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## READING AND WRITING RECIPROCITY: THE TEACHER'S ANSWER TO FOSTERING ACCELERATED LEARNING FOR STRIVING STUDENTS IN SMALL GROUP READING INTERVENTION

Leah Wieseler Nowatzki  
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**READING AND WRITING RECIPROCITY:  
THE TEACHER'S ANSWER TO FOSTERING ACCELERATED LEARNING  
FOR STRIVING STUDENTS IN SMALL GROUP READING  
INTERVENTION**

by

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A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Literacy Education

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

August 2020

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## DEDICATION

To my husband for your love, support, patience, and ability to help me stay calm and collected through this incredible journey. Big thanks to my dad for encouraging me to continue my education to earn my master's and for always being proud of me. You are dearly missed. To my Mommala for always believing in me and for being there for me no matter what. I am incredibly grateful to you, family, and I love you all more than you will ever know.

Thank you to my Capstone Committee: Chelsay, for encouraging and supporting me from the very beginning, for being a great friend and inspiring colleague. Kelly, for your guidance, expertise, and supportive and constructive feedback. Melissa, for being an APA wizard, providing excellent feedback, and for further challenging me in the eleventh hour. I appreciate all the time and energy the three of you have given me throughout this adventure.

*Thank you so much to you all for your dedication and attention in helping me realize this dream. I am more grateful than you know. This has been a long, intense journey, but it was all worth it. All of you have helped me grow as a person and a professional, and for that I am eternally grateful.*

*Muchísimas gracias a todos ustedes por su dedicación y atención ayudándome a realizar este sueño. Estoy más agradecida de lo que creen. Este ha sido un viaje largo e intenso, pero todo lo que merece la pena lo vale. Me han ayudado a crecer como persona y como profesional y por eso, estaré eternamente agradecida.*

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction**

For the last eight of my fifteen years as an educator, I have been in the role of Reading Interventionist at a Spanish Immersion school, dedicating myself to helping striving readers make progress, find a passion for reading, and most importantly, gain confidence in their abilities. Every year I struggle with how to be more effective and incorporate all the necessary components in the ever-so-short 30-minutes I have with my small groups. Last year I was given an opportunity to audit a Reading Recovery/Literacy Lessons class where so much was learned about the reading and writing process as well as their connection. Reflecting on my work with those particular students I thought about how I could use Reading Recovery strategies with my small groups even though Reading Recovery is a one-to-one program.

Focusing on different reading strategies to meet the group's needs and having my students write in connection to what they read is something I already practice on a semi-regular basis, but it has not proven to be enough. Sure, they are making a little progress, but not accelerated progress. Even though they take a step forward, so does everyone else, still leaving them behind. I had the pleasure of observing a Reading Specialist, who had Reading Recovery training the year before, conduct a lesson with three students where she used the Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) program and wove in vital components of Reading Recovery to make her LLI lessons even more powerful and effective. We do not have LLI programs in Spanish to use in the immersion program where I work, but it still got me thinking, within the structure of small group interventions, how can integrating Reading Recovery's writing/cut-up



sentence component foster accelerated learning for striving students? Now more than ever, I understand how important it is to teach reading and writing together, so the challenge is how to effectively do this with more than one student at a time within a 30-minute intervention block. In this chapter, my rationale for wanting to pursue this project and the context behind it is explained. The desire to be a better reading interventionist is where it begins. To provide background knowledge I journey back to my personal early literacy experiences then circle back to present day experiences and new learnings.

Something is missing. There must be something I am not doing to support my students. Surely there is a better technique or structure that would be more effective. In the short amount of time with my groups, I need to be more effective and integrate more explicit writing instruction to strengthen their skills to help them make greater progress. These are just a few concerns that continuously flooded my mind over the past few years.

Working one-to-one with students through Reading Recovery/Literacy Lessons and tutoring outside of school is very manageable and successful, so why am I not able to yield similar results with my small group intervention students? How can I better execute my job to help my striving students?

Understanding who my students are as children first allows me to build a trusting relationship with them to lay a foundation for learning. While that relationship is forming I get to know them as students. To teach students, one must first know their strengths and needs. Knowing what they are already able to do independently and even partially on their own, allows me to more appropriately

structure lessons to fit their needs. I believe the more connected the student is to the teacher, more progress will transpire. When I think about how I communicate and work with my students and families, it makes me think about my literacy experiences in school, wishing I had someone like me to provide additional support.

### **Personal K-12 Literacy Experiences**

As a child, I enjoyed being read to—stories like *Danny and the Dinosaur*, *The Runaway Bunny*, *Caps for Sale*, *Corduroy* (still one of my favorites), *The Velveteen Rabbit*, and Dr. Seuss books—but I did not develop a love for reading until much later. My parents were avid readers, both for work and pleasure. Dad and I would take trips to the library, read the Funnies section of the Sunday paper together, and he would tell me bedtime stories when he came to tuck me in. Mom also brought me to the library. She read with me and to me, but even with all this for me reading was never a top priority. From what my parents modeled I knew it was important. They encouraged and supported me, yet never made reading outside of school seem like it was a must. Perhaps this was strategic on their part. Perhaps my good grades did not give them reason to believe I needed extra reading support therefore they did not make me do more work.

My K-12 education came from catholic schools in a small town in southern Minnesota. Note that any names of former teachers, influencers, and students are pseudonyms. In elementary school I have no recollection of being strongly encouraged to make improvements with my reading comprehension or to lead more of a literacy-rich life. Reading always seemed like more of an option rather than a need. Drop everything and read (D.E.A.R.) time was a staple in elementary school.

During D.E.A.R. time, I was perfectly content sitting in the reading nook pouring over *Where's Waldo* and no one approached me to suggest a more appropriate book choice. I wonder what sort of reading development I acquired in this process. During what I believe was Guided Reading, we did a lot of Round Robin Reading. Looking back, it is clear I was always in the lowest reading group. Yet to my recollection, I always received those coveted VG (very good), S (satisfactory), and S+ (satisfactory +) marks. My parents never mentioned that my teachers were concerned about my literacy development in elementary school. It is possible my parents were never informed, or they never mentioned it to me.

Sixth grade was a pivotal year for me in reading. In Mrs. Runner's class, we read four very memorable chapter books as a class: *Bridge to Terabithia*, *Number the Stars*, *My Side of the Mountain*, and *The Outsiders*. We did not simply read and report on these books generically. She would read a portion aloud while we followed along then we would read a portion on our own. Afterward, we would discuss what we read and reflect on the meaning of the events and characters. She inspired me to read more. Short chapter books by *Nancy Drew*, *Lurlene McDaniel*, and *R.L. Stine* eventually became my go-tos. It was a very eclectic selection, but I was finally reading for enjoyment! Clearly I enjoyed mystery, drama, and suspense.

My junior high experiences were not valuable to my literacy experiences. In seventh grade I realized how behind I was. *Orange*. Orange was the lowest level reading group. My group. All year long. I would read the narrative or informational text card and struggle to answer the comprehension questions on the back. Begrudgingly I would bring it to Sister Jane for her to correct. Watching as she

marked all the questions answered incorrectly with her red pen was brutal. Listening to her demand improvement was uninspiring. Interestingly enough, she never suggested *how* to make such improvements, nor did she provide additional support to help me grow as a reader.

It will not be surprising to know that not only was I reading far below grade level, I was also not a strong writer. Writing, in general, was enjoyable, like copying notes for class, writing notes to friends, writing random words or phrases, or stream of consciousness, but to generate a story or a unique message seemed inaccessible. This could have been a natural consequence of lacking strong reading skills due to the reciprocal relationship between the two practices.

As junior high continued, reading began to feel more like a chore. Giving book reports seemed to be more about public speaking rather than contributing to the improvement of my reading skills or interest in reading. High school was a different story, however. Mr. Lawlin had high expectations of his students regardless of past literacy experiences. He got to know me as a reader and ignited a spark in me through some of the texts he chose: *Jane Eyre*, *Lord of the Flies*, *The Things They Carried*, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Brave New World*. These were so different from any other book I had read before because they actually had substance and deeper meaning. He taught us how to take concise notes and have rich discussions about what we read. We explored symbolism and the author's purpose for what or how he or she wrote. It was a fascinating new world of reading, which helped in my transition to college.

Reading college textbooks and academic writing was a different beast and proved to be very challenging. If it weren't for Mrs. Runner and Mr. Lawlin's inspiration and my parents' support and encouragement, it would have been a much bumpier ride. Reading high interest texts was paramount in building my love for reading along with stamina and critical thinking. I already knew I wanted to become a teacher, so reading various textbooks about education was more motivating. When I think about how I communicate and work with students, it makes me think about my literacy experiences as a child. Throughout elementary and high school, only two teachers (mentioned above) tried to get to know me as a reader and supported me where I needed it the most: reading comprehension. The two teachers of whom I am referring were the people who cared enough to encourage and coach me rather than simply tell me I needed to improve without additional support. Perhaps my past experiences led me to my role as a reading interventionist.

### **Using Past Experiences to Make Progress**

As I was once a striving student, especially in reading and writing, I am passionate about using my experiences to help students who need additional support. Striving students are those who want to feel confident and successful and work hard, but keep falling short. For the last eight of my fifteen years as an educator, I have been in the role of Reading Interventionist at a Spanish immersion school, dedicated to helping striving readers make progress, find a passion for reading, and most importantly, gain confidence in their abilities. Every year I struggle with how to be more effective and incorporate all the necessary components in the ever-so-short 30-minute intervention block. Something is missing. There must be something I am not

doing to support my students. Surely there is a better technique or structure that would be more effective. In the short amount of time with my groups, I need to be more effective and integrate more explicit writing instruction to strengthen their skills to help them make greater progress. These are just a few concerns that continuously flooded my mind over the past few years.

Often I wondered if my students would be more successful in their literacy lives if I changed my approach. As if it were meant to be, last year I was given an opportunity to audit a Reading Recovery/Literacy Lessons class where so much was learned about the reading and writing process as well as their connection. Reflecting on my work with those particular students, I thought about how I could use Reading Recovery strategies with my small groups even though Reading Recovery is a one-to-one program.

Focusing on different reading strategies to meet the group's needs and having my students write in connection to what they read is something I already practiced on a semi-regular basis when time permitted, but it has not proven to be enough. They were not making as much progress as hoped. There must be a better way.

During my audit of Reading Recovery/Literacy Lessons in 2018-2019, I observed one of our district's Reading Specialists, who had Reading Recovery training the year prior, conduct a lesson with three students using the Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) program (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017a) and wove in the word work component of Reading Recovery to make her LLI lessons even more powerful and effective. Though our school does not have the LLI program in Spanish, I still wondered: within the structure of small group interventions, how can integrating Reading

Recovery's writing/cut-up sentence component foster accelerated learning for striving students?

Now, more than ever, I understand how important it is to teach reading and writing together. My desire is to help striving students rise up and take control of their literacy lives by teaching and demonstrating early on, the close connection that exists between reading and writing. Thus leading them to be more independent, confident, and successful. I do not want them to look back and think, as I did, that they were a missed opportunity. Giving my students what I lacked for the majority of my literacy journey is the driving force for my determination and dedication as a Reading Interventionist.

The challenge is how to effectively do this with more than one student at a time within a 30-minute intervention block. Working one-to-one with students through Reading Recovery/Literacy Lessons and tutoring outside of school was very manageable and successful. I wondered if it was possible to yield similar results with my small group intervention students. Connecting with and knowing my students well is a strength of mine. Understanding who they are as children first, then knowing who they are as students is a key component in helping them become more successful. My biggest strength is the trusting relationship I form with my students and their families. I work hard to bolster their confidence with praise for what they are doing well then dive into strategies to build them up where they need support. Connecting the reading and writing practices and making them relevant will support the quest for accelerated learning.

Reading and writing are unavoidable in any content area and in life. My goal is to prepare and set them up for success as they will inevitably need reading and writing skills throughout their lives. My hope is that by linking the research-based techniques and strategies from the writing component of Reading Recovery with small group reading interventions, students who are at-risk will experience acceleration in both reading and writing once they understand the connection between the two processes. Not only do I want to provide solid interventions for students who are at-risk, I also want to provide a resource for teachers to use with their students to assure they are explicitly taught how the reciprocal relationship works and supports them as learners. The challenge will be to modify the structure so the teacher is able to meet the needs of all students in their group while including all essential components of the lesson in the allotted time.

My current teaching position and experiences with literacy growing up have led me to pursue this project. Not having the necessary reading support as a struggling reader/writer did not give me much hope for ever catching up. Using my experience in instructing readers who struggle, my goal was to develop an effective and efficient teacher resource based on best practice for use with reading intervention small groups. This will provide an effective small group reading intervention structure using the powerful writing/cut-up sentence component from Reading Recovery to foster accelerated learning.

