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Reading Recovery: Hope for children at-risk

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Reading Recovery: Hope for children at-risk

Abstract

Teachers who work with children on reading in the early primary years would likely be excited to discover a program that is effective in helping to prevent reading failure (Jones, 1991). Early intervention and reading success have become very important as "expectations have become increasingly high and unrealistic as the curriculum from upper grades has been pushed down to lower levels, thus dooming large numbers of young children to inevitable failure" (Charlesworth, 1989, p. 5). With these increasing demands of the educational system in America, effective intervention for at-risk children is a necessity. For young children to become successful learners, they must first become successful readers. Boehnlen (1987) states, "Children who do not learn to read by the end of first grade will fail to achieve in almost all other areas of school curriculum" (p. 32). Therefore, instruction that prevents reading failure will allow students the opportunity to become successful in other areas of the curriculum.

**Reading Recovery:
Hope for Children At-Risk**

**A Research Paper
Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Education**

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Teachers who work with children on reading in the early primary years would likely be excited to discover a program that is effective in helping to prevent reading failure (Jones, 1991). Early intervention and reading success have become very important as "expectations have become increasingly high and unrealistic as the curriculum from upper grades has been pushed down to lower levels, thus dooming large numbers of young children to inevitable failure" (Charlesworth, 1989, p. 5). With these increasing demands of the educational system in America, effective intervention for at-risk children is a necessity. For young children to become successful learners, they must first become successful readers. Boehnlen (1987) states, "Children who do not learn to read by the end of first grade will fail to achieve in almost all other areas of school curriculum" (p. 32). Therefore, instruction that prevents reading failure will allow students the opportunity to become successful in other areas of the curriculum.

Teachers and students are facing frustration in the struggle to keep up with the educational demands of reading

instruction. Many programs have been developed in an attempt to find solutions to the problems teachers are facing. Chapter I reading programs, tutorial programs, individualized instruction methods, and special education resource assistance provide reading help for students at-risk. In spite of the time and effort which has gone into creating these programs, children in these programs still have difficulty with reading and often continue to score low on reading tests (Gaffney, 1991; Lyons, 1991; Pinnell, 1989; Sanacore, 1990; Taylor, Short, Frye, & Shearer, 1992). Although remedial programs provide help, reading continues to be a problem for many of these children. Pianta (1990) argued for the use of prevention programs. She stated that the initiation of a prevention program may decrease learning disabilities as well as reduce the number of children identified for special remedial programs. Reading Recovery is one preventative program that has received wide attention in recent years. It is preventative rather than remedial. The purpose of Reading Recovery is to provide intervention as a chance for success for first-grade children who are at risk of failing to learn to read (Gaffney, 1991). Numerous researchers are investigating the efficacy of Reading Recovery.

Reading Recovery is a preventative program which needs

further consideration. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the theoretical basis for the use of Reading Recovery, describe the Reading Recovery program, share Reading Recovery program results, and discuss whether Reading Recovery is an effective program for helping at-risk first-grade students.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Background Information

Reading Recovery is a program of systematic intervention designed to reach first-grade students who are experiencing "confusion, frustration, and anxiety over something that is fairly natural for most children: learning how to read" (Ohio State University College of Education, 1989, p.1). It is a supplemental reading and writing program for readers in the lowest 10-20 percent of a class. The goal of Reading Recovery is to enable children to become able readers by providing instruction in specific strategies which can be used in flexible ways. Each child remains in the program until obtaining a system of strategies that work in such a way that the child can learn from his or her own attempts to read. The child must be able to "survive" back in the classroom, be independent of the teacher, and have the skills necessary to maintain progress with average students in the classroom (Clay, 1991). A student continues to work individually with a Reading Recovery teacher until these instructional goals are accomplished.

Reading Recovery was developed by Dr. Marie M. Clay, a

New Zealand educator and psychologist. Her program has been utilized nationwide in New Zealand since 1979 and is currently being implemented in more than 32 states in the United States as well as Australia, Canada, and England (Lyons, 1991). In 1985, Dr. Clay and Barbara Watson, National Director of Reading Recovery in New Zealand, came to the United States. At The Ohio State University, Clay and Watson began to train Reading Recovery teachers and Teacher Leaders. Training in Ohio led to the implementation of Reading Recovery in that state, a longitudinal study of the effects of Reading Recovery, and the spread of Reading Recovery throughout the country (Ohio State University College of Education, 1989).

