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INTEGRATING MARIE CLAY'S THEORY OF LITERACY PROCESSING AND
READING RECOVERY INTO SMALL GROUP READING INSTRUCTION

by

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Masters of Arts in Literacy Education.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

*We need to think **more** about children taking different paths to reach similar outcomes.* (Clay, 2016, p. 11)

As Clay stated above, the ability to think more about a student's prior knowledge and the skills they control, paired with what they need to learn next, has become the guiding principle for delivering reading instruction to the students I teach. My quest to help students become better readers has been shaped by my own personal struggle, my own children's experiences, and my professional drive to learn more about reading instruction. This has led me to my capstone project and the question: *how can teachers use Clay's theory of literacy processing and adapt reading recovery procedures to deliver effective small group reading instruction?*

Targeted reading intervention early on in a student's learning is crucial for students (*Reading Recovery® Beginning Reading* 2020). Early reading intervention, such as Reading Recovery, allows students to become independent problem solvers, creating a self-extending processing system. This strategic activity—independently or with teacher support—is important because the student creates their own efficient neural pathways to problem solve during reading, allowing the acquisition of new learning. The goal should be the same for small group reading instruction. The teacher's ability, during small group reading instruction, to foster independent problem solving accelerates the student's strategic activity when reading. According to Allington (2009), students lacking in strong early literacy skills or strategic activity when interacting with text need the most guided

small group instruction. The half year gap early in kindergarten or first grade can compound into students falling years behind their peers without the intense intervention provided by Reading Recovery.

In this chapter, I share my narrative as a reader (a struggling one) and my professional experiences. These experiences, both personal and professional, have led me to become a Reading Recovery teacher. During my Reading Recovery training, I wondered how I could broaden the impact of this training so it would benefit more than the 8 Reading Recovery students in a year in my building. My plan is to take Clay's theory of literacy processing and Reading Recovery procedures and incorporate them into a small group reading lesson. A brief explanation of Clay's literacy processing theory and Reading Recovery procedures are shared before I begin my literature review and detailed plan for small group reading instruction.

Personal Experience

"Bluebirds, your group is next," said the teacher. When I heard that, my mind thought: "bad readers, your group is next". This power experience launched my reading journey in first grade. Reading was hard, frustrating, and laborious. Trying to learn how to read left me with the perception that I was a dumb and unintelligent, therefore school was hard. With the support of my parents, a tutor from the University of Minnesota Graduate School of Education, belief others had in me, and my teaching experience, I was able to unlock the code of reading. My journey as a reader affords me a powerful lens of empathy and grace for students who struggle. This is unlike many who teach reading because they love to read and want students to love reading as well. This

self-doubt and inadequacy as a reader drove my passion for teaching students how to read without the scare which was imprinted upon me.

An added lens, from my own children, is the experience of witnessing “different paths”, as Clay (2016) stated, children take while learning to read. My daughter Ellie, which reading comes easily and is an avid reader, devouring books whenever she gets a chance. Caroline’s reading came in predictable incremental steps. She enjoys reading, but not voraciously like her sister, unless it is a compelling story. My son, Will, was diagnosed with Dyslexia in 2nd grade. His path could have been like mine, but because of my knowledge about reading and instruction from his talented reading teachers, his story was completely unlike mine. Will worked in a small group with a Reading Recovery teacher, but did not receive the intense one on one daily lesson. His classroom teacher provided guided reading instruction three times a week, both in first and second grade. These highly trained teachers used Will’s competencies to build his problem solving skills and taught him how to extend his own learning. Although reading and writing takes effort and time for Will, he came home in third grade and declared himself a “reader.” This is my ambition, each student seeing themselves as a reader. My perspective and story is no longer viewed as a hardship, but as a story to help others. I share these narratives with students allowing them to borrow belief in themselves until their reality becomes congruent with the borrowed beliefs.

Professional Journey

In 1994, my career as a teacher started in St. Louis, Missouri. I taught kindergarten for two years, then 1st grade. While teaching 1st grade using a phonetically

based curriculum, I learned many rules about the English language that allowed me to read faster and understand word structure versus memorizing and using context to decode words as I had in the past. I also found a love for self improvement books, which shifted my paradigm about how I thought of myself as a reader, and I embraced my experiences to help the students I worked with daily. After a 11 year sabbatical, I returned to teaching as a kindergarten teacher. Richardson's *The Next Steps in Guided Reading* (2009) was my first introduction to small group reading instruction and quickly became my "go to" resource for teaching small groups. I used Richardson's book to guide my instruction for the varied readers in kindergarten and second grade. Her book helped me provide reading instruction that was within the zone of proximal development (Mcleod, 2019) for students. I was close to Clay's call to look at "different paths," but fell short. A curiosity about Reading Recovery and understanding Clay's theory continued to drive my professional growth.

My curiosity started with my aunts being Reading Recovery teachers. Then continued while working alongside Reading Recovery teachers and intensified when using Richardson's guided reading lessons. During small group reading instruction, the differing competencies students brought to their understanding of literacy was fascinating. While teaching kindergarten, I began to have conversations about Concepts of Print (Clay, 2013) an early reading behavior, with my Reading Recovery colleagues. Students lacking the understanding of the meaning of a period, quotation marks, or commas, struggled with fluency and comprehension. Students who had b/d letter confusion would cement inaccurate neural pathways when practicing the incorrect

response during writing activities. It did not occur to me to “butt in”, as Clay suggested (2016) so correct responses were strengthened and incorrect responses extinguished. But, truly understanding Reading Recovery and Clay’s theory did not happen until my training and first-hand experience with the procedures while teaching students.

Purpose of Capstone

The purpose of my research project is to reach beyond my Reading Recovery students—to expand the impact of Clay’s powerful theory and the teaching procedures connected to Reading Recovery. In my role as a literacy specialist, I work with other striving readers in kindergarten through second grade. Many students would benefit from instruction based on Clay’s theory and reading recovery practices. I feel fortunate I was chosen to have the district invest their resources into my training. I currently use a hybrid of *Leveled Literacy Intervention* (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009) and *The Next Steps in Guided Reading* (Richardson, 2009) for small group instruction. While both are effective programs and work well with small groups, I feel there is more I can do to accelerate literacy acquisition in students. My training as a Reading Recovery teacher has solidified the notion of teaching what each student needs at this point in time, connecting new knowledge to what they already know, and digging the ditch (building the bridge) between the two knowledge pools: reading and writing (Clay, 2016). This has led me to wonder what lesson format would hold true to these principles in a small group setting.

