Is Reading Recovery a beneficial reading program to have implemented in a school district?

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Is Reading Recovery a beneficial reading program to have implemented in a school district?

Abstract
Reading Recovery is an instructional program that offers individualized reading and writing instruction to struggling first graders. This program is costly and with the limited number of first graders that can be served, it raises the question: Is Reading Recovery really beneficial in the long run?

The purpose of this paper is to explain the importance that Reading Recovery has to offer. While this program may be costly, Reading Recovery children usually complete their series of lessons within 12 - 20 weeks. After that time, other children take their place. With good classroom instruction, many children who discontinue Reading Recovery continue to progress with their classmates without other interventions.
Is Reading Recovery a Beneficial Reading Program to Have Implemented in a School District?

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# Table of Contents

## CHAPTER 1
- Introduction ........................................................................... 1
- Statement of Problem .......................................................... 2
- Significance of Problem ......................................................... 3
- Definition of Terms ............................................................... 4
- Organization of Research Paper ........................................... 6

## CHAPTER 2
- History of Reading Recovery .................................................. 7
- The Observation Survey ......................................................... 10
- Reading Strategies ................................................................ 12
- The Reading Recovery Lesson .............................................. 13

## Chapter 3
- Criticism of Reading Recovery ................................................ 18
- Benefits of Reading Recovery ............................................... 20
- Small-Group Literacy Instruction ........................................... 23
- A Positive Outcome other than Literacy Alone ....................... 25

## Chapter 4
- Three Most Common Criticisms of Reading Recovery .............. 28
- What the Evidence says about the Criticisms ......................... 29

## Chapter 5
- PowerPoint Slides for School Board Presentation ................... 34
Chapter 1

Introduction

The concept of one-to-one instruction is not new to education. One-to-one instruction has been around for years as evidenced in the rural one room schoolhouse instruction. This concept still exists today. There are private tutors, reading clinics, and numerous other settings within school buildings that offer one-to-one instruction (Askew & Simpson 2004). Music lessons, sports, speech therapy, and certain special education classes all provide one-to-one instruction. When looking closely at all of the individualized instruction that occurs in a school building, one might be surprised.

Outside of the school setting there are numerous people who receive some sort of one-to-one assistance in one form or another. Think of doctor’s appointments, sessions with a counselor, a meeting with a lawyer and the list goes on. People benefit from individualized instruction. So when looking at a critical time in an early learners life in literacy, can one-to-one instruction really make an impact in this setting?
Statement of Problem

Reading Recovery is an instructional program that offers individualized reading and writing instruction to struggling first graders. A drawback with Reading Recovery is that one Reading Recovery teacher is only able to serve about eight students a year. This program is costly and with the limited number of first graders that can be served, it raises the question: Is Reading Recovery really beneficial in the long run?

When children are not meeting the expectations of the beginning literacy skills needed in first grade, they need to have some sort of early intervention in order to give them the support they need to catch up to their peers. Reading Recovery students often lack the reading and writing skills that are essential for further growth and survival in first grade. They have not developed reading and/or writing skills that are important for them to become independent learners in the classroom.

Reading Recovery is one program that was developed to give those struggling students the boost they need to be more confident in themselves as a reader and writer in order for them to catch up to their peers and perform on grade level. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to explain the importance that Reading Recovery has to offer. Is Reading Recovery a beneficial reading program to have implemented in a
school district? Education programs continue to get cut yearly, which makes one wonder, is one-to-one instruction worth it and cost effective? Does this program prove to have lasting effects on a student’s progress?

While this program may be costly, Reading Recovery children usually complete their series of lessons within 12-20 weeks. After that time, other children take their place. With good classroom instruction, many children who discontinue Reading Recovery continue to progress with their classmates without other interventions. “Strong Reading Recovery implementation, then, can accomplish a huge savings when compared to the costs associated with retention, special education, and compensatory education services for years to follow” (Askew & Simpson 2004 p. 36).

**The Significance of the Problem**

The significance of Reading Recovery is that it allows children individualized daily one-on-one instruction for 30 minutes. The lessons are based on a child’s strengths and weaknesses. The teacher is able to gear the lesson to the specific need that a child may have, thus accelerating the literacy skills of that child. The one-to-one instruction is crucial for this accelerated growth. By working with the child individually, the teacher is able to spend time in specific areas that will help the child progress further in his/her
reading and writing skills. Another advantage of the one-to-one instruction is that it often times is able to increase a child’s self esteem, which also allows the child to take more risks as a learner. These risks can be great teachable moments for children in which they learn from their own efforts.

