

6-1-1991

Reading Recovery: A Viable Prevention of Learning Disability

Carol A. Lyons
Ohio State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons



Part of the Education Commons

Recommended Citation

Lyons, C. A. (1991). Reading Recovery: A Viable Prevention of Learning Disability. *Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts*, 31 (5). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol31/iss5/4

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Special Education and Literacy Studies at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Reading Horizons: A Journal of Literacy and Language Arts by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.



Reading Recovery: A Viable Prevention of Learning Disability

Carol A. Lyons

Mrs. Wishy Washy, one of the most popular characters of the little books used in Reading Recovery, sets a Herculean task for herself — to keep the barnyard animals clean. Professor Lyons, too, has taken on a big job — to convince the educational establishment that there must be a better way to cope with the increasing number of children classified as learning disabled. Suggesting that Reading Recovery can be that first net for avoiding the mislabeling of young children as "at-risk" learners, she provides a detailed case study of Mike, once labeled LD. The detailed description of his LD instruction and her specially tailored Reading Recovery program provide the reader with a startling contrast. In addition it provides insights into why the Reading Recovery concept is so powerful. Her recommendations for dealing with the LD crisis must be heard!

Students identified as learning disabled (LD), have increased dramatically over the past 15 years. This has fundamentally changed the identification and instructional practices of not only learning disability teachers, but regular classroom teachers as well. Regular education and learning disability teachers have colluded to relieve classroom teachers of responsibilities for teaching students functioning at the bottom of the class.

With class size increasing and administrative pressures to keep test scores high, regular education teachers are often very willing to hand the low achieving students over to the special education teacher. After all, the special education teacher has learned a particular body of knowledge and acquired a certain expertise for instructing hard to teach students. These students include not only those with the traditional handicapping conditions, but increasing numbers of students labeled as "learning disabled." Since the term learning disability defies definition (Clay, 1987) and there are no reliable and valid assessments to identify students as learning disabled (Davis and Shepard, 1983; Ysseldyke and Algozzine, 1979), it is estimated that in some urban cities, as many as 80 percent of the general education student body may be classified as learning disabled (Gartner and Lipsky, 1987). If this trend continues, changes in the general education and learning disability education will become more profound and lasting.

In a comprehensive review of a decade's experience with the implementation of PL 94-142, the Education For All Handicapped Children Act (EHA), Gartner and Lipsky (1987) estimated that 11 percent of the total public school enrollment received services under the provisions of PL 94-142. The number of students classified as emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded, physically handicapped, visually impaired, hearing impaired, or multihandicapped has decreased, while the number of students identified as learning disabled has increased dramatically. From 1976 to 1986, the number of students labeled LD grew from approximately 800,000, representing 22 percent of the special education population, to 1.9 million students, or 43 percent of the special need populations nationally (Singer and Butler, 1987). In spite of the lack of sound technical knowledge and clinical judgment in the diagnosis of learning disabilities (Davis and Shepard, 1983; Ysseldyke, 1983; Keogh, 1986; Gelzheiser, 1987), there has been an increase in the number of private clinics and interdisciplinary teams of school psychologists that identify preschoolers, kindergarteners, and first grade children as learning disabled (Lyons, 1989). Once labeled "LD," youngsters are often stigmatized as learning disabled for a lifetime (Allington and McGill-Franzen, 1989; 1990).

There is no compelling body of evidence that segregated instructional programs have significant benefits for students designated as learning disabled (Allington and McGill-Franzen, 1989; Gartner and Lipsky, 1987). In a recent article, Pianta (1990) states that current practices on the delivery of special education services have neglected the area of prevention and argues convincingly that initiating a prevention program may not only prevent learning disabilities, but lower the numbers of students who require special remedial programs. This article describes a preventive reading program, Reading Recovery, that not only greatly reduces the number of first grade students identified as LD, but is a proven viable alternative to current practices in traditional reading programs for LD students.

A description of the Reading Recovery program

Reading Recovery, developed by New Zealand educator and psychologist Dr. Marie M. Clay, targets the least able readers in the first-grade class. It is a national program in New Zealand, and by 1991 will be implemented in 32 states in the United States, two Canadian provinces, Australia, and England.

In addition to their regular classroom reading instruction, Reading Recovery students are taught one-to-one for 30 minutes daily by a teacher who has been specifically trained in Reading Recovery techniques. Each lesson includes reading and rereading several little books that are based on natural language patterns, and composing and writing a message generated by the student. There is a heavy emphasis on the reciprocal nature of the reading and writing processes as students are taught to develop and use effective strategies that proficient readers use. A comprehensive description of the Reading Recovery program and research related to its effectiveness is available (Clay, 1985; Pinnell, DeFord and Lyons, 1988; Pinnell, Fried and Estice, 1990).

Program results in New Zealand and the United States showed that most low-progress students made accelerated progress while receiving Reading Recovery tutoring. Results from the Ohio Reading Recovery program revealed that 85% of the least able first-grade children in 289 school districts statewide reached average levels in reading for their respective

classes and were successfully discontinued from the program (Lyons, Pinnell and DeFord, 1989-1990). A four-year longitudinal study in the Columbus Public Schools revealed that children who were successfully discontinued from the Reading Recovery program, as a group, performed within the average range for their grade-level peers at the end of first grade and continued to perform with the average range through fourth grade, the time at which the longitudinal research study concluded (DeFord, Pinnell and Lyons, 1989).

