

Reading Recovery Program Critique

Reading Recovery data report system is biased

- Most of the data that says that Reading Recovery is successful was collected and analyzed by its own evaluation system.
- Reading Recovery teachers submit their success rate data to supervisors. The supervisors in turn use these data to evaluate the teacher's effectiveness.
- Only the students who are considered successful are counted in the overall Reading Recovery success rate. Children not making adequate progress are taken out of the program and not counted during success rate calculations.

Reading Recovery gets unfair standards of excellence

- One goal of Reading Recovery is that students upon completion will be at the average reading level of their classmates. Therefore students in low S~S schools have lower expectations than higher SES schools, which may be interpreted as holding lower expectations for minority students.
- Reading Recovery standards do not meet national standards

Reading Recovery fails to positively effect overall school achievement levels

- "Both Reading Recovery advocates and critics agree... [that] Reading Recovery had no positive effects on overall school achievement"(Hiebert, 1994).
- Reading Recovery services only a select few students per school.

Reading Recovery fails to lessen the need for students to require other services therefore; it is extremely expensive and does not save on other program costs.

- Approximately 90% of students qualifying for Reading Recovery continue to need other learning services such as Title I and/or special education.
- Successful completion of Reading Recovery does not mean that the children are readers.

There are other research-based alternatives (other than Reading Recovery) that are more effective

- Children working with teaching assistants with little training and few teaching materials outperformed children in Reading Recovery when their overall achievement was compared (Fincher, 1991).
- Students in Reading Recovery often struggle with reading when they return to the mainstream classroom. This is possibly because the contextual strategies taught in Reading Recovery are not as applicable when reading authentic texts.

For additional information and specific research please see the following
Grossen, B., Coulter, G., & Ruggles, B. Reading Recovery: An Evaluation of Benefits and Costs. [Online].
Available: <http://www.uoregon.edu/~bgrossen/rr.htm> [2001, February 28].

READING RECOVERY:

A summary of an evaluation of this widely adopted program

What is Reading Recovery? It is a program developed by a New Zealand educator, Marie Clay, where program-trained teachers provide one-on-one tutoring in 30-minute daily sessions to the lowest 10-20% of a first-grade class who have prerequisite skills for Reading Recovery.

Evaluation Findings:

- **Measures used to evaluate RR are aligned to specific tasks taught within program (indicates bias)**
- **Inequity among schools because there is no standard level of average reading level in a class (inequity between low-income schools and others)**
- **Overall school achievement scores do not improve with use of RR**
- **Misleading data regarding the success of children in RR (does not include low students not serviced or students who don't complete program because they are not progressing)**
- **Does not eliminate the need for other reading services (Title 1)**
- **Does not eliminate the need for special education**
- **RR does not service the lowest performing children**
- **Learning rate of returned RR children is slower than that of other low-achieving students**
- **No advantage for RR on measures of authentic text**
- **Not as effective as Success for All and Wallach and Wallach programs**
- **Extremely expensive**
- **Changing regular classroom programs to include in phonemic awareness and systematic phonics with decodable texts is more effective than RR**
- **RR research design flawed (does not sample curriculum or look at local norms when releasing students as successful)**
- **Flawed data collection procedures (success data collected by evaluated teachers)**
- **Children not meeting entry level requirements are not accepted into RR**
- **Success in RR rarely means the child is a reader**
- **Other reading programs/intervention are just as effective as RR**
- **Instructional techniques used in RR are inconsistent with the techniques supported by evidence from scientific intervention research**

January 21, 2003

Reading Recovery What does the research say?

Reading Recovery is a pull out program for low performing first graders in which they work one-on-one for ½ hour a day with a specially trained teacher. While this program is popular nationally, there are some problems associated with it that districts that currently use it or are thinking about adopting it should know.

- Reading Recovery teachers themselves have collected all of the data that reports the success of Reading Recovery. This does not create an unbiased report.
- Success reports are not accurate because Reading Recovery uses predictable text. While Reading Recovery students will do well with a test that uses predictable text, studies show that they do not do well with authentic text.
- The goal of Reading Recovery is to bring the lowest pupils to the average level of their class, not the more equitable national average. So, while they might be deemed successful in Reading Recovery, they may still fall far short of the national average. This might especially affect minority children.
- While Reading Recovery may help individual children, Reading Recover does not improve overall school achievement scores.
- Reading Recovery's claim of 75-85% success rate is inaccurate.
 - Many students are dropped from the program because they are not benefiting from it. These students are not included in the percentages reported from Reading Recovery.
 - Success in Reading Recovery language means that the child has improved to the average of their class, not necessarily that the child is a reader.
- When all eligible students are included in the percentages of success, only 6.5% reached national norms.
- Reading Recovery students are just as likely as other students to be retained, placed in special education, or qualify for Title I services.
- Other common Title I programs actually have a higher success rate and are much cheaper.
- Because of the one-on-one atmosphere, Reading Recovery leaves behind a large number of students who need services.

While it leads to some learning, is Reading Recovery worth the cost and the number of students left behind? For the cost of Reading Recovery, class sizes could be reduced and teachers retrained to instruct all of their students in a more effective, researched-based environment.

January 21, 2002

What Does the Research Say About Reading Recovery?

In most cases, the research on Reading Recovery has been very positive; however, various independent evaluations have brought forth some very interesting findings. The Reading Recovery data reporting system seems to be flawed. The persons responsible for Reading Recovery success collect the data on success, omitting half the data on children eligible for the program—children who lacked prerequisite skills or were identified for special education and the children who are served but do not complete the program for any number of reasons.

Also, when success is measured, emphasis is placed on tasks that are parallel with the strategies taught in Reading Recovery—predictable text is used rather than authentic text. The goal of Reading Recovery is to bring the lowest students to the average level of their class. This means in low-achieving schools, students who complete the program, may still be nonreaders by a national standard. Therefore, being successful with Reading Recovery doesn't mean that children are readers. This, also, means that the standard for successful completion is not equitable because it results in lower expectations for children in lower achieving schools, which could potentially violate constitutional law.

Next, Reading Recovery does not reduce the need for other reading services—Title I and special education, and children who are successful in Reading Recovery are not always successful later. They do not continue to learn at the same rate as the other children. Moreover, the learning rate of returned Reading Recovery students was slower than that of other low-achieving students. Over a five-year study, it was found that Title I students produced higher measures using authentic text and other standardized measures. Reading Recovery students do not get enough exposure to authentic text. They perform much better on predictable text measures.

Reading Recovery is very expensive, and it doesn't save on other costs. The cost of Reading Recovery (30 hours per child) exceeds the national average per pupil cost for one full year of schooling. Nearly 90% of students eligible for Reading Recovery continue to need other compensatory services. For the cost of one year of Reading Recovery in a school, class sizes could be reduced and the whole school's early literacy program could be redesigned, which would be a one-time-only investment, rather than a year-after-year investment: and, the whole school would benefit. Reading Recovery does not raise overall school achievement levels.