Clay’s Theory of Literacy Processing and Reading Recovery

As Clay began her doctoral research, the data collection was more than recording and explaining reading difficulties, but “she sought to find out how to prevent reading

difficulties from occurring” (Askew, 2009, p. 16). Because Clay’s work was grounded in observations of reading and writing behaviors, the theoretical applications were used in many ways. The principles guiding Clay’s theory, according to Konstantellou and Lose (2009), argued that: “Reading is a complex problem-solving process, children construct their own understanding, children come to literacy with varying knowledge, reading and writing are reciprocal and interrelated processes, learning to read and write involves a continuous process of change over time, and children take different paths to literacy learning” (p. 65). These principles led to the development of Reading Recovery. Schmitt et al. (2005) stated that a Reading Recovery lesson, “addresses the complexity of literacy learning helping individuals in different ways perform complex literacy activities” (p. 83). Reading Recovery follows a specific lesson format, yet each part is thoughtfully chosen for the student based on their individual path. Each lesson begins with reading a few familiar books, followed by rereading yesterday's new book, then some word work that focuses on the relationship between letters, letter clusters, and words. The next chunk of the lesson focuses on writing. The student composes a message, writes the message, followed by cutting up the message and reassembling the parts of the message into a whole again. The final piece of the 30-minute lesson is the introduction and reading of the new book (Clay, 2016). The teaching during the lesson is planned based on each student's individual literacy profile over time, including all evidence of successful problem-solving, and is responsive to the individual’s moment-to-moment responses, providing shifts in learning needed at that time. These lessons, derived from Clay’s

theory and Reading Recovery, drove me to wonder how to take what I have learned and broaden my impact to other students I teach.

Conclusion

The one thing I knew when starting out as a brand new teacher in 1994 was I did not want any student to feel like I did when learning to read. The journey to becoming a reader is unlike any other experience; no two paths are the same and the goal is to create a self-extending system. Clay stated, “I think it is most helpful to think of the learner who is successfully solving reading problems as building a neural network for working on written language and that network learns to extend itself” (2016, p. 128). This self-extending system is needed for students to develop to accelerate their progress and catch up with peers. After a year-long study of Clay’s theory and teaching Reading Recovery, I came to the realization that all striving readers would benefit from Clay’s theory and Reading Recovery’s procedures, not just the eight I see in a year. Looking at the individual student and their competencies is a vital component of small group reading instruction, allowing for me to foster “different paths to a similar outcome” (Clay, 2016, p. 11). This led me to my research question: *how can teachers use Clay’s theory of literacy processing and adapt reading recovery procedures to deliver effective small group reading instruction?*

In Chapter Two, I review literature that surrounds Clay’s theory, Reading Recovery practices, and implications for classroom and small group instruction. In Chapter Three, I explain the format for small group instruction that is based on these

principles which can be altered to fit individual students. Finally, in Chapter Four, I reflect on my small group instruction format and how it can impact the field of education.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Marie Clay's revolutionary research in the area of literacy learning changed teaching practices and led to the development of a program called Reading Recovery (Askew, 2009). Her research implemented an "unusual" lens to look at how students acquire literacy skills; this process changes over time and allows for students to construct different paths based on their understanding and knowledge (Askew, 2009). While some teachers may take running records and look briefly at students' writing, they often skip the vital step of a detailed analysis. Some may take a surface-level approach rather than diving deep to see what sources of information the student is using and what additional information they use to make a self-correction. Looking at errors, self-corrections, and approximations allows the teacher to understand the processing and strategic actions done by the student. If teachers only do a quick analysis of writing, miscues, fluency, and self-correction rate vital information is overlooked and understanding of the literacy competencies is incomplete. The information gathered drives instruction about new literacy skills to be acquired and integrated into the literacy system for the child at that moment. The theory and the research described in the following chapter helps answer the question: *how can you use Clay's theory of literacy processing and adapt reading recovery procedures to deliver effective small group reading instruction?*

Overview

The review of literature connected to understanding Clay's theory led to the development of this capstone project. Three areas of literacy instruction converged during my training as a Reading Recovery teacher last year and working as a reading intervention teacher: Clay's theory of literacy processing, Reading Recovery and Guided Reading, which led me to wonder how to integrate these principles during small group reading. Clay's theory is the foundation for Reading Recovery and Guided Reading (Pinnell & Fountas, 2015). To begin, this review dives deeper into the literature surrounding Clay's theory and literacy learning which lays the foundational groundwork for understanding students current literacy competencies and teaching. The following section examines literature regarding Reading Recovery lessons, teaching prompts, and how a student's change overtime provides a framework to build from. The next section explores Guided Reading and the works of Richardson, Fountas and Pinnell. The final section of this paper explores the implications and connections between Clay's theory of literacy processing, Reading Recovery, and Guided Reading, highlighting principles that can be applied during instruction when working with a small group of readers.

Clay's Theory of Literacy Processing

Marie Clay's study of how students learn to read and write started in 1963 (as cited in Askew, 2009). She studied and recorded her observations of students as they engaged in reading and writing activities. Her "unusual lens" of recording and observing a student and their actions during early literacy activities, reading and writing is currently used by teachers to see and document change over time in a student (Askew, 2009).

One key aspect to Clay's theory of literacy processing is that learning is constructive (Jones, 2006). Literacy learning is based on the child's understanding and current competencies when coupled with exploration and problem solving. Jones (2006) suggested students create their own learning, with the teacher's guidance and support. Clay's theory is described as a *grounded theory*: a theory developed because it was inductively derived from the study versus developing a study to prove a theory (Askew, 2018). The principles grounded in Clay's theory include: 1. Reading and writing is a complex problem-solving process, 2. Children construct their own learning and begin with varied knowledge, 3. Reading and writing are reciprocal and interrelated, 4. Children's strategic action while engaged with text changes over time, and 5. Children take different paths to achieve the same outcome (Askew & Watson, 2009). The literature around these principles guides reading instruction away from teaching a sequential set of skills.

Reading and Writing are Complex Problem-Solving Processes

Students use different strategic actions while problem solving during reading and writing activities. These include solving, searching, cross-checking, and integrating sources of information to self-monitor and/or self-correct. At first, an early reader's strategic activity may be simple, but as they continue to read and write, it becomes more complex and "in the head" problem solving starts to occur (Clay, 2016). According to Konstantellou and Lose (2009), reading and writing activities require students to use existing competencies to solve problems "on the go" (as they happen) (p. 65). The complexity of the task of reading and writing can be observed when a student flexibly

chooses an alternative response during a task. While attending to the task, they search, reject, monitor and correct themselves. Fountas and Pinnell (2012) stated, “The proficient reader develops a network like a computer, only a thousand times faster and more complex. The brain *learns*, making new connections constantly and expanding the system” (p. 273). This highlights the complexity and skill needed by the student. They approach this complex problem solving process in a variety of ways.

