The Journal of
Reading Recovery®
Fall 2023 Vol. 23 No. 1

DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR SERIES

The Science of *Readingpolitik*: A Commentary

George G. Hruby

Using Cycles of Inquiry: A Reflective Tool to Foster Acceleration

Jennifer Flight

Connected From the Start: Oral Langauge, Reading, and Writing

Adria F. Klein, Nancy Rogers-Zegarra, and Julie Kugler

What Works Clearinghouse 2023 Reading Recovery Intervention Report: The Rest of the Story

Robert M. Schwartz

SPECIAL REPRINT

A Vygotskian Interpretation of Reading Recovery

Marie M. Clay and Courtney B. Cazden

Reading Recovery Community

LitCon

National K–8 Literacy
& Reading Recovery Conference

January 27–30, 2024 · Columbus, OH

JOIN THE HOMECOMING OF LITERACY LEADERS!

OPENING KEYNOTE

SHUAIB MEACHAM

Literacy, Joy, & Resilience: Hip Hop Literacy, Youth Excellence & the Power of Hip Hop for Educators

MONDAY KEYNOTE

PETER JOHNSTON

Unshrinking Literacy, Teaching and Learning

CLOSING KEYNOTE

JASON REYNOLDS

STAMPED: Reflections on Integrating Characters & Stories of Difference

Designed by and for educators, LitCon sessions focus on best instructional practices for

- Classroom teachers
- Literacy coaches & specialists
- Building & district administrators
- Title I teachers & coordinators
- Interventionists
- Teachers of Multilingual Learners
- Curriculum & language arts specialists
- Reading Recovery professionals

Earn 15+ contact hours as you learn from the experts, including featured sessions by

ALLISON BRICEÑO

GEORGE HRUBY

MARY FRIED

JAN RICHARDSON

MARYANN MCBRIDE

PAUL THOMAS

PLUS MANY MORE!
BROWSE THE FULL SESSION LINEUP

Find details & register at

LITERACYCONFERENCE.ORG

The Journal of
Reading Recovery

Contents

Fall 2023

Teaching

Implementation

Research

continued

Reading Recovery Community

RRCNA

Advertising Index

Editor's Corner

Patricia L. Scharer, Editor-in-Chief

Let's Talk About…

As I read over the final edits of this issue, I was struck by the important content which truly requires conversation! I am hoping that you will pair up with a colleague or use articles in professional development or schedule a Zoom meeting with some Reading Recovery friends to talk about one or more of the articles in this issue. I am certain that there will be powerful learning by sharing with others. Here is an overview:

Let's Talk About SOR!

Our Distinguished Author Series features an insightful article on SOR from George Hruby. He argues for a more complex view of the reading process and notes that the "journalists consistently and repeatedly get the science very wrong" (p. 18). Dr. Hruby makes an important case for educators to "follow the money" to fully understand the efforts behind the SOR campaign. Some of his points may be shocking; all are important as Reading Recovery professionals discuss SOR with colleagues.

Let's Talk About Language!

It has been a pleasure to include Marie Clay as a Distinguished Scholar so readers can learn from articles in the past. In 1990, Clay teamed with Courtney Cazden to write about the relationship between Vygotsky's work and Reading Recovery, particularly in terms of language and scaffolding. Pair with the article by Adria Klein, Nancy Rogers-Zegarra, and Julie Kugler about how to connect oral language, reading, and writing from the very first lesson. Both articles are rich with examples to discuss.

Let's Talk About Research!

Check out the *Intervention Essentials* by Wendy Vaulton and Kate Nelson to learn more about the research done by IDEC. Link with the article by Susan Mauck, Kate Nelson, and Lisa Pinkerton focusing on data collected during the pandemic. Jennifer Flight writes about cycles of inquiry she used during lessons to learn more about each student and make precision teaching moves. Finally, Robert Schwartz helps readers to understand new changes to policy at the What Works Clearinghouse which have a huge impact on how Reading Recovery is rated. Schwartz makes the case for more research on Reading Recovery and replication of previous research to maintain high ratings. The three articles would support high-quality professional development!

Happy Reading!

Reading Recovery Council of North America

Vision

We ensure the competencies necessary for a literate and productive future for children learning to read and write.

Mission

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*
- *advancing the development of knowledge and practice based on research, data, and the theoretical framework that has underpinned Reading Recovery® since its founding.*

How to Submit Articles

Write for The Journal of Reading Recovery

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.

Submitting Articles for Publication

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.

Copyright Notice

The Journal of Reading Recovery (ISSN 1538-6805) is published by the Reading Recovery Council of North America as a service to its members.

DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR SERIES

A Vygotskian Interpretation of Reading Recovery

Marie M. Clay and Courtney B. Cazden

Editors' Note

Marie Clay and Courtney Cazden began their 25-plus year friendship, travel, and exploration of literacy theory in the early 1980s at a conference in Pittsburgh.

We thank Cambridge University Press for giving us permission to reprint this article for JRR readers. Please note that style conventions have changed since 1990 and are not updated.

This is an analysis of one tutorial program, Reading Recovery® (RR), for children who have been in school for 1 year and have not yet "caught on" to reading and writing. RR was designed and evaluated by Clay in New Zealand (1985, 1991) and is becoming available to children who need it throughout that country. Because of its success there, it is being tried out in the United States, notably through The Ohio State University (DeFord, Lyons, & Pinnell, 1991; Lyons, 1987; Pinnell, 1985). Cazden learned about RR while on extended stays in New Zealand during 1983 and 1987 and became interested in features of its instructional design after viewing videotapes of New Zealand RR lessons.

Reading Recovery was designed from Clay's theory of the nature of reading, observations of children's behavior in learning to read, and collaboration with experienced New Zealand infant school teachers. Although no thought was given to Vygotsky's theories during this program development, it is possible to interpret features of RR in Vygotskian terms. At first it seemed to Cazden that RR was simply an elegant example of scaffolded instruction. As we worked together on this article, more relationships to Vygotsky's ideas appeared.

After a brief introduction to the theory of reading that guides literacy instruction in both regular New Zealand and RR classrooms, we analyze features of RR that require teacher and child to collaborate in shared tasks—reading a new book and writing the child's story; we present evidence in both cases of a shift from teacher/child interindividual functioning to increasingly complex intraindividual functioning by the child. We then suggest Vygotskian interpretations of RR as a system of social interaction organized around the comprehension and production of texts that demonstrably creates new forms of cognitive activity in the child.

A Theory of Reading

According to Clay's theory of reading and writing instruction (1991), all readers, from 5-year-old children attempting their first book to the efficient adult reader, have to monitor and integrate information from multiple sources. Readers need to use, and check against each other, four types of cues: semantic (text meaning), syntactic (sentence structure), visual (graphemes, orthography, format, and layout), and phonological (the sounds of oral language) (see Figure 9.1).

The endpoint of early instruction has been reached when children

have a *self-improving system:* They learn more about reading every time they read, independent of instruction (Stanovich [1986] calls this "boot-strapping"). When they read texts of appropriate difficulty for their present skills, they use a set of mental operations, strategies in their heads, that are just adequate for more difficult bits of the text. In the process, they engage in "reading work," deliberate efforts to solve new problems with familiar information and procedures. They are working with theories of the world and theories about written language, testing them and changing them as they engage in reading and writing activities.

By the age of 6, after 1 year of instruction, high-progress readers in New Zealand classrooms operate on print in this way. As cue users, not just oral language guessers, they read with attention focused on meaning, checking several sources of cues, one against the other, almost simultaneously. When such higher-level strategies fail, they can engage a lower-processing gear and shift focus to one or another cue source in isolation—such as letter clusters or letter-sound associations—while maintaining and directing attention on the text message at all times.

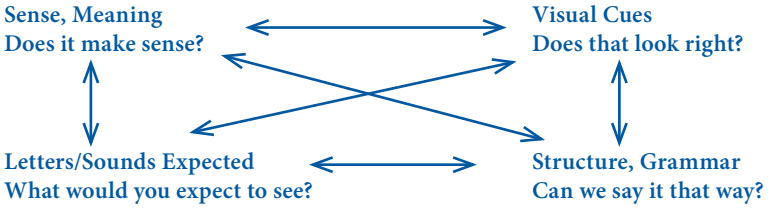
Low-progress readers, on the other hand, operate with a more limited range of strategies—some relying too much on what they can invent from memory without paying attention to visual details, others looking so hard for words they know or guessing words from first letters that they forget what the message as a whole is about.

For all children, the larger the chunks of printed language they can work with, the richer the network of information they can use and the quicker they learn. Teaching should only dwell on detail long enough for the child to discover its existence and then encourage the use of it in isolation only when absolutely necessary.

Overview of Reading Recovery

RR addresses a problem of concern to most Western educational systems. It selects young children who have the poorest performance in reading and writing and, in daily individual teaching sessions over 12–15 weeks, brings most of them to average levels of performance and teaches them how to improve their own reading and writing skills when they are no longer in the program.

Figure 9.1. Relationships Among Multiple Sources of Information During Reading



Children are selected for the RR program by a diagnostic survey (Clay, 1985) administered by RR teachers and by consultation among the school staff. No child in ordinary classrooms is excluded for any reason—intelligence, limited English proficiency, possible learning disability, and so forth.

Children's rate and amount of progress in the program in New Zealand (where 3-year follow-up research yielded evidence of continued average achievement) is similar to that achieved in Bloom's one-to-one tutoring programs (Bloom, 1971, p. 60). With the exception of 1 to 2 percent of the entire age-class cohort who need more help than RR provides, pupils from the low end of the achievement distribution are moved into the average band of performance. In other words, a significantly different population becomes not statistically different from the average group.

In order to achieve such accelerated learning, attention of teacher and child must be on strategies or operations—mental activities initiated by the child to get messages from a text. If the teacher becomes involved in teaching items rather than strategies—particular letter-sound correspondences or sight vocabulary words, for example, rather than the strategy of checking a word that would make sense in the context against information in the print—the prospect of accelerated learning is seriously threatened. Letter-sound correspondences and spelling patterns are learned, but in the course of reading and writing meaningful text, especially writing. RR teachers praise children for generative strategies, not for items learned.

The following activities, usually in this order, constitute the daily RR lesson:

1. Rereading of two or more familiar books
2. Independent reading of yesterday's new book while the teacher takes a running record
3. Letter identification (plastic letters on a magnetic board)
4. Writing a story the child has composed (including hearing sounds in words)
5. Reassembling cut-up story
6. Introducing a new book
7. Reading the new book

When a child no longer needs to work on letter identification, the third slot is deleted or used for other word-breaking or word-building work.

We will present a detailed analysis of reading activities 6 and 7 and writing activities 4 and 5. All examples are from videotapes of RR lessons in New Zealand and Ohio. The teachers, like all RR teachers (infant teachers in New Zealand, primary teachers in the United States) have received a year of training and practicum. Because of this training and subsequent monthly meetings while RR teachers are on the job, there is much less variation across teachers than in most program implementations. The children—Melanie, Larry, and Premala—are all from the lowest 10 percent in their school cohort.

Reading a New Book

During the first 2 weeks of a Reading Recovery program, the teacher does not try to teach the child anything new, but rather initiates activities that allow the child to use and explore further the repertoire of behaviors that he already controls. Teacher and child discover many things about each other during these 2 weeks. The teacher discovers what the child already knows; and the child learns how book-sharing will occur in the lessons to come. A format for book-sharing interaction between this child and this teacher is created.

Excerpts from Melanie's book introduction illustrate this (see Figure 9.2). Because the teacher takes the initiative in these early lessons, her moves are given on the left, categorized by kinds of help, with the child's responses on the right. Oral reading is transcribed in small capital letters.

The teacher's introduction of a new text

In RR, the child is not usually expected to sight-read novel text without preparation; that is more appropriate after children have learned how to read. A new book is both carefully selected and carefully introduced. What may seem like casual conversational exchanges between teacher and pupil are based on the teacher's deliberate teaching decisions for a particular child. These are based on her records, obtained from the daily individual teaching sessions, of each child's response repertoires—what Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976) refer to as "performance characteristics" (p. 97), the observable aspects of the child's reading and writing action system.

Setting the topic. The teacher has selected the new book to challenge the pupil in specific ways. She has previewed the story and its challenges. She sets the topic, title, and characters with minimal interaction; too much talk confuses. Titles are treated as labels; they often have tricks in them and tend to use language from which redundancy has been stripped. Discussion may relate to the conceptual context of the new story or to a related book the child has read.

Increasing accessibility. The teacher may sketch the plot, or the sequences in the text, up to any climax or surprise. Using new or unusual words in context, she introduces things which the child might not understand or language the child might not be able to anticipate. She may carefully enunciate unusual syntax (for example, when the text uses a full form, *cannot*, where the child might expect *can't*). Or she may use a sentence pattern two or three times to help the child hold it in his mind. If the child generates a relevant phrase, the teacher confirms it and alters it where necessary to match the text (as one teacher does when Melanie says "Eat it" in Figure 9.2 and another teacher does when Larry makes the same error in Figure 9.3 below).

In these ways, teacher and child rehearse what is novel in the story without the child actually hearing the text read. It is typical of all RR instruction that features of texts receive attention not in isolation but within the complexity of that text for this particular individual child.

Maintaining interactive ease. To repeat and amplify what the child says maintains interactive ease, but it also models for the child that discussion of the story is expected. It may create more conceptual context, add new information, or remove ambiguity and possible confusion.

Prompting the child to constructive activity. In general, the teacher urges the child to actively search for links: links within the story (by pausing for the child to generate the ending: "It's all _____" [gone] or guess *grandpa* and *baby* by analogy with *grandma*); links within the print (asking, "How did you know…?"); and links beyond the book into the child's experience ("Have you ever done that?" "How do you think X felt?").

Teachers may think that such questions are intended to arouse the child's interest and motivation,

Figure 9.2. Melanie: Book Introduction During the First Week

Teacher	Child
Setting the topic THE CHOCOLATE CAKE. (*T reads the title for M*)	
Maintaining interaction Let's read this together.	
Increasing accessibility (*She provides a model*). ('MM' and GRANDMA).	
Supporting performance (*T and M complete the page together.*) 'MM, MM' SAID GRANDMA.	
Prompting constructive activity (*T pauses…*)	(*and M continues reading the next two pages.*) 'MM, MM' SAID GRANDPA, 'MM.' SAID MA AND 'MM,' SAID BABY.
Working with necessary knowledge and what did they do? That's right. They all ate it. (*T confirms M's response, while changing the verb tense to match the text.*)	Eat it.
Providing a model and prompting completion And so they said, 'IT'S ALL…'	(M anticipates and generates)…GONE. (*Then she goes quickly to the next page and anticipates and generates a relevant oral text.*) We want more.
Accepting the partially correct response (*T accepts this, but revised it in her reply to match the sentence in the text.*) 'MORE, MORE, MORE,' THEY SAID.	
Maintaining shared interaction (*Pointing to the page, T invites M.*) *Calling for reflection or judgement about the story*	(*T and M discuss what will happen—will another cake be baked? This focuses M's attention on comprehension of the story as a whole.*)

but they play a more instrumental role in beginning reading. Such questions both provide signals to the child that reading requires active interaction with texts and bring relevant experiences and knowledge to the child's "context in the mind."

Working with new knowledge. The teacher checks to see whether the child has relevant knowledge and ensures that it has been "brought to mind" and is accessible for use in reading the book. When the teacher suspects that the child does not have the ideas or word needed for

Figure 9.3. Larry: Introduction of a New Book in the Ninth Grade

Teacher	Child
Setting the topic, theme, and characters	
Let's look at our new book. This story was about a big turnip, wasn't it. (T knew L had heard the story somewhere but had not read it.)	
THE GREAT BIG ENORMOUS TURNIP. Let's see what happened. Here's a little old man and he's…	
Prompting constructive activity	
What's he doing?	He's telling it to grow.
Accepting the child's involvement	
That's right! He's telling it to grow. Good!	
Prompting constructive activity	
And then what's he trying to do?	Pull it out.
Pull it out. Can he pull it out?	(shakes his head)
No. Who does he ask to help him?	The little old woman.
And what do they do?	Pull it?
Did they do it?	(shakes his head)
No. Who do they ask next?	(no reply)
Working with new knowledge	
They're asking the granddaughter, aren't they?	
Prompting constructive activity	
And do they all pull? Does it come up?	No.
Who do they ask next?	The dog.
Accepting partially correct responses	
The black dog, that's right. And still it doesn't come up.	
Prompting constructive activity	
Who do they ask next?	The cat.
Playing with the climax effect	
And does it come up? Does it? I think it might, and they all…	
(turns the page) …Oh, no! Not yet.	
Prompting constructive activity	
Who do they have to ask?	The mouse.
The mouse, that's right. And they're all pulling, aren't they?	
And then what happened?	It came out.
It came out, and what did they all do?	Eat it.
Accepting partially correct responses	
That's right. They all ate it. You read it to me.	

a particular test, she may explain some part of the story, or contrast a feature of the story with something she knows the child knows in another book. For example, she may help the child discriminate between two things like a school desk and an adult-type writing desk. Such help may be either anticipatory or responsive to signals from the child. When teachers expect a word to be unfamiliar to a child, they first talk toward the meaning, describe some relevant object, setting, or use, and only last label or name the word; cognitive context is necessary in order for the child to "receive" the new word with understanding.

Because constructive activity is so important, the teacher gently pushes the child toward actively working with the new knowledge in some way—for example, by checking the new information with the pictures in the book.

Accepting partially correct responses. The teacher promotes emerging skill by accepting and reinforcing responses that are only partially correct. Rarely does the child's response come out of thin air; it is a response to some part of the text and/or some part of his understanding. If a response is correct in some respect, it is in the interests of both the child's economy in learning and his increasing self-confidence as a reader for the teacher to recognize this, and then help the child change where necessary. If the teacher cannot tell what strategy the child has used, her response will be deliberately general: "I liked the way you did that but did you notice…" At other times, she praises the use of a particular feature or type of information (such as attention to the first letter).

In this way the teacher creates a lesson format, a scaffold, within which she promotes emerging skill, allows for the child to work with the familiar, introduces the unfamiliar in a measured way, and deals constructively with slips and error. The teacher calls for the comprehension of texts and for the detection and repair of mismatches when they occur. She passes more and more control to the child and pushes the child, gently but consistently, into independent, constructive activity.

In Figure 9.3, Larry is introduced to a new book, *The Great Big Enormous Turnip,* in the ninth week of his daily lessons. Following this introduction shown in Figure 9.3, the teacher expects Larry to read the book for the first time by problem solving as independently as possible.

Teacher-child interaction during the first reading

Over the course of each child's RR program, there are shifts in how much control of the task he is able to take as a result of such introductions, and how independent his first reading of a text can be. In the early weeks, the child will generate an oral utterance, inventing and reconstructing a text from the introduction or memory of past readings, the pictures, and what little he knows about print. He will spend the next 12 to 15 weeks mapping oral language onto printed text. Through the child's constructive cognitive activity, visual perception of print, oral language, and world knowledge work together, with meaning as the goal and the teacher as monitor and guide.

Larry's first reading of *The Great Big Enormous Turnip*, immediately after the teacher's introduction, is shown in Figure 9.4. On two occasions, the teacher directs his attention to the subword level of analysis—"sw-" [eet] and "str-" [ong], without losing the textual emphasis of the interchange. (Sometimes a first reading will contain more new teaching than this one does.) The teacher attends only to what she believes is critical for a correct reading of the text the next day; she decides not to work on some errors. Because the child now has the initiative, his reading is placed on the left in Figure 9.4, with the teacher's responses on the right.

A running record would be taken when the child reads the book independently the next day, and this teacher could be reasonably confident that the child will read it at or above 90 percent accuracy. When this does not happen, then the teacher's choice of book, or the way she introduced it, or her teaching around the first reading has not been appropriate.

After this first reading, each book is reread several times during the first activity in subsequent lessons. During these rereadings, there will be opportunities for the child to return to, and discover, more aspects of the text than he understood the first day.

Writing a Story

During each RR lesson, the child composes a "story" (usually just one sentence) and writes it, with help from the teacher, in an unlined notebook. Then a sentence-strip version of the same story, copied and cut up by the teacher, is given to the child to reassemble immediately and then take home to reassemble again "for Mum." Much of the child's learning of sound-letter relationships and spelling patterns

Figure 9.4. Larry's First Reading of the New Book

Child	Teacher
Setting the topic, theme, and characters THE GREAT BIG ENORMOUS TURNIP ONCE AN OLD MAN PLANTED A TURNIP.	Good. (*T ignores the omission of "Once upon a time."*)
HE SAID, GROW, GROW LITTLE TURNIP, GROW… (*pauses at the next word*)	How does that word start? Can I help you start it off? How does it start? s… He tells it to grow sw…sweet. (*T could have anticipated this word in her introduction.*)
(The child does not re-read the prompted text but moves on.) GROW LITTLE TURNIP, GROW S… (pauses at another word)	How else does he want it to grow? He wants it to grow sweet and he wants it to grow str…
(*Child is now working at both the word and story level*) …STRONG AND THE TURNIP GREW UP SWEET AND STRONG AND…	Good boy, that's lovely. Grow strong. (*no attention to the omission of "big."*) What's the other word that begins with "e"? Enor… Good.
ENORMOUS AND THEN… (*self-corrects*) THEN ONE DAY THE OLD MAN WENT TO PULL IT UP. HE…	(*no attention to the self-correction, so as not to detract from meaning)* What's he doing? That's right.
PULL… AND PULLED AGAIN BUT HE CAN'T	(*Teacher ignores the uncorrected "pulled," and attending to the present problem solving, accepts the partially correct response.)* Nearly right. It starts like can't but he c…
COULDN'T COULD NOT PULL IT UP I can't	(models) could That's right. He could not pull it up.
HE… HE CALLED THE OLD WOMAN THE OLD WOMAN PULLED… THE OLD WOMAN PULLED THE OLD MAN	(*prompts story structure*) What did he do? Look! What is he doing, do you think? He… Right, he called the old woman.
THE OLD MAN PULLED THE TURNIP AND THEY PULLED AND PULLED IT AGAIN BUT THEY COULD NOT PULL IT UP. SO THE OLD WOMAN CALLED HER GRANDDAUGHTER. THE GRANDDAUGHTER PULLED THE OLD WOMAN. THE OLD WOMAN PULLED THE OLD MAN, THE OLD MAN PULLED THE TURNIP AND THEY PULLED AND PULLED AGAIN BUT THEY COULD NOT PULL IT UP.	Good, I like the way you went back and did that again. (*confirming check*) Well done. We got that word (*they*). Jolly good. Good boy! (*The teacher skips to the end. This is a timed session being recorded.*) Right! Let's find where they pulled it up…and it came out.
THEN THEY… …THEY PULLED AND PULLED AGAIN AND UP CAME THE TURNIP AT LAST.	(*steadying*) That's right. That's very good. Do you like that book? What would you like to do to finish off?

is prompted and practiced in these activities.

For one child, Premala, we have three videotapes taken near the beginning, middle, and end of her 15-week RR program (Premala, I, II, and III). Here are the stories she composes:

I. *A little girl is cuddling a cat.* (about a book)

II. *The little red hen made a cake.* (about a book)

III. *I am going swimming at school now.* (about a personal experience; New Zealand children do swim at school!)

Figure 9.5 shows how these three sentences got written down. What the child (C) wrote is on the top line; what the teacher (T) wrote is underneath. If the child wrote the letter, but only after some kind of help from the teacher, the letter appears on the child's line with a circle around it. The "boxes" around letters in *hen* and *made* are explained below. Premala's progress in transcribing her stories can be summarized in the increasing number of letters written correctly by the child, alone or with help, and the decreasing number written by the teacher (T), as shown in Table 9.1.

To achieve this progress, the teacher gives various kinds of writing help that are analogous in function to her help in reading:

- Calling attention to the sounds of words and spelling patterns in writing

  I. "Do you know how to start writing *little*?"

  III. [After Premala has written *s* for *swim*] "Let's listen to it. What can you hear?"

- Prompting visual memory of previous experience with written words.

  II. "Something needs to go on the end [of *little*], doesn't it."

- Drawing boxes (Clay, 1985; adapted from Elkonin, 1973) to correspond to the sounds (phonemes, not letters) in the word, and showing the child how to push counters into the boxes, left to right, while saying the word slowly: h-e-n, m-a-d-e. When these boxes are first introduced, the teacher accepts letters in any order, as long as they are in the correct place. The numbers under the boxes show that Premala placed the letter for the final sounds in both words first. Later the teacher will encourage the child to fill in the letters in left-to-right order and will draw the boxes to correspond to letters rather than sounds.

- Asking the child to develop and use her visual memory.

  In II, the teacher asked Premala to write *red* several times, first with a model available to copy, then with the model covered, then to walk over and write it on the blackboard from memory, and finally to finish it after the teacher had erased the last two letters.

In III, there was similar practice for a harder word, *school*.

- Praising strategies, even if the result is only partially correct.

  I. "That's a good guess, because *cuddling* sometimes sounds like that" [when Premala has written a *k*].

Figure 9.5. How Premala's Sentence Got Written Down

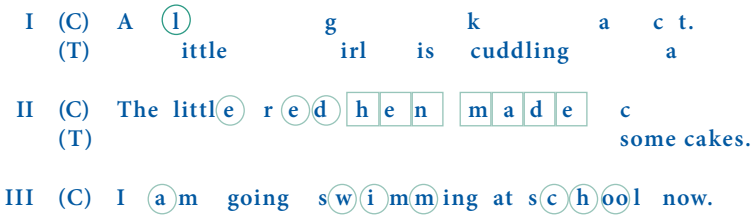


Table 9.1. Premala's Progress in Writing, in Numbers of Letters

	C Alone	C with Help	T	(Total)
I	5	1	19	(25)
II	9	10	9	(28)
III	19	8	0	(27)

II. "Good thinking. You remembered that!" [*e* on *little*]

III. "I liked the way you checked it all through" [referring to the child's reassembly of her cut-up sentence].

IV. "You don't need to look because you've got it inside your head, haven't you?" [referring to writing *school* from memory].

- Introducing new information

I. "Let's have a look and I'll show you what else *cuddling* can sound like."

- Increasing the difficulty of the task

Because the child composes the sentence that is written during each RR lesson, the teacher cannot increase the challenge of the overall writing task as she does in selecting a new book. But she does increase the challenge of the reassembly of the child's sentence from sentence-strip pieces. Slash lines show her segmentation of the sentences for II and III. (There was no sentence strip in I):

II. The / little / r/ed / hen / made / some / cakes. (Note the relationship between the segmentation of *red* and the writing Premala did from memory at the blackboard.)

III. I / a/m / go/ing / swi/mm/ing / a/t/school / now.

Although both sentences have seven words, the teacher increases the number of segments for Premala to reassemble from 8 to 12. In both lessons, Premala succeeds, rereading and checking as she goes.

General Features of Reading Recovery

Generalizing from these examples of RR activities, we suggest features that distinguish RR from other reading programs and features that may apply to other curriculum areas.

For teachers in the United States, this program should be differentiated from both "whole language" and "phonics." It differs from most whole language programs in recognizing the need for temporary instructional detours in which the child's attention is called to particular cues available in speech or print. It differs from phonics in conceptualizing phonological awareness as an outcome of reading and writing rather than as their prerequisite, and in developing children's awareness of sounds in oral language rather than teaching letter-sound relationships. It differs from both in the frequent observation and recording of the reading and writing repertoire of the individual child as the basis for teacher initiative (as in choosing the next book) and response (in moment-to-moment decisions about when, and how, to help).

There are three reasons for these features. First, especially when children have limited strengths relevant to the task at hand, it is important to use those strengths. Five-year-old children have oral language resources; RR draws on those resources in developing the child's sound awareness that can then be used to check against visual cues in print. Second, at-risk children who are taught letter-sound relationships often cannot use that information, because they cannot hear the sounds in words they say or read. So the harder skill must be taught, and the easier one seems to follow. The most pragmatic place to teach sound awareness is in writing, where segmentation is an essential part of the task.

Finally, in the case of vowels, teaching any one-to-one relationship between letters and sounds in English words must eventually be confusing to the child. Reading requires flexibility in handling such relationships, and writing provides rich practice. For example, children who learn to write five high- and medium-frequency words containing the vowel *a*—a, at, play, father, said—have implicitly learned a one-to-many letter-sound relationship (Clay & Watson, 1982, p. 24). The teacher helps the child use this knowledge, first learned in writing, during reading.

