

2006

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Recommended Citation

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Fostering Teacher Learning Through Dialogue in Training Sessions

Salli Forbes and Connie Briggs, Emporia State University

In Reading Recovery, teachers learn through their experiences observing and teaching students and through dialogue with other teachers in their training class in a community of practice (Schwartz, 1998). Teachers, teacher leaders, and trainers have all engaged in this training model and often praise the importance of the training (Jones, 1991; Lyons, Pinnell, & DeFord, 1993). External observers have also acknowledged the excellent professional development that Reading Recovery provides. For example, Herman and Stringfield (1997) share this:

The intensity and the methods utilized by Reading Recovery in training and the insistence on high level Reading Recovery performance provided an almost singularly attractive model for future staff development efforts, regardless of the program type. As schools systematize and create more opportunities for serious staff development, the thoroughness of the Reading Recovery model seems to be well worth emulating. (p. 86)

The training experiences for Reading Recovery teachers were carefully developed alongside the development of the Reading Recovery intervention for children. From the beginning, the goal of training has been successful teaching of the lowest achievers in reading and writing. In order for this to occur, teachers need to develop the ability to observe carefully the

behaviors students exhibit in reading and writing and to interpret the observations astutely, making tentative hypotheses about the strategic activity that the behaviors might indicate. The teachers also need to acquire extensive knowledge of early literacy acquisition and anticipated changes in the behaviors and competencies of beginning readers making good progress.

Teachers learn theory by reading and using *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals Part One* and *Part Two* (Clay, 2005a, 2005b) and by learning to observe children and dialogue about their observations. As teachers learn more about Clay's theory, they develop and revise their own theories about literacy acquisition and about the learning of each individual child they teach.

In this article we focus on a major component of this successful training model—the role of dialogue in the training session. We explore how learning is verbally constructed by Reading Recovery teachers and how rules of dialogue (Burbules, 1993) provide a method for explaining positive verbal construction in Reading Recovery training sessions. We examine some of the challenges to effective verbal construction in the training session and describe how teacher leaders facilitate learning through dialogue, and we also emphasize the contribution that teachers make to the co-constructive learning in which they participate.

Verbal Construction

Teacher leaders know that learning is most effective when it is constructive for learners, both children and adults. Teachers construct their own understandings independently. But, just as importantly, teachers construct understandings through their interactions with all the members of the training group. Opportunities for group conversations create co-constructive learning situations that are a good fit for learning about teaching the lowest-achieving readers and writers.

Moore (1998) described how Reading Recovery teachers-in-training use language to learn in a group dynamic and suggested that language serves two functions, a cultural function (communicating) and a psychological function (thinking). She concluded that “Reading Recovery training offers teachers the chance to involve other people in their thoughts and to use conversation to develop their own thoughts” (p. 2).

Language is paramount in mediating learner change. Through conversations focused on shared practice and collaborative problem solving, teachers in training internalize theory and become aware of how teaching behaviors may change, displayed as refined practice over time. It is through conversation that teachers have opportunities to question, hypothesize, clarify, rethink, affirm, and acquire more complex understanding of how children learn to read and write. The type of conversa-

tion we have just described is called *dialogue* and is distinguishable from other forms of verbal communication. The dialogue in the training class and ongoing professional development directs each teacher's attention to many more and different observations and ideas than the individual would encounter alone. Multiple opportunities to observe are an important key to training.

Since children are very unique in their approaches to reading and writing and in their individual corpus of knowledge, it is essential that teachers have opportunities to observe many students' lessons. Each student provides the teachers with new understandings. A study by Spiro, Coulson, Feltovich, and Anderson (2004) provides an analogy to the model for Reading Recovery teacher training. Spiro and his colleagues found that in order to make accurate diagnoses of rare conditions, doctors need as many opportunities as possible to view patients with rare conditions. Predetermined categories, or organization of the information about these rare conditions, presented in textbooks or journal articles, often led doctors to ignore unusual symptoms and fail to diagnose actual cases. Spiro et al. described knowledge of rare conditions as "ill-structured domains." When doctors formed their own mental organization of the information they gained from observing patients with the rare conditions, they were more accurate in diagnosing the conditions. Similarly to the doctors in the Spiro et al. article, Reading Recovery teachers face a complex task when making decisions about the strengths, needs, and appropriate instruction for the lowest-achieving readers and writers they teach. Reading Recovery

students are quite different from the students making good or adequate progress, and they are very different from one another.