All of my prior experiences as a student and teacher along with my desire to implement a balanced and effective intervention structure will be explored in the next chapter. The literature review in the following chapter explores what reading



intervention entails, details of Reading Recovery and how it is similar and different from small group interventions, and writing with its reciprocal relationship with reading. Chapter Three describes the project designed to explore the question: within the structure of small group interventions, how can integrating Reading Recovery's writing/cut-up sentence component foster accelerated learning for striving students? Finally, chapter four provides the conclusion and reflection for the research project.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Chapter Overview**

In every school setting, there are students who have reading difficulties. Teachers have the responsibility to observe and assess students to determine what their strengths are and offer sufficient support to foster growth. Within the constraints of a 30-minute intervention block, applying the most highly effective literacy practices based on students' specific needs yields the best results and in turn fosters acceleration (Farrell, Hunter, Davidson, & Osenga, 2019; Foorman & Eppes, 2018; Risko & Walker-Dahlhouse, 2015; Taylor, Medo, & Straight, 1994). Seeking the guidance of leaders in the literacy world helped clarify what small group intervention lesson structure would be most effective. From the desire to be more effective with students to support growth, came the research question: within the structure of small group interventions, how can integrating Reading Recovery's writing/cut-up sentence component foster accelerated learning for striving students?

In this chapter, the purpose of reading interventions is explained, how students are identified as needing reading intervention support is examined, and different structures for small group reading interventions are described. Additionally, research of the one-to-one reading intervention, Reading Recovery is shared, and a focus is put on writing to highlight the reciprocity of reading and writing. Emphasis is put on writing to support the acceleration of the reading and writing processes. They work in conjunction with and enhance one another, especially with students who are striving to make progress in one or both areas. By combining the two daily, aids in the exploration of the question: within the structure of small group interventions, how can

integrating Reading Recovery's writing/cut-up sentence component foster accelerated learning for striving students?

### **Small Group Reading Interventions**

In any school there are students who need additional literacy support. It is difficult to support all striving readers and writers in a one-to-one setting during an intervention block due to insufficient time and staff resources. To achieve this, educators or interventionists provide small groups with reading support to facilitate progress. Organizing groups differs depending on the teaching style or needs of the small group or individual. This section of the literature review focuses on what reading interventions are, how students are identified as needing extra support, focus lessons, and basic structures for delivering lessons to small reading groups.

**Small Group Reading Interventions Defined.** Based on criteria for effective reading interventions by Fountas and Pinnell (2009), reading interventions are lessons which combine both reading and writing and are geared toward individual needs of students in a small group who are considered to be low-achieving. Interventions are a scaffold to support these readers in frequent lessons with a low student to teacher ratio that are short term, fast-paced, structured, and systematic. Reading interventions are lessons which complement the effective core literacy curriculum already in place and provide tools and strategies to help identified students become stronger, successful readers through the development of phonics, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary. Finally, intervention lessons should be measurable and connect to classroom work (p. 498). Almasi and Fullerton (2012) further elaborate on this to say measuring growth through progress monitoring ought to be ongoing and authentic to

measure the effectiveness of the intervention as well as used to guide future planning and differentiation (pp. 82-83).

To change the trajectory of their reading progress, Hiebert and Taylor (1994) and Almasi and Fullerton (2012) stressed how critical it is to intervene early for students who are considered low-achieving to prevent further reading difficulties or failure. Reading interventions for selected students can be provided within or outside regular class time with the classroom teacher, specialist, or interventionist (Allington, 2013; DeFord, Lyons, & Pinnell, 1991; Risko & Walker-Dahlhouse, 2015). Helping students become successful readers is achieved by improving reading skills, leading to better problem-solving in reading to help students reach higher reading levels and work toward proficiency (Richardson & Lewis, 2018 ). Interventions should be systematic, explicit, and intensive (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012; Foorman & Eppes, 2018; Richardson & Lewis, 2018; Risko & Walker-Dahlhouse, 2015; Spear-Swerling, 2015; Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2004).

Certified teacher collaboration, strong core instruction, and progress monitoring are essential to accelerated growth in literacy because solely providing intervention is not sufficient to meet the needs of acceleration of the struggling students (Allington, 2013; Almasi & Fullerton, 2012; Foorman & Eppes, 2018; Gambrell, Malloy, Marinak, & Anders Mazzoni, 2015; Joseph, 2002; Richardson & Lewis, 2018; Taylor, et al., 1994). Therefore, these students need double or triple exposure to explicit literacy instruction to foster growth and acceleration to catch up to their peers. More importantly, the intensive, individualized support allows students to maintain or extend proficiencies and exit intervention (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012;

Foorman & Eppes, 2018; Gambrell, et al., 2015; Richardson & Lewis, 2018; Slavin, Karweit, Wasik, Madden, & Dolan, 1994; Taylor, et al., 1994). Interventions should be provided by an expert teacher: Too often, interventions are delivered by a volunteer or paraprofessional who do not have proper training to support the needs of the struggling reader (Allington, 2013; Almasi & Fullerton, 2012; Foorman & Eppes, 2018; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2017b; Juel, 1994)

**Purpose of Small Group Reading Interventions.** The purpose of having small group reading interventions is to provide additional, differentiated support to help striving readers make accelerated growth or reach proficiency in reading (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012; Diller, 2007; Fountas & Pinnell, 2009; Risko & Walker-Dahlhouse, 2015). Providing small reading group interventions allows teachers to give more individualized instruction (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012; Clay, 1991a, 2001, 2016; Foorman & Eppes, 2018; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001). Fountas and Pinnell (2001) describe guided reading as a “teaching approach designed to help individual students learn how to process a variety of increasingly challenging texts with understanding and fluency” (p. 193). Similar to guided reading, small group reading interventions also afford students the opportunities to enjoy their reading experiences and be successful (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996), but it may be more intensive and fast-paced.

Supporting students who are struggling with proficiency in literacy early on is ideal as it aids in putting a stop to the cycle of reading failure, which helps prevent confusions in reading from becoming habits (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012; Clay, 1991a; Forbes & Doyle, 2004; Hiebert & Taylor, 1994; Juel, 1994; Slavin, Karweit, Wasik,

Madden, & Dolan, 1994; Stanovich, 1986; Taylor, et al., 1994). Promoting the importance of early identification of our struggling readers, Clay (1991a) states, “If we can detect the process of learning to read going wrong within a year of school entry then it would be folly to wait several years before providing children with extra help” ( p.13).

Another reason to intervene early through small intervention groups is to establish a solid literacy foundation for striving learners (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012; Fountas & Pinnell, 2009; Slavin, Karweit, Wasik, Madden, & Dolan, 1994;). As stated above, the desired outcome for these small groups is acceleration in literacy to avoid falling further behind peers and grade-level expectations (Farrell, et al., 2019; Helman & Burns, 2012; Richardson & Lewis, 2018). Fountas and Pinnell (2009) reiterated the urgency to intervene early by saying, “We cannot wait until failure takes its emotional toll and the gap is too great to bridge” (p. 11). Stanovich (1986) related literacy gains, or lack thereof, with the *Matthew Effect*, which is essentially the concept that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Stanovich’s (1986) concept relates perfectly to reading progress in that students who started out with positive reading experiences and opportunities early on, tend to enjoy and excel in reading, whereas students who did not have a great start or available reading opportunities and resources, disliked it, performed poorly, and continued to fall further behind peers. Joseph (2002) articulated that poor readers do not receive intensive and effective instruction, they will not improve, but rather get poorer. To escape the *Matthew Effect* and the vicious cycle of reading failure, certain students who are struggling need to be offered more personalized and targeted instruction

early on (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012; Fountas & Pinnell, 2009; Slavin, Karweit, Wasik, Madden, & Dolan, 1994). Understanding more about the purpose of small group reading interventions, which is to provide more individualized instruction for the most striving readers, it further supports research of the question: within the structure of small group interventions, how can integrating Reading Recovery's writing/cut-up sentence component foster accelerated learning for striving students?

**Identifying Students Who Need Reading Intervention.** Depending on the school, students identified as needing intervention may either be considered at-risk, which means they are far below the grade-level standard, or partially meeting grade-level standards per assessment data. Formal and informal assessments are used to inform decisions about small group instruction. Spelling Inventory, Observation Survey (OS), Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA), Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), Benchmark Assessment System (BAS), Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), and Independent Reading Level Assessment (IRLA) are just a few examples of formal assessments used to gather data, which can assist in identifying students in need of reading intervention support. Aside from formal assessments, it is crucial that teachers invest time to listen closely and observe what students can do when reading and take anecdotal notes as there is a lot to glean from close, informal observation that would not appear as a result of any formal assessment (Diller, 2007). Running records and miscue analysis are prime examples of informal assessments used to observe and gather data about how and what strategies students use while reading.

***Response to Intervention.*** An example of a widely used intervention framework is Response to Intervention (RtI). This framework was created with the intention of supporting the needs of striving readers early on. It leads to further differentiating instruction for small group or one-to-one settings where students are categorized into three tiers (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012). It should be noted that RtI offers support *in addition to* core classroom learning and is not a substitution. Students in tier one are focused on core instruction with the whole class. Students in tier two have difficulties mastering grade-level work and ideally meet with the teacher for additional support in literacy two or three times a week in a small group setting. Finally, students in tier three are prioritized and meet with the teacher in more intense small groups or one-to-one daily (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012; Gambrell et al., 2015).

Students receiving tier three interventions should receive additional support from an interventionist or specialist (Malloy, et al., 2015). Selection of students for intervention is mostly data-driven, however, informal teacher observations are also taken into consideration (Diller, 2007; Joseph, 2002). Students are recommended for reading interventions by the classroom teacher in conjunction with the literacy team based on observations of reading behaviors in the classroom and data from formal and informal assessments. Students who are at-risk or below standard (tier three) are prime candidates. Identifying students for small group reading interventions using only one piece of data would not be reliable. Analysis and interpretation of multiple data points such as various assessments and observations of student reading behavior, is ideal to make an informed decision (Clay, 2013; Joseph, 2002).



**Organization of Intervention Groups.** Organization of intervention groups can take different forms. To be most effective, it is essential to work with smaller groups. Through the combined research of Fountas and Pinnell (2009), Richardson and Lewis (2018), Vaughn and Linan-Thompson (2004), the researchers defined what is most effective and essential when working with smaller groups, the importance of working with fewer students in each group so the teacher is able to tailor instruction to support the individual student's needs. Collectively these researchers suggest a range of three to five students, with three being ideal to maximize the effectiveness of the intervention. Students who need additional reading support are confused or have difficulties with learning so they need more individualized attention and that cannot happen if intervention groups are too large (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009; Lewis, 2017; Richardson & Lewis, 2018; Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2004).

When organizing intervention groups, it is paramount to have consistent communication with the classroom teachers about scheduling as well as student strengths and needs. Although the data is a good starting point, Diller (2007) and Joseph (2002) warn against relying too heavily on results from district-mandated assessments and suggest making close observation a priority and noting strengths or areas for focus that did not come from the formal assessment. Tier three intervention groups should meet daily with an expert, i.e. classroom teacher, reading specialist, or interventionist (Allington, 2013; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Gambrell, Malloy, Marinak, & Anders Mazzoni, 2015). Small groups should meet in a classroom or in a consistent location near the students' classrooms to maximize time spent on instruction (Foorman & Eppes, 2018; Richardson & Lewis, 2018). Whatever space is

chosen for instruction during the intervention, it should encourage engagement and learning with minimal distractions (Diller, 2007; Foorman & Eppes, 2018; Richardson & Lewis, 2018).

Although students participating in a reading intervention group most likely all fall within tier three, this can be broken down further to target individual needs. Grouping students based on text level is acceptable, however, grouping by strategy or greatest need allows for better focus and greater potential for acceleration (Diller, 2007; Hileman & Cline, 2019; Risko & Walker-Dahlhouse, 2015). Students who are reading at the same text level may not need practice with the same skills or strategies. As the teacher is differentiating instruction to target individual needs and goals, flexibility in grouping is ideal because students learn and grow at their own pace (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012; Clay, 1991a; Diller, 2007; Foorman & Eppes, 2018). With dynamic or flexible grouping, students move in and out of groups according to their needs and progress, which is why it is imperative that teachers monitor student progress over the duration of the intervention (Clay, 1991a; Diller, 2007; Foorman & Eppes, 2018; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001, 2017b). “In order to address individual needs of students, groups must be changed according to the differing rates of growth or the different paths students might take to reach the same goal” (Clay, 1991, p. 218). Do not waste time on unnecessary skills, strategies, or activities a student can already do independently. It would be more beneficial to exit them and continue the intervention with the rest who still need that strategy (Clay, 2016). Whether the strategy or concept is understood well enough to move on is to the discretion of the

interventionist per analysis of on-going progress monitoring and evidence of a positive change in reading behaviors.