Children Construct their own Understandings and Come with Varied Knowledge

Marie Clay, while conducting her research, saw the learner as the one creating their learning. The child is active while solving words, discovering new things, noticing and constructing meaning with the text. According to Askew (2009), Clay thought that only children “can develop strategic control over the experiences and information coded somehow in [their] brain[s] and governing many of [their] behaviors” (p. 108). When a student does this, they call upon information stored in the brain, make comparisons, and recall strategies that have been successful while actively engaging in a new way to solve a problem with guidance from a teacher. Students construct the wiring in their brain, connecting all sources of information (Pinnell & Fountas, 2015).

Reading and Writing are Reciprocal and Interrelated

Clay’s theory did not negate the importance of writing. In fact, she strongly believed in the reciprocity between reading and writing. Askew (2009) stated that writing,

slows down the complex activity so that all the pieces can be interwoven, and contributes to the building of an inner control to literacy learning. The

activity of writing involves segmenting phonemes, connecting sounds and letters, understanding concepts of print, and other activities used during writing. (p. 107)

According to Fried (2006), reciprocity for some students is not automatic. It is the teacher's role to help make these connections between their competences in reading to problem solve in writing and vice versa. This "digs a ditch" between their reading and writing pools of knowledge, creating connections and accelerating learning (Fried, 2006).

A Student's Strategic Action while Engaged with Text Changes Over Time

Change over time, even day to day, can be recorded and analyzed to understand strategic activity and competencies. Clay's research, according to Doyle (2013), studied student behavior while engaged in reading and writing continuous text. These observable behaviors showed changes in the way students interacted and problem solved as the text difficulty increased. Observable behavior varies from student to student. Tracking these changes over time allows for analysis of change in problem solving and knowledge of each student. The most common way to track change over time is using text level. Some other ways to track a student's progress is their written vocabulary, words which can be written fast and independently, and reading vocabulary, words which can be read quickly.

Children Take Different Paths to Literacy Learning

Upon entering school a student has various experiences and engagement with literacy activities. The oral language, reading and writing are different from one another. These experiences lead students to have different theories of how to engage with print (Clay, 2016). The ability to take in account what the student already knows allows the

teacher to use this as a “foothold” and allows the teacher to help the student learn what is “on the cusp” of their learning, using the clearest most memorial teaching point (Askew, 2009, p. 109). In Doyle’s chapter *Marie M Clay’s Theoretical Perspective*, she stated that Clay found no sequence to the behaviors proficient readers and writers use as their skills progress, skipping steps others use (2013). This confirmed Clay’s thinking that learners take different paths; it is not sequential. Konstantellou and Lose (2009) stated this view embraces the diversity of students, allows us to accommodate individual differences, and creates a plan based on the individual learner.

Summary

The review of research around Clay’s theory of literacy processing is vital to understanding literacy learning. Guided Reading and Reading Recovery are strongly rooted in her theory. She revolutionized thinking about literacy learning and the guidance teachers provide when helping students on their literacy journey. The previous methods of whole group instruction and sequential delivery of skills in an isolated manner no longer can be the standard for literacy instruction. Her grounded theory shifted thinking from a sequential process to a complex process of how students learn to read and write. This shift allowed her to develop the program, Reading Recovery.

Reading Recovery

Reading Recovery was developed from Marie Clay’s work regarding theory of literacy processing (Clay, 2019). Reading Recovery is a program where students work individually with a teacher one on one during an intense, well planned, and powerful 30 minutes lesson (Borba, 2002). Some major tenets of Reading Recovery are explored in

the literature, shedding light on important components of the program which develops literacy skills and the self-extending system readers employ.

Background

Reading Recovery came from Clay's understanding of the strategic actions proficient readers use while interacting with a text. Clay found students who struggle with reading and writing after their first year of formal instruction require tailored instruction to accelerate their acquisition of literacy skills in order to catch up to their peers (Clay, 2016). Reading Recovery is designed to work with such students—the lowest-performing and most at-risk students. The identification process is based on a set of literacy activities given to a student during the Observation Survey. The assessments allow for observation and recording of the specific student actions during reading and writing activities. Once a student is identified they enter a short, 20 week, one-to-one lesson series with a trained Reading Recovery teacher. Each lesson is tailored to the individual and their competencies, allowing for it to be a short intervention. Clay (2016) demanded that no time be wasted on teaching students what they already know.

The initial assessment, Observation Survey, provides information vital to the planning of *Roaming Around the Known* (Clay, 2019), a set of 10 lessons, and subsequent lessons. A careful analysis of the Observation Survey allows the teacher to develop tentative theories of the student's understanding and interaction with literacy activities. Schnug (2015) stated this as a "personalized literacy profile" (p. 21). This profile is used to develop a series of 10 lessons: *Roaming Around the Known*. During these lessons, the student and teacher learn to work together building upon what a student

already can do, creating the conditions for them to feel successful and motivated. The lessons are planned to allow for “shared meaningful literacy tasks”, “massive amounts of successful responding by the child,” and “opportunities to engage in useful strategic behaviors” (Schnug, 2015, p. 21). Engaging in literacy activities sets the stage for how the student and teacher work together. According to Lyons (2003), motivation is not something someone can do to you; it is activated by the learner and built from within. Developing intrinsic motivation and shifting the responsibility for learning onto the student (Clay 2016) is a goal for Roaming Around the Known, setting the stage for future lessons.

Lesson Format

After 10 days of Roaming Around the Known, the student and teacher enter into the formal Reading Recovery Lesson format. The lessons follow the same set of sequential literacy activities each day. It includes rereading familiar books, reading yesterday's new book, work work, composing and writing a story, and cutting up sentences. The lesson ends with a book introduction and reading of a new book. All lessons start with rereading familiar books as a warm up. Rereading familiar books allows a student to consolidate learning. The books are read fluently and allow for orchestration of complex reading behaviors to be practiced (Schmitt et al., 2005).

After reading a few familiar books the student then reads yesterday's new book. The student reads while the teacher takes a running record. The running record allows the teacher to analyze the processing done by the student and provides information regarding teaching points after the reading, both on errors and successful solving (Clay, 2016).

Following the reading of yesterday's book, the student and teacher do some quick work with words and how they work. This part of the lesson changes in complexity as the student acquires more knowledge about words. One criticism of Reading Recovery is that it lacks the explicit instruction in phonics (Hanford, 2020). But during word work, phonics is explicitly taught along with various phonemic awareness skills based on the student's need. It starts with simple letter identification and moves to construction of words using known information, always emphasizing the left to right serial order. This section of the lesson is based on the child's current competencies and starts with known information as an anchor. It may seem that phonics and learning about words only occurs during the sort word work segment of a Reading Recovery lesson. Yet after a close examination of teaching practices during a Reading Recovery lesson, the strong phonemic awareness component during writing, including hearing and recording sounds in words both orally and with the visual scaffold of Elkonin boxes.