Through Dr. Clay's teaching and research, she discovered certain strategies and processes which all effective readers, from beginners on their first books to successful adult readers, need to use. Her observations noted that good readers had certain strategies, or "in-the-head" processes, which they utilized to make sense out of what they read (Clay, 1991). These characteristics, identified by Clay, include the following:

1. Good readers develop strategies early for use with print. Included in these strategies are voice-print match, left-to-right eye movement across the page, and "sweeping"

eye movement at the end of a line back to the beginning.

2. Good readers develop self-monitoring skills. They continually check for meaning, language, and visual information to monitor their own understanding. They think about what they read and recognize when their understanding makes no sense.

3. Good readers cross-check their understanding. They integrate past learning into what they are reading. Through this method, they can understand new vocabulary, make predictions, and make inferences.

4. Good readers search for cues. They actively seek and use cues from experience such as language, pictures, and configuration. They are active problem solvers.

5. Good readers utilize self-correction. They are able to correct their errors when needed to make text meaningful (Pinnell, 1989, p. 166-7).

Clay saw these five characteristics of good readers as necessary components of being an effective reader. She used these beliefs about good readers to develop Reading Recovery. Features of the Reading Recovery program are based on these characteristics of successful readers and make the Reading Recovery program very unique (Pinnell, 1989).

One significant feature of Reading Recovery is that it

is not considered a remedial program. It is a planned program of early intervention for children who exhibit confusion or unusual difficulties in the early stages of learning to read. Proponents of Reading Recovery emphasize that the time to intervene is before the emotional impact of failure occurs. Reading Recovery teachers try to intervene and prevent failure and labeling of children from occurring (Clay, 1991).

A second unique feature of Reading Recovery is that this program provides short-term help. Reading Recovery advocates believe that accelerated progress can be made by at-risk children if provided with productive experiences at an appropriate pace. This instruction is provided on an intensive, one-to-one basis. Through this program, children develop self-generating skills which allow them to continue to learn independently. Once students have become proficient, independent learners -- and can read texts comparable to the average group in the classroom and profit from ongoing instruction there without additional assistance -- they are "discontinued," and other children enter the program (Pinnell, 1990).

A third feature of Reading Recovery is that it builds on what the child already knows. A child's strengths are identified and used in the development of that child's

Reading Recovery program. In contrast, many remedial models drill on the very areas which are confusing to the student. Children gain confidence when they realize that what they already know has value and they can build on those areas to become better readers (Pinnell, DeFord, & Lyons, 1988).

A fourth unique feature of Reading Recovery is that children learn to read by reading. In the Reading Recovery program, children are engaged in reading nearly the entire time. During each Reading Recovery session, the student reads books which are already familiar to develop fluency, reinforce vocabulary, and practice their newly-emerged skills. Reading new, challenging books engages the child in problem solving situations which are needed to gain independence (Clay, 1991).

There is also a writing component which makes the Reading Recovery program unique. During each Reading Recovery lesson, writing is used to support the developing reading strategies and to help reinforce the connection between the two processes. Writing allows children to develop strategies for hearing sounds in words and utilize the voice-print match process (Lyons, 1991).

While the Reading Recovery program provides a framework of activities for use with students, the program is different and unique for each child. It is not a

"packaged program." No two children read the same sequence of books. The reading process is too complex and the children's needs too variant. The effectiveness of Reading Recovery is rooted in the moment-by-moment interactions between the student and the teacher. This view acknowledges that learners must be active in the process and bring their own knowledge into it. Teachers are trained to pick up on student needs, use the given framework, and develop appropriate lessons while teaching (Pinnell, Fried, & Estice, 1990).

The sixth and final key which makes Reading Recovery unique is teacher development and training. This is a critical aspect of the Reading Recovery program. Both Reading Recovery teachers and Teacher Leaders go through intense training programs. Teachers are committed to a year-long course of training during their initial year with the program. They engage in high-level analyses that allow them to develop their own theoretical base upon which they can draw during those moment-by-moment interactions. The course is taught by an experienced Teacher Leader. The leader provides the needed materials and instruction for developing the essential knowledge and skills needed to be an effective Reading Recovery teacher. During their coursework, teachers work with students on a daily basis.

This provides them with hands-on experience and allows them opportunities to apply and expand their new knowledge (Clay, 1991). Teacher Leaders are specially trained through a national or central training program as key people in establishing a Reading Recovery program. Training of a Teacher Leader involves university courses dealing with reading, research, and evaluation procedures. Through practical coursework, Teacher Leaders develop a thorough knowledge of the whole Reading Recovery program (Clay, 1991).

