Common Ground: Reading Recovery and the Common Core State Standards

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Editor’s note: The Common Core State Standards Initiative began as a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers. Developed in collaboration with national experts, school administrators, professional organizations, teachers, and parents, the standards are meant to be a clear K–12 framework to prepare students for college and careers. For the purposes of clarity, in this article, the CCSS are cited when referring to specifics of the 2010 standards.

Between 2010 and 2013, state legislatures in 45 states, the District of Columbia, and four U.S. territories approved and adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts, an unprecedented event in our nation’s educational history — an event now shaping instructional and assessment policy. With the majority of states now sharing common standards, the ability to combine resources is another new development for K–12 education.

To help states, two consortia have formed—Smarter Balanced and PARCC—each receiving federal funding to design new assessment systems, curricular materials, and professional development around the CCSS. However, the CCSS documents make clear that the purpose of the standards is solely to “…define what all students are expected to know and be able to do, not how teachers should teach.” (CCSS, p. 6). Furthermore, the CCSS documents explicitly defer a litany of decisions about instruction, pedagogy, materials, extensions for gifted students, and interventions for students who struggle to teachers, districts, and states. Between implementing the CCSS and preparing for new assessment systems, promised for use in the 2014–15 school year, many changes in literacy teaching and learning are rapidly happening.

Reading Recovery professionals have a well-proven track record of success across two decades of previous state-based curricular iterations. In one of Reading Recovery’s foundational texts, An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement, Marie Clay presents the elements of good programs required for their continued success:

For a good program you need a very experienced teacher who has been trained to think incisively about the reading process and who is sensitive to individual differences; a teacher who has continued to seek professional development, and understands the literacy issues of the day, and the particular program the school is delivering. (Clay, 2002, 2005, p. 25)

This article will examine how CCSS implementation will likely influence classroom instruction and provide literacy achievement, Marie Clay presents the elements of good programs required for their continued success:

- For a good program you need a very experienced teacher who has been trained to think incisively about the reading process and who is sensitive to individual differences; a teacher who has continued to seek professional development, and understands the literacy issues of the day, and the particular program the school is delivering. (Clay, 2002, 2005, p. 25)

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answers to questions that teachers and administrators might have about Reading Recovery in the context of the Common Core.

This article will explore the six different “strands” of the Common Core—Reading Literature; Reading Informational Text; Reading Foundations; Writing; Speaking and Listening; and Language—with commentary on each strand. Several charts appear containing the actual CCSS for Grade 1 for easy reference. In each chart, certain standards (or parts of standards) have an asterisk before the number because they represent alignment between Reading Recovery and the CCSS and are seen as opportunities for Reading Recovery professionals to support students in Common Core classrooms. In fact, of the 41 standards for Grade 1, greater than 90% show alignment to Reading Recovery teaching and practices.

What alignment exists between Reading Recovery and the Common Core State Standards?

Reading, writing, and oral language—long seen as reciprocal processes in Reading Recovery—are likewise seen by the CCSS developers as happening within an “integrated model of literacy” (CCSS, p. 4) where the processes of communication need to be closely connected. More specific to reading, Clay (2005a) delineated the kinds of information used for becoming literate:

All readers, be they five-year-old beginners working on their first books or effective adult readers, need to find and use different kinds of information in print and combine the information which they find in print with what they carry in their heads from their past experiences with language. What kinds of information must be used?

- knowledge of how the world works
- the possible meanings of the text
- the sentence structures of the language
- rules about the order of ideas, or words, or letters
- the words used often in the language
- the alphabet
- special features of sound, shape, and layout
- special knowledge about books and literary experiences (p. 14)

Clay’s categories serve as one guide Reading Recovery teachers use when designing individualized lessons, giving thoughtful consideration to which kinds of information are strengths that can be helpful and which kinds of information need teaching and support for particular children. This list of information can be useful to illustrate some of the correspondences between Reading Recovery and the CCSS (Table 1).

What shifts in classroom reading instruction will the Common Core bring?