RR was designed specifically to teach reading and writing to children who are still low achievers after 1 year of school. In developing programs of problem solving with adult guidance for other low-achieving learners in our curriculum areas, six pedagogical premises may have wider significance:

1. The teacher works with what she knows the children can do alone, or with assistance, and brings them by different paths to patterns of normal progress, with which she had extensive experience.
2. The interactions occur daily for a substantial block

of time, and daily records ensure that at any one time the teacher knows exactly what the child can now do independently, and what he is currently learning to do with support.

3. The lessons address a wide range of subroutines and types of learning, all of which have been shown in research on normal children to play a role in the desired outcome behaviors, even though they may not be highly interdependent at this particular stage of learning. Most obvious is the example of reading and writing: Both occur in the daily lessons from the beginning, although their reciprocal value may not be utilized by teacher or child until later in the program.
4. At all times, the achievement of a task requires that the child see it as meaningful, because only then can the child control the task and detect errors when the message doesn't make sense.
5. The child is encouraged to work independently in some way from the first week of the program.
6. Because task difficulty is constantly being increased, the types of interactions between the child and teacher do not change greatly throughout the program, even the child assumes more control. What does change is the problem solving done by the child and the strategies that the child is called upon to use.

Vygotskian Interpretations

The teacher's role as scaffold

The metaphorical term "scaffold," though never used by Vygotsky, has come to be used for interactional support, often in the form of adult-child dialogue, that is structured by the adult to maximize the growth of the child's intrapsychological functioning. In their shared activity, the teacher is interacting with unseen processes — the in-the-head strategies used by the child to produce the overt responses of writing and oral reading. For any one child, the RR program as a whole is such a scaffold. On a more micro level, we have seen many examples of the child functioning independently, both in reading and writing, where earlier collaboration between teacher and child was necessary.

But it would be a mistake to think of the scaffold as simply being removed as the child's competence grows. Considering RR as a whole, that does happen, and the child becomes able to continue learning to read and write as a "self-improving system" within the regular classroom, without the finely turned support of the RR teacher. But within the program, because the teacher selects texts on an increasing gradient of difficulty, the scaffold of teacher support continues, always at the cutting edge of the child's competencies, in his continually shifting zone of proximal development.

Changes in the forms of mediation

According to Vygotsky, major turning points in development are connected with the appearance, or transformation, of new forms of mediation. Reading Recovery is designed to help the child accomplish just that: the integration of the semiotic codes of oral language and English orthography, plus world knowledge, into the complex operations of reading and writing. It includes the presence of stimuli created by the child (in the self-composed sentences) as well as those given to the child in teacher-selected texts. And it includes a shift from pointing as an external psychological tool (Wertsch, 1985) that the child is initially asked to use to focus his attention on each word in sequence, to later internalization when the teacher judges the child to be ready to "Try with just your eyes" (as she said in Premala III).

The special case of conscious realization

Wertsch (1985) discusses four criteria that Vygotsky used to distinguish higher mental functions: their social origins, the use of sign mediation, voluntary rather than environmental regulation, and the emergence of conscious realization of mental processes. The role of the last in learning to read (perhaps in learning any skill) is not a simple linear development toward increasing consciousness.

It is true that during RR, as the child becomes familiar with lesson procedures and text-solving processes, the teacher imposes demands for conscious realization by asking "How did you know…?" She needs to understand what information the child is using. And the child, by being prompted to talk briefly about text processing, learns that we can know about how we know and thereby control our mental processes more effectively.

But for most children identified as low achievers after 1 year in school, time will bring an increasing gap between them and the rest of their age cohort, thus reinforcing their self-image as incompetent in important school skills. In short, many will learn—unnecessarily—to be "learning disabled" (Clay, 1987). With RR, instruction supports emergent development rather than waiting for it.

But there are two qualifications to the growth of conscious realization in the RR teaching procedures and their outcomes. First, while conscious manipulation of signs to mediate higher mental functions should be available when needed for problem solving, it should recede into automatic processing when the reader/writer is attending to text meaning, which is most of the time. (We do not drive in low gear when we do not need to.)

Second, certain behavior developed and checked initially at an explicit interpsychological level (such as directional behaviors and most visual perception learning of written language forms and formats) are properly run off as automatic subroutines without conscious attention. Most cognitive psychology models of reading capture the trend toward conscious manipulation in some form. What are often neglected are the perceptual, directional, sequential sign-processing operations that operate outside conscious awareness but must be learned, since they are specific to the script in use. Learning to read and write can be considered a prototypical example of what Rommetveit (1985) calls "the cultural development of attention" (p. 194).

Development, instruction, and diagnosis

Vygotsky applied the concept of a zone of proximal development to both instruction and diagnosis. In his well-known words, "the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it; it must be aimed not so much at the ripe as at the ripening function" (1962, p. 104).

Reading Recovery is designed for children younger than those in many "remedial" programs, and teachers may ask why children are placed in the program after only 1 year in school. Wouldn't some children "catch on" to reading and writing in the regular classroom in their own time? For a few, such development might happen. But for most children identified as low achievers after 1 year in school, time will bring an increasing gap between them and the rest of their age cohort, thus reinforcing their self-image as incompetent in important school skills. In short, many will learn—unnecessarily—to be "learning disabled" (Clay, 1987). With RR, instruction supports emergent development rather than waiting for it.

With respect to diagnosis, Vygotsky (and Soviet psychologists working with his ideas) used the concept of zone of proximal development to differentiate among a group of underachieving learners. While RR is most obviously and intentionally a program of instruction, it also can serve as a form of what Brown and Ferrara (1985) call "dynamic assessment."

According to the New Zealand experience, within the 10 percent of each 6-year-old cohorts who are assigned to RR, the effects of 15 weeks of instruction lead to the differentiation of two groups of children. One group, approximately 9 percent of the entire age group, benefits sufficiently from the program to progress as average learners in the regular classroom, at least for the 3-year period for which follow-up research has been done. The other group, less than 1 percent of the entire cohort, needs further specialist help. Although the two groups of children have similar levels of independent performance at the time of the 6-year diagnostic survey, their response to RR instruction is very different:

> Reading Recovery is a programme which should clear out of the remedial education system all the children who do not read for many event-produced reasons and all the children who have organizationally-based problems but who can be taught to achieve independent learning status in reading and writing despite this, leaving a small group of children requiring specialist attention. (Clay, 1987, p. 169)

In the United States, the percentage of children requiring specialist attention may be somewhat different than in New Zealand, but the benefits of making assessment decisions on the basis of each child's response to carefully designed instruction should be the same.

References

Bloom, B. (1971). Mastery learning. In J. H. Block (Ed.), *Mastery learning: Theory and practice* (pp. 47–63). New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Brown, R., & Ferrara, R. A. (1985). Diagnosing zones of proximal development. In J. V. Wertsch (Ed.), *Culture, communication, and cognition* (pp. 273–305). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Clay, M. M. (1985). *The early detection of reading difficulties* (3rd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Clay, M. M. (1987). Learning to be learning disabled. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies, 22*, 155–173.

Clay, M. M. (1991). *Becoming literate: The construction of inner control.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Clay, M. M., & Watson, B. (1982). *The success of Maori children in the Reading Recovery programme.* Report prepared on research contract for the Director-General of Education, Department of Education, Wellington, New Zealand.

DeFord, D. E., Lyons, C. A., & Pinnell, G. S. (1991). *Bridges to literacy: Learning from Reading Recovery.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Elkonin, D. B. (1973). USSR. In J. Downing (Ed.), *Comparative reading: Cross-national studies of behavior and processes in reading and writing* (pp. 551–579). New York: Macmillan.

Lyons, C. A. (1987). Reading Recovery: An effective intervention program for learning disabled first graders. (ED 284 170).

Pinnell, G. S. (1985, Spring). Helping teachers help children at risk: Insight from the Reading Recovery program. *Peabody Journal of Education*, pp. 70–85.

Rommetveit, R. (1985). Language acquisition as increasing linguistic structuring of experience and symbolic behavior control. In J. V. Wertsch (Ed.), *Culture, communication and cognition* (pp. 183–204). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Stanovich, K. E. (1986). Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly, 21*, 360–406.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1962). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press.

Wertsch, J. (1985). *Vygotsky and the social formation of mind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wood, D., Bruner, J. S., & Ross, G. (1976). The role of tutoring in problem solving. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 17*, 89–100.

Source

Clay, M. M., & Cazden, C. B. (1990). A Vygotskian interpretation of Reading Recovery. In L. Moll (Ed.), *Vygotsky and education: Instructional implications and applications of sociohistorical psychology* (pp. 206–222). New York: Cambridge University Press.

About the Cover

Look out world, Monica is coming for you! Monica is a 6-year-old Reading Recovery student whose recent favorite read was about colors in the city. She loves playing games at school and at home, her favorite being tag. When she grows up, she wants to be a reading teacher. We can't wait to see what you do next, Monica!

DISTINGUISHED SCHOLAR SERIES

The Science of *Readingpolitik*: A Commentary

George G. Hruby, University of Kentucky

About the Author

Dr. George Hruby is an associate research professor of literacy education at the University of Kentucky's College of Education and former executive director of the university's Collaborative Center for Literacy Development. His work typically focuses on the neuroscience of reading and the theoretical foundations of literacy education, and has appeared in numerous journals and edited research volumes.

It seems every state legislature in the nation these days has proposed and passed bills into law on phonics-focused reading instruction, aka the "science of reading" (SOR). Mainstream news outlets appear eager in their support. Indeed, headlines from reputable and questionable sources alike have been hammering a consistent narrative for several years: "Why millions of kids can't read and what better teaching can do about it" (*NPR*, January 2019). "Why Johnny still can't read" (*National Review*, October 10, 2020). "School changes reading program after realizing students 'weren't learning to read'" (*CNN*, April 24, 2023). "Kids can't read: The revolt that is taking on the educational establishment" (*New York Times*, April 15, 2023).

We get the message: America's children can't read, because they aren't learning to read, because they aren't being taught to read. Except, of course, that they are being taught to read with the result nearly every school child can read at some level, usually in and around their grade.

Nonetheless, according to the media, the reading crisis is so grave only government coercion will do (see *Chicago Chalkbeat*, May 19, 2023; *New York Times*, May 9, 2023; *Indiana Capital Chronicle*, April 11, 2023). Yet, according to these same channels, the crisis and its solution are surprisingly simple. "An end to the reading wars? More US schools embrace phonics" (*AP News*, April 20, 2023). "In the California 'reading wars,' phonics is gaining" (*CalMatters*, November 7, 2022). "It's time to stop debating how to teach kids to read and follow the evidence" (*ScienceNews*, April 26, 2020). "The surprising obstacle to overhauling how children are taught to read" (the "obstacle" being experienced teachers and researchers — go figure). (*New York Times*, May 25, 2023).

Phonics, it is bluntly if improbably asserted, has been missing from the curriculum. Reintroducing it will set everything aright. Except these stories provide no evidence phonics has been missing, shy the occasional strange quote from a single teacher, and no mention is made of the repeated waves of phonics instruction that have lapped ashore at public school classrooms over the past 70 years.

Stories built on a narrative of reading "failure" and scientifically "proven" phonics solutions are strikingly similar. They all include the same key phrases ("science of reading," "structured literacy," "phonics-first," "reading crisis," "settled science," "scientifically proven") and the same exaggerations (e.g., our kids

can't read; balanced literacy tells kids to just guess the words; colleges of education push failed teaching practices). (See the relationship of this genre with teacher-bashing in Thomas, 2022.)

They also all employ the same narrative hooks (e.g., anecdotal but heart-rending stories of struggling children and parental frustration; was-blind-but-now-I-see teacher conversion tales; simplistic accounts of how the alphabet represent sounds; crude depictions of improbably perverse teacher education programs). And they pivot on the same dramatic plotline: Grassroots movement of work-a-day parents surprisingly informed by "scientific evidence" effectively take down state after state's educational establishment. Remarkably as a result, nearly every state legislature has swiftly passed similar high-dollar laws wherein school districts are mandated to select a reading program from an authorized list of approved choices.

But this fable conveniently omits the obvious improbability of there being only *two* teaching methods—one proven effective and the other irredeemably evil—the latter inexplicably advocated by seasoned teachers and academic researchers. It also omits the improbability of the political cohesion, consistency, and lightning bolt success of the putative "parent revolt." The reports eschew any alternative views on the teaching of reading, such as those informed by empirical evidence, historical precedent, or mainstream scholarly opinion on what is known about effective reading instruction. And they ignore plentiful evidence of funding and advocacy from corporate-supported policy lobbies pushing what looks for all the world like a typical, all-American boondoggle.

One hopes somewhere deep down beneath this SOR narrative there may be some actual research, and there are surely legitimate reading researchers who consider themselves scientists of reading. But the journalists consistently and repeatedly get the science very wrong.

One hopes somewhere deep down beneath this SOR narrative there may be some actual research, and there are surely legitimate reading researchers who consider themselves scientists of reading. But the journalists consistently and repeatedly get the science very wrong. For instance, the stories typically blur the distinction between the letter-sound skills children need to "decode" letter sequences to word forms (as through phonics, taught in the early elementary grades), and the language development kids need to make sense of the vocabulary the word forms represent (language comprehension, as developed from earliest childhood throughout the school years and beyond). The distinction is an important one, both in research about and instruction for, reading (Paris, 2004). The consistent error of comparing decoding and language comprehension apples-to-apples, with one "side" pitted against the other Star Wars-style, suggest education reporters, like Chat GPT, are good at crafting compelling-sounding paragraphs without quite knowing what they are writing about.

As another example, these stories often claim the three-cueing system teaches students to "guess the words." I have yet to come across such a story where the three-cueing system is actually described. Knowledgeable reading teachers know the three-cueing system teaches children not only to use letter-sound relationships to recognize word forms (i.e., phonics, the first cueing system), but also encourages them to use grammatical structure (i.e., syntax, the second cueing system), and vocabulary and sentence meaning (i.e., semantics, the third cueing system) to determine the intentions expressed by the author. Random guessing of word-forms is not part of this framework; but relying on all three systems for word recognition and understating is. For very young readers, phonics alone may not help a child decode a word if they have never heard it nor know its meaning. Teachers use three-code approaches to help young readers "sound out," but also learn new vocabulary and subject content with the contextual support provided by the text. The child's capacity for inferential probability is thereby developed as well.

Using probability-informed inference to make sense of a word is not random guessing; it is how most people learn new vocabulary and new information by reading — for meaning. (For that matter, the first two cueing systems are how your text messaging app predicts what

you are trying to type on your phone; your autocomplete on your email system works the same way). Check any dictionary entry, and the first thing you will find is the correct spelling (letter sequence) of the word, followed in parentheses by its pronunciation (sound sequence), the two together essentially being the first cueing system. After the pronunciation comes its grammatical function, usually abbreviated and in italics (part of speech, the second cueing system), followed by a numbered list of the word's definitions (its meanings, the third cueing system). Since when is the organizational structure of a dictionary radical, ineffective, or harmful?

To be wrong on occasion is merely to be human; from the crooked timber of man, and all that. But to be as *consistently* wrong as this drumbeat of bad education reporting, a dedicated obedience is required. An attentive reader soon gets the impression these stories are all dutifully cut and sewn out of a corporate-sponsored template. And indeed, there are several "nonprofit" portals for this kind of disinformation online, and at least one entity for training budding reporters in how to write it (e.g., Education Writers Association).

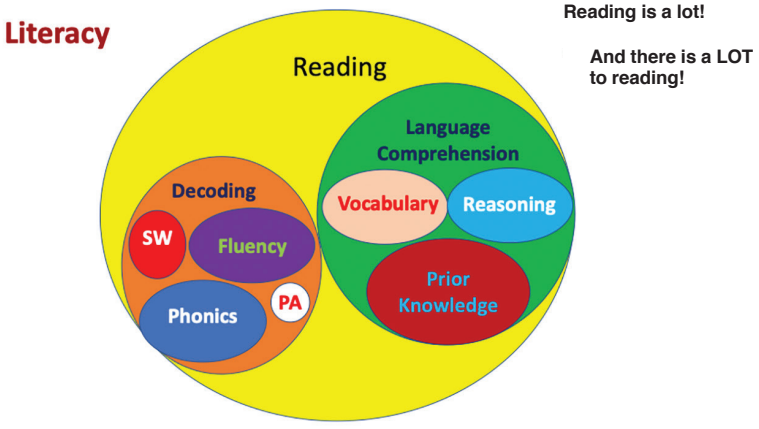
Yes, research is clear…

As a scholar of reading education, I can agree with one claim in this narrative: The reading research is robust and clear. Teaching reading in early elementary grades with some form of phonics is more effective than trying to do so without it (National Reading Panel, 2000a, 2000b). Few reading researchers or teachers would disagree. But which method of teaching phonics is best? The synthetic approach, or the analytic, or the analogical — or the systematic, the word-based, the interactive, the multisensory, the structured, or some other? To date, calculated across methods or studies (e.g., Bowers, 2020), the research does not indicate it makes much difference which approach you use, so long as you teach phonics deliberately and well. Sales pitches aside, there certainly is no compelling evidence for any commercial brand over another.

But neither are these methods mutually exclusive, and a good teacher hoists a heavy toolkit. Nothing works for everyone, and nothing works for anyone all the time. The challenges a child may encounter while learning to read are myriad and change over time. Depending on the child, some methods may in fact be superior to others for that student's skill level, strengths, and difficulties. So common sense recommends that experienced teachers be allowed to employ a range of methods and strategies according to what will best match their students' needs. Yet many proposed SOR laws would effectively forbid such adaptive teaching (e.g., O'Donnell, 2023).

Although different phonics approaches may contribute equally well, on average, to teaching decoding skills (recognizing letter sequences as word forms), there is more to decoding than phonics (practice with real texts for fluency is imperative, for instance), and more to reading than decoding (language comprehension, for an obvious start). Pushing a single lower-order factor, such as phonics (and a singular method for teaching phonics, at that) to the exclusion of necessary higher-order factors, such as comprehension, may actually *undermine* the longer-range objective of teaching letter-sounding skills — that being to teach children to make sense of and thus learn from the texts they read.

Figure 1. Many Reading Experts Recommend That Multiple Ingredients Are Necessary for Good Literacy Development



SOURCE: Author

That is why many reading experts recommend comprehensive reading curricula akin to a well-balanced diet, inclusive of the many ingredients necessary for good literacy development (National Reading Panel, 2000a). Phonics, yes, and phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge, sight word reading, and plenty of practice for decoding fluency. But also writing instruction, vocabulary growth, effective oral presentation, careful reasoning, knowledge development, engaged group discussion, and especially motivation and engagement to inspire the effortful practice necessary for students to become effective readers and writers (see Figure 1). Reading requires a lot (Compton-Lilly et al., 2020).

Alert the Press and the People!

Journalists and politicians who emphasize the necessity of phonics for mastering alphabetics, but posit language development instruction as a negative counterpoint, are paddling out of their depth (Moscatello, 2023). One of the first things teachers learn in their instructional trainings is the "simple view of reading," wherein reading (R)—reading as measured on a reading comprehension test—is understood as the product of decoding skills (D) and language comprehension (C), both of which can be measured separately. There is even a formula to demonstrate the relationship mathematically: R = D x C (Gough & Tunmer, 1986).

Granted, this is a *simple* view of reading, a thumbnail heuristic for conceptualizing the relationship of general factors. There's a lot packed into D and a lot packed into C and a lot more besides. But the multiplication symbol in the formula is key. It indicates both D *and* C are necessary to do well on R. Neither is sufficient alone. A weakness in either will bring down the entire test score. Moreover, a weakness in R (a low reading test score) does not warrant the assumption that the problem must be D, let alone just one of its elements—phonics—rather than C, or some combination of D, C, or "other." To determine the reason for a weak reading score, further observation and assessment is required. From factor analyses, we know students who struggle to learn to read do so for a variety of reasons. Thus, teaching methods that compulsively focus on one factor to the exclusion of others may be helpful for students weak in that factor — but useless, even harmful, for students with other needs.

As noted, this is a simplistic view of reading and there are clearly other factors beyond decoding skills and language comprehension for good reading (Duke & Cartwright, 2021). For instance, interest, agency, and engagement of students are crucial in the long term (and becoming a good and thoughtful reader is a long-term endeavor). Research shows phonics is most effective in the earliest grades (Kindergarten, Grade 1). But research also shows that by second grade, most kids who struggle with decoding do so because of difficulties with fluency, likely due to lack of adequate reading practice, rather than with phonological accuracy due to inadequate phonics (Riddel Buly & Valencia, 2002). Lack of phonemic accuracy doesn't even come second for such students as a cause of their reading difficulties; language comprehension does. Reading is far more complex than the simple view would suggest. But for newbies to the world of reading instruction (e.g., parents, legislators, journalists) it is a crucial first pass. We should not be afraid to use the simple view to enlighten the public. (As I tell my own education majors: Teach students where they are, not where you wish they were.)

Follow the Money!

Why then all the dubious media focused on phonics? And why are there so many similar state laws being introduced across the U.S. mandating one-size-fits-all *systematic* phonics programs often delivered by digital technology?

> Although sequenced-synthetic approaches have not been shown to be more effective at teaching kids to read than other approaches, they have been shown, with the assist of policy mandates and taxpayer funding, to scale up for publishers in reliably lucrative ways.

Journalists should know this one: Follow the money! Consider the price tags proposed in these bills: $100 million in Tennessee; $110 million in Minnesota; $111 million in Indiana; $162 million in Ohio; $90 million for Atlanta's Fulton County

alone; trillions of dollars proposed nationwide, with a third or more going to school districts to cover the purchasing of new products. What kind of products? Reading programs that presequence synthetic phonics instruction (reading by sounding out words letter-by-letter), often technology-delivered for use through digital devices. Although sequenced-synthetic approaches have not been shown to be more effective at teaching kids to read than other approaches, they have been shown, with the assist of policy mandates and taxpayer funding, to scale up for publishers in reliably lucrative ways. The use of digital delivery will likely amplify companies' profits, but there is no evidence it will improve students' reading (e.g., learning to read at home via internet as during the pandemic).

Assertions that there is only one right scientific way to teach reading most likely hale from the educational publishing and testing conglomerates that stand to make a bundle — if they can successfully hustle state legislatures into passing laws mandating their instructional products. (Apparently, many school districts wouldn't buy into them otherwise, which tells you something.) And at their hustle they have proven quite adept. To provide a rationale—or at least ground cover distraction—for these coercive measures, dubious claims of reading wars, phonics crises, the putative evils of teacher unions, and anecdotes about evidence-based programs based on "settled science," are megaphoned through social and traditional media by nonprofits indirectly but surely funded by corporate sponsors (a set up not unprecedented more broadly; see the Sacklers' relationship with the National Academies of Science, Technology, and Medicine, *New York Times*, 4/23/23).

Yes, America has had phonics fads in the past. Worth recalling, after each fruitless mania there was a sobering morning-after wherein some backfield hijinks, usually involving money, were revealed.

If this sounds like a stretch, keep in mind the same scenario played out in the 1990s, back when Nicholas Lehmann at *The Atlantic*, coined the term "Reading Wars." Yes, America has had phonics fads in the past. Worth recalling, after each fruitless mania there was a sobering morning-after wherein some backfield hijinks, usually involving money, were revealed.

Louisa Moates, lead author of today's much ballyhooed LETRS program, cited and often quoted with untempered enthusiasm in SOR news features, was even then a vocal proponent of phonics-focused "scientifically based reading," which was pitted against something called whole language. The false claim was made that whole language taught children to "guess" at words rather than sound them out letter by letter. A nationwide reading crisis had putatively resulted, and systematic phonics through direct and explicit instruction was claimed as the only cure — although empirical evidence for a crisis was hard to discern, and in any case, few teachers were using whole language.

The result of that earlier push for "scientifically based reading" was the National Reading Panel report on early reading (2000a, 2000b; still cited by systematic phonics proponents as proof for the superiority of their approach, although the report did not find for that). And on the report's supposed basis came the Bush Department of Education's (DOE) $5 billion-plus Reading First program, 2001–2006, mandating phonics skill drilling and testing 1½ hours a day, 5 days a week, Kindergarten through Grade 3. It handsomely benefited three major publishing conglomerates and a host of camp followers. Unfortunately, according to a congressionally mandated evaluation in 2008, kids who went through the required programs didn't do any better on end-of-year reading tests than similar kids who hadn't gone through them (Gamse et al., 2008). The empirical evidence of the efficacy of systematic phonics over comprehensive instruction proved as elusive as the evidence of a reading crisis.

Nonetheless, this same gameplan was rerun again in the 20-teens at the urban district level. Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Louisville, Tampa — all adopted rigorously systematic, synthetic phonics programs and teacher training systems. The results were disastrous (see 2015–2019 urban district data at https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading/districts/scores/?grade=4). And now here we go again.

Diane Ravitch, a former Bush DOE official, has recently retraced the history of 1990s phonics fiasco (n.d.). But eyewitness accounts and critiques at the time by Richard Allington (2002), James Cunningham (2001), Gerald Coles (2003), or Frank Smith (2003) still seem strikingly fresh — because 20-plus years on, the "new" science of reading repeats the storyline and nomenclature of the 1990s to a T. Today "science of reading" has displaced "scientifically based reading," but it still promotes systematic phonics and structured literacy (e.g., Orton-Gillingham-styled "multisensory" reading instruction). Meanwhile, "balanced literacy" has displaced "whole language" as the nemesis, with some SOR proponents insinuating balanced literacy is whole language in disguise. Again, the false claim is made that kids are taught to "guess the words."

The call to replace "failed" instructional practices with phonics skill drilling is even older than the 1990s, though. Rudolph Flesch' 1955 *Why Johnny Can't Read*, fingered progressive education's "thoughtful reading" as the cause of public education's reputedly mediocre schools (read *popularly democratic and locally controlled*). Flesch's red-baiting, and the subsequent launch of the Soviet Union's Sputnik, helped usher programmatic phonics drilling, materials, and tests into the schools nationwide (late 1950s–1970s) to meet the intellectual challenges of the Cold War — to declining test scores over those years but startling profits for publishers.

For that matter, the same concerns were voiced in the first quarter of the 20th-century, too, right down to the confirmation biases of phonics obsessives (Grupe, 1916). So, it is not as if the scientific rationales for phonics drilling are new or unfamiliar, let alone "settled" in favor of synthetic phonics-first-and-only. We have lots of research and over a century's worth of precedent: Efforts to drill teachers in prepaced synthetic phonics have never made a significant difference in children's reading ability, and that is the reason for the "surprising obstacle" of teacher resistance to the new phonics mandates. Seasoned reading professionals know better than the profiteers.

Efforts to drill teachers in prepaced synthetic phonics have never made a significant difference in children's reading ability, and that is the reason for the "surprising obstacle" of teacher resistance to the new phonics mandates. Seasoned reading professionals know better than the profiteers.

So, What's New This Time?

There are three notable differences between yesteryear's push for systematic phonics and today's, however. First, the mandated instructional products are increasingly streamed off the internet for use on tablets, laptops, Chromebooks, or smart phones. As a result, many schools no longer own the products they pay for. Instead, they rent time-limited access to them, always having to return for more product (cha-ching!). Second, the products and technology are taking over the teaching — as they are designed to do to guarantee fidelity to the program and maximal product use, including incessant testing, screening, progress monitoring, off-site instruction and homework (cha-ching!). And then, still, there are massive text set collections available, replete with workbooks, teacher guides, manipulatables, and all the rest.

Thirdly, the publishing and testing corporations are now chiefly owned by tech-oriented New York hedge funds or private equity groups in California (e.g., Veritas Capital, Platinum Equity, Clearlake, A-Street, Alpine, Francisco Partners, Illuminate, etc.) For the most part, these are not publicly traded companies you or I can buy into through our 401k. These are tightly controlled financial cartels; to join you need to pony up millions. Strictly reserved, in other words, for the super-rich and their financial institutions. After all, the margins and receipts for online delivery of these kinds of product are amazing! But if you think Wall Street financiers and Silicon Valley venture capitalists stay awake at night worrying about how young children in America learn their phonics … you're an interesting person!

But Seriously, Folks…

Are there classrooms where phonics is not being taught, or not taught well? Unfortunately, yes, there are classrooms where inadequate instruction may be found. But those classrooms are more likely led by emergency hires, parent volunteers, permanent substitutes, provisional certifications, para-pros pressed into full service, or newly minted alternative-route-to-licensure teachers. Caring, hard-working adults, in other words, but with little training in how to teach children to read. But they are nonetheless trying their best, because our schools are facing unprecedented rates of teacher attrition, a true crisis that is going unattended. A real challenge in teaching our kids to read, then, is a lack of properly trained, certified, and supported teachers, not the brand or method of phonics instruction being used.

