teachers may be consulted to confirm the ranking and to offer information about any child who may appear to be mis-ranked at this early point in the year.

Working from the alternate ranking lists, Reading Recovery teachers administer the six tasks of the Observation Survey to the bottom one-third of the children on the list. If more than 30% of children are in need of supplementary instruction then the school team needs to raise questions about the school's classroom literacy program and the kinds of experiences that these first graders had as kindergartners.

Following assessment, the team meets to select the lowest-achieving first graders who are to be served first in the school year. The Reading

Recovery teachers—and teacher leader where appropriate—examine the children's records using stanines and raw scores to carefully guide selection decisions (Clay, 2014a). First the teachers look at stanines, as stanines allow comparison of a child's performance across the tasks of the Observation Survey and how that child's performance compares to the average scores for the age group: "It is probably a good idea to consider stanine scores first for decisions about children entering Reading Recovery, but to use raw scores to identify differences within stanine bands" (New Zealand Reading Recovery, 2020). Stanine tables have been created in order to facilitate the selection of Reading Recovery students in the United States (Mauck, 2021). Also, the 2021 revised *Procedures for Administering Leveled Text Reading Passages* (2021) allow teachers to observe and record children's early responses to text and thus enable them to make fine distinctions among children with a low repertoire of literacy behaviors.

Clay has cautioned that we should not do arithmetic with stanines and raw scores. When selecting children for a placement, "The Observation Survey stanines should not be summed or averaged" (Clay, 2019, p. 126). Indeed, no numerical shortcuts are possible in ranking children. The misguided practice

of adding up raw scores or stanine scores to determine which children are the lowest ones is problematic for several reasons. Item numbers are different; each test measures different aspects of literacy; scores and resulting stanines do not take into account children's partially correct responses; and, in some cases, a very few more items may result in a significant change in stanine. However, the most important reason against numerical shortcuts is that they go against the underlying philosophy of Reading Recovery which is the fostering of teachers' understanding and professional judgment on each child's performance. This judgment is informed by not merely looking at the numerical score but in checking the child's ways of responding in each measure that may not be captured by an individual score.

In 2012, the total score, a combination of the six Observation Survey task scores, was developed by the International Data Evaluation Center to meet the approval criteria for a screening tool established by the National Center on Response to Intervention. The use of the total score has created confusion at times among those who have thought it might be a good idea to combine the Observation Survey scores when selecting students for Reading Recovery. However, the total score was designed for research purposes only and not intended for Reading Recovery selection and diagnostic purposes. As D'Agostino (2012) stressed, "... the total score is suitable for research designed to examine student growth over the school year. The total score should not, however, be used for diagnostic purposes. Instead, continue using the profile of student's six task

scores to inform decisions about teaching ... [and] continue to select students as current practices recommend (Lose & Konstantellou, 2005)” (p. 64).

Ideally, a school has enough Reading Recovery teachers to serve all the children who need the supplementary help. However, for students with similar scores when the school is only partially implemented, the team has to deliberate carefully to ensure selection of the lowest achievers. If selection decisions need to be made among children with very similar scores, then the input of classroom teachers is critical. The team’s goal is to determine which child shows the least evidence of problem-solving activity and, therefore, is least likely to survive in the classroom environment without the extra help (*Standards and Guidelines*, 2017, Appendix C).

Fulfilling the Promise to All Children Who Need Reading Recovery

Unfortunately, complex educational policies and demanding economic circumstances create pressure on many schools to eliminate some children from consideration for Reading Recovery service (Lose & Best, 2011). Reading Recovery is intended to be an inclusive, not exclusive, intervention that aims to intervene early for the children most challenged by literacy learning in first grade. The ideal of Reading Recovery is full implementation with smoothly operating school teams who support all children’s reading and writing development. Without full implementation some children will be denied an opportunity to take advantage of an intervention that clearly works.

We acknowledge there are many challenges to meeting the literacy learning needs of a diverse student population. Yet, specific steps can be taken to ensure that all eligible students experience literacy learning success. When taking these steps we strongly recommend schools be guided by the following core principles:

- **Recognize that Reading Recovery works for the lowest-achieving children.** Research evidence demonstrates that Reading Recovery is an effective intervention that makes a difference to the literacy performance of the lowest-achieving children regardless of intellect, behavior, oral language proficiency, home support, school attendance, or sensory and physical abilities.
- **Use Reading Recovery as a prereferral intervention.** Schools should try out the least restrictive environment whenever possible and provide eligible children with an opportunity to experience early and complete Reading Recovery services. By doing so children’s learning needs can be met early while the potential for learning success is greatest.
- **Move toward full implementation of Reading Recovery as soon as possible.** By working diligently toward a full implementation of Reading Recovery, schools can reduce referrals to longer-term, more-costly interventions, reserving lengthier interventions only for those students who truly need them. Partial

coverage is problematic as it forces the school’s Reading Recovery team to make decisions to exclude certain children in the subgroups of low-performing children we have discussed here. With full implementation, schools avoid the problem of putting teachers in the uncomfortable position of having to choose which children will receive services and ensure access to the power of the intervention for all eligible children.

- **Embrace shared ownership to ensure a successful Reading Recovery implementation.** School teams are one of the most important steps that a school can take to ensure Reading Recovery services for all eligible students. With a smoothly functioning school team, all children benefit from the extra attention their teachers devote to literacy issues and their professional development.

In the past, some schools have mistakenly excluded children from the benefits of participation in Reading Recovery. This is unfortunate as Reading Recovery is intended to be inclusive, and evidence clearly indicates its benefits to low-achieving children with diverse causality. In the quest for a literate society Reading Recovery provides a well-documented response to tackling the problem of early literacy difficulties. While the challenges to the smooth implementation of Reading Recovery are real, they can and must be met. The long-term benefits to children, schools, and society are well worth the effort and investment.

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About the Authors

Dr. Mary K. Lose is professor emerita at Oakland University and Reading Recovery trainer emerita.



Mary served as Reading Recovery trainer and director of the Reading Recovery Center of Michigan at Oakland for 20 years (2002–2022), working with Reading Recovery teacher leaders and their school administrators. Her research has concentrated on the theory behind effective practice in literacy intervention work with young children and the acceleration of learning through contingent teaching, the foundation for which is informed teacher decision making. The leaders, teachers, and children who have been partners in Mary’s learning, teaching, research, and service have provided inspiration for the work she values and enjoys so much. She continues to research and collaborate with colleagues and leaders across the country, in support of the most vulnerable literacy learners in our schools. She can be reached at lose@oakland.edu

Dr. Eva Konstantellou is professor emerita at Lesley University’s Graduate School of Education and Reading



Recovery trainer emerita. As a Reading Recovery trainer at the Center for Reading Recovery and Literacy Collaborative at Lesley University, she was fortunate to work for 20 years (1998–2018) with Reading Recovery teacher leaders and teachers in the northeast United States and collaborate with Reading Recovery trainers on various projects. She currently divides her time between the United States and Greece, engages in researching the state of education globally, and writes on issues of critical literacy and identity formation through education. She can be reached at ekonstan@lesley.edu.

