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Joe Stouffer et Janice Van Dyke

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Résumé de l'article

The Ontario Human Rights Commission's (OHCR) Right to Read Report calls for school districts to implement early literacy interventions that have been scientifically proven to be effective for young children with reading difficulties. The acknowledgment of early intervention as an essential service for young children experiencing reading difficulties is a strong and welcome message in the report. However, the report recommends a narrow course for reading interventions in Ontario, drawing on discourse from the Science of Reading community, which questionably frames current interventions, such as Reading Recovery, as unscientific, ineffective commercial programs. In this response, the authors contest the one-sidedness of these recommendations based on a paradox in the report between what constitutes an effective early literacy intervention supported by science and the standards for effectiveness the OHRC requires of interventions it endorses versus those it discredits. Rather than dismissing one approach or the other outright, a call is made for school leadership to consider broader reading science and the strengths of various approaches instead of narrowing the menu of effective literacy interventions that may support diverse learners.

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Stones from a Glass House: The Paradoxical Condemnation of Reading Recovery in the Ontario Human Rights Commission's *Right to Read* Report

Joe Stouffer
Brandon University

Janice Van Dyke
Affiliate of Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery

Abstract

The Ontario Human Rights Commission's (OHCR) *Right to Read Report* calls for school districts to implement early literacy interventions that have been scientifically proven to be effective for young children with reading difficulties. The acknowledgment of early intervention as an essential service for young children experiencing reading difficulties is a strong and welcome message in the report. However, the report recommends a narrow course for reading interventions in Ontario, drawing on discourse from the Science of Reading community, which questionably frames current interventions, such as Reading Recovery, as unscientific, ineffective commercial programs. In this response, the authors contest the one-sidedness of these recommendations based on a paradox in the report between what constitutes an effective early literacy intervention supported by science and the standards for effectiveness the OHRC requires of interventions it endorses versus those it discredits. Rather than dismissing one approach or the other outright, a call is made for school leadership to consider broader reading science and the strengths of various approaches instead of narrowing the menu of effective literacy interventions that may support diverse learners.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission *Right to Read* Report

In 2022, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) released the much-anticipated *Right to Read* report, which advocates for the rights of all Ontario students, particularly those who experience difficulty learning to read. Aligning with other international-scale reports (e.g.,

International Literacy Association [ILA], 2019a), the OHRC posits that children's right to access literacy education includes the following:

- Access to knowledgeable and qualified literacy educators.
- Integrated support systems.
- Supportive learning environments and high-quality resources.
- Policies that ensure equitable literacy instruction.

The report highlights a need for a systemic overhaul of the province's equitable provision of reading intervention to meet the needs of all families, particularly those without the financial means to access additional support from outside of the school system for their children and to ensure that all students leave the Ontario school system as literate citizens. The consequences of not all students becoming functionally literate have long been documented in terms of negative personal and societal effects, including poor health and decreased employment opportunities and standards of living, particularly among the least literate Canadians (Statistics Canada & Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2005).

In the report, the OHRC alleges that a root cause of many Ontario students' reading failure is the three-cueing system, an orientation to the nature of reading generally taken up by constructivist theorists (Clay, 1991; Rumelhart, 2004) in which readers decode and comprehend texts by considering multiple sources of information, including semantic, syntactic, and visual cues. The OHRC posits that instructional reading practices that include the three-cueing system are not based in scientific evidence and do not cultivate proficient decoding skills.

A glasshouse of paradox, partiality, and misinformation

While the spirit of the call to action by the OHRC that expresses that all students have the right to read and should have equitable access to reading intervention as a matter of social justice is well received, the theoretical and pedagogical recommendations of the OHRC report have been flashpoints for debate within Ontario and across Canada. Critique has been launched regarding the veracity of the report's claims that there is a general failure in Ontario schools to teach reading and that there is a lack of scientific basis for substantiating the current Ontario reading curriculum. Responses to the *Right to Read* report have also problematized its depiction of phonics-based approaches as stemming from a settled, unrefuted scientific base, its positioning of universal classroom phonics instruction as a panacea for reading difficulties, and its missing acknowledgement of the reciprocity of reading and writing development (Cummins, 2022; Holloway & Stagg Peterson, 2022).

The OHRC also names and rebukes the continued implementation of Reading Recovery (Clay, 2005) and Leveled Literacy Intervention (Fountas & Pinnell, 2009) because of reference to a three-cueing system in their theoretical underpinnings and/or utilization of non-generic sequence of phonics instruction. In their place, the OHRC lists reading intervention programs that align with systematic phonics instruction (Section 10, e.g., Empower Reading [Empower Reading and Learning Group, 2022]; Open Court Reading [McGraw Hill, 2022]). Although the *Right to Read* report focuses on Ontario, because it is associated with a declaration of children's human rights, its recommendations are likely to attract widespread attention and further politicize Canadian and international approaches to literacy intervention (Davenport & Jones, 2005; Macintosh, 2023).