Are there actually students who have atypical difficulty learning decoding skills for word form recognition? Yes, again. But, at the risk of sounding glib, that is not at all surprising. People differ on anything you might measure them on, including reading development trajectories. Some children are going to have more difficulty learning to read than others. The good news is there are approaches for assessing and redirecting such students that are more likely to be effective than not. The bad news is these methods are currently being back benched by the new SOR laws in favor of rather incoherent instructional programs that offer little probability of effect.

Some may think automated digital teaching packages can provide a solution to teacher attrition. There is a long history of efforts to automate reading instruction from the 19th Century forward—each, it seems, proven to be more scientific than the last—but they have never worked to improve student outcomes and have, on occasion, led to the opposite. Research on current digital approaches report similarly lackluster results: The pandemic was a perfect experiment in nature. Yet the newly coerced use of ill-suited reading instruction packages and the marginalization of teachers by technology together have failed to rebound student achievement now that students are back at school. Instead, what we are getting is increasingly depressed scores plus increasingly depressed students (Chaterjee, January 7, 2022)! These innovations may even contribute to increased rates of teacher attrition.

Given that national reading scores haven't changed much over the past 30 years (Reinking et al., 2023), it would seem, in one form or another, and generally through several, most of America's children are likely getting as much phonics as is helpful already. And that is another reason, among others, that SOR legislation is unlikely to improve students' reading scores.

The Bottom Line

The chief point, here, is not that phonics is harmful or useless, although, in excess, phonics can get taught to the exclusion of other things that matter equally for good reading. It's that arguing about how to teach phonics is pointless: First, because, as noted, evidence-based research does not substantiate the use of any one approach over another; second, because, historically, no approach has ever scaled up via policy to produce superior reading test scores on standardized measures; third, because standardized measures are largely g-weighted (Spearman's correlate for general intelligence) to ensure test reliability and it turns out intelligence is a correlate of language development, not decoding; and fourth, because in the great equation of what makes for good reading development, choice of phonics method is a single digit variable. So, even if one reading method were shown to be somewhat better than another, that would only amount to some tenths of a percentage point contribution to the overall calculation of student achievement. In the real world, .3%, or whatever, is not measurable as significant. Other factors are far more pressing and promise a greater bang for instructional time and taxpayers' dollars.

Given that national reading scores haven't changed much over the past 30 years (Reinking et al., 2023), it would seem, in one form or another, and generally through several, most of America's children are likely getting as much phonics as is helpful already. And that is another reason, among others, that SOR legislation is unlikely to improve students' reading scores. When you already

have an effect from existing phonics instruction, and you replace that with newer but similarly effective phonics programs, there is no reason to expect a better result even when delivered via digital devices. There are, however, new costs for "new" materials, and thus new profits. There is also now the allure of predictive reliability and digital control. And with the prospect of further advances in artificial intelligence (AI), it could be there are bigger objectives than phonics-mania behind the science of reading narrative.

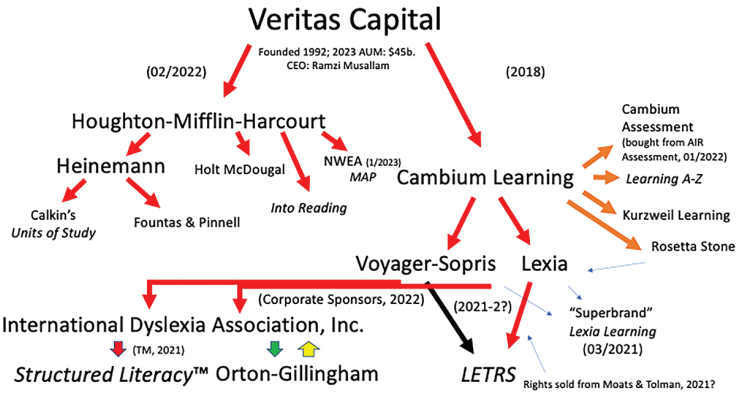
Big Finance and Reading Curricula

The overheated public relations advocacy for phonics programs may likely be a strategic distraction. The long game here may instead be technological control and privatization of the schools — and with it, a de facto national curriculum determined by coastal Big Tech-Finance. Phonics fads, as history shows, come and go. Pushing favored products through procurement policies is not new, even in education. Neither are hapless legislators, who wouldn't know a phoneme from a flip-phone, rushing to fork over barrels of taxpayer dollars with little coherent rationale. That's business as usual.

What is new is the opportunity to corner the market on technology-delivered instruction within the public schools. Getting there "first-est with the mostest" would allow Big Tech-Finance an early land grab. The phonics-first craze may be just a convenient subterfuge for this longer game of privatizing the public schools. Still, conveniently for the financiers, the product-centered and product intensive approaches to skill drilling (such as systematic phonics) are more profitable than student-centered or teacher quality-focused approaches powered by meaningful activities and real-time response to students' emerging abilities (such as with most forms of balanced literacy). So, of course, it is the skill-drilling that gets pushed, but to the exclusion of the other things that matter, such as meaningful reading experience. And unfortunately for SOR, the meaningful activities and live instruction being sidelined are better suited to the language comprehension improvement and knowledge development that is necessary for students to do well on their end-of-year standardized tests. And this turns out to be especially true for students "at risk" of reading and learning difficulty — those tending to be students from poverty, from newly immigrated families, or from intergenerationally lower literate households.

Thus, using technology to emphasize what the technology is good at—lower-level skill drilling—is not likely the solution to putatively weak reading scores. In any case, most students are well past mastering their phonics by end of third grade (Foorman et al., 2015; 2018), so forcing even more phonics upon them after that point will achieve little, because it isn't what they need; while what many striving students do need—language, knowledge, and reasoning development—goes without instruction on the pretext that those elements will develop "naturally." So, no gain is likely to be had there. A lose-lose scenario if ever there was one, which leads us to why such wrong headedness would get buffaloed through so many state legislatures with blitzkrieg speed. Blithering incompetence, or the persistent pressure of campaign funding?

Figure 2. An Example of Financial Entwinement of Notable SOR Products (as of August 27, 2023)



SOURCE: Author

Publishers Covering Their Bases

Should digitized systematic phonics instruction bellyflop at improving students' reading ability, as it seems to be doing, the same companies may eventually pivot to selling the comprehension-oriented reading products they also happen to own (as they have done in the past). As shown in Figure 2, for instance, Veritas Capital, owner of Cambium, which owns Lexia, which owns the rights to and publishes LETRS and is a major sponsor of the International Dyslexia Association, Inc., recently bought and took private Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH). HMH publishes Into Reading, one of the nation's most notable legislatively mandated phonics-focused reading programs. In January of 2023, HMH also bought Northwest Education Association, maker of the MAP tests, the most popular elementary-level progress monitor for reading and math in the nation.

But HMH also owns the imprint Heinemann, publisher of Fountas & Pinnell's comprehensive literacy continuum and Lucy Calkin's highly popular Units of Study, both of which take a student- and meaning-centered approach to reading development (for which phonics advocates have given them much grief). These widely appreciated programs include and extend good phonics instruction, but they promote reading for meaning and require the direct, personal instruction of capable and well-supported teachers.

The SOR-preferred phonics products are product-use intensive and therefore more lucrative. And, of course, whatever the program, there are always the related screeners, progress monitors, and summative assessments, in addition to the text sets, guidebooks, virtual worksheets, etc. proctored through the same digital platforms. More profitable than what is leased, however, is what can be taken for free and repackaged for sale: data on student's use of the product (ostensibly for product improvement purposes) vacuumed up key stroke by key stroke, pause by pause, eye glance by eye glance, and soon enough pupil dilation, facial expression recognition, guttural or vocal gestures, and all the rest—not merely psychometric data, but biometric, behavioral, emotive, and psychiatric data—all free for the taking. A massive invasion of students' and families' privacy with nary a permission slip in sight. For what? For Big Data crunching and the building of reliably predictive algorithms for anticipating and controlling users' choices. Smell the money yet?

Big money itself is not the problem, nor is capitalism when it runs properly. Still, boondoggles and the dark money flowing into campaign war chests in "one-party" states poses a severe danger to public education.

Big money itself is not the problem, nor is capitalism when it runs properly. Still, boondoggles and the dark money flowing into campaign war chests in "one-party" states poses a severe danger to public education. Given human nature, hedge and private equity funds empowered with big tech (fin-tech, as they call it at the *Wall Street Journal*) acquiring entire sectors of an industry guarantee the kind of coercive pricing and disregard for consumers and workers most fair-minded and decent people resent. (See Ballou, 2023, on how similar scenarios have hit medical and elderly care fields.) We the people could and should demand better for our children and communities. And we could — were we knowledgeable educators to alert the larger public in winning ways.

The Longer Game of SOR

Historically, school privatization has involved support for small networks of charter schools, semi-private public schools that on occasion went belly-up (leaving the founding investors with golden parachutes at public expense). What is going on today is far more brazen — grabbing a beachhead in school classroom; commandeering a monopoly on instruction (teaching of students, training of teachers); monopsony through legislated mandates for state-approved programs and materials; plus the Big Data treasure chest dependably minted by instructional technology. The result is a potential profit generator of magnificent proportions — public school privatization on techno-steroids. The new SOR legislation provides the hedge funds and private equity groups all the tax-sourced profits, leaving the states and districts with all the legal liabilities and expenses—essentially the "heads-we-win-tails-you-lose" approach for which

private equity and big finance have become notorious—as many former employees, customers, and forced-buyout shareholders can attest.

In the wake of this wholesale appropriation of the public schools, local control of instruction and even state control of the curriculum would become things of the past, as could quasi-independent program evaluations, third-party scientific research, and teacher preparation by colleges of education. The takeover of the school systems could even displace independent certification of teachers by state departments of education. After all, only those companies collecting (and guarding) the test data could make informed determinations about who is effective with their products … or what new products of theirs will be needed next year. Already venerated professional development centers for high-quality reading teachers have been shut down and replaced with training centers for the new SOR products (Goldstein, 2023).

But one thing is for sure. The massive media push for phonics mandates across the nation in the past 4 years is the sort of coordinated shock-and-awe, full-court press that only well-funded lobbyists, political action committees, and advocacy "nonprofits" could muster. This is clearly not a revolt by a handful of community-based concerned parent groups. On the matter of why so many legislators in so many states would support these expensive bills, I'll refrain from speculation. But the quick rush to mandate these products has all the markings of a classic boondoggle.

If all this wasn't unsettling enough, we now have mounting evidence of screen time addictions correlating with increased rates of childhood and adolescent depression and mental illness, including increased rates of attempted suicide (Bitsko et al., 2022). Newer forms of educational technology built around evolving entwinement of information systems and the newer forms of AI are going to radically transform public school classrooms. Disregard for the wellbeing of end users while chasing profits with the assist of dubious or fabricated research findings is how Big Pharma gave us the opioid crisis, how Big Tobacco gave us the lung cancer crisis, how Big Oil gave us the leaded pollution and global climate change crises. What will Big Tech-Finance with their doubtful evidence give us in classrooms? The end users here are children. Their presence in schools is mandatory. Transparency and sound judgment are requisite. Inadvertent collateral damage upon a generation of Americans is not acceptable.

Is Mammon a Sufficient Explanation?

So, okay, there's a lot of money on the table, and big equity groups laser-focused on technology profiteering are at the fore, and the stakes may be unbelievably high, and no one is guarding the nursery. Yet there is the possibility of an ideological agenda behind SOR as well, one not in the best long-term interest of the American people, at least those who rely on the public schools. Phonics-first pedagogy is a pedagogy of obedience to lower-level skills and the authority of the text, recitation of sounds represented by letters, regardless of whether the sounds make sense or not. Reading for obedient chanting seems to be the goal of these systematic approaches. Perhaps legislators, financiers, and journalists of an authoritarian bent believe teaching via obedience training leads to more obedient and complacent citizens. History demonstrates otherwise, but clearly within a cultural moment where "social" media is being wielded by hate-mongering demagogues and the coastal chattering class toys with the idea that aristocracy is a solution to meritocracy's discontents (e.g., Deenan, 2023; cf., Sandel, 2020), worry should be in order for middle-of-the-road devotees of American democracy.

Bluntly put, displacing the goal of meaning with sound-making in systematic phonics instruction may be neither an oversight nor a pedagogical misstep. It is possibly a feature. The agenda is to thwart the education of those most likely to be in need of better language and literacy comprehension development — to keep the poor intergenerationally poor, and the marginalized intergenerationally marginalized; to assuage the financial anxieties of the professional class and perpetuate cheap labor for the favored, while undermining a necessary pillar of democracy: a literate and informed electorate that includes even those least well served by the status quo. Is this just another case of confirmation bias fueled by self-dealing, or something even less savory?

What Our Schools Really Need

What the schools most need, and the newly mandated phonics laws most lack, is the capacity for instructional nuance in response to children's unique developmental trajectories and varied literacy interests and challenges. At present, digital platforms do not facilitate effective teacher mediation of the instruction to suit individual students (they might be redesigned to that end, but at present this is not even a promise). We still need responsible, effective teachers to provide the optimal conditions for fostering language, careful reasoning, and knowledge, as well as socioemotional self-regulation.

We need to trust and invest in our teachers, our schools, and our children, and parents—per a recent NPR poll—overwhelmingly agree. Well-prepared teachers are the most-powerful way to improve students' reading ability. We should support them with high-quality professional development so they can responsibly and effectively provide students the full range of skills, reasoning, and knowledge needed to read and learn and live well. We should temper teachers' hard-won understanding of effective instruction with the knowledge of what research shows is most probable, and distance them from the marketing of product barkers pushing the next bright, shiny object. Their instruction should always be student-centered, not product-centered. Our children, their futures, our families, and communities, perhaps even our democracy, are at stake.

References

Allington, R. L. (2002). *Big brother and the national reading curriculum: How ideology trumped evidence.* Heinemann.

Ballou, B. (2023). *Plunder: Private equity's plan to pillage America.* PublicAffairs.

Bitsko, R. H., Claussen, A. H., Lichstein, J., Black, L. I., Jones, S. E., Danielson, M. L., Hoenig, J. M. et al. (2022). *Mental health surveillance among children — United States, 2013–2019.* Center for Disease Control, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (Supplements). 71(Suppl-2): 1–42. http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.su7102a1

Bowers, J. S. (2020). Reconsidering the evidence that systematic phonics is more effective than alternative methods of reading instruction. *Educational Psychology Review, 32,* 681–705.

Chaterjee, R. (January 7, 2022). Kids are back in school—and struggling with mental health issues. *NPR.* https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2022/01/07/1070969456/kids-are-back-in-school-and-struggling-with-mental-health-issues

Coles, G. (2003). *Reading the naked truth: Literacy, legislation, and lies.* Heinemann.

Compton-Lilly, C. F., Mitra, A., Guay, M., & Spence, L. K. (2020). A confluence of complexity: Intersections among reading theory, neuroscience, and observations of young readers. *Reading Research Quarterly, 55,* S185–S195.

Cunningham, J. W. (2001). Review: Essay book reviews: The national reading panel report. *Reading Research Quarterly, 36,* 326–335.

Deenan, P. J. (2023). *Regime change: Toward a postliberal future.* Sentinel.

Duke, N., & Cartwright, K. B. (2021). The science of reading progresses: Communicating advances beyond the simple view of reading. *Reading Research Quarterly, 56,* S25–S44.

Flesch, R. F. (1986). *Why Johnny can't read: And what you can do about it.* Harper & Row.

Foorman, B. R., Herrera, S., Petscher, Y., Mitchell, A., & Truckenmiller, A. (2015). The structure of oral language and reading and their relation to comprehension in kindergarten through grade 2. *Reading and Writing, 28,* 655–681.

Foorman, B. R., Petscher, Y., & Herrera, S. (2018). Unique and common effects of decoding and language factors in predicting reading comprehension in grades 1–10. *Learning and Individual Differences, 63,* 12–23.

Goldstein, D. (September 8, 2023). Amid reading wars, Teachers College will close a star professor's shop. *New York Times.*

Gamse, B. C., Jacob, R. T., Horst, M., Boulay, B., & Unlu, F. (2008). *Reading First impact study, final report* (NCEE 2009–4038). National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

Gough, P. B., & Tunmer, W. E. (1986). Decoding, reading, and reading disability. *Remedial and Special Education, 7,* 6–10.

Grupe, M. A. (1916) Phonics in relation to early reading. *The Pedagogical Seminary, 23,* 175–183. https://doi.org/10.1080/08919402.1916.10534704

Moscatello, C. (September 13, 2023). Did New York City forget how to teach children to read? This fall, Eric Adams is pivoting to phonics. *New York/Intelligencer.* Available at https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2023/09/new-york-city-schools-how-to-teach-children-to-read.html

National Reading Panel. (2000a). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. NIH Publication No. 00–4769.

National Reading Panel. (2000b). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction: Reports of the subgroups*. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. NIH Publication No. 00-4754.

O'Donnell, P. (February 21, 2023). *'The evidence is clear.' DeWine pushes for 'science of reading' as only approach in Ohio classrooms.* NPR Network. Available at https://www.wvxu.org/education/2023-02-21/mike-dewine-science-reading-ohio-phonics-three-cueing

Paris, S. G. (2005). Reinterpreting the development of reading skills. *Reading Research Quarterly, 40*, 184–202.

Ravitch, D. (n.d.). Diane Ravitch's blog. https://dianeravitch.net/?blogsub=confirming

Reinking, D. P., Hruby, G. G., & Risko, V. J. (2023). Legislating phonics: Settled science or political polemics? *Teachers College Record, 125*, 104–133.

Riddle Buly, M., & Valencia, S. W. (2002). Below the bar: Profiles of students who fail state reading assessments. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 24*, 219–239.

Sandel, M. J. (2020). *The tyranny of merit: What's become of the common good?* Farrer, Strauss, & Giroux.

Smith, F. (2003). *Unspeakable acts, unnatural practices: Flaws and fallacies in 'scientific' reading instruction.* Heinemann.

Thomas, P. L. (2022). The science of reading era: Seeking the "science" in yet another anti-teacher movement. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 22*(2), 5–17.

Connected From the Start: Oral Language, Reading, and Writing

Adria F. Klein, Saint Mary's College of California
Nancy Rogers-Zegarra, Saint Mary's College of California
Julie Kugler, Santa Clara United School District

Introduction

Carefully listening to the oral language of our students, including our multilingual learners, can significantly impact our thinking and teaching. In this article, we use the term multilingual learners (MLLs) versus English learners (ELs), to honor and affirm the child's first language or languages. Often children speak and/or understand multiple languages; we always want to consider their known language(s) as an asset when learning a new language. The language children offer in English is only part of their translanguaging repertoire that is important for Reading Recovery® educators to observe and leverage. The strategies offered here facilitate teachers to think more deeply when observing and planning lessons with MLLs. Garcia et al. (2017) discuss the "stance" of the teacher to embrace multilingualism by drawing upon the students' repertoires and to see them as unitary rather than isolated entities.

As Reading Recovery educators, we have been investigating the interrelationship of oral language, reading, and writing. We explored oral language use in all components of lessons. We looked at composing to increase the syntactic complexity in writing, and considered how oral language structures inform interactions and text selections. This led to the development of a recursive model of interconnected reading and writing cycles, which are reciprocal. Dixon (2014), in the article *Put Your Ear a Little Closer*, suggests that "as effective teachers, it is essential that we understand how to strategically develop a child's oral language skills to support literacy acquisition" (p. 16).

In this article, we discuss the assessments used to inform our teaching with a focus on oral language development, teaching moves across the lesson in both reading and writing that foster oral language development, and a model of observation across the lesson to support and expand language for MLLs. This continuous stance of inquiry and observation informs our current thinking and further exploration during our lessons.

Interconnections of Oral Language, Reading, and Writing

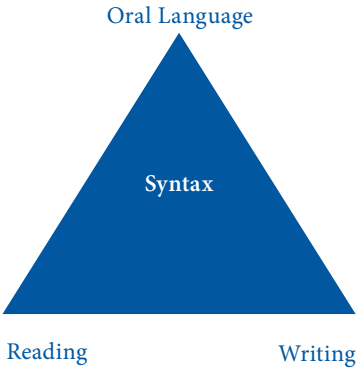
Clay (2016) notes language and literacy move forward together in developing systems fostering strategic processing. As we consider the reciprocity of reading and writing, oral language must be included. All the processes are joined together, thus creating a triangulation. How we create a message in speaking, reading, or writing is governed at its center by the syntax and structure of the language (see Figure 1). Clay (2016) notes that children use multiple sources of information as they read, write, and use their own oral language. As children access the information of different kinds, syntax and structure contribute rich sources of information, especially early in learning to read and write. This matters even more when working with MLLs.

Clay (2015) says that language and literacy must move forward together.

> I am encouraging teachers to understand that learning in one language area enriches the potential for learning in the other areas. Therefore, if we plan instruction that links oral language and literacy learning (writing and reading) from the start—so that writing and reading and oral language processing move forward together, linked and patterned, from the start—that instruction will be more powerful. (p. 95)

Planning for both language and literacy together from the start of lessons provides support for children to develop patterns of learning that lead to the deepening

Figure 1. The Triangulation of Language and Literacy Development



SOURCE: Adapted from Klein, A. (2022). LitCon presentation.

of the neural network. Therefore, this leads to the child becoming automatic and fluent.

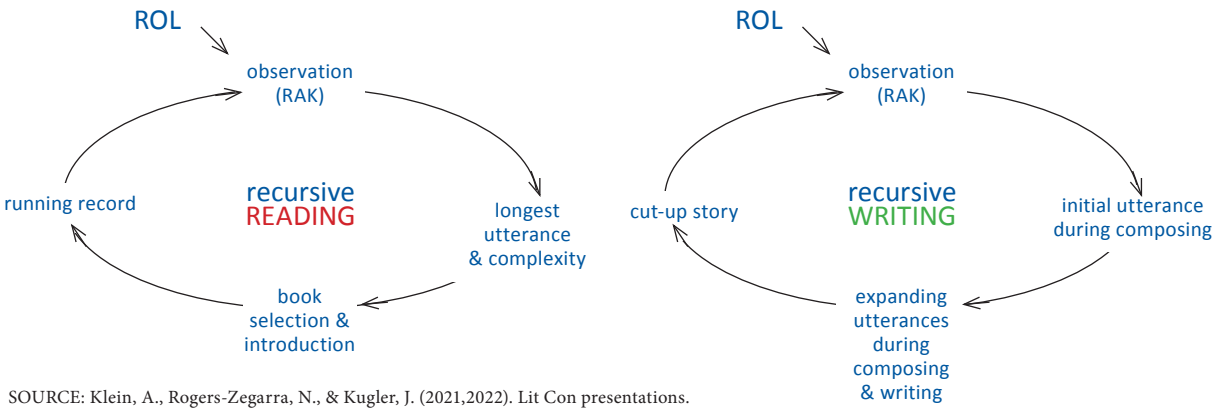
A Recursive Teaching Model

Using the power of language to increase MLLs' reading and writing occurs throughout the lesson. Creating opportunities to pause and listen to a student's oral language becomes a catalyst for their literacy learning. Using Figure 2 as visual references, a student's utterances (oral language) can provide a starting place for selecting books for reading as well as composing sentences during writing. This observational stance of oral language provides us an opportunity to use the English language that a student controls to guide their uniquely designed lessons. Through increased exposure to print and new English language structures, a student's oral language will begin to expand to include more complex sentences in reading and writing. Consequently, the continued exposure to an array of texts will provide many different examples of language structures, thereby influencing oral language and writing. The concept of a recursive model is initiated and sustained throughout the lesson series. For many students this interwoven approach to language and literacy will expand with ease as the student moves through the program. For others, there will need to be more deliberate and dexterous teaching. When working with multilingual students, the goal is not to jump from the simplest to the most-complex language structures, but to strategically increase the level of complexity over time. Through this expansion of oral language during reading and writing we can begin to apply Clay's (2016) theory of moving from new to known in many variant forms. By beginning with the language structure that a child controls in their oral expression and then extending or making it more complex, the child will begin to increase their language production and eventually the new language will become known and used more flexibly, hereby creating a recursive loop.

Understanding Language as an Asset

Clay's studies of oral language revealed that control of sentence structure is significant for emergent readers and writers. Referencing the power of reading, writing, and oral language in Figure 1, oral language feeds and propels reading and writing. Oral language is a child's first self-extending system and is a considerable asset in learning to read and write. In order to determine the oral language structures a child controls, we suggest teachers administer the *Record of Oral Language*

Figure 2. Using the Power of Language to Increase Multilingual Learners' Reading and Writing



SOURCE: Klein, A., Rogers-Zegarra, N., & Kugler, J. (2021,2022). Lit Con presentations.

ROL; Clay et al., 2015). Knowing the structures a child controls orally helps us think about structures students can read and use in writing. We suggest an intentional analysis of your records to determine which structures your children can use, approximate, and control. In this article, there are many examples of teaching moves that support understanding language as an asset. Once aware of the oral structure used by the child, think carefully about selecting texts which align to the child's oral language. While we will be discussing instruction in English, we suggest exploration of these topics in other languages. The approximations a child makes depends on what comes before and after the reading; regardless, they are controlled by the student's oral language. The rationale of finding or possibly adapting text to closely match a student's oral language, allows the child to anticipate and self-monitor using what they know about the language.

Using the Record of Oral Language to inform instruction

The ROL has seven types of sentences (Figure 3) which are arranged in three graded complexity levels. The child repeats two samples of each type of sentence, and the tester records the child's oral responses. The teacher notes and then analyzes accurate responses, omissions, and approximations. The responses indicate which structures the child controls at that point in time. (See pages 39–41 in the ROL.) Each level of difficulty has two sentences which represent the seven sentence types. If a child cannot orally repeat the sentence accurately, analyze the approximations the child produces. Approximations are strengths that the child brings to the task as language structures increase in use. As we explore the answers a student provides, consider what the child says as their known language structures.

Data from the ROL indicate where to start teaching and which language structures to expand while having conversations in reading and writing. Briceño and Klein (2019) analyzed running records which provide further information about the language structures MLLs use when reading. They found MLLs often have trouble accurately reading prepositions, pronouns, past tense verbs, and contractions because the child's syntax influences the reading. Also, they note that syntax impacts composing both compound and complex sentences.

Based on our research, we suggest listening to students' approximations, noting their utterances, and observing, as the student's oral language structures develop over time. As teachers, keen observers, and listeners, when we talk with children, read books, and share the composing of stories, we can note which language features change over time in oral language, reading, and writing.

Looking deeply at diagnostic sentences

In the ROL, Clay reminds us to look at all patterns produced by the child: patterns of the errors and patterns of approximations. Close examination of patterns reveals the child's changes in sentence structures and their emerging language approximations. The ROL authors created additional research-based diagnostic sentences to gather more information about children using specific structures. These diagnostic sentences are arranged in order of difficulty, as are the three levels of sentences. Additionally, there are two sentences for each structure: imperatives, negatives, and questions in the diagnostic sentences.

After listening to Rafael (pseudonym), an MLL Reading Recovery student, and noting his oral language structures on the more complex ROL Level 3 sentences, we noticed he lacked control of using negatives and asking questions. To dig deeper, we analyzed the child's responses on Clay's diagnostic

Figure 3. Summary of Basic Structures Used in the Leveled Sentences

Type A	Nbe+	Bill	was		asleep.
Type B	NVN	Bill	saw	John.	
Type C	NV+	Bill	went		to town.
Type D	NVNN	Bill	sent	John a book.	
Type E	NVN clause	Bill	knows	what he wants.	
Type F	Here/There	Here	are	some more fish.	
Type G	NVN+	Bill	sent	John	to town.

SOURCE: Clay et al., (2015), p. 41.

Table 1. Diagnostic Sentences: Negatives and Analysis of Student Responses

Student Response and Sentence Number	Analysis
Most cows don't eat short grass.	Approximations show us what to notice.
#31 *Most cows can't eat short grass.*	Strengths
	• Repeats 11-word sentence
The car over there is not really your brothers, is it?	• Gets the gist of some negative sentences.
#38 *The car over there isn't really your brother's, is it?*	Work to focus on
	• Controlling negative contractions "isn't," "didn't"
The car he don't want to move.	• Using possessive pronoun "his"
#44 *He didn't move his car far enough off the road.*	• Constructing negative sentences

sentences. In Table 1, we capture Rafael's responses to the diagnostic sentences: Negatives.