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Denton Celebrates 20 Years of Descubriendo la Lectura

Carmen Cantú Lipscomb and Juanita Ramirez-Robertson, Denton ISD, Texas



Denton ISD in Texas celebrated two major milestones in 2022: 30 years of Reading Recovery and 20 years of Descubriendo la Lectura. These educators serve a myriad of students ranging from dominant Spanish speakers to emergent bilinguals, with one teacher at each bilingual campus in the district. Joining Teacher Leader Carmen Lipscomb (front) at the festivities are (left-to-right, row 2) Enid Ortez, Carmen Colón, Sulema Flores, Denise Stodola, (row 3) Stacy Shrestha, Mary Mata, Dina Wuenschel, Selee Saenz-Ranchos, Yanci Rios, and Juanita Ramirez-Robertson.

Read the history of DLL in Denton in both English and in Spanish on the following pages.

Celebrating 20 Years of DLL in Denton

Reading Recovery® came to Denton ISD in 1992, met with eagerness, potential, and challenges. A few teachers were trained and implemented the intervention in a few schools. In 2002, with the support of our Title I director and grant funds, Denton ISD set the course to train a few Reading Recovery teachers and a teacher leader. After the initial training in Reading Recovery, three teachers bridged to Descubriendo la Lectura (DLL). This training year started our 20-year journey which includes training 26 teachers and two teacher leaders.

Denton ISD is always on the cutting edge of educational practices. The district also believes firmly in equity for all students. The moment we decided to bring back Reading Recovery, including Descubriendo la Lectura was an easy decision.

Descubriendo la Lectura is the Spanish reconstruction of Reading Recovery. The training year consists of the initial training in Reading Recovery and a bridging course where the teacher(s) can transfer their knowledge of Reading Recovery to DLL.

During these 20 years, we have seen many changes. We trained and bridged four teachers our first year. These teachers primarily served/taught children who were mostly Mexican American, first generation, native Spanish-speaking students. Today, we have 11 teachers, one

at each bilingual campus. These teachers serve a myriad of students ranging from dominant Spanish speakers to emergent bilinguals. Our students (and teachers) represent Texas and most of the Latin nations in North, Central, and South America. All these students bring with them a rich culture and heritage and varying degrees of bilingualism.

Descubriendo la Lectura has changed the literacy trajectory for over 1,200 bilingual students in Denton ISD.

Our veteran teachers, Sulema Flores (20 years), Juanita Ramirez-Robertson (18 years), and Mary Mata (15 years) view translingualing (the varying degrees of bilingualism) as the biggest change in the intervention since 2002–2003. Juanita states, “Our work enables us to teach more flexibly in this intervention where we are making instructional decisions that appear more flexible for each learner and that included more truly authentic bilingual instruction.” We also asked our DLL teachers, in their field year, “What is the biggest surprise of your field year?” Denise Stodola states, “My biggest surprise

is how each child is unique and takes a different path to proficiency. The importance is to adjust the teaching according to the child’s growth and interests. Also, how fast they can learn.”

Marcia Kellum, Reading Recovery teacher leader, and Carmen have the privilege to train, lead, work, and learn with the amazing group of DLL teachers in Denton. Their work involves constantly transferring knowledge from every version of Marie Clay’s *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals* (2019) and our professional journal articles from JRR to their daily work with bilingual learners.

Descubriendo la Lectura has changed the literacy trajectory for over 1,200 bilingual students in Denton ISD. Our goal is for them to be true bilingual global citizens that make a positive change in our world. Our work would not be possible without the support of Dr. Jamie Wilson, our superintendent; our board of trustees; and Sandy Brown, our site coordinator and former Reading Recovery teacher. Also, we are so fortunate to have Texas Woman’s University, our Reading Recovery and DLL university training center, in our town.

Our district believes that every child deserves access to a high-quality, early intervention like Reading Recovery and DLL.

Celebrando 20 años de DLL en Denton

Reading Recovery llegó al distrito escolar de Denton en 1992 con entusiasmo y potencial junto con algunos retos. Algunos maestros fueron capacitados e implementaron la intervención en varias escuelas. En 2002, con el apoyo de nuestro director de Título 1 y fondos subsidiados, Denton ISD estableció la meta para capacitar a algunos maestros de Reading Recovery y un maestro líder. Después de la formación inicial en Reading Recovery, tres profesores realizaron la conexión con Descubriendo la Lectura (DLL). Este año de capacitación inició nuestro viaje de 20 años que incluye capacitar a 26 maestros y 2 maestros líderes.

Denton ISD siempre está a la vanguardia de las prácticas educativas. El distrito también cree firmemente en la equidad para todos los estudiantes. El momento en que decidimos traer de vuelta a Reading Recovery, incluyendo a Descubriendo la Lectura fue una decisión fácil.

Descubriendo la Lectura es la reconstrucción de Reading Recovery. El año de capacitación consiste en la formación inicial en Reading Recovery y un curso de enlace donde los maestros pueden transferir sus conocimientos de Reading Recovery a DLL.

Durante estos 20 años, hemos visto muchos cambios. Capacitamos y conectamos a cuatro maestros en nuestro primer año. Estos maestros

principalmente sirvieron/enseñaron a niños que eran en su mayoría mexicano-estadounidenses, estudiantes nativos de habla hispana de primera generación. Hoy tenemos 11 maestros, uno en cada plantel bilingüe. Estos maestros atienden a una miríada de estudiantes que van desde hispanohablantes dominantes hasta bilingües emergentes. Nuestros estudiantes (y maestros) representan a Texas y la mayoría de las naciones latinas en el Norte, Centro y Sur de América. Todos estos estudiantes traen consigo una rica herencia cultural y variados grados de bilingüismo.

Nuestras maestras veteranas, Sulema Flores (20 años), Juanita Ramírez-Robertson (18 años) y Mary Mata (15 años) ven la translengüización o los diversos grados de bilingüismo como el mayor cambio en la intervención desde 2002-2003. Juanita afirma: “Nuestro trabajo nos permite enseñar de manera más flexible en esta intervención en la que estamos tomando decisiones de instrucción que parecen más flexibles para cada alumno y que incluye una instrucción bilingüe más auténtica”. También les preguntamos a nuestros maestros de DLL, en su año de entrenamiento, “¿Cuál es la mayor sorpresa de su año de campo?” Denise Stodola afirma: “Mi mayor sorpresa es cómo cada niño es único y toma un camino diferente hacia la competencia. La importancia es ajustar la enseñanza

de acuerdo con el crecimiento y los intereses del niño. Además, qué tan rápido pueden aprender”.

Marcia Kellum, líder de maestros de Reading Recovery y Carmen tienen el privilegio de capacitar, dirigir, trabajar y aprender con el increíble grupo de maestros de DLL en Denton. Su trabajo implica la transferencia constante de conocimientos de cada versión de *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals* (*Lecciones de Lectoescritura/Alfabetización Diseñada para Individuos*) y nuestros artículos de la revista profesional de JRR a su trabajo diario con estudiantes bilingües.

Descubriendo la Lectura ha cambiado la trayectoria de lectoescritura de más de 1200 estudiantes bilingües en Denton ISD. Nuestro objetivo es que sean verdaderos ciudadanos globales bilingües que generen un cambio positivo en nuestro mundo. Nuestro trabajo no sería posible sin el apoyo de nuestro Superintendente, Dr. Jamie Wilson, nuestro Consejo Escolar y nuestra Coordinadora de Sitio (ex maestra de Reading Recovery), Sandy Brown. También, somos muy afortunados de tener nuestro Reading Recovery y DLL UTC, Texas Woman’s University, en nuestra ciudad.

Nuestro distrito cree que cada niño merece tener acceso a una intervención temprana de alta calidad como Reading Recovery y DLL.