The six features discussed above make Reading Recovery a unique program. These six components were developed based on Clay's five characteristics of good readers which were discussed earlier. All six components must be present for a Reading Recovery program to work effectively and be successful.

Chapter 3

Description of the Reading Recovery Program

The children and teachers working with the Reading Recovery program focus on literacy learning. Instructors are teaching students to be independent readers. Through the individualized instruction of the Reading Recovery program, children make accelerated progress and catch up to the reading level of their classmates (DeFord, Lyons, & Pinnell, 1991). A successful Reading Recovery program must have effective personnel training, appropriate standards for qualifying children for the program, structured lessons, and appropriate discontinuation criteria.

Personnel Training

Two important groups of people must be trained for a Reading Recovery program to be successful. These two groups, Reading Recovery Teachers and Teacher Leaders, and their training programs are described in this section.

Teacher Training

As Clay and other researchers have investigated and worked with the Reading Recovery program, they have found a

critical part of a successful program to be the training of the teachers involved. Strategies needed and used for Reading Recovery develop during a year-long, intensive inservice program. Teachers also receive follow-up support in subsequent years (Pinnell, 1987).

Clay suggested that the teachers who volunteer for Reading Recovery training should:

- * be permanent members of the staff
- * be able to commit themselves for at least two years to the program
- * be able to work with their peers (i.e., the teachers of the children selected)
- * demonstrate good relations with staff members
- * be prepared to teach before members of the inservice course (Clay, 1991, p. 358).

These teacher characteristics contribute to the success of Reading Recovery training programs.

The primary components of the Reading Recovery staff development are the processes of observation, practice, and feedback. Observation, which is the powerful basis for practice and feedback, is much more than simply looking at teaching. Observing during Reading Recovery is explicitly linked to decision-making and theory-building processes (Pinnell, 1987).

Through lectures and discussions, reading, and through practice, teachers learn diagnostic techniques and intervention procedures. While attending training, teachers are simultaneously working with children. Teachers apply their knowledge on a daily basis and see the immediate results of their decisions. Their one-to-one work with the children and the intensity of the Reading Recovery program makes accelerated progress in reading possible for students. The progress is so rapid that it allows teachers, through monitoring and careful record keeping, to immediately assess the results of the shifts and modifications they make in their own instruction (Pinnell, 1987).

Throughout the initial training year of Reading Recovery, everyone must teach at least three lessons "behind the glass." This means conducting a lesson with a student in a small room separated from a larger room by a one-way glass. While one Reading Recovery teacher works one-on-one with a student in the small room, the Teacher Leader, or trainer, discusses what is going on with the rest of the class. This discussion is very intense and is intended to extend understandings about teaching in relation to issues raised during the demonstration lesson (Jones, 1991).

Teachers in training are also observed in the field at least four times during the year by the Teacher Leader. The

leader usually observes two or more lessons, then discusses the lessons with the Reading Recovery teacher. These visits are considered to be part of the teacher training and the teachers are responsible for learning and improving from them (Jones, 1991).

The role of the Teacher Leader is to facilitate the Reading Recovery teachers' thinking and analyses of their teaching decisions for each of the children they teach. Teachers must learn to be expert decision makers. They must choose appropriate books and select the most powerful and effective procedures for each student. Long-term and ongoing staff development is essential if teachers are to link Reading Recovery theory to practice (Pinnell, Fried, & Estice, 1990).

Teacher Leaders

After working for at least a year as a Reading Recovery teacher, trainees are chosen for Teacher Leader programs. These programs take place at special university training centers. Teachers chosen have a thorough knowledge of the Reading Recovery program and the ability to work supportively with other teachers. Training of a Teacher Leader involves university courses dealing with reading, research, and evaluation procedures. Teacher Leaders

develop a thorough knowledge of the whole operation of the Reading Recovery program through practical coursework.

The complex role faced by Teacher Leaders requires a wide range of skills in many diverse areas. "It is essential that they have the theoretical concepts upon which the programme is based, a sensitive awareness of the organizational, professional and child development issues associated with the innovations in the program, and extensive practical experience of the everyday workings of the first two years of school" (Clay, 1991, p. 369-70). The Teacher Leader is essential to a successful Reading Recovery program. The training of a Teacher Leader is the necessary first step to implementing a Reading Recovery program (Clay, 1991).

Future Teacher Leaders take part in several inservice sessions along with the rest of the training program. Participating in and helping to plan these sessions provides for development of teaching skills, introduction to new techniques, and opportunities to visit and work with Reading Recovery teachers and children. Teacher Leaders continue as trainees for a year and receive ongoing instruction from the training center (Clay, 1991).