The Common Core standards privilege meaning making with fully 20 standards dedicated to this purpose, equally divided between literary and informational reading. Comprehension is no longer just one of the five priorities—phonemic awareness,

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 1. Reading Recovery and Common Core State Standards</th>
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<td><strong>Clay’s Information Types</strong></td>
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<td>Knowledge of how the world works</td>
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<td>Special features of sound, shape, and layout</td>
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<td>Special knowledge about books and literary experience</td>
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phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension—that constituted previous standards guided by the National Reading Panel and No Child Left Behind (Calkins, Ehrenworth, & Lehman, 2012). “Even for the youngest readers, the Common Core pushes for reading for meaning. This shift in focus means a few things. One is that classrooms (or states) that have coasted on low-level reading skills need to quickly get on board with high-level reading skills” (Calkins et al., p. 29).

The CCSS for Reading Literature (Table 2) and for Reading Informational Text (Table 3) can be conceptualized by understanding that Standards 1–3 focus on what the text says; Standards 4–6 focus on how the author writes; Standards 7–9 focus on reasoning beyond and across texts; and Standard 10 focuses on pulling it all together with increasing complexity (Calkins et al., 2012).

One example of common ground between Reading Recovery and the CCSS is represented in Reading Standards for Literature (RL) 9: Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories. In the Reading Recovery book collection, there are several examples of series books — books with repeated characters who have different adventures across texts like the Baby Bear books (Rigby PM Collection) or Hungry Giant series (Hameray Joy Cowley Collection). Reading Recovery teachers have long supported and engaged students in comparing/contrasting the adventures and experiences of characters in text introductions, writing, or in conversations about texts after reading. Another common practice in Reading Recovery is directing attention to who is talking and how they would sound, emphasizing phrasing, intonation, or expression. Such teaching occurs in lessons because we understand these aspects of fluency to be necessary for the reader’s construction of meaning while maintaining fluency (Clay, 2005b).

Another shift that all classrooms will need to make regards an increase in the amount of informational reading children are doing — a shift that Reading Recovery teachers may need to make as well. One suggestion is to review your book collection with a group of colleagues to identify the

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<th>Table 2. Reading Standards for Literature (RL) for Grade 1 Students</th>
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<td>Common Core State Standards, 2010, p. 11</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key Ideas and Details</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>1.</em> Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.</td>
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<td><em>2.</em> Retell stories, including key details, and demonstrate understanding of their central message or lesson.</td>
</tr>
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<td><em>3.</em> Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Craft and Structure</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>4.</em> Identify words and phrases in stories or poems that suggest feelings or appeal to the senses.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>5.</em> Explain major differences between books that tell stories and books that give information, drawing on a wide reading of a range of text types.</td>
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<td><em>6.</em> Identify who is telling the story at various points in a text.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>7.</em> Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>8.</em> (Not applicable to literature)</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>9.</em> Compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories.</td>
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<td><strong>Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity</strong></td>
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<td><em>10.</em> With prompting and support, read prose and poetry of appropriate complexity for grade 1.</td>
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<th>Table 3. Reading Standards for Informational Text for Grade 1 Students</th>
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<td>Common Core State Standards, 2010, p. 19</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key Ideas and Details</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>1.</em> Ask and answer questions about key details in a text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>2.</em> Identify the main topic and retell key details of a text.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>3.</em> Describe the connection between two individuals, events, ideas, or pieces of information in a text.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Craft and Structure</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>4.</em> Ask and answer questions to help determine or clarify the meaning of words and phrases in a text.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>5.</em> Know and use various text features (e.g., headings, tables of contents, glossaries, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in a text.</td>
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<td><em>6.</em> Distinguish between information provided by pictures or other illustrations and information provided by the words in a text.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>7.</em> Use the illustrations and details in a text to describe its key ideas.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>8.</em> Identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>9.</em> Identify basic similarities in and differences between two texts on the same topic (e.g., in illustrations, descriptions, or procedures).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>10.</em> With prompting and support, read informational texts appropriately complex for grade 1.</td>
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quantity and quality of informational texts you have in order to devote resources where needed. Most Reading Recovery teachers will find a variety of informational texts already embedded, from the earliest levels on up. For example, popular books, such as Big Things (Rigby PM Collection Level 1), Fantastic Fish (Wright Group Level 2), or Sports (Hameray Kaleidoscope Collection Level 3) are, in fact, informational texts at very early levels. Higher levels include some literary nonfiction such as The Clever Penguins (Rigby PM Collection Level 12) and Nelson, the Baby Elephant (Rigby PM Collection Level 18), as well as more-traditional nonfiction like How to Make a Card (Kaeden Books Level 11) or The Popcorn Book (Scott Foresman Level 18).