In response #31, Rafael used "don't" for "can't," which has a slight meaning mismatch. His response encourages us to observe his use and understanding of contractions more closely. In response #38, Rafael produced an 11-word sentence, and he got the meaning of the sentence. However, Rafael approximated "is not" for "isn't," demonstrating he does not have firm control over this form of contraction yet, making us wonder about his overall use of contractions. Based on Rafael's response to #44, we gain more information, and we note a meaning mismatch; he substituted "The car he don't want to move" which is different from response #38, where he used a contraction substituting the contraction "don't" for "didn't." Rafael's response also shows us that he doesn't control the possessive pronoun "his" yet. He attributes the action to the car vs. the person. Additionally, Rafael's response was seven words vs. ten words indicating the sentence was too hard since he dropped the phrase "far enough off the road" at the end of the sentence. These approximations help us see where Rafael is in his oral language development and what we need to teach such as the use and meaning of contractions in various forms and the concept of possessive pronouns "his" and "hers."

In Table 2, we note that he dropped words from each response, further substantiating that composing questions were difficult for him.

Looking at his approximations for the questions on the diagnostic sentences, we confirm that Rafael understood the meaning in response #11 but we can see that he doesn't quite control the use of "are" in the question, "Are you selling him your bike?" Also, in response #17: "the

Table 2. Diagnostic Sentences: Questions and Analysis of Student Responses

Student Response and Sentence Number	Analysis
— you selling your bike him?	Approximations show us what to notice.
#11 *Are you selling him your bike?*	Strengths
	• Meaning is conveyed and student can form some questions
The old man not — good — swimming — —	Work to focus on
#17 *The old man isn't very good at swimming, is he?*	• Using possessive "your"
	• Controlling contraction "isn't"
— you lending him your pencil?	• Applying "are" structures used in questions
#21 *Are you lending him your pencil?*	

old man, not good swimming." In response #21, Rafael is approximating the structure but omitted "are" at the beginning of the question. This confirms our earlier observations of his early control of negative sentences.

Based on his responses to the diagnostic sentences, we gained additional information about Rafael's control of questions and negative structures. Now we can plan reading, writing, and speaking opportunities that expand the structures he approximated. We suggest teachers take time to analyze student responses on the three levels of sentences using the ROL and the additional diagnostic sentences. Teachers can revisit student responses on the various types of sentences a few times during the lesson series to observe how the child's oral language structures are developing. When selecting books at early levels, great care must be given to match the student's current language structures with structures in books. Often, early stories contain the structures "Do," "Does," and "Did" and the negative contractions "Don't," "Doesn't," and "Didn't," which can be very difficult for MLLs if they do not have these structures under control. We suggest teachers use a simple sentence, "I like to jump." and gradually model how to orally transform the sentence in various ways:

1. Negative
   I don't like to jump.
2. Question
   Do you like to jump?

Modeling these types of structures orally and in writing will help students become fast and flexible at using these structures and transforming them.

Another point to consider is that students' reading errors on the running record that appear to be due to a lack of visual analysis are more likely due to a lack of syntactic control. Using information from the ROL and the diagnostic sentences teachers can more carefully analyze the grammatical structures that students control and apply this knowledge to analyzing running records and the intentional teaching of needed structures. Teachers should not avoid books that have complex structures but rather provide ample opportunities to teach, scaffold, and practice these structures orally. Through this modeling, newly acquired language structures can transfer while reading books and writing a variety of sentence structures taken from books.

Observing changes in language and literacy

Change over time is a crucial component in a student's lesson series. It is critical to reflect on oral language that MLLs are continuing to use — more varied language structures, different types of vocabulary, and shifting from simple to more complex sentence structures. In order to develop alignment between oral language, reading, and writing we must reflect on the similarities between the three areas as it relates to language development. In Table 3, the leveled sentences from the ROL have been aligned with what is expected from books and in student writing. Expert decisions must be made when selecting books to ensure that the text has language structures which match the student's oral language pattern. A mismatch in these two systems may equate to a student's inability to use their oral language as a monitoring system during reading. Additionally, in writing, the student's language structures should be comparable to what the child is being exposed to in reading. The child's writing may indicate that he has yet to control a particular grammatical form in his oral language. For example, if the child writes simple sentences yet is reading books with compound sentences, then reading, writing, and oral language may be out of balance. It is critically important for MLLs that their oral language is aligned to reading and writing, and that there is a closer match across the three systems. Table 3 illustrates the alignment to work toward when designing a series of lessons.

Table 3. Change Over Time in Language, Writing, and Reading

ROL	Writing	Reading
Level 1	Simple Sentences	Levels 1–4 Depending on book/text type
Level 2/3	Stretching/ Extending Sentences	Levels 5–8 (Pronoun/prepositional phrase)
Diagnostic Sentences	Transformative (positive/negative) (question/answer)	Level 5+

SOURCE: Klein et al. (2022). LitCon presentation. Adapted from Clay, M. M. (2016).

Developing Teaching Moves

The real question becomes how do we put this all into practice while designing a lesson series for an MLL? Listed below are a few key teaching moves, which can be implemented during a series of lessons, that are designed to support the development and expansion of oral language while also growing a literacy processing system. Most essential is for the teacher to be tentative and responsive to daily changes in oral language development as topics and interests impact language. Clay (2016) reminds us frequently not to shy away from complexity.

Teaching Move 1: Connecting language and literacy during Roaming Around the Known

Clay states that oral language is the child's first self-monitoring system (Clay, 2016). She charges Reading Recovery teachers with attending to the students' oral language by noticing and noting the longest utterance a child uses. These utterances in English are an indication of the grammatical structures a child controls in their own oral language. Our work, while rooted in Clay's teaching regarding noting the longest utterance (and recording how it changes over time), expanded to observing any utterance an emerging MLL student uses during a lesson. What do we mean by the term "any utterance?" Through observation of MLLs' utterances, it was possible to hear complex utterances in fewer words, thus providing a window into the student's oral language development. For example, the use of past tense verbs, contractions, and/or negative sentence construction may not occur in a long utterance, but it may be observable in a shorter utterance, "I can't do that." In this four-word utterance, a student demonstrates complexity through the use of contractions as well as a negative sentence construction. This wondering propelled us to ask the following questions about language development during Roaming Around the Known:

- What does observing and recording utterances look like? (OBSERVE)
- What types of teaching moves can be made to develop and build on the assets of oral language? (TEACH)
- What can we do to expand an MLL's oral language? (EXPAND)

We explored these three concepts as we taught our lessons. Through the lens of observation, the goal was to identify utterances which demonstrate different types of grammatical structures a student controls in oral language. From those observations, book selection and writing experiences were created which support linking the child's oral language to print. For example, if a child controlled the grammatical sentence structure of "I can ____", book selection for Roaming Around the Known would begin with books which will model the sentence structure, that will allow the child to use their oral language to self-monitor. Additionally, writing episodes during Roaming Around the Known can also incorporate this simple language structure in order to create links between speaking, reading, and writing. For example, a writing episode might be to add a page to the end of a book, which encourages the child to draw from the syntax of the book.

The next teaching move was to make deliberate strategic moves during Roaming Around the Known to expand a child's oral language. To build on the previous example, the strategic teaching moves were to shift the child over time from simple to more complex and longer sentences using the "I can____" sentence frame. The expansion of language was supported through careful selection of books that contain examples of expanded language and through prompting during writing episodes to elicit language expansion (see Figure 4). For example, a child can move through a progression similar to this one over time:

- I can read.
- I can read a book.
- I can read to my mom.
- I can read a book to my mom.

Teaching Move 2: Building language during composing in writing component of lessons

Opportunities to talk, discuss, and compose across the lesson are essential for developing a student's oral language. Shared conversations provide daily formative assessment and starting points to extend a child's syntax. In the ROL, we looked at simple sentence transformations. As we expand the language structures a child controls, we start with a simple sentence, "I like birthday cake." Simple sentences like

Figure 4. Teaching Move of Expanding Language From Simple to More-Complex Sentence Structures

Teaching Move:
In Roaming Around the Known, the child read a variety of "I like" books and wrote stories that expanded the "I like" sentence.

this are easily read at early levels. As Table 4 illustrates, we can model and expand sentences such as "I like birthday cake" which can quickly be changed to a negative structure through modeling and practice in oral and written language. "I do not like birthday cake" can be modeled and changed to a question, "Do you like birthday cake?" While conversing with children, teachers can plant structures and allow children to rehearse those structures. Children become fast and flexible in producing questions and negative sentences when allowed to expand their oral language, reading, and writing.

Teachers can start these conversations in Roaming Around the Known by sharing what the child and teacher each like or dislike and writing structures in stories.

Sentence transformations. As noted in the examples of Rafael's diagnostic sentence and work with other students, the structures "do," "does," "did," "doesn't," and "didn't" often cause problems for MLLs because students do not yet control these English structures. During composing conversations in writing, teachers can arrange questions to elicit a space to work on language structures.

Table 4. Sentence Transformations

Simple Sentence	I like birthday cake.
Negative	I do not like birthday cake.
Question	Do you like birthday cake?
Command	Get the birthday cake you like.
Exclamation	Yea! Birthday cake!

SOURCE: Adapted from Gentile, L. (2004).

With another MLL early in the lesson series, the teacher listened to the child's utterances during the composing conversation. Through multiple exchanges during the composing conversation, the teacher learned that the Reading Recovery lesson was happening during choice time. The child said, "I hope I didn't miss the choice time." After talking a little bit more, the child revealed how anxious and worried she was. The teacher was able to capture the student's oral language composition and repeated it for the child.

The student was asked if she would like to record that thought in her journal. She said "yeah" and recorded, "I don't want to miss choice time." In this case, the teacher could capitalize on the negative construction "don't" that the child had spontaneously used. Then she could write/record the use of the structure (see Figure 5). As teachers, we should consider more carefully the language structures that surface in the child's utterances during the composing conversation.

Educators need to give the child time to talk and the opportunity to test out their emerging language structures. Capturing sentence structures for students to work on takes a keen listener and an intentional language teacher aware of the structures a child needs in order to match books to the MLL reader. In this next example (see Figure 6), the teacher extracted a targeted language structure from a long conversation about going to the store with the same student. The child said, "I didn't want to go to the store." The child then discussed several other topics. The teacher knew that the structure "didn't" was partially

Figure 5. Composing Conversation: Negative Structure, Lesson 14

Utterance During Composing Conversation:

"I hope I didn't miss the choice time."

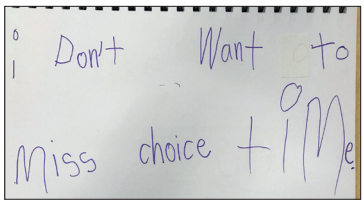
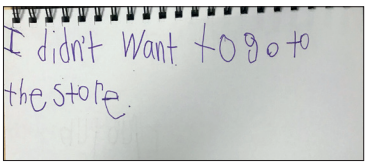


Figure 6. Composing Conversation: Negative Structure, Lesson 37

Utterances During Composing Conversation:

(extracted from a long conversation)



known, and when the structure came out of the child's mouth, the teacher recognized an opportunity to work on this structure using the child's authentic language. The teacher was not focused on simply having the child record words on a page but was listening for a partially known structure to work on while composing and writing.

Table 5 is an illustration of a composing conversation with a MLL to develop questions in oral language. The teacher was able to navigate the conversation to elicit a question that could be recorded.

Teaching Move 3: Expanding language during writing

During lessons it is essential to look for opportunities to provide extra language support, so that language and literacy move forward together, patterned from the start. In writing, we begin to think about the same idea. How can we scaffold the writing to provide extra support in composing and writing? A child is revealing their language secrets as they talk. They are constructing and composing and developing fluency. Clay (2016) describes how the teaching shifts from simple sentences at first, to complex sentences later.

The goal is to deepen our definition of sentence complexity and apply the ideas to instructional practice in reading and writing in multiple ways to foster flexibility. However, these interactions are not all used on the same day or even with the same child. They must be individually determined. Figure 7 offers an additional resource that was developed by a team of teachers and teacher leaders working with the New Teacher Center at UC Santa Cruz. Originally published by Dominie Press and now available online from Hameray Publishing (2013), it also shows examples of sentence types. Based on Clay's chart in the ROL, Figure 7 provides additional sentence types to consider using in writing lessons with students. Other resources also are available for teachers on the Hameray website.

Table 5. Composing Conversation: Question Structure, Lesson 48

Teacher	You were telling me about the paint on your fingers and you said, "Yesterday I painted with my auntie. What did you paint? Tell me.
Student	We paint from, we went to get paint.
Teacher	You did?
Student	And then after we paint and she said, "Do you want to paint with me? I said.
Teacher	Oh my gosh. So fun. I love that story.
Student	And after she said, "Do you want to go eat with me?" "Yes."
Teacher	I love it. Should we write about the part when your auntie said, "Do you want to paint with me?"
Student	(nods her head yes)

This is what the student recorded in the journal.

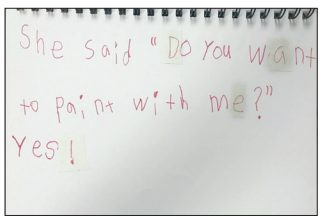


Figure 7. Structure Levels and Additional Sentence Types to Consider to Inform Writing

LANGUAGE STRUCTURE LEVELS	
ENTRY	Wordless Book
1	Simple Sentences
2	Simple Sentences with Prepositional Phrase
3	Sentence with Conjunction
4	Sentence with both a Prepositional Phrase and a Conjunction
5	Sentence with Relative Pronoun
6	Sentence with Adverbial Clause
7	Sentence with Multiple Structures

ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE STRUCTURE READERS		
L	Laterals	For extra practice at the lower levels, a lateral is another form of the book that uses a different noun for the subject.
M	Movable	For flexibility in changing the language, these books feature a phrase that can be moved to a different position in a sentence.
T	Transformation	For understanding the relationship between statements and other forms of sentences, these books show either combinations of positive and negative statements, or statements and questions.
P	Preposition	These books have 2 prepositional phrases.
A/B	Differentiates between multiple books on the same level.	

ONLINE SOURCE: Hameray Publishing (2013), p. 11.

Example: Using conjunctions

Consideration must be given when negotiating during the composing conversation, there's a lot of demand for sentence combining. One example is when a student produces many short sentences during composing (Table 6), we can offer ways to create a more-complex sentence through sentence combining. Listen for the language, learn from the language, and view the language as an asset in order to help the language grow. In both examples, the children went from using many short phrases, words, chunks, and simple sentences to a compound sentence. This came in natural development as the child's language grew. In the Table 6 examples, the student and teacher expanded the language and crafted a more complex sentence for writing using a conjunction.

Example: Using questions

Another example of a language expansion opportunity can occur by teacher prompting with "when" and "where" as possible scaffolds (Table 7). The "when" offers expansion with a time frame and the "where" adds location. These types of questions need to be invitations to talk more, not an interrogation.

Example: Transforming in three different ways

Exploring transformations in oral and written language can support children by exposing them to different types of language structures. Figures 8, 9, and 10 on the following page illustrate examples of changing a statement from positive to negative construction, changing a statement to a question, and transforming a statement to dialogue.

One teaching move for transforming sentences from positive sentences to negative sentences is having the child record their sentence in their journal (Figure 8). "My watch can flip over." Without much more work, the teacher and student can change the sentence by changing a word: "My watch cannot flip over." The child had already composed the story and negotiated how to write the sentence down. Another example is, "Cookie is a bad, bad cat!" The teacher can prompt for negative construction changes. In this example the child chose to also modify the sentence by deleting the word "bad" and adding a negative, "Cookie is not a bad cat." With

Table 6. Using Student Language During Composing Conversation

Student Language	Student Written Sentence
They have big ears. They can eat. They can jump really high. They can be a good pet.	A rabbit can jump and he has big ears.
I have a blister. From zipper, playground.	I have a blister and it hurts.

Table 7. Expanding Language With Prompting During Composing Conversation

Original Composition:
I went walking with my auntie.

Prompt: When?
On Saturday, I went walking with my auntie.

Prompt: Where?
On Saturday, I went walking with my auntie in the park.

simple word changes, the child can expand the language they used during writing.

The second teaching move is transforming a sentence to a question (Figure 9). "I am sick with a cold." easily transformed to "Am I sick with a cold?" Some sentences will require more work to transform them into a question. "My timer broke in my pocket." needed several words changed and the verb form changed for it to become a question: "Did my timer break in my pocket?" We can have fun with our students talking about these types of transformation and getting them to write these without much effort.

A final example of transforming language is the use of dialogue in reading and writing (Figure 10). Start with a simple sentence, then think about how to expand the language. For example, asking a child who said the sentence and then adding the necessary dialogue markers. To help with transforming a simple sentence to one with dialogue, the student composed a story and wrote "My cousin is going to give me a calculator." Then the teacher prompted the child with a question, "Who gave you the calculator?" The student's response was "my cousin." At this point, the teacher referred to a book that used a dialogue marker so that the child can then extend writing: "My cousin said, I will give you a calculator." Getting the child flexible and fluent in transforming sentences in different ways is the goal.

As children read numerous structures in books and discuss the stories, they can continue to write more complex sentences. Teachers support children by providing the opportunities to share the conversations, manipulate the language as they are learning these structures and transform language. All the teaching moves mentioned above model how to expand language with scaffolding. In time, the child will initiate language expansion independently.

Figure 8. Teaching Move: Transforming Positive to Negative Construction

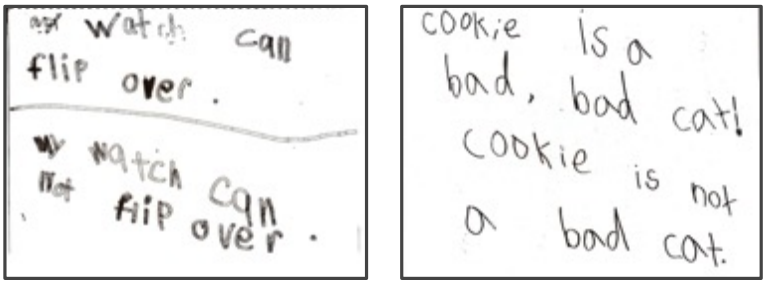
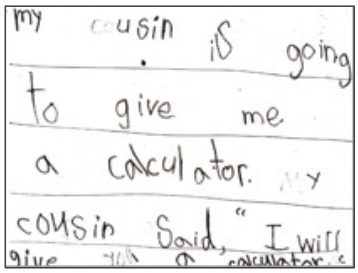


Figure 9. Teaching Move: Transforming a Sentence to a Question

Figure 10. Teaching Move: Dialogue



Teaching Move 4: Leveraging movable phrases in the cut-up story

Every section of a Reading Recovery lesson has an opportunity to build and support language development. "Encourage the use of alternative constructions: expanding the phrase, moving things around, transforming simple statements" (Clay, 2004, p. 13). Early in the lesson series the student begins to learn how to link language to print during cut-up stories. (Clay, 2015).

This opportunity to manipulate their story and match it to the composed utterance is critical when developing language as a monitoring system. In the middle of lessons, the teacher will guide the student to move phrases around to get exposure to new sentence structures. Late in lessons, the goal is for students to begin to demonstrate flexibility with sentence structure during construction of the cut-up story

(Clay, 2015). What does this look like in lessons? Let's use the example of a movable phrase. In the previous writing example in Table 7, the child constructed a story that could be extended through teacher questioning. At a different time, the teacher could use a sentence akin to this one to teach the student about movable phrases. If the child's story contains a phrase which indicates time (i.e., "on Saturday, in the morning,") the teacher can model how to move that phrase from the end of the story to the beginning of the story. The child would first construct the story as it was written and read the story to confirm. Then the teacher might say, "What would your story sound like if I moved this part to the beginning?" Then the child reads the new construction of his story. This is a scaffolded approach about manipulating known language structures in a new way.

A second example would be to move an entire prepositional phrase to the beginning of the story. This would be done not only to extend and expand language structures but also to align types of sentence structures the child may be encountering in text (Figure 11). The goal is to build the bridge between composing, writing, reading, and oral language. Using the cut-up sentence to model how to move phrases will illustrate to a child how text can be laid out in different ways. Using text that a child has created provides more ownership and more practice with how language works.

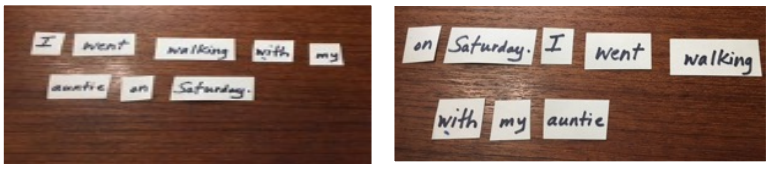
Conclusion

Thinking about the intersection of reading, writing, and oral language gives us many opportunities for growth for MLLs. As we begin to observe a child's oral language through assessment (Clay et al., 2015) or informal observations (utterances) during the lesson series, we can create opportunities to leverage oral language as it connects to the child's literacy processing system. By using the diagnostic sentences from the ROL, we were able to identify and target specific areas of language that need to be scaffolded during a student's lesson series. Additionally, we found opportunities to expand language structures particularly during the writing components of the lesson. In this article, we suggested focused teaching moves that support MLLs language during composing, writing, and the cut-up sentence. We encourage educators to remember that anytime a child is reading, writing, speaking, and listening, it is an act of constructing and composing, and those four areas of literacy draw upon language knowledge in similar ways (Clay, 2016). Language is an asset which we leverage as a critical resource for students, particularly MLLs. With continued opportunities to expand oral language, students will lift and accelerate their literacy processing.

Figure 11. Examples of Cut-Up Sentences Showing Flexibility With Moving Language Phrases

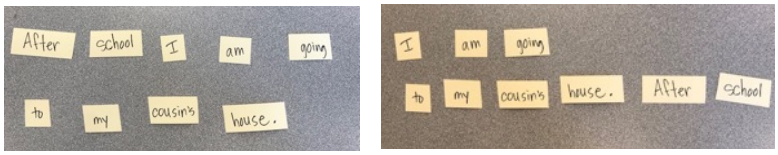
Original Sentence:
I went walking with my auntie on Saturday.

Transformed Sentence:
On Saturday, I went walking with my auntie.



Original Sentence:
After school I am going to my cousin's house.

Transformed Sentence:
I am going to my cousin's house after school.



References

Briceño, A., & Klein, A. F. (2019). A second lens on formative reading assessment with multilingual students. *The Reading Teacher*, *72*(5), 611–621.

Clay, M. M. (2004). Talking, reading, and writing. *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, *3*(2), 1–15.

Clay, M. M. (2015). *Becoming literate: The construction of inner control.* Heinemann.

Clay, M. M. (2016). *Literacy lessons designed for individuals* (2nd ed.). Heinemann.

Clay, M., Gill, M., Glynn, T., McNaughton, T., & Salmon, K. (2015). *Record of oral language: Observing changes in the acquisition of language structures.* Heinemann.

Dixon, M. (2014). Put your ear a little closer: Tuning in to a child's language to aid literacy acquisition. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 13*(2), 16–24.

García, O., Johnson, S. I., & Seltzer, K. (2017). *The translanguaging classroom. Leveraging student bilingualism for learning.* Caslon.

Hameray Publishing (2013.) *Oral language development series sampler* (p. 11). https://www.hameraypublishing.com/pages/oral-language-development-series-sample

For further reading

These scholarly works also guided our research and the writing of this article.

Briceño, A., & Klein, A. F. (2016). Making instructional decisions: Deepening our understanding of English learners' processing in reading. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 16*(1), 55–66.

Clay, M. M. (1982). *Observing young readers: Selected papers*. Heinemann.

Clay, M. M. (2013). *An observation survey of early literacy achievement* (3rd ed.). Heinemann.

Clay, M. M. (2014). *By different paths to common outcomes: Literacy teaching and learning.* Heinemann.

Clay, M. M. (2015). *Change over time in children's literacy development.* Heinemann.

Collins, J. (Ed.) (2015). *English language arts/English language development framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten through grade twelve.* Curriculum Frameworks and Instructional Resources Division, California Department of Education.

Fried, M. D. (2013). Activating teaching: Using running records to inform teaching decisions. *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, *12*(1), 5–16.

Gentile, L. (2004). *The oral language acquisition inventory (Olai) pre K-3 linking research and theory to assessment and instruction.* Dominie Press.

Ionin, T., & Wexler, K. (2002). Why is "is" easier than '-s'?: Acquisition of tense/agreement morphology by child second language learners of English. *Second Language Research*, *18*(2), 95–136.

Kaye, E., & Van Dyke, J. (2012). Interpreting running records: Reexamining common practice. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 11*(2), 5–21.

Klein, A. F., & Briceño, A. (2019). An assets-oriented formative oral language assessment for multilingual students: The oral language record. In G. Onchwari, & J. Keengwa (Eds.), *Handbook of research on assessment practices and pedagogical models for immigrant students* (Chapter 10). IGI Global.

Konstantellou, E., & Lose, M. K. (2016). The role of powerful language interactions in Reading Recovery lessons: Developing strong literacy processing systems. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 16*(1), 5–28.

Raban, B. (2014). TALK to think, learn, and teach. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 13(*2), 5–15.

About the Authors

Dr. Adria Klein is the trainer and director of the Reading Recovery Center at Saint Mary's College of California. She is the co-author of many professional books and articles including *Research in Reading Recovery*, as well as many children's books. Her latest book is *Meaningful Reading Assessment* with Peter Afflerbach.

Dr. Nancy Rogers-Zegarra is a clinical trainer and Reading Recovery teacher leader for Saint Mary's College of California. She has preK–12 administrative experience; has taught at the elementary, secondary, and university levels; and served as a reading specialist in California and Peru. Nancy was an elementary principal at two schools, and served as the director of English language learners and assessment. She is the current editor of *The California Reader.*

Julie Kugler is a Reading Recovery teacher leader and literacy intervention teacher in Santa Clara Unified School District, Santa Clara, CA. Her teaching experiences have always been rooted in educating a diverse population of learners, particularly with multilingual students.

Using Cycles of Inquiry: A Reflective Tool to Foster Acceleration

Jennifer Flight, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

Author's note: All student names are pseudonyms.

For some children, coming into Reading Recovery® lessons immediately puts them on a path to accelerated learning, but this is not the case for all. As teachers we need to find ways to support the learning of those we find difficult to teach. Teacher reflection is a critical action to scaffold student learning when acceleration is compromised.

The pace at which teachers reflect on and adjust instruction is important. Clay (2016) states, "When you are learning a complex thing a bit at a time, the pace at which you put it all together appears to be important. Negative effects tend to accrue if you do a lot of reading and writing on the basis of a half-formed theory for too long" (p. 6). Clay was referring to children, but this also applies to us as teachers. If we don't see that our teaching is making a difference, over time, there are cumulative effects. We can't let this happen. We need to take immediate action to support a positive shift in the child's learning trajectory.

In reading *Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know*, by Adam Grant, I was struck by the story of a group of wildfire fighters in the Mann Gulch Fire of 1949 (Grant, 2021, pp. 3–7). The fire had shifted direction and the firefighters needed to shift from fight to flight mode to outrun the fire and reach safety. Firefighters have tools and processes for their work. In danger, many were unaware their heavy gear was slowing them down, and once they did, some were still reluctant to drop their tools. William Dodge, the leader of the group, quickly rethought the situation and saw a possible way to survive. He started a fire, burning the area around him, called to his team to join him (no one did), and was able to lay low and the fire went around him. Of the 15 men, only two firefighters were able to outrun the fire. Dodge survived because he quickly rethought the situation and was open to new possibilities.

As teachers, when students are not making expected progress, we feel pressure or in the case of the fire analogy, we feel heat and smell smoke. This feeling is a warning sign to pay attention and immediately take on a rethinking stance. Perhaps we need to drop previous ways of doing things, change course, or let go of materials and procedures. Rethinking is a challenge; We hesitate at the idea of rethinking, we go with what we have been taught, what our experiences suggest is best, and give things more time. More time is not the answer. Clay (2016) tells us, "The pace at which you put it all together is important" (p. 6). We need to pay attention and act fast, just as Dodge did as he trialed a new technique in firefighting, the escape fire.