Qualifying Children for Reading Recovery

Teacher judgment and a variety of reading tests are used to determine which children are selected for the Reading Recovery program. Those chosen for the program are the children ranking in the lowest 10-20 percent of readers in the class.

The Diagnostic Survey, which is utilized for assessment in all Reading Recovery projects, consists of six subtests: Text Reading, Letter Identification, Word Test, Concepts About Print, Writing Vocabulary, and Dictation (Ohio State University College of Education, 1989). The six diagnostic instruments making up the survey are used to identify what a child already knows or can do. During Text Reading, the child reads orally from a series of books of varying difficulties. The reading is analyzed based on the number and type of miscues. Letter Identification involves the child attempting to identify letters of the alphabet. The child is asked to read a list of high-frequency words for the Word Test. The Concepts About Print assessment involves the teacher and the child interacting together. As the teacher reads from a specially constructed book, Stones (Clay, 1979) or Sand (Clay, 1972), the child is asked to perform a set of tasks and answer questions which indicate what the child knows about conventions of print, such as

directional movement, line sequence, and punctuation. Writing Vocabulary assesses all the words the child can generate and write without teacher assistance within a given period of time. Finally, Dictation involves the teacher reading a sentence and the child attempting to write the sentence. This test focuses on the child's ability to write whole sentences and to hear sounds and represent them with letters (Pinnell, 1989).

After testing is completed and scores are evaluated, students from each first grade class are ranked according to their reading abilities. The students ranking lowest in the class are selected and admitted to the Reading Recovery program.

Components of the Reading Recovery Lesson

During the 30-minute Reading Recovery lesson, the teacher and student sit side-by-side. They read and write collaboratively. The teacher watches for those "teachable moments" when the student demonstrates awareness or a specific need. The teacher then reinforces those responses. The Reading Recovery teacher may reinforce something good the student has done, such as self-correction, or may actively teach a new skill or other way of thinking. In this way, the student is continually building on what is

already known using the framework the teacher provides. This lesson framework allows for flexibility within which the teacher makes decisions according to individual student needs. Each student involved with the Reading Recovery program is taught appropriate lessons and skills for him or her as an individual. Individual needs are met by the moment-by-moment decisions of the teacher (Clay, 1991).

There are four major components of the Reading Recovery lesson: Rereading of a familiar story, taking a running record of text reading (using the book introduced and read one time on the previous day), composing and writing a message or story, and reading a new book. Each part is considered critical for helping the student develop independent reading strategies (Gaffney, 1991).

The first stage of a Reading Recovery lesson is rereading of familiar stories. This allows the student to utilize all strategies "on the run" (Clay, 1991) while focusing on meaning. Fluency is promoted and comprehension is also aided through these rereadings. The book to be reread may be selected by the student or it may be preselected by the teacher to allow for a particular teaching/learning opportunity. The books are chosen to reflect the student's natural language rather than a controlled vocabulary. If a book at the appropriate reading

level is chosen for the rereading, the student will be able to read with 90-95% accuracy (Clay, 1991).

During the second stage of a Reading Recovery lesson, the student rereads a book introduced, read one time, and discussed on the preceding day. While the student reads, the teacher takes a running record of the student's oral reading. A running record is a shorthand technique which allows the teacher to record reading behavior while the child is reading (Clay, 1991). The running record provides the teacher with information regarding the abilities of the student. The teacher also gains valuable information on the student's strengths and how to build on those strengths in future lessons. The teacher serves as a "neutral observer," (Lyons, 1991) using expertise from Reading Recovery training to analyze cues the student did or did not use and note self-correcting behaviors. This part of the lesson is similar to a miscue analysis where teachers note substitutions, omissions, insertions, self-corrections, etc. The teacher also analyzes whether the text is too easy or too difficult. Information gained during this stage of the Reading Recovery lesson helps the teacher determine the next day's reading selection and where the focus of the lesson should be (Clay, 1991).

The third portion of the Reading Recovery lesson

consists of the student writing a brief message, usually one or two sentences long, assisted by the teacher. Sometimes these messages are extended over a few days and become a story. The message is written word by word; the student writes known words and attempts unknown words with the help of the teacher. Teachers frequently use Elkonin boxes (Cunningham & Cunningham, 1992) and/or magnetic letters to aid students in spelling words. Children are given boxes (teacher draws one box for each sound in the word the child is trying to spell) or letters to produce words using letter/sound relationships. These strategies not only build letter/sound relationships, but also help the student examine details of written language and look for patterns in words (Clay, 1991; Pinnell, 1989).