We take issue with the one-sidedness and contest the soundness of the evidence that is presented to support the OHRC's recommendations regarding reading interventions. The stones cast by the *Right to Read* report against Reading Recovery are undermined by a paradox between the standards that the OHRC deploys to discredit interventions that apply three-cueing system

approaches to reading and the subsequent lack of application of those standards to its own glasshouse-like endorsement of phonics-focused interventions. Additionally, we challenge mischaracterizations used to discredit the Canadian implementation of Reading Recovery within the report.

What is Reading Recovery?

Reading Recovery®/IPLÉ®[i] is an internationally implemented short-term (i.e., 12–20 week) early literacy intervention that helps the lowest achieving Grade 1 children develop effective processing systems for reading and writing English and Canadian French (IPLÉ) and reach average levels of classroom performance (Clay, 2005). A daily 30-minute Reading Recovery lesson is individualized to each student's needs and is intended to provide explicit, personalized instruction in reading and writing to develop students' knowledge, their skills, and the foundations for self-extending literacy strategies and processes.

Experienced teachers apply for Reading Recovery training and assignment through their school district. Reading Recovery teachers receive over 300 hours of job-embedded training, during which they learn to apply Clay's literacy processing theory (Clay, 1991; Doyle, 2019) to individual student learning. Professional development and ongoing coaching through monthly professional learning sessions and regular in-school visits from a mentoring teacher leader are provided (Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery [CIRR], 2022a). This sustained approach to professional learning is intended to be part of a school's comprehensive approach to literacy development for all students. In Canada, the trademark and national data collection for the intervention are managed by the CIRR, a registered charitable organization.

Old Stones from the Reading Wars: Phonics First and Only

The theoretical stance presented in the *Right to Read* report reflects a resurgence of discourse from dyslexia advocacy groups within the North American Science of Reading (SOR) community (The Reading League, 2022) and rehashes a long-standing argument over how reading should be taught that originated from the so-called "Reading Wars" (Bommarito, 2019; Mathews, 2020; Pearson, 2004). Advocates of the SOR approach prioritize instruction that targets readers' development of automaticity of decoding skills (e.g., Moats, 2007, 2020), which, in this view, requires sequential and explicit teaching of the English alphabetic system (i.e., sound/printed letter associations or phonics), culminating in what is argued to be word solving and automatic word recognition via semantic mapping through visual analysis (Ehri, 2014; Ehri & McCormick, 2013).

Some SOR pundits argue that readers' consideration of multiple cueing sources is disruptive to the efficient application of letter/sound associations and distracts readers from the complete visual analysis of letters across words. This argument has been represented in the media as perpetuating readers' contextual guessing at words from looking at pictures or superficially using the beginning letter(s) of words (Goldberg, 2019; Hanford, 2019). In SOR-based critiques, reading failure has been generally attributed to "balanced reading" instructional approaches (e.g., Fisher et al., 2020; Fountas & Pinnell, 2017), specifically those that include the three-cueing system, where decoding skills are sometimes taught contextually alongside other components of reading.

Balanced literacy programs and some historic whole language approaches are conflated in the media, as shown in the following example: "Supporters of whole-language instruction and balanced literacy typically believe reading is a skill naturally obtained if a child is exposed to lots

of books" (Macintosh, 2023, para. 13). This antiquated "learning reading by osmosis" approach was once associated with whole language learning but is not supported by research (Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 2000) and is no longer promoted in balanced literacy. Contemporary balanced literacy approaches are so termed because teachers are directed to strike a balance among the modalities (e.g., whole class, small group, or individual) and amount of time spent on the direct instruction and practice of decoding/encoding and language comprehension/expression skills in response to students' needs (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017).

However, balanced literacy approaches have recently been deemed *improperly* balanced by the SOR-community for lacking sufficient structure and time spent explicitly and sequentially teaching phonics (Goldberg, 2019). The OHRC calls for a restructuring of literacy instruction and only endorses interventions that assign the lion's share of instructional time to SOR-based practices. It recommends that Ontario schools remove all reference to the three-cueing system from curricula. Further, instructional practices associated with the three-cueing system, such as the use of a running record (i.e., annotating and coding a typescript to record the cues and strategies used by the reader [Clay, 2019]) or prompting the reader to consider sources of information beyond letter/sound associations (Fountas & Pinnell, 2016) are recommended to be replaced by systematic phonics instruction. In a similar vein, instructional texts levelled within a multi-faceted gradient of difficulty of readability (Fountas & Pinnell, 2011) are presented as inferior to decodable text (i.e., texts that are authored within a constrained range of words to match an instructional sequence of phonics).