One of the biggest arguments against Reading Recovery is generally related to the cost. Individualized instruction sounds costly. However, in Reading Recovery, children usually complete their series of lessons within 12-20 weeks. After that time, other children take their place. With good classroom instruction, many children who discontinue Reading Recovery continue to progress with their classmates without other interventions.

**Definition of Terms**

*At-risk* - a child who is struggling learning how to read and write and is currently not performing reading and writing skills on grade level.

*Discontinued program* - the Reading Recovery program ends after 12-20 weeks depending on the child’s progress. At the end of his/her program the child is administered the Observation Survey. If he/she scores on grade level then he/she is considered to have discontinued the Reading Recovery program without further intervention.
**Recommended Action** - after 20 weeks of a child being in Reading Recovery the child is administered the Observation Survey. If the child does not score well in all areas of this test, his/her program is considered discontinued and further recommended action is advised, such as Title I support, or in some cases problem solving which can also lead to special needs intervention.

**Exited Program** - after being given 20 weeks of lessons and a child is not performing on grade level according to his/her results on the Observation Survey, the Reading Recovery teacher will recommend further intervention. The intervention may consist of small group instruction performed by a Title I teacher or he/she may be recommended for problem solving and be referred to special needs.

**Observation Survey** - an observation of reading and writing tasks administered by a trained Reading Recovery teacher. The survey consists of 6 main parts developed by Marie Clay. The results are used to identify children who are in need of further assistance. These results are then used as a basis of the beginning lessons of Reading Recovery.

**Continuing Contact** - on going professional development for trained Reading Recovery teachers. This training happens monthly during the school year in order for a Reading Recovery teacher to remain certified to teach Reading Recovery.
Self-extending system - an ongoing process whereas the child is learning from his/her own reading and writing strategies.

**Organization of Research Paper**

Chapter 1 of this paper has provided an introduction to Reading Recovery, including the benefits of implementing Reading Recovery and the costs of not implementing Reading Recovery. Chapter 2 will give the history of Reading Recovery and state the purpose and goals of the program. Chapter 3 will state the criticism as well as the praise of Reading Recovery. Chapter 4 will sum up what all of the research says and will state the critical items to be taken from the research. Chapter 5 will include a PowerPoint presentation that could be presented to a school board if ever faced with the decision of having to cut Reading Recovery due to financial constraints.
Chapter 2

This chapter will describe the history of Reading Recovery and how it originated. It will also give an understanding of the purpose of Reading Recovery as well as how children are selected for the program. The Observation Survey, which is used for selection of children, will be described. The reading strategies that are important for becoming an independent reader will then be listed and explained followed by the components of a Reading Recovery lesson.

History of Reading Recovery

Reading Recovery originated in Auckland, New Zealand, and was created by Marie Clay over 30 years ago. Reading Recovery has since spread to many other parts of the world, including the United States, which first began in 1984. Since then, approximately 75% of the students who were in the program reach grade level performance in reading and writing in 12-20 weeks. Reading Recovery is a short-term early literacy intervention for first graders who have the lowest achievement in literacy learning. A trained Reading Recovery teacher delivers reading and writing instruction daily for 30 minute lessons. The lessons are designed for each individual student’s needs. The goal of the intervention is for students to develop strategies that will help them in writing and reading so that they may perform on grade level.
Due to the overwhelming theories about the causes of reading and writing difficulties there is little evidence of what is successful. Marie Clay never questioned causes of reading difficulty or compared one treatment to another; on the other hand, she worked hard at trying to solve the problem that could be used in an educational system. She closely watched children becoming confused and failing to progress when it came to literacy learning. She began a two year research and developmental plan as part of a research team of six literacy teachers. Through monitoring of children’s difficulties and teacher’s responses the Reading Recovery program was developed. “Education is a product of society, and its values and practices are not amenable to identical replication in every country. Yet Reading Recovery has been able to adapt to different setting and populations, look fundamentally the same, and produce similar outcomes, if it is supported by a recognized training course” (Clay 1994, p. 10).

One important aspect of Reading Recovery is that no child is excluded from the program for any reason. The only criterion is that they are low in literacy achievement. “The program must adapt to the specific needs of a particular child” (Clay 1994, p. 10). After students gain control of their literacy learning and can problem-solve no matter what kind of instruction is given to them, they are exited out of the program. Schools
will have low numbers of children with literacy difficulties and a much lower number of students needing special services when Reading Recovery is implemented.

