

# First Graders Learning Basics In Reading Recovery Program

BY DORI COSGROVE GURGANUS

Some Brunswick County first grade students, those who haven't progressed in reading as far as their classmates, are getting an extra push this year.

The Reading Recovery Program, geared for first graders and offered at Union Primary, Southport Elementary and Lincoln Primary this year for the first time, is an intensive plan to re-teach kids who can learn to read, but simply haven't.

"It's a wonderful program," says Kim Royal, one of the teachers at Union Primary who works with Reading Recovery.

She and her partner, Foy Crary, share responsibilities between teaching a regular first grade class, and splitting the day in half for Reading Recovery sessions.

Children who qualify for the program must meet criteria for Reading Recovery, mainly by showing a capacity for learning, but not having been given an "extra push to keep up with their peers," said Ms. Crary.

If a child is found to be learning disabled, he or she is sent to a different program.

"The kids we help are beginning readers who were high risk and might not get through the first grade," says Ms. Royal. "There's nothing wrong with them, most of them just haven't come from an environment conducive to reading."

Often these traits are noticed in kindergarten, she says, when teachers see that a child has trouble retelling a story or shows a lack of familiarity with books.

Students who have been retained from kindergarten or first grade also do not qualify.

"Our students all have the ability and potential to learn and be at least average or better than average readers," says Ms. Crary.

Testing in the fall of a child's first grade year identifies them as not having the same literacy level as other first graders.

All first grade teachers make a list of their students from most skilled to least skilled according to the reading

*"There's nothing wrong with them, most of them just haven't come from an environment conducive to reading."*

—Kim Royal  
Reading Recovery teacher

test, and give the Reading Recovery teachers the names on the bottom half of the list.

After more testing, a small number of students are selected for Reading Recovery, with the permission of their parents. Currently eight students at each elementary school participate in the sessions, and each school is equipped with two specially-trained Reading Recovery instructors.

The students are scheduled for 75 classes of intensive, one-on-one reading assistance with those teachers for 30 minutes each day.

The classes will probably take from 15 weeks to the entire school year, Ms. Crary and Ms. Royal point out, taking into consideration illnesses, vacations and school events.

The system being practiced in Brunswick County is a split day for the two teachers. For example, Ms. Crary may have the regular first grade class for the morning until lunchtime. During that time, Ms. Royal takes her four Reading Recovery students, one by one, out of that class for 30 minutes to a quiet, secluded classroom down the hall.

In the afternoon, Ms. Royal teaches the regular first grade class while Ms. Crary takes the other four Reading Recovery students for four, individual 30-minute sessions.

These students miss 30 minutes of class, but gain more literacy skills in return.

"The students we've taught have not regressed later, and that's a good sign," says Ms. Crary.

Reading Recovery was first introduced in the United States in the 1970s by a child psychologist, Dr.

Marie Clay of New Zealand, with her book, *The Early Detection of Reading Difficulties*. A pilot program was tested at Ohio State University in the early 1980s and was found to be successful.

Ms. Crary heard of the program while attending Georgia State University in the late 1970s and remembers wondering what it entailed.

"Basically Dr. Clay did research on bad reading habits and good reading habits and figured we should teach good reading habits to students who needed help," she says, summing up the theory behind the work.

It's not how to read, but how to learn to read, both Union Primary teachers agree.

"Hopefully they'll get it and not become statistics," adds Ms. Crary.

Brunswick County is one of several school systems piloting the program in North Carolina through Dr. Noel Jones, teacher-leader-trainer from UNC-Wilmington's Curricular Studies program.

All six Brunswick County teachers have attended training at UNC-W and report to Jan Toomes, their teacher-leader for the program. The training earns credits toward a master's degree in early childhood education.

"It's very structured," Ms. Crary says of the methodology used by Reading Recovery teachers. Minute by minute, the teacher must cover a different letter or word, and write down exactly how the student responds.

Instructors are evaluated from time to time by their teacher-leader to make sure they follow the program in detail—from sitting in the correct way in relation to the child to documenting the progress each child makes each day.

Students can place out of the program, proving that they have caught up with their peers, or can be recommended by their instructor for graduation.

Motivation can play an important role in a child's success as well, both teachers agree.



STAFF PHOTO BY DORI C. GURGANUS

**WORKING INTENTLY WITH** students on a one-to-one basis, Foy Crary (pictured above with a student) and Kim Royal are helping first graders with basic reading skills.

"Parents make the difference," explains Ms. Crary. "Some children will succeed in spite of lack of support from their family, but they must be internally motivated."

Many students have parents who work long hours or who do not stress the importance of reading to their children.

"They're not necessarily from deprived homes, but they haven't been encouraged to read," she adds.

Invitations have been sent out asking parents to visit and watch their child as they show off new reading skills, but, Ms. Crary says, no parents have accepted the offer.

Students are also allowed to take their special textbooks home to share their skills with their parents.

And even though Ms. Royal and Ms. Crary will help a handful of first graders this academic year, they feel that they could be doing more.

"You reach so few who have a need and that's frustrating," says Ms. Crary. "I'd like to reach every child that needs it."

Out of the total 280 first graders at Union Primary, they estimate, 50 to 60 children are at risk of not practicing good reading habits and of never learning how to fully comprehend what they read.

Of that group, they predict that they will actually help 10 to 12 students.

"Ideally we'd have five Reading Recovery teachers to adequately staff this program," Ms. Crary says

"It ought to be fully implemented to help kids who need an extra push."

