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*“Reading Recovery provides the best evidence of long-term success for the largest proportion of students served.”*

— S. A. Walmsley and R. L. Allington (1995)

## Continued Progress of Reading Recovery Children

Educators and policymakers want to know if children served by Reading Recovery continue to make progress in good classrooms following the intervention. Researchers at The Ohio State University asked that question early in the implementation of Reading Recovery in the United States. A scientific study with random assignment and control groups (Pinnell, 1989) provided early evidence of Reading Recovery’s immediate and long-term effects. Children continued to perform well on text reading in subsequent years.

A comprehensive study of more than 5,000 students in Australia (Rowe, 1995) revealed that Reading Recovery children were performing as intended in Grades 5 and 6. This study showed that the lower limits of the achievement distribution can be reduced for Reading Recovery children.

Numerous research and evaluation studies in the United States have demonstrated that Reading Recovery children continue to improve their literacy performance after the intervention ends. These studies lead to the following conclusions:

1. The majority of former Reading Recovery students continue to perform within an average range of class performance.
2. Literacy performance after Reading Recovery seems to become stronger over time.
3. The need for costly long-term remediation for many children is dramatically reduced.

The following studies representing five states and Descubriendo la Lectura were selected to demonstrate the ongoing performance of former Reading Recovery children. Because all of these studies have been published, readers can explore the details of each study.

A 4-year longitudinal study compared Reading Recovery children who successfully completed lessons with a random sample of their classroom peers (Askew, Kaye, Frasier, Mobasher, Anderson, & Rodríguez, 2002). The study assessed performance using a variety of measures: standardized and state assessments, a measure of text reading, classroom teacher questionnaires, and school questionnaires. At the end of the 4 years, the sample included 116 children who had successfully completed Reading Recovery lessons, and 129 random sample children in 45 schools across Texas.



### *Major findings:*

- Significant differences existed between the Reading Recovery sample and random sample at the beginning of Grade 1. Accelerated progress of Reading Recovery children during the intervention in Grade 1 brought them to within an average band of their classmates by the end of Grade 1.
- Across the 4 years, literacy gains on the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test for the Reading Recovery sample closely matched those of their random sample classmates.

- At the end of fourth grade, 95% of the Reading Recovery children read at grade-level standard.
- On the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), 85% of the Reading Recovery sample passed the reading test, compared to 90% of the random sample.
- Classroom teachers reported that most Reading Recovery children were performing within expected ranges of their classrooms.

## KANSAS

Researchers in Kansas compared the fourth-grade literacy performance of Reading Recovery children who successfully completed the intervention in Grade 1 (N = 56) with a stratified random sample of their peers in matched schools (N = 79), (Briggs & Young, 2003).

### *Major Findings:*

- Former Reading Recovery children had scores similar to the comparison group on the vocabulary and comprehension subtests and on the total reading test of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test.
- There were no significant differences in mean scores between the two groups on the subtests of the Gates.

A study of former Reading Recovery students in the San Luis Coastal Unified School District used two standardized measures to assess students' achievement in second through fifth grades (Brown, Denton, Kelly, & Neal, 1999). Performance of 760 former Reading Recovery children was measured using the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT-9).

### *Major Findings:*

- Of the children who had a full Reading Recovery intervention in Grade 1, 81–85% reached average proficiency levels in reading by the end of Grade 1 on Reading Recovery measures and the ITBS.
- High proportions (65%-85%) of the children continued to perform at average reading levels on both the ITBS and SAT-9 in Grades 2 through 5.

## CALIFORNIA

## MAINE

Using the Maine Educational Assessment (MEA), researchers compared fourth-grade literacy scores of the general population with three groups of former Reading Recovery children: those who successfully completed Reading Recovery lessons, those who completed lessons and were recommended for additional assessment, and those with an incomplete series of lessons at year-end (Ruhe & Moore, 2005). The sample included 1,260 Reading Recovery students in Maine in 1998, and 14,286 students who took the Grade 4 MEA in 2001.

### *Major Findings:*

- Children who successfully completed Reading Recovery lessons performed at average levels in reading and writing in Grade 4. Most were not distinguishable from the general fourth-grade population.

- Children recommended for further assessment after a full series of Reading Recovery lessons performed below the class achievement average in fourth grade. However, 63% partially met or met expectations in Grade 4 reading and 37% in Grade 4 writing.
- Children with an incomplete series of lessons also performed below average in Grade 4. However, 72% met or partially met expectations in Grade 4 reading and 47% in Grade 4 writing.

Indiana researchers compared the subsequent performance of children who successfully completed Reading Recovery lessons with a random sample of their class peers across second, third, and fourth grades (Schmitt & Gregory, 2005). Participants were randomly selected from 253 Indiana schools. Measures included a test of oral reading, the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test, and the Indiana State Test of Educational Progress (ISTEP).



#### *Major Findings:*

- Reading Recovery children were orally reading texts that were above grade level, and performance was similar to their peers each year following the intervention. Achievement scores of Reading Recovery children approximated the distribution spread of their grade-level peers.
- The vast majority of former Reading Recovery children tested within an average band of their peers on the Gates-MacGinitie at each grade level.
- On the ISTEP, scores for Reading Recovery children approximated a normal distribution with a mean at the 45th percentile and a standard deviation of 21.7, an unexpected pattern of progress for children beginning school as the lowest achievers.

## Descubriendo la Lectura

Reading Recovery has been reconstructed for children whose initial instruction is in Spanish. The intervention is known as Descubriendo la Lectura (DLL). Researchers have compared the subsequent performance of children served by DLL with a random sample of their peers in Grades 2 and 3 (Escamilla, Loera, Ruiz, & Rodríguez, 1998). Assessments included a test of oral reading in Spanish, Spanish Reading Achievement Test (SABE-2), and for children transitioned to English a test of oral reading in English and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test. Classroom teacher questionnaires were also collected for additional student information.

#### *Major Findings:*

- Classroom teachers perceived DLL and random sample students as comparable in literacy abilities and group placement.
- DLL children read at text levels above their peers on oral Spanish reading tests and equivalent to their peers on SABE-2.
- Most children continued to read in Spanish in Grades 2 and 3. The small number of children tested in English were doing as well as the random sample in Grades 2 and 3 although the achievement of both groups was low.

In 1995, Shanahan and Barr issued a challenge related to the long-term effects of Reading Recovery as an intervention:

If it can be shown that children participating in the Reading Recovery program are not only brought up to the average of their classmates but that they then continue to progress at an average rate, these findings would have major implications for the timing of special support and the allocation of resources. *(Shanahan & Barr, 1995, p. 978)*

Results of follow-up and longitudinal studies of Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura children are indeed promising responses to Shanahan and Barr's challenge. Consider the benefits to the children and the reduced costs of long-term remediation to their systems.

## References

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