Reading Recovery is an early intervention that is designed to work with the lowest achieving first graders who are having difficulty learning how to read and write. Once a child is selected for the program he/she meets with a trained Reading Recovery teacher for 12-20 weeks for a daily 30 minute lesson. The lessons are designed to specifically meet the needs of the individual student. The goal of the program is for students to perform reading and writing skills comparable to their peers working on grade level.

Children are selected for the Reading Recovery program by studying the Observation Surveys of the lowest performing first graders. Classroom teachers and the trained Reading Recovery teacher discuss the results, and the children are then selected for the program. The number of children who are able to receive Reading Recovery vary from school to school within the school district. A minimum of 4 students per trained Reading Recovery teacher is generally required; however, there have been instances in some districts where more have been allowed.
The Observation Survey

There are six main parts of the Observation Survey that measure the reading and writing skills of a particular child.

1. The first part is the Letter Identification where the child is asked to identify 54 upper and lower case letters. This section is used by the teacher to identify what the child knows about upper and lower case letters, what letters are known and unknown by the child, and what confusions about particular letters that a child may have.

2. The second part of the survey is the Word Test. This part consists of having the child read a list of 20 high-frequency words. The teacher is then able to record what words are known and/or any attempts made by the child on an unknown word. This part can often help a teacher speculate what strategies a child may or may not be using while reading.

3. The third part is known as Concepts about Print or commonly referred to as C.A.P. This part of the survey consists of the teacher reading a specific book used only for this part of the test. The book contains some errors that are purposely printed that way in order to see if the child is paying close attention to the items in the book. This part of the survey tells the teacher about a
child’s knowledge of book handling skills and his/her specific knowledge of print. Set questions are asked on each page of the book in order to determine the knowledge of the child on a certain concept of print.

4. The fourth part consists of having the child write all of his/her known words on a blank piece of paper. The **Writing Vocabulary** section allows for ten minutes of writing. If needed, the teacher is allowed to prompt the student for possible words that he/she may know.

5. The fifth part is called **Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words**. A specific sentence containing 37 phonemes is read to the child. The child is asked to write down what he/she hears while the teacher reads the sentence to the child.

6. The last part of the survey is called **Text Reading**. The child is asked to read a leveled book that is contained in the testing materials used only for Reading Recovery. The teacher takes a running record of the child’s reading. The running record is then scored to see how well he/she performed on the reading. If he/she scores 95% or higher, the teacher will give the child the next level of book. If the child scores between 90%–94% that is considered an independent reading level. If the score is below 90% then it is considered too hard and is also
known as frustration level. The teacher will then have the child read a lower level book.

**Reading Strategies**

Clay believed that there are specific strategies that all effective readers need to develop and use. These strategies are often known as “in-the-head” processes. They can be noted through observation through the child’s reading processes and may show evidence that strategies are being used (Pinnell 1989). The strategies that Clay identified as characteristics of effective readers are as follows:

**Early strategies for operating on print** means that readers need to know how to read left to right, are able to have one-to-one matching while reading, and are able to return sweep. By studying the results of an individual child’s Observation Summary on the Concepts about Print component, the teacher can get a good understanding if these concepts are understood by the child. This part tells the teacher whether or not the child understands the first and last concept, knows the difference between a word and letter, notices if there is a letter or word order change, and knows the meaning of periods, question marks, commas, and quotation marks.

**Self-monitoring** is done when readers are able to think about what they are reading and whether their reading does not look right or sound right. This is often done without prompting
and can be noticed whether an error is corrected or not. This strategy can also be observed when the child is putting his/her cut-up sentence back together.

Cross-checking is when a child notices discrepancies in his/her own reading by checking one kind of information with another. This is not seen as much in later lessons.

Searching for cues means that a reader is actively problem solving while reading by rereading, using the picture for clues, thinking about what would make sense, or attempting to decode the word.

Self-correction is when readers independently are able to correct their own mistakes by using strategies when they need them (Pinnell, 1989 p. 166-167).

The Reading Recovery Lesson

There are six main parts in a Reading Recovery lesson.

1) **Reading Familiar books** - the child starts off his/her lesson by reading 2-3 familiar books. Reading these books helps him/her read better and he/she can work on the strategies that the Reading Recovery teacher has taught him/her.

2) **Running Record** - the Reading Recovery teacher then takes a running record of the new book that was introduced in the previous lesson. Once the running record is taken, the teacher selects one to two things from the reading that
will help the child think about a good effort that he/she made or something that he/she needs to think about when reading that will help him/her next time.