After the student has composed the message, the teacher quickly writes it on a sentence strip. Then, the words on the strip are cut apart for the student to reassemble and read. This gives the student an opportunity to look at the differences between words. The student examines details of writing in the message which utilized his or her own language in familiar text (Clay, 1991).

During the final component of the Reading Recovery lesson, the student is introduced to a new book. This book is preselected by the teacher to provide opportunities for

teaching and learning specific skills. First, the teacher and the student look through the book and talk about the pictures. The student becomes familiar with the story line and is introduced to some of the vocabulary of the story through this oral language activity. Then, the student reads the book with assistance from the teacher as necessary. This book is then used the following day for the running record in stage two of the Reading Recovery lesson (Clay, 1991).

Clay (1991) states very clearly the necessity of including all four components in every Reading Recovery lesson. Each stage is designed to serve a specific purpose and to aid students with reading difficulties.

Discontinuation from the Reading Recovery Program

Deciding when to discontinue a child from Reading Recovery can be a difficult task. One goal of the Reading Recovery program is to make children independent of the teacher. When a child no longer receives instruction from the Reading Recovery teacher, that child must be confident enough to know when to ask for and how to use help. The student must be able to continue to increase learning and maintain control over reading and writing. Before being discontinued, children are expected to have above average

scores on reading tests administered to their class. Students who are discontinued from the Reading Recovery program must have the skills and abilities to continue learning and maintain the average reading and writing levels in their classrooms. Behaviors which must be observed before students are discontinued from Reading Recovery are directional movement, one to one matching of letters and words, self-monitoring or self-checking, cross-checking of cues, use of multiple cue sources or using meaning, structure, visual, and auditory cues to achieve a match across all cues, and self-correction of errors (Clay, 1991).

Chapter 4

Results and Outcomes of Reading Recovery Studies

Marie Clay's Reading Recovery model appears to be an effective means for preventing early failure in reading for some children. It is based on research of reading strategies good readers utilize. This includes good strategies for use with print, self-monitoring skills, cross-checking their own understanding, searching for cues, and utilizing self-correction. Many evaluative studies have been conducted to determine the successfulness of the Reading Recovery program. The results of these studies, responses of Reading Recovery program participants, and possible reasons for the success of Reading Recovery will be discussed in this chapter.

Assessment and Measures of Reading Recovery Effectiveness

The following information regarding the results of Reading Recovery projects has been taken from several sources (Clay, 1991; Lyons, 1989; Ohio State University College of Education, 1989; Pinnell, 1989; Pinnell, DeFord, & Lyons, 1988; Pinnell, Fried, & Estice, 1990). The figures reported are comparable in all sources.

In January of 1985, Clay and Watson began the Reading Recovery program in the United States. As part of the training, a group of teachers piloted Reading Recovery in six Columbus, Ohio schools. Students who participated in this study were selected by the Diagnostic Survey (Clay, 1991) and by teacher judgment.

Students were randomly assigned to two groups, one which received Reading Recovery lessons and the second which received an alternate compensatory program to assist with reading difficulty. For purposes of these findings, the latter group was referred to as the "comparison group." In reporting results, a random sample group was also used for comparison. This group represented grade level cohorts excluding those in the prior two groups. This comparison allowed researchers to determine whether discontinued students "...could read material that matched the average range of ability in the school. The nature of this random sample -- from middle and upper level achievers -- made the second comparison tough indeed" (Pinnell, 1990, p. 19).

By May 1985, 73.5% of the students enrolled in Reading Recovery had been successfully discontinued (Ohio State University College of Education, 1989). As a total group, including students discontinued from the program by May 1985 and those still enrolled in the program, Reading Recovery

students scored higher than the comparison group on all measures of the Diagnostic Survey. When comparing these two groups on nationally normed tests, the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills, the Reading Recovery students had a Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) gain of 7.4 compared to -2.6 for the comparison group on the Reading Vocabulary subtest. On the Comprehension subtest, students enrolled in Reading Recovery had an NCE gain of 7.0 compared to -4.5 for the comparison group. The comparison group lost ground while Reading Recovery children gained ground relative to the expected achievement for their grade level (Ohio State University College of Education, 1989).

Means and standard deviations were calculated on all measures for all reported groups. Multivariate analysis (Hotelling's T^2) indicated a significant difference ($p \leq .05$) favoring Reading Recovery students over the comparison group on six of nine measures. Specifically, Reading Recovery students scored higher on Letter Identification, Concepts About Print, Writing Sample, Dictation, and the two reading subtests on the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills. Slightly lower scores were achieved on Writing Vocabulary, Text Reading, and the Word Test. As a group, the Reading Recovery children, who were in the lowest 10-20 percent of their class at the beginning of the year, now scored about

the same in reading skills as a group of average first grade students (Ohio State University College of Education, 1989).

