



Reading Recovery®
Council of North America

www.readingrecovery.org

Reading Recovery Is Cost Effective

Reading Recovery is an investment in children.

Learning to read in first grade is a long-term investment—a visionary perspective that early investments will greatly reduce later spending. And the savings will not only be calculated in dollars. The cost that children pay for literacy failure is incalculable.

Reading Recovery is more than a ‘program.’

Reading Recovery is not a packaged program for purchase. It is not scripted or based on a single-factor solution. Instead, Reading Recovery is an investment in professional development for teachers who then design individual lessons for the lowest literacy achievers. Reading Recovery has a system for implementation that fits into existing school structures.

Reading Recovery achieves unparalleled results in a short time.

Student outcomes consistently show that most (about 75%) children with complete Reading Recovery interventions reach grade-level performance in only 12–20 weeks. Others make considerable progress but may need additional assessment or support. Reading Recovery data inform those decisions.

When comparing Reading Recovery to other literacy interventions, you can visit the What Works Clearinghouse (http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/BR_TR_08_13_07.pdf) beginning reading program reviews. The reviews are based on research that meets the strictest standards of evidence. Note that no other early intervention has strong evidence across all four domains, and no other reading intervention was judged to have positive effects on general reading achievement.

Reading Recovery reduces and in some cases closes the literacy achievement gap for low achievers, English language learners (ELLs), children with low family incomes, and various racial and ethnic groups.

The continued progress of Reading Recovery children after Grade 1 is also compelling evidence of years of cost savings.

Reading Recovery reduces consequences and costs of reading failure.

A report commissioned by the KPMG Foundation in the United Kingdom reveals the long-term costs of literacy difficulties (www.readingrecovery.org/research/cost/index.asp). Consequences of reading failure were identified including

- special support in school across the grades,
- truancy and exclusion from school,
- reduced employment opportunities,
- increased health risks, and
- a greater risk of involvement in the criminal justice system.

Costs related to low literacy were calculated over time to age 37. Those costs were then adjusted based on making Reading Recovery available for every child who needs it. The savings would be at least 1.37 billion British pounds (or more than 2.7 billion American dollars) annually!

In the United States, cost-effectiveness studies have documented that Reading Recovery reduces costs of ongoing special education, Title I, grade-level retention, and related services. National data (www.ndec.us) show that by the end of Grade 1, only 1% of the children served by Reading Recovery are placed in special education for literacy, compared to 4% of similarly low readers. This demonstrates the viability of Reading Recovery as a response to intervention (RTI) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA).

Reading Recovery builds teacher expertise and leadership.

Reading Recovery is an investment in teachers—the best use of school dollars to impact student achievement. The ongoing and intensive Reading Recovery professional development model produces highly qualified teachers. This cadre of professionals builds literacy expertise and capacity for working with struggling readers in schools.

National data show that Reading Recovery teachers, on average, work with 8.1 Reading Recovery children over the course of a year PLUS 41 children in their other teaching roles. In addition to using their expertise with 50 children each year, these teachers interact with other teachers in collaborative and leadership roles.

Reading Recovery costs less than the routine spending for low-achieving children throughout the elementary years.

Without Reading Recovery, schools still need to offer support for low-achieving children. There are costs associated with any service for struggling readers, and those costs are usually higher in the long term than Reading Recovery in the short term. For example, Reading Recovery is considerably less expensive than Title I instruction when accounting for the educational impact of both services.

Although small groups may seem more efficient, costs can be misleading. Lessons for small groups are usually longer than the 30-minute Reading Recovery lessons, and the duration of the service is usually much longer than the 12-20 weeks for Reading Recovery. And student outcomes for the lowest achievers depend on the one-to-one teaching in Reading Recovery.

How are Reading Recovery costs calculated?

Costs of Reading Recovery interventions vary across school districts and regions of the country. When comparing costs of interventions for the lowest-achieving first graders consider these factors:

- Number of Reading Recovery students served daily
- Salary and benefits of the teacher to determine estimated costs per student
- Length of daily lessons
- Duration of intervention
- Outcomes for the lowest-achieving children
- Additional benefits of intervention

A cost comparison example

Calculations for estimated annual per-pupil cost based on a teacher salary and benefits of \$60,000 annually.

| | Annual Per-Pupil Cost | Average Time in Program | Per-Pupil Cost Across Time |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Retention | \$9,200 | 1 year | \$9,200 |
| Title I | \$2,400 | 5 years | \$12,000 |
| Special Education | \$3,750 | 5 years | \$18,750 |
| Other (e.g., small group pull-out) | \$2,400 | 3 years | \$7,200 |
| Reading Recovery | \$3,750 | 12–20 weeks | \$3,750 |

PER-PUPIL COSTS: Consider the number of children served *daily* by 1 full-time equivalent (FTE) teacher and divide that number into the salary plus benefits for that teacher. **Remember** that most Reading Recovery teachers work one-half day (or .5 FTE) in the intervention, meaning that it takes at least 2 teachers to make 1 FTE. Because Reading Recovery teachers serve children for 12–20 weeks, 1 FTE teacher will work with 16–20 children annually.

For more detailed information visit the Reading Recovery section at www.readingrecovery.org

Calculating Reading Recovery Costs and Benefits for Your School

Costs of interventions vary across school districts and regions of the country. This chart may be useful if you want to calculate a per-pupil cost for all interventions for the *lowest-achieving* first graders in your schools. Be sure to include information about *student outcomes* and *related benefits* for each intervention. SEE NOTES BELOW.

| Intervention | Annual Per-Pupil Cost | Average Time in Program | Per-Pupil Cost Across Time | Student Outcomes for Lowest Achievers | Related Benefits |
|---|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| Retention | | | | | |
| Title I | | | | | |
| Special Education | | | | | |
| Other (e.g., small group pull-out) | | | | | |
| Reading Recovery | | | | | |

PER-PUPIL COSTS: Consider the number of children served *daily* by 1 full-time equivalent (FTE) teacher and divide that number into the salary plus benefits for that teacher. **Remember** that most Reading Recovery teachers work one-half day (or .5 FTE) in the intervention, meaning that it takes at least 2 teachers to make 1 FTE. Because Reading Recovery teachers serve children for 12–20 weeks, 1 FTE teacher will work with 16–20 children annually.

STUDENT OUTCOMES: Consider the *lowest-achieving students*. Often small groups are offered to children with fewer difficulties, and outcomes cannot be compared with outcomes for lower-achieving Reading Recovery children.

RELATED BENEFITS: Consider issues such as professional development; support structures/networks; early identification system; progress monitoring and accountability system; teacher, parent, and student satisfaction; etc.