Challenging Deficit Thinking in Special Education: Acceleration Possibilities in Literacy Lessons

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Found within the introduction of *Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals* (2016), Marie Clay reminds us that many different types/groups of children can benefit from the use of Reading Recovery® teaching procedures, including those in special education. This article aims to tell the story of promising acceleration possibilities found within a large-scale, national data sample of special education students receiving Literacy Lessons™ intervention, carrying out Clay's vision and intent for beginning readers who find the path to literacy difficult.

Introduction

Special education, including its student population and instructional practices, has historically been perceived through deficit mindsets. Rather than focusing on the full potential of the learner themselves, unfortunately, special education students most often receive instruction that focuses on their identified disability, and/or is limited to what the learner is seemingly capable of (Cornett & Knackstedt, 2020; Frey, 2019; Shume, 2020; Trent et al., 1998).

Additionally, the notion of special education students' rate of progress being *accelerative* (progress being made at a rate that is quicker than the average of their peers), rather than remedial, is vastly understudied and underprioritized. Further, acceleration is rarely discussed relative to the special education community. Wolter (2016) alerts us to an "opportunity gap" in literacy in the field of special education, asserting, "It's not the circumstances students bring to school that limit student's growth but rather the opportunity *at school*" (p. 31). However, one literacy intervention—Literacy Lessons—provides revealing data to support a shift in thinking regarding instructional practices, training, and professional development for special education students and teachers (Harmon & Williams, 2017; Poparad, 2021).

Clay's vision for reaching special populations of students beyond Reading Recovery begins with her theory of literacy processing. *Literacy processing theory* is a complex view of literacy learning that focuses on understanding the perceptual and cognitive systems involved in the reading and writing process for emergent literacy learners. These integrated neural networks are constructed in the head of the learner as a result of reading and writing continuous texts (see e.g., Clay, 1991, 2014, 2015, 2016; Doyle, 2013). This view of literacy learning is foundational to Reading Recovery, but additionally, Clay challenged teachers to expand their application of literacy processing theory and Reading Recovery teaching procedures to include students in special education and English learners, or emerging bilinguals (Clay, 2016). Literacy Lessons is a powerful, one-to-one intervention delivered by specialist teachers supporting special education students and English learners in Grades 1–5 who are finding reading and writing difficult (Reading Recovery Council of North America, 2013).

Similar to Reading Recovery, nearly a decade of data collected from implementations of Literacy Lessons reveals powerful student outcomes (Harmon & Williams, 2017; Lose & Konstantellou, 2017; Poparad, 2021). In this article, we share Literacy Lessons data from a national sample of 1,033 first- through fifth-grade special education students with documented learning disabilities and individualized education plans (IEPs). Text level gains from these students who received the Literacy Lessons intervention demonstrated accelerative gains. These data prompt questions about the ways special education populations are typically viewed and instructed.

The goal of this article is to explore the large-scale sample of multiyear text-level data and link the accelera-

tive outcomes to specific ideologies, instructional beliefs, and practices among special education interventionists providing Literacy Lessons instruction to students who are being viewed—finally—as fully capable, active learners. Following that exploration, we will address the potential implications of the data presented as well as future considerations that may provide additional information to impact special education instruction, special education teacher training opportunities, other student populations, and beyond.

Assessment, Instruction, and Teacher Training in Special Education

The field of special education has a long history of centering classification and categorization at the expense of emphasizing specific supports that optimize learning for individual students (Cornett & Knackstedt, 2020; Frey, 2019; Johnston, 2011). This viewpoint endures, in part, because of the medical model of disability. That model sustains the belief that the disability resides within the person, signifying an inherent impairment which privileges diagnosis and treatment of the individual (Shume, 2020). Beginning with the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EACHA, 1975) and continuing with the current reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA, 2004), the medical model has been interwoven throughout the laws and policies that govern special education, focusing on the categorization of individuals. This view reduces the role of special education instruction to focus intensely on labeling the disability and fix the learner, as opposed to an in-depth

examination of other contextual factors for possible "solutions," such as changes in environmental factors and/or adjusting teaching methods. As Cornett & Knackstedt (2020) explain:

> [N]ever is the teacher directed to consider whether the context, teaching or learning environment may be the problem, not the child. Put simply, the EACHA focused on internal deficits of the child, not the barriers in the environment and system. (p. 512)

In many educational settings, this ideology continues to prevail. For example, in a study examining the experiences of and preparation for inclusive education, Kurth and Foley (2014) found that mentor teachers in field placement settings readily used deficit language to describe students who they felt could not be included. This deficit mindset that remains fixed on students' capabilities has direct implications for instruction. Although the literature and research in the field of special education speak to inclusion for all, this study reinforces the significant disconnect between the way special education teacher candidates are prepared and common practices in the field (Gehrke & Cocchiarella, 2013).

The norm-referenced assessments used to identify, diagnose, and determine eligibility for special education services provide another example of the medical model in action within the field of special education today. The EACHA relied on specific norm-referenced assessments, and the manner in which these assessments are carried out and enforced has largely remained unchanged

(Cornett & Knackstedt, 2020; Frey, 2019). Using these assessments with the purpose of evaluating how one measures up to a sample of students representing the "norm" is in direct alignment with the medical model. The results of these assessments often are used by special education teachers for the development of IEP goals, as well as instructional planning; however, these assessments were never designed for those purposes and using them in that manner goes against their specified scope and intention (Frey, 2019). These assessments may not assist special education educators with answering the necessary questions to create a plan that addresses the individualized needs of a learner and considers the variety of factors that affect opportunities to learn (Frey, 2019).

Instead, answering questions such as "What instructional practices are most effective for this particular student?" and "Under what conditions does this student respond?" are vital. The importance of these questions cannot be understated, as these questions get to the heart of valuing individualized, personalized, and differentiated instruction, which is the antithesis of the medical model.

Response to intervention and multi-tiered systems of support

Prior to the reauthorization of IDEA, the discrepancy model was used to identify students with the classification of "specific learning disability" (SLD). Due to the wording of the definition of SLD, previously there was no way to identify a student as having an SLD except by exclusion (Johnston, 2011). For example, if a student had IQ test scores that showed intellectual capability but

demonstrated poor reading ability, the student was considered learning disabled. This lack of identifiable characteristics led to a rapid increase in the number of students classified as SLD and consequently the amount of funding to departments of special education (Brownell et al., 2010; Johnston, 2011; Vellutino, 2010).

With the reauthorization of IDEA came response to intervention (RtI), a way to ensure, by law, that the contexts of quality instruction and

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intervention opportunities were examined before classifying students as needing special education services, especially students with SLD. The law requires data prior to referral that indicates the child received appropriate instruction by qualified personnel and that documentation of repeated assessments of achievement reflects the child's response to a research-based intervention. RtI carried the potential to move beyond the medical model to focus on prevention and improving instruction; however, much of RtI implementation has been about standardization, fidelity, and

transfer. Johnston (2011) explains: "If the child's reading improves, it is assumed that the instructional package worked; if not, the child is framed as the problem … it frames the problem as a fixed trait of the child" (p. 517). The prevailing implementation of RtI is, again, steeped in the medical model, centering measurement and identification instead of personalized, individualized, and differentiated instruction. Therefore, suggesting a policy change will not remove the medical model ideology from the field. To move beyond a central focus of standardization and diagnosis requires a shift in mindset that focuses on responsive instruction, as well as a system of professional development to cultivate specialized expertise in teachers (Brownell et al., 2010; Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006).

Teacher training in special education
Historically, special education teachers typically receive broad and varied preparation designed to address multiple content areas and grade levels; specifically lacking focus and depth of content knowledge (Geiger et al., 2014; Leko et al., 2015). Indeed, "teacher preparation programs cannot continue to prepare special education teachers broadly and hope they will develop the depth of knowledge and skill fluency needed to teach rigorous content within an MTSS framework" (Leko et al., 2015, p. 28).