Spiro, Feltovich, and Coulson (1991) identified across-case irregularity as one cause of difficulty. McEneaney, Lose, and Schwartz (2006) explain why across-case irregularity is a challenge for Reading Recovery training.

There is great variation in the children we label at risk on the basis of low achievement in classroom settings... Children differ in item knowledge, literacy processing, aspects of oral language including phonemic awareness, and other literacy-related knowledge. The situation is further complicated by changes that result as children learn." (p. 124)

Reading Recovery students take many different paths to literacy learning with very different ways of responding to text. Teachers need to have the

opportunity to observe and teach as many students as possible, building mental case histories to support future teaching.

Since assembling working systems and strategic processing are "in the head" and not visible, teachers rely on observations to form hypotheses about what the behaviors indicate. These hypotheses remain tentative, since there is no certainty that they are correct. Based on their tentative interpretations of the learner, teachers watch to see how the child responds to instruction, and they continue to adjust their theory as the child's responses indicate. In training classes, the dialogue of the group, led by the teacher leader, provides each teacher in the class an opportunity to hear other theories and rationales for those theories, to present her own theory, and to have her theory challenged. The interchange with other teachers and the teacher leader supports each teacher in developing alternative theories and in remaining tentative and flexible.



Based on their tentative interpretations of the learner, Reading Recovery teachers watch to see how the child responds to instruction in a demonstration lesson. Teachers continue to adjust their theory as the child's responses indicate.

The related teacher learning associated with this process is constructed on the spot while each teacher attends to several things at once—what is happening in the lesson; the statements or questions of the teacher leader; and the responses, questions, or comments of the other teachers in the class. In addition, the teacher is expected to contribute her own thoughts and relate the topics to her own experiences of teaching. Lyons explains, “This is a social process where a group of teachers construct knowledge together and form a chain of reasoning. Each teacher’s hypothesis about a student’s processing represents one link in the chain” (1994, p. 276). The group conversation, a verbal construction, is integral to Reading Recovery training in that it allows and supports teacher learning. It is, therefore, informative to explore verbal construction and challenges to the process of verbal construction in some detail.

Challenges to Verbal Construction in Training Sessions

“Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors.” —African Proverb

Learning with divided attention—observing and interpreting the reading and writing behaviors of the student and instructional moves of the teacher, while participating in a fast-paced dialogue—can seem quite challenging for teachers, especially at the beginning of the training year. Exploring some of the possible causes of challenge or discomfort may help teacher leaders and teachers better understand the process.

Illuminating Tacit Understandings

Teachers come to Reading Recovery training with many unique experi-

ences as learners and with different personal theories about how children learn to read and write. Sometimes they are aware of their beliefs and biases and sometimes they have not taken time to reflect on how their personal belief systems affect how they learn and how they teach. What they know and how they act remains tacit, implied, or indicated, but not actually expressed. Senge, Roberts, Kleiner, Roth, and Smith (1999) recognize three types of tacit under-

standings that must be illuminated if a group is to move forward to achieve a shared mental model. These are underlying assumptions, espoused values, and artifacts. Senge et al. (1999) identify the category of *underlying assumptions* as “unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings (the ultimate source of values and actions)” (p. 337) that people bring to the table. An example of an underlying assumption a teacher might have is that children must learn to sound out words before reading fluently. Another example is that a teacher might believe it is disrespectful to challenge others in the class. A second type of tacit understanding is *espoused values*. These encompass such things as philosophies, goals, and strategies. An espoused value a teacher might have

is her philosophy of stages of reading development or the idea that every adult learner is responsible for his own learning. A third type of tacit understanding is *artifacts*. Examples include the visible, organizational structures and processes that a teacher might have used, e.g., lesson plan formats, word walls, ABC charts, basal readers, etc. Every cultural group, including literacy teachers, has sets of underlying assumptions, espoused values, and artifacts that are

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uniquely special to and understood by that group. New learning may challenge adults’ tacit understandings.