When comparing scores of successfully discontinued students to the calculated average band of the random sample, the Reading Recovery students scored higher on all measures. The average band of scores was calculated by computing both a mean and a standard deviation and by using plus or minus .5 standard deviation from the mean as the upper and lower boundaries of average performance (Ohio State University College of Education, 1989). End-of-year scores revealed that 90% of Reading Recovery students met or exceeded the average range of the random sample on Letter Identification and Dictation on the Diagnostic Survey. On Concepts About Print, over 86% met or exceeded the average range and over 77% met or exceeded the average range on Writing Vocabulary. On the writing scale, over 68% met or exceeded average levels. In the next three follow-up years, successfully discontinued Reading Recovery students, as a group, continued to maintain the high scores they had achieved by the end of the first-grade year without the need for further intervention (Ohio State University College of Education, 1989).

Due to the success of the project in Columbus, the Ohio General Assembly provided financial support for Reading

Recovery to go statewide for the 1985-86 school year. The goal was to reach 15% of all first-graders in Ohio. Teacher Leaders and Reading Recovery teachers were chosen and began training for the program. Teachers participating in the project attended training sessions at The Ohio State University. Through these training sessions, the teachers were prepared and continued to receive instruction of the Reading Recovery process (Ohio State University College of Education, 1989).

In the initial statewide implementation year, the year during which the teachers continuously received training, 73% of Reading Recovery students were successfully discontinued. The range of successfully discontinued students over the next three years was 82%, 86%, and 83%, respectively (Pinnell, 1989).

In summarizing these findings, Pinnell (1989) states, Evidence from the first three years of implementation indicated that Reading Recovery has had positive outcomes for children initially determined to be at risk of failure in reading. Two-thirds or more of the children who receive a full program in Reading Recovery make accelerated progress and perform within the average range for their class. Children retain their gains and

continue to make progress at least two years after the intervention (p. 175).

Responses to Reading Recovery

Reading Recovery teachers have seen the success of many students. These teachers believe in the program. However, no matter how strongly Reading Recovery teachers believe in the program, there are other people who must be considered. Classroom teachers, parents, and children must also have a chance to share their ideas about Reading Recovery. The Reading Recovery program has touched families, teachers, and first grade classes (Hamill, Kelly, & Jacobson, 1991).

Two researchers, Linda Asmussen and Janet Gaffney (1991), investigated the families of children at risk of reading difficulties. They attempted to understand the relationships within families and between families and schools when children are involved with the Reading Recovery program. Asmussen and Gaffney designed the Reading in Families Project to address the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between the literacy environment in a home and a student's involvement with the Reading Recovery program? How does involvement in the Reading Recovery program influence attitudes towards

literacy and reading activities of family members?

2. What is the relationship between home factors and child's level of progress in Reading Recovery? (Home factors are seen as availability of reading materials, attitudes of parents or guardians, and reading activities of family members).

3. What is the nature of the relationships among family members, regarding literacy, when a child is having difficulty reading? What is the relationship when that child is involved in the Reading Recovery program? And, do relationships change when the child with previous difficulty is able to read at average levels?

Answers to these questions required input from children, parents, classroom teachers, and Reading Recovery teachers. Asmussen and Gaffney conducted home visits, interviews by phone, and conferences to find the responses they were seeking. The researchers hoped to obtain information about family background, home literacy environment, and child and parent attitudes toward reading.

In several cases researched by Asmussen and Gaffney, young students with low reading scores had very little experience with literature in their homes. It was difficult for most families to deal with the literacy problems. Many parents and siblings were unsure of how to help a struggling

reader. However, the students who were read to at home and had families who valued reading appeared to improve skills more quickly than students who did not share the same experiences. Through the Reading Recovery program students and their families became more interested in and enthusiastic about reading. Reading became a bigger and more important part of their lives. The results of this study uncovered significant shifts among family members in the actions and attitudes which support and hinder a child with reading difficulties (Asmussen & Gaffney, 1991).

Classroom teachers have also been affected by the Reading Recovery program. Hamill, Kelly, and Jacobson (1991) discussed how the Reading Recovery program affected their classrooms and students. One aspect of the program which was unexpected by these teachers was that Reading Recovery students became more eager to learn. Their desire to learn increased and they were excited about school.