As teachers, we know daily and weekly reflection is necessary for us to design lessons for individuals, yet it is challenging to find the time needed to do this well. We know adaptation is required "to ensure the construction of effective processing at all times despite a not-so-balanced repertoire of the struggling learner" (Clay, 2015b, p. 221). How might we make the process of reflecting and rethinking easier? How do we make teaching decisions with the particular child in mind? How do we evaluate the effectiveness of our actions?

In this article, I will introduce a rethinking framework, the Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) improvement cycle as a tool to discipline rethinking and adjust instruction (Bryk et al., 2015, pp. 121–122). I will share some of my thinking about accelerating learning through stories of three students who made me rethink as I worked to puzzle out how to best support them as learners. As you read these stories, I challenge you to consider a student who needs you to rethink instruction to make it easier for them to learn.

Tools for Rethinking

Reading Recovery teachers have tools to support rethinking how we design instruction for individual learners. We have Clay's texts, which we read and reread thinking about a particular student. We keep daily records, including predictions of

progress and weekly reflections. We problem solve challenges with colleagues in professional development sessions, coaching, and colleague visits. We work with parents, classroom teachers, and school teams. Multiple and differing perspectives help us to be more open to rethinking, as "we learn more from people who challenge our thought process than those who confirm our solutions" (Grant, 2021, p. 86). These people make up what Grant calls our "Challenge Network."

When progress is slow, "the intent is to find a way to get around the roadblock and establish or reestablish accelerated learning" (Clay, 2016, p. 168). In considering the roadblock to learning, it is necessary to be open to doing things differently. Clay tells us the "early intervention teacher must know of many ways to foster literacy strengths, must vary her teaching sequences, and be bold in negotiating short-cuts" (2016, p. 25). The PDSA cycle can guide us in "testing" a bold short-cut (PDSA Worksheet, Appendix A). The cycle is a mini experiment to determine if improvement occurs when a change or bold move is implemented. For planning purposes, the order of the cycle does not begin the plan, but by studying the data.

Study. What do you know about the student's behaviors as related to the roadblock? Strengths? Weaknesses? Note: If you are planning continuing PDSA cycles, compare what you learned with your prediction(s).

Act. What might you do next? Consult with colleagues to gather varied perspectives to provide a number of options.

Plan. Define the bold move/change to test. Make a prediction(s) about what will happen. Determine what data you will collect to evaluate if the change was an improvement.

Do. Carry out the bold move/change and document what happened.

The PDSA cycle frames what you are teaching in the short term, similar to short-term predictions of progress. I have found it helpful to reword the prediction of progress from "in the next few weeks he will need to know" (Clay, 2016, p. 28) to "in the next few lessons he will need to know …". Testing the bold move is quick—3 to 5 days—to learn quickly.

The following examples will link both predictions of progress and the PDSA tool as a support to thinking about how to eliminate a learning roadblock.

Case Study 1: Collin

Preparing for Roaming Around the Known lessons with Collin, I knew I would need to approach teaching with an openness and curiosity to what might be possible, as I had limited experience in teaching multilingual learners. Writing predictions of progress helped me to "maintain a long-term perspective" by beginning lessons with the end in mind. Two long-term predictions of progress related to language use guided the earliest lessons.

At the end of the lesson series Collin will need to know how to

- Expand his syntactical knowledge in order to anticipate complex literary structures in text.
- Actively engage in conversation in order to share his ideas on a variety of topics in preparation for writing.

Beginning lessons in the known, thoughts of simplifying learning arose. Practicing commonly used phrases (e.g., May I get a drink of water) or learning vocabulary through reading books with simple pattern structures (e.g., Mom is cooking. Mom is running.) came to mind. What might be a bolder move to accelerate language learning? The PDSA cycle and my challenge network guided me to rethinking possibilities (Figure 1).

Step 1: Study – Analyze the data

I first met Collin in May of first-grade year. He had been in school in Canada for 3 months, having immigrated from China. In his classroom, Collin did not speak and was easily distracted in classroom learning activities. From initial assessment data, Collin knew a few letters by name, wrote his name, a friend's name (Colin with one L), and the word "I." He heard and recorded five sounds and was able to dictate a sentence to describe his drawing, "Daddy, Mommy, and me." Based on this data, it was evident that Collin knew a few things about print in terms of both reading and writing. In order to learn more about Collin's use of the English language, the *Record of Oral Language* (Clay et al., 2015) and *Biks and Gutches* (Clay, 2015a). were also administered. He repeated back three 5-word sentences and added an "-s" ending to a word to make it plural, e.g., book-s.

Thinking about beginning lessons in the known, Clay advises, "It is

Figure 1. Collin PDSA Cycle 1

Roadblock:
Limited use of English to communicate

2. Act Decide what to do next based on what you learned. • Learn more about Collin's ability to use English.	**3. Plan** Define the change. • Tell Me Task Make a prediction(s) about what will happen. • Collin will retell a story using pictures in order to begin to use some English language phrases. Design a way to test the change. • I will pay special attention to the language Collin uses by recording and transcribing his independent retelling of a story.
1. Study Analyze the data. • No evidence of speaking in the classroom. • Labeled a picture by dictating a 4-word utterance. • Repeated a 5-word sentence with a subject, verb, and phrase.	**4. Do** Carry out the change. Collect data. Document surprises, obstacles, challenges, and successes. • Collin was highly engaged and joined in on the retelling from the very first day. • The pictures supported me to hear and understand what he was noticing.

powerful to harness the established power of children's oral language to literacy learning from the beginning, so that new literacy knowledge and new oral language powers are linked and patterned from the start. Children with the least preparation for literacy learning need such an integrated approach if they are to catch up to their classmates" (Clay, 2015b, p. 95). Aware of the need to link talking, reading, and writing, how might lessons in the known begin when Collin's English oral language use appeared to be very limited?

Step 2: Act – Decide what to do next

It was important and necessary for me to engage my "Challenge Network" to expand my thinking about ways to support language learning. At the time, I was training as a teacher leader and had an opportunity to discuss possibilities of a bold move with colleagues that led to a research project of what might be possible in the first 3 weeks of lessons. I had a goal to learn more about Collin's ability to use English language.

Step 3: Plan — Change, prediction(s), test/data collection

I trialed the "Tell Me Task" procedure; a process that scaffolds the retelling of a familiar story. This task is part of the New Zealand Ministry of Education's School Entry Assessment (2000). The process is as follows, with the same book read to the child each day.

Day 1: Teacher reads the story to the child. Teacher retells the story.

Day 2: Teacher reads the story to the child. Teacher and child retell the story together.

Day 3: Teacher reads the story to the child. Child retells the story. The retelling is audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Using this procedure, I predicted that Collin would be able to use the pictures of the story to support his use of some English language phrases. I planned to audio record Collin's independent retelling on the third day and transcribe the retelling to make his use of language visible.

Step 4: Do – Take note of surprises, obstacles, challenges, and successes

Collin actively joined in with retelling the story from the very first day. This was a big surprise! The illustrations helped me to hear and understand what Collin was noticing in the story. Following is the transcript of Collin's retelling of *The Gingerbread Man* fairy tale.

They a woman and pick a, in the woman.

I, I think the woman put the over there, because smell over there.

Gingerbread man jum in the roo, put you in the door. And go, go, go.

The old woman talking, Stop! Stop! Come back!

Be- Because da run fast-ta, gingerbread man run fast-ter.

Cow. Stop! Stop! I will eat you.

Gingerbread man talking, you can't catch me I'm a gingerbread man.

Come meet the horse. Stop! Stop! I will eat you.

You can't catch me I'm a gingerbread man.

Because gingerbread man don't, don't know, water.

Fox in, in, time in, time in, climb in my tail. Climb me tail.

Tim talking, climb on my back.

Climb in my nose. Up ... down. Snip! Snap! Fox is yummy.

This PDSA cycle took three lessons to complete and provided evidence of how powerful story retelling can be as a starting point for learning more about a child's ability to use language.

Follow-up PDSA cycles

The retelling language sample became the language data that informed the next PDSA cycle where I continued with the Tell Me Task procedure, reading and retelling a different fairy tale, in addition to, recording longest utterances to learn more about Collin's use of language (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Collin PDSA Cycle 2

2. Act Decide what to do next based on what you learned. • Continue to learn more about Collin's ability to use English. • Continue using the Tell Me Task using a different fairy tale to keep the story structure similar. • Daily recording of longest utterances.	**3. Plan** Define the change. • Tell Me Task and longest utterances. Make a prediction(s) about what will happen. • Collin will use some English language phrases from retellings in conversation. Design a way to test the change. • Analyze the language used in the retelling and longest utterances to understand language strengths.
1. Study Analyze the data. • Oral retellings included details, descriptive vocabulary, and developed language structures. • A sense of story and how stories sound. • More consistent use of a verb in every sentence; use of some simple past -ed verbs. • Evidence of beginning control of inflectional endings -s, -ing, -ed.	**4. Do** Carry out the change. Collect data. Document surprises, obstacles, challenges, and successes.

(Note: To read more about my work with Collin, please see my 2017 article titled, "Language Learning — Run, Run as Fast as you Can," in *The Journal of Reading Recovery*.)

Case Study 2: Kaleb

Kaleb was a student who had been homeschooled for kindergarten and most of first grade. Once attending school, he was selected for Reading Recovery. A roadblock to Kaleb and I working together presented itself in the third lesson. Kaleb would refuse to engage when introduced to a new book. I led with, "I will read you this story …" to which he would hide his hands in his sleeves, put up his hood, and roll up into a ball on his chair. I felt I was clear that there was no expectation for Kaleb to read the book. I was puzzled by this behavior and recognized it was critical to get an immediate shift so we could share the task of reading, he would be open to noticing and talking about print, as well as trying new things. I had written a couple of predictions of progress related to noticing print.

At the end of the lesson series, Kaleb will need to know how to

- Self-monitor for language, movement, and visual infor-

mation in order to understand the author's message.

- Articulate words slowly in order to write new words using sound analysis.

Kaleb and I needed "to develop useful ways of interacting" (Clay, 2016, p. 30) with stories and books and a bold move was necessary.

Step 1: Study – Analyze the data

From Kaleb's initial assessment, he could 1–1 match on one line of print. He recognized two words, "I" and "is" and he could write five words (his name, "mom," "I," "cat," "Godzilla"). He liked to draw detailed pictures and to tell stories about animals. Unexpected was his refusal to engage when invited to share the reading of a previously heard book or to engage when I read a new book to him (Figure 3).

How can Kaleb and I find useful ways of interacting? How can I support Kaleb to begin to look at print? How can I help him to recognize that he can use what he knows to learn new things? Guiding my thinking was the need for Kaleb to find links between what he knows and new things he notices. Clay (2016) tells us, "As children get better about finding links, they look for more opportunities to engage in these activities. To make progress you must learn some rules about scanning the printer's code. Only then can you direct your language and visual perception to the challenges of extracting meanings from text or constructing messages in print" (p. 5). A quick shift would need to happen so that Kaleb was willing to engage and initiate noticing things about print.

Step 2: Act – Decide what to do next

Do I continue with standard ways of working? Perhaps selecting books with simple pattern structures and known vocabulary? Or do I continue reading books on different topic, hoping that I will select well, and he will engage with the story? I knew that I needed to arrange the learning conditions so that Kaleb would engage with printed text. Clay (2016) tells us to "organize things so the correct response occurs … intervene to prevent the occurrence of an unwanted response. Do not give an old habit any chance to recur when you are trying to eliminate it" (2016, p. 61). I felt it necessary to make a bold move and temporarily abandon the use of leveled texts/published books and use Kaleb's dictated stories and shared writing as reading material to arrange for success.

Step 3: Plan — Change, prediction(s), test/data collection

I decided to test using only dictated stories for reading practice. I predicted Kaleb would actively participate in reading activities and

Figure 3. Kaleb PDSA Cycle 1

Roadblock:
Refusal to engage when introduced to a new book

2. Act
Decide what to do next based on what you learned.

- Temporarily abandon the use of leveled texts.
- Use Kaleb's dictated stories and shared writing as reading material.

3. Plan
Define the change.

- Use only dictated stories for reading practice.

Make a prediction(s) about what will happen.

- Kaleb will actively participate in reading activities.
- He will begin to self-monitor for 1–1 match ad known words, noticing some visual information; he will begin to reread and self-correct.

Design a way to test the change.

- Informal running records taken on dictated stories.

1. Study
Analyze the data.

- Actively participated in reading and rereading his stories.
- Self-monitored for language, movement, and visual information with evidence of rereading to self-correct.
- Beginning to notice high-frequency words seen in other places.

4. Do
Carry out the change. Collect data. Document surprises, obstacles, challenges, and successes.

Figure 4. ***Zoo Stories*** **Dictated by Kaleb**

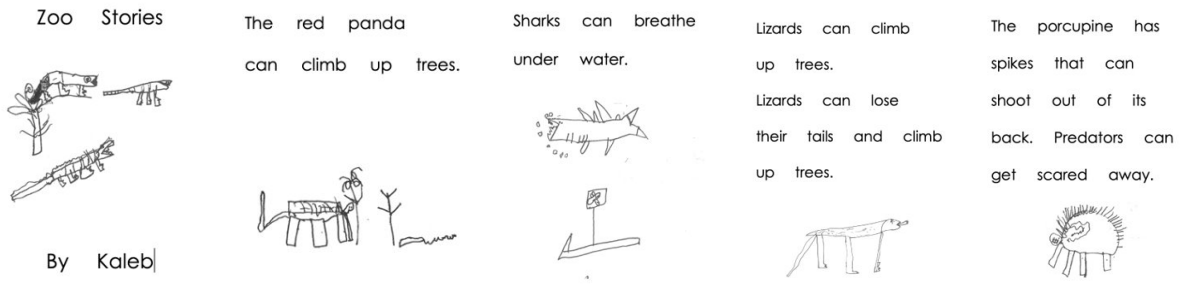


Figure 5. Informal Running Record of *Zoo Stories*

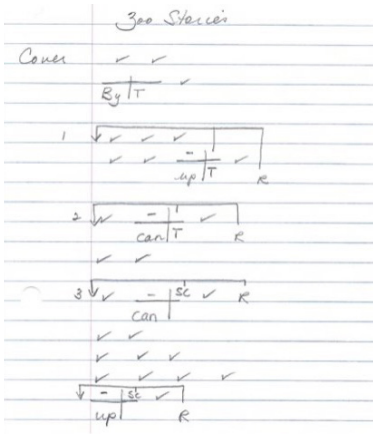


Figure 6. ***SCP Stories*** **Dictated by Kaleb**

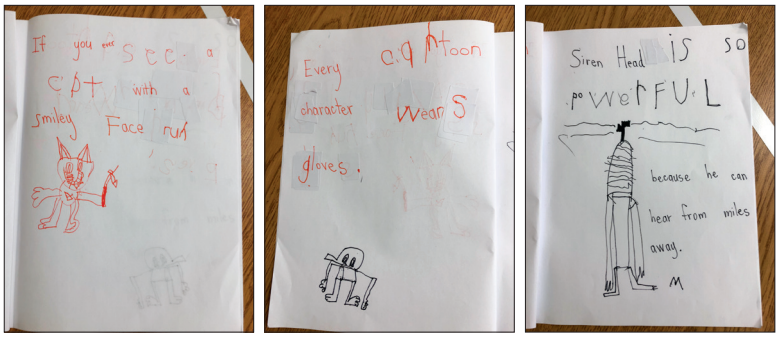
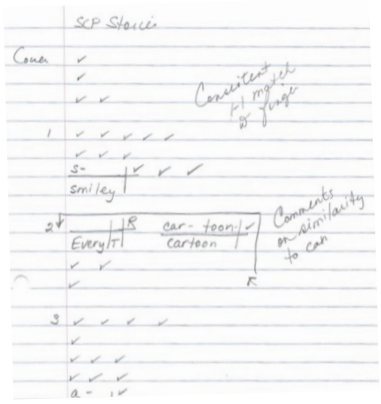


Figure 7. Informal Running Record of *SCP Stories*



begin to self-monitor one-to-one match and known words, noticing some visual information. He might begin to reread and self-correct. I would collect information about his reading behaviours through taking running records on his dictated stories.

Step 4: Do – Take note of surprises, obstacles, challenges, and successes

The first PDSA was four lessons in length. Kaleb was actively engaged in composing, illustrating, reading, and rereading his stories. He read his stories quickly, using a finger to monitor one-to-one match. By the second day he increased his participation in writing, adding what he knew, including linking words he wants to write with words written in previous stories, e.g., "see," "cat," "is" (Figures 4–7).

Follow-up PDSA cycle

In reading his dictated stories, Kaleb learned that what he can say he can write, and what he can write he can read. In comparing what happened to the predictions, Kaleb was self-monitoring for both one-to-one match and known words. When he noticed a discrepancy, he reread to search for more information and to self-correct. Knowing this, for the second PDSA cycle I planned to thoughtfully introduce selected Level 3 and 4 texts, making explicit links to his understanding of the world. Given his knowledge about animals, I introduced *Tiger, Tiger* (Randall, 1994) using language that he could relate to, predator/prey, and playfully drawing his attention to known words. Kaleb

Figure 8. Kaleb PDSA Cycle 2

2. Act Decide what to do next based on what you learned. • Carefully select Level 3 and 4 texts; make explicit links to his understanding of the world. • Direct attention to links between works in his stories and words in books.	**3. Plan** Define the change. • Introduce carefully selected Level 3 and 4 books. Make a prediction(s) about what will happen. • Active participation in reading activities. • Monitor reading for 1–1 match and known words; he will reread and self-correct. Design a way to test the change. • Running records taken on familiar Level 3 and 4 books.
1. Study Analyze the data. • Able to 1–1 match on one line of print. • Not aware that noticing known words in reading is helpful. • Refusal to engage when being read a new story and when invited to share the reading of a familiar book.	**4. Do** Carry out the change. Collect data. Document surprises, obstacles, challenges, and successes. • Actively engaged and willing to compose. • Accepted help with writing. • Dictated stories are much more complex than the pattern stories he had been reading in the classroom.

again disengaged and refused to listen to the book. I made an immediate decision to return to creating and rereading dictated books with Kaleb for an additional 4 days. After 8 lessons of only using dictated stories as reading material, I again trialed introducing a new book, supporting Kaleb in orienting himself to the book prior to the first reading of the book. Kaleb was now willing to engage in talking about and reading published texts, and a shift to the structure of a typical Reading Recovery lesson was made (Figure 8).

Case Study 3: Logan

Logan's learning trajectory was accelerated from the beginning of his lesson series. He was an active reader and writer with a large bank of known words in both reading and writing. He had ways of solving problems with increasing independence in both reading and writing. Part-way through the lesson series though, I became increasingly concerned about his ability to compose stories for writing. In talking with his classroom teacher, she related that Logan required support to both begin writing and to maintain focus. This is when I recognized that composing was not a speed bump but a true roadblock. I can see now that I was hoping that time would support Logan in learning to compose when it was a bold move that was needed to shift us out of a pattern of me suggesting story topics, whether they be of personal interest or from books. This also led me to rethinking a prediction of progress to better reflect what Logan needed to be able to do:

> At the end of the lesson series Logan will need to know how to
>
> - Compose a story in order to write two to three complex sentences.
> (revised to)
> Initiate constructing and composing a story in order to put his own ideas into messages.

How might the composing context be adjusted? Logan had many experiences with storybooks, he was being read to regularly, and from observations, he was eager to engage in reading and talking about the books. Logan had a good sense of story. Building on his story strength, I wanted to find a way to make it easy for him to compose stories. What might be possibilities? Sometimes, when composing is difficult, we encourage a child to write about a familiar book. For Logan though, I wanted him to begin to see himself as a composer of his own ideas, not as a reteller of someone else's ideas.

Step 1: Study – Analyze the data

After working with Logan for about 10 weeks, I reflected on all that I knew about how we interacted in lessons and his response to instruction (Figure 9). Logan actively engaged in conversations about

Figure 9. Logan PDSA Cycle 1

Roadblock:
Reluctance to engage in conversation and compose stories on a self-selected topic

2. Act
Decide what to do next based on what you learned.

- Change the composing context from a teacher-initiated idea to an idea Logan generates himself.

3. Plan
Define the change.

- Use wordless picture books to support composing.

Make a prediction(s) about what will happen.

- Compose story using the pictures and the characters as a support.

Design a way to test the change.

- On the lesson record, identify who initiates the conversation, tallying teacher-student initiated comments.

1. Study
Analyze the data.

- Actively engaged in conversations about books.
- One-sided conversation.
- Reliant on the teacher to provide an idea(s) for writing.
- Knows what he doesn't want to write about but doesn't volunteer ideas.

4. Do
Carry out the change. Collect data. Document surprises, obstacles, challenges, and successes.

- Logan easily began composing a story to go with the wordless book.
- Initiates conversation about illustrations.

books. He talked about what he noticed and implications of characters' decisions. When prompted to engage in a brief conversation in preparation for writing, Logan was reliant on me to provide an idea for writing. He was usually compliant and would work with suggestions, but he did not volunteer his own ideas.

Step 2: Act – Decide what to do next

A bold move was needed to shift the interaction pattern to allow Logan to independently compose. "Composing has to be learned. It is about going from ideas in the head, to spoken words, to printed messages" (Clay, 2016, p. 78). To change the composing context, from a teacher-initiated idea to an idea Logan generated himself, I provided a few wordless picture books from which he chose to write a story. The wordless picture book provided aspects of story that he was comfortable discussing — characters, setting, plot, and opportunities for dialogue.

Step 3: Plan – Change, prediction(s), test/data collection

In testing a wordless picture book as a tool to support composing, I predicted Logan would compose his own story using the pictures. He would draw on the characters as a support to creating dialogue. To collect data, I would note on the lesson record who initiated the conversation by tallying teacher-student initiated comments.

Step 4: Do – Take note of surprises, obstacles, challenges, and successes

Logan took to composing a story with ease. This was a surprise given the previous reluctance to engage in conversation. The pictures provided the content and opportunity for him to initiate conversation. What did he learn? He determined names for characters, narrated, read the pictures to get a sense of how the character was feeling and used this to write dialogue, and he used what he knew about stories to compose a story similar in structure to those he would read (Figure 10).

Follow-up PDSA cycles

Logan used the scaffold of wordless picture books to write a few books over 10 lessons. Following this, I wanted to see if he could initiate composing his own stories. I met with his classroom teacher and we both encouraged Logan to take an everyday activity and turn it into something to write about, just as he had done with the wordless books. (Figure 11). He wrote about a variety of self-initiated topics. Sometimes about something happening in his life:

In bed I weared my watch. Today I bringed my watch to school!

My Nana is coming to my house after school.

My Dad told me that the Jets won in the overtime. I was cheering for Calgary.

He also wrote stories centered around an everyday object, bringing in a sense of imagination. The following story was inspired by his bedtime stuffed toy, Moose.

Moose Goes to Sleep

Dad goes to sleep with baby moose.

He has a bad dream.

He wakes up in the middle of the night.

I have a bad dream.

He hears a fire. His Daddy wasn't home.

He calls the police.

Figure 10. ***The Haircut*** **Written by Logan**

Through changing the composing context, Logan learned to initiate composing a message from a topic of his choosing.

Figure 11. **Logan PDSA Cycle 2**

2. Act Decide what to do next based on what you learned. • Work with Logan's classroom teacher to arrange conditions for independent composing in the classroom.	**3. Plan** Define the change. Make a prediction(s) about what will happen. Design a way to test the change.
1. Study Analyze the data. • Having the characters talk seemed to make composing easy • My contributions were limited to wondering about relationships between the characters and prompts to begin writing.	**4. Do** Carry out the change. Collect data. Document surprises, obstacles, challenges, and successes.

Conclusion

Reflecting on student learning has the potential to help us to adjust the conditions to foster accelerated learning. Disciplining a process for thinking quickly about a child's learning and designing instruction for the individual student is necessary to make it easy for that child to learn. Through the stories of my work with Collin, Kaleb, and Logan, I recommend attention to four key ideas:

1. Pace matters. If the child's learning is not accelerating, pay attention immediately. How fast am I learning about this particular child? Am I arranging for learning opportunities that will allow for active behaviors from the

very start? Have I adapted learning opportunities for this child?

2. Engage your challenge network. Additional perspectives will help you to identify or confirm the learning roadblock and expand the possibilities for rethinking instruction.
3. Maintain a long-term perspective on day-to-day teaching decisions. Keep what the child needs to learn how to do at the end of their series of lessons as a guide.
4. When acceleration is compromised, "plan" and "do" a simple but bold change and "study" progress after 3 to 5 lessons. Continue to use the PDSA cycle until accelerated learning is (re)established. Keep in mind, "These processes are complex and will not be easy to observe and explain. We need to be tentative and flexible because we could be wrong in our explanations from time to time, or from this child to that child" (Clay, 2016, p. 6).

To teach is to learn. Rethinking helps us to stay curious about challenges and problems, develop hypotheses, and design experiments to test them. "The solution is not to decelerate our thinking — it's to accelerate our rethinking" (Grant, 2021, p. 29). In accelerating our rethinking, we accelerate our learning and create conditions for a child to accelerate their learning.

References

Bryk, A. S., Gomez, L. M., Grunow, A., & LeMahieu, P. G. (2015). *Learning to improve: How America's schools can get better at getting better*. Harvard Education Press.

Clay, M. M. (2015a). *Biks and gutches: Learning to inflect English, a guide for teaching*. Heinemann.

Clay, M. M. (2015b). *Change over time in children's literacy development*. Heinemann.

Clay, M. M. (2016). *Literacy lessons designed for individuals* (2nd ed.). Heinemann.

Clay, M., Gill, M., Glynn, T., McNaughton, T., & Salmon, K. (2015). *Record of oral language: Observing changes in the acquisition of language structures, a guide for teaching*. Heinemann.

Flight, J. (2017). Language learning — Run, run as fast as you can. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 8*(1), 19–34.

Grant, A. (2021). *Think again: The power of knowing what you don't know*. Viking.

Hunt, R., & Brychta, A. (2011). *The haircut*. Oxford University Press.

New Zealand Ministry of Education (2000). *School entry assessment June 1997–Dec 2000*. Retrieved from https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/7522/sea.pdf

Randell, B. (1994) *Tiger, tiger*. New PM Story Books: Nelson Price Milburn.

About the Author

Jennifer Flight is a Reading Recovery trainer at the Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery, Western Region, Winnipeg, Manitoba. She has experience as an early years classroom teacher, and as a Reading Recovery teacher and teacher leader. She currently serves as co-director of the North American Reading Recovery Improvement Science Hub.

To learn more about the North American Reading Recovery Improvement Science Hub, please read articles in previous issues of this journal..

Forbes, S., Askew, B., Flight, J., & Embry, J. (2019). A perpetual state of inquiry: Our commitment to continue Marie Clay's tradition of continuous improvement. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 19*(1), 38–44.

Lochmiller, C. R., & Karnopp, J. (2020). Initiating a network's renewal: Charting the development of Reading Recovery's networked improvement community. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 19*(2), 27–34.

Smith, A. (2021). Hub continues work to increase instructional strength of all Reading Recovery teachers. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 21*(1), 56–57.

Flight, J., & Smith, A. (2022). Team members share value of improvement science hub work. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 21*(2), 68–69.

Scott, K. J., & Flight, J. (2022). Stengthening the investment: Administrator perspectives help guide improvement. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 22*(1), 70–74.

Intervention Essentials

Understanding the Role of IDEC

Kate Nelson, The Ohio State University

What is IDEC?

The International Data Evaluation Center (IDEC) is an ongoing research project at The Ohio State University. IDEC's mission is to assist all U.S. Reading Recovery® implementations by collecting and reporting annual data. Active Reading Recovery professionals enter student data at four points across the school year using IDEC's secure website. School and teacher data are collected as well. These data are used to create reports used by Reading Recovery stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of their Reading Recovery implementations and to advocate for Reading Recovery.

What kind of reports are issued?

IDEC'S annual reports detail students' literacy performance measured by the six tasks of *An Observation of Early Literacy Achievement* (Observation Survey; Clay, 2019). They also report characteristics of both Reading Recovery children and their teachers.

Annual reports are provided at multiple levels: university training center (UTC) reports, site reports, district reports, and school summaries. UTC reports prepared for UTC trainers include all data (i.e., literacy measures, student and teacher characteristics) for the entire UTC. Site reports provide data for all districts within the site, while district reports share data for all schools within the district. Site and district reports are available to teacher leaders and allow for analysis of systemic level patterns of the site, a zooming-out data analysis procedure. School summaries provide literacy outcomes for individual schools; these reports include literacy outcomes for individual students. School summaries are available to teacher leaders and allow them to zoom-in to examine patterns more closely. Site level "data dumps," which are excel spreadsheets of all data entered by teachers in the IDEC website, are also provided.