The next section of the lesson is when the student composes and writes a story. The literacy skills learned included hearing and recording sounds in words sequentially, the development of oral language, attending to letter formation, using analogy to construct new words and building up the student's writing vocabulary and fluency while writing words. (Schmitt et al., 2005).

After the story is written by the student, the teacher then writes the story on a sentence strip. While the student reads the sentence, the teacher cuts it apart. The cut up sentence allows students to make the connection between "reading to writing, writing to speaking and reading to speaking" (Clay, 2016, p. 106). The task requires the student to

search, use and notice details while practicing fluency, monitoring and correcting errors independently.

The final part of the daily lesson includes a book introduction and reading of a new book. The careful selection of the new book, based on Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, has only a few new learning opportunities for the student. The introduction helps the student understand the story's plot while practicing new phrases or language structures that are unfamiliar; unfamiliar names and vocabulary which are important for the student to know before reading. Clay (2016) called for teachers to "take the bugs" out so it can be a successful first read. The first reading of this book is not a test, it is read with support from the teacher. The goal is for the student to use current competencies, supporting tentative problem solving, and learn new strategies while reading a new text (Schmitt et al., 2005).

Observing Behaviors

During a Reading Recovery lesson, observations are recorded. This includes teacher prompts and student response to the prompts (Lose, 2007). It is imperative to record the prompt, teacher language, and student response to understand the student's processing and develop a theory of their literacy learning. The tentativeness and careful observation of the teacher can promote the acceleration of literacy learning. When recording observations, it is important to take note on what is easy, hard, partially known, or unknown. These observations allow further planning by the teacher based on their theory of the student's understanding. It directly relates to the next day's lesson planning, including anticipating or preventing incorrect responses. The tentative theory of how the

student interacts with text is developed through careful analysis of the running record. Are students neglecting sources of information when reading? Are they using only initial visual information? Will they monitor for meaning and structure and then incorporate visual information for a self-correction? Some research, (Hanford, 2020) states that using the 3 cueing system, M (meaning), S (structure), and V (visual), creates students to only use picture or contextual information to figure out unknown words, but a careful analysis of running records provides valuable data. The careful reflection of student problem solving while reading continuous text, “on the run”, informs teaching decisions for the upcoming lesson (Clay 2016). Analysis of how a student uses or neglects these sources of information provides guidance for further instruction. For instance, a student might need help with specific phonetic instruction based on careful analysis of the running record and/or writing. Both the careful analysis of daily lesson records and running records provide information about the change over time that is occurring during literacy learning.

Prompts/ Teacher Language

When students and teachers are moving through a lesson series, the teacher may ask a student to notice or do something, this is called a prompt. Prompts are not only teacher talk, they are a specific call to action for the student. Prompts are short, direct and to the point based on what this child needs to do or notice at this point in time during the lessons series (Clay 2016). Lose (2007) provided a framework of David Wood’s theory of Level of Contingent Support during Reading Recovery lessons. The levels of support fall under 5 categories that move from least support to the greatest amount of support: “general verbal, specific verbal, specific verbal interaction with nonverbal indicators,

prepares for next action and demonstrates action” (Lose, 2007, p. 18). During a lesson, prompting or call to integrate information can shift depending on the student’s response. For example a teacher might say “do you see something that might help you?” as a way of providing a lower level of support to begin. If the student is unsure or tentative, then adding another level: “look here, it starts like mom” while pointing to the first letter provides another layer of support. Careful recording of observations of teacher prompts and student action gives insight to change over time in the student’s literacy processing. A closer look allows the teacher to develop an awareness of the level of support provided to the student. Too much support (level 4 and 5) hinders the self-extending system—a system that builds upon itself and needs to be developed by readers. Johnston (2004) talked about the importance of noticing and naming, a prompt. This noticing and naming allows the student to develop an inner control, a self-extending system. It can be as simple as “why did you stop?”, “does it look like something you already know?” or “remember yesterday when you wrote that word in your story?” These clear, precise calls for action by the student helps build their literacy competencies. Prompting and teacher language govern the acceleration of student learning.

Summary

Reading Recovery and the research surrounding the teaching within a lesson strongly bind the connection between Clay’s theory and teaching. Teachers must first understand the student’s current understanding of literacy, their theories about reading and writing, and current item knowledge to build upon. The lesson format during a Reading Recovery lesson allows for connections to be made within reading and writing

while working on continuous text. The clear, concise and direct language used by teachers leads to acceleration. The research around Reading Recovery helps teachers understand the individual differences among the students working in the group, and that not all students are in need of the same instruction as others. The observation and note taking done during a Reading Recovery lesson sheds light on the individual's current literacy processing system allowing the teacher to help extend that processing system (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). And contrary to Hanford's criticism, phonemic awareness and phonics are directly taught to a student during their Reading Recovery lesson through the constant braiding of reading and writing, both in isolation and in context (2020).

Guided Reading

Guided reading has made its way into many elementary classrooms in a response to creating differentiated instruction around reading. Guided Reading is an instructional setting teachers use to teach a small group of students reading using the zone of proximal development to "to learn how to use strategic actions to process texts successfully" (Pinnell & Fountas, 2015, p 24). This section discusses leaders in the area of guided reading, specifically Irene C. Fountas, Gay Su Pinnell and Jan Richardson's research around guided reading. Clay's work in New Zealand has laid the foundation for guided reading (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). Fountas and Pinnell also summarized the key instructional principles at the foundation of teaching guided reading originating from Clay's theory (2015). These instructional principles build upon student's strengths, tasks are shared and supported by the teacher, an expectation the child will try something to problem solve, and the teacher is mindful of task complexity (not too hard, too easy) for

the student. The lesson structure used in Fountas and Pinnell's *Literacy Lessons by Design* and Jan Richardson *The Next Steps in Guided Reading* is similar to the lesson structure during a Reading Recovery lesson, but not in the same sequence. The standard guided reading lesson contains a book introduction, reading of the new book with instructional guidance from the teacher, discussion around comprehension, teaching or highlighting a strategic action, word work, and incorporating writing connected to comprehension. The main difference between these programs and Reading Recovery is that they work with a group of students instead of an individual student.

Both programs, *Literacy Lessons by Design* and *The Next Steps in Guided Reading*, use authentic text for initial assessments and ongoing assessments, running records, to determine the appropriate texts to use with students. This information provides the teacher with an understanding of what strategic activities the student is or is not using at the time. Then students are grouped according to current literacy processing strengths and needs, and the lessons begin with the intention of moving each student beyond their current competencies.