In the classroom, larger amounts of time will be devoted to exploring fiction and nonfiction texts in depth. There is also an expectation that students read independently and move through a “staircase of increasing text complexity” (CCSS, p. 8) with scaffolding through “prompting and support” (CCSS, p. 12–13) as needed in Grade 1. Again, the idea of a gradient of text is very common to Reading Recovery; we work daily with leveled books, moving children up a steep gradient of text difficulty to “allow for the build-up of fast responding” (Clay, 2005b, p. 150) over time.

What does the new emphasis on comprehension mean for Reading Recovery?
We read and listen to understand; we write and speak to communicate with others while simultaneously using inner speech to self-regulate thinking and to comprehend the world. Reading Recovery shares Vygotsky’s view that all language (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) is a mediation tool used for the development of social, cultural, and cognitive understandings (Clay & Cazden, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978).

Because of the increased emphasis placed on deep comprehension in the standards, Reading Recovery professionals need to be clear about the role that comprehension plays in Reading Recovery, focusing on what Clay says about comprehension:

Comprehending is not just a literacy task… it is what a child is doing when holding a conversation with someone, listening to someone reading aloud, or reading on his or her own, at any time or place. It is not an aspect of thinking that emerges only after children have done the reading or passed through the first two years of school. All educators need to hold as their top priority the expectation that learners will understand what they are reading. The reading process the child builds should involve comprehension, for if we train the child to read without involving these powerful thinking strategies from the beginning, it will be more difficult for some of them to think about content later… Comprehension lies in what learners say, what is read to them, and what they read and write; learners should know that all literacy acts involve comprehension. (Clay, 1998, p. 217)

Reading Recovery teachers understand that it is meaning that drives all literacy acts. We must advocate continually and frequently that:

• we support and develop comprehension as children listen to our text introductions that teach about text structure; model book language; describe layout and text features; use the specific language of reading (problem, bold print, character, etc.) (Clay, 1998; 2005a; 2005b),

• we foster the use of meaning as one source of information used to read (Clay, 2001; 2005b),

• we engage in talk about books after reading and about children’s lives throughout the lesson to develop comprehension and meaning (Clay, 2005b),

• we develop phonemic awareness, knowledge about phonics and orthography while composing and recording a message that has meaning to a particular child (Clay, 2001; Clay, 2005b), and

• we teach, prompt, and scaffold for the development of self-extending systems in both reading and writing that will continue a child’s journey towards comprehension and meaning (Clay, 2001; 2005b).

What shifts will the Common Core bring for writing in primary classrooms?
Another major shift for classrooms will be the increased emphasis on the amounts and types of writing necessary (Table 4). As with reading, the writing standards are organized uniformly across all grade levels, meaning that all students K–12 engage in similar kinds of writing, with gradual changes and shifts over time.
More specifically, the Grade 1 standards call for students to produce three types of writing:

1. opinion pieces in which the student states an opinion and supplies a reason
2. informational writing in which they name a topic, supply facts, and provide some sense of closure
3. narratives which include two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide some sense of closure

But these types of writing are not expected to be done with complete independence, as is illustrated by Standard 5. This standard clearly states that writing in primary classrooms is to be done with “guidance and support from adults,” a scaffold that remains in place across the standards from kindergarten through Grade 8. Furthermore, released test items available on the respective websites of both Smarter Balanced (http://www.smarterbalanced.org) and PARCC (http://www.parcconline.org), demonstrate clearly that writing will be used extensively for students to be able to demonstrate comprehension — a factor that has the attention of most state and district literacy leaders. Because the CCSS more heavily emphasize writing, larger amounts of time for students to engage in writing will be needed in classrooms implementing these standards.

What are possible implications about writing for Reading Recovery?

Reading Recovery professionals have long recognized reading and writing as reciprocal processes (Clay, 2001, 2005a, 2005b; DeFord, 1994; Fried, 2006) and all Reading Recovery lessons include daily instruction in composing and writing; therefore, we embrace this renewed focus on time and instruction in writing within classrooms as a positive development.