Identifying students for Reading Recovery

Students are identified for the program by Reading Recovery teachers. These students are the lowest achievers in the first-grade chart as evidenced on a standardized test and the Diagnostic Survey (Clay, 1985) excluding none. Reading Recovery provides a good "first net" for students who might have reading problems and thus prevents the stereotyping that can come from intensive testing and labeling at early ages. In some school districts, however, students are labeled as learning disabled before they enter or some time during first grade (Lyons, 1989).

Recent research reports that 86% of the 1986-1987 Reading Recovery students further classified by local teams of school professionals or psychologists from private clinics prior to or during first grade as learning disabled were discontinued from the Reading Recovery programs (Lyons, 1989). Furthermore, these "LD" students continued to learn to read with regular classroom reading instruction.

Characteristics of Reading Recovery students further classified as Learning Disabled

An analysis of the error behavior of Reading Recovery students further classified as LD compared to Reading Recovery students who were not labeled as LD revealed some startling contrasts (Lyons, 1989). At the beginning of the intervention program, the students classified as learning disabled tended to display different reading behaviors and reading strategies from the other low progress readers. Students diagnosed as LD over-relied on visual/auditory information and ignored the supportive language structure and meaning of the

predictable texts they were reading. Students not diagnosed as LD integrated the meaning and language structure when reading, but tended to ignore visual/auditory information.

The two groups of students became more alike in their use of multiple cueing systems as they progressed through the Reading Recovery program. Both groups increased in competence, with a large percentage discontinued from the program reading within the average reading group in their first-grade classrooms. There were no significant differences between the oral reading error patterns of the two groups at the time of exit from the program. The shift in the reading strategies used by both the LD and the non-LD groups toward multiple cueing systems by the end of the program suggests the effectiveness of Reading Recovery in overcoming the reading difficulties of both types of students. In addition, about equal percentages of both groups exited the program successfully, after receiving 50 to 72 lessons. These results suggest that beginning readers who are classified as learning disabled respond as well to the techniques of Reading Recovery as do other low progress readers. Furthermore the students labeled as LD may have learned to be learning disabled (Clay, 1987). The following longitudinal case study of one first grade boy who was classified as LD and placed in a program illustrates this point.

Intervention decisions in traditional LD programs and in Reading Recovery

To illustrate the identification procedures and subsequent instructional programs designed for a "learning disabled" kindergarten student, I will use examples from one student, Mike. Within this article, I have provided a longitudinal case history describing the early identification of Mike's learning disability prior to first grade, his experiences attending a learning disability clinic during the summer, his first grade diagnosis for selection into the Reading Recovery program, growth in his competence as a reader shown through reading and writing samples collected during the first 6 weeks of his program, and finally his oral reading scores on basal materials which provided evidence that he could be released from the program reading with the average of his first grade classmates. Mike lost his LD label in 12 weeks and 2 days. I was Mike's teacher.

Mike's kindergarten experience

The prekindergarten screening tests indicated that Mike demonstrated good listening comprehension skills and was able to follow directions. He recognized 32 letters of the alphabet by name and wrote his first and last name correctly. Mike was characterized as a warm, friendly, articulate five year old who should make average progress in kindergarten.

In late November, the kindergarten teacher was concerned about Mike's slow progress in identifying the sound of the alphabet letters. He was the only student in the class who could not name and provide the corresponding sound for each of the consonants. The parents were asked to reinforce this skill at home using flash cards. By January, Mike was still confused about sound-symbol relationships. He frequently reversed letters and had much difficulty copying the daily news. By March, Mike had problems remembering letter names and high frequency words, and he rarely participated in group discussions. He did not begin and complete tasks on time, he could not follow directions, he demonstrated poor small motor coordination when writing and coloring, he lacked organizational skills and he appeared extremely nervous, crying easily. The parents granted permission to have the kindergarten teacher submit a referral for psychological testing for a learning disability. School policy prohibited processing LD referrals until the middle of first grade and so the parents decided to have Mike tested at a private clinic that specialized in diagnosing learning disabilities.

Private clinic assessment and diagnosis of Mike's learning disability

The clinic report stated that family and medical history, shared by the mother, revealed familial learning problems of both parents and two older siblings. Prenatal and perinatal birth complications, long labor, delayed prenatal care were reported as factors that may have contributed to Mike's lack of achievement. Tests results also indicated that Mike's vision and hearing were adequate and could be ruled out as the primary cause of his learning problems.

The psychologist stated that Mike appeared relaxed during administration of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R, 1974) with the exception of the timed reading subtest. His gregariousness faded rapidly as the measures of achievement began. He did persist through the subtests on the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery Test of Achievement (1977) and appeared to make his best effort. He used his right hand to write and displayed labored psychomotor ability. His global resources fell in the high average range as measured by the WISC-R. His full scale IQ was equivalent to the 88th percentile with verbal and performance skills evenly developed in the high average range. Significant relative strengths and weaknesses were apparent in his profile of skills. Strengths were interpreted in his ability to use verbal abstract thinking and his use of social judgment or common sense in verbal and non-verbal situations. Weaknesses were diagnosed in psychomotor speed or ability to copy quickly and accurately. Anxiety was noted during oral reading.