**Reading Intervention Lessons.** What is taught in a small reading intervention group is solely dependent on the needs of the group or individual student. In reading intervention, a one size fits all mentality is not an equitable approach for unique learners and does not match best practices regarding differentiation. Instruction should be appropriate and differentiated (Risko & Walker-Dahlhouse, 2015). “Differentiated instruction gives readers access to the same curriculum as their classmates, multiple opportunities to participate in mixed-ability grouping, learning outcomes commensurate with students’ skill and ability, and learning assignments designed to meet students’ needs” (Risko & Walker-Dahlhouse, 2015, p.116). Not only should the lessons be differentiated for the unique learners, they should be intentional and well-designed (Juel, 1994), as well as offer engaging and relevant materials to help readers draw connections to their lives (Allington, 2013; Gambrell et al., 2015).

There are many concepts and strategies to teach in an intervention group such as phonemic awareness, phonics, language comprehension, explicit and implicit reading comprehension, use of text features, questioning perspectives using critical literacy, vocabulary, oral language, fluency (prosody, phrasing, expression), and writing to name a few (Diller, 2007; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, 2009). The teacher should know their students well to help the interventionist initially “match the right goal to the right reader” (Serravallo, 2015, p. 2). Richardson (2018) and Allington (2013) shared concerns about teaching aspects of the reading process in isolation.

Whatever is taught should be done in context to help the student transfer those skills into authentic reading and writing. A teacher *can* introduce concepts in isolation, but needs to be cognizant of integrating the strategies as soon as possible (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2004). When working with students, it is crucial to work at their instructional level. Choosing texts that are too challenging, even if it is at grade level, leads to frustration and disinterest and is not beneficial to the reading process (Allington, 2013; Gambrell, 2015; Helman & Burns, 2012). Whereas choosing texts that are too easy too often will not raise the level of challenge for the student, resulting in slower progress.

***Structure of Daily Lessons.*** To be efficient and effective, a daily routine or consistent outline for each lesson is essential to maximize on-task instructional and work time. Being able to anticipate what activity or part of the lesson is coming next serves as a comfort for many students. Consistently utilizing a predictable structure gives students a sense of security, allowing them to learn and use the essential structure more quickly and also allocates necessary practice for the teacher pacing instruction to include all vital components (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009).

Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2001, 2013, 2017b) suggested a guided reading lessons to be structured in a way which includes the following components: introduction of the new text, independent reading of the new text by the students or quietly reading to the teacher, discussion prompts led by the teacher to guide and gauge understanding, teacher makes specific teaching points about the text, word-solving strategies, optional extension of meaning through writing or drawing.

Comparable to Fountas and Pinnell, Diller (2007) enlisted a lesson structure,

however, this one incorporates daily fluent writing for beginning readers right after the familiar reading portion and a writing portion is suggested for a follow-up activity the next day. Clay's (2016) structure of daily Reading Recovery lessons for one-to-one intervention support was similar to those of Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2001, 2013, 2017b) and Diller (2007), however, each 30-minute lesson includes all essential elements daily to link reading and writing and includes a cut-up sentence component: familiar reading, running record, word work, writing/cut-up sentence, new book introduction, student's first read of the new book. The breakdown for timing is to aim for 10 minutes for the familiar reading and running record, 10 minutes for letter/word work and writing, and 10 minutes for the new book introduction and the student's first attempted read.

Richardson (2009) had many of the same components as Clay (2016), Diller (2007), and Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2001, 2013, 2017b) for small group lessons, however, each lesson was a maximum of 20-minutes and lessons were divided into three days: Day one included a book introduction, students reading the new book with teacher prompts, teaching points, discussion prompt, and word study. Day two consisted of rereading or continuing to read yesterday's new book, and word study. Finally, day three included an optional rereading yesterday's book for fluency and ended with guided writing.

Richardson and Lewis (2018) implemented a different way of conducting small group reading. In this model, small groups rotate through four different stations with a specific focus. The duration of each station is 12-15 minutes, which means the whole intervention time is 45-60 minutes. Station one focuses on introducing a new

book where the teacher prompts for strategic action and takes notes based on observations. Phonics and word study are at the core of station two where the teacher reviews sight words and teaches phonics skills. Station three, focuses on reading yesterday's new book and students practice reading with fluency and engage in discussion about the book. The last station, four, is guided writing where students write about a familiar text with appropriate teacher support (Richardson & Lewis, 2018).

Combining varying structures of small group instruction and instructional strategies to fit the needs of students who are at-risk is a guiding principle. There is not one single, magic method, theory, approach, or strategy that can be successful and effective with every student who is underperforming in literacy. This leads to advocating for the use of a broad repertoire to meet the individual needs of students (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Tracey & Morrow, 2015). Fountas and Pinnell (2001) provide numerous ideas for how to engage and support striving readers and writers by offering different ways to match specific tools to the individual readers' needs; one important aspect being writing: Quick write prior to reading to activate any prior knowledge, writing in a journal to reflect on their reading, and webs or other graphic organizers (pp. 450-459).

Supporting students in a small group setting is beneficial. It provides opportunities for the teacher to observe their reading and writing behaviors more closely and tailor the lesson to the individual to build off what they already know. There are various ways to structure daily intervention lessons for small group work, but finding one that is most effective for the teacher and students can be challenging.

Again, the question is: within the structure of small group interventions, how can integrating Reading Recovery's writing/cut-up sentence component foster accelerated learning for striving students?

Without intervention, they can perpetuate confusions and fall into behaviors that we then diagnose as reading disabilities. What was an early weakness that would respond to instruction becomes a long-term deficit. We need to remember that a difficulty is not necessarily a disability. By intervening early and using a repertoire of different instructional techniques, we can put most children back on track. (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009, p. 30)

Students who are behind grade-level expectations and striving for proficiency deserve additional support that is intensive to help accelerate learning. There are many factors regarding small group reading interventions: The process of identifying and prioritizing students based on data from assessments and observations, organizing groups based on common needs among the students in each group, and being purposeful about what is taught in each lesson. Teaching points should be intentional and target the needs of the individual student and not necessarily the whole group to help striving readers make accelerated progress (Clay, 2016; Fountas & Pinnell, 2017b; Juel, 1994; Serravallo, 2015). The importance of reading intervention is undeniable. The next section introduces another reading intervention model called Reading Recovery. Unlike small group reading interventions, Reading Recovery's highly-trained instructors work one-to-one with their striving students. Similarities and differences between the two intervention models, small group and one-to-one, are revealed.

## **One-to-One Intervention: Reading Recovery**

Differing from small group reading intervention is Reading Recovery, a program designed for students who have fallen behind after being in school for one year (Clay, 1991b, 2001, 2016; Lewis, 2017; Lyons, Pinnell, & DeFord, 1993). Rather than working with multiple students at once, Reading Recovery focuses on one student at a time. Starting with what the student already knows, the goal of Reading Recovery is to accelerate a student's learning in a given timeframe. This section reveals what Reading Recovery is, how it differs from small group interventions, how students are selected for the program, and describes the components that make up the well-structured, research-based, one-to-one intervention.

**Reading Recovery Defined.** "Reading Recovery is a system-wide intervention that involves a network of education, communication, and collegiality designed to create a culture of learning that promotes literacy for high-risk children" (Lyons, et al., 1993, p. 2). Reading Recovery is also described as a systematic, early reading and writing intervention whose purpose is to reduce the incidence of literacy learning problems among low-achieving first graders (Clay, 2001, 2016; Lyons, et al., 1993; Pinnell, Smith-Burke, & Worden, 2002). One might describe it as prescriptive as the program provides specific instruction and intervention to different students based on their strengths and learning needs (Clay, 2001).

It is a preventative program which aims to reduce the number of students falling far behind their peers and accelerate their learning to catch up and fully participate with others in their class (Pinnell, Fried, & Estice, 1991). Ultimately,



Reading Recovery's goal is to develop a solid foundation for future learning and create a self-extending system for its students (Clay, 2016; Williams, 2016). Reading Recovery is a comprehensive program created to support many different school populations, different curricula focal points, and varied school-wide achievement levels (Clay, 2001).

Lessons for this second-chance program occur outside of the regular classroom, one-to-one with a highly trained teacher for 30-minutes daily. Students chosen to participate in Reading Recovery are students who fit into tier three in the RtI model, meaning they are far below grade-level standards and are prioritized as needing more intensive, daily support. Typically, a student participates in Reading Recovery for 12-20 weeks, not for the long-term (DeFord, et al., 1991; Lewis, 2017; Lyons, 1989; Lyons, et al., 1993; Pinnell, et al., 1991). Williams (2016) described Reading Recovery as a balance of familiar and new text experiences, using data to make purposeful and individualized teaching decisions, providing echoes and links, and lifting the level of challenge over time which offers support to develop self-extending systems in reading and writing.

At the end of the 12-20 weeks and after a post-assessment has been conducted and analyzed, the teacher decides whether the student is ready to discontinue. If a student discontinues the program it means they have made significant progress and are performing at the average level of the students in their class or grade *and* the Reading Recovery teacher believes the student has the basic reading and writing competencies and will not lose them (Clay, 2001; Lyons, 1989).

**Reading Recovery Differs from Small Group Reading Intervention.** Small

group reading interventions typically consist of students who need additional support with the same skills and strategies or are reading at the same text level. Reading Recovery is not dependent upon a specific curriculum or set of materials. It is a rigorous, systematic, one-to-one intervention whose lessons are built around the needs of the individual student (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012; Clay, 1991a; Pinnell, et al., 1991). Lessons that begin where the student is in their learning as opposed to picking up where the standards or curriculum wants them to be is another major factor that is unique to this program (Clay, 1991b). There is no set lesson sequence regarding whether one strategy should be learned before another therefore each student's sequence will be different (Clay, 2016).

Rather than planning lessons based on where the class is within an established grade-level curriculum, they are adapted to the specific needs of the student. Instead of learning strategies in isolation, which may cause confusion in the long run, the student is learning in the context of a full text (Clay, 2016). Reading Recovery teachers observe and analyze strengths of the student and what they already know, as opposed to other schools of thought that suggest catching the student up to the concepts and pace of the set curriculum (Clay, 1991b, 2001, 2013, 2016; Pinnell, et al., 1991; Lewis, 2017; Lyons, 1989; Williams, 2016). Due to the fact that it is more student driven, based on abilities and behaviors, there will most likely be more buy-in and students will be more invested in this work, which is just one more reason to weave this into small group reading work. Furthermore, Reading Recovery differs because the focus of the program is on change, not only on the part of the student, but the teacher too. Intensity of the program and instruction, consistency of support,

quality of teaching, and immediacy of teacher feedback are other ways the program is unique. It is heavily reliant on dialogue between the student and teacher and puts emphasis on the reciprocity of reading and writing (Anderson & Briggs, 2011; Clay, 2001; 2016). Similar to learning about small group interventions, learning about and understanding Reading Recovery further explores the guiding question: within the structure of small group interventions, how can integrating Reading Recovery's writing/cut-up sentence component foster accelerated learning for striving students?

### **Reading Recovery Students: Who They Are and How They Are Selected.**

Students who are the lowest-achieving in their grade and are not making satisfactory progress after their first year of school are prime candidates for Reading Recovery (Clay, 2001, 2016; Lyons, 1989; Lyons, et al., 1993; Pinnell, et al., 1991). Once first-grade students are identified by their teachers as performing in the 10%-20% range, the Reading Recovery teachers further analyze the data breakdown to see which students they will assess with the Observation Survey of early literacy achievement. The Observation Survey (OS) is an extensive and comprehensive assessment that measures the following (Clay, 2013):

- Knowledge of letters: identification, sound, word with initial letter (pp. 84-87)
- Concepts about print (CAP skills)
  - Orientation of the book
  - Concept that print, not picture, carries the message
  - Directional rules
    - Moves left to right on any line
    - Return sweep

- Word-by-word pointing
  - Concept of first and last
  - Inversion of picture
  - Response to inverted print
  - Line sequence
  - Left page is read before a right page
  - Word sequence
  - Letter order / reversals
  - Meaning of punctuation
    - Period
    - Comma
    - Question mark
    - Quotation marks
  - Capital and lowercase letters
  - Words that contain the same letters in a different order (saw v. was)
  - Concept of a letter and word
  - Concept of first and last letter
  - Concept of a capital letter (pp. 44-46)
- Ability to read the Ohio word list
  - List of 15 sight words for first grade (pp. 93-96)
- Writing vocabulary
  - Amount of words the child is able to write independently in 10-minutes starting with his or her name (pp. 107-108)

- Hearing and recording sounds in words (pp. 118-122)
- Running record to find appropriate instructional level (pp. 51-81)

Of the selected students, the eight who have the overall lowest scores and lowest stanines will be selected for the first Reading Recovery group of the year. “Stanines are scores which redistribute raw scores according to a normal curve in nine groups from one (low score) to nine (high score)” (Lyman, 1963, as cited in Clay, 2013, p. 126). These scores give the instructor an idea of what the student will most likely be able to do or what the student needs in comparison with peers of the same age range.