Insisting on a Scientific Research Basis for Reading Interventions but Drastically Limiting What Counts as Science

The OHRC report is paradoxical. It argues that there should be a scientific research basis for reading interventions but does not follow its own advice because it ignores or mischaracterizes a considerable body of research and limits what counts as science based on the narrow SOR perspective. The OHRC's call for a scientific foundation for reading interventions seems conditional on an intervention's alignment with a particular branch of reading science:

> [School] Boards' formal training on reading and literacy tended to focus on specific board programs or resources rather than learning about effective reading instruction. Often, the training was on board programs or resources that are inconsistent with the science of reading. For example, one board told us about training they have provided on using running records, guided reading, balanced literacy, Levelled Literacy Intervention and Reading Recovery®. (Section 8)

There is no doubt that the large body of reading science is contentious and difficult to navigate. Responding to the recent debates spurred by a global resurgence of the SOR movement, the internationally well-regarded journal *Reading Research Quarterly* dedicated two special issues (Goodwin & Jiménez, 2020, 2021) to clarifying and articulating the breadth of current peer-reviewed reading science, bringing forward findings from multi-disciplinary researchers. In these two issues, the contributing authors synthesize converging research across several branches of reading science, presenting evidence that justifies defining reading science more broadly to include not only phonics and word decoding but also additional aspects of literacy learning and teaching, such as multi-cueing system approaches (Compton-Lilly et al., 2021; Scanlon & Anderson, 2021), comprehension, fluency, sociocultural contexts, and executive function. Also explored are the

media's roles in amplifying a dichotomous conflict between orientations within the Reading Wars (MacPhee et al., 2022) alongside scientifically supported calls for more centrist policies and balanced approaches to reading instruction (e.g., Cervetti et al., 2020; Compton-Lilly et al., 2021; Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Paige et al., 2022). Considering the scope of this more comprehensive view of reading science, the sentiment within the OHRC report that phonics-centred programs are the sole model of reading intervention supported by research ignores decades of past and contemporary research (ILA, 2016a, 2016b, 2019b).

The SOR movement capitalizes on the moniker of science to imbue itself with an air of credibility to a public audience and position its advocates as *the* scientific experts and adjudicators of what counts as rigorous science (de Riddler, 2014; Worthy et al., 2018). This seeming authority has attracted the attention of some media outlets and has been weaponized to portray more centrist reading pedagogies as denying settled science, employing outdated tools, using ill-prepared, naive teachers, or engaging in outright quackery (Goldberg, 2019; Hanford, 2019, 2022). Academic voices from the broader reading science field challenge dogma from the SOR community in which "dyslexia policy and practice are steeped in authoritative discourse that speaks of a definitive definition, unique characteristics and prescribed interventions programs that are not well supported by research" (Worthy et al., 2018, p. 369). Additionally, some academics have rebutted the media's recent attacks on Reading Recovery as being biased, unscientific mischaracterizations (Bommarito, 2022b; Pearson, 2022). Pearson (2022) responds to Hanford's (2022) denunciation of Reading Recovery and Marie Clay as follows:

> I was appalled and angered by this indictment for two reasons: (a) it is based on a limited portrayal of scientific reading research (dare I say, just plain wrong), and (b) it was directed at a scholar who has left us a rich, perhaps unparalleled, legacy of understanding about the nature of reading acquisition, one to be celebrated not denigrated. (2022, para. 2)

Foundational skills that support decoding include oral language, print concepts, phonological and phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge, and phonics. These foundational skills are understood as essential for decoding, and proficient decoding is understood as necessary for fluency and comprehension (Lindsey, 2022; National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000; Stouffer, 2021). However, essential does not equal sufficient (ILA, 2019b). Even the NRP report, which is contentious for its narrow view of what counts as research (Shanahan, 2003; Yatvin, 2002), acknowledges that "Phonics instruction is never a total reading program…. By emphasizing all of the processes that contribute to growth in reading, teachers will have the best chance of making every child a reader" (NRP, 2000, pp. 2-96–97).