3) **Letter and Word Work** - After the running record, the teacher and child go up to the white board and do some letter and word work with magnetic letters. Here the child distinguishes different characteristics by doing a letter sort with magnetic letters. Assembling words and word parts is also part of the word work that is done at the white board. The child will then build new words that will help him/her become a better reader and writer. The teacher gives specific words each day for the child to build. The teacher scaffolds on what the child knows and then will make the task increasingly more difficult as time passes, depending on what the child may need next.

4) **Writing Journal** - The teacher and child have a meaningful conversation about something that he/she enjoys or about a book that he/she has read. The child then composes a story from the conversation and writes it down in his/her own writing journal. The teacher selects words that may pose a problem to the child and then makes either sound or letter boxes for the child to figure the word out. The child is asked to say the word slowly and records what he/she hears. Then he/she writes the letters in the boxes.
The teacher has the child write the word several times so he/she can work on learning the new word.

5) **Cut-up sentence** - After the child writes his/her story, the teacher writes it on a sentence strip and cuts it up. The child is then asked to put it back together, kind of like a puzzle. The teacher will then put it in an envelope for the child to take home so he/she can put it back together.

6) **New Book** - the last part of the lesson is when the teacher introduces a new story to the child. The teacher helps the child think about new or important words in the story. If he/she runs into a tricky word, the teacher will ask the child questions to help him/her think of a way to solve that word. The teacher is trying to teach the child all the approaches taken by good readers. This book will be used for the next days' running record.

At the end of every lesson 2-3 familiar books will go home with the students in their book bag to read with a parent/guardian at home. The books need to come back to school every day in order for students to get new books. Reading with someone at home gives the child a chance to gain confidence in him/her self as a reader and gives him/her the practice he/she needs to be a better reader.
Reading Recovery is different from traditional remedial programs. It begins right away in the first grade and offers intensive one-on-one support from a trained teacher. The lessons focus on the strengths on the child instead of weaknesses. The teacher writes lessons for the specific needs of the child and builds on what he/she already knows. A Reading Recovery lesson immerses the child in reading and writing rather than drilling on skills and “items” of knowledge. The program expects accelerated progress from the lowest achievers. It also requires that the instructional program be adjusted to each child’s needs and make the most of each child’s strengths (Pinnell 1989 p. 161).

The training that a Reading Recovery teacher must go through is an extensive one year class with a trained teacher leader who has received specialized training in every aspect of Reading Recovery. Even after the one year of training for teachers, they must continue to go to monthly professional development, which is also called continuing contact. During these meetings the teacher will teach a lesson with one of his/her Reading Recovery students behind a two way mirror, also known as teaching behind the glass. This gives a powerful opportunity for the teachers in the continuing contact group to learn from one another and to have in-depth discussions.
concerning student learning. This training continues each year in order for a Reading Recovery teacher to remain certified.

Summary

The history of Reading Recovery is quite extensive and is a complex program. There are many components that are involved with the program making it specific to each child’s needs in reading and writing. Given that Reading Recovery only works with one child at a time, what does research say about the effectiveness of the program? Chapter 3 will take a more in-depth look at the criticism and benefits of Reading Recovery.
Chapter 3

This chapter will discuss the criticism of Reading Recovery and offer some other alternative forms of intervention. The benefits and positive outcomes of Reading Recovery will also be discussed. Research will be presented from both sides in order to give a complete synopsis of the program. Another approach of an intervention that stems from the Reading Recovery program will also be examined.

Criticism of Reading Recovery

Some argue that Reading Recovery does not give long enough support needed for some children to catch up to their peers. After the 20 week program is finished and the children still struggle in their reading and writing efforts they are considered for recommended action. This may require a small group setting with instruction given by a Title I teacher. The more weight one gives to other aspects inherent in children (e.g. their cognitive and linguistic abilities) and the more weight one gives to environmental factors (e.g. the input of home and school) the more likely it is that the effectiveness of targeted early intervention will not be sustained in the long term (Hurry and Silva 2007).

Another argument of Reading Recovery is the limited number of students that Reading Recovery can serve in a year. A critic of Reading Recovery, Rasinski (1995) wonders about the children
who struggle in reading, but receive no help in achieving independence because the majority of the schools’ resources were given to help only a limited number of first-grade students in Reading Recovery. His concern is if it is appropriate to bring some students up to independence level while allowing others to flounder for a lack of resources?

The cost of Reading Recovery is also an issue. Reading Recovery is an expensive program to have implemented in a school district. Much cost is involved in the start-up process as well as the ongoing process. The start-up costs include teacher leader salary, tuition for Reading Recovery classes, and building the facilities necessary to conduct Reading Recovery training. The ongoing costs of Reading Recovery include the teacher leader salary and travel expenses, teacher salaries, books and materials for lessons and research, as well as ongoing professional development for teacher leaders and teachers (Neagle 2000).