As teachers enter Reading Recovery training, they begin with established understandings that are illuminated and peeled back—like an onion—over time. Through their range of training experiences, including observations of lessons and the accompanying dialogue, they construct new understandings. The result of this process is the development of the tacit knowledge that surrounds the community of Reading Recovery practice. Teacher leaders are integral to this process.

Understanding the nature of the learning process, teacher leaders engage teachers in articulating their current understandings. As they question teachers and ask for refinement of thinking, they are able to

illuminate the tacit understandings that teachers hold, thus enabling them to realize their own beliefs. One teacher talked about the disconnect between theory and practice she and her colleagues experienced that became evident through their group reflection and dialogue.

. . . By sharing our experiences and frustrations with our own inadequacies, we grew to understand that we had not behaved in a way that was consistent with our view of reading as strategic behavior. We had all abandoned, at one time or another, the theoretical framework of the learning process provided in Vygotsky's (1978) work and the reading process inherent in Clay's (1991) work. We could recite the principles and theories of learning and reading that support the Reading Recovery program without difficulty, but we couldn't act on them. (Lyons, Pinnell, & Deford, 1993, p. 166)

As teachers continue with their training, change occurs over time. They examine their beliefs more closely and embrace change. They begin to take responsibility for contributing to the learning of the group and understand that challenge is part of the learning process. Over the course of their training year, they internalize the observation and teaching of many lessons, and through constructive and recursive dialogue, they acquire new assumptions and espoused values. In effect, their new learning results from their participation in a community of practice.

Palinscar, Magnusson, Marano, Ford, and Brown (as referenced in

Schwartz, 1998) define a community of practice as a setting in which "learning and development occur as individuals participate in the socio-cultural activities of a community, transforming their understanding, roles, and responsibilities as they collaborate with knowledgeable others in carrying out activities that are explicitly connected with the practices of the community" (p. 1). The newly trained Reading Recovery teachers become a cultural group with similar language, understandings, and dispositions about teaching high-risk children. This transformation does not occur without tension. It is these tensions that are discussed further below.

Tensions in community of practice

In his 1998 article, "Supporting Teacher Learning: Reading Recovery as a Community of Practice," Schwartz explores many tensions that are experienced within a community of practice model. By illuminating the challenges of the training model, teacher leaders and teachers are able to realize the complexity of a transformative approach to professional development. All tensions are important to acknowledge; however, we have chosen to focus on two to highlight the importance that dialogue plays within a community of practice. These include training versus inquiry and conversation versus interrogation.

Training versus inquiry. Webster's Dictionary (1994) defines train[ing] as "a: to form by instruction, discipline, or drill; b: to teach so as to make fit, qualified, or proficient" (p. 1252). The term training connotes something that is done to the participant, e.g., a transmission model that bestows knowledge on those who participate. This definition

is far from the inquiry model on which Reading Recovery is based.

In Reading Recovery, inquiry is the co-construction of knowledge that depends upon the interaction and synergy of a group. Early in a training year, the inquiry model is very fragile. Teacher leaders help teachers understand their individual responsibility to the whole class. Trust is nurtured in order for dialogue to open up so that teachers can honestly explore the issues that surround teaching and learning. Teachers have to learn that there is no "right way" that applies to all situations, because every child is different and every teaching interaction is based on a preceding one. Group members learn that there are multiple interpretations of each observation. Teacher leaders may tell the group these things; but, until they have opportunities to experience them they may remain reluctant to embrace participation. The teacher leader, as the more knowledgeable professional, is responsible for creating a climate in which the community can practice. She supports teachers' initial inquiry by focusing attention, making links to theory, clarifying procedures, and modeling appropriate language with which to talk about processing. Teachers quickly take on the task because they are working within a supportive, authentic environment that is focused on assisting a teacher to extend her skill and expertise for teaching a struggling reader.