IDEC also prepares on-demand reports. These are available throughout the year, providing "real time" data for teacher leaders to download through the IDEC website. There are numerous types of on-demand reports available; this article will focus on three widely used reports: OS Scores by School Reports, School Reports, and End of Year Student Reports.

The OS Scores by School Report presents the growth of full program students from the start of the year to year-end based on the Observation Survey (OS) Total Score, showing one bar graph for each school in a site. This allows teacher leaders to compare growth across participating schools. The School Report shows the growth of each Reading Recovery student in the school from the start of the year to year-end, as revealed by the OS Total Score. Each student's growth is represented by a bar graph, and for comparison, the growth of the typical first grader is also shown. Both the OS Scores by School Report and the School Report are often shared with building and district officials. The End of Year Student Report shows fall, entry, exit, and year-end scores on each of the six OS tasks for each individual student. These reports are often shared with parents as progress reports. In addition to annual school summaries, on-demand reports allow teacher leaders to zoom in to examine patterns at the school level.

Why is IDEC a key component to national Reading Recovery implementation?

IDEC is essential to the national Reading Recovery implementation as it supports trainers and teacher leaders in monitoring and evaluating their programs. The national report, displaying the literacy outcomes for all Reading Recovery students in the U.S., is published each year. This report addresses research questions established by Marie Clay, such as: How many children were served and who was served in Reading Recovery? What was the progress of Reading Recovery children on literacy measures? Additionally, IDEC supports

research activities of all Reading Recovery universities and research institutes examining data related to Reading Recovery implementations.

How does IDEC support/help local implementations?

IDEC supports local implementations of Reading Recovery by providing teacher leaders with data for monitoring Reading Recovery. Because IDEC provides data at multiple levels, teacher leaders can examine patterns at a systemic level, then zoom in to examine these patterns at the local school level to understand them further. Using reports and data dumps, teacher leaders can better understand what is working well and where they may want to focus attention for fine-tuning.

IDEC also supports local implementations by providing teacher leaders data and reports that can be used to present to school and district officials to advocate for Reading Recovery. In addition to the standard site and district reports, IDEC creates both a site and district executive summary which are brief reports designed to be understood by those unfamiliar with Reading Recovery. And as mentioned above, the on-demand reports can be used to present school and student growth to district and school officials. These data provided by IDEC are an essential component of Reading Recovery's advocacy efforts.

Is IDEC available for individual assistance?

Yes! IDEC staff attend conferences such as the International Reading Recovery Institute, Teacher Leader Institute, and LitCon to offer free data consultations. Teacher leaders and trainers are invited to confer with IDEC staff regarding their reports, or to get an introductory walk-through of IDEC, or to learn how to analyze their data. Additionally, trainers and teacher leaders can contact IDEC to schedule consultations over Zoom, or to schedule Dr. Nelson for in-person training to support teacher leaders in examining data. Finally, one may contact the Help Desk at idechelpdesk@osu.edu for data requests that go beyond the usual reports IDEC provides.

In sum, IDEC is an ongoing research project that continuously collects data on Reading Recovery student literacy measures and on the characteristics of all participating students, schools, and teachers. IDEC is committed to meeting the data needs of both trainers and teacher leaders and creates reports of the data which are essential for evaluating implementations and for advocating for Reading Recovery.

References

Clay, M. M. (2019). *An observation survey of early literacy achievement* (4th ed.). Heinemann.

See also:

Pinkerton, L. (2022). Intervention essentials: Trademarks: Protecting Clay's literacy interventions. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 22*(2), 43–44.

About the Author

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

Intervention Essentials

Reading Recovery's Unique Data Lens

Wendy Vaulton, Lesley University

The volume and quality of data collected, analyzed, and reported in Reading Recovery® is a rarity among educational or social programs. Every Reading Recovery teacher, teacher leader, and site coordinator is part of a large, ongoing, national research and evaluation effort. With extensive data on each of the hundreds of students served annually, Reading Recovery is in a distinctive position to make data-informed decisions at every level of implementation — student, school, district, state/regional, and national.

What is the purpose of Reading Recovery's data collection and reporting efforts?

The collection and management of comprehensive, valid, reliable data provide Reading Recovery with a unique lens through which stakeholders can zoom in and out on implementation and outcomes. The impressive range of detail of Reading Recovery data collection, analysis, and reporting allows comparisons over time at the national, state, site, school, and student levels. Teachers can use data to assess student learning in real time, guide teaching, and know when help may be needed to ensure continued progress. Teacher leaders can use data to inform professional learning plans and goals for their site to support teachers as they work with students. Site coordinators, in collaboration with teacher leaders and others, can use data to advocate for resources and policies to increase effectiveness and improve implementation.

One of the unique features of Reading Recovery's data collection is the inclusion of a randomly selected, national comparison group. This comparison group includes two randomly selected first graders from Reading Recovery schools. Their literacy performance, assessed at the beginning, middle, and end of the year, helps all stakeholders understand how the achievement and growth of Reading Recovery students compares to that of the average first grader.

What does it take to ensure return on investment from data collection?

Data-informed decision making is often conceptualized as a journey from data to wisdom. But how are teachers, schools, and sites making that journey happen? The International Data Evaluation Center (IDEC) provides annual and on-demand reports to help Reading Recovery stakeholders along the way.

Annual reports provide a great starting point for inquiry. Interesting findings in data should serve as the beginning of inquiry, not the end. Cycles of learning from data should spiral and build over time. Research suggests that educators are more capable of interpreting and responding to data when they work collaboratively. It is more equitable, transparent, and valuable to include many perspectives when studying data to make decisions. Classroom teachers, interventionists, teacher leaders, and administrators bring different questions, skills, and values to data discussions.

What can meaningful data use look like at the school level?

The benefit of collaborative problem-solving work was seen recently at a school in New England with a new kindergarten literacy curriculum. The school's K–2 literacy team (including Reading Recovery) examined the new curriculum's effectiveness for all students. As a team, they developed targeted questions and developed a data collection strategy. The team wanted to understand the strengths and needs of the bottom 20% of students, instructed in the new curriculum,and exiting kindergarten. Reading Recovery's fall assessments were used to compare cohorts and explore how they differed in the years before and after the change in curriculum.

Using this data, the team compared change over time in the bottom 20%. No single piece of data answered all the team's questions, but by working collaboratively, the

team identified patterns suggesting that adjustments to writing instruction appeared important. The Reading Recovery teachers were then able to share ideas with the kindergarten team to inform their planning.

This kind of work, while time consuming, can be generative, leading to ever-increasing reflection and improvement. It also builds understanding of the benefits of all educators in the building collaborating to focus on their improving practice.

How are stakeholders using data at a systemwide level?

It takes a safe, supportive context to use data as a mechanism for *making* change, rather than just monitoring it. In Evesham, NJ, an environment of trust and collaboration is the foundation of systemwide communication and problem solving. Site Coordinator Mindy Kauffer, Teacher Leader Cindy LaSalvia, and all the site's teachers have worked closely in an ongoing effort to achieve strong outcomes. After close examination of both IDEC and local data, one of the site's priorities was to ensure that more students receive a full series of lessons. By focusing on acceleration, the site has seen numbers of *Incomplete* status decline more than 10% below nationally reported numbers, and *Accelerated Progress* reach about 25% higher than nationally reported numbers.

This systemwide improvement had multiple components, including the teacher leader reviewing data early and often with teachers and bringing in supports as quickly as possible. The site also made an important shift in language, referring to Reading Recovery as 12- to 18-week intervention instead of 20 weeks. This shift had a profound effect on how Reading Recovery teachers and classroom teachers think about first round students and how they work together to ensure a successful transition into the classroom as soon as possible.

What are some national and international uses of Reading Recovery data?

Each year, trainers review national data carefully, looking for patterns and trends pointing to successes and opportunities for improvement. A national analysis of data from Reading Recovery, Descubriendo la Lectura (DLL), and Literacy Lessons® is provided for all stakeholders. Trainers use their reports to inform professional learning. Additionally, trainers may use IDEC data to explore new or ongoing research projects. For example, several recent studies have disaggregated national data to understand Reading Recovery's impact on closing achievement gaps for different groups of students (see Lipp & Elzy, 2022; or Zalud, 2017, for examples).

Why is gathering, analyzing, and reporting Reading Recovery data so important?

Every time we step back and take a moment to reflect on what our data are telling us, we have an opportunity to be more deliberate, targeted, and effective in the next steps forward. The future of our work depends on understanding, in full, the stories our data can tell us as educators and leaders.

References

Zalud, G., & Baron, M. (2017). The effectiveness of Reading Recovery with American Indian children. *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, 17(1), 10–17.

Lipp, J. R., & Elzy, J. (2022). Challenging deficit thinking in special education: Acceleration possibilities in Literacy Lessons. *The Journal of Reading Recovery*, *21*(2), 17–26.

About the Author

Dr. Wendy Vaulton is the Gay Su Pinnell Endowed Chair for Reading Recovery and Early Literacy at Lesley University. She serves as the center's Reading Recovery trainer, supporting teacher leaders in five states.

Intervention Essentials

Responses to Parents' Questions About Reading Recovery

Mary K. Lose, Oakland University

Parents of children selected for Reading Recovery® often have questions about the intervention and what this instruction means for their child. Following are responses to commonly asked questions.

Why does the school suggest Reading Recovery first?

Reading Recovery is an early intervention providing individualized instruction in reading and writing for children experiencing challenges with beginning literacy learning. This intervention offers the learner the fastest route to success and allows them to avoid ongoing, long-term struggles with school and learning. Individualized, responsive instruction is key, and Reading Recovery offers personalized instruction from a specially trained teacher prepared to work with these learners. The individualized nature of Reading Recovery makes it the best option offered by the school.

Note: This discussion about the Reading Recovery® intervention for first-grade students also pertains to Descubriendo la Lectura (Reading Recovery in Spanish), Intervention préventive en lecture-écriture (Reading Recovery in French), and Literacy Lessons® — an intervention based on Reading Recovery theory and instruction for children up to age 9. The term "parent" also refers to the child's "caregiver."

What does Reading Recovery instruction entail?

Instruction is based on two important tenets. First, lessons are built on detailed observations of the ways the child responds to written language with a focus on problem solving and acquiring new skills. Attention is paid to what the child can do well and how to help the child use their strengths to work out what they find difficult. Second, each lesson addresses both reading and writing since these are reciprocal processes that pull from the same information sources — letters, sounds, words, language, and, sentence and story meaning. Essentially, skills acquired in one area support development in the other. The Reading Recovery teacher analyzes what each child knows and builds on these strengths throughout the lesson series.

What is the goal of Reading Recovery instruction?

The goal of each child's Reading Recovery instruction is the development of complex literacy processing systems used by proficient readers. In every lesson, the learner reads authentic stories and writes personal messages, attending to information about the code (e.g., letter sounds), working on it, and linking it to things they know. The teacher helps the child recognize and discriminate among the visible symbols (e.g. letters, letter clusters, and whole words) and make links to the invisible oral language structures in order to

- monitor their reading and writing;
- search for several kinds of information in letter sequences, word sequences, and in longer stretches of sentences and texts;
- check that one kind of information fits with all other available information;
- repeat themselves as if to confirm what they have written or read;
- correct themselves as needed; and
- make discoveries and solve new words by these means.

With increased fluency on longer stretches of progressively more complex texts, children build networks for working on written language that extends itself over time.

When, where, and for how long will this instruction happen?

The Reading Recovery intervention is short term, approximately 12–20 weeks, with recommendations for the child's continued learning provided when their lesson series ends. Lessons are 30 minutes daily in a quiet setting suitable for one-to-one instruction.

Will my child continue to participate in their classroom with their peers?

Reading Recovery does not replace the classroom reading program, the primary source of literacy instruction for all children, but provides an additional opportunity to receive support and gain proficiency. The aim of the lesson series is to accelerate each child's progress in literacy, bringing them to a level of proficiency that allows them to profit from the classroom program without ancillary support.

Will my child get instruction in phonics?

Reading Recovery lessons involve explicit instruction in phonics and word analysis skills during daily reading, writing, and hands-on activities. Reading Recovery's research-based teaching procedures address phonemic awareness, letter identification and discrimination, linking sounds with letters, analyzing the sounds in words, learning how words work, and applying advanced skills to decode unknown words when reading and to record unfamiliar words when writing. All new learning is observed, assessed, and applied in reading and writing authentic messages daily, thus ensuring the transfer of learning in isolation to real reading and writing.

How can I support my child's progress and participation in Reading Recovery?

Parents can listen to their child read the little books sent home daily, enjoying the stories and perhaps engaging in a brief discussion of the content or its characters. They can also observe their child's assembly of the cut apart message from the day's writing activity, an opportunity to see how their child's writing and reading processes are linked. These home activities provide an ideal context for parents to support their child's progress as a reader and writer.

How will I know if my child is making progress?

Reading Recovery teachers take daily records of each child's reading, writing, and word analysis work, observing what the child finds challenging or easy. They also maintain weekly records of the child's text reading levels and the new words recognized in reading and writing. This information is used to plan responsive, daily lessons and to communicate the child's progress to parents.

Parents are encouraged to visit the Reading Recovery lesson to observe their child's reading and writing and to exchange information with the teacher on behalf of their child's continued progress.

What happens after Reading Recovery lessons have ended?

Children who have acquired a processing system for literacy and have reached average levels will shift to classroom instruction only; some may need teacher monitoring for a short time to facilitate this change. Other children who are slightly below level will also transition to classroom instruction but need some additional support, typically in the form of small-group instruction, to reinforce their progress. A small number of children, having made some progress, will require longer-term support. They will be referred for instruction provided by a specialist teacher or a teacher trained in Literacy Lessons. Importantly, the period of Reading Recovery teaching will provide essential diagnostic information and recommendations for each child's continued literacy learning.

About the Author

Dr. Mary K. Lose is professor emerita at Oakland University and Reading Recovery trainer emerita. She can be reached at lose@oakland.edu.

Implementing Literacy Lessons in the United States: Revised Standards and Guidelines

Mary Ann Poparad, National Louis University

In June 2023, the North American Trainers Group (NATG) approved revisions to the *Standards and Guidelines of Literacy Lessons in the United States*. This article provides contextual background information and highlights particular changes appearing in the current edition.

Historical Background

Clay (2005) provided the rationale to support implementations of Literacy Lessons® in addition to Reading Recovery®:

> A Reading Recovery training for teachers of special education children has been approved and supervised from time to time. The new title for this book acknowledges that these things have occurred and implies that further exploration of working with some special education children is appropriate. (p. ii)

By 2006, explorations with Literacy Lessons began in the United States as an extension of Reading Recovery to serve two special groups of students beyond first grade—English language learners and children identified for special education services—who were experiencing difficulty with early reading and writing.

In 2013, NATG prepared and approved the first edition of the implementation standards for Literacy Lessons in the United States in order to support an application for the trademark currently held by The Ohio State University (Figure 1). That U.S. trademark legally guards against counterfeiting, fraud, and misuse.

Further clarification of Clay's earlier guidance appeared in the second edition of *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals* (2016).

> It is because these procedures are designed for adapting instruction to the learning needs of individual children that they can be applied to special education students who are experiencing difficulty with early literacy acquisition and to English language learners, including seven- to nine-year-old children who need foundational instruction in English literacy.
>
> The training in Reading Recovery teaching procedures needed by teachers of special education students and English language learners has been developed and implemented with the trademarked title *Literacy Lessons*. …within the existing infrastructure for training and dissemination established by the holder of a national trademark. (p. 3)

Figure 1. Trademarked Literacy Lessons Logo

An operational standards document provides implementation consistencies, protects the trademark, and ensures the quality and integrity of Literacy Lessons implementations across multiple locations. The Implementation Committee within NATG carries responsibility for monitoring and recommending revisions to the implementation standards based upon trends found across national research reports and current practices reported by teacher leaders through their university training centers.

The *Standards and Guidelines* document delineates expectations regarding eligible students, teacher qualifications, initial teacher training and continuing professional development, the role of teacher leaders and trainers, ongoing data collection,

and research. Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons teacher training sites receive an annual authorization to use the trademark "Literacy Lessons" based upon agreement with these operational standards. Each approved teacher training site employs at least one actively registered and credentialed Reading Recovery/Descubriendo la Lectura and Literacy Lessons teacher leader.

As Reading Recovery teacher training sites and university training centers began and sustained implementations of Literacy Lessons over the past 10 years, we have learned more about effective operations and essential practices. With the exception of the pandemic years, the national number of schools, teachers, and students participating in Literacy Lessons has increased over time as shown in Figure 2.

Why Standards and Guidelines?

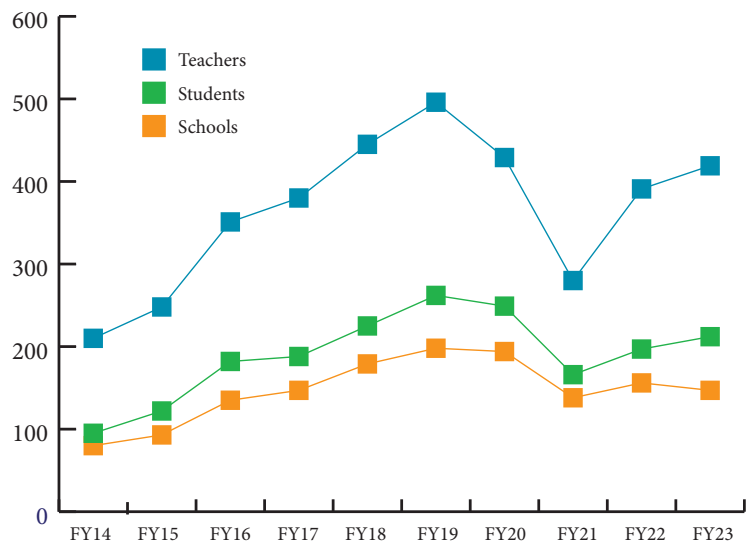
Written standards provide an implementation infrastructure and assurances that the national data collected and published in research reports reflects standardized implementations. While standards are developed and periodically revised to ensure the consistency and quality of implementations, Reading Recovery trainers carry the primary responsibility to interpret and guide site-based decisions that will most likely ensure quality implementations, practical consistency, and effectiveness across a wide variety of educational systems. Standards assure consumers that annual national, regional, and local research reports reflect the most-essential characteristics for authenticity.

While not required for standard implementations, guidelines offer additional recommendations known to support highly successful implementations (Briggs & Lomax, 2017; Harmon & Williams, 2017; Poparad, 2021, 2022). The most essential, standard, and nonnegotiable requirements for implementing Literacy Lessons under the U.S. trademark are these:

- Individually designed and delivered instruction for students from special populations who are having great difficulty in developing an early literacy processing system
- A recognized initial course of study for qualified teachers with annual ongoing professional development
- Data collection, research, and evaluation
- Establishment of an infrastructure with standards to sustain and ensure quality

Upon NATG approval, the Reading Recovery Council of North America (RRCNA) publishes and houses the most current *Standards and Guidelines* documents for Literacy Lessons and for Reading Recovery/Descubriendo la Lectura in the United States.

Figure 2. Number of Participating Teachers, Students, and Schools in Literacy Lessons in the United States, FY14–FY23



SOURCE: International Data Evaluation Center, 2023.

Additions, Revisions, and Clarifications

The intent in this section is to draw attention to particular differences including additions, revisions, and clarifications that may support the implementation and growth of Literacy Lessons sites within the United States. Not every difference between the 2013 and 2023 document is detailed within this article.

Additions

Instruction in Spanish. Literacy Lessons may be provided in Spanish under appropriate conditions and when an individual educational plan (IEP) for special education services requires Spanish to be the language of instruction. Literacy Lessons may be offered in Spanish under these conditions:

1. *Instrumento de observación de los logros de la lecto-escritura inicial* (Escamilla et al., 1996) is an appropriate assessment.
2. The IEP designates Spanish as the language of supplemental instruction.
3. The teacher of Literacy Lessons holds a multilingual credential.
4. A credentialed and active Descubriendo la Lectura teacher leader provides the teacher training, coaching, and continuing professional development.

Transitioning of teachers. The 2013 document did not include a standard method for transitioning the teacher of Literacy Lessons credential to a Reading Recovery credential. To address the need for such cases, Section 6: Standards for Transitioning Teachers Credentialed in Literacy Lessons, was added in the 2023 document. This section was approved at the Spring 2019 NATG meeting.

> The transition may be completed through professional development requirements specified by the university training center in collaboration with the teacher leader. Teachers making a transition will complete specified requirements to earn additional status as a Reading Recovery teacher per the current edition of the *Standards and Guidelines of Reading Recovery in the United States*. (2023, p. 11)

Definitions. The 2023 document also includes an expanded 2-page Introduction and overview of rationale; trademark information; clarification; and specific definitions of terms, roles, and responsibilities.

Revisions

Table 1 summarizes significant revisions and additions since 2013. Terminology adjustments value individuals over a service

Table 1. Summary of Changes to *Standards and Guidelines of Literacy Lessons in the United States*

2013 Edition (Updated 2014, 2015)	2023 Edition
Introduction	Expanded Introduction and Overview section
Teachers	
Literacy Lessons intervention specialists	Literacy Lessons teachers
	Teachers training (trained) in Literacy Lessons
	Teachers of Literacy Lessons
Eligible Teachers of Literacy Lessons	
School has an implementation of Reading Recovery	School or district affiliates with a Reading Recovery site
Students Eligible for Literacy Lessons	
Bilingual	Multilingual
English language learners	Students who are multilingual
Special education students	Students who are identified for special education services
References	Updated references
No Appendix	Appendix A: Code of Ethics for United States: Professionals and Administrators Implementing Literacy Lessons
	Appendix B: Request for Exemption from Standard

category or job title. For example, throughout the document, "teachers trained in Literacy Lessons" has replaced "Literacy Lessons teachers." "Students identified for special education" has replaced "special education students." "Students who are multilingual" has replaced "English language learners" to align with the *WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework* (2020). The term 'multilingual learners' refers to "all children and youth who are, or have been, consistently exposed to multiple languages (WIDA, 2020, p. 11).

Clarifications

Constant is the overarching aim of Literacy Lessons to accelerate the learning of each student in both reading and writing. An implementation of Literacy Lessons primarily complements rather than replaces Reading Recovery. While it is not possible to address all potential scenarios within a universal standards document, the 2023 document aims to clarify expectations while acknowledging that unique circumstances and challenges may arise. University trainers consult and advise school leaders when temporary allowances may be appropriate.

School administrators choose to implement Literacy Lessons and agree to operate under the current standard expectations. They agree to maintain an annual affiliation with a Reading Recovery teacher training site and collaborate with teacher leaders who assist and advise administrators in selecting students and qualified teachers to enter the training courses. Teachers complete initial training courses during the first year of implementation and agree to participate in continuing professional development sessions each year thereafter to sustain an authentic implementation of Literacy Lessons.

Any school implementing Literacy Lessons will affiliate with an active Reading Recovery teacher training site in order to access a qualified teacher leader. Reading Recovery or Descubriendo la Lectura remains the expected primary preventative, short-term instructional supplement for eligible first-grade students.

Students selected for Literacy Lessons have not yet developed an early literacy processing system (after completing Grade 1), have been recommended or identified for intensive early literacy instruction, and are not eligible for Reading Recovery or Descubriendo la Lectura. When Reading Recovery is not available or possible in a school, Literacy Lessons may be implemented through regular consultation with the university trainer and teacher leader.

The updated 2023 standards document allows for the implementation of Literacy Lessons in the absence of Reading Recovery in a school building by offering alternative practicum experiences during the teacher's initial training year:

> When the teacher is in training and working in a Reading Recovery school, Literacy Lessons students will be selected from the pool of students eligible for Reading Recovery after the lowest-achieving students have been selected for first round Reading Recovery. The next-lowest first-grade students will be assigned to teachers training in Literacy Lessons.
>
> If there are no students eligible for Reading Recovery or other first-grade students needing early literacy intervention, teachers training in Literacy Lessons with guidance from the teacher leader may select (in this order) from
>
> - Retained first-grade students who did not have an opportunity for Reading Recovery lessons
> - The lowest second-grade students
> - Second semester kindergarten students (p. 6)

Any school implementing Literacy Lessons will affiliate with an active Reading Recovery teacher training site in order to access a qualified teacher leader. Reading Recovery or Descubriendo la Lectura remains the expected primary preventative, short-term instructional supplement for eligible first-grade students.

Reading Recovery aims to reduce the number of children needing long-term intervention services beyond first grade. While a series of short-term and diagnostic Reading Recovery lessons are limited to a period of 12–20 weeks, individualized Literacy Lessons may continue until a student has (a) established an early literacy processing system commensurate with end of Grade 1 proficiency and (b) has acquired the capacity to participate in and profit from less-intensive group instruction.

Continuing Role of NATG and RRCNA

NATG remains the final authority for monitoring, developing, revising, and approving the implementation *Standards and Guidelines* documents for both Reading Recovery/Descubriendo la Lectura and for Literacy Lessons in the U.S. Published revisions result from ongoing analysis of trends found in national student outcome data, from school-based practices, and challenges reported by teachers, teacher leaders, and school administrators. The Canadian Institute for Reading Recovery develops similar standards for Canadian implementations under trademarks for Reading Recovery, Intervention préventive en lecture-écriture (IPLÉ), and Literacy Lessons in Canada.

Collectively, we acknowledge the uniqueness and various complexities of instructing students who are multilingual learners and students recommended or identified for special education services. Trainers are prepared to offer continued guidance and oversite in collaboration with teacher leaders, teachers, and site coordinators in making local decisions to ensure the quality and integrity of implementations.

About the Author

Dr. Mary Ann Poparad is an associate professor emerita and trainer of Reading Recovery teacher leaders at National Louis University (Chicago/Tampa). She has served in many leadership roles for the North American Trainers Group, most recently as chair of the Implementation Committee.

References

Briggs, C., & Lomax, R. (2017). Literacy Lessons: An innovation in progress. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 17*(1), 41–48.

Clay, M. M. (2005). *Literacy lessons designed for individuals part one: Why? when? and how?* Heinemann.

Clay, M. M. (2016). *Literacy lessons designed for individuals* (2nd ed.). Heinemann.

Escamilla, K., Andrade, A. M., Basurto, A. G., Ruiz, O. A., & Clay, M. M. (1996). *Instrumento de observación de los logros de la lecto-escritura inicial.* Heinemann.

Harmon, L., & Williams, J. (2017). Enhancing the lives of learners and teachers: Literacy Lessons implementation in Kentucky and Ohio. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 17*(1), 32–39.

Pinkerton, L. (2023). Trademarks: Protecting Clay's literacy interventions. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 22*(2), 43–44.

Poparad, M. A. (2021). Teachers and children learning with and from each other: What is possible with Literacy Lessons. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 20*(2), 41–52.

Poparad, M. A. (2022). Literacy Lessons implementation: Reaching school improvement goals. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 22*(1), 39–40.

Standards and guidelines of Literacy Lessons in the United States (2nd ed.). (2023). Reading Recovery Council of North America. https://readingrecovery.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/LL-SG-June23-FINAL.pdf

WIDA. (2020). *English language development standards framework, 2020 edition: Kindergarten–grade 12.* Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/WIDA-ELD-Standards-Framework-2020.pdf

What Did the Data Reveal About Pre- and Post-Pandemic Student Outcomes?

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

This report is an extension of IDEC's spring report of national Reading Recovery® outcomes (Mauck et al., 2023) with updated data from the 2022–2023 school year. The initial report focused on literacy outcomes for full program students. In this report, we turn our attention to examine data related to students with an exit status of Incomplete and those with an outcome status of Progressed to better understand these categories. Additionally, we focus on text reading level data for random sample students from pre- and post-pandemic data to better understand the wider context in which Reading Recovery is taking place.

When discussing pre-pandemic data, we are referring to data from the 2018–2019 school year. Data during the COVID-19 pandemic refers to the 2020–2021 and 2021–2022 school years. Post-pandemic data refers to data from the 2022–2023 school year.