In a standard guided reading lesson, the teacher begins by looking for an appropriate text, one that stretches students yet not allow them to be overwhelmed by problem solving (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012). The teacher introduces the text, students read the text while the teacher provides brief support to individuals. It is important to note that this is not a choral reading of the text, but instead each student reads the text individually. Some teachers have students turn their backs towards the table to prevent choral reading. Following the reading a guided discussion around the comprehension of the text takes

place and sharing a teaching point related to the strategic behavior the students can practice within the text. This is followed by word work, which allows the students to understand orthology and to use this knowledge during reading and writing activities (Clay, 2016). The last component of a guided reading lesson is writing, extending comprehension, concluding the lesson.

During the lesson, similar to a Reading Recovery lesson, notes are taken and observations are made. Both programs encourage watching individuals and notice their strategic behaviors. At the end of each lesson in the *Literacy Lessons by Design*, suggestions for specific behavior to look for during the student's engagement during literacy activities are listed.

Summary

The literature is clear with the connection between Guided Reading and Clay's work. The structure of the lesson has hints of a Reading Recovery lesson. The end goal of a guided reading is to have students to read, comprehend, interpret, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate what they have read. The literature is clear that guided reading is an effective instructional model to "bring readers from where they are to as far as teaching can take them" (Fountas & Pinnell, 2012, p. 268). Clay's theory and Reading Recovery's approach can be heard within Fountas and Pinnell's quote (2012).

Influence of Reading Recovery on Small Group Reading Instruction

This section ties Marie Clay's theory, guided reading practices, and Reading Recovery together. It highlights transferable techniques from reading recovery to small group instruction like the cut up sentence, rereading familiar books to build fluency, the

study of breaking words into chunks and encouraging self-correcting behaviors. It also emphasizes the effects of teacher language/ prompts on developing monitoring and self-correcting behaviors.

Guided Reading and Reading Recovery

Guided Reading has started to become an essential teaching method in early elementary reading instruction, rooted in some Reading Recovery practices. These Reading Recovery practices have been adapted to fit a small group setting. Current literature cites practices that are critical for accelerating student growth while other practices cannot not be adapted to a small group setting. Both Reading Recovery and guided reading lessons use continuous text for the teaching of both reading and writing. The critical difference between a guided reading lesson and a Reading Recovery lesson is that a Reading Recovery lesson is based solely on the strategic action of one student, where a guided reading lesson has three to four students whose strategic actions may vary as well as their pools of knowledge. Although the strategic action and knowledge each child exhibits during a guided reading lesson is different, the teacher can adapt Reading Recovery practices to help the student take control of the text. The literature reviewed explains procedures and adaptations of Reading Recovery to fit guided reading instruction.

Reading Recovery and guided reading are used as an early instructional model to intervene when a child struggles with early reading skills. Many of Clay's (2016) procedures can be adapted to fit small group instruction. The use of running records,

rereading familiar books, book introductions, prompts, and incorporating word work and writing throughout the lesson are a few highlighted by the literature.

Observation

Reading Recovery teachers carefully analyze and reflect on their lessons to strategize tentative instructional steps needed next. Lewis (2017) described her teacher career in two parts, before and after her Reading Recovery training. One lesson she learned during “post Clay teaching” (p. 1) was the value of observation. Observation is crucial to understanding a reader. Observation is key during assessment but also in the planning of our instruction. Lipp and Helfrich (2016, pp. 644-645) listed questions to keep in mind when looking at a student’s running record: “How does the Reading Sound? What do Students Control? What do your students do at difficulty? What does a ‘told’ tell?”. When asking these questions while studying a running record, provides valuable insight into how to shape your instruction. Lewis (2017) urged us to not only observe our students, but ourselves. When we analyze our actions, become aware of our behavior, notice things like wait time, and compare student word count versus teacher word count, student learning increases.

Prompting

Prompting is embedded throughout a Reading Recovery lesson and a guided reading lesson. A prompt “calls the child to action” according to Clay (2016). Teachers need to be mindful when choosing prompts. Lewis (2018) stated, “In my efforts to assist, I was doing too much supporting and I was hindering progress instead of accelerating it” (p. 4). Prompts that are carefully chosen and not filled with unnecessary words that

confuse the child can accelerate progress. While these prompts are short and direct, teachers need to be flexible and responsive to the reader asking them to “skillfully integrate” all sources of information (Lipp & Helfrich, 2016, p. 643). Fountas and Pinnell (2012) states that teacher language instructs a reader to problem solve and build their “reading power” (p. 279) both in a Reading Recovery and guided reading lesson. Teacher language has the ability to teach, prompt for a specific action or reinforce wanted behavior. Prompts can also extinguish undesired behaviors. For example, you might place a letter *b* on the writing page before they write the letter *b*, eliminating the confusion between *b/d*. Besides incorporating information gleaned from the literature regarding observations and prompting, specific Reading Recovery procedures can be combined with guided reading procedures to deliver effective small group reading instruction.

Integration of Procedures

The influence of Reading Recovery on Guided Reading is reflected in the literature cited. There are some procedures from an individual Reading Recovery lesson that can be adapted to fit small group reading instruction. The following describes components of a Reading Recovery lesson and the adaptation to work during small group reading instruction.

Fluency

A procedure adapted from Reading Recovery is rereading familiar books. Rereading familiar books focuses on fluency and acts as a “warm up” to the subsequent reading activities. According to Lipp and Helfrich (2016), “ensure they are practicing good fluency, and if not, intervene to model and practice how it should sound” (p. 641).

They also suggested that students in small guided reading groups have an “anchor text” (Lipp & Helfrich, 2016) readily available. The practice on rereading familiar text allows students to put together words in phrases, making reading sound like talking. The rereading of familiar books also allows students to practice orchestrating processing learned from previous lessons. Rereading familiar books during the lesson also allows the teacher time to take a running record on yesterday’s new book for future analysis.

Running Record

Running records are a key component to evaluating an individual reader to determine what the child has under control and strategic actions used during reading. A running record is an observation of a child, and in this context, is taken on a book introduced the previous day. The four basic areas to analyze are Tolds, High-Frequency Words, Self-Monitoring and a Summary of Problem-Solving Actions (Fried 2013), while Lipp and Helfrich (2016) added fluency to this list. Fried (2013) suggested that careful analysis of running records leads to accelerated progress made by the student. Hanford (2020) claimed that classifying errors as M (meaning), S (structure), V (Visual) leads to ineffective reading strategies. Yet, Fried (2013) called teachers to examine running records for processing done by the student, quality of processing and reflection of teaching and student response, going beyond identifying the error as M, S or V. The reflection on errors can be carried over into the writing portion of a lesson to allow a full understanding of a student’s literacy behaviors and strategies.

Writing

In a study published by Iverson et al. during small group instruction, the cut up sentence procedure took place after the running record (2005). In a standard Reading Recovery lesson, the cut up sentence happens after working with words. Iverson et al. (2005) had the student receiving instruction, compose the story while the other students would monitor along with the student. The student who composed the story would record the sentence in their writing book using the practice page while the other students would work on a blank page and practice on a white board. The student who is not directly involved in the composition, writing, and assembling of the sentence, would be involved as “a teacher” monitoring and helping with problem solving during the process of composing, writing and assembling the cut up sentence.