A Report of National Outcomes for Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura for the 2021–2022 School Year

Susan A. Mauck, Lisa Pinkerton, and Kate Nelson
International Data Evaluation Center, The Ohio State University

This report features results from the Reading Recovery® and Descubriendo la Lectura interventions in the United States during the 2021–2022 school year. Information is provided about the students who participated in the interventions, the students’ intervention status upon exit, and the progress that students made.

In 2021–2022, for the second year in a row, the group of lowest-performing Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura students started the school year with lower literacy scores than before school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, yet most of them were able to catch up to their peers and all of them ended the first-grade year with much stronger literacy scores than they had prior to the intervention. The data in this report support the conclusion that both Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura are effective and needed now more than ever.

Summary of the Reading Recovery Implementation

Research Question 1

How many students were served and who was served in Reading Recovery?

During the 2021–2022 school year, Reading Recovery was implemented by 12 university training centers responsible for overseeing the intervention in schools located in 43 states (see Table 1). There were 23,561 first-grade students who participated in the Reading Recovery intervention. These children received the intervention from 3,119 teachers trained in Reading Recovery who were supported by 214 teacher leaders in 169 training sites serving 655 school districts. There were 2,083 schools participating in Reading Recovery, with 43% of the students located in a suburb/large town, 37% in a rural area/small town, and 20% in an urban area.

Demographic information for the participating Reading Recovery students ($n = 23,561$) revealed that 51% were boys and 49% were girls. The students came from different racial and ethnic backgrounds (i.e., 54% White, 19% Black/African American, 18% Hispanic, 2% Asian American, 1% Native American, and 6% were either from multiple races or other ethnic backgrounds). Of the schools that reported federal lunch status, approximately 79% of Reading Recovery students were eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Background information

In the fall of the school year, teachers in each school that participates in Reading Recovery randomly select two students from the first graders in the school to be part of a national random sample of first graders. The

Table 1. Participation in Reading Recovery in the United States, 2021–2022

| Entity | <i>n</i> |
|-----------------------------|----------|
| University Training Centers | 12 |
| Teacher Training Sites | 169 |
| States | 43 |
| School Systems | 655 |
| School Buildings | 2,083 |
| Teacher Leaders | 214 |
| Teachers | 3,119 |
| Reading Recovery Students | 23,561 |
| Started in Fall | 12,276 |
| Started at Mid-year | 11,285 |
| Random Sample for RR | 3,874 |

NOTE: Counts for Reading Recovery students include students who were taught by both teachers trained in Reading Recovery and teacher leaders.

students in this national random sample are considered typical first-grade students and serve as a comparison group.

The random sample from the 2021–2022 academic year ($n = 3,874$) was comprised of students who came from different racial and ethnic backgrounds (i.e., 60% White, 16% Black/African American, 14% Hispanic, 3% Asian American, 1% Native American, and 6% were either from multiple races or other ethnic backgrounds). Approximately half of the random sample students were boys and half were girls. Of schools reporting federal lunch status, 73% of the random sample students were eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Teachers trained in Reading Recovery who participated in the 2021–2022 data collection had an average of 21.5 years of teaching experience and 8.6 years teaching Reading Recovery and/or Descubriendo la Lectura. These teachers provided individual literacy instruction to an average of 7.2 Reading Recovery children during the school year. In addition, teachers trained in Reading Recovery worked with an average of 29.5 additional children beyond their Reading Recovery load. Thus, accounting for all teaching roles/assignments during the 2021–2022 academic year, teachers trained in Reading Recovery instructed an average total of 36.7 children.

Research Question 2

What was the intervention status of students served by Reading Recovery?

Of the students who received a complete series of Reading Recovery lessons ($n = 16,196$, 68.8% of all served), end-of-intervention outcomes were as follows:

- 52.5% ($n = 8,508$) achieved the intervention goal of reading and writing levels commensurate with the average students in their first-grade cohort. These students were given the outcome status of *Accelerated Progress: Achieved Intervention Goal*. They have the ability to continue making progress without additional support beyond the classroom teacher.
- 21.6% ($n = 3,499$) made significant progress in their levels of reading and writing achievement but did not reach average class levels after completing a full series of lessons. These students were given the outcome status of *Progressed: Monitoring and Support Essential for Ongoing Literacy Progress*. Although they have a literacy

processing system under construction, these students will need close monitoring and support to continue making gains.

- 25.9% ($n = 4,189$) made some progress during the intervention, but additional evaluation along with ongoing intervention were considered crucial for literacy progress to continue after completing a full series of lessons. These students were given the outcome status of *Recommended: Additional Evaluation and Intervention Essential for Ongoing Literacy Progress*. They deserve immediate consideration by the school team, classroom teachers, and specialists to monitor and support their ongoing progress.

Of the total group of students selected for Reading Recovery ($n = 23,561$), not all students were able to complete the intervention (31.2%, $n = 7,365$).

- 25.6% ($n = 6,038$) of students were unable to complete a full series of instruction before the end of the school year. These students were given an exit status of *Incomplete*.
- 2.9% ($n = 684$) of students moved during the school year while still enrolled in the intervention. These students were given an exit status of *Moved*.
- 2.7% ($n = 643$) of students' lessons were concluded early due to unusual circumstances based on a decision made by someone other than the Reading Recovery teacher. These students were given an exit status of *None of the Above*.

Table 2. Counts and Percentages of Reading Recovery Students by Exit Status, 2021–2022

| Exit Status | <i>n</i> | % Full Program | % Total |
|----------------------|---------------|----------------|---------|
| Accelerated Progress | 8,508 | 53% | 36% |
| Progressed | 3,499 | 22% | 15% |
| Recommended | 4,189 | 26% | 18% |
| Incomplete | 6,038 | | 26% |
| Moved | 684 | | 3% |
| None of the Above | 643 | | 3% |
| Total | 23,561 | | |

NOTE: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and when summed may not equal 100%.

Counts and frequencies of all students who participated in the Reading Recovery intervention in 2021–2022 are presented in Table 2 by status.

Research Question 3

What was the progress of the Reading Recovery students on the literacy measures of the Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement?

The assessment used in this examination of Reading Recovery students’ literacy skills was *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Observation Survey; Clay, 2019). There are six tasks on the Observation Survey that are administered by a teacher

trained in Reading Recovery. The six tasks measure children’s reading and writing behaviors: the Text Reading Level task, the Letter Identification task, the Ohio Word test, and tasks that measure students’ understanding of how the English system of writing works, their phonemic awareness, and their ability to write words (i.e., Concepts About Print task, Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words task, and Writing Vocabulary task, respectively). The Observation Survey tasks were administered several times to Reading Recovery students and the random sample of comparison students during the 2021–2022 academic year (e.g., fall, mid-year, year-end).