Current Reading Recovery Outcome Status Categories

- *Accelerated Progress: Achieved Intervention Goal*
- *Progressed: Monitoring and Support Essential for Ongoing Literacy Progress*
- *Recommended: Additional Evaluation and Intervention Essential for Ongoing Literacy Progress*
- *Incomplete*
- *Moved*
- *None of the Above*

Pre-pandemic, all instruction was delivered in person, or through a standard model. During the pandemic, a combination of remote, modified, and standard instruction was implemented. Remote instruction meant Reading Recovery instruction was delivered using an online platform. Modified instruction meant that in-person attendance occurred on an alternative schedule and Reading Recovery instruction was modified because of the school's accommodations due to the pandemic.

In the first year of the pandemic, 21% of instruction was delivered remotely, 55% was modified, and 24% was standard. In the second year of the pandemic, 1% of instruction was remote, 36% was modified, and 63% was standard. Post-pandemic, nearly all instruction had returned to standard; 0.2% was remote, 1.7% was modified, and 98.1% was standard.

Each of the three topics, the category of Incomplete, the category of Progressed, and pre- and post-pandemic data, is framed by a research question. Research question one focuses on students with an exit status of Incomplete, research question two focuses on students with an outcome status of Progressed, and research question three focuses on pre- and post-pandemic data.

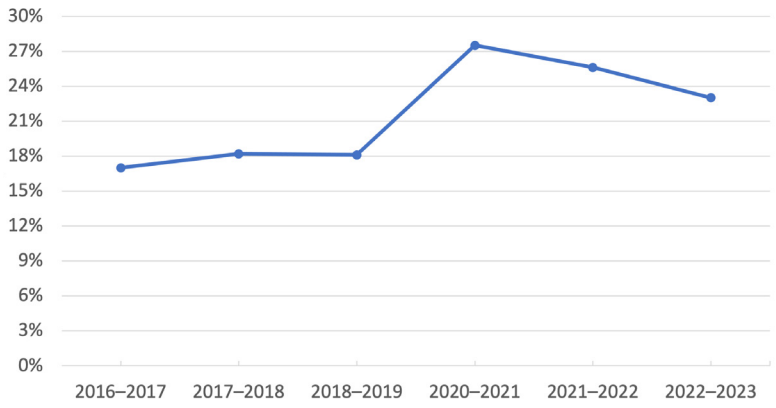
Research Question 1

What were the characteristics of the students whose exit status was Incomplete, how have factors affecting these students changed in recent years, and how have the proportions of students in this category changed in recent years?

Students whose exit status is Incomplete typically are students who began instruction in the second semester of first grade and whose academic year ended before the student received a full series of lessons (20 weeks) and did not demonstrate Accelerated Progress (Doyle, 2020).

The percentage of students with an exit status of Incomplete has increased since the pandemic. Pre-pandemic, the percentage was 18.0% compared to 27.5% and 25.6% during the 2 years of the pandemic. Post-pandemic, the percentage decreased to 23.0%, which is still a considerable increase from pre-pandemic rates. We plotted the percentages of students with this exit status for the 3 school years before the pandemic started (2016–2017 through 2018–2019) and for the 3 most recent years (2020–2022 through 2022–2023). As seen in Figure 1, the percentage of students with an exit status of Incomplete was steady in the years before the pandemic and then increased from 18.0% to 27.5% in

Figure 1. Percentages of Reading Recovery Students with an Exit Status of Incomplete, 2016–2017 to 2018–2019, 2020–2021 Through 2022–2023



Note: The percentage from the 2019–2020 school year is not shown, as data collection was interrupted by school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

the first year of the pandemic. The percentage of students whose exit status was Incomplete decreased post-pandemic to 23.0%, but it is still substantially higher than it was pre-pandemic.

To help us better understand this notable increase in students with an exit status of Incomplete, we examined data regarding lessons missed, as well as the mean number of days before instruction began pre-pandemic and post-pandemic.

As seen in Table 1, the mean number of days before instruction began, or the days to first roaming, was 92.5 pre-pandemic. During the pandemic, this number increased to 98.5 then 96.2, and post-pandemic, it nearly returned to the pre-pandemic mean (93.2 days).

We also examined lessons missed, which remained higher than pre-pandemic levels. Pre-pandemic, the average lessons missed was 12.5. This number increased during the pandemic to 13.2, then increased again to 16.0. Post-pandemic, the average number of missed lessons was 15.5. Examining these data further, we can see that lessons missed due to teacher and student absences increased post-pandemic. Pre-pandemic, the average lessons a student missed due to absence was 3.9 lessons, while post-pandemic the average was 5.5 lessons. Meanwhile, the average lessons missed due to teacher absence pre-pandemic was 3.2 lessons, which increased to 4.0 lessons post-pandemic. The average number of lessons missed because a student was unavailable was 1.9 lessons pre-pandemic, 2.4 and 1.8 lessons during the pandemic, and 2.1 lessons post-pandemic. The number of lessons teachers were unavailable increased, from an average of 3.6 lessons pre-pandemic, to 4.1 lessons post-pandemic.

There was a 24% increase in lessons missed (12.5 lessons pre-pandemic compared to 15.5 lessons post-pandemic), which may have contributed to the increase in students with an exit status of Incomplete. After the initial increase in days to roaming during the pandemic, there was about a 1-day increase in the number of days to instruction post-pandemic, which also may have contributed. On average, the lessons missed and increased time to roaming adds up to nearly a week of instruction. However, there may be other contributing factors that are not reflected in these data as there was a 28% increase in students with an exit status of Incomplete post-pandemic.

Table 1. Reading Recovery Student Means From 2018–2019 and 2020–2021 to 2022–2023

School Year	Days to First Roaming	Student Unavailable	Teacher Unavailable	Student Absent	Teacher Absent	Total Lessons Missed
2018–2019	92.5	1.9	3.6	3.9	3.2	12.5
2020–2021	98.5	2.4	2.6	5.3	2.9	13.2
2021–2022	96.2	1.8	3.6	6.3	4.3	16.0
2022–2023	93.2	2.1	4.1	5.5	4.0	15.5

To help us understand who the students with an exit status of Incomplete were, we examined the demographics of this group and how they differed from the demographics of full-program students (i.e., students with an exit status of Accelerated Progress, Progressed, or Recommended). We used all full program students as our comparison group because these students were able to complete the intervention, whereas the students with an exit status of Incomplete were not.

As seen in Table 2, the percentage of boys and girls was about the same. ELL students represented a higher percentage of students with an exit status of Incomplete than full program students, while students with an identified disability had a similar percentage. Regarding the categories for race and ethnicity (i.e., Black, Hispanic, Other, and White), a higher percentage of Black and Hispanic students were given an exit status of Incomplete, while White students had a lower percentage than full program students. Compared to all full program students, urban schools had a higher percentage of students who did not complete the intervention, while schools in a suburb/large town or in a rural area/small town had a lower percentage of students who did not complete the full intervention.

We also looked at the distribution of year-end scores on the six tasks of *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Observation Survey; Clay, 2019) for this group. As seen in Figure 2, in 2022–2023, there were many students with an exit status of Incomplete with high scores on the six tasks of the Observation Survey. For example, for students with an exit status of Incomplete, 9% were able to read at a level 16 or higher on the year-end Text Reading Level task, 50% were able to identify all the upper- and lowercase letters on the year-end Letter Identification task, 11% were able to read all of the 20 words on the year-end Ohio Word Test, 30% had a near perfect score on the year-end Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words task (i.e., scores of 36 or 37), and 34% were able to write 45 words or more in ten minutes on the year-end Writing Vocabulary task.

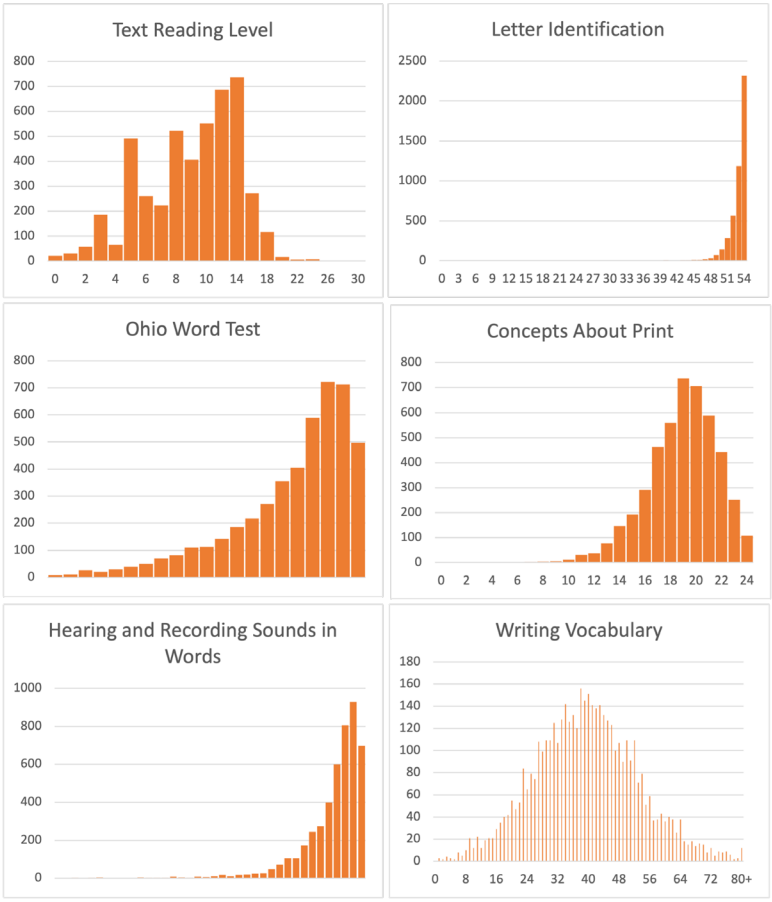
Almost 11% of students with an exit status of Incomplete had an Observation Survey Total Score above 540. It would be interesting to study this group of students further to understand why they were given an exit status of Incomplete when they scored very high on the Observation Survey.

Table 2. Demographics of Reading Recovery Students: Full Program and Incomplete, by Status and All Full Program Students, 2022–2023

	Exit Status				
Demographics	Accelerated Progress	Progresssed	Recommended	Incomplete	All Full Program Students
Male	51.0%	48.6%	45.4%	50.5%	50.9%
Female	49.0%	51.4%	54.6%	49.5%	49.1%
English Language Learners	14.3%	16.2%	15.9%	17.3%	15.7%
Has Identified Disability	8.7%	11.6%	18.1%	12.1%	11.8%
Race/Ethnicity					
Black/African American	16.2%	16.6%	21.4%	18.6%	17.9%
Hispanic	14.6%	18.0%	21.2%	20.8%	18.0%
Other	10.1%	9.1%	8.1%	9.4%	9.4%
White	59.2%	56.2%	49.3%	51.1%	54.7%
School Location					
Urban	16.4%	18.7%	23.8%	22.7%	19.8%
Suburb/Large Town	45.3%	43.6%	38.5%	41.7%	42.8%
Rural/Small Town	38.3%	37.7%	37.7%	35.7%	37.4%

Note: The Race/Ethnicity category Other is a diverse group (e.g., multiracial, Asian, Native American).

Figure 2. Distributions of Year-End Observation Survey Task Scores of Reading Recovery Students with an Exit Status of Incomplete, 2022–2023



Research Question 2

What was the average growth in literacy skills for students with an outcome status of Progressed, as measured by the Observation Survey Total Score, from fall to year-end? How did their growth compare to the other full program Reading Recovery students and the random sample students?

In 2020, the transition from two outcome statuses to three outcome statuses was made. Prior to 2020, full program students could be given the outcome status *Discontinued* or *Recommended*. Discontinued was the term many used when students successfully completed their intervention, achieved literacy levels equal to that of the average students in their first-grade cohort, and could continue making literacy progress without support beyond the classroom teacher. A student with an outcome status of Recommended did not achieve literacy levels equal to that of average students in their first-grade cohort. Some were considered for immediate evaluation for ongoing intervention while some could benefit from supplementary support from the classroom teacher. Due to confusion regarding these terms for those outside of Reading Recovery, as well as a need for a category for students who made significant literacy progress but did not reach the average of their peers and needed continued support, a third category was created (Doyle, 2020).

In the academic year of 2020–2021, the transition was made to three outcome statuses: Accelerated Progress, Progressed, and Recommended. Accelerated Progress replaced Discontinued. Students with an outcome status of Accelerated Progress successfully completed their intervention, achieving literacy levels equal to the average of their peers and could continue making literacy progress without supplemental support beyond the classroom teacher. Students with an outcome status of Progressed made significant progress in their levels of literacy but did not reach the average of their peers after completing 20 weeks of intervention. Continued monitoring and support was considered essential for their literacy progress. Students with an outcome status of Recommended made some progress during the intervention; however, additional evaluation and ongoing intervention was critical for their literacy progress to continue (Mauck et al., 2023).

For research question two, we examined growth in literacy skills, as measured by the Observation Survey Total Score, from fall to year-end for the Reading Recovery full program students by exit status

and the random sample students. To illustrate average yearly growth in literacy skills, we created growth bars for each of these groups by calculating the difference between their average fall and year-end Observation Survey Total Scores and plotted these bars in a figure to show where each group started, on average, in the fall and where they ended the year, on average (Figure 3).

Most students in the U.S. are in school for 9 months, so we determined growth in literacy skills for the typical first grader in the U.S. to be equal to the random sample students' average growth from fall to year-end. The random sample's average growth in literacy skills in 9 months was used to calculate the number of months' growth in literacy skills over 9 months for full program Reading Recovery students by exit status.

As seen in Figure 3, Reading Recovery students with an outcome status of Accelerated Progress started the 2022–2023 school year in the fall with an average Observation Survey Total Score that was 42 points lower than the random sample (380 vs. 422 respectively) but ended the school year with an average that was 15 points higher (550 vs. 535, respectively). Students with an outcome status of Accelerated Progress made 13.5 months of growth in literacy skills on average from fall to year-end. Students with an outcome status of Progressed started in the fall with an average Observation Survey Total Score that was 65 points lower than the random sample students (357 vs. 422, respectively); while they didn't quite reach the year-end average score of the random sample students, they closed the gap considerably, ending the year only 19 points lower than the random sample students (516 vs. 535, respectively). Students with an outcome status of Progressed made 12.6 months of growth on average from fall to year-end. Students with an outcome status of Recommended started the year with an average Observation Survey Total Score that was 90 points lower than the random sample (322); although they made substantial growth in their literacy skills, they did not reach the year-end average scores of the other three groups (465). The students in this group made 10.6 months of growth on average from fall to year-end.

We wondered where the students with an outcome status of Progressed might have been placed when there were only two outcome statuses (Discontinued or Recommended) for full program Reading Recovery students (i.e., before 2020–2021). Determining this is complicated because the outcome status of Progressed was introduced in the same year as the first full school year of the pandemic. We don't know what effect the disruption caused by school closures at the start of the pandemic in March of 2020 had on Reading Recovery students, nor do we know the effect of the different-than-usual types of instruction (e.g., remote or modified), but examining the proportions in each full program outcome status in the school years pre- and post-pandemic might be useful.

As seen in Figure 4, in the school years before the pandemic and the introduction of the outcome status of Progressed, the proportions of students with an outcome status of Discontinued (i.e., Accelerated Progress) and Recommended were fairly constant. The proportions of students with an outcome status of Discontinued (i.e., Accelerated Progress) decreased slightly from 72% in 2016–2017 to 71% in

Figure 3. Average Gain in Observation Survey Total Scores for Full Program Reading Recovery Students by Outcome Status and Typical First Graders, 2022–2023

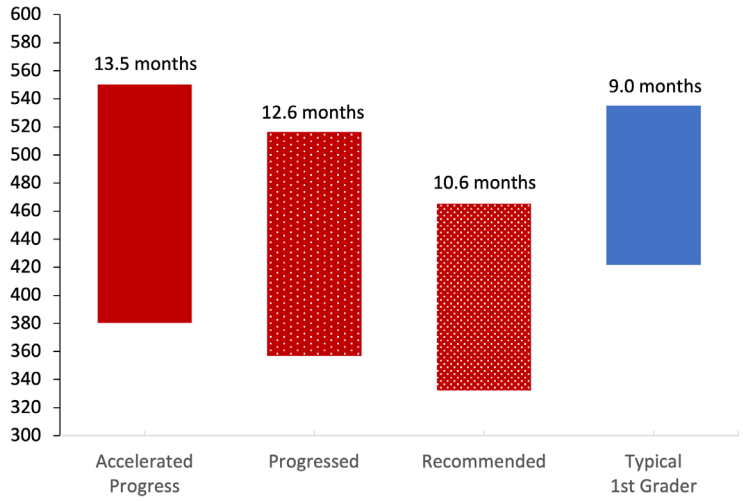
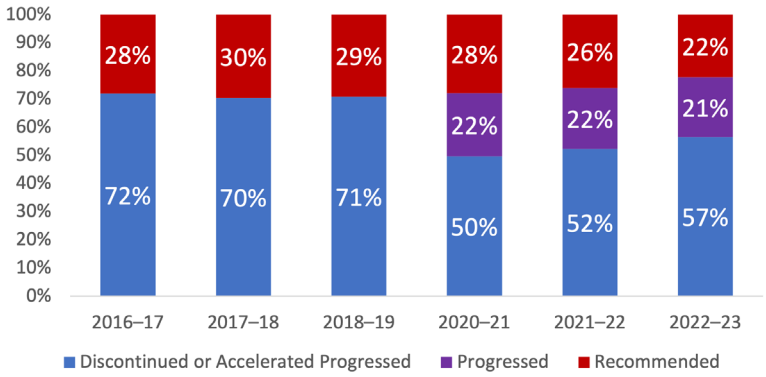


Figure 4. Percentages of Full Program Reading Recovery Students by Outcome Status, 2016–2017 to 2018–2019, 2020–2021 Through 2022–2023



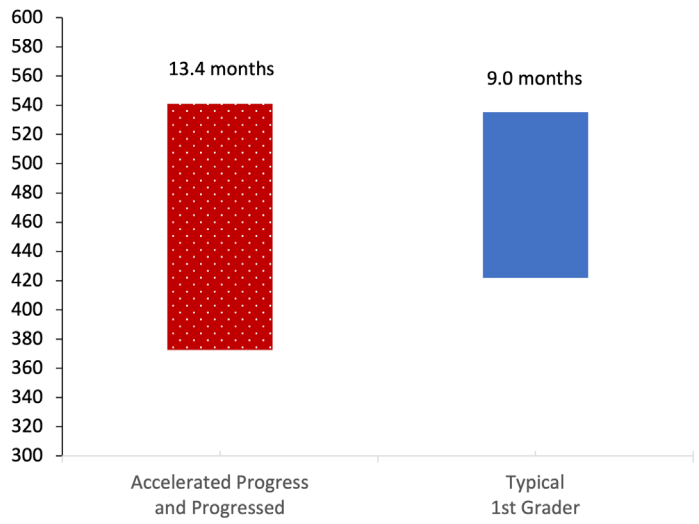
Note: Proportions are not shown for 2019–2020 because data collection was interrupted due to school closures that occurred at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2018–2019 and inversely, the proportions of students with an outcome status of Recommended increased slightly from 28% in 2016–2017 to 29% in 2018–2019. The proportions of students with an outcome status of Progressed has been constant at 22% and 21% in the 3 school years since this status category has been introduced, but the proportion of students with an outcome status of Accelerated Progress initially increased slightly from 50% to 52%, then increased again to 57%. The proportion of students with an outcome status of Recommended initially decreased slightly from 28% to 26%, then decreased again to 22%.

Prior to the introduction of the outcome status of Progressed, most Reading Recovery students who completed the intervention were successfully discontinued after the Reading Recovery intervention (~70%). Now that the outcome status of Progressed has been introduced, we see that most full program students in Reading Recovery are given outcome statuses of Accelerated Progress or Progressed (i.e., 72% in 2020–2021, 74% in 2021–2022, and 78% in 2022–2023). Post-pandemic, it appears that while the proportion of students with an outcome status of Progressed remained constant, the percentage of students with an outcome status of Accelerated Progress increased (57%) and the percentage of students with an outcome status of Recommended decreased (22%). Before the introduction of the new outcome status (i.e., Progressed), it appears that most students with an outcome status of Progressed might have been given an outcome status of Accelerated Progress and fewer of them might have been given an outcome status of Recommended. It will be interesting to see if the proportions of the students in each of these groups change in the coming years or if they stay constant.

Since most full program Reading Recovery students post-pandemic (i.e., 78%) had an outcome status of Accelerated Progress or Progressed, we wondered what the average literacy growth of the students in these two groups combined would be compared to the random sample. As seen in Figure 5, the

Figure 5. Average Gain in Observation Survey Total Score for Accelerated Progress and Progressed Students Combined and Typical First Graders, 2022–2023



average growth in months on the Observation Survey Total Score for students in these two groups combined was 13.4 months, which was not very different from the average growth in months made by students with an outcome status of Accelerated Progress (i.e., 13.5 months). The two groups combined (78% of full program Reading Recovery students) had an average fall Observation Survey Total Score that was 49 points lower than the typical U.S. first grader (422 vs. 472, respectively) but ended the school year with an average that was 6 points higher (535 vs. 541, respectively).

Research Question 3

What were the distributions of scores on the Observation Survey Text Reading Level task of the typical first grader (i.e., the random sample students) in the fall, mid-year, and year-end pre- and post-pandemic?

To answer research question three, we examined the distributions of random sample students' Observation Survey Total Scores at fall, mid-year, and year-end pre-pandemic and post-pandemic (i.e., 2018–2019 vs. 2022–2023). We used the random sample students' scores because we wanted to characterize the typical first grade classroom before and after the start of the pandemic. We used the scores on the Observation Survey Text Reading Level task because completing this task required students to integrate many kinds of information. For example, completing this task successfully requires that students know the conventions used in print language (e.g., punctuation symbols), and it requires that

Figure 6a. **Distributions of Scores on Text Reading Level Task of Typical First Graders in the Fall Before and After the Pandemic, 2018–2019 and 2022–2023**

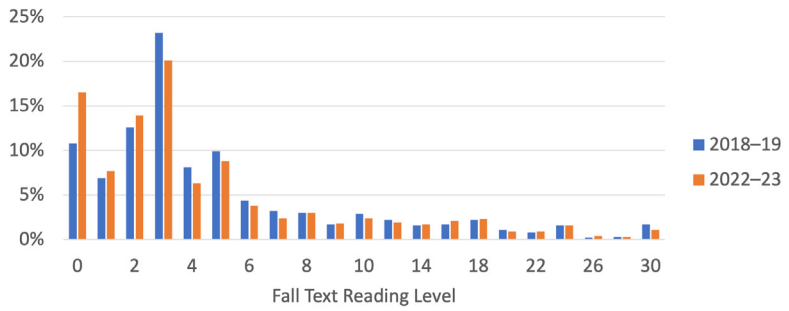


Figure 6b. **Distributions of Scores on Text Reading Level Task of Typical First Graders at Mid-Year Before and After the Pandemic, 2018–2019 and 2022–2023**

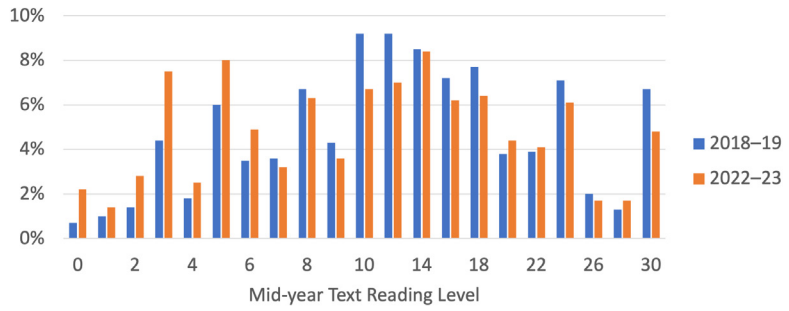
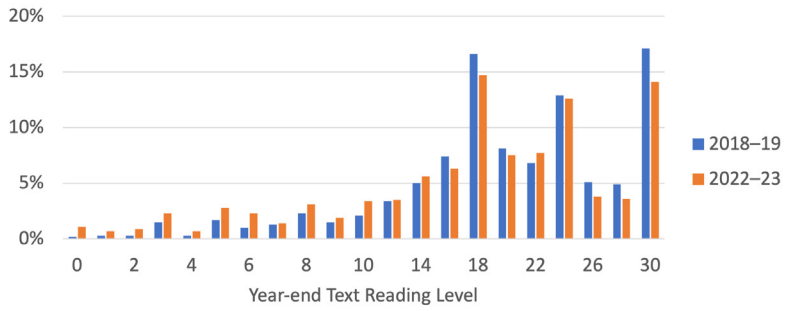


Figure 6c. **Distributions of Scores on Text Reading Level Task of Typical First Graders at Year-End Before and After the Pandemic, 2018–2019 and 2022–2023**



students know how to make sense of the visual patterns that exist in written text (e.g., single letters, clusters of letters, word parts, words, and phrases).

As seen in Figure 6a, the percentage of students entering first grade with lower scores on the Text Reading Level task has increased since the pandemic. Pre-pandemic, less than a third (30%) of U.S. first graders scored below a 3 on the fall Text Reading Level task. Post-pandemic, 38% of typical first graders read below a text level 3 in the fall. The pattern indicated here is repeated at mid-year and year-end in which the percentage of students reading at lower levels has increased post-pandemic. The percentage of students reading below a level 3 in the fall was an average of 43% during the pandemic. Post-pandemic, the percentage has started to recover but was still notably higher than it was before the pandemic.

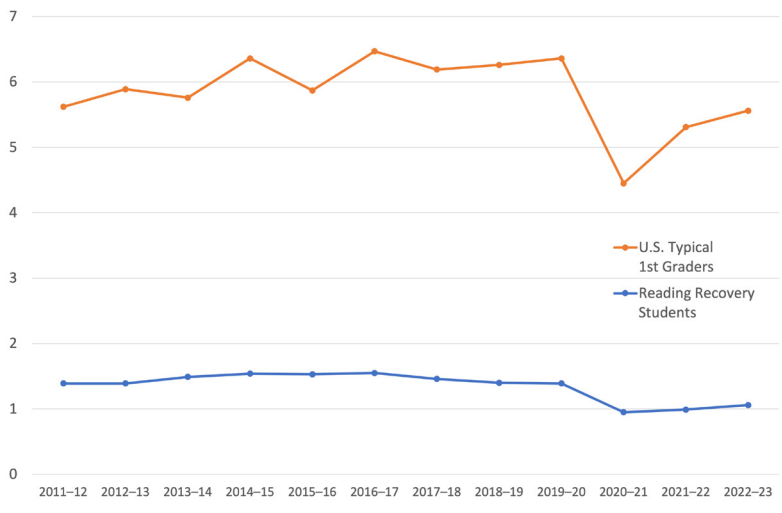
As seen in Figure 6b, pre-pandemic, only 19% of typical first graders scored below a level 7 on the Text Reading Level task at mid-year. Post-pandemic, 29% of typical first graders scored below a level 7 at mid-year.

In Figure 6c, distributions for year-end Text Reading Level scores again reveal this pattern. Pre-pandemic, about a fifth of students (21%) scored below a Text Reading Level of 16 at year-end. Post-pandemic, 30% of typical first graders read below this level.

This pattern also appeared at the highest reading levels. For example, at the end of first grade pre-pandemic, 79% of typical first graders had scores of 16 or higher on the Text Reading Level task while post-pandemic, only 70% had a Text Reading Level score of 16 or higher. The percentage of students who were reading at the highest text levels dropped notably during the pandemic, then recovered slightly post-pandemic, but did not return to pre-pandemic levels. These data indicate that Text Reading Level scores decreased notably after the pandemic for typical first graders. Although these scores have begun to recover, there is still a considerable decrease when compared to pre-pandemic scores.

We wanted to understand how Reading Recovery students compared to typical first graders on Text Reading Level pre- and post-pandemic as well. To do this, we compared the Text Reading Level scores for students in 680 schools receiving Reading Recovery from the 2011–2012 school year through the 2022–2023 school year. As seen in Figure 7, both typical first graders (random sample students) and Reading Recovery students saw a notable decrease in Text Reading Level scores from pre-pandemic data. During the pandemic, both Reading Recovery students' and typical first graders' scores decreased by about 30%. However, post-pandemic, typical first graders' fall scores decreased by only 11% while Reading Recovery students' fall scores decreased by 21% when compared to this group's pre-pandemic scores. Thus, we can see that typical first graders have shown greater improvement on their fall Text Reading Level scores than Reading Recovery students, indicating that Reading Recovery students are entering first grade at notably lower rates post-pandemic.

