

Where Are They Now?

Ream's Story: Success Through Collaboration and Teamwork

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Her long, thick black braid and quiet demeanor didn't distinguish her from other first graders attending Salina Elementary in Dearborn, home of the largest population of Arabic speaking students outside the Middle East. As so many second language learners are, she too was shy, and I just thought she was reluctant to speak. But, Ream Alsafari was truly a different case. There was concern about Ream in kindergarten. It was noted that she was extremely quiet. She did not socialize much with other students and there was concern that she was possibly a "selective mute" with little to no oral language. The kindergarten teacher, however, realized that Ream spoke both Arabic and English. But, because Ream remained very reluctant to participate in class in either language, the teacher was concerned about her hearing and noted the recommendation of a hearing exam in Ream's folder. Ream's name was added to a screening list.

In kindergarten Ream was also identified for consideration for the Reading Recovery intervention on the teacher's alternate ranking form. The following fall, first grade for Ream, the teachers discussed whether Ream should be selected due to her overall lack of response. Contact was made with our teacher leaders at the site. The response was short: absolutely take her.



Reading Recovery teacher Beth Gorman (left) suggested that Ream needed a multifaceted approach to facilitate her learning, with special considerations across her entire school environment and experience. "It was the individual, tutorial setting that allowed Ream to learn to read," Beth said.

So, Ream became my Reading Recovery student the first week of school. On the first and second day of Roaming Around the Known, I noticed how intently Ream watched my face when I spoke. Further, I concluded that her speech and articulation patterns were distinctive of hearing loss. Fortunately, my first degree years ago had been as a hearing impaired teacher. It seemed to be providence that Ream would be my student. I observed her carefully and

recorded observations meticulously this first week. She was always intent on my face so she could lip read, and I found her to be bright and eager in the one-to-one tutorial setting of Reading Recovery.

I contacted the district's hearing impaired (HI) consultant to arrange for a screening as soon as possible. The consultant screened Ream in September and was so concerned with the results that she immediately con-

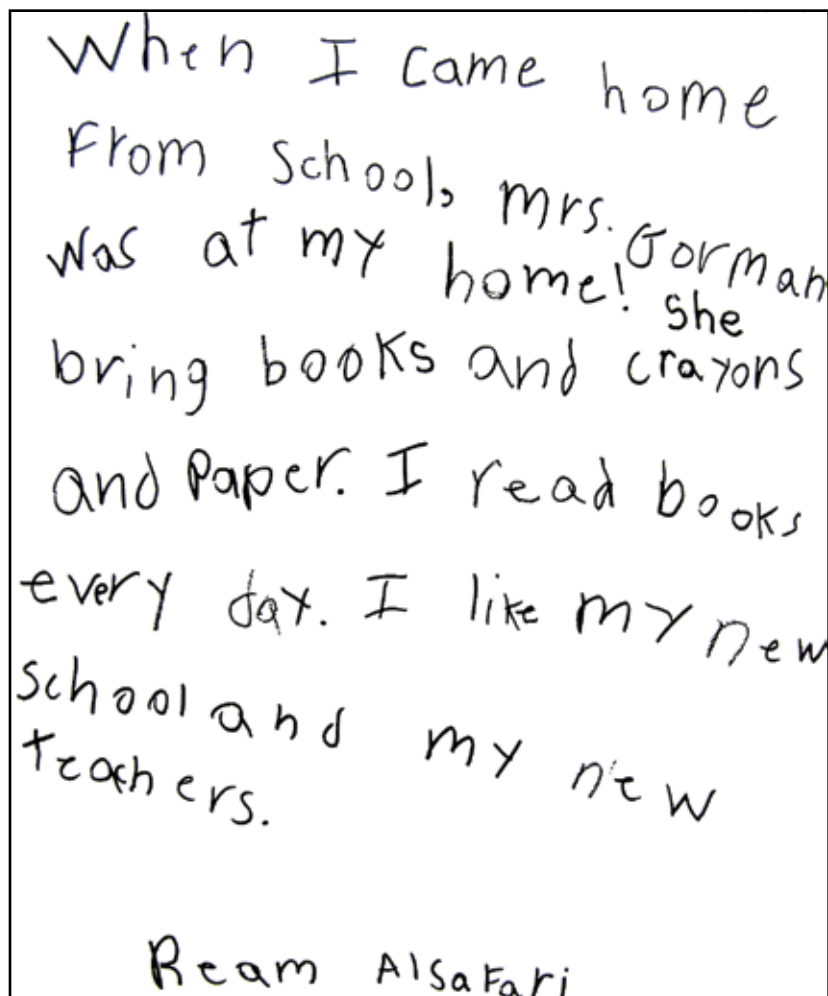
tacted her supervisor to administer far more extensive testing. The family was invited to the school, and the gravity of the situation was explained. The parents were very willing to follow the recommendations of the HI consultant. They subsequently made an appointment for Ream with a specialist at the renowned Children's Hospital of Michigan, and she was scheduled for an appointment with an ear, nose, and throat doctor for comprehensive testing. I circled the date of that appointment on my calendar, approximately a month from the time of the call, and anxiously awaited the day.