Once lessons begin, teacher and student follow a very structured format of familiar reading, rereading yesterday’s new story while teacher takes a running record, letter or word work, writing/cut-up sentence, and new story introduction by the teacher and first reading by the student. Although the overall lesson structure is stable, book, written message, and interactions are flexible and should bend to the needs of the student (Lyons, et al., 1993).

**Components of a Reading Recovery Lesson.** Daily lessons begin with reading familiar texts. Reading familiar texts may not seem valuable, but the task carries great power as it allows the student to practice reading with appropriate phrasing, intonation, and expression; be in more control, and leads to self-extending systems (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009; Williams, 2016). As teachers, we want our students to create self-extending systems by taking what we have learned and practiced together to continue to learn and grow alongside their grade-level peers. Familiar reading permits students to practice fluency and word recognition with a

wide range of texts at or below the student's level. Reading familiar texts builds confidence, strengthens the decision-making process, and frees the reader up to notice new elements of text structure or words encountered (Clay, 2016; Williams, 2016). "Things that are familiar will come together more rapidly and allow the learner to attend to novel things. When this happens at an ever-increasing rate, accelerated learning occurs" (Clay, 2016, p. 21). Building off what the student already knows, it frees up their cognitive load, so when they are learning something new, it will not be as taxing. When students have more control over that which is familiar, it leads to strengthening problem-solving skills for new texts.

Rereading yesterday's new book gives teachers the opportunity to take a running record and observe what strategies the student is using to problem-solve and understand what he or she is reading. The teacher observes what links the student is making to newly learned information from the previous day and gathers evidence of what processing information is being used (Clay, 2016; Williams, 2016).

Observations made by the teacher during the running record provide an ideal opportunity to give feedback and select a teaching point when the student has finished the text.

Letter and word work, vital components of Reading Recovery, emphasize phonological awareness (Lyons, et al., 1993). Students learn to identify and recognize all letters. More advanced students practice breaking words apart to understand the importance of letter orientation and order. Words are broken or taken apart in three ways: (1) by syllables, *wa-ter*; (2) phoneme by phoneme, *c-a-t*; (3) by onset and rime, *c-at* (Clay, 2016). Learning to break words apart allows the student to use what is

known to solve partially known or unknown words. Once *cat* becomes a known word or pattern, it supports students in problem-solving words like *bat, fat, that, splat*.

Breaking words apart is a skill that transfers to the writing process, further linking the two core practices of reading and writing (Clay, 2016; DeFord, 1991; Richardson & Lewis, 2018).

Next, the student composes a message or story. Depending on the student's oral language or comfort level during this portion, the teacher can prompt with a question linked to a text just read or give a writing prompt related something recently discussed with the student. According to Clay (2016), composing a message leads to practice of spatial rules, punctuation, letter formation, hearing and recording sounds in words, and building writing vocabulary. Writing every day builds writing fluency and leads to longer or more complex messages. To help compose tricky words, the student can use sound boxes where the student pushes one counter at a time into separate boxes to represent each sound heard in a particular word.

Once sound boxes have been mastered, students transition to letter boxes where they fill in each box with the letter for a given word (Clay, 2016). If a student gets stuck, the teacher can use a technique or word work strategy called analogy, which allows the student to attempt new words by using known words with an appropriate level of support from the teacher (Clay, 1991a, 2016; Gambrell, et al., 2015; Joseph, 2002). For example: if the student is attempting the word *sat* and the teacher knows the student can already read and write the word *hat*, the teacher might prompt the student by saying things like, *You know another word like that; Have you heard another word that sounds like that?; Say the word slowly. Is it like another*

*word you know?* (Clay, 2016, p. 105). When considering appropriate levels of support for each student, Lose (2007) suggests using Wood's levels of contingent support:

Level 1 - level 5 (least to most help):

- Level 1: Teacher give general verbal support
  - General prompts such as *You try it, Go back and try again, I like how you solved that new word*
- Level 2: Teacher gives specific verbal support
  - More specific verbal prompts such as *Read what you have and think what you need to write next, What other sounds can you hear*
- Level 3: Teacher give specific verbal with non-verbal indicators
  - The teacher may draw Elkonin boxes for the student and verbally prompt the him or her to say the word slowly to determine which sound/letter goes into each box.
  - The teacher could also cover part of the tricky word with a card or their hand and verbally prompt the student to look at the first part and ask him or her to say the first part of the word.
- Level 4: Prepares the student for the next action
  - Again, the teacher initiates the problem-solving for the student. The example given is with the word *make*. The student produced *m-a-k*, so the teacher can prompt the student for what should come next. *What do you need to add to the end so it looks right?*
- Level 5: Teacher takes control and demonstrates the next action so the student can see exactly what needs to be done.



- One example given is for the word *boat*. The student produced *bot* and the teacher can tell them *there needs to be an -a- here to make it look right* (teacher points to the spot between the -o- and the -t- (Lose, 2007, pp. 18-20).

A vital extension of the writing component is the cut-up sentence. Fountas and Pinnell (2009) promote the cut-up sentence component as a productive activity for students who have a difficult time learning about letters, sounds, and words. reveal all the student must do when reconstructing their cut-up sentence:

- Hold the idea or sentence or idea in their head
- Attend to sentence order
- Think about the first sound of a word and what letter or letter cluster they expect to see
- Visually search for and locate the next word
- Use known words to monitor reconstruction
- Reread throughout the reconstruction process
- Focus on orientation and reconstruct their sentence from left-to-right, word-by-word
- Remember and use the appropriate language structure
- Pay attention to end punctuation, as well as capital letters at the beginning of a sentence
- Reread to check
- Use voice-print matching through the process (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009, pp. 227 & 312).

As the student is composing their message in an unlined writing notebook, the teacher multitasks by observing the decisions made by the student in addition to writing the message on a sentence strip. After the teacher has written the message, the student reads each word as the teacher cuts the sentence apart word by word. Once the words are cut apart, the teacher mixes up the word order and creates a word tower. From the word tower, the student is tasked with reconstructing their sentence (Lyons, et al., 1993). This transitions the message into a reconstruction task for the student, providing opportunities to locate and say the words in order. It also affords the student practice with directionality, reading fluency, phrasing, and expression. Having come full circle, the writing task has morphed into a reading task (Lyons, et al., 1993), once again demonstrating the strong link between the two practices. Learning to write contributes to learning to read. Both practices are problem-solving activities. Reading is about message getting and writing is about message sending (Clay, 2001). Another powerful factor Fountas and Pinnell bring to mind is that “rereading what you have written is a different experience than rereading other texts, because you have a sense of ownership. Writers often reread their writing in progress to check it. Doing so develops their ability to monitor and self-correct, as well as to remember the meaning” (2009, p. 313).

New book introduction and attempting the new book is the last component of the Reading Recovery lesson structure. The teacher provides an appropriately supportive introduction based on the needs of the student because sometimes a higher level of teacher support is needed and when they are more advanced within a level they need less support (Clay, 2016). Prior to the lesson, the teacher reviewed different

texts to find one that was just right for the student. It could have been selected for a specific sentence structure that is partially known, words to practice recognition based on familiar patterns, verb tense, etcetera. Choosing a particular text should help the reader apply what they already know of directionality, tracking, matching one-to-one words, monitoring, phrasing, or with whatever the student needs more practice (Clay, 2016). It should offer the reader familiarity, yet provide a slight challenge.

Reading Recovery and small group reading interventions have similar components, however, the makeup of this one-to-one intervention program is more rigorous and student-led. The structured program was designed specifically for acceleration grounded in what the student already knows. Students are carefully selected based on formal data. Each lesson builds off the previous lesson based on acute observations, careful planning, decision-making (preplanned and in-the-moment), and the importance of reciprocity of reading and writing.

Reading nurtures writing and writing nurtures reading. Reading Recovery is an intensive intervention designed to support students one-to-one, however, the power of this predictable structure and linking of reading and writing to enhance one another cannot be ignored. Especially with striving readers and writers it is imperative to explicitly demonstrate the strong relationship of the two practices. Marrying the ideas of small group instruction with the principles of Reading Recovery make small group reading intervention more effective. The next section emphasizes the practice of writing and further highlights the deep connection between reading and writing, which helps answer the question: within the structure of small group interventions,

how can integrating Reading Recovery's writing/cut-up sentence component foster accelerated learning for striving students?

### **Reading and Writing Reciprocity**

Many early interventions tend to leave writing out because reading is perceived as more important. Some might say learning to read is easier than learning to write, which is partially why many teachers think teaching reading first is beneficial. Reading and writing have a special relationship and what is learned in writing supports learning in reading and vice versa (Bromley, 2015; Clay, 1991a; Coady, 2007; DeFord, 1991; Forbes & Dorn, 2015; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001; Fried, 2006; Gentry & Gillet, 1993; Graham & Hebert, 2010; Griffo, Madda, Pearson, & Raphael, 2015; Kamberelis, 1998; Lyons, et al., 1993; Shaw, 2008; Spandel, 2005).

Many teachers focus on writing *or* reading rather than their reciprocal relationship and miss out on teaching students what one process can do for the other. This section focuses on three main topics: Writing as a practice, writing and the striving reader/writer, and the supportive and enhancing relationship between reading and writing. Within the world of writing there is the writing process and spelling, as well as the influence of oral language and how they contribute to the practice. Lastly, within the topic of reciprocity between reading and writing, various ways are explored to make the relationship *visible* by reading what was written, writing about what was read, and using mentor texts (Serravallo, 2015).

**Writing.** Writing is taught for the purpose of communication, not simply for the sake of writing. People write as a form of expression and a way to share a message with others. People write to be read and understood.

Writing involves a complex series of actions. Children have to think of a message and hold it in their mind. Then they have to think of the first word and how to start it, remember each letter form and its features, and manually reproduce the word letter by letter. Having written that first word (or an approximation), the child must go back to the whole message, retrieve it, and think of the next word. Through writing, children are manipulating and using symbols, and in the process learning how written language works. (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 14-15)

Authenticity in writing is a key factor that motivates writers to craft messages and draws a reader in (Anderson & Briggs, 2011; Bromley, 2015; Coady, 2007; Griffo, et al., 2015; Spandel, 2005). Not only should a student aim to write authentically, but the writing practice should be taught authentically. Writing with and for students is an excellent use of instructional time and can result in teaching multiple strategies at once (Graves, 2004, Spandel 2005). Allowing students to see the teachers struggle with the writing process can be impactful. When students see the struggle they can better connect with the realities of the writing process and gain ideas they had not previously considered (Spandel, 2005). If the goal is to teach authenticity in writing, what better way than to show it throughout the entire process.

Students want to write and will do just that, if opportunities are made available (Graves, 2004). If the goal is for students to write they need multiple opportunities and ample time to do so (Askew & Frasier, 1999; Bromley, 2015; Graves, 2004; Hiebert, 1994; Pinnell & McCarrier, 1994). The more students write, the more they will learn about the practice. Students who struggle in reading or

writing will continue to struggle if writing opportunities and focus lessons are not accessible and abundant. Not only is it critical to provide ample time to write, it should be integrated into other content areas and teach students *how* to write; how to write in different formats such as note-taking, writing a friendly letter, journals, recipes;, and how to use of different modes other than paper and pencil to carry out the writing activity (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, 2017b; Spandel, 2005; Tracey & Morrow, 2015).

Equally, if not more important to the writing practice is the understanding that students need to take ownership of their writing and that begins with choosing their topic (Clay, 1991a, 2010; Gentry & Gillet, 1993; Graham & Hebert, 2010; Graves, 2004; Serravallo, 2017; Spandel, 2005). When teachers talk too much or give too many prompts it stifles the authenticity and voice of the student writer. One of the biggest motivators for any writer is the freedom to choose their own topic. What do they wish to write about? Writers use personal experiences, connections, and ideas to fuel their work. When this is done, their writing comes alive with a more natural voice (Spandel, 2005). Teaching a variety of writing strategies will support writers in composing with voice and craft (Serravallo, 2017) and the authentic voice and craft is what gains the full attention of the reader.