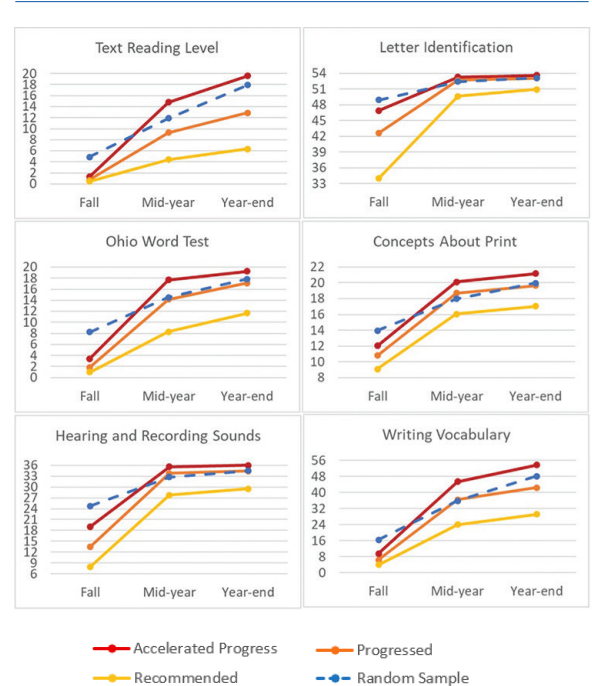
To answer research question three, we used fall, exit or mid-year, and year-end scores on the six tasks of the Observation Survey for Reading Recovery full program students by outcome status and the random sample students. Only exit scores from first round Reading

Table 3. Observation Survey Task Mean Scores for Reading Recovery Students and Random Sample Students by Exit Status and Time of Year, 2021–2022

| Task/Time of Year | Exit Status | | | |
|--|-------------|------|------|------|
| | AP | P | R | RS |
| Text Reading Level | | | | |
| Fall | 1.3 | 0.8 | 0.5 | 4.9 |
| Mid-year | 14.8 | 9.3 | 4.4 | 11.9 |
| Year-end | 19.6 | 12.9 | 6.3 | 17.9 |
| Letter Identification | | | | |
| Fall | 46.9 | 42.7 | 34.1 | 48.9 |
| Mid-year | 53.5 | 52.7 | 49.6 | 52.4 |
| Year-end | 53.6 | 53.1 | 50.9 | 53.1 |
| Ohio Word Test | | | | |
| Fall | 3.4 | 1.9 | 1.0 | 8.2 |
| Mid-year | 17.7 | 14.2 | 8.3 | 14.5 |
| Year-end | 19.2 | 17.1 | 11.7 | 17.9 |
| Concepts About Print | | | | |
| Fall | 12.0 | 10.8 | 9.1 | 14.0 |
| Mid-year | 20.1 | 18.7 | 16.1 | 18.0 |
| Year-end | 21.2 | 19.6 | 17.1 | 20.0 |
| Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words | | | | |
| Fall | 19.1 | 13.5 | 8.0 | 24.8 |
| Mid-year | 35.6 | 33.8 | 27.8 | 32.8 |
| Year-end | 36.0 | 34.4 | 29.5 | 34.5 |
| Writing Vocabulary | | | | |
| Fall | 9.6 | 6.4 | 4.0 | 16.5 |
| Mid-year | 45.4 | 36.5 | 24.1 | 35.9 |
| Year-end | 53.8 | 42.6 | 29.1 | 48.1 |

NOTE: AP = Accelerated Progress; P = Progressed; R = Recommended; RS = Random Sample
The mid-year means were calculated using only scores from first round Reading Recovery students at exit.

Figure 1. Plots of Mean Scores by Time Point on the Observation Survey Tasks for Full Program Reading Recovery Students by Status and for Random Sample Students, 2021–2022



NOTE: The mid-year means were calculated using only scores from first round Reading Recovery students at exit.

Recovery students were used to calculate the means at mid-year. Means at the three time points for full program students in each outcome status and the random sample are presented in Table 3. In addition, Figure 1 presents line graphs of the means.

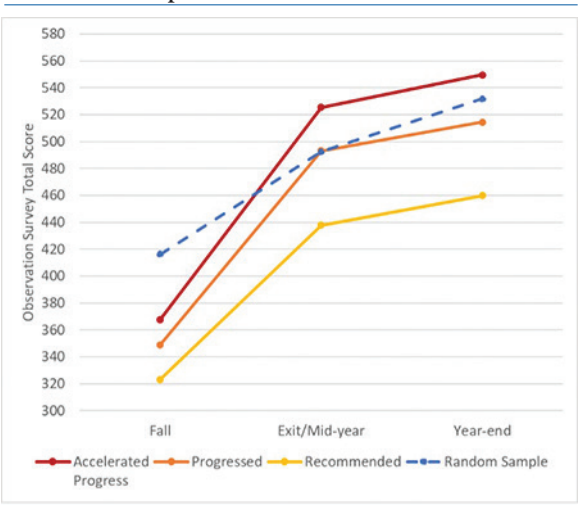
Research Question 4

What was the average gain in literacy skills from fall to mid-year to year-end of first round full program Reading Recovery students by outcome status and the random sample students?

To answer research question four, we calculated average fall, mid-year, and year-end scores for full program Reading Recovery students by outcome status and for the random sample students. As shown in Table 4 and Figure 2, on average, first round full program students in each outcome status category started the school year with average Observation Survey Total Scores that were lower than the average score of the random sample students, made strong growth during the intervention, and continued to grow in their literacy skills after the intervention. The random sample students made steady progress throughout the school year but ended the year with an average score that was lower than the average for most Reading Recovery students.

Just as they did in the first school year after the start of the pandemic, full program Reading Recovery students in all three outcome status groups started first grade in the fall with scores on the Observation Survey that were low, yet all Reading Recovery students made substantial growth during the school year. In the 2021–2022 school year, just over 74% of Reading Recovery students made an average growth of 13.5 months. In addition, this

Figure 2. Average Growth in Literacy Skills From Fall to Exit/Mid-Year to Year-End for First Round Full Program Reading Recovery Students by Outcome Status and for Random Sample Students, 2021–2022



group of students completed the school year with an average score on the Observation Survey that was higher than the average of the random sample students.

In 2021–2022, tens of thousands of first-grade students in the United States benefited from their participation in Reading Recovery. The data in this report clearly demonstrate the efficacy of Reading Recovery and the impacts such an intervention can have on the literacy development of students who are struggling with learning to read and write. The data provide a strong indicator that effective early literacy intervention is important now more than ever.

Table 4. Average Scores and Gains on the Observation Survey Total Score From Fall to Exit/Mid-year to Year-end for First Round Full Program Reading Recovery Students by Outcome Status and Random Sample Students, 2021–2022

| Group | Observation Survey Total Score Average | | | | |
|----------------------|--|---------------|----------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|
| | Fall | Exit/Mid-year | Gain Fall to Exit/Mid-year | Year-end | Gain Exit/Mid-year to Year-end |
| Accelerated Progress | 368 | 526 | 158 | 549 | 24 |
| Progressed | 349 | 493 | 144 | 515 | 21 |
| Recommended | 323 | 438 | 114 | 460 | 22 |
| Random Sample | 416 | 493 | 76 | 532 | 39 |

Summary of the Descubriendo la Lectura Implementation

Research Question 1

How many students were served and who was served in Descubriendo la Lectura?

The Descubriendo la Lectura intervention, a reconstruction of Reading Recovery in Spanish, was designed for first graders who receive their initial literacy instruction in Spanish. Table 5 provides details about participation in Descubriendo la Lectura in the United States during the 2021–2022 academic year. There were 263 children participating in the intervention who received instruction from 53 teachers. These students attended 42 schools in 15 school districts that were located in eight states, and the teachers were supported by 17 teacher leaders. The schools these students attended were located in a suburb/large town (57%), urban area (38%), and rural area/small town (5%).