Rasinski (1995) believes that we need to consider other ways to achieve similar instructional effects at lower costs. His own research at Kent State, for example, suggests that parents can be trained to provide effective one-to-one instructional support and assistance in reading to their children on an almost cost-free or very low-cost basis.
It is crucial that with any early intervention results are lasting long-term effects. There is an overwhelming amount of research that supports Reading Recovery; however, there are some researchers who question the long-term effects of the program. It is argued that while Reading Recovery shows success within the first two years after receiving the program, the gains begin to fade in the third year.

With only one exception (Rowe cited in Hurry and Silva 2007 p. 4), the international evidence of longer-term effects of Reading Recovery does not support the hypothesis that Reading Recovery can alter children’s ‘learning curve’ beyond the period of intervention, though gains made during the intervention tend to be maintained (Shanahan & Barr, cited in Hurry and Silva 2007 p. 4).

**Benefits of Reading Recovery**

One study conducted by Askew & Frasier (1994) investigated the sustained effects of the Reading Recovery program on second grade children who successfully completed the program. The children’s literacy scores were observed a year or more following the intervention. In addition, the classroom teachers offered their insights on the Reading Recovery program effects, the literacy behaviors, and the school performance of the children.
A pilot study and a main study were conducted. There were 50 discontinued children randomly selected from three different sites at the end of their second grade year in the pilot study. Another 50 children from a random group of all regular first grade classrooms in Reading Recovery schools from three different sites were selected for the pilot. The main study consisted of 54 children who had successfully discontinued from Reading Recovery during their first grade year and another group of 53 children who were randomly selected from all second graders in the same schools. Both groups had similar numbers of males and females and included Anglo, African American, Hispanic, and Asian ethnicities.

Three literacy tasks were used to assess the performance of the students. The three tasks included measures of oral reading of text, dictation, and spelling. The testing was completed by Reading Recovery teacher leaders at the end of the school year. The findings in both the pilot study and the main study showed that discontinued Reading Recovery students sustained their literacy gains at least a year or more after receiving the intervention. They were able to read text levels at or above their grade level and compared similar to their peers on the three literacy measures. The results also indicated that there were no major differences between either group in any area (Askew & Frasier, 1994).
One may argue that small groups are more effective than Reading Recovery because they reach more students. While small groups can be effective in the later years, one-to-one instruction seems to be much more effective at an earlier age. Evidence shows for a small number of young children who are at high risk of literacy learning, one-to-one teaching for a brief period of time is essential for building an initial literacy foundation on which all future learning will be achieved (Askew & Simpson 2004).

Other factors have had an impact on the decision to use small groups for reading instruction compared to one-on-one instruction. It is much easier to control behavior management in one-to-one teaching as opposed to a small group; therefore, more teaching can be accomplished. Also, a teacher cannot predict the needs of every child and differences are apparent among every learner. Another downside to students receiving small group instruction is that in many areas, schools are swayed to provide instructional support to children in grades required to take state mandated tests.

However, by not providing intervention at an early age, children's struggles with reading continue to worsen, which can cause the number of children who need extra support to increase drastically. When weighing out the options, the short term
intense intervention that Reading Recovery provides far outweighs future costs to schools and society.

The goal of Reading Recovery is not progress; the goal is to enable a child at a very young age to develop a self-extending system for reading. This enables independent problem solving and the ability to learn about reading while reading (Pinnell et al., 1995). The specific needs of each student must be considered in order to make a significant difference. We need to think about what gain is needed to make a noteworthy impact for each student and what support each student needs to achieve that gain. These children must become independent readers early on in their schooling (Pinnell et al., 1995 p. 274).

**Small Group Literacy Instruction**

A study conducted by The Ohio State University (Allen & Dorn 1996) focused on a way to supplement existing Reading Recovery programs with small-group early literacy instruction. The approach was developed to provide additional support for first grade children who needed early intervention where there was no space in the Reading Recovery program at the beginning of the year. There became a concern due to the high number of low-achieving first graders in Reading Recovery schools in Arkansas. The fear that without additional support, the children who were
unable to enter Reading Recovery would fall further behind in their regular classroom.