Next year, Ms. Royal and Ms. Crary hope to set up a plan that they feel would work better by helping more children. Their plans include adding more teachers and not requiring those teachers to also teach a regular class.

That method would enable the teachers to help more students, not just the eight students at the very bottom of the literacy skills list.

However, available funding through the school system remains to be seen, and teachers like Ms. Royal and Ms. Crary must wait to see how far Reading Recovery can stretch itself next year.

# THE KID'S PAGE

## Heroes and Freedom Fighters

Written by students of Union Primary School for everyone to enjoy!



**George Washington**

George Washington was born on the shores of the Potomac River.

Lyndsey D.

He was known as the father of his country.

Victoria Shadid

George Washington was known not to tell a lie.

Anna Gibbons

George Washington was our first president.

Nicole White

Washington rode the fields in a snowstorm, he caught a severe cold and died Dec. 14, 1799.

**Harriet Tubman**

Harriet tubman (a slave) was born about 1820. Her grandparents on both sides were slaves, who had been brought to America from Africa. Sometime after 1725, she helped at least three hundred slaves escape to freedom. Most of them were members of her own family. She died on March 10, 1913.

Renata Hankins

**My Car**

My car is an oil tanker. It goes to gas stations across North Carolina. His name is Jonathan. He is happy.

Josh Sands

My car is wild strawberry, that's the color. It is a pretty car. My dad takes me to school in it. It is fun to ride in it.

Brandy Davits



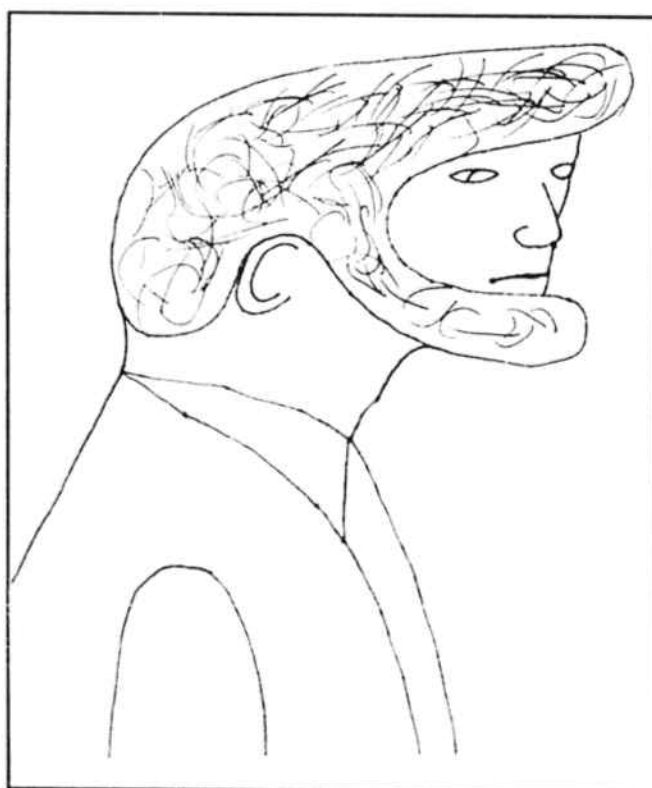
**Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Martin fought for his rights, and he fought for other peoples rights too. And he said, "He wouldn't stop."

Shannon Reese

Martin Luther King was an American civil rights leader. Dr. Martin Luther King won the Nobel Peace Prize.

Sarah Spaycl



**Abraham Lincoln**

Did you know that Abe Lincoln learned how to do math on a fire shovel? He added and subtracted. Then he cleaned the shovel off and started all over again.

Bert Parker

He was known as Honest Abe.

Heather Culler

Abraham Lincoln was our 16th president of the United States.

Shiquanda Stokes

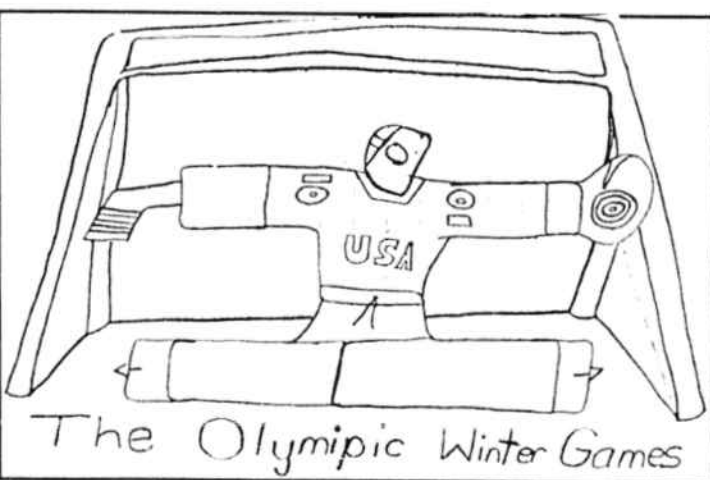
Abraham Lincoln was born in Kentucky on February 12, 1809.

Eric Hayes

**Ice Hockey**

Ice hockey. Slap puck in goal  
Ice warrior skating, fight for puck.  
Exciting, rough, hard-hitting,  
cold, fast  
Face-off

Adam Vitale



Sean Goforth

I love my mother  
She let's me do stuff sometimes.  
She cares about me.

Khandon Frink

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