Word Work

In a standard Reading Recovery lesson developed by Clay (2016) letter and word work as well as writing are embedded throughout the lesson but specifically worked on after rereading yesterday’s new book. Word work, specifically analogy work, in Iverson et al.’s study was integrated into the lesson after the rereading of familiar books and before the rereading of yesterday’s book. Word work was focused on analogy work and the application of the strategy to identify and spell unknown words (2005). The study done by Iverson et al. (2005) claimed teachers found it necessary to interject a small segment called “extending the known set” (p. 461). This procedure allowed students to build up their sight word knowledge, using a procedure similar to Richardson’s learning a new sight word procedure (2009). Once a student can read and write about 20 words with

fluency, this segment was dropped. The amount of time given to sight word and word analogy was increased. This extra time allowed struggling readers to “cement” new or partially known words or word parts into their brains. One criticism of Reading Recovery is that it does not teach phonics (Hanford, 2020). Yet when taking a closer look at procedures during word work, the student is learning both fast recall of words, using left to right progression and not memorizing the whole word as Hanford suggested (2019). Students also learn how to break words apart in multiple ways to problem solve on the run (Clay, 2016) aiding in fast and fluent reading.

Book Introduction

Another procedure that can be adapted from Reading Recovery to small group instruction is an effective book introduction. A book introduction orients a reader to the text. Orienting a reader or readers to a book is necessary for a successful first read of the story. When orienting a reader to the text, you take the “bugs” out that make it tricky for the reader. Some books contain unfamiliar or different language structure and new words. It also gives the reader the “gist” of the story line without giving the ending away. This new book is not a test for the reader, but allows for a successful read with some strategic action taken by the reader (Lipp & Helfrich, 2016, p. 642). “Reading Wars” is a debate about how best to teach reading to students, a phonetically based program versus a balanced literacy approach. Barshay (2020), who opposed a balanced literacy approach, stated that readers need to be engaging with more difficult text, challenging them and time spent developing vocabulary and content knowledge has a bigger pay off. Well,

according to Clay (2016), book choice and introductions during a Reading Recovery lesson does exactly this.

Summary

Reading Recovery procedures work most effectively during one on one instruction because teaching is based on the student's interaction with text. But as the literature shows, many of Clay's (2016) procedures can be effectively adapted to fit a small group guided reading lesson plan. The use of familiar rereading, running records, effective book introductions, word work, writing and teacher prompts can be adapted and used in a guided reading group. This instructional model helps early readers develop the strategic actions which skilled readers use unknowingly.

The one piece in literature that is difficult to incorporate in a Guided Reading group is writing and word work. In Reading Recovery, word work and writing is based on the individual student, using what they already know or is partially known. A guided reading group, students have a varied set of known and partially known information. The study by Iverson et al. (2005) had two students in a small group. Their study suggests word work and writing sight words happen after the familiar reading, fitting nicely into a guided reading model. Iverson et al.'s (2005) instructional method of composing a sentence, writing the sentence and the cut-up sentence seems difficult because it neglects other participants in the group and only focuses on one student. It feels less authentic to all members of the group. Further research is needed by me to adapt this component into a small guided reading group and implement effectively.

Conclusion

Marie Clay's research and Reading Recovery program (2016) has been effectively used throughout the United States and the world. Her program is designed for a skilled teacher to work one on one with a student for 12-20 weeks. Unfortunately, this model cannot support all early struggling readers in schools. But, with the understanding of her procedures and the literature surrounding using components of Reading Recovery, a classroom teacher and/or literacy intervention teacher can implement some components into their guided reading groups and make a difference for readers each day.

The seamless interweaving of reading familiar books, having an anchor text in a book bag to develop fluency, and a running record on yesterday's new book with one student can easily be integrated into a guided reading group lesson. The idea of a book introduction is to create a successful first read, allowing for the student to use strategic action to problem solve, allowing acceleration in fragile and frustrated early readers. These three components are easy to implement in a guided reading group.

Understanding prompts, as Clay (2016) defined as "calls for action", is critical for acceleration. The prompts chosen by the teacher either confuse, create dependence or accelerate a child. The literature suggests that prompting and words spoken determine the pieces of information used by a student to problem solve. Therefore, teachers need to be mindful and specific to not neglect or over emphasize specific types of information.

The focus for Chapter Three discusses how to incorporate Clay's theory and Reading Recovery practices into a K-2 small group reading setting. In Chapter Three, the

use of research guides the development of a guided reading lesson format and tracking forms to record student's literacy behaviors and changes over time.

Chapter Three

Project Description

Introduction

As a classroom teacher, guided reading was always part of my reading block. The power of teaching students to learn the strategies used by readers in a small group setting was both enlightening and frustrating because I assumed the literacy processing each student possessed was learned in a linear progression. Last year when I was trained as a Reading Recovery teacher my knowledge and understanding of literacy acquisition helped alleviate this frustration. The examination of Clay's Literacy Processing Theory and practice of Reading Recovery procedures led me to ask the question: *how can you use Clay's theory of literacy processing and adapt reading recovery procedures to deliver effective small group reading instruction?* The study of the research surrounding Clay's theory, Reading Recovery, and Guided Reading provided the understanding and guidance around developing a curriculum project to support small group reading instruction as a literacy specialist.

This chapter contains a description of the project, with critical preplanning steps and reflection pieces beyond instruction. The theories that influenced the project, constructivist theory, Clay's literacy processing theory, and Vygotsky's zone of proximal development are explained. The chapter states the setting which the project took place and the intended participants.

Project Description

My project curates documents and resources used for planning and delivering instruction during a small reading group, for myself and other literacy teachers. The project curates documents containing a list of assessments and a summary of skills for each child, a strategic profile planning document, a lesson plan template with teacher reflection, various progress monitoring sheets, and resources to aid planning and instruction.

To begin, each student was assessed on both reading and writing activities. Different formal assessments were used; the Observation Survey (Clay, 2013) or Fountas and Pinnell's Benchmark Assessment (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010). The Observation Survey consists of six different assessments including letter identification, concepts about print, word reading, hearing and recording sounds in words, writing vocabulary, and text reading (Clay, 2013). Fountas and Pinnell's Benchmark Assessment System includes a phonemic awareness, letter identification, sight words, decoding and encoding, text level, fluency, comprehension, and reading behaviors tied to text reading. The Observation Survey was used with first graders while Fountas and Pinnell's Benchmark Assessment was given to second grade students at this point in the year. The careful analysis of each assessment given provided necessary information to complete the next piece before teaching.