The study consisted of nine Arkansas public schools. A total of eleven teachers and 231 students participated in the study. They participated in one of the following programs: early literacy small-group only, early literacy small-group followed by Reading Recovery, or Reading Recovery only. Testing was done at the beginning and end for both Reading Recovery and small-group literacy programs. The six parts of the test included: letter identification, Ohio word test, concepts about print, writing vocabulary, dictation, and text reading. Out of the 231 students, 41% received Reading Recovery tutoring only, 40% received small-group early literacy program services only, and 19% received both services.

The combination of individual tutoring and small-group instruction enabled each Reading Recovery teacher to serve an average of 21 low-achieving children during the academic year (Allen & Dorn 1996 p. 58). The results showed that out of the 231 students, 60% received one-on-one instruction in Reading Recovery at some point during their first grade year. Out of the 93 children who received small-group instruction, 30% were average readers without having had Reading Recovery. Out of the 43 children who had small-group instruction and went right on to Reading Recovery 56% were discontinued at an average of only 25
lessons as opposed to the average of 65 lessons for discontinued Reading Recovery only children. Large gains were made in all areas of reading writing and dictation tasks when compared to other random sample first grade students in the state.

It was noted that the Reading Recovery program was the most powerful intervention that was studied. The reading/writing group that was taught by the Reading Recovery teachers proved to be not as effective. The researchers did note that these teachers did not receive training for transferring their knowledge of Reading Recovery theory to a group setting (Allen & Dorn 1996 p. 50).

**A Positive Outcome other than Literacy Alone**

Rhodes-Kline and Quaglia (1998) researched the ways in which Reading Recovery not only affects children’s literacy development, but their aspirations, which in turn will lead to other areas of the children’s lives. There have been eight conditions that positively affect student aspirations. These conditions have been founded through research and practical application in schools by the National Center for Student Aspirations (NCSA). The eight conditions are as follows: achievement, belonging, curiosity, empowerment, excitement, mentoring, risk-taking, and self-confidence.
Reading Recovery is a program that is set up to encourage and praise children’s efforts. The goal of the program is for students to become independent learners and develop a self-extending system that they continue to use in their regular classroom. These aspects of achievement are very similar to those necessary for aspirations. According to the NCSA, achievement is one of the preconditions for aspirations, Reading Recovery would be expected to affect student aspirations positively, though increased achievement, as well as student awareness of success (Rhodes-Kline & Quaglia 1998 p. 95). Basically those that achieve more may become more confident as a result.

A survey was done in one northern New England state that consisted of parents, classrooms teachers, administrators, and Reading Recovery teachers. They were all asked to respond to open ended survey questions to evaluate the Reading Recovery program. The survey was given to 1429 parents, 535 classroom teachers, 250 administrators, and 250 Reading Recovery teachers. There was a response rate of 82%.

The results of the survey showed that the parents’ felt that their children’s attitude about school and their self-esteem seemed to improve after the Reading Recovery
program. Classroom teachers’ also said that Reading Recovery affected students’ attitude and self-esteem. For example, two teachers wrote: “New confidence and self-esteem had helped in all classroom areas not just reading” and “Increased self-esteem about learning to read; attitude shift from ‘I can’t’ to ‘I can’; increased independence in the classroom” (Rhodes-Kline & Quaglia 1998 p. 97).

**Summary**

In conclusion, the impact that Reading Recovery creates far outweighs the criticism that is mentioned. Small groups are very beneficial after first grade, due the tremendous gains that can be made from the one-on-one instruction that Reading Recovery offers in first grade. While cost plays a big factor in a school district, as mentioned, the cost of Reading Recovery far outweighs the future costs of not implementing the program. “When you compare the success rate of Reading Recovery with other programs that keep children for years and never get them reading on grade level, Reading Recovery is a bargain” (Cunningham and Allington 1994).
Chapter 4

This chapter will describe the advantages and disadvantages of Reading Recovery. The three main areas of the criticism of the program will be discussed, as well as the three main benefits of the program.

Three Most Common Criticisms of Reading Recovery

The criticism that was most often found with Reading Recovery was the large cost of the program and the limited number of students that one trained Reading Recovery teacher can work within a year.

One study found that "thirty hours of instruction for one child in Reading Recovery costs more than a full year of schooling for the child" (Grossen, Coutler, and Ruggles cited in Farrall 1997). These authors recommended that instead of implementing Reading Recovery, that budget should go towards class reduction and implementation of an effective school-wide reading program.