***Writing process and spelling.*** There are many ways to write, therefore a writer is not bound to a single writing process. For beginning or striving writers, teach them one process to get started knowing they will eventually develop a process that works for them (Serravallo, 2017). Truly, good coaching begins with the writer and his or her ideas, not necessarily the processes, conventions, or strategies (Spandel,

2005). Once the student writes more and has increased motivation, slowly start teaching the process, the conventions, and structures of writing such as sentence or paragraph construction, punctuation, and capitalization, which help to improve reading comprehension (Graham & Hebert, 2010).

The earliest form of writing begins with scribbles. Scribbles later become random letters, which transform into invented spelling and end with more conventional spelling to communicate the message and bring meaning to the written text (Gentry & Gillet, 1993; Hiebert, 1994; Tracey & Morrow, 2015). Readers and writers that struggle may be more apprehensive to write because they are overly concerned about how to spell words correctly, which interrupts the thought process and suppresses motivation. A simple way to encourage writing is to encourage invented spelling by teaching the student how to say the word out loud slowly so they stretch it out to hear the sounds in sequential order (Cunningham, 2015; Lyons, et al., 1993).

Another way to lessen the concern about proper spelling is to remind the student to use what they already know to learn new words. This is the use of analogy (Askew & Frasier, 1999; Clay, 2016; Cunningham, 2015; Matczuk & Straw, 2005), which can be likened to using word families. If a student knows how to spell or write the word *map*, it helps them solve the new word, *gap*, *zap*, or *trap*. Since spelling is learned in order to write, it should be integrated with the reading and writing processes, rather than taught in isolation, so it has context and meaning (Gentry & Gillet, 1993).

*Influence of oral language.* Oral language is an important factor not to be overlooked as speaking and writing use the same cognitive abilities or processes (Bromley, 2015; Graham & Hebert, 2010). Learners become aware of new and different ways to check the language they use when speaking or hearing in their environment and in books (Clay, 1991a). Students pick up on oral language in their community and bring this knowledge to school. Oral language and prior knowledge play a major part in writing as it is used to search, monitor, and self-correct. Crévola and Vineis (2005) remind that exploring oral language is a way for students to link the symbols they are learning about in school with the real world. It is critical for students to understand, what students think can be talked about, then what is talked about can be written, and finally, what is written can be read. In oral language reading and writing, the focus is that students can produce and verbally share their ideas and thinking about an image and later write and revise their ideas, then read them (Crévola & Vineis, 2005). Students can construct messages by using language they have heard from others around them or read in a book (Anderson & Briggs, 2011; Clay, 1991).

Crévola and Vineis (2005) address the stages of oral development and the role oral language plays in literacy development, which are pre-production, early production, speech emergence, and intermediate and advanced fluency. Pre-production is essentially everything the student absorbs language from their surroundings (i.e. through rhymes, songs, and language they hear) as they begin to make sense of the language. In early production, students build their use of oral language by participating in more oral discussions and incorporating simple language



structures into their everyday speech. Speech emergence addresses the point when these learners are using more of their newly learned content language to communicate and express themselves. Lastly, students who are at the intermediate and advanced fluency stage are learning and understanding more complex oral language structures (Crévola & Vineis, 2005).

There are times when a student might read the text in a way that sounds right, but does not look right or match the written text. Their oral language and knowledge of syntax and sentence structure took over. Although they read the text incorrectly, it still sounded right to say it the way they did and still held meaning.

**Writing and the Striving Reader/Writer.** Too often, early interventions leave out the writing portion (Clay, 2016). Encountering difficulties happens when reading and writing are taught separately and differently (Shaw, 2008). Students who struggle in one or both practices need explicit teaching about the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing the most (Anderson & Briggs, 2011; Clay, 2016; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Forbes & Dorn, 2015; Fried, 2006). It is important for them to see how reading and writing work together and support one another. The revelation of what the student says can be written and what the student writes can be read is incredibly powerful (Clay, 2010). “Writing’s influence on reading has positive effects for striving students, but it is not the case if students are not taught how to write about text they’ve read” (Graham & Hebert, 2010, p. 24). Explicitly teaching the reading and writing connection and providing ongoing practice has a positive impact on struggling students’ understanding of a text (Graham & Hebert, 2010).

Drawing or sketching are forms of writing in the beginning stages because they express the thoughts and emotions of the writer and effectively link reading and writing for many students (Clay, 1991a, 2010; Coady, 2007; Fountas & Pinnell, 2017a, 2017b; Gentry & Gillet, 1993). Some students may start there and progress to expression in written form. When working with striving readers/writers, it is important to know your students and set goals with and for each of them. They will benefit from modeling, prompting (when necessary), feedback (on content first and only what is necessary), and additional support as they work toward their goal(s) (Gentry & Gillet, 1993; Serravallo, 2017). These unique learners go at their own pace and take individual paths in their journey of writing. Thus the importance of supporting individual learners where they are in the writing acquisition stage and carefully selecting teaching points to meet the needs of each learner to foster change (Askew & Frasier, 1999; Matczuk & Straw, 2005; Reutzel, Clark, & Flory, 2015).

A good intervention has striving students reading and writing every day. Students learn to write by writing and they learn to read by reading, but students can learn to write by reading and vice versa, which is another reason to explore the question: within the structure of small group interventions, how can integrating Reading Recovery's writing/cut-up sentence component foster accelerated learning for striving students? Fountas and Pinnell (2009) acknowledge the fact that it would be nearly impossible to fully develop students' understanding of the writing process, craft, and conventions in a 30-minute intervention group, but incorporating both reading and writing is a highly effective practice to support the growth of these skills. Demonstrating the reciprocity of the two practices of reading and writing, students

learn to write by reading and they learn to read by writing (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, 2017b). Writing is crucial to the process of learning how to read in early intervention because it prevents the student from neglecting many things they must know about print and reveals to the teacher how they are problem-solving (Clay, 1991a).

It is essential to build in opportunities for striving students to use what they already know and incorporate that with new knowledge for learning to occur. One way to achieve this is by connecting learning activities to their lives, which provides relevance and motivation (Coady, 2007; Graves, 2004; Matczuk & Straw, 2005). Graves (2004) observed that a writer writes about what he or she is familiar with. Therefore, the more connected the students are to the topic or idea, the more writing they will generate. As ongoing practice occurs and motivation is maintained, their writing proficiency grows and their written messages naturally become longer and more complex (Graham & Hebert, 2010; Hiebert, 1994).

Clay (2016) emphasized how procedures of Reading Recovery “are designed for adapting instruction to the learning needs of individual children” (p. 3) and that “a child’s ultimate resource for learning to read and write is spoken language: all his new learning becomes linked in his brain with what he has already learned about the language he speaks” (p.24). This further supports the notion that it is important to build lessons off what the student already knows.

**How Reading and Writing Support and Enhance One Another.** It is clear that reading and writing are inseparable, but, being read to and reading aloud also contribute to writing (Spandel, 2005). According to Gentry and Gillet (1993), “When a child is read to regularly and frequently, one of the earliest concepts about print he

or she acquires is that books and print contain messages that are expressed in words” (p. 22). Fried (2006) explained that a student may be able to write a word and not recognize it in a book, but using the act of writing helps with problem-solving while reading. Fried (2006) also suggested reminding the student that they know that word within the text. To support the student, the teacher can ask them to write the word, say the word they wrote, and then go back into the text to read the word in context to establish the connection.

Gentry and Gillet (1993) promote and validate the strong relationship between reading and writing as they consider the two to be equally important. Reading and writing practices should be used in conjunction with one another because they support, strengthen, and reinforce each other (Clay, 2014; Coady, 2007; Fountas & Pinnell, 2017a, 2017b; Graham & Hebert, 2010). It is the responsibility of the teacher, interventionist, or specialist to help the student see and experience the connection between reading and writing because early readers and writers do not yet realize they can read what they have written (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, 2017b; Fried, 2006; Gentry & Gillet, 1993).

This section further addresses the reciprocity between reading and writing and how this work is enhanced by using skills and strategies already attained. “Both reading and writing draw on the same sources of knowledge about letters, sounds, chunks, clusters, words, syntax, the rules of discourse, and narrative structures and genre differences” (Clay, 2014, p. 139). Knowledge students have about writing influences their understanding of reading. What they learn in reading helps with writing because both practices use the written language (Fried, 2006) to create

meaning through print (Coady, 2007; DeFord, 1991; Graves, 2004; Serravallo, 2017). Serravallo's (2017) book of writing strategies is organized in a way that scaffolds the learning of students depending on where they are on the continuum of learning how to write and what their specific needs might be. Powerful links between reading and writing are also stressed throughout to show they are mutually supportive.

Serravallo (2017) developed nine writing strategies. They are: Developing a writing identity, generating ideas, focus and meaning in written work, organization and structure, elaboration, word choice, conventions of spelling and letter formation, conventions of grammar and punctuation, and collaborating with others. These powerful strategies motivate and encourage students to support peers, offer feedback, and learn from each other's writing through the entire process, rather than only at the time there is a finished product.

Engaging students in purposeful, authentic writing activities is of great importance in the scope of the reading and writing connection as their writing will be more developed (Bromley, 2015; DeFord, 1991; Tracey & Morrow, 2015). Once a writing task is complete it is crucial to provide opportunities for students to publish their work to share the message they are communicating and to celebrate and value the work they have done (Bromley, 2015; Graves, 2004; Reutzel, et al., 2015).

Fountas and Pinnell (1996) provided a table that shows how reading and writing are similar. This table further solidifies the importance of linking the two practices for all students, emergent and more advanced readers and writers. The following table indicates the parallels:

**Table 1**

***Similarities of Reading and Writing***

Writing	Reading
Before and during: writers talk, discuss, brainstorm, reflect, gather information, make lists, etc.	Before and during: readers talk, predict, skim outlines & headings, raise questions.
Writers bring shape to the written work they draft and revise it.	Readers revise thinking, predictions, and concepts read.
Writers learn to look at their word and reread for changes.	Readers learn to reevaluate what they understand about written work and reread a text.
Writers share their work through discussion and through publication.	Readers share understandings through verbal, written, and artistic responses.
Writers appreciate others' work.	Readers draw understandings across whole texts.
Writers bring meaning to texts they compose and express feelings and ideas through written language.	Readers derive wide-ranging meaning from text based on their personal, varied experiences/background to bring meaning to what they are reading.
Writers reveal attempts to apply their knowledge in new ways through drafts.	Readers reveal their attempts to use information to solve words via partially correct responses.

***Reading what is written.*** Writing relies heavily on reading, and writers read to perfect their craft. With a focus on the meaning of their message, a writer must stop to review what they have written to make sure it looks right, sounds right, makes sense, and even regain momentum or acquire new ideas (Coady, 2007; Lyons, et al., 1993; Spandel, 2005). Peer review and editing are invaluable practices. They provide a way to share work and learn from one another. Listening to someone read written work out loud is another powerful method for reflection and editing (Spandel, 2005) as it allows the listener to hear how it sounds and what revisions need to be made.

Whether writers realize it or not, they are always reading and rereading their work to confirm or disconfirm meaning.

***Writing about what is read.*** Write about what was read because “it affords greater opportunities to think about ideas in a text, requires them to organize and integrate those ideas into a coherent whole, fosters explicitness, facilitates reflection, encourages personal involvement with texts, and involves students transforming ideas into their own words” (Graham & Hebert, 2010, p. 13). It is natural to want to write about or talk about what was read, which is why literature circles and book clubs are so popular. Discussing the book’s themes or underlying messages allows the reader to gain different perspectives not realized independently. Students become more engaged and reading becomes deeper and more meaningful (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). Writing in response to a text is a common literacy center activity. Students can write about a familiar book, a favorite book, or about a personal experience connected to the text (Hiebert, 1994; Lyons, et al., 1993; Taylor, et al., 1994). Varying the level of writing, students can also write about deeper themes of the books and further questioning and exploration of the author’s intentions for writing the book. This connects to what McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) stressed about thinking beyond the printed information and further analyzing what the author is trying to say.

***Using mentor texts.*** One way to help motivate or inspire writing is to observe, analyze, and study the writing of others, whether it is a classmate or published author (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, 2017b; Reutzel, et al., 2015). Beginning writers can practice *reading it like a writer*. In doing so they pay close attention to detail.

Learning how others craft their written work permits the writer to discover new techniques. Such techniques allow the writer to discover their voice or writing style. “Students need to read (and hear) a wide range of literature in order to understand what creates -or hinders- voice” (Spandel, 2005, p.134). Using mentor texts can also help the writer *visualize* how writing and words work.