Mike's achievement in reading as measured on the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery Test of Achievement (1977) showed his skills were relatively evenly distributed in the below average to borderline range. Significant ability-achievement discrepancies were present in each measured academic area. If grade equivalent scores were used, Mike's reading and written language skills would be similar to those of a four year old. The Bender Visual-Motor Gestalt Test (1938) was administered to assess Mike's visual perception. Interpretation of his reproduced designs suggested average to low average visual perception. Although the figures were adequately copied, it was felt that his skills were not commensurate with his cognitive functioning.

The assessment team was of the opinion that Mike met criteria to be certified as learning disabled in the areas of reading and written language, and made a series of recommendations.

- They recommended that a team of educators, including a psychologist, should be convened to determine Mike's

eligibility for special education services and develop an individualized educational program.

- They noted that because Mike had high average cognitive ability he would benefit from a regular classroom curriculum modified to meet his needs. Modified assignments, extra time for completion of tasks, grading on the basis of individual growth and ability/achievement grouping were ways suggested to adjust the pace for him.

- Oral tests, peer tutoring, and individual tutoring were recommended. Taping of written materials in order to help him in the regular or special education setting were also mentioned.

- While retention was not recommended due to his documented learning disabilities, the assessment team did suggest that an intensive summer reading program that specialized in phonics instruction might help Mike learn some beginning reading strategies.

Mike's summer school experiences at a learning disability school

Based on the clinic's test results and consultation with the kindergarten teacher, Mike's parents enrolled him in a private summer school recommended by the clinic. The diagnostic personnel developed a systematic means of using the data derived from the psychoeducational assessment to plan his intervention. One certified teacher was assigned to work with a group of three students, who demonstrated similar weaknesses on the psychometric battery.

The students spent the first 10 minutes of the 45 minute lesson working independently on specific "easy" tasks, while the teacher checked their homework. Then the teacher questioned each student individually to make sure he understood his mistakes. The teacher modeled correct responses until the student could accomplish the tasks quickly with 100% accuracy.

Every Monday a new skill was introduced and demonstrated. The students were required to practice the targeted skill on Wednesday and Friday. For example, during week 2, the targeted skill was automaticity and generalization. The skill packets contained exercises with varying degrees of difficulty to be performed quickly, accurately, and in several milieus. To

insure automaticity, the teacher provided opportunities for supervised practice.

Students worked independently on the skill packet, while the teacher observed their progress and assisted the students if they asked for help. If the student made an error, the teacher corrected the error and required the student to repeat the correct response several times until it was mastered. During the last five minutes of each lesson, the teacher assigned homework and distributed 3 to 5 work sheets to be completed and returned the next class period. Mike's instructional program was organized according to the sequence in Figure 1.

The instruction offered in the private clinic could be characterized as follows: 1) direct skill training focusing on the letter names and letter sounds Mike did not know, 2) direct skill training focusing on words, word families, word meaning, 3) direct skill training focusing on recognizing word parts, prefixes and suffixes, 4) visual and auditory discrimination at the letter and word level, 5) activities to improve visual/motor skills, 6) activities to improve visual memory, and 7) limited amount of time reading very easy texts.

To summarize, the teacher presented, modeled, defined, explained, and taught skills in isolation. While the instruction was systematic (i.e. sequential in nature with extensive modeling) the contingent feedback was not positive. Instead, the teacher corrected Mike's errors and then modeled correct responses for Mike to repeat several times. Approximately 30 minutes of the total nine hours allotted for instruction was specified for reading books. There was almost no instruction that might be classified as involving high level cognitive skills, and little active teaching. Extensive independent seat work was considered one-to-one teaching by the clinic's staff. Mike occasionally received one-on-one instruction, but only when he requested it. His "individualized instruction" appears little more than independent skill drill with periodic teacher supervision. Furthermore, this skill drill and practice did not generalize or translate to new, higher level skills.

Figure 1: Clinic LD Program

1. Drill on letter names and corresponding sound (week 1)
2. Trace letters in sandpaper and in the salt tray (week 1)
3. Timed copying exercises from chalkboard (week 2)
4. Find missing letters from sight word. Use picture to help student know words (week 2)
5. Select words for sight word (flash card) practice that are grouped into meaningful categories such as rhyming words, words that begin and end with the same letter, words with the same medial vowel and a silent "e," category words (e.g., words that have to do with baseball, colors, number words, etc.). (week 3)
6. After drilling on sight word recognition with flash cards, sort the cards into words which begin with the same letter, etc. (week 3)
7. Root word practice or word family practice. Using rhyming words make new root words. (week 4)
8. Circle all the e's or b's (etc.) in a given printed sentence. This exercise focuses student attention on visual discrimination of similar letters. As the student becomes more proficient in this task, he should tell what sound the letter makes in the word and give another word with the same sound. (week 4)
9. In order to focus the student's attention on frequently reversed or inverted letters the following exercises are recommended: use a colored highlighter to indicate visually confused letters; use a cloze procedure when reading sentence or words. (week 5)
10. Visual-motor integration skills may be strengthened through activities such as dot-to-dot books, jigsaw puzzles, copying pictures from printed designs, handwriting practice, wadding paper into balls and practicing throwing them into a wastebasket from increasing distances. (week 5)
11. Activities to improve visual memory skills included looking at a series of objects for about one second per object, covering the objects and asking the student to recall what he saw; playing concentration, using letter, word, or number cards as the stimulus to recall. (week 6)
12. Reading very easy books with one to three words per page. Texts should have a controlled vocabulary that includes preprimer and primer Dolch words. (week 6)