Training and professional development for special education teachers rarely promotes a *constructivist approach* in which teachers learn to build on learners' strengths (Akpan & Beard, 2016). A constructivist approach is based on the idea that knowledge is a product of the human mind, constructed by unique

individuals differently (Akpan & Beard, 2016) rather than taken in by a passive learner. A constructivist teaching model moves away from the prevailing medical model and deficit ideology that places knowledge as a process of transfer, from teacher to student, thereby "fixing" the inherent deficits within. Deficit ideologies oversimplify the complex nature of literacy learning. As a result, special educators' opportunities to receive specific and intense instruction dedicated to understanding the complex nature of the reading process within a practice-based approach are very rare (Hikida et al., 2019; Leko et al., 2015). Deficit models of instruction paired with lowered expectations and a lack of specialized teacher training may lead to students in special education settings remaining in a perpetual state of slow progress and low achievement, which makes the possibility of acceleration, or increased rate of progress, nearly absent for most students receiving special education services.

Literacy Lessons: Training, Professional Development, Instruction, and Shifting Mindsets

Literacy Lessons intervention challenges deficit thinking in every aspect: training, instruction, and professional development. Literacy Lessons for special education students is taught by special education teachers additionally trained in the intervention. This training and subsequent teaching and professional development has demonstrated the ability to positively shift teacher mindsets (Harmon & Williams, 2017; Lose & Konstantellou, 2017; Poparad, 2021).

Training and professional development

Teacher training is a key factor in the success of the Literacy Lessons intervention, as it centralizes the ongoing development of teacher expertise. Literacy Lessons teachers, like Reading Recovery teachers, train through a three-tiered model of support, with trainers at university training centers nationwide training affiliated teacher leaders who are employed by school districts. The teacher leaders then train and provide ongoing support to teachers. Each teacher trained in Literacy Lessons engages in a year of graduate-level study while simultaneously teaching students using the intervention. This constructive training model utilizes professional learning sessions with lessons viewed through a one-way mirror that provide teacher observation, analysis and reflection experiences; ongoing coaching visits; and continual data collection and analysis to collaboratively support student learning.

Beyond the training year, teachers receive ongoing professional development, coaching, collaboration, and support from teacher leaders for the duration of their time as Literacy Lessons professionals. This multilayered approach to professional development and teacher training yields positive outcomes for the lowest-achieving students in Reading Recovery (May et al., 2016). Because Reading Recovery teacher leaders are responsible for training both Reading Recovery teachers and Literacy Lessons teachers, the training model for both remains carefully aligned. Although May et al., 2016 specifically referred to Reading Recovery training and not Literacy Lessons training, conclusions drawn about the effectiveness of the professional development model existing within Reading Recovery may be applicable to the training of those teachers trained in and implementing Literacy Lessons.

An external evaluation by May et al. (2016) highlighted the deliberateness and instructional dexterity of Reading Recovery teachers as elements of instructional strength. *Instructional strength* in Reading Recovery is defined as *the extent to which a teacher instructs for maximum learning in every lesson* (May et al., 2016, p. 90). It was further noted

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that the strongest Reading Recovery teachers and lessons demonstrated both *deliberateness and instructional dexterity*. "Deliberateness is understood as *an encompassing commitment to thoughtful practice*; instructional dexterity is defined as *the flexible application of deep skill*" (May et al., 2016, p. 91). Reading Recovery teachers, through their continual deliberateness and instructional dexterity, provide responsive teaching to students based on their individual strengths and needs, which supports student acceleration.

The recognition of instructional strength as a key factor in the success of the intervention speaks volumes about the impact of the teacher training model of Reading Recovery. While the lesson framework and literacy processing theory provide a guide for instruction in both Reading Recovery and Literacy Lessons, it is the skillful teacher's responsibility to carefully observe students to make instructional decisions that support acceleration and growth. Initial and ongoing training provides teachers with the theory, practice, and ideologies needed to effectively support students who are finding reading and writing difficult.