Some SOR advocates, such as Moats (2007), use the findings of the NRP to irrevocably position systematic phonics as the most effective general approach to reading instruction. Allington (2007) raises issues with her interpretation and indeed with the NRP's interpretation of the studies they reviewed:

> Moats would have the reader believe that the presence of systematic phonics lessons – explicit, scripted, sequential, and paced – has been found to be critical in fostering beginning development. But, in fact, what the NRP found is that systematic phonics provided a small benefit, primarily on reading lists of words and non-words . . . even those findings have been seriously challenged by subsequent analyses of the NRP data base. (2007, p. 4)

The definitiveness with which the *Right to Read* report depicts phonics-centred interventions as uniquely scientific is faulty. In their literacy leadership brief *Children Experiencing Reading Difficulties: What We Know and What We Can Do* (ILA, 2019b), a panel of 25 international scholars refute the SOR movement's discourse, which has spread "misinformation by oversimplifying both the sources of reading difficulties and how to address them" (p. 2). Drawing on decades of research on reading interventions, the ILA panel concludes that reading interventions must address several important areas of reading development, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, writing, self-regulating behaviours, interest, motivation, background knowledge, culture, socioeconomic status, and past experiences. The panel also points to a lack of research supporting universal instructional schemes and the potential consequences of approaches that are limited to phonics:

> Emphasis on dyslexia and direct phonics instruction is far too narrow…. The comprehensive studies of Reading First interventions that had an intensive focus on decoding indicated positive effects for decoding ability but not for comprehension. Even more concerning is the unsupported claim in some recent articles that all students should receive the same decoding content in the same sequence and in the same way, which is not supported by research. In fact, this practice can actually have negative consequences. (p. 5)

Contemporary research also disputes the OHRC's narrowed delineation of effective reading interventions. Burns et al. (2023) examine reading interventions' effect sizes on reading comprehension and standard tests of multiple reading skills from 333 experimental or quasi-experimental studies from 26 meta-analyses. They report that interventions focused on word recognition had the smallest effect size on general reading achievement (0.44) relative to interventions that targeted language comprehension (effect size = 0.62), active self-regulation (effect size = 0.46), or processes that bridge word recognition and language comprehension (effect size = 0.70). Burns et al. (2023) suggest that a better understanding of broader reading science and its implications for interventions is needed to inform the issue of inequality in reading outcomes.

One-size-fits-all approaches such as those endorsed in the OHRC are not designed to match students' needs, and students can even ultimately lose ground relative to their peers with such approaches (Connor & Morrison, 2016). In contrast, the ILA (2019b) points to the research that shows effective reading interventions, which include the following strategies:

- Hold high expectations for all students.
- Deliver comprehensive reading instruction, including word reading, oral language development, writing, comprehension, and self-regulation.
- Allow students to practice developing skills in the context of authentic reading and writing.
- Respond to the strengths and needs of individual readers.
- Include a flexible range of instructional strategies.
- Rely on teachers' expertise and diagnostic adaptability, not universally prescribed programs.

In summary, in the OHRC report, the paradox is that only the reading interventions and research that align with SOR epistemology are acknowledged, while interventions that address other branches of reading science are, ironically in a supposed discussion of science, unjustifiably devalued or conspicuously absent. As Gabriel (2021) points out, "When it comes to reading

instruction, an 'all or nothing' approach is actually *un*scientific" (para. 1). The SOR community's argument hinges upon the premise that proficient decoding equals proficient reading for all — yet contemporary advances in reading science demonstrate that reading success cannot be so narrowly and universally defined (Duke & Cartwright, 2021).

An Illustrative Case: The OHRC Report and Reading Recovery

The *Right to Read* report echoes other organizations' calls (e.g., ILA, 2019b) that reading interventions provide scientific evidence demonstrating their effectiveness. Reading Recovery is exemplary in the provision of such studies in that research on its effectiveness spans decades (e.g., Burroughs-Lange & Doutetil, 2007; D'Agostino & Harmey, 2016; Hurry & Fridkin, 2018), includes experimental studies (e.g., Center et al., 1995; Iversen & Tunmer, 1993; Kaye et al., 2022; May et al., 2016; Pinnell, 1989; Pinnell et al., 1994; Quay et al., 2001; Schwartz, 2005), and includes longer term impacts (e.g., Van Dyke, 2019; Hurry, Fridkin & Holliman, 2022).

In their evaluation of scientific evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of reading intervention programs that met specific research evidence standards, the United States Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences' What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) (2013, 2022) reviewed randomized control studies on Reading Recovery's efficacy. The WWC determined that Reading Recovery warranted positive or potentially positive ratings across four outcomes of reading interventions: alphabetics (i.e., phonics and phonemic awareness), fluency, comprehension, and general reading achievement. In their comparison of reading interventions, Reading Recovery received the highest improvement index in fluency and general reading achievement. Notably, the WWC ranked Reading Recovery first for overall effectiveness among over 200 reviewed literacy interventions (Table 1), which included some of the phonics-centred programs characterized as "evidence-based" in section 10 of the OHRC report (Table 1).