Using the research about reading interventions, Reading Recovery, and writing, with its reciprocal relationship to reading, will support teachers on their quest to help striving readers and writers make accelerated progress. Researching the reading and writing process through the Reading Recovery lens helped explore the research question. Within the structure of small group interventions, how can integrating Reading Recovery’s writing/cut-up sentence component foster accelerated learning for striving students? Having a better understanding of all the minutiae in delivering effective literacy support will contribute to the development of the resource teachers and interventionists can use with students in small reading groups. Having a predictable structure alone allows the teacher to focus on the lesson details and supporting students in their individual reading and writing journey. It also helps the teacher fine-tune the pacing of lessons to provide the most effective instruction for students. Also, having a better understanding of effective literacy allows for more strategic work for each student to foster accelerated learning.

### **Summary**

There is much to consider regarding reading interventions: the selection of students, the organization of groups, ideas for teaching points during reading intervention lessons, and the structure of a daily lesson. Reading Recovery, like small



group reading interventions, is in place to support students who have fallen far behind their peers. The main difference is the intensive practice of this research-based intervention. It has a strict daily lesson structure that includes familiar reading, running record on yesterday's new book, letter array or word work, writing/cut-up sentence, and finally, the new book introduction by the teacher and student's first read (Clay, 2016). Within this structure there is necessary room for flexibility for each lesson because regardless of what intervention model is chosen, the lessons must be tailored to meet the unique needs of the learner(s) and planned day-to-day. Teacher decision-making is highly important as the lesson unfolds. Using close observation of what the student is able to do helps guide the lesson and supports planning for the next lesson. Writing has historically been taught separately and differently than reading, which is a disservice to students, especially students who struggle with one or both literacy practices.

Knowing how valuable reading and writing are to one another, it would be irresponsible for me to deny striving students of this important overlapping work in small group reading interventions. This knowledge fuels the change for how small group reading intervention should look and operate. Reading and writing complement and enhance one another and are mutually supportive, interactive processes (Griffo, et al., 2015). In chapter three, this literature review serves as a guide for the pursuit of developing a resource for small group literacy instruction which integrates the writing component of Reading Recovery to help foster acceleration in our students who struggle with one or both practices.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Project Description**

#### **Chapter Overview**

Chapter Three aims to identify the audience impacted, the setting or context in which this resource is to be used, and a timeline for the completion of the project. Rather than being a project with an end date, this resource is meant for ongoing use. Furthermore it explains the theories or influences which inspired the development of this project. The ultimate goal of this project is to serve as a resource for teachers to use with small group reading interventions, which answers the question: within the structure of small group interventions, how can integrating Reading Recovery's writing/cut-up sentence component foster accelerated learning for striving students? Throughout this chapter, when referring to *small group reading interventions*, assume that writing is a vital component.

#### **Rationale/Inspiration**

The inspiration for the development of this project was a personal goal to become a more effective reading interventionist. Explicitly linking reading and writing allows students to experience the effectiveness of using the reciprocal relationship between the two processes to achieve understanding and make gains in their literacy lives. Through many years of teaching and reflection on personal experiences with literacy, it stands to reason that pursuing the development of a resource to aid teachers in supporting students who struggle with reading, writing, or both are beneficial.

Emergent literacy theory is based on the beliefs that children's development in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are all interrelated, and that the strengthening of any one of these four areas will have positive effects on the others. (Tracey & Morrow, 2015, p. 87)

The search for a resource that *has it all* has been quite the task, which is why the decision to create such a resource to fulfill this need was desirable. Combining reading and writing into a resource for small group reading interventions will help teachers be more effective and accelerate student learning. I have created a teacher resource which outlines and describes a small group reading intervention structure containing all vital components, including the writing/cut-up sentence component from Reading Recovery, within the 30-minute intervention block. This resource offers an efficient and effective structure for both teachers and students. It addresses the question: within the structure of small group interventions, how can integrating Reading Recovery's writing/cut-up sentence component foster accelerated learning for striving students?

Explicitly teaching the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing allows students to experience the effectiveness of using both processes to achieve deeper understanding and accelerate literacy learning (Clay, 2016; Shaw, 2008). Observation of a Reading Specialist conducting a Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) lesson while weaving in Reading Recovery's letter identification and word work component cultivated inspiration and fueled a search for a program that would serve as a hybrid of a small group reading intervention and a one-to-one reading intervention without neglecting any vital components.

The biggest obstacle was solving the problem of how to include all vital components during the short 30-minute lesson with a small group of students as opposed to a lesson with one student. The search for an already existing program that infused the writing component from Reading Recovery with a small group reading intervention program did not exist. Clay (2016) shared that many early intervention programs do not include a writing component.

I created a resource that is modeled after many influences in the world of literacy and intervention, but mostly focused on the lesson structures reviewed in Chapter Two. When I began creating this resource I focused on creating a universal structure all teachers could use, therefore, I combined various aspects or similar components in the aforementioned daily lesson structures led to the creation of one that would be suitable for more effective and efficient small group intervention work.

Diller (2007), along with Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2001, 2013, 2017b), provided useful lesson structures for small reading groups, whereas Clay's (2016) structure was developed for one-to-one reading intervention work. Clay (1991a, 1991b, 2001, 2010, 2013, 2014, 2016), Almasi and Fullerton (2012), Gentry and Gillet (1993), Richardson (2009), Richardson and Lewis (2018), and Serravallo (2015, 2017) all contributed expertise to specific strategies for reaching goals, navigating the complex world of phonemic awareness and spelling, and linking the two core literacy components of reading and writing.

Fountas and Pinnell (1996, 2001, 2013, 2017b) laid out a six-part structure consisting of new book introduction, independent reading and reading to the teacher, prompting for discussion around the text to check understanding, teacher addresses


teaching points, students participate in word-solving strategies, and an optional component of writing or drawing to support understanding. Diller's (2007) structure was slightly different due to the integrated fluent writing component for beginning readers after the familiar reading as well as the suggested writing portion as a next-day follow-up.


Similarly, Clay's (2016) structure contained the same components, but integrated a writing/cut-up sentence component to connect reading and writing. The small group reading intervention structure is modeled mostly after Clay's (2016) format as it incorporates all vital components for daily lessons. There had to be a strong emphasis on the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing. The resource provided examples and explanations for all components of the daily lesson structure, however more detail was given to the writing/cut-up sentence component as this was the most unfamiliar component for the intended audience.

Richardson's (2009) structure was somewhat similar, but the 20-minute lessons were broken up into three days, with the main focus being different each day, where the lessons seem to build off one another. Writing was not incorporated until the last portion of day three. Lastly, Richardson and Lewis' (2018) structure spanned a 45 - 60-minute period and had students rotating through four stations with different instructors who focused on specific components, such as the new book introduction, phonics and word study, reading yesterday's new book and comprehension discussion, and guided writing.

Within the daily lesson structure, it will be essential to include strategies for students when navigating the hearing and recording sounds in words as they write.

One such tool is Elkonin sound boxes, which are widely used in Reading Recovery and other reading practices to assist students in building their phonological awareness. It is essential for students to hear the sounds and sequence so they are able to connect those sounds with the letters when they read (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009, Elkonin, 1975). This is done by students breaking the word into the separate sounds or phonemes. The student practices pushing one chip, token, cube, etc. into a box that represents a sound in the word. Each box represents a single sound in the word, not a letter (Wikipedia, 2018; Elkonin boxes, n.d.).

For the words *dog* and *back*, three boxes would be drawn. While saying each letter sounds for *dog* aloud, the student pushes a token into the first box to represent the /d/, a token into the second box for the /o/, and a token into the third box to represent /g/. The same process is used for the word *back*. The student pushes a token into the first box to represent /b/, a token into the second box to represent the /a/, and a token into the third box to represent the /k/ sound. Using the same model, the student can write the letter in each box to represent the sound. When written, each separate sound would be represented in its own box like this:  or

. Notice that one sound may be represented by more than one letter. The sound boxes support the student by framing the word to help them identify the separate sounds. Once the students become more independent with this sound and letter boxes (master sound boxes before moving on to letter boxes), it helps them as the skills transfer to spelling and writing (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009).

More supporting information teachers can use for instruction are the five stages of invented spelling (Gentry & Gillet, 1993). The five different stages of

invented spelling are: precommunicative, semiphonetic, phonetic, transitional, and conventional. After the student has learned to write using scribbles and drawings they move on to invented spelling and begin with the precommunicative stage, which is where the student first realizes letters make sounds and creates a message that only he or she can read right after it was written. Following the precommunicative stage is the semiphonetic stage. At this point, the student starts to show awareness of phonemes and will write an abbreviated form of a word by using fewer letters to represent a given word. Phonetic is the third stage. Here the student literally spells using the sounds they hear to create a written message. The fourth stage, transitional, is when the student begins writing what the word sounds *and* looks like. Conventional is the fifth and final stage that is developed over years from word study, reading, and writing (Gentry & Gillet, 1993). Reaching the fifth stage is another way to show the importance of the reading and writing relationship. Learning about the letter and sound relationships positively affects the student's ability to write. Much of what is written can stem from what is spoken. Clay (2016) agrees that patterns of oral language are strongly linked to the visible symbols in reading and writing.

Oral language plays a major role in conjunction with reading, writing, and spelling. Students use what oral language they have in conversations and when they are given opportunities to discuss the texts they are reading they will begin to mimic the language of texts being read. In small group reading interventions it is imperative to include discussion that eventually lead to students having richer conversations that extend their vocabulary and oral language (Clay, 1991a, 1991b; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, 2013; Lyons, et al., 1993). In agreement with Fountas and Pinnell (2001), Clay

(1991a) asserts that reading and writing afford students opportunities to begin to understand the links between messages in written language and messages of oral language.

Serravallo (2015) dedicated an entire section specifically to improving the activity of writing about reading. More often than not, readers do not think deeply about what they read nor do they write about what they read. The rationale is that by explicitly showing and teaching students how to do this, it demonstrates how much it matters to think and take the time to write about what is being read. Closely connected is Serravallo's (2017) book of writing strategies, which further highlights the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing and how they support and build on one another.

### **Audience and Setting**

The intended audience was any teacher or interventionist who taught literacy at a public Spanish immersion elementary school in the upper Midwest. This resource directly targeted and influenced teachers, therefore, targeted and benefited any student who received small group reading interventions. According to research, Pre-K to second-grade students typically transition from learning how to read and begin reading to learn as the focus shifts from patterned text, phonics, chunking, decoding multisyllabic words, phrasing, prosody, and overall comprehension, to more technical and academic vocabulary, complex text structures, and a more wide-spread knowledge base in third-grade (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013; Duke, Pearson, Strachan, & Billman, 2011, and Nagy, 1988, as cited in Hileman & Cline, 2019, p. vi).



Considering the research, this resource will primarily focus on small reading intervention groups for first and second grade students who are far below grade-level expectations. Triangulating data from formal assessments and informal observation will aid in the collection of such information. As stated before, this does not mean teachers and students in upper elementary could not benefit from using this resource. As a reminder, to avoid the Matthew Effect (Stanovich, 1986), Almasi and Fullerton (2012) and Clay (1991a, 1991b) stressed the importance of intervening early with students when they are struggling rather than waiting until it is too late. If the student is not given appropriate support, they will not have a strong foundation on which to build their literacy lives, which results in the continuous track of falling further behind. The need to target students early on in elementary school is yet another reason this project targeted first and second grade students. Beginning with first grade is strategic because these students should have base knowledge gained in kindergarten and it will be easier to see which students truly struggled to understand or hold on to the foundational learning of their first year in school (Clay, 2016).

Kindergarten through fifth grade student enrollment was 446 and the demographics of the school was made up of 68.8% white, 19.3% Hispanic/Latino, 3.8% Black or African American, 1.8% Asian, .4% American Indian or Alaska Native, and 5.8% who identified with two or more races or ethnicities (See Figure 1). Of this population, 4.3% were EL students, 9.6% were flagged as students who needed special education services, 2.9% were flagged as students who were gifted and talented, and .9% had 504 plans (See Figure 2).