Fortuitously, Clay wrote: “As more attention to early writing in classrooms raises schools’ expectations of children’s written language performance, Reading Recovery teachers will need to keep an eye on the writing children are expected to do in the classrooms” (2005b, p. 67). To maximize writing instruction, Reading Recovery professionals might begin by revisiting important sections in Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals with colleagues to explore Clay’s emphasis on increasing our expectations about complexity and how writing should change over time in a series of lessons, paying particular attention to the desired outcomes that “in the later lessons children might compose two or three sentences, write more, write faster, with less help, and construct more interesting messages” (Clay, 2005b, p. 56). Asking for classroom samples of the kinds of writing that average Grade 1 students are doing and analyzing these pieces in relation to Reading Recovery students can inform our teaching. Another activity that might be useful is to look across a series of lessons to identify the kinds of writing Reading Recovery students are already engaged in and brainstorm ways that classroom teachers might support increasing the variety and types of writing.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Types and Purposes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Write opinion pieces in which they introduce the topic or name the book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply a reason for the opinion, and provide some sense of closure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide some sense of closure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide some sense of closure.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Production and Distribution of Writing</th>
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<tr>
<td>4. With guidance and support from adults, focus on a topic, respond to questions and suggestions from peers, and add details to strengthen writing as needed.</td>
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<td>6. With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Research to Build and Present Knowledge</th>
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<tr>
<td>7. Participate in shared research and writing projects (e.g., explore a number of “how-to” books on a given topic and use them to write a sequence of instructions).</td>
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<td>9. (Begins in grade 4)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Range of Writing</th>
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<td>10. (Begins in grade 3)</td>
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For example, one group of teachers recently categorized and generated possible topics for opinion pieces appropriate for Grade 1 students by analyzing previous Reading Recovery student writings:

- Favorites (with a reason) from children’s interests: characters, books, sports, people, activities, places, etc.
  — I like Brave Triceratops because he chased away the T-Rex and saved the other dinosaurs.
  — I like going shopping with Grandma because she’s nice and she buys me stuff even when I don’t ask her.

- Simple judgments
  — I think we should have pizza day more times a week because kids love pizza and it is good for you.

- Dislikes with reasons
  — I hate broccoli because it tastes bad and it smells yucky when you cook it.

- “Bests” with reasons
  — Jaelin is my best friend because he always makes me laugh when we sit together on the bus.
  — The first night of Hanukkah is the best because we always get chocolate.

What is the role of the Foundational Skills section of the Common Core State Standards?
Though the CCSS documents do emphasize comprehension and writing more thoroughly, they also focus on a few “foundational” skills. In order to contextualize these skills, which dominated previous standards in many parts of the country, the CCSS documents state: “These foundational skills are not an end in and of themselves; rather, they are necessary and important components of an effective, comprehensive reading program designed to develop proficient readers with the capacity to comprehend texts across a range of types and disciplines” (CCSS, p. 15).

This statement aligns closely with Reading Recovery teaching procedures. In fact, entire sections of Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals Part Two (Clay, 2005b) are devoted to procedures and prompts for each of the four headings in Table 5: Print Concepts, Phonological Awareness, Phonics and Word Recognition, and Fluency. One particular procedure that illustrates this is Reading Recovery’s use of Elkonin boxes (Clay, 1979, 1991, 2005b). In early lessons, students use sound and letter boxes as a scaffold both to hear phonemes in sequence and to write letters that correspond to sounds for unknown words they are trying to write in messages daily. Additionally, teachers demonstrate, prompt, and support students in taking words apart flexibly by using magnetic letters and dry erase boards to demonstrate important principles about how words work while reading and writing. These elements (and others) have long been ‘common’ to Reading Recovery, and a series of lessons would be likely to involve all of the four foundational headings in Table 5, whether you were in Poughkeepsie, Portland, Pensacola, or Peoria!

| Table 5. Reading Standards: Foundational Skills for Grade 1 Students |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Common Core State Standards, 2010, p. 23 |

**Print Concepts**

1. Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print.
   a. Recognize the distinguishing features of a sentence (e.g., first word, capitalization, ending punctuation).

**Phonological Awareness**

2. Demonstrate understanding of spoken words, syllables, and sounds (phonemes).
   a. Distinguish long from short vowel sounds in spoken single-syllable words.
   b. Orally produce single-syllable words by blending sounds (phonemes), including consonant blends.
   c. Isolate and pronounce initial, medial vowel, and final sounds (phonemes) in spoken single-syllable words.
   d. Segment spoken single-syllable words into their complete sequence of individual sounds (phonemes).