Table 1: WWC Ranking of Reading Interventions Named in the OHRC Report

Overall Effectiveness Ranking	Intervention Name	Alphabetics		Comprehension		Reading Achievement		Reading Fluency	
		Improvement Index	Effectiveness Rating	Improvement Index	Effectiveness Rating	Improvement Index	Effectiveness Rating	Improvement Index	Effectiveness Rating
1	Reading Recovery	18	(++)	14	(++)	27	(++)	46	(+)
6	Leveled Literacy Intervention	NA	(0)	NA	NA	11	(++)	11	(+)
9	Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing	NA	(+-)	21	(+)	NA	NA	NA	NA
15	Lexia Core5 Reading	11	(+)	11	(+)	NA	(0)	NA	(0)
16	Early Intervention in Reading	36	(+)	18	(+)	NA	NA	NA	NA
19	Corrective Reading	NA	(0)	NA	(0)	NA	NA	11	(+)
25	Wilson Reading System	13	(+)	NA	(0)	NA	NA	NA	(0)

Note: The WWC (2022) has assessed experimental studies on the effectiveness of 233 literacy programs, isolating effects for alphabetics, comprehension, general reading achievement, and reading fluency. The improvement index indicated expected change in percentile rank for students who complete each intervention. Effectiveness ratings were determined by the quality of the research, significance of the research findings, size of difference between intervention groups, and control and consistency of findings among studies. Effectiveness was rated as (++) positive, (+) potentially positive, (+-) mixed, (0) not discernible, (-) potentially negative, and (--) negative.

The Consortium for Policy Research in Education appraises the four-year scale-up of Reading Recovery implementations as "one of the most ambitious and well-documented

expansions of a U.S. instructional curriculum" (May et al., 2016, abstract). May and colleagues found that among the lowest-achieving Grade 1 students randomly grouped for this quasi-experimental study, Reading Recovery participants (N = 3,444) significantly outperformed an equal number of students in the control groups across measures of overall reading, comprehension, and decoding. These effects are similar for English language learners and students in rural areas.

In his 2005 research review "How Much Evidence is Enough Evidence?" Richard Allington states, "There is a powerful research base supporting the efficacy of Reading Recovery" (p. 10). He notes D'Agostino and Murphy's (2004) meta-analysis (N = 36 studies) among additional studies, classifying Reading Recovery as the most thoroughly researched reading intervention of its time. Yet the OHRC report unaccountably asserts that "there is little to no scientific evidence supporting… Reading Recovery" (2022, section 10).

Like any research, Reading Recovery research has been debated. Issues that have been raised include the sustainability of gains made by participants, sampling approaches, and stakeholder involvement in the research (e.g., Buckingham, 2019; Iverson & Tunmer, 1993; May et al., 2016; Shanahan & Barr, 1995). These types of debate are to be expected in the academic community. In contrast, the OHRC does not seem to recognize that the oft-cited findings of the NRP (2000) report have been critiqued, and a number of issues for phonics-based programs have been found, including the following:

- Uneven overall effect sizes, ranging from 0.23 to 0.68.
- Ceiling of effects in kindergarten and Grade 1, showing decreasing overall (0.12) and comprehension effects (0.32–0.12) for readers who struggle above the first grade.
- A range of long-term effects, including some negative overall effects (-0.47 to 0.86) and, in one program's case, large negative effects on reading comprehension (-0.81) (ILA, 2019b).

The OHRC report is notable not only for its inattentiveness to the research base for Reading Recovery but also for its mischaracterization of the intervention.

Clarifying Mischaracterizations of Reading Recovery in the OHRC Report

The OHRC report portrays Reading Recovery as an unproven, ineffective, commercial program that fails to provide struggling readers with sufficiently structured instruction in phonics and decoding:

> School boards are using a combination of commercially available reading interventions such as … Reading Recovery®, and some board-developed approaches. These approaches are ineffective and insufficient, based on both the body of research on effective early interventions and the boards' own outcome data on early reading…. Programs without a strong evidence base or that are based on the three-cueing approach should not be used for students with reading difficulties. Ineffective programs will delay student progress. (2022, section 10)

However, the nature and longitudinal data reporting on the outcomes of the Canadian implementation of Reading Recovery refute such characterization.

Is Reading Recovery a commercial for-profit program?

Even though it is trademarked, Reading Recovery is made available to school districts by the CIRR, which is a registered Canadian charity[ii] governed by a volunteer board of directors. Annually, school districts that implement Reading Recovery following the Canadian standards and guidelines for implementation (CIRR, 2022a) are provided with the use of a royalty-free license. Reading Recovery cannot be purchased from a commercial establishment, and there is no commercial profit when Reading Recovery is implemented. Given the lack of authorial attribution for the OHRC report, one concern that can be raised is that of a potential conflict of interest that could arise should the unnamed authors also be consultants or authors of some of the commercial programs it recommends.

Does Reading Recovery include structured phonics instruction?