Identification of first grade students for the Reading Recovery Program

Any student who falls in the bottom third of the first grade class is tested for Reading Recovery, even students who are previously classified as learning disabled. Testing involves individual assessment using the Diagnostic Survey (Clay, 1985), and a group administered standardized test. Mike scored in the 4th percentile on the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT 6, 1986). The following six subtests of the Diagnostic Survey (Clay, 1985) documented Mike's reading and writing strengths: 1) letter identification — 49 out of a possible 54 letters; 2) sight word test — 0 out of a possible 20 preprimer words; 3) concepts about print — 6 out of a possible 24 items. Mike knew the front of the book and that the print contained a message. He also had control of left to right directionality, and knew that a period meant to stop reading. He could locate the bottom of a picture and upper and lower case letters "m" and "h." 4) Writing vocabulary — Mike wrote his first name in the allotted 10 minutes; 5) Dictation — 9 out of a possible 37 phonemes. The sentence, *The bus is coming and it will stop here to let me get on*, was dictated. Mike could hear and record 9 of the 37 phonemes. 6) Running record of text reading — Level B out of a range of levels (A, B, 1, 2, 3). Mike was able to read the words *No, no, no* in the book *Where's Spot?* (Hill, 1980).

The Reading Recovery lesson framework

The first 10 days of the student's 30-minute daily program is called "roaming around the known." During this period the teacher does not teach, but rather refines and re-evaluates the scores from the Diagnostic Survey (Clay, 1985), by sharing books and writing collaboratively. In this very supportive situation, Mike began to take some risks and attempted to read for meaning. By the end of the 10 day session, Mike was reading three word sentences and writing several high frequency words: *I, me, and, the, my*. The following week he was ready to begin lessons. Each Reading Recovery lesson includes four major components: the child rereads favorite books, the teacher makes a running record of the child's reading, the child composes and writes a message or story, and the child reads a new book.

Rereading familiar books. Mike read on the average of 3 to 5 favorite books every day. The books ranged from easy reading to more challenging text, and Mike generally read with above 90% accuracy. The texts were easy enough for Mike to use effective strategies, and difficult enough to provide opportunities for independent problem solving. Mike used a balanced set of strategies and cues "on the run" while focusing on the meaning of the text when the material was easy. However, when the materials became more difficult, evidenced during the second week of lessons in the analysis of *My Home* (Melser, 1984), Mike lost all sense of the meaning and resorted to using visual/auditory information exclusively when trying to figure out an unknown word. Figure 2 presents a running record of Mike's reading during week 2.

After determining that Mike was not using a balanced set of cues (meaning, language structure, and visual/auditory information), I selected the most productive teaching points to make after commenting on Mike's independence in reading the text. I said, "You said, *my home is have*. That word starts like *have*, but does that make sense, Mike? Does that sound right? Try that again and think what the bird and all the animals are telling us in this story." Mike reread the first sentence accurately, and this enabled him to read the other sentences that contained the same type of miscue correctly. My discussion with Mike was not an attempt to "correct" his inaccurate response. Instead, I chose to discuss the overall theme of the story and thus provided a catalyst for Mike to focus on the meaning of the story and learn how to use visual/auditory information, which was his strength, to confirm a meaningful prediction.

Taking a running record of text reading. The teacher becomes a neutral observer in order to take a running record of the student's independent reading behavior. The student has read the book once the previous day and he is not expected to read the material with 100% accuracy. If the text is too easy, the student does not have the opportunity to use the repertoire of strategies necessary to become an independent reader.

Figure 2: Reading Recovery Running Record
Week #2 of Mike's Program

<u>My home</u>				Level 3		Accuracy 40%			
Page						Cues Used			
						E	SC	E	SC
2	✓	✓	✓	<u>have</u>		1		MS(✓)	
	My	home	is	here					
	✓	✓	<u>baby</u>			1		MS(✓)	
	said	the	bird.						
3	✓	✓	✓	<u>have</u>		1		MS(✓)	
	My	home	is	here					
	✓	✓	<u>from</u>			1		MS(✓)	
	said	the	frog.						
4	✓	✓	✓	<u>have</u>		1		MS(✓)	
	My	home	is	here					
	✓	✓	✓						
	said	the	pig.						
5	✓	✓	✓	<u>have</u>		1		MS(✓)	
	My	home	is	here					
	✓	✓	✓						
	said	the	dog.						
6	✓	✓				1		MS(✓)	
	A	dog							
	✓	<u>ran</u>							
	A	rabbit							
7	✓	✓	✓	<u>have</u>		1		MS(✓)	
	My	home	is	here					
	✓	✓	✓						
	said	the	dog.						
	✓	✓	✓			1		MS(✓)	
	and	I	go.						
8						1		MS(✓)	
	✓	<u>by</u>	<u>dog</u>						
	Come	back	dinner.			1		MS(✓)	