Demographic information for the participating Descubriendo la Lectura students ($n = 263$) revealed that about half were boys, half were girls, and 99% were Hispanic. Of the schools that reported federal lunch status, 90% were eligible for free or reduced lunch. English was not the primary language at home for 99% of all Descubriendo la Lectura students.

| Entity | <i>n</i> |
|-----------------------------|----------|
| University Training Centers | 3 |
| Teacher Training Sites | 14 |
| States | 8 |
| School Systems | 15 |
| School Buildings | 42 |
| Teacher Leaders | 17 |
| Teachers | 53 |
| DLL Students | 263 |
| Started in Fall | 133 |
| Started at Mid-year | 130 |
| Random Sample for DLL | 133 |

NOTE: Counts for Descubriendo la Lectura students include students who were taught by both teachers trained in Descubriendo la Lectura and teacher leaders.

Background information

In the fall of the school year, teachers in schools that participate in Descubriendo la Lectura randomly select four students from the first graders in the school to be part of a national random sample of first graders. The students in this random sample are considered typical of the first-grade students in their schools. The students in the random sample from the 2021–2022 academic year ($n = 133$) were 54% boys and 46% girls. Over 96% of the random sample identified as Hispanic, and 84% were eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Teachers trained in Descubriendo la Lectura had an average of 19.6 years of teaching experience and 7.8 years teaching Descubriendo la Lectura and/or Reading Recovery. These teachers taught 5.3 Descubriendo la Lectura children during the 2021–2022 school year and 19.4 children beyond their Descubriendo la Lectura load. Thus, accounting for all teaching roles/assignments during the 2021–2022 academic year, teachers trained in Descubriendo la Lectura instructed an average total of 24.7 children.

Research Question 2

What was the intervention status of students served by Descubriendo la Lectura?

Of the students who received a complete series of Descubriendo la Lectura lessons ($n = 168$, 63.9% of all served), end-of-intervention outcomes were as follows:

- 39.3% ($n = 66$) achieved the intervention goal of reading and writing levels commensurate with the average students in their first-grade cohort. These students were given the outcome status of *Accelerated Progress: Achieved Intervention Goal*. They have the ability to continue making progress without additional support beyond the classroom teacher.
- 20.8% ($n = 35$) made significant progress in their levels of reading and writing achievement but did not reach average class levels after completing a full series of lessons. These students were given the outcome status of *Progressed: Monitoring and Support Essential for Ongoing Literacy Progress*. Although they have a literacy processing system under construction, these students will need close monitoring and support to continue making gains.

- 39.9% ($n = 67$) made some progress during the intervention, but additional evaluation and ongoing intervention were considered essential for literacy progress to continue after completing a full series of lessons. These students were given the outcome status of *Recommended: Additional Evaluation and Intervention Essential for Ongoing Literacy Progress*. They deserve immediate consideration by the school team, classroom teachers, and specialists to monitor and support their ongoing progress.

Of the total group of students selected for Descubriendo la Lectura ($n = 233$), not all students were able to complete the intervention (36.1%, $n = 95$). The following reasons were given for this:

- 28.9% ($n = 76$) of students were unable to complete a full series of instruction before the end of the school year. These students were given an exit status of *Incomplete*.
- 2.3% ($n = 6$) of students moved during the school year while still enrolled in lessons. These students were given an exit status of *Moved*.
- 4.9% ($n = 13$) of students' lessons were concluded early due to unusual circumstances based on a decision by someone other than the Descubriendo la Lectura teacher. These students were given an exit status of *None of the Above*.

Counts and frequencies of all students who participated in the Descubriendo la Lectura intervention in 2021–2022 are presented in Table 6 by status.

| Exit Status | n | % Full Program | % Total |
|----------------------|------------|----------------|---------|
| Accelerated Progress | 66 | 39% | 25% |
| Progressed | 35 | 21% | 13% |
| Recommended | 67 | 40% | 25% |
| Incomplete | 76 | | 29% |
| Moved | 6 | | 2% |
| None of the Above | 13 | | 5% |
| Total | 263 | | |

NOTE: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and when summed may not equal 100%.

Research Question 3

What was the progress of the Descubriendo la Lectura students on the literacy measures of the Instrumento de observación de los logros de la lecto-escritura inicial?

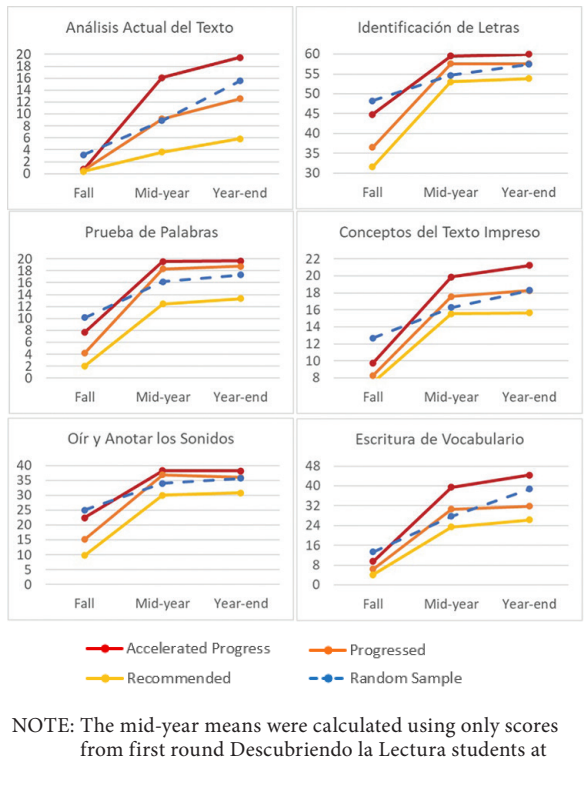
The assessment used in this examination of Descubriendo la Lectura students' literacy skills was the *Instrumento de observación de los logros de la lecto-escritura inicial* (Instrumento de observación; Escamilla, et al., 1996). Like the Observation Survey, the Instrumento de observación is composed of six tasks that measure children's reading and writing behaviors: Análisis Actual del Texto, Identificación de Letras, Prueba de Palabras, Conceptos del Texto Impreso, Oír y Anotar los Sonidos de la Palabras, and Escritura de Vocabulario. The Instrumento de observación was administered several times (e.g., fall, mid-year, and year-end) to both

Table 7. Instrumento de observación Task Mean Scores for Descubriendo la Lectura Students and Random Sample Students by Exit Status and Time of Year, 2021–2022

| Task/Time of Year | Exit Status | | | |
|--|-------------|------|------|------|
| | AP | P | R | RS |
| Análisis Actual del Texto | | | | |
| Fall | 0.7 | 0.6 | 0.4 | 3.2 |
| Mid-year | 16.1 | 9.2 | 3.6 | 8.9 |
| Year-end | 19.5 | 12.5 | 5.8 | 15.5 |
| Identificación de Letras | | | | |
| Fall | 44.8 | 36.5 | 31.6 | 48.3 |
| Mid-year | 59.5 | 57.6 | 53.0 | 54.7 |
| Year-end | 60.0 | 57.6 | 53.8 | 57.4 |
| Prueba de Palabras | | | | |
| Fall | 7.7 | 4.2 | 2.1 | 10.2 |
| Mid-year | 19.5 | 18.3 | 12.5 | 16.2 |
| Year-end | 19.7 | 18.7 | 13.4 | 17.3 |
| Conceptos del Texto Impreso | | | | |
| Fall | 9.8 | 8.3 | 7.5 | 12.7 |
| Mid-year | 19.9 | 17.6 | 15.6 | 16.3 |
| Year-end | 21.3 | 18.3 | 15.7 | 18.3 |
| Oír y Anotar los Sonidos de la Palabras | | | | |
| Fall | 22.4 | 15.2 | 9.8 | 25.0 |
| Mid-year | 38.3 | 36.8 | 30.0 | 34.0 |
| Year-end | 38.2 | 36.0 | 30.8 | 35.7 |
| Escritura de Vocabulario | | | | |
| Fall | 9.5 | 6.4 | 4.2 | 13.4 |
| Mid-year | 39.5 | 30.6 | 23.4 | 27.7 |
| Year-end | 44.4 | 31.8 | 26.2 | 38.8 |

NOTE: AP = Accelerated Progress; P = Progressed; R = Recommended; RS = Random Sample
The mid-year means were calculated using only scores from first round Reading Recovery students at exit.