Conversation versus interrogation. In Reading Recovery, inquiry is based upon conversation that is focused and generative. Again, it is the skill of the teacher leader that leads the group to understand there is no correct answer or preconceived outcome of the discussion. The talk follows the lead of the teacher/child interaction and

is dependent upon the quick observation, insight, and lively exchange among participants to yield possibilities and suggestions to improve the teaching tomorrow. Talk that lags into a question-and-answer session is destructive to the inquiry process and could ultimately affect the learning of the entire class in a negative way. It is therefore helpful to consider how to maintain productive dialogues and support conversations that support adult participation. The process can be enhanced by understanding rules of dialogue.

Addressing Challenges Through Rules of Dialogue

In *Dialogue in Teaching: Theory and Practice* (1993), Burbules defines dialogue as communication aimed at the pursuit of intersubjectivity that may or may not result in agreement. He identifies three rules of dialogue that are unstated, flexible, and at times overlap. Burbules' rules of dialogue provide an explanation of the type of dialogical interaction that

takes place during Reading Recovery training sessions.

The first is the *rule of participation*. "If dialogue is to be *pedagogical*, it requires the active participation of all participants... What this means in practice is that any participant should be able to raise topics, pose questions, challenge other points of view, or engage in any other activities that define the dialogical interaction" (Burbules, 1993, p. 80). An understanding that is nurtured during in-service sessions is the idea that everyone is responsible for the learning of others in the group. It is important for participants to make their thinking and questions public, no matter how incomplete or vague, in order to provide a basis for scaffolding the thinking of others—thus contributing to a mutually constructed conversation resulting in a higher level of understanding by the entire group.

Even though we use the term *training* to refer to the course designed for

Reading Recovery teachers, the co-construction of learning is highly valued when teachers observe and talk about the lessons taught by their peers during class. Reading Recovery training is designed with the idea that all members of the class will participate. Before and after observing lessons, teachers sit in a circle indicating that all are equal participants and are expected to contribute to group questioning, problem solving, and reflection. Teacher leaders are trained to avoid inquiry-response-evaluation questioning patterns (Cazden, 2001) where they ask a question directed at one person, expect a response, and then evaluate the response as either right or wrong. Instead, questions are asked of the group and teachers respond to the group, scaffolding their ideas, questions, and comments off of one another and exploring the various possibilities and ideas that might explain what they are seeing. This takes place before, during, and after the lessons. This is not unlike a group of friends who have shared a



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common experience and are having a conversation at the dinner table, all excited to contribute.

The second rule is the *rule of commitment*. “Because . . . dialogue’s pedagogical purposes can only be achieved over time, a willingness to stay with the process, even when its outcomes are unclear, is essential for success” (Burbules, 1993, p. 81). This principle requires a commitment to, and trust in, the members of the class to realize that the person teaching for the group is offering a gift that will enable those observing to gain greater understanding about how to teach for reading and writing processing over time. Clarity on an issue is not always achieved within one session. Reading Recovery training is designed to be recursive in order to explore issues at different points in time across a year. In this way, teachers are able to scaffold each other’s learning as they gain more experience with their own teaching and observing of the teaching of others.

The third *rule of reciprocity* defines dialogue as relationship. “The capacities, or virtues, that foster an effective dialogical relation[ship] frequently need to be developed and improved among the participants as they learn together, not only about the topic at hand, but also about the communicative/pedagogical process itself” (Burbules, 1993, p. 82). This rule is about building mutual respect and concern for the members of the group. Early in the year, teachers are mindful of the risks they take as they teach for others. Group trust has yet to be established and it is hard to hide conflicting theory and practice. Group members tentatively question each other and are reluctant to have others in the group challenge them.

Over time they learn that constructive, reciprocal dialogue exponentially lifts the group’s thinking. They learn to appreciate the contributions that each person makes to the group’s understandings, relying on honest feedback, insight, questions, and reflection.