Note. Cueing Systems:
meaning = M
Structure (language) = S
Visual/auditory = V

**Figure 3: Reading Recovery Running Record
Week #4 of Mike's Program**

<u>I can jump</u> Level 4 Accuracy 87%		Cues		Used	
		E	SC	E	SC
Page 2	✓ ✓ ✓ I can jump ✓ ✓ said the grasshopper.				
3	✓ <u>can</u> ✓ I can't jump ✓ ✓ <u>worm</u> said the snail.	1		MSV	
		1		MSV	
4	✓ ✓ ✓ I can run ✓ ✓ said the spider.				
5	✓ <u>can</u> sc ✓ I can't run ✓ ✓ <u>worm</u> Rsc said the snail.	1	1	MSV	MSV
		1	1	MSV	MSV
6	✓ ✓ ✓ I can fly ✓ ✓ said the butterfly				
7	✓ <u>can</u> sc ✓ I can't fly, ✓ ✓ <u>worm</u> sc said the snail.	1		MSV	MSV
		1		MSV	MSV
8	✓ ✓ ✓ <u>slip</u> But I can slide	1		MSV	

Note Cueing Systems:
 meaning = M
 Structure (language) = S
 Visual/auditory = V

Self Correction = sc
 Rereading = R

The teacher examines the running record closely, analyzing the cues used and cues neglected, paying close attention to self-correction behavior. In this way the teacher is able to discern the strategies and the sources of information the student is using to gain meaning from text. This daily assessment provides an accurate record of the student's reading progress over time. Figure 3 shows a running record taken during Mike's fourth week in Reading Recovery.

Mike independently read *I Can Jump* (Cowley, 1987) while I took a running record. His substitutions indicated that he was reading for meaning. He read *worm* for *snail*. More importantly, unlike his oral reading during the second week of the program, Mike was consistently using meaningful cues to monitor himself and predict what would make sense and then confirming his predictions using visual/ auditory information. For example, Mike read *said the worm*, reread the entire sentence and then self-corrected.

After the reading, I decided the most productive teaching points to make were first, to support Mike's rereading of line 5 which led to a self-correction. I said, "*worm* sounds right and makes sense in that sentence, Mike, but what did you notice that made you reread the sentence and change the word to *snail*?" Mike replied that *worm* begins with a "w" and the word did not have a "w" but it did have a "s," and the picture looked like a snail, so the word had to be *snail*. Then, I asked him to reread page 3 and to look carefully to see if what he said matches what he saw. The question was intended to enable Mike to use the same strategies that he used on page 5 to read page 3. Mike reread page 3 accurately and used the same strategy sequence that he had told me he had used on page 5. His earlier behaviors led me to believe that he could use the same process to resolve his other miscues.

Composing and writing a message or story. Every day the student composes a brief message, usually one or two sentences long, and, assisted by the teacher, writes it in a blank writing book that is turned sideways. The student and teacher collaboratively write the message or story on the bottom page.

The top page, called the practice page, is used for working out the words. Figure 4 shows a sample of Mike's writing during week 4.

During his fourth week of lessons, Mike independently wrote the words *they*, *the*, *that*, and the *f*, *n*, and *d* in the word *found*. He asked to have the boxes drawn for the word *map*, so I drew three boxes on the practice page. Mike pushed three counters into the boxes while saying the word slowly. Without my help, he put the correct letter in each box and wrote the word *map* in his story. Mike used the same process for figuring out the word *lost*. I asked him to say the word *lost* slowly, and then asked "What can you hear?" First, Mike put in the *t*, then saying the word again, he independently wrote in the *l* and *s*. I finished the word inserting the *o*. I then asked Mike to write the familiar word *that* several times on the practice page in order to help him gain complete control of this high utility word. I noted that this was a new behavior for Mike; he had never written the word *that* independently, although he had worked on the word on the practice page several days ago.

When the writing was completed, Mike read the sentence several times while I wrote it on a sentence strip. I then cut the sentence into words and Mike quickly reassembled and read the sentence. The first time he reassembled the sentence it said: "They found the map they that lost." I asked Mike to re-read the sentence again paying close attention to the words and to notice if what he read sounded right, made sense, and looked right. Mike reread the sentence and immediately reversed the order of the words *they* and *that*. Mike had not monitored his reading until he was asked to check to see if the words look right and self correct by reversing the word order.

Reading a new book. Every day the student is introduced to a more challenging new book which he or she is expected to read without help the following day. Before the new book is attempted, the teacher discusses the main idea of the book while looking at the illustrations. The teacher's role is not to introduce new words, but to provide an oral scaffold that enables the student to focus on the meaning of the entire text.

**Figure 4: Mike's Writing
During Week #4 of Reading Recovery**

Practice page

that

that

m	a	p
---	---	---

l	o	s	t
---	---	---	---

that

Story page

They found the map
that they lost.