These classroom teachers also saw other changes in Reading Recovery students. They witnessed a positive change in the children socially and academically. They saw the students reaching personal goals on a weekly basis. Reaching these goals gave the students a new level of confidence. These children were no longer afraid to take risks and were motivated to think, question, and learn

(Hamill, Kelly, & Jacobson, 1991).

Classroom teachers indicated awareness of the many advantages of the Reading Recovery program. The Reading Recovery program strengthened the belief that early readers should be instructed according to their individual needs. Students should be challenged to excel, celebrate what they know, and find excitement in their personal accomplishments.

Another advantage of this program is that classroom teachers have the opportunity to work directly with the Reading Recovery teacher. This is very important for student success. Together, classroom and Reading Recovery teachers define students' strengths and needs in reading and writing. Teachers try to be consistent in encouraging each student to build strategies which apply both in and out of the classroom. Both classroom teachers and Reading Recovery teachers work with students to strengthen their skills. Through Reading Recovery and ongoing classroom instruction, the children are successful and gain confidence in their work (Hamill, Kelly, & Jacobson, 1991).

Classrooms also change when students are involved with Reading Recovery because students involved with the program change. Children change as they see their classmates, who once struggled, accomplish new goals. As Reading Recovery students gain confidence, they volunteer to read in class

and enjoy reading with their classmates (Hamill, Kelly, & Jacobson, 1991). Students who are discontinued from the Reading Recovery program view themselves differently because they have power over the reading and writing processes. These children leave the Reading Recovery program eager to try and knowing that they can learn (DeFord, Lyons, & Pinnell, 1991).

Reading Recovery Success

Why has Reading Recovery been so successful? Perhaps one reason is that Clay's model emphasizes making reading meaningful. Books used in the model are first looked at as an entire piece of literature. Then, individual pages are read. Only then is attention given to individual words and letters.

Another reason which could account for the success of Reading Recovery could be the multiple cuing systems utilized in this program. Lyons (1991) proposes that students identified as learning disabled tend to overrely on visual and auditory information and ignore the supportive language structure. Other low-achieving students tend to use only language structure and ignore the visual and auditory information present in the story. Through use of the multiple-cuing systems present in Reading Recovery, both

types of learners can benefit.

One more reason for the success of the program might be that each child's reading and writing behaviors are diagnosed thoroughly. Time is taken to determine what the child already knows and what needs to be learned. Both formal and informal measures are used to assess reading behaviors for each Reading Recovery student. Because of this thorough diagnosis, each student receives instruction which will be most personally beneficial (Opitz, 1991).

Reading Recovery may also be successful due to the quality of instructional time. Students in the program spend more time in direct instruction than their classmates, allowing for accelerated progress (Opitz, 1991). Throughout this quality time, the teacher is constantly monitoring and adjusting teaching to meet specific student needs, making the most of each "teachable moment" (Pinnell, 1989).

All modalities are emphasized in Reading Recovery. Clay (1991) suggests that a variety of modalities must be used when working with individual children. Children's learning styles vary greatly. For this reason, their programs must be designed individually to best suit the specific needs of each child. The majority of students have tactile, kinesthetic, and/or global learning styles. Therefore, a multisensory approach is used to make the

Reading Recovery program successful (Clay, 1991).

Reading Recovery succeeds at teaching children to read and write because both processes are emphasized in the program. Clay (1991) states and believes that reading and writing are connected. Both processes are necessary to help children learn about print. Clay suggested, "... learning to write letters, words, and sentences actually helps the child to make the visual discriminations of detail in print that he will use in his reading" (Clay, 1991, p.54).

Effective teachers also account for the success of Reading Recovery. These teachers employ a variety of strategies to help their students be successful (Opitz, 1991). Reading Recovery teachers are asked to model appropriate behaviors for the students. Students must have examples and be provided with feedback from the teacher (Clay, 1991). Modeling and feedback are only two of the strategies used in Reading Recovery which research has found to be effective (Opitz, 1991).

Much of Reading Recovery's success may also be credited to its goal of helping students develop strategies to become independent readers. Opitz (1991) noted that the metacognitive nature of Reading Recovery enables readers to understand and have control over their own reading, resulting in the "breakthrough" to literacy.

The effectiveness and success of Reading Recovery continues to be evaluated and discussed by researchers. Results indicate that Reading Recovery is a very successful program. Clay (1990), citing figures in New Zealand, stated that fewer than one percent of students discontinued from the Reading Recovery program needed further referral. Several studies in Ohio produced similar results (Ohio State University College of Education, 1889). In 1992, Kathy Escamilla and Anna Andrade conducted a Reading Recovery program in Spanish. They found the process to be just as successful with Spanish speaking children. Researchers continue to observe similar positive results and successful outcomes when using the Reading Recovery program.