Responsive instruction requires teacher expertise as well as assessment practices that allow teachers to capitalize on the individual strengths of students. Brownwell and colleagues (2010) reiterate this notion in their article on reconceptualizing special education teacher preparation, stating, "Unlike we imagined in the previous era, the diagnostic and intervention knowledge of special education teachers must be well integrated with content domain knowledge" (p. 369). Indeed, there is no useful diagnostic information that can be gathered by simply focusing on classification; teacher expertise is key. Johnston (2011) supports this notion as well, stating, "If the emphasis is put on instruction, then the evidence that the child is not learning adequately indicates that instruction is not yet appropriate and needs to be further optimized" (p. 519). This idea is central to Clay (2016), as well as other researchers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017) who have underscored the importance of teacher expertise along with the structures that support the development and improvement of teacher knowledge and decision making. These structures are the fabric of the training model for the Literacy Lessons intervention.

Similarly, Reading Recovery teacher training has been widely recognized as a model of professional development deemed effective in building teacher capacity and understanding. The Learning Policy Institute released a research report titled *Effective Teacher Professional Development* (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017) in which the authors set out to determine what constitutes effective teacher professional development. Reviewing 35 methodologically rigorous studies shown to demonstrate a positive link between teacher professional development, teaching practices, and student outcomes, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) defined teacher professional development as "structured professional learning that results in changes in teacher practices and improvement in student learning outcomes" (p. v). From this review, seven features of effective teacher professional development were identified. Darling-Hammond and colleagues note that effective professional development

1. Is **content focused**

2. Incorporates **active learning** utilizing adult learning theory

3. Supports **collaboration,** typically in **job-embedded** contexts

4. Uses **models and modeling** of effective practice

5. Provides **coaching and expert support**

6. Offers opportunities for **feedback and reflection**

7. Is of **sustained duration** (p. 4)

Within this report, Reading Recovery is specifically recognized as one of the few professional development models possessing all seven elements and has been found to generate positive student gains. (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017, p. 4). It is evident the teacher training model and ongoing professional development contribute greatly to teacher expertise, instructional strength, decision making, and positive student outcomes.

Instruction
Literacy Lessons instruction is built upon Clay's literacy processing theory and values observing children as learners and being responsive to their individual needs. This careful observation provides the foundation from which teachers design individual lessons for each child. Additionally, central to literacy processing theory is the idea that "children construct their personal rules about written language from the print they are exposed to and from opportunities to construct their own messages in writing" (Clay, 2016, p. 6). Therefore, reading and writing continuous text remains a priority throughout the intervention. Unlike those trained through a deficit lens, teachers are trained to remain tentative, continually observing how students respond to print and providing a supportive scaffold as students make links between the known and unknown. Maintaining a peak level of tentativeness and flexibility is crucial: "Teachers need to be tentative in their judgments and must easily and quickly change the emphases of the instruction in response to interaction with learners" (Clay, 2016, p. 214). This flexibility remains possible through the consistent message that all students are capable of learning, and it is the teacher's responsibility to continually search for answers that support student learning and acceleration. Clay (2016) challenges

teachers, "If a child is a struggling reader or writer the conclusion must be that we have not yet discovered a way to help him learn" (p. 165).

Shifting mindsets
Even further, teacher mindset shifts resulting from Literacy Lessons training and teaching give way to an important revelation: When special education teachers are immersed in Literacy Lessons' constructive model of teaching and learning—specifically related to a complex view of literacy—previous notions of the ways in which students learn can be challenged, leaving space for teachers to expect, teach for, and ultimately, observe acceleration as it occurs. Harmon and Williams (2017) provide a statement from one trained Literacy Lessons teacher detailing the pivotal shift in thinking occurring because of her training and experience with the intervention:

> The biggest impact that Literacy Lessons training had on my teaching is the idea that there is hope for students who have experienced struggle when learning to read. As a special education teacher, the focus was often placed on supporting and maintaining any reading knowledge and skills, whereas, this training has shifted my focus to accelerate literacy learning regardless of a previous label. (p. 33)

This teacher's revelation about expectations for student learning is not an isolated occurrence. Across the country, Literacy Lessons teacher leaders report similar realizations shared from special education teachers (Harmon & Williams, 2017; Lose & Konstantellou, 2017; Poparad, 2021). It is evident that the training

model, constructivist approach, and literacy processing theory can provide special education teachers with alternative ways of viewing their students' capabilities and the impact of their teaching on students' learning.