**Phonics and Word Recognition**

3. Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.
   a. Know the spelling-sound correspondences for common consonant digraphs (two letters that represent one sound).
   b. Decode regularly spelled one-syllable words.
   c. Know final -e and common vowel team conventions for representing long vowel sounds.
   d. Use knowledge that every syllable must have a vowel sound to determine the number of syllables in a printed word.
   e. Decode two-syllable words following basic patterns by breaking the words into syllables.
   f. Read words with inflectional endings.
   g. Recognize and read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words.

**Fluency**

4. Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
   a. Read grade-level text with purpose and understanding.
   b. Read grade-level text orally with accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression.
   c. Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.
What implications do the Speaking and Listening Standards have for classrooms and Reading Recovery?

As with the reading foundations, the majority of the standards for Speaking and Listening (Table 6) are directly related to Reading Recovery. The oral language that children possess and have control over serves as an important strength for both reading and writing, and the diversity of oral language experiences creates some of the individual differences we routinely experience with children in Reading Recovery (Clay, 2001). Additionally, one aspect of judging complexity and leveling books in the Reading Recovery gradient of texts is based upon oral language. Early books use predominately oral language structures; higher levels utilize unusual structures and rely more on literary language (Peterson, 1991).

Across lesson components, oral language is continually developed and expanded upon. Conversations about books, about writing, and about the interests of children happen before, during, and after lessons on a daily basis.

**Neither the Reading nor Writing Standards contain any reference to grammar, conventions, or vocabulary. Will these be taught in Common Core classrooms?**

Recognizing that grammar, conventions, and vocabulary are not exclusive to reading, writing or speaking, the Common Core authors chose to organize these concepts under the heading of Language Standards as seen in Table 7 on the following page. Classroom teachers will likely continue to embed these standards into existing classroom structures for reading, writing, and speaking. At first glance, however, these standards seem confusing or daunting to someone who see the litany of conventions as being full of terms and concepts outside of the reach of most first-grade students. But a careful look at the verb in these standards helps us to delineate what is or is not expected of students. For example, most of the Language Standards employ the verb “use” as in Standard 1.a.: “Use common, proper, and possessive nouns.” This does not mean that Grade 1 students must identify or name nouns or understand terms like possessive or proper. The standard says “use” and most student writing, upon examination, will be likely to use the types of nouns listed.

Every day in Reading Recovery lessons, attention is given to composing messages with appropriate complexity and variety of sentences that provide opportunities to support children in learning how to transition to conventional forms of writing. Through prompting, demonstration, teaching, and reinforcing, students in Reading Recovery and in Grade 1 routinely begin to apply conventional rules to both their written and oral language over time.

Vocabulary development—developed through oral language interactions, listening, viewing, and reading and writing—is yet another area of common ground between Reading Recovery and the CCSS. There are daily conversations about words and their meanings across all lesson components. And as students gain more experiences with books over time, we see and hear shifts in their use of language across reading, writing, and speaking. As mentioned earlier, even the gradient of texts used in Reading Recovery analyzes how language structures are utilized and the types of vocabulary used, with an increasing use of more literary language and specialized vocabulary as texts become more difficult. Books with phrases such as, “frogs need freshwater” or “bellowed Hungry Giant” or “replied the wolf” offer countless opportunities to learn about words and their meanings. And, the gradi-

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Table 6. Speaking and Listening Standards for Grade 1 Students

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<th>Common Core State Standards, 2010, p. 15–16</th>
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### Comprehension and Collaboration

1. Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about grade 1 topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups.
   a. Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).
   b. Build on others’ talk in conversations by responding to the comments of others through multiple exchanges.
   c. Ask questions to clear up any confusion about the topics and texts under discussion.
2. Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.
3. Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to gather additional information or clarify something that is not understood.

### Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

4. Describe people, places, things, and events with relevant details, expressing ideas and feelings clearly.
5. Add drawings or other visual displays to descriptions when appropriate to clarify ideas, thoughts, and feelings.
6. Produce complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation. (See grade 1 Language standards 1 and 3 on page 26 for specific expectations.)
ent of text, itself a type of scaffold for learning to read, also scaffolds for vocabulary development. “This flexible way of working would allow for an ever-increasing control over more difficult texts: a) increased amounts of problem solving could be expected to increase problem-solving power, and b) the reading work done could sharpen knowledge of, and access to, new vocabulary” (Clay, 2001, p. 50).