In order for this group dynamic to build, the rules of dialogue have to be made transparent. Teachers are called on to be reflective of their individual contributions to the learning of the group at each session. Some teachers have to make more of an effort to participate effectively, learning to check on themselves to ensure they are not monopolizing the conversation. Teachers realize that through open, constructive dialogue they are able to clarify their own thinking and build on the thinking of others.

At the end of each session, especially early in the year, the teacher leader might comment, “Think about how you contributed to the learning of the group today,” or “Did everyone contribute to the conversation today?” Comments such as these help teachers reflect on their roles in the group dynamic and build the expectation that everyone will participate to the benefit of the group.

Ways to Foster Dialogue

Dialogue techniques

There are several dialogue techniques the teacher leader uses to foster socially constructed learning in the training session. It is important that teachers understand the techniques the teacher leader is using to guide their thinking, so that the teachers are able to engage in a high level of verbal construction. Those techniques include

- clarifying (use teacher’s and child’s behavior to interpret procedures);
- challenging (call for teachers to give evidence);
- directing/redirecting attention;
- eliciting;
- extending (taking teachers from their current understandings to new understandings);
- shaping language,
- linking (to *Literacy Lessons* or across lessons);
- instructing (increasing teachers’ knowledge);
- reinforcing/affirming (authentic, not empty praise); and
- summarizing (quick check with the group to sum up what has been said).

(B. Watson, personal communication, 1999; citing Wood, 1998)

While this is not an exhaustive list, it includes many of the techniques the teacher leader uses to mold and shape the dialogue, extending the teachers’ current understandings. Often a single statement or question functions as more than one of these techniques.

In order to better understand the dynamic of the interchange between the teacher leader and teachers and to provide examples of these dialogic techniques, the following transcript of a dialogue has been analyzed to identify the techniques used in each of the teacher leader’s statements/questions. The transcript is from a session in the third month of the training year.

Transcript of Dialogue While Observing a Lesson During a Training Class

(During Familiar Reading)

TL = teacher leader; T = teacher

Speaker	Dialogue	Dialogical Method
1. TL	Listen carefully to the reading. Think about how it sounds.	directing/redirecting attention
2. T	It's not very fluent.	
3. T	Well, she has to slow down to problem solve.	
4. TL	She does slow down for the problem solving, but does the reading sound phrased the rest of the time?	directing/redirecting attention; clarifying; challenging
5. T	It is really choppy.	
6. T	She can't read enough words together...	
7. T	It's not too hard, because she's not making that many mistakes.	
8. T	She is putting a couple of words together sometimes.	
9. TL	You don't seem to think that this is phrased reading, although Alice is trying to put a few words together. Is it time for Beth to start teaching for phrased and fluent reading?	summarizing; eliciting; shaping language
10. T	Well, she is still pointing.	
11. T	Beth should get her to stop pointing.	
12. T	But what if she still needs to point?	
13. TL	Let's think about why Beth wanted her to point in the first place. What does pointing help her do?	eliciting; linking
14. T	Make a one-to-one match.	
15. TL	Anything else?	eliciting;
	(Pause — no response)	
	We read the section "Do away with the helping hand" last week when we were talking about DaTron. Do you remember what section that was in? What were we to teach for in that section?	linking; eliciting
16. T	(several teachers respond at the same time) Directionality!	
17. TL	Yes, it was "Learning about direction." Pointing helps Alice with both directional movement and locating words one-to-one. It is only supposed to be a temporary prop, though, and should be dropped or discouraged when she doesn't need it anymore. Does Alice have control over one-to-one matching and directional movement?	reinforcing/affirming; instructing; eliciting
18. T	Yeah.	
19. T	But sometimes she gets off, like on "mother."	
20. TL	Even when the child controls one-to-one matching, there could still be some lapses. Does she have the idea that each cluster of letters is a word and needs to match what she is saying?	instructing; clarifying
21. T	(several teachers at once) Yeah!	
22. TL	Is she able to match most of the time?	
23. T	(several teachers at once) Yeah!	