Outcomes for Students

In the remainder of the article, we present data supporting the possibility of accelerated literacy learning occurring within special education settings where the Literacy Lessons intervention is implemented. We will highlight the accelerated rate of reading documented for special education students (students with a documented learning disability who qualify for special education and have an IEP) receiving the one-to-one Literacy Lessons intervention between the years 2013 and 2019. The national sample data obtained from the International Data Evaluation Center consist of 1,033 special education students in Grades 1–5. These data focus specifically on documented gains in Text Reading Level (TRL) based on the results from Clay's *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Observation Survey, 2019) from entry to exit of Literacy Lessons intervention, a timeframe of 1 school year. TRL is used regularly to better understand how a student is reading in comparison with peers,

provide diagnostic information to support instruction, and formally assess student reading progress. While there are many versions of leveled texts, Clay's Observation Survey adheres to national norms to identify the average TRLs of students. In a study conducted by Denton et al. (2016) the components of the Observation Survey, which includes TRL, were deemed as valid assessments of early literacy development.

Literacy Lessons national data sample reveals acceleration possibilities
Table 1 illustrates the consolidation of findings of the study sample for special education students in Grades 1–5 who received Literacy Lessons intervention. Typically, for each grade level, the data show an approximate gain of 10 TRLs from the beginning to the end of the intervention. It is important to consider the study sample students' rate of growth prior to Literacy Lessons intervention compared to their rate of growth determined from the beginning and end of the intervention. In doing so, the study sample shows starting point TRLs revealing they had made very little growth prior to Literacy Lessons, despite their years in schooling.

Figure 1 is a visual representation of the accelerated trajectory in TRL

gains of students in each of the grade levels represented. The change in mean TRL from entry to exit is further represented beyond the quantitative data in Table 1. Each grade level presents a steady, upward climb indicating a strong rate of growth for TRL regardless of grade level participating in the Literacy Lessons intervention. This evidence of acceleration is powerful when considering special education students who typically have not been expected to accelerate based on deficit thinking and models of instruction (Trent et al., 1998). Simply put, the average rate of progress in TRL gains seen in the study sample makes a case for Literacy Lessons as a viable intervention capable of accelerating student learning gains in special education. Even more, the data provide evidence that special education students **can** experience accelerated learning.

The expectation of accelerated learning should impact the ways in which special education teachers are trained, the instruction they provide to students, and the overall outlook on special education in general. Through teacher training experiences that meet all identified characteristics of effective professional development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017), teachers can be supported to develop instructional strength that is both

Table 1. Text Reading Level (TRL) Statistics from Students in the Study Sample, 2013–14 to 2018–19

Measure	Grade 1		Grade 2		Grade 3		Grade 4		Grade 5	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
TRL at Start of Lessons	2.4	2.4	4.9	3.9	8.4	5.5	8.5	6.2	10.6	6.3
TRL at Year-End	10.2	6.2	14.5	7.4	17.9	7.9	18.1	7.8	20.2	8.3

Note: Statistics used to create the table were based on TRL scores of students identified with a disability who had scores at the start of Literacy Lessons and at year-end (*N* = 1,033). Grade 1 (*n* = 427); Grade 2 (*n* = 279); Grade 3 (*n* = 157); Grade 4 (*n* = 123); Grade 5 (*n* = 47).

Figure 1. Change in Mean Text Reading Level (TRL) by Grade Level at Start of Literacy Lessons and at Year-End
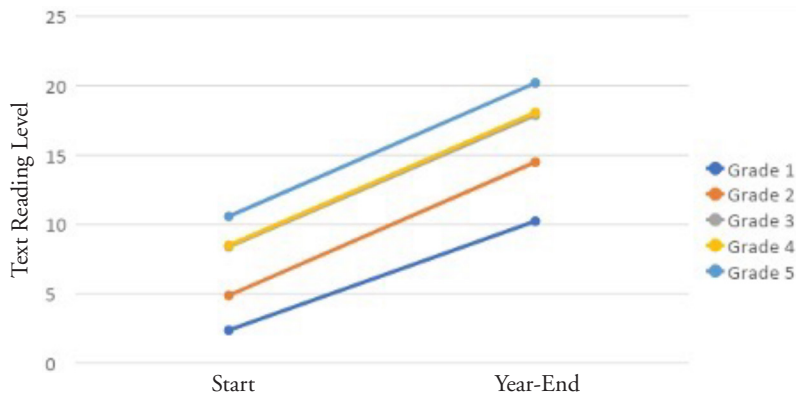
Note: Statistics used to create the figure were based on TRL scores of students identified with a disability who had scores at the start of Literacy Lessons and at year-end (*N* = 1,033). Grade 1 (*n* = 427); Grade 2 (*n* = 279); Grade 3 (*n* = 157); Grade 4 (*n* = 123); Grade 5 (*n* = 47).