Figure 3. Plots of Mean Scores by Time Point on the Instrumento de observación Tasks for Full Program Descubriendo la Lectura Students by Status and for Random Sample Students, 2021–2022



participating Descubriendo la Lectura students and a random sample of students during the 2021–2022 academic year.

To answer research question three, we used fall, exit or mid-year, and year-end scores on the six tasks of the Instrumento de observación for Descubriendo la

Lectura full program students by outcome status and the random sample students. Only exit scores from first round Descubriendo la Lectura students were used to calculate the means at mid-year. Presented below is a table of means at the three time points for full program students in each outcome status and the random sample (Table 7). In addition, Figure 3 presents line graphs of the means.

Research Question 4

What was the average gain in literacy skills from fall to mid-year to year-end of first round full program Descubriendo la Lectura students by outcome status and the random sample students?

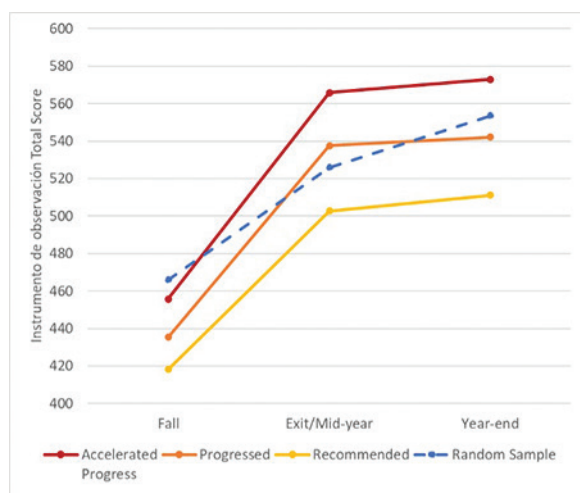
To answer research question four, we calculated average fall, mid-year, and year-end Instrumento de observación Total Scores for full program Descubriendo la Lectura students by outcome status and for the random sample students. As shown in Table 8 and Figure 4, on average, first round full program students in each outcome status category started the school year with average Instrumento de observación Total Scores that were lower than the average score of the random sample students, made strong growth during the intervention, and continued to grow in their literacy skills after the intervention. The random sample students made steady progress throughout the school year but ended the year with an average score that was lower than the average for most Descubriendo la Lectura students.

There is strong evidence that the effects of disruptions to learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic were still challenging teachers in schools with the Descubriendo la Lectura intervention. Fall Instrumento de observación Total Scores of the students who were selected for participation in the intervention were about

Table 8. Average Scores and Gains on the Instrumento de observación Total Score From Fall to Exit/Mid-year to Year-end for First Round Full Program Descubriendo la Lectura Students by Outcome Status and Random Sample Students, 2021–2022

| Group | Instrumento de observación Total Score Average | | | | |
|----------------------|--|---------------|----------------------------|----------|--------------------------------|
| | Fall | Exit/Mid-year | Gain Fall to Exit/Mid-year | Year-end | Gain Exit/Mid-year to Year-end |
| Accelerated Progress | 456 | 566 | 110 | 573 | 7 |
| Progressed | 435 | 538 | 102 | 542 | 5 |
| Recommended | 418 | 503 | 84 | 511 | 8 |
| Random Sample | 466 | 526 | 60 | 554 | 28 |

Figure 4. Average Growth in Literacy Skills From Fall to Exit/Mid-Year to Year-End for First Round Full Program Descubriendo la Lectura Students by Outcome Status and for Random Sample Students, 2021–2022



20 points lower in 2021–2022 than they were before the start of the pandemic in 2018–2019 (448 vs. 428, respectively). However, examining Descubriendo la Lectura students’ mean scores by status group allowed us to observe the strong progress in literacy skills these students made regardless of their status category.

Thousands of children in the United States have benefited from participating in the Descubriendo la Lectura intervention. In the 2021–2022 school year, as in previous years, first-grade students who completed the intervention showed strong gains in their literacy skills. The findings in this report provide support for the efficacy of the Descubriendo la Lectura intervention.

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NOTE: All data are from the IDEC national summary reports for Reading Recovery and for Descubriendo la Lectura in the United States for the respective academic years cited.

About the Authors

Dr. Susan A. Mauck is a research scientist with the International Data Evaluation Center. She was a public elementary teacher for 30 years before completing her PhD in quantitative research, evaluation and measurement at The Ohio State University in 2019.



Dr. Lisa Pinkerton is the Marie Clay Endowed Chair in Reading Recovery and Early Literacy at The Ohio State University, where she also works as a Reading Recovery trainer. She presents on a wide range of literacy topics at international, national, and state conferences.



Dr. Kate Nelson is the International Data Evaluation Center manager at Her background includes serving as a literacy professor and researcher, as well as directing a literacy intervention program.



Important Work Continues

Cursory Data Analysis Will Decide Next Step for New Assessment Package

A bit of history

The current Scott Foresman package has been the standard entry/exit assessment for Reading Recovery® for the past 33 years, beginning when Reading Recovery was first implemented in the United States. Over the years, Reading Recovery professionals shared concerns about the relevancy of some of the passages, appropriate representation of diverse characters, as well as an apparent unevenness in the difficulty of the levels. In 2007, the North America Trainers Group (NATG) conducted a study to review the testing packet and consider alternatives for assessing progress in text reading (Briggs et al., 2011). The results of the study did not reveal adequate evidence to recommend a transition to a new assessment. Based on the strong correlation found between the Scott Foresman packet and the standardized Slosson test (SORT-R)—as well as the desire to maintain continuity across years of data and the knowledge that considerable time and financial support would be needed to research and design a new set of assessment books—the NATG task force recommended the continued use of the Scott Foresman assessment passages.

New assessment study

In 2021, Billie Askew, along with consultants Gay Pinnell and Irene Fountas, took on the process of researching and designing a new set of assessment passages for Reading Recovery. This project was important to Billie because she knew it would be important to Reading Recovery in the U.S. moving into the future. The research is currently in progress with support from the Reading Recovery Council of North America (RRCNA). This section will provide an explanation of the steps taken thus far.

Identifying texts for the study

The first step was to find both fiction and nonfiction texts that would include diverse characters and topics that would be appropriate to use for Reading Recovery assessment. The passages chosen for this study came from a variety of places. The New Zealand Ministry of Education provided links to their Ready to Read series of books for our consideration. Diane DeFord allowed us to review her out-of-print assessment book series. We

reviewed KEEP Books from the Literacy Collaborative at The Ohio State University, and we considered out of print little book titles from the Reading Recovery Book List. All the books were given a first, cursory review and either went forward or were discarded. For example, some of the New Zealand books were not culturally appropriate for use in the U.S. and were not considered.

