CHANGE IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE READING RECOVERY DESIGN.

Change is an integral part of the Reading Recovery design. Nobel Prize winner Kenneth Wilson wrote, "Reading Recovery offers U.S. education its first real demonstration of the power of a process combining research, development (including ongoing teacher education), marketing, and technical support in an orchestrated system of change" (Wilson & Daviss, 1994, p. 76).

Reading Recovery is a dynamic program that changes in response to ongoing research. Theoretical constructs, teaching practices, and implementation are constantly examined in search of the most effective procedures (Jones & Smith-Burke, 1999). An examination of the evolving works of Marie Clay provides evidence of change over time.

This section highlights issues of change and constancy that provide both flexibility and stability for Reading Recovery at the national, school district, and local school levels. This section is organized into two parts:

> A. Reading Recovery's built-in mechanisms for change including the central document for theory and practice, the internal processes of data collection and reporting, the ongoing professional development process, the standards and guidelines, and the international network

> B. Areas of change recommended by the Internet letter, especially the inclusion of explicit instruction in phonics and phonemic awareness

A. Reading Recovery has built-in mechanisms for change.

Change in Reading Recovery is not left to chance. Several systems ensure careful and responsible responses to patterns of change and constancy.

1. The *Guidebook* reflects changes in theory and practice.

Patterns of change are evident in the evolving editions of Reading Recovery's central program document, *Reading Recovery: A*

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(Wilson and Daviss, 1994)

Guidebook for Teachers in Training (Clay, 1993b). Originally published as *Early Detection of Reading Difficulties* (1979/1985), it was thoroughly revised and retitled in 1993. An examination of these books reveals significant additions over years of development, including the following:

- more intensive attention to and detailed description of the role of phonemic awareness;

- explicit directions for teachers in helping children use letter-sound relationships, more phonemic awareness, and phonics;

- more deliberate focus on comprehending strategies during the reading of a new book;

- differentiation between the way the teacher supports children during the reading of a new text and the role of familiar reading; and,

- more information on how to teach for fluency and phrasing.

The *Guidebook* is a central and constant resource for teachers not only during professional development sessions but also as they do their daily teaching. Changes in the *Guidebook* result from a careful examination of current research across a wide range of disciplines and perspectives and are carefully examined and acted upon each year by all persons involved in Reading Recovery. Professional development for purposes of increasing teacher skill and updating practice is a requirement for Reading Recovery teachers as long as they are involved in Reading Recovery.

2. Data collection and analysis guide changes.

Internal Reading Recovery processes use data collection and analysis to inform changes in implementation at local, state, and national levels. Reading Recovery teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators at every training site systematically collect and report data on every child to the National Data Evaluation Center located at The Ohio State University. The center reports aggregated data at the school level, the school system level, the training site level, and the university training center level. Data collected allow school personnel to analyze results and improve implementation efficiency and effectiveness at all levels.

A partial list of data collected follows:

- status (outcome) categories of children: discontinued, recommended, incomplete, moved, none of the above

- number of lessons for individual children

The *Guidebook* is a central and constant resource for teachers not only during professional development sessions but as they do their daily teaching.

- number of weeks for individual children

- reasons for missed lessons for individual children

- years of experience for teachers

- number of retentions in first grade

- number of special education referrals and placements in first grade

- level of Reading Recovery coverage in the school (percent of lowest-achieving children served)

Analysis of these data has revealed important findings about Reading Recovery implementation at the national level. Among the findings,

- The level of Reading Recovery teacher coverage in schools is correlated with program success.

- Time is an important factor in program efficiency. Data are available for examination of time related to length of programs, missed lessons, and more.

- Teacher factors are also related to program outcomes. For example, trained and experienced teachers on average have more successful student outcomes than teachers-in-training.

Ongoing professional development ensures incorporation of new research and understanding of its applicability to the Reading Recovery lesson. A one-way mirror, a required part of Reading Recovery professional development, enables teachers to observe, reflect on, and discuss Reading Recovery lessons with a teacher leader or university trainer.