Reading Recovery can be described as clinical because its highly trained teachers deliver a different series of lessons to different children according to their unique profile of strengths and learning needs (Clay, 2005). This model of extensive teacher training has been noted as a strength of the intervention (Pinnell et al., 2002), which has also demonstrated positive influences on the practice of Reading Recovery-trained teachers who return to classrooms (Cox & Hopkins, 2006; Pressley et al., 2001; Stouffer, 2016).

The intervention is different for every child, in that the starting point is the child's strengths, and teaching builds upon what the child is able and trying to do. The teaching is individually designed and individually delivered. Rather than label or view a child who struggles to learn to read through a deficiency lens, Clay (1987) suggests that a child's challenges in literacy learning stem from instruction that was deficient for that particular child, or more simply, the impetus is to *fix the teaching—not the child*. One assumption behind this design is that literacy difficulties arise for many different reasons. As Clay (2005) explains, "The low level of success in older remedial programs probably occurred because what is difficult about literacy learning differs markedly from child to child" (p. 17). Consequently, Clay (2005) argues that an early literacy intervention that holds prevention as a central concept "must address the extremes of variability that could affect any child learning to read or write" (p. 4).

Canadian Reading Recovery students are screened pre- and post-intervention using Clay's (2019) Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement plus the Burt Word Reading Test (Gilmore et al., 1981). The Observation Survey tasks, listed below, yield information regarding foundational skills in phonemic awareness, phonics, and decoding that are called for in the OHRC report:

1. Concepts About Print: knowledge of foundational principles, including directionality and regulators of decoding and interpreting English print (e.g., concepts of letters, words, book handling)
2. Letter Identification: knowledge of English alphabet in upper- and lower-case forms linked to letter names, sounds, or words
3. Word Reading: vocabulary of immediately identified words in reading
4. Writing Vocabulary: vocabulary of correctly spelled words in writing
5. Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words: ability to hear sounds within words (phonological/phonemic awareness) and represent those sounds with letters (phonics)

6. Instructional Text Level: parameters for teachers to guide text selection to foster instructional conditions with sufficient challenge to move reading forward without overwhelming a learner
7. Burt Word Reading Test: ability to recognize, analyze, and solve complex words through analysis of letter sounds and word parts. (CIRR, 2022b, para. 15)

Aligning with the research endorsing responsive approaches within effective reading interventions (ILA, 2019b), each Reading Recovery lesson is individually tailored to a student's needs and provides explicit, personalized instruction in reading and writing to develop decoding skills, including the following:

- Phonological awareness and phonics
- Word making, analysis, and morphology
- Immediate recognition of words and spelling
- Application of word recognition and solving skills in connected texts
- Self-regulation of decoding and comprehending
- Fluency
- Oral language. (CIRR, 2022b, para. 9)

While using the three-cueing system fosters readers' integrated consideration of semantic and syntactic cues to support word solving, Clay (2005) notes that

> In the [Reading Recovery] lesson records of what children say and do you will capture evidence of children's own attempts to solve these problems. They begin to make better estimates of what a word might be. They are not just guessing. (p. 124)

By observing readers, including through the use of running records (Clay, 2019), to capture and analyze children's reading behaviours as part of the lesson record, teachers may detect and formatively address imbalances among a reader's use of cueing sources (Stouffer, 2021; Valencia & Hebard, 2013).

Is Reading Recovery accountable to schools and effective for all children?

In Ontario, Reading Recovery has served over 100,000 students, trained over 15,000 teachers, and provided more than four million hours of professional in-service training to educators. In addition to the scientific evidence of effectiveness previously presented, all Canadian school districts that implement Reading Recovery report annually to the CIRR on five possible outcomes for children in the program: 1) accelerated progress, 2) substantial progress, 3) limited progress, 4) moved, and 5) progressing but unable to continue (Sun & Matczuk, 2020). Children who had the opportunity to complete their series of lessons are categorized as having made *accelerated progress* if their classroom progress and post-intervention results indicate that they have developed an effective reading and writing processing system. The expectation is that they will be able to benefit from classroom instruction without the need for further one-on-one tutoring. Children are categorized as having made *substantial progress* if they have had a full series of lessons and have made progress but will require some extra support in order to continue to develop effective reading and writing processes. Children categorized as having made *limited progress* are recommended to receive further evaluation and possibly a longer term of specialist support to continue to make

progress in literacy. Children who left a school before completing a full lesson series are categorized as *moved***.** Children may be categorized as *progressing but unable to continue* for reasons that vary but not because they are making insufficient progress. Reasons for this categorization may include situations where Reading Recovery is no longer available at the child's school, a Reading Recovery teacher may not have been available, or a child may have been chronically absent or demonstrated extreme social/emotional issues.