Figure 7. Fall Text Reading Level Scores of Typical First Graders and Reading Recovery Students, 2011–2012 Through 2022–2023



These data provide context for Reading Recovery in the post-pandemic landscape by demonstrating the changes that have occurred both within the program and for typical first graders since the pandemic. We examined changes and factors affecting students with an exit status of Incomplete since the pandemic, as well as the literacy progress for students with this exit status. We also examined data from students with an outcome status of Progressed, comparing them to other full program students and historical rates of outcome statuses prior to the introduction of this category. We have seen fluctuations in exit statuses since the introduction of the Progressed status and will continue to monitor change in these rates. Finally, we examined the fall Text Reading Level scores for typical first graders pre- and post-pandemic to deepen our understanding of the context in which Reading Recovery instruction occurs and compared these data to fall Text Reading Level scores for Reading Recovery students pre- and post-pandemic. Reading Recovery professionals may find it useful to further analyze their data at the site and local school levels to find whether the patterns examined here are reflected at their own sites and schools. It is our goal that trainers and teacher leaders may use these data to further understand their students and make instructional and programmatic decisions.

References

Clay, M. M. (2019). *An observation survey of early literacy achievement* (4th ed.). Heinemann.

Doyle, M. A. (2020). Introducing new intervention status categories for Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura students. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 20*(1), 5–16.

Mauck, S., Pinkerton, L., & Nelson, K. (2023). A report of national outcomes for Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura for the 2021–2022 school year. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 22*(2), 64–71.

NOTE: All data are from the IDEC national summary reports 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. Kate Nelson is the International Data Evaluation Center manager at The Ohio State University. Her background includes serving as a literacy professor and researcher, as well as directing a literacy intervention program.

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.

What Works Clearinghouse 2023 Reading Recovery Intervention Report: The Rest of the Story

Robert M. Schwartz, Oakland University

In July 2023, the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) completed their fourth Reading Recovery® Intervention Report. This report indicates potentially positive effects in four outcome domains: Literacy achievement, writing productivity, receptive communications, and writing conventions. The literacy achievement domain is given a Tier 2 rating, based on one study that meets WWC standards with 6,888 students and showing strong evidence of improvement. The other three domains are given a Tier 3 rating, based on one study that meets WWC standards with less than 350 students. But this is far from the whole story! In the sections below, I'll explain what administrators and teachers need to know about the available research evidence on the effectiveness of the Reading Recovery intervention.

ESSA Evidence Tiers

The ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act) evidence tiers are a relatively new addition to WWC intervention reports. Tier 1 indicates strong evidence of effectiveness and is defined as a study that meets WWC standards without reservations and has at least one statistically significant positive effect, with at least 350 students from two or more educational sites (https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/essa). "The WWC incorporates these evidence tier definitions into its effectiveness ratings to simplify the usability of ratings for education decision makers who often need to identify evidence that aligns with the U.S. Department of Education's definitions" (WWC, 2022, p. 131).

A search of the WWC's literacy intervention reports includes 131 programs listed by their evidence tier and within tiers by the date of the intervention report. I am surprised and disappointed that Reading Recovery was not given a Tier 1 rating. The evaluation of the Reading Recovery scale-up grant (May et al., 2016) provides the strongest possible evidence of the intervention's effectiveness. Scale-up grants were only given to programs that had already demonstrated potentially positive effects. May et al.'s 2016 independent evaluation of Reading Recovery under scale-up conditions provides Tier 1 evidence of positive effects. So why doesn't the 2023 intervention report indicate this?

Why Not?

Reading Recovery's effect on literacy achievement was rated as Tier 1 in the recently revised (2023) WWC single study review of May et al. (2016) analysis of the Reading Recovery scale-up grant (https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Study/90698). This evidence is considered Tier 1 because it is based on a well-conducted randomized controlled trial that meets WWC's design criteria without reservation. In addition, the findings on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Observation Survey; Clay, 2019) reading measures are significant, positive, and large.

However, for intervention reports, WWC adds to the ESSA evidence criteria the requirement that two studies show strong evidence to receive a Tier 1 rating. The Reading Recovery Intervention Report (2023) rates the literacy achievement evidence as Tier 2, since May et al. (2016) is considered only one study. With this additional criterion, both the definition of a study and the time limits for consideration of studies are critical.

Definition of a study

So, what qualifies as a study according to WWC?

> The core of the WWC evidence review process is the assessment of eligible studies against WWC standards. The definition of a study is important, given how the WWC reports on and summarizes evidence. The WWC defines a study as an examination of the effect of an intervention on a group

> of participants in which assignment to conditions was coordinated (*WWC Procedures and Standards Handbook*, 2022, p. 20).

This document further explains that a manuscript may contain a single study or multiple studies depending on sample overlap.

The requirement that at least two studies show positive results to receive WWC's highest rating is reasonable. The National Science Foundation and the Institute of Education Sciences (2018) agree "there is a need to increase the visibility and value of reproducibility and replication studies among education research stakeholders" (p. 1). Replication of findings in educational or psychological research is rare. They define direct replication as

> studies that seek to replicate findings from a previous study using the same, or as similar as possible, research methods and procedures as a previous study. The goal of direct replication studies is to test whether the results found in the previous study were due to error or chance. This is done by collecting data with a new, but similar, sample and holding all the research methods and procedures constant. (2018, p. 2)

The May et al. (2016) evaluation of the Reading Recovery scale-up grant provides this type of direct replication and eliminates the possibility that the strong positive findings are due to error or chance. This research includes data from four randomized controlled trials with large samples that came from different schools, teachers, and students in each year of the scale-up. There is no sample overlap across years. WWC chose to treat this data as one study. Educational decision makers should realize that the replication of strong literacy achievement outcomes in May et al. provides Tier 1 evidence of Reading Recovery's effectiveness under scale-up conditions!

What about the Tier 3 ratings in the domains of writing productivity and receptive communications? This is based on one study (Burroughs-Lange & Douëtil, 2007) that met WWC standards with reservations and included less than 350 students. So, this rating seems appropriate.

Table 4 of the intervention report shows that the measures linked to these domains in Burroughs-Lange & Douëtil (2007) were the Writing Vocabulary and Hearing and Recording Sounds in Word subscales of the Observation Survey. The WWC's single study review of May et al. (2016) also includes an analysis of these measures in the supplemental findings section (https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Study/90698). Whether you consider the May et al. research one study or four, combining their findings with the Burroughs-Lange & Douëtil (2007) results would yield Tier 1 ratings for the writing productivity and receptive communications domains.

WWC has generated Reading Recovery Intervention Reports in 2003, 2007, 2013, and 2023. The first three intervention reports showed positive or potentially positive evidence in the domains of alphabetics, reading fluency, comprehension, and general reading achievement. (ESSA tiers were not an aspect of these earlier reports.) Evidence related to these domains came partially from the subscales of the Observation Survey. The most recent version of WWC's (2022) *Procedures and Standards Handbook* reports subscales within supplemental findings of single study reviews and does not include them when reporting domain findings for intervention reports. This change makes it harder for decision makers to find relevant evidence.

For example, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills has a reading words subscale and a comprehension subscale. These scales relate to the WWC domains of alphabetics and comprehension, but now can only be found in the supplemental section of the single study review. The analyses in May et al. (2016) and Schwartz & Lomax (2020) combined with the evidence in WWC's 2013 Reading Recovery Intervention Report support Tier 1 ratings in alphabetic, reading fluency, comprehension, and general reading achievement.

Subgroup analyses are also reported by WWC as supplemental findings and not included in the main intervention report. Both May et al. (2016) and Schwartz & Lomax (2020) report evidence of effectiveness for the subgroup of English learners. Again, the four large independent samples of this subgroup show that Reading Recovery is highly effective for English learners.

Time limits

The WWC's 2013 Reading Recovery Intervention Report was issued during the third year of the scale-up grant. The first-year results from this scale-up research

were reported by May et al. in 2013. This research was not included in the 2013 Reading Recovery Intervention Report. In fact, the 2013 intervention report included one less study than was included in the 2006 report.

Delaying the production of a new Reading Recovery Intervention Report to 2023 has distorted the effectiveness evidence in multiple ways. The WWC *Procedures and Standards Handbook* (2022, p. 23) limits the evidence review to the past 20 years. This eliminates all but one of the studies included in the 2006 intervention report that provided the research base for the i3 scale-up grant — Schwartz (2005). The WWC (2021) *Reading Language Arts Review Protocol* further restricts the timeframe for eligible studies to 15 years. As previously noted, the number of studies providing evidence is a critical component of WWC effectiveness ratings and is impacted by the timing of the review and the time limit on eligible studies.

What the Evidence Says

The delay in updating the Reading Recovery Intervention Report and the changes made to WWC procedures across this delay combine to limit and distort the evidence of effectiveness available to decision makers. Reading Recovery research provides Tier 1 evidence of effectiveness in multiple beginning reading domains. The ESSA Tier 1 criteria require one well-designed study showing positive effects with at least 350 students from two or more educational sites. The May et al. (2016) report far exceeds these criteria with four large independent samples, including a total of 6,888 students from 1,254 schools. Reading Recovery continues to provide teachers with the professional knowledge needed to support at-risk beginning readers and is effective for teachers and their students when brought to scale as designed. And now, as Paul Harvey might have said, you know the rest of the story.

References

Burroughs-Lange, S., & Douëtil, J. (2007). Literacy progress of young children from poor urban settings: A Reading Recovery comparison study. *Literacy Teaching and Learning, 12*(1), 19–46.

Clay, M. M. (2016). *Literacy lessons designed for individuals* (2nd ed.). Heinemann.

Clay, M. M. (2019). *An observation survey of early literacy achievement* (4th ed.). Heinemann.

Expanding the Story

But, of course, this is only the part of the story told by experimental research. Marie Clay developed and refined Reading Recovery based on observational research. She provided a lesson framework, a set of procedures, and a learning community that enables teachers to observe and adjust their instruction based on the strengths and needs of individual students (Clay, 2016; https://readingrecovery.org). This is what makes Reading Recovery so effective.

The Journal of Reading Recovery has a multitude of articles designed to support Reading Recovery teachers. Across 30-plus years as a member of the Reading Recovery community, I have had the opportunity to expand and share my learning.

For teachers and administrators interested in learning more about the theory behind Reading Recovery instruction, the following articles provide a good start. Clay knew that, with a topic as complex as beginning reading, there is no end to the story.

Schwartz, R. M. (1997). Self-monitoring in beginning reading. *The Reading Teacher, 51*(1), 40–48. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/292464987_Self-monitoring_in_beginning_reading

Schwartz, R. M. (2005). Decisions, decisions: Responding to primary students during guided reading. *The Reading Teacher, 58*(5), 436–443. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/250055745_Decisions_Decisions_Responding_to_Primary_Students_During_Guided_Reading

Schwartz, R. M. (2015). Why not sound it out? *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 14*(2), 39–46. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276205126_Why_Not_Sound_It_Out

Schwartz, R. M., Bates, C. C., Klein, A., Morgan, D. N., & Williams, J. L. (2021). The role of observation in advancing the science of reading and instruction. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 21*(1), 47–55. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/355379250_The_role_of_observation_in_advancing_the_science_of_reading_and_Instruction

May, H., Gray, A., Gillespie, J. N., Sirinides, P., Sam, C., Goldsworthy, H., Armijo, M., & Tognatta, N. (2013). *Evaluation of the i3 scale-up of Reading Recovery year one report, 2011–12*. Consortium for Policy Research in Education.

May, H., Sirinides, P., Gray, A., & Goldsworthy, H. (2016). *Reading Recovery: An evaluation of the four-year i3 scale-up*. Consortium for Policy Research in Education. Retrieved from http://www.cpre.org/reading-recovery-evaluation-four-year-i3-scale

National Science Foundation and Institute of Education Sciences (2018). *Companion guidelines on replication & reproducibility in education research*. Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/pdf/

Schwartz, R. M. (2005). Literacy learning of at-risk first grade students in the Reading Recovery early intervention. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 97*(2), 257–267.

Schwartz, R. M., & Lomax, R. G. (2020). Evidence for action: A secondary analysis of the Reading Recovery scale-up. *The Journal of Reading Recovery, 20*(1), 52–58.

What Works Clearinghouse (2021). *Reading language arts review protocol.*, V 4.1. Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/ReferenceResources/ELA_Synthesis_Protocol_V4.1.pdf

What Works Clearinghouse (2022). *Procedures and standards handbook*, V. 5. Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/referenceresources/Final_WWC-HandbookVer5_0-0-508.pdf

What Works Clearinghouse (2023). *Reading Recovery intervention report*. Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/InterventionReports/WWC_RR_IR-report.pdf CompanionGuidelinesReplicationReproducibility.pdf

About the Author

Dr. Robert Schwartz is an emeritus professor in the Department of Reading and Language Arts at Oakland University in Rochester, MI. He is a past president of and former research consultant for the Reading Recovery Council of North America. His research interests include self-monitoring in beginning reading, early literacy intervention, research design, and professional development for literacy teachers. In the What Works Clearinghouse 2007 review of 887 studies from 153 beginning reading programs, Dr. Schwartz's Reading Recovery research was one of only 27 studies that met WWC's standards without reservations. He can be reached at rschwart@oakland.edu.

President's Message

LitCon 2024 Offers Learning Opportunities for Everyone

RRCNA President Debra Rich

Please plan to join me in Columbus for LitCon 2024. Bring a team, including your administrator. With over 100 sessions for Grades K–8, there are learning opportunities for everyone!

Saturday learning: PreCons and the Leadership Institute

When you arrive early on Saturday morning, you will be able to spend the day exploring in-depth study by registering for one of six PreCon sessions. Be an advocate and invite administrators, curriculum directors, teacher leaders, and coaches to the Leadership Institute. Spend a full day learning from Diane Sweeney as she presents "Foundations for Student-Centered Coaching." Then stay for the Leadership strand through the remainder of the conference and hear from school leaders who have implemented strong literacy programs in their buildings and districts.

Conference highlights

The conference kicks off on Saturday evening with an energetic keynote by Dr. Shuaib Meacham, titled, "Literacy, Joy, and Resilience: Hip Hop Literacy, Youth Excellence and the Power of Hip Hop for Educators." Be prepared for an inspiring keynote that will transform how you view literacy education. Experience dynamic examples, incredible stories, and innovative teaching strategies that will leave you energized to ignite a passion for learning in students and ready to empower the youth of today for a brilliant tomorrow! Meacham will follow up with a session on Sunday morning.

Dr. Peter Johnston opens the general session on Monday morning with his keynote, "Unshrinking Literacy, Teaching, and Learning." While children need to acquire "the code" to access print, it is also important to consider the nature of the literacy children acquire. Children's social and emotional development lies squarely in the heart of the language arts and the literate talk within which they are immersed, and that development, in turn, supports literacy development.

Tuesday, you will have the exciting opportunity to hear Jason Reynolds, the 2020–2022 National Ambassador for Young People's Literature. He makes regular appearances on various media outlets and is a #1 *New York Times* bestselling author. His message, "STAMPED: Reflections on Integrating Characters & Stories of Difference," will surely leave an imprint on you.

Come for the learning, connect with friends new and old, enjoy the exhibitors, and win big at the Big Win! We look forward to seeing you in Columbus. Register at https://literacyconference.org/registration/

Executive Director's Message

We Are Strongest Together: The Reading Recovery Community

RRCNA Executive Director Billy Molasso

You know that feeling when you're looking for your lost keys and stumble on something you've long missed, but thought was gone forever? That's serendipity, defined as "luck that takes the form of finding valuable or pleasant things that are not looked for" (Thanks, Webster!)

Sometimes, a small, everyday event will surprise you, transforming a routine task into an illuminating shift in perspective that's anything but mundane.

At the recent fall business meeting for the North American Trainers Group (NATG), I experienced such a surprise. You could call it a serendipity of the soul, a treasure hidden amongst spreadsheets, status updates, and day-to-day task planning.

Before we engaged in the day's agenda, one of our fabulous Canadian trainers, Melissa Wilde, invited the team to gather in a circle. One by one, each member of the group spoke a single word that brought them joy. It was a simple question, but with each simple answer given—family… music… dogs—our smiles widened, and our connections strengthened.

Next, we watched an interview with Archbishop Desmond Tutu in which he explained the concept of *ubuntu*. (The 3-minute video is well worth your time!) Tutu explains that ubuntu is the essence of being human. He shares, "Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness … We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole world. When you do well, it spreads out; it is for the whole of humanity."

> As a community we are stronger because we work together, hope together, and of course, share common joys and sorrows.

The circle exercise illustrated his point so clearly—our individual joys became communal strength. Not only did this exercise join the team in a powerful moment of humanity, it prepared us for productive collaboration, reminding us that we were a community with a common mission, and that we were strongest together.

Thank you for inviting the Reading Recovery Community into your circle. As a community we are stronger because we work together, hope together, and of course, share common joys and sorrows. In the face of the political and corporate interests that seek to destroy Reading Recovery, we remain a strong community with a common mission. Ubuntu. We are because you are.

Scan to hear Archbishop Tutu's explanation of ubuntu.

Update on the Reading Recovery Suggested Book List: We Need Your Help!

Every year the North American Trainers Group oversees a process of screening titles for the book list that is accessed by educators who are members of RRCNA. A committee of trainers and teacher leaders screen the titles for appropriateness and then follow a process of field testing the titles with students in Reading Recovery® lessons. For over 3 years, the committee had difficulty completing the review and field-testing processes due to limited in-person lessons during the pandemic. No new books were added to the list during that period, and it has become increasingly difficult to accomplish this full process. Ironically, this has been a period of great increase of published titles with a wide variety of genres and text types which have not yet been added to the list. Reading Recovery professionals are not limited to using books on this list but do rely on these suggested titles as they select books for their initial set of materials and for packets they may want to add at various levels.

What is the Book List?

Reading Recovery is an early intervention program for at-risk first-grade children. Because children in Reading Recovery have very specific gaps in developing an effective literacy processing system, a fine gradient of difficulty in texts is needed to support the intervention. A new book is introduced every day of the lesson series, and books are read and reread frequently.

Because of the constant and continual use of texts that fall within this specific gradient of difficulty, a list of books recommended for use during Reading Recovery lessons has been created. Currently, there are thousands of titles on the Reading Recovery Book List. Each book is assigned a level from 1–30 to indicate an increasingly complex gradient of texts. As reading and writing skills improve, students read more-challenging books and book types with a range of genres and text types in their lessons.

How Does a Text Become Part of the Book List?

All texts submitted must go through a rigorous research-based process. Submitting a text for review does not guarantee inclusion on the list. In fact, part of the process of field-testing books is to use them within regular lessons in a range of settings and students. New books are always being released, so the book list is normally updated yearly. The timeline for this process varies and while the pandemic limited field testing of the titles, the plan is to continue the review of those books with a shorter pilot process this year. This year, Reading Recovery is continuing to pilot a new timeline to streamline the process of adding books to the book list. For example, the initial screening in June lessened the number of total titles for field testing which save time for all involved. In addition, many new features are being added to the website including very easy searching of levels, genres, and many other factors.

What's Happening in 2023–2024?

The current screening committee has been faced with a big task to accomplish. To begin the process, a group of trainers and experienced teacher leaders gathered at Saint Mary's College of California in June 2023, to screen over 1,700 titles submitted by a wide range of publishers, some of which had never submitted books previously. In an intense 3-day meeting, the committee first screened the titles for appropriate use in lessons; the levels suggested by publishers ranged from 1–28, with most being in the 7–18 span. The books are initially screened to ensure that there is a range of representation of people and settings with appropriate use of language structure and related issues. After this initial review, the books are accepted for field testing.

Improvements to the process

We are now beginning the second year of piloting an expedited process in which we conduct calls for new titles annually. Timelines for the process have shifted and take into consideration needs for educators for the new school year.

We have reduced the number of copies of each title that publishers need to submit for books selected for field testing to make it easier and more cost effective. We have expanded the actual book list database to include more information about many of the individual titles, and new titles added to the book list will all have the more in-depth

information about each title included as we add them later this school year.

Spanish language book updates

Later, during the 2023–2024 school year, the list will include Spanish and bilingual titles appropriate for Descubriendo la Lectura and reviewed by DLL teacher leaders and teachers, for the first time. We are adding books in Spanish as part of a parallel process leveling Spanish language titles for use in DLL. These lists are being merged as a resource for Reading Recovery and DLL professionals for the first time.

Timeline Summary 2023–2024

The following is a summary of the field-testing process. The first step following the receipt of the books is a review of all books by a group of Reading Recovery trainers and highly experienced teacher leaders by the end of the summer. At that time, each book will be reviewed as appropriate or not for use in Reading Recovery lessons. If the text is found appropriate, there will be a request sent to publishers for additional copies that will be used to field test the book with Reading Recovery students during lessons.

The timeframe of the book leveling process will also be changing; we are continuing to pilot a shorter procedure this year.

March 1 to June 1, 2023
Accepting books for review; one copy of each text

July 1, 2023
Publishers notified of books accepted with invoices

August 1, 2023
Payment of a fee along with 10 copies of each text due

Fall 2023
Field testing with Reading Recovery volunteers

May 1, 2024
Field testing completed and final levels analyzed

June 1, 2024
Notification to publishers of book official levels and added to book list

Volunteer Information

Field testing work is intended to be within the existing Reading Recovery lessons. Volunteers will get a sneak peek at new books, keep their field testing books, and be part of an exciting hands-on professional development experience. Teacher leaders can volunteer to host a field testing site, and we are currently inviting participation through the Reading Recovery Community site.

Volunteers must

- have several years of experience in Reading Recovery,
- attend one training session virtually or watch a recording of the training session,
- level all books in their packet(s) — books will be sent in packets of 10 different titles,
- be an active member of the review community or join RRCNA to access online resources, and
- submit data electronically by May 1, 2024, in an easy-to-use online form.

Field Testing Improvements

- Use an easy online form to submit your data, so the process fits into a teacher's everyday schedule.
- Begin with initial field testing levels so teachers know exactly when to start testing.
- Books are distributed in packets of 10, so teachers can select the best number of books to commit to this year.

Packets of books like these could be on their way to you! Field testing works within your existing Reading Recovery lessons. Volunteers get a sneak peek at new books, keep their field testing books, and share an exciting hands-on professional development experience.

- The deadline to field test the books and submit data is extended until May 1, 2024.

Book List Improvements for Use by Educators

- Indicating which books are newly uploaded
- Being able to search the book list by the year the books were updated
- Including photos of covers in the search
- Ability to leave comments under the books
- And other new options soon to be added

Final Thoughts for the Overall Process

If educators have any feedback on the list or levels, please share; this helps everyone to be more knowledgeable about the use of books in lessons. Of course, we encourage educators across a school site to join RRCNA so they can utilize this members-only resource!

We're Here to Help

If you have questions about the process or anything in this article, please contact the authors:

Dr. Adria Klein, trainer and chair of the Book List Committee: aklein@stmarys-ca.edu

Meghan Farynowski, RRCNA assistant director of engagement: mfarynowski@readingrecovery.org

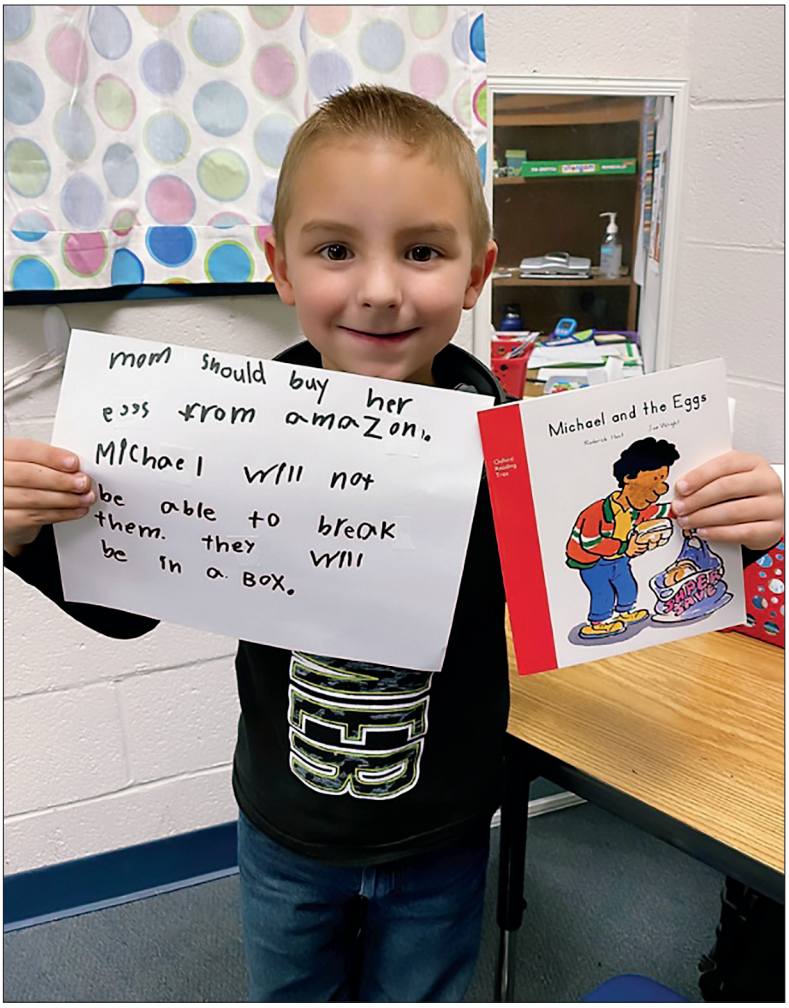
The Last Word

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.

Revisionist Reader

One lesson, I told Asher that we were going to read my very favorite story, *Michael and the Eggs* (Roderick Hunt, 1997). After Asher read the book, I asked him if he thought mom would send Michael to the store again to buy eggs for her. He said, "No, but she could just get them from Amazon. That would solve all of her problems." Asher wrote about how the sequel to *Michael and the Eggs* would go in our modern day world.

— *Courtney Smith*



Asher adds the modern touch to his teacher's favorite story.

It's All In a Name

My student had an amazing discovery yesterday during our lesson. Her name is Beverly and she started to encounter the word "Every" in text. She stopped and looked at me and said, "You know, that word is like Beverly — I am just taking off the B and the L and it's every! Just amazing!"

Then she said, "You know, the author of a lot of these books has the same name as me "Beverly" and my mom's name is Randi, so it's like we are the authors because it says Beverley Randall."

— *Annette Fracassa*

Inclusion through Literacy: Stories for All Voices

Join your colleagues to explore your role as a literacy educator in supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion with three days of in-depth professional development.

Our Destination

Margaritaville Resort

1600 North Indian Canyon Drive
Palm Springs, California 92262

This family-friendly resort is your oasis in the desert to stay, play & soak up the sun! Discounted conference rates starting at $139 are available June 10-14, 2024. Book online or call 866-403-1929 and use the code 5839109 by May 20, 2024.

Conference rates

The Teacher Leader Institute is required professional development for active teacher leaders and teacher leaders-in-training in the United States. Reading Recovery trainers, trainers-in-training, and site coordinators are also encouraged to attend.

	Early Bird Rates before April 16	Regular Rates after April 16
	Member / Nonmember rates	
Teacher Leader	$650 / $750 *plus the annual $50 TL Registry fee	$750 / $850 *plus the annual $50 TL Registry fee
TL-in-Training	$600 / $700	$700 / $800
Trainer	$635 / $735	$735 / $835
Site Coordinator	$635 / $735	$735 / $835

Get details and register at
readingrecovery.org/teacher-leader-institute2024/

Reading Recovery Council of North America
150 East Wilson Bridge Road, Suite 200
Worthington, OH 43085

Nonprofit Org.
US Postage
PAID
Columbus, Ohio
Permit No. 8562

Our vision:
We ensure the competencies necessary for a literate and productive future for children learning to read and write.

Phone 614.310.READ (7323) *Fax* 614.310.7345
Visit Us Online **www.readingrecovery.org**

Annual Appeal

FOUNDATION FOR STRUGGLING READERS

Supporting the Reading Recovery Community

Support the little learners most in need by building the expertise of the educators who serve them.

Powered by gifts of all sizes, the Foundation for Struggling Readers supports educators, students, and communities through transformative advocacy, development, and engagement.

Every Gift Helps!

Help the Foundation for Struggling Readers meet its $50,000 fundraising goal:

- Make a one-time or recurring donation
- Contribute in honor of a loved one
- Direct a required minimum disbursement to the Foundation
- Remember the Foundation in your estate planning

Scan to donate