

The theory underpinning Reading Recovery

Reading Recovery is based on the ground-breaking work by Professor Marie Clay at the University of Auckland to understand how children develop literacy skills.

The theory of literacy processing pays close attention to:

- a child’s ability to hear the sounds in spoken language (their growing phonological awareness);
- their knowledge of letters and printed words;
- their knowledge about how to use the relationships between sound and letter sequences;
- the language structures and the meaning of the story.

The teacher's role in the Reading Recovery lesson is to guide the child “to pay particular attention to four kinds of information the young readers must become aware of and learn to work with. Different kinds of information may be checked, one against another, to confirm a response or as a first step towards further searching” (Clay, 2016, p. 129)).

In the early stages of literacy development, children use a number of sources of information to bring together the words on a page, and the meanings that the words deliver. Children use visual information, the sounds the letters make, the way the words are put together and whether it makes sense to the child based on their experience and knowledge of the world around them.

This diagram represents what a reader’s brain needs to do. It shows how children combine different sources of information to make sense of the words on the page.

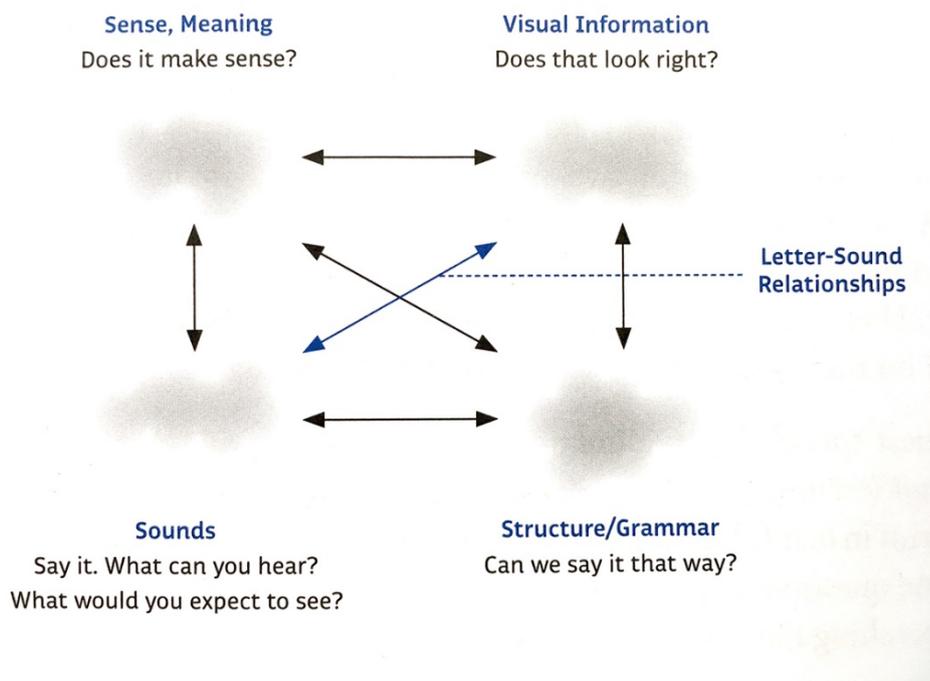


Diagram source: Clay, 2016, Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals Second Edition, page 129

Why individual intervention works

“The special situations that allow the lowest achievers to learn quickly and catch up with their classmates involve teaching them one at a time, and not in a prescribed sequence such as occurs in class or group instruction. If we problem solve each individual case we are able to hand over literate 7-year-olds to the education systems with an inner control over literacy learning which enables them in a good classroom program, to continue to learn within the average band.”

- Clay, 2007, p.16

“If we know how to ensure that students will learn to read in the early grades, we have an ethical and perhaps legal responsibility to see that they do so. Preventive tutoring can be an alternative for providing a reliable means of abolishing illiteracy among young children who are at risk for school failure.”

- Wasik & Slavin, 1993, p.158

Raising literacy achievement

The aim of Reading Recovery is to prevent literacy difficulties at an early stage before they begin to affect a child's educational progress. By providing extra assistance to the children facing the most challenge after one year at school, Reading Recovery works as an effective prevention strategy against later literacy difficulties. On a national scale, it helps insure against low average literacy levels.

The range of literacy achievement in any class, at any age level, varies widely. Effectively implementing Reading Recovery narrows the range of ability levels a classroom teacher has to deal with, improving the effectiveness of classroom teaching.

Reading Recovery is nationally implemented and monitored by the Ministry of Education, ensuring it is delivered reliably and consistently. The intervention has high levels of success and low numbers of children needing longer-term assistance.

A second chance at reading and writing success

Reading Recovery provides a second chance to children who find learning to read and write challenging and need to catch up with their classmates. It identifies those children early, before problems become consolidated, and provides specialised one-to-one assistance from a teacher trained in Reading Recovery.

These teachers provide intensive, individual help for the small number of children who need extra support. They have daily individual lessons, additional to their classroom programme. Depending on their rate of progress, these will continue for approximately 12-20 weeks.

How it is funded

Reading Recovery is funded and supported in New Zealand schools by the Ministry of Education. Individual schools make a contribution equal to the Ministry's funding.

How educators implement it

Reading Recovery teachers inform part of a school's Reading Recovery team, alongside the Principal, Assistant/Deputy Principal (Junior Classes) and other members of the junior school staff. This team is responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of the intervention in their school. Team members help identify children who should take part and evaluate their outcomes.

Reading Recovery Tutors consult with and advise the school team on matters affecting the quality of the school's Reading Recovery implementation. They also provide teacher training, professional development and support for trained Reading Recovery teachers.

Ongoing success in Reading Recovery relies on school-wide systems. Effectively implementing Reading Recovery strengthens the whole school, not just the children receiving direct help. The stronger the implementation, the better the outcomes for your school.

Successful implementation of Reading Recovery in a school depends upon:

- a school policy to run an effective programme
- a team approach for at-risk children
- continuity of Reading Recovery within the school
- adequate staff for the number of children needing help
- a close check that all children needing help are receiving it
- good communication with parents.

How can a school get started?

1. Contact your regional Reading Recovery Officer at the Ministry of Education
2. Contact your local Reading Recovery Tutor. [Click here to find a Tutor in your region.](#)
3. Contact your local Reading Recovery Tutor to find an experienced Reading Recovery teacher or identify a junior class teacher to train.

Monitoring and reporting on effectiveness

School Reports

School Reading Recovery teams provide regular reports to their Board of Trustees on how successfully Reading Recovery is being implemented in their school. The team's annual report will cover:

- how many children entered Reading Recovery
- how many children have successfully reached average levels and no longer need individual assistance
- referrals to an appropriate literacy specialist for those children identified as needing ongoing support
- planning for future needs.

National Data Collection

The Ministry of Education collects data from all New Zealand schools running Reading Recovery, monitoring it for emerging trends. This collated and published data can be viewed here:

<https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/reading-recovery>