**Figure 5: Reading Recovery Running Record
Week #6 of Mike's Program**

<u>Mouse</u>		Level 4	Accuracy 100%	Cues		Used
				E	SC	E SC
Page 2	<div> <div>✓</div> <div>Out</div> <div>✓</div> <div>creep</div> </div> <div> <div>✓</div> <div>of</div> <div>✓</div> <div>creep</div> </div> <div> <div>✓</div> <div>the</div> <div>✓</div> <div>home</div> <div>hole</div> <div>IRisc</div> </div>				1	MSY MSY
3	<div> <div>✓</div> <div>Throw</div> <div>✓</div> <div>creep</div> </div> <div> <div>✓</div> <div>Through</div> <div>✓</div> <div>creep</div> </div> <div> <div>✓</div> <div>the</div> <div>✓</div> <div>grass</div> <div>IRisc</div> </div>	"That doesn't make sense"			1	MSY MSY
4	<div> <div>✓</div> <div>Up</div> <div>✓</div> <div>creep</div> </div> <div> <div>✓</div> <div>the</div> <div>✓</div> <div>creep</div> </div> <div> <div>✓</div> <div>stairs</div> <div>step</div> <div>IRisc</div> </div>				1	MSY MSY
5	<div> <div>✓</div> <div>Under</div> <div>✓</div> <div>creep</div> </div> <div> <div>✓</div> <div>the</div> <div>✓</div> <div>creep</div> </div> <div> <div>✓</div> <div>door</div> </div>					
6	<div> <div>✓</div> <div>Around</div> <div>✓</div> <div>creep</div> </div> <div> <div>✓</div> <div>Across</div> <div>✓</div> <div>creep</div> </div> <div> <div>✓</div> <div>the</div> <div>✓</div> <div>floor</div> <div>IRisc</div> </div>				1	MSY MSY
7	<div> <div>✓</div> <div>In</div> <div>IRisc</div> <div>✓</div> <div>creep</div> </div> <div> <div>✓</div> <div>the</div> <div>✓</div> <div>creep</div> </div> <div> <div>✓</div> <div>cabinet</div> <div>cupboard</div> <div>IRisc</div> </div>				1	MSY MSY
8	<div> <div>✓</div> <div>Up</div> <div>✓</div> <div>creep</div> </div> <div> <div>✓</div> <div>to</div> <div>✓</div> <div>creep</div> </div> <div> <div>✓</div> <div>the</div> <div>✓</div> <div>chessa</div> </div>					
	<div> <div>✓</div> <div>Nibble</div> </div> <div> <div>✓</div> <div>nibble</div> </div> <div> <div>✓</div> <div>nibble</div> </div>					

Note. Cueing Systems:
 meaning = M
 Structure (language) = S
 Visual/auditory = V

Self Correction = sc
 Rereading = R

After the brief introduction, the student reads the book with assistance from the teacher as necessary. This first reading of a new book provides opportunities for the teacher to teach the student how to use multiple sources of information and strategies in a strategic and flexible way. Figure 5 shows an analysis of Mike's oral reading of *Mouse* (Cowley, 1983) taken during week 6, and documents his ability to integrate multiple cueing systems in a flexible, strategic way.

Mike monitored his reading and consistently reread when he thought something was wrong. On page 2, the miscue was meaningful and syntactically accurate but he noticed that *home* did not look right. Through close visual discrimination, Mike self-corrected. On page 3, he used visual information to read *throw*, however, after reading *throw the grass creep creep*," Mike said "that doesn't make sense!" He then reread the entire sentence and self-corrected, this time using meaning and his sense of language structure. I did not have to say anything during this reading. When he finished, I commented and reinforced specific reading strategies that led to successful, accurate reading. I noted that he changed his patterns of behavior based on the demands of the text and his own responses. He was becoming a fluent reader who used information from the text in a flexible, purposeful way. Mike continued to make steady progress throughout the next 6 weeks of the program. He was released from Reading Recovery after 62 lessons, reading at the primer basal level.

Reading Recovery instruction has these features:

- It is based on the student's strengths, not deficits.
- Students are taught strategies that enable them to become independent readers.
- Students develop an internal system for self-improvement.
- The program uses natural language texts of increasing difficulty.
- Students learn to read by composing and writing their own messages.
- Reading Recovery teachers observe, analyze, and record student behaviors that inform their instruction.

- The program is very flexible and based on what students demonstrate they know.
- The student and teacher are both active participants in the learning event. The students are taught how to think, monitor their own reading independently, predict, confirm, and understand what they read.
- Every element in the Reading Recovery lesson framework is individualized.
- Teachers select from approximately 2,000 little books using natural language patterns. Students are introduced to a new book of increasing difficulty each day.

To summarize, the experiences Mike had in kindergarten and during the summer program appeared to influence his reading behaviors at the beginning of first grade. It was only when Mike learned how to use the visual/auditory information, reinforced in the summer school program, to support and confirm meaningful language that he began to make accelerated progress in reading. Both the kindergarten and summer school experiences may have reinforced Mike's idea that reading means making the sounds the letters make. That is the response Mike gave when he was asked "What is reading?" at the beginning of first grade.