In the meantime, we continued our Reading Recovery lessons. Throughout the fall, all of us—the classroom teacher, the HI consultant, and I—met with the parents frequently and communicated by phone and email. Based on my 20 years of experience as a teacher, I suggested that Ream needed a multifaceted approach to facilitate her learning, with special considerations across her entire school environment and experience. The classroom teacher was beginning her first year of teaching; yet, she was very committed to working with me to provide all the support necessary for Ream to succeed in school. We ate lunch together often to discuss Ream's progress, and she made classroom modifications. I also conferred with the art, music, gym, and media teachers to make sure accommodations were made for Ream in those classes. (Basic recommendations were helpful and included these: Have her sit in the front of the room. Look directly at her when speaking. Use the amplification system available at all times.)

It took 30 days for the first available opening at the hospital. On the day of the appointment, I was surprised to find Ream in school! Unfortunately, Ream's father had been unable to take her to the appointment due to unforeseen circumstances, and her mother did not drive. This appointment was crucial.

Reading Recovery teachers do whatever it takes to get the job done, and I immediately began looking for an alternative plan for transportation. I contacted her family and worked with our principal, Nadia Youmans, and

the classroom teacher to make a plan work. Luckily, the HI consultant was able to drive Ream, her mother, and an interpreter to the hospital. Ream was able to make her appointment! Ream was diagnosed with a moderate-to-severe hearing loss in both ears and from there began the process of getting hearing aids, receiving her first pair at the end of November. In December 2006, Ream successfully discontinued from Reading Recovery lessons reading at Level 14. She was in the highest reading group in her first-grade class.



When I came home
From school, Mrs. Gorman
was at my home! She
bring books and crayons
and paper. I read books
every day. I like my new
school and my new
teachers.

Ream AlSafari

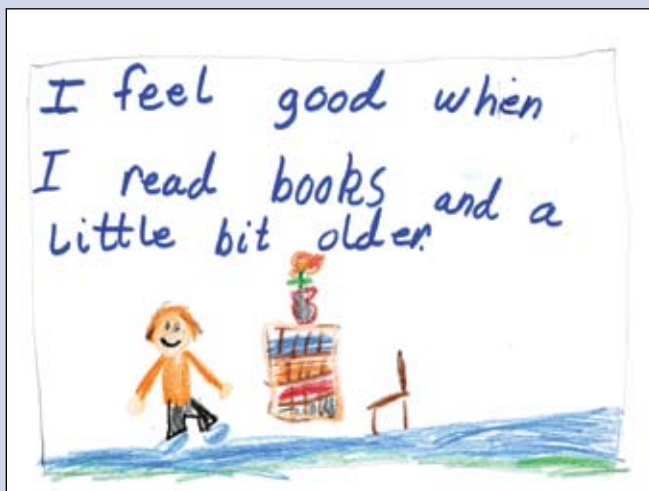
Now in second grade, Ream wrote this note in the fall when she received a surprise visit from her Reading Recovery teacher, Beth Gorman.

It was the individual, tutorial setting of Reading Recovery that allowed Ream to learn to read. Ream was eager to learn and the fact that she received Reading Recovery lessons specifically designed for her was essential. For example, because Ream could not hear words, it was important for me to link all new word learning to the known, and this also pertained to the sounds of words. The sounds of could, would, and should had to be linked to the sound of a known word she could hear, like good. Teaching onset and rime was

important. This is how she figured out pronunciations. We often used a mirror so that I could model articulation of words. We photocopied pictures from the stories she read, glued them in her writing notebook, and used those as a springboard for writing. She acquired new language structures and word meanings from the stories she read. As lessons progressed, it was helpful for me to collaborate with a former Reading Recovery teacher in the district who currently works as a teacher for the hearing impaired.

Ream was a bright girl who needed specialized support and instruction to accelerate. Reading Recovery provided just that. She grew by leaps and bounds and used her strengths to propel her learning forward, as I did the same. Ream became an enthusiastic reader and writer. Today Ream attends a school that serves the hearing impaired. Her second-grade teacher reports she is reading and writing at grade level, and she is mainstreamed for all language arts work. Ream is an example of how the dual aims of Reading Recovery changed a life and made a difference.

Reading Recovery Student Artists



Shane Bradley
Gadsen, Alabama



Audrey Beverage
Portales, New Mexico