Analyzing the assessments described above allowed the teacher to put together an initial student strategic profile which guided the student's instruction according to their needs. The data gathered from the analysis highlighted literacy strengths and weaknesses

of a student. The data granted insight to particular areas that extra work was needed and items the teacher needed to pay special attention to, like a b/d confusion, to accelerate learning. This data also revealed prompts or teacher language to be used with each student. Revisiting the data and new data gathered running records allowed the teacher to notice changes over time (Clay, 2016). This provided the guidance to plan future learning opportunities during lessons and teacher language, the prompts, used to accelerate literacy acquisition.

Once the competencies of each individual are understood, lesson planning began. Each lesson had the same format. The lesson began with reading familiar texts. Within each student's familiar text collection an anchor text, one they can read fluently along with phrasing and expression, was included as a reference (Lipp & Helfrich, 2016). The anchor text could be referenced as a "star book" (post-it note with a star on the cover). This helped students practice and remember how fluent and phrased reading sounds. While the groups of students were engaged with familiar reading activities, the teacher took a running record of at least 100 words per text. This was later analyzed for literacy competencies and changes in competencies.

After the familiar reading and the running record, the students worked on word work. The word work was planned and focused around the needs of students. This part of the lesson stressed phonemic awareness, phonics, and word learning activities. Following the word work, students wrote a sentence or story. During writing, comprehension strategies were emphasized. Writing provided students the opportunity to deeply explore the text's main idea, characters, problem/solution, or new information learned. Writing

also provided information and practice with encoding. Students practice using a part already known to create another word, fluent writing of sight words, and phonic patterns used in words.

The last part of the lesson was reading a new book, beginning with an introduction. The introduction allowed the “bugs” to be taken out so it can be a successful first read (Clay, 2016). For example, that might include practicing a new language structure, understanding the gist of the story, or planting vocabulary words used in the story. Then, students read the story individually with the teacher supporting strategic problem solving. Choral reading was strongly discouraged so individual problem solving can be practiced. Specific teaching strategies were highlighted after reading using examples from the book. Comprehension was also highlighted after reading. That concluded the daily lesson. The next day’s lesson was based upon observations of all components of the lesson.

Observations recorded during the lesson provided valuable information to influence future interactions with students (Clay, 2016). The observations recorded allow the teacher to document change over time in the various parts of a lesson. According to Clay, an observant teacher is able to help when the task is beyond their current competencies, and decide to prompt or allow the student to work things out themselves (Clay, 2016). The recording of observations in the moment was essential in a small group setting otherwise confusion of students and their needs occurred. The reflection on these observations by the teacher developed future learning opportunities based on the cusp of their learning. This led to writing new strengths and weaknesses, areas where extra work

was needed and things to pay special attention , bi-weekly, on the student's strategic profile sheet. The observations guided specific prompts or teacher language needed to accelerate learning. It was important to capture the specific prompts for each child in a systematic way that showed evidence of student growing literacy competencies.

Theories

Constructivist Theory

Constructivist Theory of learning states that the child is actively engaged in the learning process; it is not the teacher delivering knowledge to be learned (McLeod, 2019). The student is responsible for making the connection and the teacher's role is to provide the environment or learning opportunity for the child (McLeod, 2019).

Construction of knowledge by the student is built from previous experiences and acted upon by the student. Hein (1991) suggested getting to know what the child already knows is imperative, only then can a teacher proceed with planning. According to Jones (2006), the teacher's role is to "set the conditions under which the child can learn and provide contingent guidance and feedback" (p. 60). This theory sets the stage for organizing and presenting learning for the student (Hein, 1991). Several educational theories are based on constructivism, such as Marie Clay's literacy processing.

Clay's Theory of Literacy Processing

Clay's theory of literacy processing came from a grounded theory: she did not set out to prove a theory, but rather understand and learn how children acquire literacy skills. Clay's theory has several principles and states that reading and writing are complex

processes. Clay used an “unusual lens” to document the acquisition of literacy skills by students including running records and writing samples to capture the complexity of reading and writing tasks (Askew, 2009). Clay’s theory also states that literacy proficiencies change over time, reading and writing are reciprocal and interrelated, changes over time can be documented, children construct their own learning, and most importantly children take different paths to similar outcomes. Her theory led to the development of the Reading Recovery program which accelerates student learning (Askew, 2009).

Zone of Proximal Development

The Zone of Proximal Development was developed by Lev Vygotsky and illustrates the difference between what a student can do independently and what they can do with the guidance from a more knowledgeable other, in this case a teacher (McLeod, 2019). It is a social learning theory, emphasizing culture and social factors affect cognitive development (McLeod, 2019). The Zone of Proximal Development allows a student to use what they already know and with the aid of a teacher, develop new skills or strategies. The interaction between student and teacher is a conversational social interaction, and the student seeks to make connections and understand the new learning (McLeod, 2019). Jones stated that the learning progress is determined by the student’s understanding (2006). The Zone of Proximal Development of a student is where instruction takes place during both guided reading and Reading Recovery lessons. These theories in conjunction support my capstone project and lay the foundational principles for the work by both the student and teacher.

Setting

The small reading group lessons were developed for an elementary school, one of nine, in a large district. The elementary school is located in a suburban setting of a major metropolitan area in the upper midwest. The elementary school's enrollment consists mainly from the surrounding neighborhoods. The student population is 740 in grades kindergarten through fifth grade. The school population is 61.2% White, 26.1% Asian, 3.1% Hispanic, 2.6% Black and 7% two or more races. Out of the total population 3.9% meet the requirements for free and reduced lunch, 7.5% are in Special Education and 3.6% are English Language Learners.

Participants

This project was created for striving first and second grade readers. The first grade students were selected from the pool of possible Reading Recovery students, but are not the lowest achieving first graders that were placed in the Reading Recovery program. The second grade students were selected based on FAST aReading test scores, teacher recommendation, followed by Fountas and Pinnell's assessments Benchmark Assessment System. The groups consisted of 3-4 students based on similar needs and text level proficiencies. The lessons occurred daily for 30 minutes located in a small group classroom.

Summary

This Capstone project started with my professional journey, which led to a review of the research and theory tied to my question: *how can teachers use Clay's theory of*

literacy processing and adapt reading recovery procedures to deliver effective small group reading instruction? During Chapter Three, the purpose, influence of theory and project design was discussed. Chapter Four encompasses the reflection of my work, the impact of the project and possible further application, including other literacy intervention teachers in a similar position and inviting classroom teachers to try the format within their classrooms during small group reading instruction.