Barr (1974) and Juel (1985) provide convincing evidence that beginning reading strategies are determined to a significant degree by the instructional methods teachers use. Instructional practices for teaching beginning reading to students classified as learning disabled have traditionally recommended a code-emphasis approach (Clay, 1985; Coles, 1987; Lewis, 1983; Torgesen, 1980). The teacher hired by the private clinic was obviously following the collected wisdom of learning disability experts who base their advice on empirical research that argues that when students experience difficulty with the learning task, teachers need to provide them with learning skills they lack. Introductory materials published by the clinic state that prereading decoding skills necessary to successful reading must be simplified and practiced until mastered. Once mastered, new skills will be introduced.

I would argue that Mike and other Reading Recovery students classified as learning disabled (Lyons, 1989) never figured out what reading is all about during their kindergarten programs. These students never learned appropriate learning patterns. They were operating from incomplete and inappropriate concepts about the reading process. The intervention program specifically tailored to remedy Mike's deficits actually reinforced his inappropriate learning behaviors. The clinic's program was based on the assumption that Mike had to know every set of letter-sound relationships to read. Furthermore, it was believed that visual images of letters and words, pictorial and geometric stimuli, "simpler" materials, puzzles, throwing paper balls into a basket, working with shapes and sounds, etc., would produce gains in reading skill.

Mike and other Reading Recovery students classified as learning disabled prior to Reading Recovery service were instructionally disabled. They learned their way into the learning disability category and — when they participated in the Reading Recovery program — they learned their way out of the category. Their learning disability was environmentally produced. These students were instructionally disabled (ID), not learning disabled (LD).

Conclusions, implications, recommendations

In the 1990's, the public is once again viewing elementary students as raw material for local, regional, state and international competition. American standards of achievement are seen as too low, especially in the area of reading. Schools are being called on to raise reading scores and to test students more rigorously based on increased standards. Newspapers are publishing students' reading scores so that the public can compare reading scores among local districts and within buildings in the same school district. Realtors are now using student's achievement scores to sell homes in selected school districts.

In the past, when standards were raised, failing students from advantaged social groups were defined as learning disabled. With today's standards, the number of students labeled learning disabled is increasing (Allington and McGill-Franzen,

1990). Furthermore, there seems to be an increasing number of students who are identified as learning disabled in preschool and primary school (Martin, 1988). The team decision-making process as currently employed in public school settings for assessing learning disabilities is at best inconsistent. In most instances, the teams function largely to endorse problems first observed by teachers (Martin, 1988; White and Calhoun, 1987; Ysseldyke, 1983). The team process operates with a deficit model which leads to considerable misclassification of students (Clay, 1987; Sleeter, 1986; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, Shinn, and McGue, 1982). It is not surprising that this referral pattern and subsequent placement in a program to improve Mike's "disability" was initiated in kindergarten.

- **Recommendation 1:** Educators, psychologists, parents, researchers, the media and the press need to focus greater attention on how to teach students rather than on how to categorize and label primary students who have not acquired beginning reading skills. Within the last two decades, numerous attempts to develop assessment-intervention links in the field of learning disability (Allington and McGill-Franzen, 1989; Arter and Jenkins, 1977; Bickel and Bickel, 1986; Gelzheiser, 1987; Ysseldyke, 1983; Ysseldyke and Salvia, 1974) have concluded that there is little evidence for effectiveness of the practice. Yet this practice, which is based on a deficit model of identification and instruction, is deeply ingrained in the learning disability programs offered in both private clinics and public schools in America today. Mike and his family were viewed as impaired and the instruction was disability-focused.

- **Recommendation 2:** Instructional programs should be designed around what the student knows. Begin with the student's strengths to teach the student how to use what he knows to learn how to learn. Educators' views of students labeled as learning disabled adversely affect expectations regarding their academic achievement, causing these students to be separated from other students; to be exposed to a watered-down curriculum; to be excused from standards routinely applied to "average" students; to be taught by learning disability teachers who may never take a course on the reading

process or beginning reading instruction, and who generally do not expect LD students to be released from their LD classroom, curriculum, or label.

• **Recommendation 3:** Learning disability teachers should be required to enroll in courses that examine the nature of learning and emergent literacy so that they have a foundation to understand the generic concepts, principles and theories of the learning and reading processes. Some professionals in the learning disability field are arguing that too many students who are simply underachievers are identified by private clinics and public schools as LD and that such identification practices result in both stigma and limitation of the student's life experiences and opportunities to succeed (Clay, 1987; Coles, 1987; Franklin, 1987). Several researchers (Allington and McGill-Franzen, 1989; Lyons, 1989; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, Shinn, and McGue, 1982) found few psychometric differences between students identified as learning disabled and other low achievers who have not been labeled LD.

• **Recommendation 4:** Do not classify young children as LD in order to get enough funding to support special education programs. Pianta (1990) argues that prevention programs would curb the number of students classified as LD, while offering remedial programs that could address students with more extreme needs. Reading Recovery is a very successful alternative preventive program that has shown great promise in cleaning up the burgeoning population of students diagnosed as LD in the primary grades, thus enabling remedial programs to address the needs of students with more severe learning problems.