**Table 7. Language Standards for Grade 1 Students**

| Conventions of Standard English |

- **1.** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
  - a. Print all upper- and lowercase letters.
  - b. Use common, proper, and possessive nouns.
  - c. Use singular and plural nouns with matching verbs in basic sentences (e.g., He hops; We hop).
  - d. Use personal, possessive, and indefinite pronouns (e.g., I, me, my; they, them, their, anyone, everything).
  - e. Use verbs to convey a sense of past, present, and future (e.g., Yesterday I walked home; Today I walk home; Tomorrow I will walk home).
  - f. Use frequently occurring adjectives.
  - g. Use frequently occurring conjunctions (e.g., and, but, or, so, because).
  - h. Use determiners (e.g., articles, demonstratives).
  - i. Use frequently occurring prepositions (e.g., during, beyond, toward).
  - j. Produce and expand complete simple and compound declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences in response to prompts.
- **2.** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
  - a. Capitalize dates and names of people.
  - b. Use end punctuation for sentences.
  - c. Use commas in dates and to separate single words in a series.
  - d. Use conventional spelling for words with common spelling patterns and for frequently occurring irregular words.
  - e. Spell untaught words phonetically, drawing on phonemic awareness and spelling conventions.

| Knowledge of Language |
| 3. (begins in grade 2) |
| Vocabulary Acquisition and Use |

- **4.** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 1 reading and content, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.
  - a. Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
  - b. Use frequently occurring affixes as a clue to the meaning of a word.
  - c. Identify frequently occurring root words (e.g., look) and their inflectional forms (e.g., looks, looked, looking).
- **5.** With guidance and support from adults, demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.
  - a. Sort words into categories (e.g., colors, clothing) to gain a sense of the concepts the categories represent.
  - b. Define words by category and by one or more key attributes (e.g., a duck is a bird that swims; a tiger is a large cat with stripes).
  - c. Identify real-life connections between words and their use (e.g., note places at home that are cozy).
  - d. Distinguish shades of meaning among verbs differing in manner (e.g., look, peek, glance, stare, glare, scowl) and adjectives differing in intensity (e.g., large, gigantic) by defining or choosing them or by acting out the meanings.
- **6.** Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts, including using frequently occurring conjunctions to signal simple relationships (e.g., I named my hamster Niblet because she nibbles too much because she likes that).

**Will the increased focus on reading and writing in primary classrooms result in less of a need for interventions such as Reading Recovery?**

This is unlikely to be the case for several reasons. In her 1998 book, *By Different Paths to Common Outcomes*, Clay stated that classroom instruction represents three components—“The teacher and curriculum interacting with the constructive learner” (p. 202)—and that experience shows that 80% of children become constructive learners despite the classroom programs we adopt, leaving about 20% in need of intervention. This number, now corroborated by many other sources (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005; Mellard & Johnson, 2008; Shapiro, 2013; Wright, 2011) suggests that regardless of good first instruction with these (or any other) standards, some children will find learning to read and write difficult. For this reason, a successful short-term early literacy intervention will likely be needed to help low-achieving students in Grade 1 meet the challenges represented in such standards.

History too shows that this is unlikely. In developing the CCSS, the standards of Australia, Great Britain, Canada, and New Zealand, were focused on and utilized because these countries all have national standards and because their students outperform American students on international tests (National Governor’s Association, Council of Chief State School Officers, & Achieve, Inc., 2008). Despite having a long history with more-rigorous standards like the CCSS, these countries have also had an equally long history with the need for Reading Recovery. From the experiences of New Zealand, Marie Clay wrote the following:
It is important to think clearly about today’s school improvement programs which aim to raise the general level of achievement. Lifting the average scores in schools will increase rather than decrease the need for early intervention. School improvement programs designed for success will unquestionably create larger gaps between those who can easily meet the challenges and those who have several counts against them when it comes to school learning. Higher general levels of achievement will create larger gaps between the average and the lowest achievers in literacy acquisition unless special measures are put in place. (Clay, 2001, p. 216)

There seems to be an emphasis on ‘text complexity.’ What do literacy teachers need to know about this concept?