Local schools, districts, and university training centers use outcome data and implementation data to address program questions. In addition, observational and anecdotal data often lead to increased emphasis on implementation issues at the national level. For example, national conferences and publications focus on the key role local administrators play in creating an effective and efficient implementation.

3. Ongoing professional development disseminates changes.

Ongoing professional development ensures incorporation of new research and understanding of its applicability to the Reading Recovery lesson. Reading Recovery's professional development builds teacher skills and provides continuous updating so that trained Reading Recovery teachers incorporate changes as they occur. In fact, Hermann and Stringfield (1997) noted Reading Recovery's high-quality professional development: "As schools systematize and create more opportunities for serious staff devel-

opment, the thoroughness of the Reading Recovery model seems to be well worth emulating."

Ongoing professional development occurs at three levels: university trainers, site-based teacher leaders, and school-based teachers. Ongoing development is required for all Reading Recovery professionals throughout their involvement in Reading Recovery.

This continuing professional development across the entire Reading Recovery network is an important mechanism in the change process. Reading Recovery professionals receive up-to-date knowledge of new developments in the program. This self-renewal system accommodates changes that result from sound research and from carefully monitored developments.

4. Published standards and guidelines reflect changes.

Patterns of change and constancy are also evident in the *Standards and Guidelines of the Reading Recovery Council of North America.* It is well known that the effectiveness and efficiency of any intervention are tied directly to issues of implementation within a school or system. Most recently revised in 2001, the standards and guidelines are intended to protect the investment of adopters who are responsible for the establishment and maintenance of Reading Recovery.

Standards and guidelines are not arbitrary: they are based on underlying rationales supported by research on effective practices, national data evaluation, and research and observational data from the field. Changes are made as needed. Since 1993 there have been three editions of the standards and guidelines.

5. An international network of Reading Recovery trainers works to ensure the dynamic nature of the intervention.

An international network of Reading Recovery trainers (including faculty members from 23 universities in the United States) is responsible for guiding ongoing development and research efforts in Reading Recovery. The university trainer must have knowledge of what it means to bring about cycles of change in practice, but in ways that are consistent with the academic theories which support the program. Trainers bring several areas of expertise together in an ongoing way as Reading Recovery is problem-solved into educational settings. The university trainer's role is to think integratively about theory, bringing diverse areas of current theoretical and practical knowledge together into working relationships.

"As schools systematize and create more opportunities for serious staff development, the thoroughness of the Reading Recovery model seems to be well worth emulating."

(Hermann and Stringfield, 1997)

B. Reading Recovery responds to Internet letter change recommendations.

The Internet letter recommends three areas of change for Reading Recovery: increased group size, use of standardized outcome measures, and explicit instruction in phonics and phonemic awareness.

1. Increased group size

Internet letter arguments for change in group size are weak: To deny children effective one-to-one intervention based on research cited in the Internet letter would be irresponsible. The cost-effectiveness section of this report reviews substantial research evidence on the efficacy of one-to-one tutoring with the lowest-performing students (see pages 31 to 41).

2. Use of standardized outcome measures and continuous progress monitoring

Section III on assessment measures reviews the *Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Clay, 1993a/2002), a standard measure developed in research studies and used by Reading Recovery professionals. The Observation Survey includes the quality of sound assessment instruments with reliabilities, validities, and discrimination indices. In addition, research reviewed in Sections I and III demonstrates that Reading Recovery students perform well on norm-referenced tests after the intervention year (Askew et al., 2002; Brown et. al., 1999; Pinnell et al., 1994; Schmitt & Gregory, 2001).

Children are shown how to use letter-sound relationships to solve words in reading and writing and how to use structural analysis of words and learn spelling patterns.

3. Explicit instruction in phonics and phonemic awareness

The Internet letter claims that Reading Recovery does not include explicit instruction in phonics and phonemic awareness. Yet any astute observer of a Reading Recovery lesson would recognize the explicit teaching of letters, sounds, and words. Children are shown how to use letter-sound relationships to solve words in reading and writing and how to use structural analysis of words and learn spelling patterns. (For a detailed description of instruction in phonics and phonemic awareness within the Reading Recovery lesson, see Pinnell, 2000).