TRL 18 is typical of an end of the year first-grade student (Stanine 5 according to U.S. norms). However, once these students begin Literacy Lessons, their TRL gain in 1 year far exceeds their past gain over 3 years. Over the last 3 years, these students' rate of growth per year was only 2.8 text levels or 8.4 total. This shows an acceleration of over three times what could be expected before the onset of Literacy Lessons instruction. Figure 2 further highlights this acceleration by providing an estimate of the students' previous TRL gains prior to the intervention in comparison to the TRL gains achieved from entry to exit of the intervention.

As Grade 3 students, their progress had been minimal up until that point. However, once the students became immersed in the Literacy Lessons intervention, their progress

deliberate and dexterous (May et al., 2016), providing responsive teaching to special education students through the Literacy Lessons intervention.
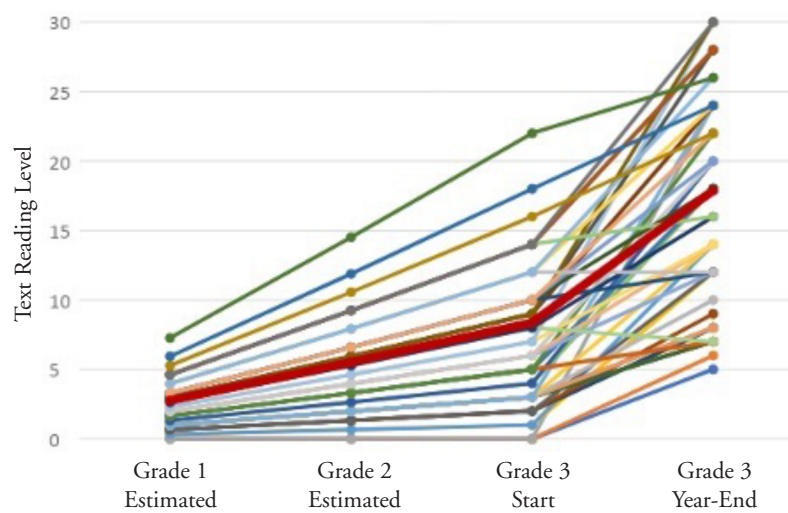
Using the data from Grade 3 as one powerful example, a story unfolds far beyond the numbers and lines presented in Table 1 and Figure 1 (see Figure 2). It should be noted that this story could be told using any grade level represented in the study sample. Figure 2 shows TRL gains from a random selection of third graders' data. For example, as demonstrated in Table 1 and Figure 1, within a year or less, a typical third-grade special education student receiving Literacy Lessons intervention makes rapid, accelerated progress, growing in TRL ability by 9.5 text levels (8.4 entry to 17.9 exit, or almost 10 levels). If our baseline for all Literacy Lessons students at kindergarten entry is TRL 0, these data suggest that a typical third-grade student identified for special education gains an average of 8.4 TRLs over 3 years of instruction prior to Literacy Lessons (kindergarten, first grade,

second grade). Referencing Clay's Observation Survey (2019), a TRL 8 is an average reading level for a mid-year first-grade student (Stanine 4 according to U.S. norms), while a

Figure 2. Individual Student Text Reading Level (TRL) Growth Trajectories, Grade 3