- | | | |
|--------|---|--|
| 24. TL | And do you see evidence that she has control of directional movement over two or more lines of text? | clarifying |
| 25. T | (several teachers at once) Yeah! | |
| 26. TL | Listen for the phrasing on this book.
(Pause to listen) | directing/redirecting attention |
| 27. TL | Is there a difference from the last book she read? | eliciting; extending; linking |
| 28. T | Yeah. She is reading with expression. | |
| 29. TL | What is different about this book that would help her read it with better phrasing? | eliciting; extending |
| 30. T | <i>Jolly Roger, the Pirate</i> has more of a story. | |
| 31. T | You can tell that she thinks it's funny. | |
| 32. T | This book is more like how she talks. | |
| 33. TL | The language structure is more familiar, isn't it? All of those things can help her anticipate the language that is coming up. How might Beth help Alice to read books like <i>Up in a Tree</i> as she did <i>Jolly Roger, the Pirate</i> ? | reinforcing/affirming;
shaping language; instructing;
extending; linking |
| 34. T | In <i>Literacy Lessons</i> it says you can read it to her and then read it with her. | |
| 35. T | If she just read that refrain to her once, she would have it. | |
| 36. TL | Those are two ideas for teaching for phrasing. Does anyone else have another idea? | reinforcing/affirming;
eliciting |
| 37. T | She might need to read the whole story to her, like we read about in <i>Literacy Lessons</i> . | |
| 38. TL | Yes, reading the whole story helps her to know how it flows throughout the book.
Is there anything Beth can do before Alice reads the story to help her be phrased or anticipate phrases? | reinforcing/affirming;

eliciting; extending |
| 39. T | You mean the introduction? | |
| 40. TL | Is that possible? | challenging |
| 41. T | Well, she could have Alice repeat that refrain in the introduction. | |
| 42. T | But isn't that giving away the farm? | |
| 43. TL | What do you mean? | challenging |
| 44. T | Well, there isn't very much work to do if you tell her most of the words. | |
| 45. TL | Let's think about that. What work might there be for her if she has heard and even repeated some of the language? | challenging;
extending |
| 46. T | She still has to see where it says that. | |
| 47. T | She wouldn't necessarily know what the words look like. | |
| 48. TL | In fact, she might be better able to integrate the language structure that she can anticipate, because she has heard it, with the visual information in the print. | reinforcing/affirming;
extending; instructing |
| 49. T | And integrating is strategic activity, right? | |
| 50. TL | Yes, integrating information is strategic activity. | reinforcing/affirming;
shaping language |

This session occurs fairly early in the training year, when the teacher leader is establishing the dialogic interaction of the group. Later in the year the teachers would do more responding to each other and even foster dialogue using some of the techniques the teacher leader is now using. The teacher leader is doing a lot of eliciting throughout the interaction, which may not be needed so much later in the training year.

The teacher leader in this interaction is helping the teachers to listen critically for the phrasing in students' reading, to consider when it is appropriate for the child to stop pointing to each word, and to consider many possible methods for teaching for phrasing. She directs the teachers' attention to the sound of the reading in turn 1, and again in line 4. In addition, she clarifies her original directing comment in turn 4 by explaining that the teachers should listen for phrasing on the reading that does not involve problem solving. She links the reading of the second book to that of the first book in turn 29 and to the student and reading that was done in the prior class in turn 15. She helps to shape the teachers' language by rephrasing, while also affirming their current and emerging understandings.

There are changes in the manner in which the teachers learn through the dialogue across the training year. The teacher leader provides clear expectations for the teachers' role in the dialogue and learning process. At the beginning of the training year the teacher leader explains the process and the rules of dialogue. Initially, teachers respond to the questions and comments of the teacher leader. Gradually, they begin to respond to

each other, with the teacher leader as the guide.

As the year progresses, the teachers become more responsible for using the dialogue techniques the teacher leader has demonstrated. It is essential that teachers actively engage in the dialogue within each session. Rodgers (2000) explains, "Each person has a responsibility to articulate ideas, to follow a line of inquiry started by someone else and to stay with it" (p. 6). The teacher leader remains the key person to guide and shape the dialogue, but teachers now begin to challenge one another, link their comments to earlier statements or observations, link statements to readings in *Literacy Lessons*, direct attention of others, and monitor and shape the language. Teacher leaders encourage teachers to take greater responsibility for the dialogic techniques and may directly ask teachers to do this when it does not occur.