Once books to consider were identified, introductions in a standardized format needed to be written. For some of the longer texts, passages were selected that were appropriate for the approximate level. The passages were chosen based on cohesion of meaning. In other words, could the passage stand alone and still be meaningful? Volunteer trainers were given criteria for standardization and wrote drafts of introductions for each book which were then reviewed by another trainer to reach consensus.

Teacher leaders from across the country volunteered to review a set of the books. They were provided a list of scanned books and a checklist for evaluation. They indicated if they thought the introduction was appropriate, the appropriateness of the text (no bias or stereotypes), and if they agreed or disagreed to consider the book for testing, along with a rationale. They were also asked to provide an estimated text level for each book. All of this feedback was collated and taken into consideration for selection of texts to include in the study.

In December 2021, a group of experienced teacher leaders and trainers met in person at the RRCNA office in Columbus to conduct a third review of the books, looking once again at diversity, appropriateness of topic, and approximate text level. Reviewers were divided into two groups — independently making text level suggestions and then, as a larger group, sorting the books by level. Some books required minor changes in the text to make them more applicable to a level, and the work continued until the reviewer group came to a consensus regarding good fit for each level of text being considered. Minor changes were made to the texts to ready them for the study.

School and student samples

Dr. Jerry D'Agostino from The Ohio State University, agreed to serve as the external researcher, providing the research protocol and data analysis. Together with the consultant group, a book level calibration study

was planned. Approximately 300 students from 10–15 schools participated in the study. University training centers (UTCs) at Clemson University, The Ohio State University, Saint Mary's College, and Texas Woman's University each identified four or five schools that represented a range of diversity across the U.S. to participate. District Reading Recovery teachers and teacher leaders helped with the identification of the schools and facilitated selection of the students. Approximately 20 first-grade students from each school were divided into three groups—low, medium, and high readers—from a class ranking sheet provided by the Grade 1 teachers. A current reading level for each child was also provided by the classroom teacher. Between 7 and 10 students from each of the three class groups were selected to be tested. Permissions were secured from the school and parents of each child participating.

Testers and testing

Each UTC identified two testers to read the books with first graders at the participating schools. Testers included retired and active teacher leaders and retired trainers. They were provided protocol training during the summer of 2022 to follow uniform testing procedures. RRCNA mailed copies of the texts and testing forms to each of the testers. Testers were provided a stipend for their participation.

Three books and the current Scott Foresman texts at each level were randomly assigned to one of four testing blocks; the primary purpose being to ensure that each book was administered to an equal number of students during testing. Each of the students per school would be randomly assigned to two forms within one of the assigned blocks.

The goal of testing was to obtain accuracy scores for books that were within the student's instructional to frustration range. Testers were given a protocol to follow that included beginning one level below the reading level identified by the classroom teacher to continue until the child read two books at the frustration level for each of two blocks of texts. For each book read, the tester took a running record including a fluency rating from the NAEP Oral Reading Fluency Passage Reading Expression rubric. Once all assigned students were tested, the running record forms were mailed to RRCNA to input data.

Summary

The goal of the study is to find two assessment texts at each level that are equivalent in terms of difficulty so that teachers may use either text to assess Reading Recovery students accurately.

To date, all data have been submitted and are awaiting analysis. Until there is a cursory analysis of the level data, it is not clear whether additional data will need to be collected. Many hours and many volunteers have participated in the work of this important study so far and there is still much work to do.

— Submitted by Dr. Connie Briggs
Texas Woman's University trainer emerita

Investigating the New Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words Task

The Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words (HRSIW) task published in the 2019 edition of Marie Clay's *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* is currently being investigated to allow an in-depth examination of its new forms (or sentences) with first-grade students in the U.S. Last September, schools were randomly selected for participation in this project by the International Data Evaluation Center (IDEC). The Reading Recovery teachers in these schools are conducting pilot testing with their school's two random sample students. The testing occurs as the teachers conduct random sample testing with the Observation Survey following established practices at three times during the school year: the beginning of the year, mid-year, and end of the year.

The teachers administer all six Observation Survey tasks during each testing period; however, they are not administering the original form of the HRSIW task. In its place, they administer two new and different forms as assigned by IDEC which designates both the specific forms to be used and the order of presenting the forms to the students.

To date, Reading Recovery teachers from approximately 500 schools have completed two testing periods and the data has been entered in the IDEC system. The analyses will be conducted following the completion of the end of year testing and data entry in June 2023. Results will be shared with trainers following the final analyses.

— Submitted by Dr. Mary Anne Doyle
University of Connecticut trainer emerita

President's Message

Sense of Belonging Strengthens Reading Recovery Community



RRCNA President Maeghan McCormick

Spring is here, and the end of the school year is in sight! That means my time as your RRCNA president is coming to a close and while it has been a challenging year, it certainly has not been without its rewards.

Serving on the RRCNA Executive Board has been a fantastic privilege because I get to partner with deeply dedicated educators and get to see firsthand their accomplishments with emergent readers and writers. Connecting with these colleagues is a treasured experience. I particularly valued the opportunity to meet them in person during professional development — especially at LitCon: National K-8 Literacy & Reading Recovery Conference!

If you were lucky enough to attend LitCon this year, you heard me share during the closing general session my personal ruminations on the state of literacy education at this point in history. I shared my belief that there has never been a more challenging time to be an educator than in this post-COVID era, where our students have faced disrupted education, absenteeism, health uncertainties, and even food insecurity. Many in attendance commiserated with me in these thoughts, particularly that even as we have gotten back to “a new normal,” teachers continue to struggle through what seems to be an ever-

worsening anti-teacher sentiment, drastic teacher shortages, and our theories under constant attack from political and business interests.

Sharing these frustrations with a room of 1,000-plus educators was both an intimidating experience and a cathartic one! I felt in that moment that I wasn't alone. That

students' eyes. Those moments, coupled with the camaraderie we share, with our professional learning communities give us the strength to face the naysayers.

As I shared in my address, it often seems that politicians see children as constituents. Big business sees them as prospects and dollar signs.

Together we experience frustrations and joys, and we support each other through it all. . . . Whether a Reading Recovery teacher, classroom teacher, literacy coach, interventionist, or administrator, we are one in this struggle but also one in our successes.

we weren't alone. Together we experience frustrations and joys, and we support each other through it all. And yet again, as I so often am, I was reminded of the importance of belonging to the Reading Recovery Community.

Whether a Reading Recovery teacher, classroom teacher, literacy coach, interventionist, or administrator, we are one in this struggle but also one in our successes. And we see so many successes every day! Amidst the contention of daily politics, we see shining reminders of what matters when we witness those small “Aha moments” in our

But as educators, we've chosen a higher purpose, allowing us to see children as they truly are — little people with big dreams and enormous potential.

Thank you for choosing this higher purpose for your students *and* for your colleagues. As a Community, we hold each other up during this hard work! And now—when it's hard—it is more important than ever that we stay the course and continue to provide the best, most responsive literacy instruction to the students in our care.

RRCNA Board of Directors Election Results

We are pleased to share results of the recent election for terms beginning July 1, 2023.