Note: Lines represent individual student growth in TRL of a random sample of special education students who participated in Literacy Lessons in Grade 3 (*n* = 48) during the 2013–14 to 2018–19 school years. The lines reflect the student's TRL measured at entry and then again at year-end. Lines prior to Grade 3 are estimated based on the students' TRL in Grade 3 at entry to Literacy Lessons, assuming each student's growth was linear. The thicker red line represents the mean of all special education students in Grade 3.

shifted from slow and stalled, to steady and quick as they moved almost 10 text levels in 1 year, in comparison to the 8 text levels they had estimated to gain in their years of schooling prior to the Literacy Lessons intervention. It is important to note students in Grade 3 are still reading at an emergent level, as reading at grade level is beyond the scope of Literacy Lessons instruction. However, in Grade 3, data indicate that during their prior educational experiences (Grades K–2), these students had grown only 8 text levels, but during their intervention year, had grown almost 10 levels in 1 year. One may assume by these results that the students were capable of acceleration prior to Literacy Lessons, but either their instruction was not meeting their learning needs, or teachers' expectations prevented them from recognizing students' full potential.

Further Considerations

Data from the study sample present a strong case for the continued data collection, analysis, and dissemination of research on Literacy Lessons implementations. This example of acceleration within special education provides justification for alternative considerations of special education teacher training and ongoing professional development; student capabilities and possibilities within special education; models of instruction most conducive to supporting accelerative learning; social-emotional outcomes occurring as a result of active, accelerative learning; and the need for increased implementations of Literacy Lessons. Moreover, the implications of these data warrant a shift in thinking, challenging the deficit model prevalent among

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special education settings within the educational system.

While this article focuses on the accelerative gains found among the special education population, the Literacy Lessons intervention is also designed for English learner teachers to support emerging bilingual learners. It will be important to explore what additional data will reveal for these learners, as acceleration should be a focus and expectation for students acquiring an additional language just as it is for special education students.

Considering these data beyond the numerical growth of the student sample is particularly important. Although the quantitative gains themselves are impressive, the stories beyond the numbers gleam far greater implications for the power and promise of Literacy Lessons for special education populations. Beyond academic growth, Literacy Lessons students often note increased confidence, motivation, and positive self-perception (Harmon & Williams, 2017; Poparad, 2021). While research currently exists noting positive effects on student motivation and self-perception in Reading Recovery (Bates et al., 2016), a replication of this study is warranted for Literacy Lessons students, both children learning English as an additional language and students in special education.

This information may provide further justification for Literacy Lessons as a positive, impactful intervention that can accomplish more than accelerated learning for students. Identified gains in self-confidence and positive shifts in student demeanor stand to further exemplify the power and promise of Literacy Lessons.

Closing Thoughts

Marie Clay's vision that children beyond those served in Reading Recovery could benefit from a complex model of literacy and individualized instruction appears to have merit. High-quality training of specialist teachers paired with implementation practices that value individualized, personalized, and differentiated instruction supports accelerated progress of students in special education and disputes the commonly held view that these students are limited in their capacity to learn, and learn quickly (Lose & Konstantellou, 2017). The data presented in this article show the impact of Literacy Lessons, quantitatively and with powerful stories of how the intervention has changed students' self-perceptions, learning trajectories, and overall confidence (Harmon & Williams, 2017; Poparad, 2021).

The implications of these data warrant a shift in thinking and present a case for increasing the number of

teachers trained in Literacy Lessons throughout the United States, thus increasing the number of special education students served in the Literacy Lessons intervention. It is past time to decenter classification and categorization in special education, and instead focus on improving teacher expertise with literacy instruction that specifically addresses the individual needs of students. The beliefs, ideologies, and instructional practices among Literacy Lessons interventionists make it clear that acceleration is possible when students are finally seen as fully capable and active learners.

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About the Cover

Kenison made exceptional progress during her Reading Recovery lessons. She loves to read all kinds of books and has a particular affinity for animal stories. She takes great delight in bringing the voices of the characters to life when she reads. An enthusiastic writer, Kenison enjoys composing stories about her experiences. She is full of life, always smiling, and prides herself on being a wonderful classmate and friend. Reading Recovery helped Kenison grow into a skilled reader and writer and a confident learner who enjoys new challenges.