Another criticism found with Reading Recovery is the one-to-one instruction vs. small-group instruction. A study conducted by Evans (1996 cited in Farrall), found that studies comparing Reading Recovery delivered in a one-on-one setting and Reading Recovery delivered small group setting did not show any advantage to one-on-one instruction.
The third criticism of Reading Recovery is the lack of sustainable outcomes. Shanahan and Barr (1995) suggest that substantial gains may be apparent right away, but the gains can only be maintained through additional intervention and support.

"That the effects of Reading Recovery and other early interventions are apparent for so long without such support is a testimonial to their quality. Despite the claims of many Reading Recovery advocates, however, it is unreasonable to expect this program to entirely do away with the need for later special assistance for low-achieving children." (Shanahan & Barr 1995 p. 982)

**What Evidence Says About the Criticism**

While Reading Recovery is often criticized for being an expensive program, there have been many studies that have shown how successful the program can be. Because cost comparisons are costly and complex, no studies were found that showed a comparison of Reading Recovery’s cost to other equivalent interventions. However, as Clay points out, Reading Recovery is economical for at least three reasons (Clay 2005):

1. Children move through their lessons in about 12-20 weeks.

2. After the invention, most children move forward with their average or better classmates with few needing further interventions. Cost savings include grade-level
retention, special education placements, and Title I services.

3. Successful Reading Recovery children become both readers and writers, a double benefit for the children.

A report conducted by the International Reading Association (IRA) in 1995 stated that due to Reading Recovery, many students who were at risk of failure in reading would have been identified as learning disabled. Not only does Reading Recovery teach children how to read and write, it also helps decrease the number of children who are referred and eventually placed in special needs. By receiving Reading Recovery as an early intervention, the number of children labeled with learning disabilities is reduced (Moriarty 1996).

While Reading Recovery is known to be an expensive intervention, breaking down the savings can shed a little light on the successful outcomes of the program. In one Massachusetts school district (Fall River Public Schools), it was stated that without Reading Recovery intervention, it is estimated (from past statistics) that 50 percent of the 147 program children would have been referred to special education, and 50 percent would have received Title I services. In addition, 8.6 students would have been retained and still would have required either Title I or special education
services (Moriarty 1996, pgs. 44-45). This district estimates that special education services at $1,346,165; Title I services at $366,930; and retention at $33,050, for a total cost of $1,746,145. By subtracting the Reading Recovery cost of $385,048, this school district has a net savings of $1,361,097 (Assad, 1996 as sited in Moriarty 1996).

There are a number of studies that discussed the gains that Reading Recovery children have made. The program provides significant support to the lowest performing first graders through individualized instruction. Without this one-on-one individualized instruction, these struggling readers and writers continue to fall further and further behind their peers. This problem often leads to retention, behavior problems, and social problems.

Due to the individualized instruction, the children often gain more confidence in themselves as readers and writers. The lessons written for Reading Recovery are child specific and written daily by the Reading Recovery teacher. The lessons are written according to that particular child’s needs. The teacher is constantly working on helping the child become more independent in the classroom, as well as the upcoming years of their schooling. "The teaching is highly efficient because the teacher has this precise inventory of skills and strategies and
is able to teach exactly what the child needs to know next” (What Evidence Says, 2002 p. 41).

The individualized lessons are one very important aspect of the program because it is child specific. One lesson does not fit all. The individualized lessons build on what the child needs at that particular moment which is why we see such quick results from Reading Recovery. “This explicit and intensive instruction would be weakened if teacher time was divided among several other children” (What Evidence Says, 2002 p. 35).

A number of studies have shown how successful Reading Recovery has proven to be in the later years of a child’s schooling. Clay states that one of the goals of Reading Recovery is that this high-quality early intervention will bring a low-achieving child up to average, and that he or she will then “become an average progress child” (Clay, 1985, p. 52).

Studies have shown that children who have been through the Reading Recovery program have made sustainable outcomes. One important component of this early intervention is the instruction that the child makes outside the program. “An intervention may accelerate the progress of children, but if instruction is not responsive to the higher achievement shown by children, the promise of the intervention may not be realized” (Shanahan & Barr 1995, p. 980).
The success rate of Reading Recovery is quite high with a nationwide rate ranging from 75 percent to as high as 94 percent and the child who achieves through Reading Recovery intervention sustains that success over time (DeFord, Pinnell, Lyons, & Young 1988; Deford, Pinnell, Lyons, & Place, 1990; Shanahan, Barr, Blackwell, Burkhart, 1993 as cited in Moriarty 1996). This information shows that Reading Recovery is a highly successful program.