While Reading Recovery in its purest form is meant to be used with low-achieving first-graders in a one-to-one setting, there have been adaptations made in alternative programs which have also been successful. One such program is Early Intervention in Reading (Taylor, Short, Frye, & Shearer, 1992) which is intended for use by small groups in the regular classroom. Research on the effectiveness of this small-group intervention holds promise due to the financial aspect which may make Reading Recovery cost prohibitive in some schools. Another adapted program is Reading Rescue (Lee & Neal, 1992). This program was

effectively utilized with an eighth-grade student who had been described as a "non-reader." Reading Rescue very closely follows the components of Reading Recovery. With the current interest in adult literacy in our country, research into this variation of Reading Recovery could greatly benefit this movement. Further research can determine whether these alternative programs prove to be as effective and successful as the original program.

Chapter 5

Concluding Remarks

Many teachers face numerous demands and pressures in order to help children succeed in reading and writing. When a child struggles with reading, school becomes difficult for both the student and the teacher. In the past, a remedial program was the only choice for helping a child with reading problems. Now, Reading Recovery offers prevention rather than remediation. Reading Recovery is unique in that it is a program of early intervention rather than early remediation. Students with problems are identified at the beginning of their schooling and an attempt is made to prevent further reading difficulties. Reading Recovery is designed to provide intensive, short-term help which allows the student to make accelerated progress and "catch-up" with peers.

The 30-minute Reading Recovery lessons contain four major components. These components are rereading a familiar story, taking a running record, composing and writing a message, and reading a new book. Each component has a unique purpose in the lesson and is critical for the overall effectiveness of the program. The reading and writing

activities in which the student is engaged nearly the entire session are flexible and unique for each individual student. Students learn quickly through the Reading Recovery process. They feel success in the program and are able to reach the reading level of their classmates. Reading Recovery students are discontinued with the confidence and the skills and strategies which allow them to succeed.

Reading Recovery is a relatively new program in this country. Currently, there are few documented case studies available describing program effectiveness outside of those from the original pilot sites in Ohio. Some Reading Recovery studies have been criticized for lacking sound research design because it is unclear how the individual training and lesson components affect Reading Recovery students and the Reading Recovery program (Jones, 1991). There is currently a multifaceted study being conducted by The Ohio State University which will compare the effects of Reading Recovery and other interventions (Pinnell, 1990). It appears that future study in this area utilizing improved research methods would promote what appears to be a highly-effective program.

Another aspect of the Reading Recovery model which could benefit from future research is the teacher training. As staff development is so integral and critical to the

success of Reading Recovery, research which is sensitive to the teacher learning process and which investigates how the teacher distinguishes the fine judgments needed for effective decision-making in the program is needed.

However, since the pilot in the United States in 1985, Reading Recovery has been implemented in more than 32 states. Gains made by Reading Recovery students as a whole far exceed those made by students served in other compensatory programs. In comparison to what would be considered an "average" student, students who have been successfully discontinued from Reading Recovery scored higher in reading on some nationally-normed tests. According to Pinnell (1990), there are both immediate and long-term positive effects from Reading Recovery. These effects are consistent across many replications, regardless of curriculum, socio-economic conditions, and teacher background.

Reading Recovery is helping children who were once seen as "at-risk" to be successful readers and successful learners. Students who are discontinued from the Reading Recovery program seem to be able to succeed in their classrooms. Dyer (1992) argues for the implementation of Reading Recovery by stating:

In industry, if a company could produce a better

product for less money in less time, that change would be initiated immediately. American students, teachers, parents, and taxpayers deserve no less. With the research evidence that Reading Recovery is not only educationally effective, but also cost-effective, this early intervention deserves careful consideration by those responsible for the education of children (Dyer, 1992, p. 18).

Reading Recovery appears to be a highly successful program aimed at preventing failure in reading early in a student's education. By using this program to allow children the opportunity to reach the level of their classmates, student failure and teacher frustration will be reduced and success will be increased. Its holistic approach seems to effectively help many low-achieving students "catch up" with their peers in a relatively short amount of time. If further longitudinal studies show Reading Recovery to be as successful as the short-term results have indicated, perhaps rather than being considered "at-risk" of failure, low-achieving students will be considered "at-promise" (Lee & Neal, 1992).

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