While it is true that both the CCSS documents (including Appendix A) and national and state educational leaders are referencing the need for increased text complexity, this is not a call to whole-group reading instruction or to placing “grade-level” text into the hands of children with expectations that they will all be able to read such texts independently. Unfortunately, many policymakers may be misguided in their interpretations of the CCSS documents, largely because clarifications about text complexity are often buried in appendices or in footnotes and are easily overlooked.

The call for shifts in text complexity is actually meant to be graduated over time, with many of the same scaffolds and expectations of matching children to appropriate texts for instruction. For Grades K and 1, Appendix A (p. 10) clarifies that because students are acquiring reading skills at various rates, the text complexity requirements do not begin until Grade 2. Furthermore, the CCSS document itself clarifies that children at the kindergarten and grade 1 levels should be expected to read texts independently that have been specifically written to correlate to their reading level and their word knowledge. Many of the titles listed above are meant to supplement carefully structured independent reading with books to read along with a teacher or that are read aloud to students to build knowledge and cultivate a joy in reading. (CCSS, p. 32)

A close reading of Table 8, which illustrates the change in expectations across kindergarten through Grade 5, shows that scaffolding is expected for some grade levels as this complexity is increased over time. Appendix A confirms this, noting that “the expectation that scaffolding will occur with particularly challenging texts is built into the Standards’ grade-by-grade text complexity expectations” (p. 3) but cautions that the general movement should be toward decreasing scaffolding and increasing independence over time.

The important points (that can be easily missed) are that scaffolding, found in both good classroom instruction and Reading Recovery, is both warranted and necessary to develop competence in reading. Additionally, matching students to instructional level texts because children progress at different rates is an expectation in the primary grades. Texts selected for students should increase in complexity over time and the goal of instruction is to decrease scaffolding while increasing student independence. These concepts are fundamental to Reading Recovery and many quality classroom practices as well and will continue to be important in implementing the Common Core State Standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>With prompting and support, read prose and poetry [informational texts] of appropriate complexity for grade 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature [informational texts] in the grades 2-3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the higher end of the range.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature [informational text] at the high end of the grades 2-3 text complexity band independently and proficiently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature [informational texts] in the grades 4-5 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the higher end of the range.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature [informational text] at the high end of the grades 4-5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We must continue to be informed about the common ground between the CCSS and Reading Recovery. … But mostly, we must continue to provide powerful, daily literacy instruction that helps children close gaps quickly so that they can return to classrooms and benefit from regular instruction with the CCSS.

What is the bottom line for Reading Recovery professionals who work in Common Core schools and states?

Reading Recovery professionals need to remain in close contact with classroom teachers and school literacy teams to stay updated as to implementation timelines and efforts in Common Core schools. Additionally, we must continue to be informed about the common ground between the CCSS and Reading Recovery. But mostly, we must continue to provide powerful, daily literacy instruction that helps children close gaps quickly so that they can return to classrooms and benefit from regular instruction with the CCSS. Marie Clay reminded us in 1998 of the flexibility built into the Reading Recovery framework that will be useful as schools move toward implementing the Common Core:

In the Reading Recovery program, there is a standard skeleton for the lesson, but the teacher designs each child’s lessons and series of lessons to work with what that child already knows, is learning, and needs to be challenged by. The lessons are not sequenced or prescriptive. Teachers are trained on how to construct a series of lessons for a particular child with the aim of getting that child to make the necessary changes to do what good readers do. There is enough flexibility in the program to allow it to:

• adapt to individual differences
• return a child to any classroom program
• adjust teaching to the different needs of ESL children and other special cases. (Clay, 1998, p. 213)

Reading Recovery has demonstrated success in the United States with over 2 million children since 1985, and over 100 research studies document its effectiveness as an early literacy intervention (Reading Recovery Council of North America, 2012). As Reading Recovery professionals, we realize the power of utilizing the lesson framework flexibly to design instruction that meets the needs of individual children so that over time they will successfully meet Goal #10 of the CCSS: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational text independently and proficiently.

References


**Children’s Books Cited**


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**About the Author**

Jeff Williams is a Reading Recovery teacher leader and K–6 literacy coach for Solon City Schools in Solon, OH. He was elected to serve on the National Council of Teachers of English Executive Committee from 2008–2011 and chaired a national review team that provided feedback on drafts of the Common Core State Standards. Jeff has co-authored several articles and is a regular speaker at national and state conferences, including the annual Reading Recovery & K–6 Classroom Literacy Conference.