CHAPTER FOUR

Reflection

Introduction

In the fall of 2019, I began my training as a Reading Recovery teacher. During my training, and transition to a Reading Recovery/Literacy Specialist at a new building, my life changed. It was now, as some describe, “post Marie Clay” (Lewis, 2017, p. 1). Many Reading Recovery teachers delineate their life in this way, before and after Marie Clay. I now reside in the camp, after Marie Clay. As I learned about her theory of literacy processing and the implications as it relates to teaching students how to read, I began to wonder how I could bring this intense instruction to more students, not exclusively the eight Reading Recovery students I would teach during a typical year. My goal was to develop a way to use Clay’s theory, my Reading Recovery training, and knowledge about Guided Reading to reach more students, especially ones who were unable to experience the gift of 1:1 tutoring through the Reading Recovery program. I feel that I have been able to answer this question through studying the research and developing my capstone project.

In this chapter, I reflect on my capstone project, revisit the literature surrounding Clay’s theory, Reading Recovery and Guided Reading, and discuss the connection between my project and the literature reviewed. Also, limitations and possible future implications of my project will be discussed. Woven throughout this chapter is evidence of how I answered the question: *how can teachers use Clay’s theory of literacy processing and adapt reading recovery procedures to deliver effective small group*

reading instruction? The chapter will end with a final reflection and summary of my capstone project and the process I took to create it.

Author's Reflection

Before I started my project, I knew my research and project needed to be connected to my new job as a Reading Recovery, Literacy Intervention teacher. I had a passion for teaching reading, based on personal experience. I did not want any student to have a similar experience to mine, arduous. Eliminating the feel of not being a “good reader” for any student would be considered a success.

Throughout my training year as a Reading Recovery teacher I began to understand the complexity of reading and wondered how to take this new understanding reading to reach more students. During teaching Reading Recovery, the complexity of literacy acquisition became indisputable. I would watch students start to make their own connections, develop a more sophisticated way of interacting with text, like noticing parts in words to help them read new words and rereading to confirm their successful problem solving of a word. This excited me! I noticed myself trying prompts that worked with Reading Recovery students with my small group students. Sometimes it worked and other times it was unsuccessful. I began to wonder why, what was missing. This was the driving force to create this project. Another, the cost of training, was another force. My district had graciously paid for my training and promised to continue my training as a Reading Recovery teacher with ongoing professional development yearly. I have to admit that my narrow focus initially, creating something for me, did not feel selfish. Now, as this project has been completed I feel this project needs to be shared with more and a

professional development series for first and second grade teachers would be beneficial, allowing my project to impact others in my school. While completing this project the personalization and responsiveness to each student's literacy processing became fundamental in planning small group instruction, which previously was neglected.

Connecting to Research

As I began to revisit the research surrounding Marie Clay's theory of literacy processing, Reading Recovery and Guided Reading a common thread was woven throughout, individualized instruction and response to individual needs of the student. While teaching kindergarten and second grade small reading groups, I focused on the next skill the students would need, not instruction based on current competencies, known item knowledge and what they need to learn next. Within this model, the instruction was based on Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (McLeod, 2019), yet lacked the specificity needed to benefit each student. I addressed this in my project by creating additional reflection pieces after assessments, lesson, and formative assessments tools, like the running record. These components are based on Marie Clay's theory of literacy processing (Doyle, 2013). The research states that we look carefully at a child's current strategic action and develop a tentative theory about how they are engaging in literacy activities, our prompts/instruction will build the self-extending system used by successful readers (Clay, 2016).

Also during my literature review I examined the specific lesson structure of a Reading Recovery lesson (Clay, 2016), a Guided Reading lesson (Richardson, 2009), and a Leveled Literacy Intervention (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009). I was able to use these lessons

to develop a hybrid plan using components from each and adapting them to fit the individuality of the students in a group.

Implications

The goal for this project was to integrate Marie Clay's theory of literacy processing, Reading Recovery and Guided Reading practices into one lesson structure that could be used by literacy intervention teachers while teaching small reading groups. In an ideal world, all literacy intervention teachers would also be Reading Recovery teachers, sharing their time between the two jobs. The initial and ongoing training would help literacy intervention teachers understand and become more targeted in their response to a student's item knowledge and strategic activity. But, unfortunately this training is costly and requires a time commitment by schools and teachers. This project could be used by classroom teachers working within a small group setting either with striving readers or "on target" students. Personally, my goal was to spend time analyzing and incorporating the year long training to become a Reading Recovery teacher. My aspiration to adapt the success of the Reading Recovery program to a wider audience led me to my question, *how can teachers use Clay's theory of literacy processing and adapt reading recovery procedures to deliver effective small group reading instruction?* I feel like I have answered this question through my capstone project. In the project, the resources highlight and adapt Guided Reading and Reading Recovery to create a strong, individualized reading plan for a small group of students. It has students working in a group, using a common book and lesson plan, yet allows for individualization based on a student's current literacy competencies. This project works with all books, including

prepackaged literature set or leveled books that fit the students' reading ability and interest. The individualization is present in the student strategic profile, formative assessments, and components of the lesson. The additional resources provided help guide planning. The table which houses the resources will be available to reference at any time.

Limitations

As I was creating my project, I began to wonder about the limited impact. The work, learning and processing, has made me become a strong small group reading teacher. A feeling to share this with more teachers began to grow. Currently, this project and lesson format will be shared with other literacy teachers and a few classroom teachers searching for a more effective way to teach small reading groups. Most have prior knowledge and experience using Guided Reading (Richardson, 2009) and Leveled Literacy Instruction (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009). But as I thought about a wider audience, all first and second grade teachers, it lacks the professional development needed for effective implementation within their own classrooms. In retrospect, a professional development series around Clay's theory of literacy processing would precede this project. Clay's theory is essential to individualized reading instruction and responsiveness, the in moment instruction for each student. Any first or second grade classroom teacher would be able to take this project and try it in their classroom, but the intensity of the initial assessment, careful analysis, and planning may feel daunting without the theory and practice.

Summary

The start of this paper, I shared my personal reading journey, my children's reading journey and the driving force behind my project. Throughout the research in chapter two, the project development in chapter three and the reflection in chapter four, the importance of understanding and developing a tentative theory about a student's current literacy processing has been central to this project. This central idea has always been a guiding principle of Clay's literacy processing theory and Reading Recovery. At the time this paper was written, the Coronavirus epidemic had a strong hold on our daily lives. Students were going to school in a hybrid or full distance model, while the district is hinting to transitioning to full distance learning. The implementation of this project, centered on children taking different paths to learning how to read, could not be more relevant, yet difficult to notice or observe behaviors via Zoom. Even though it might be difficult, the importance of documenting, planning and clearing up confusions is essential. My plan to share with other literacy specialists and classroom teachers, is timely during this current learning model. As we continue to navigate the Coronavirus and small group reading instruction is delivered via zoom, the adaptation of Clay's literacy processing theory and Reading Recovery procedures will provide strong, effective reading instruction to those who have yet to develop a self-extending system essential to a successful reader.

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