**Summary**

In looking at both sides of the criticisms and benefits of Reading Recovery, it seems evident that there are many more positive outcomes to be gained from implementing this program within a school district. One cannot ignore the questions regarding the program. But when looking at all of the research and studies that have been done, Reading Recovery has proven to be a highly successful early intervention for struggling readers and writers.
This chapter presents a PowerPoint that will focus on why Reading Recovery should not be eliminated from a school district if budget cuts were to be made. The reasons for creating the PowerPoint will be described, as well as the intended audience, where the presentation will take place, and the desired outcomes.

**School Board Presentation**

The intended purpose of this PowerPoint is to inform the school board the importance of Reading Recovery and the impact that this program can make within the school district. The presentation will occur at the Educational Services building during the scheduled school board meeting. The PowerPoint is designed to inform the school board members, school staff, administrators, the superintendent, parents/guardians, and all interested parties, the need to have Reading Recovery implemented within the district.

The main point that I want to communicate in my presentation, is that given the information in all of the research that I have read, Reading Recovery is not an option to be cut from a school district’s budget. There is too much support for the benefits of the program and much to be lost if this program were to be cut.
While it is known that Reading Recovery is an expensive program to implement in a district, the cost far outweighs not having it. Given the fact that many school districts seem to be making budget cuts, cutting Reading Recovery from a district should not be an option due to the amount of positive benefits found in all the research.

The desired outcome of this presentation is for the school board, superintendent, and members of the audience in the meeting to gain a better understanding of Reading Recovery. I would like them to learn about the positive outcomes and strong impact that this early intervention can have not only within the district, but for every child who receives this extra support.

Following is the PowerPoint that I have created that lists the 10 benefits that Reading Recovery has to offer within a school district. Detailed information about the specific benefits that Reading Recovery offers will be stated throughout the slides in order to inform the audience the true impact that Reading Recovery can make in a child’s learning.
10 Benefits School Districts Get for their Money with Reading Recovery

Presented by
Carrie Langan
1st Benefit

- Scientifically, research based early intervention for 1st graders having difficulty learning how to read and write
  - More than three-quarters of children with a complete intervention reach grade-level standards
2\textsuperscript{nd} Benefit

- An intense 12-20 week, one-to-one instruction for accelerated growth in reading and writing
  - after the lessons are completed, the school knows much more about the students and can take positive actions for their future learning
3rd Benefit

- Reading Recovery can be an effective intervention for children learning to read and write in Spanish
4th Benefit

- A cost effective short-term intervention
  - can reduce the need for
    - special education
    - long-term remedial services
    - grade level retention
5th Benefit

• Low achieving children can learn!
  - The progress that children can make in such a short amount of time can quickly change the perceptions and expectations that one may have on a particular child.
6th Benefit

• Reading Recovery is an intervention that greatly narrows or closes the achievement gap in literacy learning among:
  
  • Socioeconomic groups
  • Racial groups
  • Ethnic groups
7th Benefit

- Reading Recovery is an early intervention that has been found to reduce the achievement gap between native and non-native speakers.
8th Benefit

- Reading Recovery is a widely acclaimed professional development program for teachers, strengthening literacy learning school-wide
9th Benefit

- Creates a strong university-school partnership to support literacy instruction for all children
10th Benefit

- Reading Recovery increases self-esteem and self-efficacy for low-achieving children
"When you compare the success rate of Reading Recovery with other programs that keep children for years and never get them reading on grade level, Reading Recovery is a bargain."
(Cunningham and Allington 1994)
References


Summary

Reading Recovery is one early intervention that provides strong support to struggling first graders in reading and writing. While this program has been criticized for being costly, it is one program that provides accelerated growth to the lowest performing first graders in their literacy learning.

The daily 30 minute lessons foster this growth and give the Reading Recovery teacher a firsthand look at what the child can and cannot do. No other reading program allows the teacher this opportunity to work with an individual child on exactly what that child may need at that particular moment.

The data that is collected daily gives the teacher a good grasp on where the child is at with his or her reading and writing development. This information can be extremely valuable to the classroom teacher as well regarding the decisions that they need to make for the child in their instruction in the classroom. In the instances where a child is not making adequate progress, the information is a very valuable resource for the problem solving team for further assessment.

Overall, this program is very beneficial to any district who desires to close the achievement gap and have significant gains in reading and writing achievement of the lowest performing first graders. Slow rates of literacy learning across first grade can have a cumulative impact, increasing the
gap between the lowest achieving students and their average- or high-achieving peers. This pattern can negatively influence a child's entire school experience (Juel cited in Schwartz 2005). An effective early intervention can close the achievement gap and substantially reduce the number of students who need long-term literacy support (Schwartz 2005).
References