References

- Allington, R.L., & McGill-Franzen, A. (1989). School response to reading failure: Instruction for Chapter 1 and special education students in grades two, four, and eight. *Elementary School Journal*, 89, 529-542.
- Allington, R.L., & McGill-Franzen, A. (1990). Children with reading problems: How we wrongfully classify them and fail to teach many to read. *Spectrum*, 8, 3-9.
- Arter, J.A., & Jenkins, J.R. (1977). Examining the benefits and prevalence of modality considerations in special education. *Journal of Special Education*, 11, 281-298.

- Barr, R.C. (1974). Effect of instruction on reading strategies. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 4, 555-582.
- Bender, L. (1938). Bender Visual-Motor Gestalt Test. New York: Psychological Corporation.
- Bickel, W.E., & Bickel, D.D. (1986). Effective schools, classrooms, and instruction: Implications for special education. *Exceptional Children*, 42, 489-500.
- Clay, M.M. (1985). *The early detection of reading difficulties*. Portsmouth NH: Heinemann.
- Clay, M.M. (1987). Learning to be learning disabled. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies*, 22, 155-173.
- Coles, G. (1987). *The learning mystique*. New York: Fawcett Columbine.
- Cowley, J. (1983). *Mouse*. Auckland NZ: Shortland.
- Cowley, J. (1987). *I can jump*. San Diego CA: Wright Group.
- Davis, W.A., & Shepard, L.A. (1983). Specialists' use of test and clinical judgment in the diagnosis of learning disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Quarterly*, 19, 128-138.
- DeFord, D., Pinnell, G.S., & Lyons, C.A. (1989). Follow-up studies of the Reading Recovery Program. Technical Report Vol. XI, The Ohio State University.
- Franklin, B.M., (1987). *Learning disabilities: Dissenting essays*. Philadelphia PA: Falmer.
- Gartner, A., & Lipsky, D. (1987). Beyond special education: Toward a quality system for all students. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57, 368-395.
- Gelzheiser, L.M. (1987). Reducing the number of students identified as learning disabled: A question of practice, philosophy, or policy? *Exceptional Children*, 54, 145-150.
- Juel, C. (1985). The influence of basal readers on first grade reading. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 10, 134-152.
- Keogh, B.K. (1986). Future of the learning disabled field: Research and practice. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 19, 455-460.
- Hill, E. (1980). *Where's Spot?* New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.
- Lewis, R.B. (1983). Learning disabilities and reading: Instructional recommendations from current research. *Exceptional Children*, 50, 230-240.
- Lyons, C.A. (1989). Reading Recovery: A preventative for mislabeling young 'at risk' learners. *Urban Education*, 24, 125-139.
- Lyons, C.A., Pinnell, G.S., & DeFord, D.E. (1989-1990). *The Ohio Reading Recovery Project: Volume XIII*. State of Ohio, Year 4.
- Martin, A. (1988). Teachers and teaching. *Harvard Educational Review*, 58, 488-501.
- Melser, J. (1984). *My home*. Auckland NZ: Shortland.
- Metropolitan Reading Diagnostic Test. (1986). New York NY: Psychological Corporation.
- Pianta, R.C. (1990). Widening the debate on educational reform: Prevention as a viable alternative. *Exceptional Children*, 56, 306-313.
- Pinnell, G.S., DeFord, D.E., & Lyons, C.A. (1988). *Reading Recovery: Early intervention for at risk first graders*. Arlington VA: Educational Research Services.

- Pinnell, G.S., Fried, M.D., & Estice, R.M. (1990). Reading Recovery: Learning how to make a difference. *The Reading Teacher*, 43, 282-295.
- Singer, J.D., & Butler, J.A. (1987). The education for all handicapped children act: Schools as agents of social reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57, 125-182.
- Sleeter, C.E. (1986). Learning disabilities: The social construction of a special education category. *Exceptional Children*, 53, 46-54.
- Torgesen, J.K. (1980). Conceptual and educational implications of the use of efficient task strategies by learning disabled children. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 13, 364-371.
- Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC-R). (1974). New York: Psychological Corporation.
- White, R., & Calhoun, M.L. (1987). From referral to placement: Teachers' perceptions of their responsibilities. *Exceptional Children*, 53, 460-468.
- Woodcock, R.W., & Johnson, M.B. (1977). Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery. Boston MA: Boston Teaching Resources.
- Ysseldyke, J.E. (1983). Current practices in making psychoeducational decisions about learning disabled students. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 16, 226-233.
- Ysseldyke, J.E., & Algozzine, B. (1979). Perspectives on assessment of learning disabled students. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 2, 3-14.
- Ysseldyke, J.E., Algozzine, B., Shinn, M.R., & McGue, M. (1982). Similarities and differences between low achievers and students classified learning disabled. *Journal of Special Education*, 16, 73-85.
- Ysseldyke, J.E., & Salvia, J.A. (1974). Diagnostic-perspective teaching: Two models. *Exceptional Children*, 41, 181-186.

Carol A. Lyons is a faculty member at The Ohio State University, Columbus Ohio, and Director of the National Diffusion Network Reading Recovery Program, The Ohio State University.

READING RECOVERY ANECDOTE

When introducing the story, Poor Old Polly, level 10, I asked the student if he knew the word swap. He immediately thought of the word swat. I tried to explain the difference between the words and convey the concept of swapping things. I gave each of us a small book and said we should swap books. He hit me with his book!

Pat Johnson