In other countries, such as the United States and Australia, the sampling methodology in Reading Recovery data collection has been contested a) for purportedly not reporting outcomes for students deemed to be making insufficient progress and for whom lessons were terminated or b) when the program's annual data did not include the results of students who had not completed their series of lessons before the end of the Grade 1 year (e.g., Buckingham, 2019; Shanahan & Barr, 1995). However, the Canadian data collection for Reading Recovery results differs greatly in that all unfinished Grade 1 students are carried over and complete their series of lessons at the beginning of their Grade 2 year. No Canadian children who begin Reading Recovery lessons are excluded from the data; all are reported in one of the five previously mentioned categories during the school year in which they complete their lessons (CIRR, 2022a). Annually since 1995, the CIRR publicly reports (see https://rrcanada.org/research/) the results of all Canadian Reading Recovery participants (Table 2). The most recent 2020–2021 annual report (CIRR, 2022c) is modified to reflect and report Reading Recovery's adaptation to the global COVID-19 pandemic in Canada, including remote delivery of lessons and professional learning. In all years prior to the pandemic, a majority of participants were categorized as discontinued/making accelerated progress (1995–2019 mean: 64.79%) or substantial progress (2014–2019 mean: 14.38%).

According to Clay (2005), the Reading Recovery intervention yields two positive outcomes. The first positive outcome is when children make accelerated progress and are successfully brought to grade level, such that individual lessons are discontinued. Accelerated progress or Clay's intended meaning of "recovery" takes up the nautical sense of the word, meaning regaining one's bearings and correcting course direction rather than "curing" readers of a disability or condition (Bommarito, 2022a). The expectation is that the intervention has put these children back on track for becoming competent readers and writers with self-extending processing systems that will continue to develop for the next two years at school with good classroom instruction and moderate personal motivation (Clay, 2005). A limiting qualification to this outcome that must be considered for Reading Recovery (and any intervention) is that the quality and appropriateness of post-intervention classroom instruction may vary widely and may consequently impact motivation and long-term effects unevenly (Jesson & Limbrick, 2014).

The second outcome includes children who made substantial progress but still require extra support within a classroom setting and those who made limited progress and for whom further assessment, longer-term assistance, and specialist help may be recommended. Clay (2005) also frames this outcome positively from the stance that individual instruction provides relevant information in the form of diagnostic teaching, which may add to any growth plan and academic or psychological assessment data that helps tailor future programming to address a child's educational needs. For example, recent work (Kaye et al., 2022) has explored Reading Recovery's potential to identify children who experience dyslexia.

Table 2: Reported outcomes of Canadian Reading Recovery participants 1995–2019

School Year	Lesson series discontinued	Recommended for specialist or longer-term support in literacy		Left the school before completing the lessons series	Progressing but not able to be continued for other reasons	Total number of Reading Recovery students whose lesson series was concluded
1995-1996	68.7%	17.8%		6.1%	7.4%	2,499
1996-1997	71.8%	17.4%		6.4%	4.4%	4,593
1997-1998	73.2%	18.5%		5.1%	3.3%	6,237
1998-1999	73.2%	18.5%		4.9%	3.4%	7,039
1999-2000	73.0%	19.0%		4.6%	2.9%	8,626
2000-2001	71.2%	20.4%		4.8%	3.6%	10,615
2001-2002	71.0%	21.1%		4.7%	3.2%	11,316
2002-2003	70.0%	22.8%		4.0%	3.2%	11,629
2003-2004	68.8%	23.5%		4.3%	3.4%	11,450
2004-2005	69.7%	23.1%		4.5%	2.9%	11,809
2005-2006	68.3%	24.3%		4.6%	2.9%	11,699
2006-2007	67.0%	25.5%		4.1%	3.5%	11,350
2007-2008	64.5%	27.9%		4.5%	3.1%	11,133
2008-2009	64.8%	27.5%		4.1%	3.7%	11,529
2009-2010	64.8%	27.4%		4.0%	3.8%	11,156
2010-2011	61.9%	27.0%		3.5%	7.6%	11,533
2011-2012	63.2%	24.7%		4.6%	5.5%	8,258
2012-2013	65.3%	24.7%		4.5%	5.5%	6,390
2013-2014	62.3%	26.3%		4.2%	7.2%	5,138[a]
Renaming and disaggregation of students recommended for more support	Accelerated Progress	Substantial Progress	Limited Progress	Moved	Progressing but not able to continue	
2014-2015	58.7%	12.8%	18.7%	4.8%	5.1%	5,439[a]
2015-2016	53.1%	14.0%	21.7%	4.9%	6.4%	6,326[b]
2016-2017	54.9%	12.9%	21.6%	5.3%	5.2%	5,285[c]
2017-2018	47.9%	15.4%	25.7%	4.3%	6.7%	7,028
2018-2019	47.1%	16.8%	24.4%	4.1%	7.6%	7,463
Average and total over time	64.79%	25.87%		4.62%	4.65%	205,540

Note: From Sun and Matczuk (2020). Reprinted with permission. Beginning in 2014–15, the category "recommend for specialist or longer-term support in literacy" was replaced with two categories: "substantial progress" and "limited progress."