Figure 1  
*Student Demographics 2019-2020*

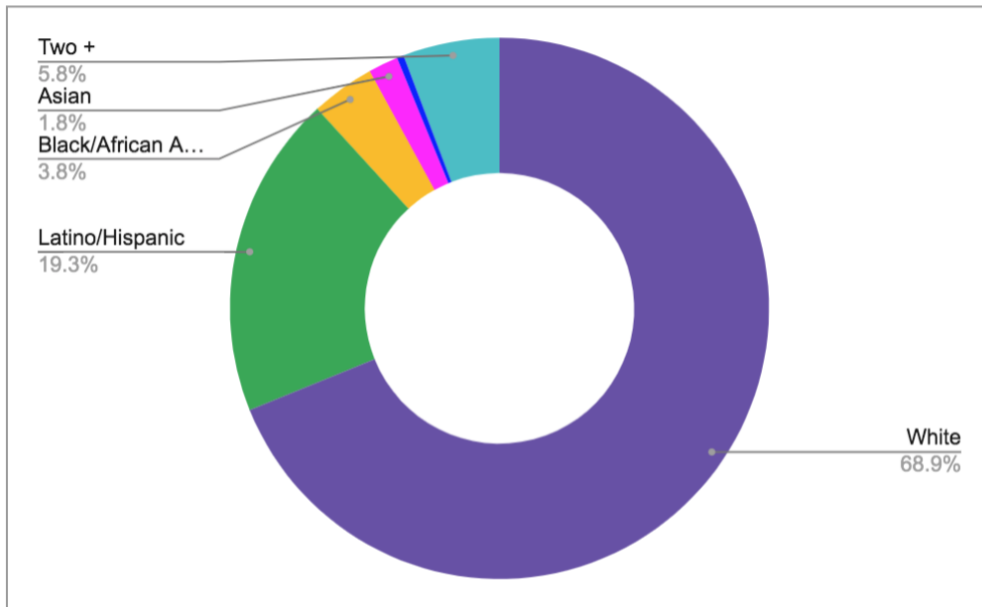
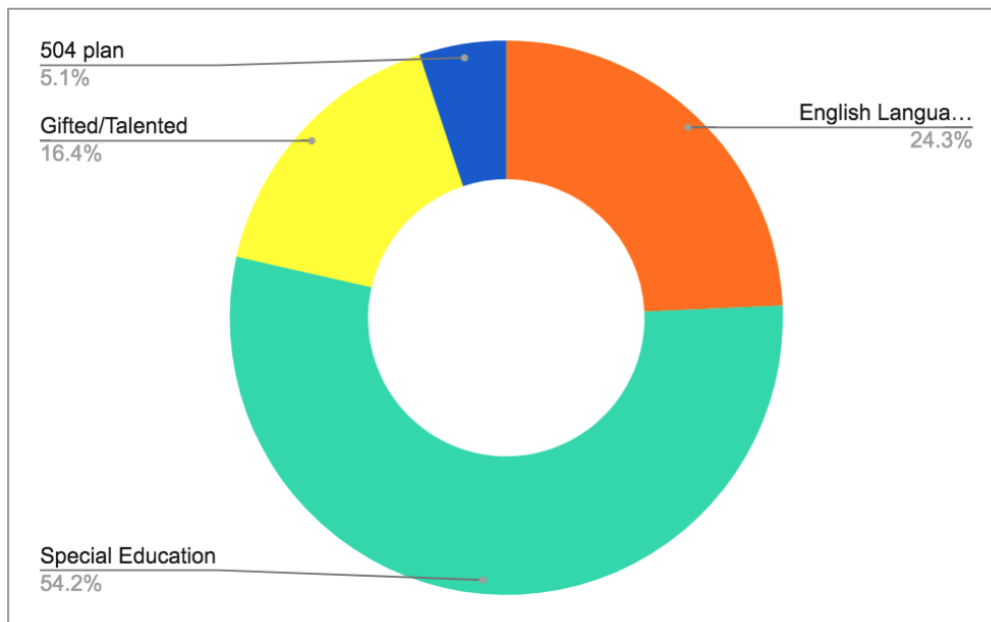


Figure 2  
*Special Student Population 2019-2020*



### **Project Description & Overview**

The decision of developing a resource for educators was born out of necessity. The need for a resource that helps a teacher concentrate all key components in a 30-

minute session was urgent. Many teachers, especially traveling interventionists, were searching for a solid routine for the lessons within the time constraints as there was not much room for flexibility within schedules when supporting 18 classrooms Kindergarten through fifth grade. Ideally, the resource created would be most valuable to students in first through second grade as they are still learning *how* to read rather than those reading to learn (Beck, et al., 2013; Duke et al., 2011; Nagy, 1988, as cited in Hileman & Cline, 2019). Students in upper elementary grades with similar needs could also benefit from this resource.

A resource for teachers to use that lays out the structure of a daily small group lesson, which includes all of the key components was developed using this template inspired by Clay's (2016) daily structure for Reading Recovery lessons: rereading familiar books, rereading yesterday's new book/running record, letter identification and breaking words into parts, writing about reading, hearing and recording sounds in words and reconstructing the cut-up story, sharing the introduction to the new book, and finally, the child's attempt at reading the new book (Clay, 2016). Techniques and strategies from Reading Recovery's writing component were embedded in the small group model to allow teachers to efficiently instruct and manage small reading groups to foster acceleration in literacy for students who were at-risk. The following structure inspired by Clay (2001, 2016) shows how a daily lesson in Reading Recovery is organized. It is important to note that these were slightly modified to accommodate a small group of four (or fewer) students, as opposed to working with students one-to-one. Within the structure of small group interventions, how can integrating Reading Recovery's writing/cut-up sentence component foster accelerated

learning for striving students?

**Rereading familiar books and taking a running record.** This portion was modified to accommodate multiple students within the time constraints of the intervention block. Students take out books from their book bins or bags and read silently or quietly, while the teacher takes a running record on yesterday's new book with one student who sits next to their left. The teacher selects one or two teaching points on which to focus in that moment to provide immediate feedback, prompting, and guidance after the running record. Other students move to the next table (if available) or turn away from the table to read independently.

**Word work.** The duration of this component should be approximately two to three minutes. For emergent students, the teacher intentionally chooses specific letters for the students to identify in a letter array based on what they partially know to extend their learning (do not group commonly confused letters such as *b, d, p, q*, or *m, w, n, u* ). Students practice linking letter forms to sounds. Letter and word work should be practiced on a magnetic white board, ideally at eye level of the students.

Students who were more advanced work on word solving strategies grounded in phonics and phonological awareness. Aspects of phonological awareness for practice are rhyming, syllable blending and segmenting, onset and rime, phoneme isolation (initial, final, medial), blending and segmenting phonemes (Diller, 2007). It is the teacher's responsibility to intentionally create opportunities to connect new features, letters, and words, to what the students already know, but should not do too much at a time

**Writing.** When getting started with routines and learning what each student

needs, rather than asking students for their own thoughts and connections to begin, the teacher should use a prompt to have students write about a familiar story recently read or something that sparks the student's interest. Once the student shares their idea or sentence, the teacher prompts them to repeat the idea or sentence one or two times to help the student solidify what they said and hold it in their head as they attempt to write it in the writing notebook.

Students use a special writing notebook with unlined paper and use a marker rather than pen or pencil. This notebook should open up (top to bottom). The top page is used as a practice page where the student can practice hearing and recording sounds in words. The student can use strategies (with or without prompts or support of the teacher) such as:

- Saying the word aloud slowly to stretch it out to hear the sounds in sequential order
- Using sound boxes (or letter boxes if the student already mastered sound boxes) to support hearing the letters in sequential order to compose the word.
- Drawing an analogy to help the student use what he or she already knew to support the learning of a new word.

Depending on the complexity of the chosen word, the teacher may need to write it for the student (decision-making is significant, as the teacher should not do anything for the student that he or she can already do independently (Clay, 2016)). Finally, the bottom page is used for the final message construction. I've referred to it as the expert or final draft page to help distinguish it from the practice page. As the student continues their work, saying and writing their message, the teacher observes

and provides appropriate support while multi-tasking to write the student's message on a sentence strip. Once the student finishes the sentence, the teacher prompts them to read the message back one last time and offers any necessary positive feedback about what the student did.

**Cut-up sentence.** The next step is to cut the sentence apart. There are several ways to cut the sentence apart, depending on the student's needs:

- Word-by-word
- Onset and rime
- Syllables
- Chunks for phrasing

The student's task is to read and say the word out loud as the teacher cuts apart each word of the sentence. Once the sentence is cut apart, the pile of words is ready to be turned into a tower. The teacher quickly mixes up the words and places them in a vertical tower.

Now the task has become a visual scanning task and the student needs to identify and locate the first word of their sentence, drag it across the table to the left, and say the word out loud. The teacher may prompt the student to read and reread the partial reconstructed sentence to help them remember their sentence. Proceed like this until they have reconstructed the entire sentence. In the process, the teacher supports the student in proper spacing of words. Finally, the student reads the entire sentence out loud. Now that their sentence has been reconstructed, it can be manipulated to practice return sweep, appropriate pacing, phrasing, and expression. What began as a writing task, transitioned to locating, visual scanning left-to-right, organizing,

spacing, and ultimately reading.

**Sharing the introduction to the new book.** The teacher gives a brief overview of the text without giving away too much. To offer a little familiarity, the teacher purposefully uses specific vocabulary, phrases, or language structures from the book that might be too challenging or confusing for the student. Be careful not to introduce too much new vocabulary or information in the beginning so as not to overload the student before they even begin their attempt to read the book.

**Attempting the first read of the new book.** After the teacher reads the title of the book (the teacher always reads the book title) and keeping the book introduction in mind, the student attempts to read the new book for the first time. They apply what was already known in order to read the new text successfully while the teacher observes and offers appropriate levels of support as the student navigates the new text.

### **Project Outline and Timeline**

This resource created a way to provide teachers a template or guide to evade the overwhelming feeling of having to reinvent the wheel or purchase an overly expensive intervention program and materials. Depending on what the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year looks like in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and potential distance learning hybrids, the plan is to introduce the resource during the beginning of the year at a staff development day. Without knowing how everything will transpire, there is much uncertainty regarding how to pilot the implementation of this resource.

The application of this resource was designed to explore the question: within the structure of small group interventions, how can integrating Reading Recovery's writing/cut-up sentence component foster accelerated learning for striving students? The intended implementation was to commence after data analysis from the first round of benchmark assessments is completed. This allows teachers, literacy specialists, and interventionists time to discuss the data and organize groups. After forming groups, teachers then put the resource's structure into practice. Once teachers begin to use the resource, teachers are asked to keep a log of questions, confusions, and successes to use at follow-up meetings.

After the initial six-week intervention cycle, participating teachers meet in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) with the Reading Specialist to discuss results and reflect upon the first intervention cycle. The expectation for the PLC is to share data, talk about what was working well, and advise where more support is needed. Questions to address are: Was the resource structure used consistently? Was the resource used with validity? Was the routine and organization of the resource helpful for both the students and the teacher? Where and how is more support needed? Did teachers see accelerated growth with their striving students? Most importantly, did teachers observe improvements in reading *and* writing by embedding writing into their daily reading intervention lessons?

All constructive feedback is incredibly helpful in making any necessary modifications to make the resource more user friendly while maintaining its effectiveness in fostering accelerated learning for striving students. It also aids in continued support for teachers who use the resource to help their students. It will be



clear to see where teachers need more coaching and assistance.

## **Summary**

Literacy consists of reading, writing, speaking, and listening, but historically, reading and writing have been taught separately. For students who are struggling with reading and/or writing, it is most effective to explicitly teach in such a way that links the two practices. The impetus for wanting to create a resource that includes the strong writing component of Reading Recovery with the small group reading intervention model was that many intervention programs lacked the vital element of reciprocity between reading and writing. “Effective literacy instruction includes a writing component to optimize the advantages of reciprocal learning between reading and writing” (Forbes & Dorn, 2015, p. 31). Using books and writing cultivates learning about both the reading and writing processes (Lyons, et al., 1993), especially when instruction occurs from authentic experiences in context (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2004). Offering professional development to teachers that weave the two worlds of one-to-one instruction and small group reading interventions together and applying it to small reading intervention groups will result in answering the question: within the structure of small group interventions, how can integrating Reading Recovery’s writing/cut-up sentence component foster accelerated learning for striving students?

The next and final chapter, Chapter Four, reflects the process of developing this resource and unexpected obstacles or discoveries are revealed. Referring back to Chapter Two allows reflection on what proved to be most useful or influential throughout the creation of this project. Implications and limitations of the project are

discussed along with how it benefits teachers of literacy and students who are striving readers and/or writers.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Conclusion**

#### **Chapter Overview**

This chapter serves as a reflection of the research and creation of the resource for small group literacy work which implements the writing/cut-up sentence component from Reading Recovery in daily 30-minute intervention lessons. This resource originated from the need to give students below grade-level expectations more effective and well-rounded support in literacy. Within the structure of small group interventions, how can integrating Reading Recovery's writing/cut-up sentence component foster accelerated learning for striving students? This question guided me through all the research and project development. Implication and limitations of the project will be presented as well as potential future research related to the resource. Finally, results of the project as well as benefits it offers to the target audience will be addressed.