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Santa Clara, CA

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Executive Director's Message

New Website Reflects Member Priorities to Connect and Serve



RRCNA Executive Director Billy Molasso

One of the best parts about my role as executive director is getting to meet and learn from RRCNA members like you. From Reading Recovery teachers in school buildings to the trainers in our university training centers and regional institutes, every member of this Community is uniquely dedicated, driven, thoughtful, and full of great ideas!

One of those great ideas that came from RRCNA members began as a tiny seed and grew into a massive undertaking! I'm talking, of course, about the new and improved Reading Recovery website, and just in the last few weeks, we were pleased to unveil it to you.

We took feedback from our members and crafted the website around your priorities. Here's what we learned and how we adapted according to what you shared:

Easy access to all resources in one place

Once you are logged into your member account, all member resources are accessible from the Resources tab in the left column. Here's where you'll find all your favorites, including the Book List, Journal archives, e-Learning Center, plus many more.

More advocacy

Doubling down on our commitment to help members advocate for Reading Recovery in their states, the new Act Now Center highlights legislative activities at the state level that may impact your practice. View proposed legislation and use our simple advocacy tools to stay informed, find your legislators, and even contact them directly right from our page.

A focus on research

Check out the new Research database! Here you'll find Reading Recovery-specific research in a format that's easy to search by author, subject, and more. This includes free access to many research articles at the click of your mouse. We're continuing to add more recent research to this database every month!

Expanded and consolidated common questions

We answered questions that people would have about our work on the old webpage — but they were spread out and hard to find. Now, we have an exhaustive Common Questions link for both members and explorers.

A greater emphasis on Community

While we rolled out the Reading Recovery Community Forum last year, many members still weren't sure where to go or how to use it. The new website keeps this valuable resource front and center on the homepage, allowing easy access and visibility. Log in and join the conversation!

Leadership listings

Who's on X committee? Who is now chair of Y committee? In our new webpage, you can find direct listings of our committees, workgroups, and task forces that are up-to-date and easy to find. This will allow our members to connect more directly with leaders who are doing important work.

All of this—plus a snazzy new look—was done in an effort to meet our members' needs so that you can best serve your students!

Take a few minutes to poke around the new website and let us know what you think at community@readingrecovery.org.



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Jackson, MI
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Reading Recovery Community

Awards Support Professionals

Financial awards provide assistance for training, professional development, and other early literacy efforts. Awards are given to Reading Recovery teachers, teachers-in-training, teacher leaders, university trainers, or administrators who support the implementation of Reading Recovery.

LitCon Professional Development Awards

These awards help offset costs to attend LitCon: National K-8 Literacy & Reading Recovery Conference in Columbus.

Tenyo Family Foundation Grant

Bobbie Barrier
Sarah Blair
Rebecca (Becky) Fritz
DeAnn Holba
Lisa Hoover
Amanda Jones
LaShaunta Lake
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SongLake Books Grant

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Dr. Julie Olson Grant

Amy Peterson
Jill Speering
Rachel Spellman
Jami Vandenberg
Tracie Vitantonio

Geri Stone Memorial Fund Awards

This program provides financial awards to help continue the work of Geri Stone and RRCNA's vision.

Diane Pas
Kellie Kelly
Brit Hoyt

Teacher Leader Training Awards

These awards support the year-long training of a Reading Recovery teacher leader.

Sponsored by Pioneer Valley Books

April Hamilton
Anna Hancock
Erica Kenoyer
Leslie Ray
Lora Reavis
Courtney Smith

Sponsored by MaryRuth Books

Sarah Mayer
Julie Schwartzbauer

Sponsored by the Linda Dorn Reading Recovery Legacy Fund

E. Louise Raigoza

Thank you to the donors to the Foundation for Struggling Readers for making these awards possible, especially to these associate members.



2023  2024

AWARDS SEASON

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Volunteers Essential for Book List Update

The Reading Recovery Book List is an essential resource for Reading Recovery professionals. Thousands of titles comprise the list, which RRCNA members can easily search online. The numeric system of levels from 1–30 indicates increasingly complex texts, with Level 1 being most supportive of emergent readers and Level 30 representing more sophisticated texts. Experienced Reading Recovery teacher leaders and teachers volunteer to help determine the placement of new books in this gradient of increasing difficulty by field testing these books in their Reading Recovery lessons and submitting the data.

This year, volunteers from across the country are piloting an updated, more efficient procedure to update the Reading Recovery Book List. Volunteers must be a trained teacher leader or teacher with at least 3–5 years of experience and membership in RRCNA. Publishers submitted new titles in the spring of 2022. A group of trainers and teacher leaders reviewed the books during the Teacher Leader Institute in June, screening the books using a diversity scale and for appropriateness for Reading Recovery lessons. Meanwhile, the Book Leveling Committee recruited sites from across the

country to volunteer in field testing. Once the books were approved for review, each volunteer received a bundle of books which they kept as a thank you for helping. After an initial training, volunteers began using the books in lessons and collecting data, sandwiching the new book in between two other books of the same level. Throughout the book leveling process, the committee has supported volunteers with initial trainings, mid-semester check-ins, and a dedicated Reading Recovery Online Community Forum where participants can ask questions and host discussions. The 2022–2023 cycle is almost complete, with final levels submitted in March. The book list will be updated in June, with a potential of 500 new titles to be added.

Participating in the book leveling process is a rewarding ongoing professional development experience that improves understanding of what book complexity means. If you are interested in participating in the 2023–2024 cycle or learning more, encourage your teacher leader to reach out to Adria Klein at Saint Mary's College of California. We couldn't expand this indispensable resource without volunteers like you.



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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.** Please share in an email to vfox@readingrecovery.org.

Fun With Baby Bear

Beverley Randell's carefully leveled PM Storybooks have delighted students as well as teachers for nearly 60 years. The New Zealand author and editor realized that young readers needed stories with satisfying endings about situations they understood. And so, Randell dedicated her career to researching, writing, and editing books that have made a difference in the literate lives of children.

Her popular Baby Bear stories were based on real characters and incidents in Beverley's life. "Many teachers tell children to use their imaginations, but almost all my stories are sparked by observation rather than invention," she said in a fall 2014 issue of *The Journal of Reading Recovery* feature article. You can read the full journal story in the Members Only Resource Center. Here, we share a few other Baby Bear stories from JRR and the Reading Recovery Teachers Facebook Group page.

The Complicated Life of Baby Bear

Ryan, a former Reading Recovery student, had a clever interpretation of the Baby Bear series by Beverley Randell. Ryan and I first read *Baby Bear Goes Fishing*, and a few days later, *Baby Bear Climbs a Tree*. Ryan immediately closed the book and proclaimed, "Baby Bear can't make up his mind! First he's not too little, then he's not too big. Which is it?" During Baby Bear's *Hiding Place*, Ryan stopped after reading that Father Bear thought Baby Bear was lost in the woods. "He's been kidnapped," he said. When asked to clarify, Ryan very assertively declared, "If he was lost he would still have his basket. You never leave your food supply in the woods. I'm a Cub Scout — that's survival 101. That bear's been kidnapped!" Oh, how I miss my days with Ryan!

— *Jamie Lipp, Reading Recovery Trainer*
from the fall 2015 issue of JRR





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From The Big Win opening gala to the 100+ literacy-rich PD sessions, LitCon 2023 was an amazing experience! Truly the homecoming of literacy leaders, LitCon welcomed more than 1600 dedicated educators from the US and abroad for four days of learning designed to explore best practices in K-8 literacy instruction and renew our passion for education.

Save the date for next year!
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