Opportunities for dialogue in the training session

Dialogue in different parts of the session takes different forms. Before the lessons are observed, each of the teachers who will teach a lesson verbally shares information about the child and what she is currently working on in her own teaching. It is important for each teacher to share the information verbally with her colleagues and for the colleagues to ask pertinent questions that will give them the information they need to astutely observe the lesson. This sharing does not require passing written information to the teachers. The information is clarified and extended by the questions and comments of the other teachers in the group. The teachers will be learning to listen carefully and critically to the informa-

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tion shared so they can use that information as a springboard for the observation and dialogue during the lessons.

The dialogue during the lessons is fast paced and closely linked to what is being observed. Since the lesson moves quickly, the dialogue must move quickly. The teacher leader will sometimes redirect the teachers to what is currently happening in the lesson if the dialogue lingers on an earlier issue for too long. Sometimes when the teacher leader does this she may ask one of the teachers to note the topic of the dialogue so it can be revisited after the lessons.

After the lessons, teachers have the opportunity to explore issues in greater depth and will use *Literacy Lessons* to inform, clarify, and expand the dialogue about topics that arose

either during the lessons or during the follow-up dialogue. Following a brief, specific dialogue about the lessons led by the teachers who taught those lessons along with the teacher leader, there is a longer time devoted to a dialogue about instructional issues and procedures that relate to all the teachers' learning.

Conclusion

There are certain tenets that contribute to the learning in the Reading Recovery community of practice. Among those discussed in this article are (a) theory is learned alongside practice; (b) learning is a social process, co-constructed by group engagement and many opportunities for dialogue; (c) teacher learning is supported by a knowledgeable teacher leader who nurtures a learning environment and provides appropriate scaffolding; and (d) over time teachers assume more responsibility for engaging in dialogue that contributes to the group learning. The rules of dialogue, as presented by Burbules, help teachers and teacher leaders better understand how to engage in productive dialogue.

Because the training model is so different from what most teachers have previously experienced, there are challenges and tensions that need to be acknowledged, navigated, and negotiated over time. The teacher leader, as the more experienced and knowledgeable professional, is pivotal in providing the environment and support to ensure success for the group. This is done in a number of ways by

- using techniques that encourage dialogue,

- supporting dialogue through modeling language and calling for active engagement at increasingly higher levels of understanding,
- challenging teachers to think and extend the thinking of others in the group, and
- ensuring that activities during training sessions focus on the articulation of practice and theory that surrounds the teaching and assessing of students.

Teachers also contribute to the successful co-construction of group members' learning. By understanding the methods used in Reading Recovery training, teachers can contribute to the dialogue and the learning of others. They will be better able to recognize the techniques used by the teacher leader as contributing to their own learning.

Reading Recovery professional development is highly successful because it operates as a community of practice that values constructive and highly interactive dialogue. As Lyons found, "By collectively constructing chains of reasoning while observing, analyzing, and discussing student-teacher interactions in progress behind a one-way glass, teachers refine what they already know and in the process develop a more coherent theory of learning and teaching" (1994, p. 286). The understandings, knowledge, and skills of the teachers develop across the training year through this social construction.

Dialogue is only one contributor to the training of Reading Recovery teachers. Successful training in Reading Recovery requires a combi-

nation of experiences that have proven to produce outstanding results year after year. In addition to the social construction around observed lessons and shared readings, each teacher learns through the daily instruction of four students (teaching eight or more students within the training year).

This is not only an effective method for learning how to teach the lowest-achieving students, but it is also the most effective way to maintain teaching skills and knowledge. Teachers continue to refine and extend their knowledge and expertise through ongoing dialogue, observation of lessons, and daily instruction of four Reading Recovery students beyond the training year, for as long as they are Reading Recovery teachers.

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