The Internet letter uses two studies (Iversen & Tunmer, 1993; Morris et al., 1990) to support this claim. The analyses that follow demonstrate the difficulties associated with using these studies as evidence.

> Interestingly, the increase in phonemic awareness and phonics that Iversen included in training of her experimental group had already been included in Reading Recovery programs around the world.

a. **Iversen and Tunmer** (1993). Iversen conducted a study that included two groups of Reading Recovery teachers-in-training. As the sole staff developer, she taught both groups, giving to one group the charge to implement an extra few minutes of phonological awareness training. (See page 18 for additional information regarding this study.)

Iversen herself had been trained as a teacher leader during the early years of Reading Recovery in New Zealand but was no longer teaching Reading Recovery and was not attending continuing professional development to receive program updates. Therefore, she was unaware that important changes to increase emphasis on phonemic awareness and phonics had already been incorporated in Reading Recovery. Thus, the Reading Recovery training provided to the traditional Reading Recovery group in effect deprived them of information about newer teaching practices.

Even so, results indicated that both Reading Recovery groups outperformed the control group on all measures—including measures of phoneme deletion and phoneme segmentation. The group with increased emphasis on phonemic awareness had programs that were shorter than Iversen's *traditional* group. Interestingly, the increase in phonemic awareness and phonics that Iversen included in training of her *experimental* group had already been included in Reading Recovery programs around the world.

b. **Morris, Tyner, and Perney** (2000). This is the second study cited in the Internet letter in support of explicit phonics. This study looked at some alternative staffing, training, and instructional approaches to early intervention. Morris and his colleagues did place a greater emphasis on isolated approaches to early intervention, but they also modeled more than three-quarters of the lesson format on Reading Recovery. The results indicated that students who participated in their First Steps program made better progress than a matched group of low students in nonparticipating comparison schools. This study was not designed to compare results against Reading Recovery or to isolate the contribution of a particular form of word study in relation to other program components. The claim in the Internet letter that "the addition of an explicit component addressing spelling-to-sound patterns was highly effective" (paragraph 7) seems questionable given that First Steps students received tutoring for the entire school year, averaging 91 lessons per student. The Morris, Tyner, and Perney study provides no demonstrated evidence that components should be added to Reading Recovery lessons.

C. Evidence shows that Reading Recovery teaches phonemic awareness and phonics.

A study by Stahl et al. (1999) demonstrates that Reading Recovery students do, in fact, perform well on tests of phonemic awareness and phonological coding. The study was conducted to determine whether techniques used in Reading Recovery lessons promoted progress in the metalinguistic areas of phonemic awareness and phonological recoding. A total of 30 at-risk first-grade students were rank ordered. The lowest-achieving children (n=11) were entered into Reading Recovery. A control group of 19 subjects eligible for Reading Recovery was formed. Measures used included the Observation Survey, particularly the Letter Identification and Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words tests; the Pseudoword Learning Test; and Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation, a test that measures students' ability to hear and articulate sequentially the separate sounds in 22 words.

Reading Recovery students made significantly greater improvement than the control group on measures of phonological processing. Students who successfully completed Reading Recovery lessons demonstrated strategies similar to children in the alphabetic stage by the 16th week of Grade 1. These students were using strategies that were similar to those used by normally achieving first graders. This study suggested that Reading Recovery children acquire phonological awareness and phonological recoding with Reading Recovery lessons without additional lesson components in phonological processing. The inclusion of all Reading Recovery participants and the utilization of measures other than Clay's responded to methodological concerns raised in other reports.

Other researchers have also stressed that Reading Recovery teaches phonics. Writing in 1990 about her observation of Reading Recovery, Marilyn Adams said, "The importance of phonological and linguistic awareness is also explicitly recognized" (p. 420). Adams describes Reading Recovery as one of several programs that "are designed to develop thorough appreciation of phonics.…On the other hand, none of these programs treats phonics in a vacuum" (p. 421).