#### **Reflection**

The past eight years of my teaching career have focused on delivering the most effective and successful reading interventions for small groups of striving readers. Each year I tried implementing slightly different structure, component, or management styles based on administrative directives, school and district-wide Reading Specialist data, time, new curriculum, and specific student needs. These small changes were justified each year as a way to determine what worked best and was the most effective in regard to student growth in literacy. Having a solid structure and fostering accelerated progress continually came up short. Two years ago, I was given the rare opportunity to audit a Reading Recovery/Literacy Lessons course. In

that year-long course I learned more about literacy and the reciprocal relationship of the reading and writing process than in the entirety of my teaching career.

Embarrassingly, I did not fully understand the powerful connection between reading and writing.

Writing was never a major component in my small group reading intervention work due time constraints and my trying to teach too much based on the reading behaviors of the students. Reading Recovery has writing built into the daily structure, which validates its effectiveness in the acceleration of literacy learning. Writing would not be a major component of a renowned research-based program's daily structure if it was not critical to student achievement. Learning more about how reading and writing support one another had me contemplating different ways to effectively integrate Reading Recovery's writing/cut-up sentence component into my 30-minute small group reading interventions. So I asked myself, within the structure of small group interventions, how can integrating Reading Recovery's writing/cut-up sentence component foster accelerated learning for striving students?

One of the more difficult aspects of producing this resource was thinking about how much information to provide for teachers. What would be perceived as too little or too much? There was no great answer to that question because everyone is different. It forced me to think about what professional development around literacy instruction teachers have received at my school. To my knowledge, in addition to using data from a literacy survey conducted in the past couple of years, most received training around running records, word work, the organization and management of guided reading groups, and the nuances of our new literacy program. With most

teachers' previous professional development experiences in mind I went back to review the different lesson structures I discovered in my research. Clay's (2016) structure stood out to me as being the most balanced, but I knew it would need slight modifications to accommodate small group work rather than one-to-one lessons.

What components would be included in the structure? Of the small group reading intervention components that would make up the daily lesson structure: familiar reading and running record, word work, writing/cut-up sentence, introduction and first read of new book; I had difficulty deciding what to leave out, if anything, or how to modify it to be most effective with a small group of students. Next, deciding how much detail to include in the descriptions plagued me. Typically I provide more information than necessary because of my concern that they will not understand, but it usually backfired on me and they would get lost in the minutiae.

Reviewing the information from previous professional development for the staff, I ultimately decided to provide more detailed information for the writing/cut-up sentence component only, as this was the most unfamiliar piece. Knowing what I wanted to develop and actually getting started with the process was more challenging than expected. My main goal was to provide a simple, structured resource for literacy interventionists and teachers of literacy. Avoidance of overwhelming the target audience who already had more than they could manage successfully on their figurative plates was the secondary goal that presented itself throughout the process. Being the people-pleaser I am, accepting the fact that it would be impossible to please everyone while not overwhelming anyone in the target audience was a slight challenge.

## **Implications**

The creation of this easy to understand, follow, and sustain resource would allow intervention, first-grade, and second-grade teachers to support striving students efficiently by incorporating all vital components of a lesson every day. Having a routine would be beneficial to both students and teachers. Applying a “predictable sequence of activities offers children security, and they learn and use essential learning routines more quickly” (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009, p. 12). How would a routine and structure benefit teachers? Exercising routine and structure would focus instruction and management of pacing during each lesson as they incorporate the necessary components to support their striving readers.

Following a routine and structure would hold teachers accountable for the delivery of efficient and intensive instruction during the allotted amount of time with their small reading intervention groups. Utilizing this resource would supply a common structure and routine for all teachers of literacy. As with any project development there are going to be roadblocks and obstacles to overcome. It was no different for the development of this particular resource for small group reading interventions. There were many factors that hindered the research and application of this literacy resource. Most of them were within my control and forced me to reflect, adapt, and revise. Others either warranted assistance and collaboration of cooperating teachers or were out of anybody’s control.

## **Limitations**

As in any project there were limitations that impeded forward momentum. In the short time I had with my small *trial* group, the biggest obstacles were wasted time

or inefficient use of time, consistent student attendance and scheduling conflicts, challenges the writing/cut-up sentence component with multiple students presented, and last but not least, spring break and the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. All these obstacles created additional difficulties, some of which were out of my control.

*Time.* Punctuality continued to be an issue through the first two weeks. My intervention schedule did not allow more than a few minutes between sessions, which meant I typically arrived at their classrooms around the time our lesson was supposed to begin. This was not ideal because they had to acknowledge my presence, stop their current task, clean up, get their reading bags, then walk down the hall to my workspace, and be ready to work right away. Foorman and Eppes (2018) stressed the importance of having a close proximity of the pull-out intervention workspace, but that was out of my control. After a week of attempting to troubleshoot, I asked the teachers to send the students to me a couple of minutes before their scheduled group time. Unfortunately the two teachers often forgot or one would remember and the other would not so her student would show up, but the other two students were still with their class. Solution: the student whose teacher remembered would get the two other students from their classroom and they would come down to my workspace. This was not a perfect system, but it was a step in the right direction.

*Pacing.* Each lesson was a little difficult regarding pacing because in the past I had become accustomed to facilitating discussions with my students about their understanding of the texts, which consumed much of our time to effectively work through the entire lesson structure. Now that we were incorporating writing each day, there was not sufficient time to have lengthy conversations about the readings.

*Running Records.* Having worked one-to-one with students in Reading Recovery/Literacy Lessons or Descubriendo la Lectura using this daily lesson structure, I was in the habit of allowing the student to read the entire book since they were of reasonable length. The texts used in my small group were significantly longer, so allowing the student to read it in its entirety was no longer feasible. This forced me to be even more prepared. Prior to the lesson, I counted out about 100 - 150 words (hopefully around a reasonable stopping point in the story). Once the student reached that point of the story, the familiar reading and running record component ended, I curbed the urge to discuss the text with them, and we promptly moved on to the next component.

*Attendance and scheduling.* Although the expectations were clear (or so I thought), the understanding of classroom teachers on the importance of daily attendance for the students was lacking. There were often scheduling conflicts when the teacher planned a different activity during our time slot or they needed to keep their student for a myriad of reasons. This negatively affected forward movement of accelerated progress. Scheduling around other pull-out services posed problems early on as well, which pushed back our initial start date. Since our group met at the end of the day, there were numerous times when one of the students had gone home early.

*Writing/cut-up sentence component.* Prior to working with this small group I had heavily considered the difficulty I would face with the writing component. How could I effectively support each student with their unique ideas about the text? Jason was a slow, reluctant writer who struggled to come up with his own ideas for a lack of confidence; Eva had so many ideas and wrote a lot, but made many errors and



constantly appealed to me for help; and Isabel usually wrote the bare minimum, but had fantastic ideas that connected to the text and made few errors. Differentiating writing for these three students was challenging at first.

After consulting with a colleague, we arrived at a reasonable solution. The writing component would have to be slightly modified in the beginning until we were in a good rhythm. Rather than each student writing completely different ideas, we began with dictated sentences related to the text. An advantage to this scaffold was that I could prepare the sentence strips prior to the lesson. Scaffolding this way allowed me to take the necessary time to discover what each of them was able to do and understand where they needed support. Once I understood what each of them needed it was much easier. This transition from dictated sentences to writing their own ideas lasted for about a week, when spring break snuck up on us and then COVID-19 happened.

*Spring break and the Coronavirus (COVID-19).* Just before spring break our group finally began to get into a solid routine. This was also a time when one of my three student's families decided to go on spring break the week before the school's scheduled spring break. Due to COVID-19, spring break was extended and then schools made the transition to distance learning. Not only did the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affect the world regarding health and safety, it also brought an abrupt end to working with my small group or any of my intervention groups for that matter. With the transition to distance learning, the school and district wanted to focus on core classroom instruction during such unprecedented times for the sake of not overwhelming the teachers, students, and families more than necessary. Therefore

all my work with students, one-to-one and small groups, was put on hold indefinitely.

Eventually I was granted permission to resume work with intervention students in Reading Recovery/Literacy Lessons and Descubriendo la Lectura. Unfortunately, I was unable to get responses from all three students in my small group for this project. I continued with two of the three students, but was unable to work with them together via Zoom (a cloud-based video conferencing service). Though I was now working one-to-one, to my surprise, conducting reading interventions remotely and managing the lesson structure proved difficult due to limitations with technology and navigating this new (hopefully temporary) reality. It was very difficult to complete the lesson while devoting the necessary attention to all components of the resource's structure.

Of course, not being able to sit next to the students was a major pitfall, but not being able to effectively practice word work and writing was devastating to my project. Zoom has a screen share feature that allows the participants to see my screen or my whiteboard, but it was difficult to help the students learn how to manipulate the whiteboard. It proved to be an arduous task in both the target language and English. Depending on the type of device the student worked on, it provided different challenges as well. Despite all the limitations and bumps along the way, we still had a successful couple of months of learning together. Contending with the new reality and challenges we faced this spring caused me to think about the fall and how to make adjustments to my resource so it is more appropriate for distance learning.

As I started earlier, the goal was to provide a simple, structured resource for literacy interventionists and teachers of literacy. I wanted to create an efficient and

effective product for teachers who work with small reading groups to foster acceleration in reading and writing for their striving students without overwhelming them. My follow-up goal for spring semester was to fine tune the management of this resource for small group reading interventions that incorporated the writing/cut-up sentence component of Reading Recovery. Since I was unable to fully practice and fine tune, it naturally sparked considerations for the uncertain future of the next school year. How could this small group reading intervention work be modified for virtual learning?

### **Future use, research, and project development**

What will the future of teaching bring with COVID-19? Everything is still uncertain so the next logical step would be to conduct further research and focus on how this resource could be adapted and used successfully if and when we have to carry out distance learning again. As many have discovered through experience with distance learning, it was challenging to engage and maintain attention of one student during virtual lessons. Successfully conducting small group reading interventions virtually for our striving readers and writers is the next level challenge.

Further research and modifications may be necessary if the small reading group structure is proving to be unmanageable for teachers or if students are not making accelerated progress. Critical thinking and self-reflection on the part of the teacher will play a major role. Core instruction as well as purposeful planning and management of lessons when working with their small reading groups would be another strong area of reflection. Was it the structure that did not turn out the expected acceleration? Was the resource being used in earnest? Were teachers

building each lesson off what the students could do or was the focus on the gaps? Examination of individual student goals would need to happen as it is possible the goal was not appropriate for that student at that point in time.

Another idea for further research is to explore how the writing component could be enhanced beyond the single writing/cut-up sentence? Is there a reasonable way to incorporate more writing about the text into this small reading group structure? Potentially, it could be effective to keep the writing/cut-up sentence component, but add a writing extension based on different writing prompts. Achieving more of a guided writing model rather than independent work for this extension would be the biggest obstacle due to limited time constraints.

One more factor I would like to consider for future research is how to select books appropriate for each student in the group using the same structure. Would this be manageable? In Reading Recovery/Literacy Lessons and Descubriendo la Lectura, a specific text is chosen for the individual student each day according to their goal. How would this look in a small group setting? Differentiating for each student would mean a specific text is chosen for each student based on their needs so figuring out how this could be accomplished is on the horizon for accommodating my small group reading intervention groups

### **Benefits to instructing small group reading interventions**

As stated in Chapter Two, the purpose of having small group reading interventions is to provide additional, differentiated support to help striving readers make accelerated growth or reach proficiency in reading (Almasi & Fullerton, 2012; Diller, 2007; Fountas & Pinnell, 2009; Risko & Walker-Dahlhouse, 2015).

Having a resource that offers a solid structure and routine for students and teachers of literacy will support the acceleration of reading and writing. Writing is crucial to the process of learning how to read in early intervention because it prevents the student from neglecting many things they must know about print and reveals to the teacher how they are problem-solving (Clay, 1991a, 1991b). When students practice integrated reading and writing every day using a predictable routine in their small reading intervention groups, they will grow to be more active and constructive learners as well as gain enhanced language and communication skills. Achieving these skills will further support accelerated growth for striving readers.

### **Summary**

Through the research about the importance of early literacy interventions, the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing, and applying the combined daily lesson structure for small group interventions, I learned that it is much more challenging and will take time. Reminding myself to put more focus and energy on what is working well is going to be much more productive. It will positively support accelerated growth in my striving students and also for me to become an even more effective interventionist. Exploring the theories and practices of influential individuals in the literacy world was inspiring, and regardless of the many limitations encountered with the research and project creation, there was so much I learned from my own experiences and reflections. Concluding with a product which reflects my aspirations for a more efficient and effective way to support striving readers and writers. I look forward to the opportunity to implement this resource to discover, within the structure of small group interventions, how can integrating Reading

Recovery's writing/cut-up sentence component foster accelerated learning for striving students.

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