Concluding Thoughts and Recommendations

Arguably, the OHRC report exceeds its scope of determining children's right to read and delves far beyond human rights issues by asserting a narrow hegemony from undisclosed authors prescribing SOR-based reading interventions. In the report, the SOR's simplified theory of reading (Duke & Cartwright, 2021) is portrayed as exclusively scientific. Throughout its report, the OHRC solely positions SOR-aligned interventions as superior to three-cueing approaches. However, the OHRC report disregards the contested terrain of reading research and implies that the scientific community is settled in support of SOR views (Cummins, 2022). In a paradoxical call for a scientific basis and evidence on the effectiveness of reading interventions, the OHRC omits much of the peer-reviewed research from the scientific community that points to the limitations of or refutes its stance.

In particular, the OHRC misrepresents Reading Recovery and does not acknowledge its primary data and other researchers' commentary on its efficacy. For example, research has noted the merits of reading interventions being responsive and adaptable to individual students' needs (ILA, 2019b). But because Reading Recovery's design individualizes phonics instruction rather

than following a universally prescribed sequence, the OHRC report dismisses it as wholly ineffective.

In the place of an analysis of Reading Recovery within the broader research, the OHRC offers testimonials from families who claim SOR approaches were successful or more effective than Reading Recovery for their children. Taking up the Oprah Winfrey-popularized term "speaking your truth," the OHRC seemingly capitalizes on families' emotional narratives to reinforce and propel their agenda (Braw, 2022). Even so, numerous, similarly grateful accounts have been made by the families of Reading Recovery students (CIRR, 2020; Reading Recovery Council of North America, 2022); for example,

> This is a heartfelt thank you from two very relieved and encouraged parents to all involved in running Reading Recovery. It has averted a possible disaster for our son and set him off on the road to success at school. I hope that all children who need the extra support can continue to benefit from this terrific program. (CIRR, n.d., p. 1)

If personal testimony is, on the one hand, brought forward to champion SOR approaches, it seems highly questionable why similar voices endorsing Reading Recovery are silenced by their omission from the *Right to Read* report.

It seems unconstructive to merely continue to cast stones. Convincing evidence and branches of reading science debate aspects of both SOR and Reading Recovery. Policy makers and teachers must remain cautious regarding propaganda and unfulfillable promises of one-size-fits-all approaches to reading interventions. Rather than having schools remove programs, decision makers should look beyond the OHRC report to the larger scientific community so that they can make more comprehensively informed decisions regarding an intervention's scientifically determined effectiveness, limitations, and breadth to appropriately support diverse students.

Troublingly, the OHRC report disregards the parts of reading science that challenge SOR stances. It seemingly asks educational leadership to ignore historical outcomes of comparable philosophical narrowness, such as the disappointing results of the Reading First movement in the United States (Gamse et al., 2009) and 20 years of phonics-led educational reforms in England (Wyse & Bradbury, 2022). For Ontario and potentially other Canadian provinces and territories, to tear down some of their current interventions only to build glass houses seems misguided, if not institutionally short-sighted, and runs the risk of further denying the most vulnerable children the right to learn to read.

Author Bios

Joe Stouffer holds a PhD in Language and Literacy Education from the University of British Columbia and is an assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy in the Brandon University Faculty of Education, Canada. His research interests include Reading Recovery, pre-service teacher preparation, and the development of teachers' use of formative assessments to support reading and writing instruction. A former classroom teacher, Reading Recovery teacher, and teacher leader, he has supported schools across Canada as an independent literacy consultant and as a consultant with Pearson Education Canada. Joe currently serves as a volunteer board member for the Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery.
Email: stoufferj@brandon.ca Website: joestoufferliteracy.com

Janice Van Dyke received her PhD in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education University of Toronto. She is a Reading Recovery trainer emeritus with the Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery in Ontario, Canada, and an education consultant. She has worked as a subject teacher and classroom teacher, special education teacher, Reading Recovery teacher, and teacher leader and trainer in national and international contexts. Janice's research interests focus on child development, particularly the concurrent development of language and literacy and young children's writing development. Email: janicervandyke@gmail.com

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[i] Reading Recovery and IPLÉ have been registered by the Canadian Institute of Reading Recovery under Section 9 of the Canadian Trademarks Act.

[ii] Canada Revenue Agency - Annual Charity Return: https://apps.cra-arc.gc.ca/ebci/hacc/srch/pub/dsplyRprtngPrd?q.srchNmFltr=Canadian+Institute+of+Reading+Recovery&q.stts=0007&selectedCharityBn=139744973RR0001&dsrdPg=1