D. New Zealand researcher responds to the Internet letter.

Authors of the Internet letter point to concerns about Reading Recovery in New Zealand where Reading Recovery is a widely used program for lowest-performing beginning readers. As evidence of dissatisfaction, the letter cites a unanimous recommendation from a report of the Literacy Experts Group. Two signatories

of the Internet letter were from the 10-member group. In response to an article in the New Zealand newspaper *Education Weekly*, Cedric Croft, chief researcher from the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, wrote

> It would be regrettable if…recommendations from the 1999 Literacy Experts Group, was construed as meaning that this group was among those attacking Reading Recovery. Because it wasn't, even though two of its 10 members are among a group of 32 predominantly American reading researchers reported as having 'recently circulated a letter criticizing Reading Recovery to members of Congress and through the media.'…

> One recommendation [that Reading Recovery place greater emphasis on explicit instruction in phonological awareness] from the Literacy Experts Group was reported as being unanimous but so were the other 17!

> Another recommendation from the Literacy Experts Group is worth quoting too. 'We recommend continued government funding of Reading Recovery as a national systematic programme, providing New Zealand research is carried out to determine whether it is as effective as it could be'…

> Most striking, however, is the clear message that most of this debate is about some researchers talking to some other researchers, with very little buy in from the teachers who implement Reading Recovery, or those with experience of translating research findings into effective classroom programmes. And, there is a huge gulf between a research study and a programme that works in a classroom. This is one area where the four New Zealand signatories of the U.S. [Internet] letter are out-of-step with many other reading researchers and literacy educators in New Zealand. (2002, p. 2–3)

"Most of this debate is about some researchers talking to some other researchers, with very little buy in from the teachers who implement Reading Recovery, or those with experience of translating research findings into effective classroom programmes. And, there is a huge gulf between a research study and a programme that works in a classroom."

(Croft, 2002)

E. Summary

The change process in Reading Recovery is ongoing and based on careful testing of components over time. Changes are not made in response to one or two studies or to insufficient evidence. But changes have been documented in the past and are expected to be part of the future. The Internet letter has not provided compelling evidence for change, nor has it proven that Reading Recovery does not change or incorporate independent research results.

One of the key changes recommended by the Internet letter is explicit instruction in phonics and phonemic awareness. Reading

Recovery has a strong phonemic awareness component including the explicit teaching of letters, sounds, and words. Reading Recovery also shows children how to use letter-sound relationships to solve words in reading and writing, how to use structural analysis of words, and how to learn spelling patterns (Pinnell, 2000). A study by Stahl et al. (1999) demonstrated that Reading Recovery students do in fact perform well on standardized tests of phonemic awareness and phonological coding. Researcher Marilyn Adams wrote this about Reading Recovery: "The importance of phonological and linguistic awareness is also explicitly recognized" (1990, p. 420).

Programs that focus on items of knowledge in prepared curricular sequences may teach the targeted objectives effectively, but they have provided no evidence of successfully closing the gap between at-risk learners and their classmates, nor have they provided evidence of developing abilities to learn that continue beyond the life of the programs. Reading Recovery's power lies in the fact that it is preventative in nature. Children's learning accelerates while they are being tutored in Reading Recovery, and they develop a system for learning that is self-extending. They continue to learn more about reading and writing as they engage in meaningful literacy activities in classrooms.

Change is integral in Reading Recovery. Mechanisms for change are built into the Reading Recovery design and are reflected in the *Guidebook*, the internal processes of data collection and reporting, the ongoing professional development process, the standards and guidelines, and the international network.

Reading Recovery is one of the few highly dynamic programs in existence. Across the United States, 23 universities participate in the implementation and further development of Reading Recovery. Worldwide, university faculty members collaborate to examine research evidence and suggest research priorities.

One of the difficulties of United States school reform is the constant swing as we trade and discard various approaches. Successful approaches like Reading Recovery need to be secure so they can continue to develop deliberately and in slow increments supported by research. Only with this kind of thoughtful approach will we build successful programs that really work for our students.

One of the difficulties of United States school reform is the constant swing as we trade and discard various approaches. Successful approaches like Reading Recovery need to be secure so they can continue to develop deliberately and in slow increments supported by research.