



Reading Recovery® Council
of North America

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What Works to Teach Children to Read? “Reading Recovery,” says USDE’s What Works Clearinghouse

(Columbus) -- The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), a branch of the United States Department of Education (USDE) and the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), today released its 3-year independent review of the experimental research on Reading Recovery. The evidence that Reading Recovery is an intervention based on scientific research is now documented and acknowledged by the USDE and IES.

“We are pleased that the What Works Clearinghouse has recognized Reading Recovery’s strong scientific research base,” said Jady Johnson, executive director of the Reading Recovery Council of North America (RRCNA). “The announcement confirms what teachers, parents, and school administrators across the U.S. know -- Reading Recovery works!”

The WWC found that Reading Recovery, a one-to-one tutoring program for the lowest-achieving first graders, has positive effects on students’ alphabetic skills and general reading achievement. A finding of positive effects is the WWC’s highest rating. They found potentially positive effects, their next highest level of evidence, on fluency and comprehension outcomes.

The report includes an improvement index to reflect the strength of the Reading Recovery intervention. Scores on this index can range from -50 to +50. The average improvement index scores for Reading Recovery students show large and impressive effect sizes: +34 for alphabetic (phonemic awareness, print awareness, letter knowledge, and phonics); +46 for fluency; +14 for comprehension (vocabulary and reading comprehension); and +32 for general reading achievement.

The WWC conclusions are based on five research studies, four that meet WWC’s highest level of evidence standards and one study that meets their standards with reservations. The WWC requires only two independent, well-designed clinical trials to establish a positive causal finding.

“The What Works Clearinghouse recognizes causal evidence and therefore has clearly defined the kinds of studies they choose,” said Robert Schwartz, reading researcher from Oakland

University and president-elect of the RRCNA Board of Directors. “After causal evidence is established, other kinds of studies are important to answer specific questions,” Schwartz said. “Reading Recovery has over 100 research and evaluation studies confirming positive results and effectiveness for children of various income, ethnic, and racial groups. Also, Reading Recovery’s annual evaluation data replicate the results from clinical trials.”

Each year, Reading Recovery collects and reports data on each of the more than 100,000 children served. The data from across the United States provide annual confirmation of Reading Recovery’s proven results for children. Reading Recovery’s evaluation reports demonstrate that it can be successfully implemented in a variety of schools.

Reading Recovery is a short-term reading intervention for first graders with the lowest reading achievement and is used in 7,500 schools in the U.S. In Reading Recovery, students work one-to-one with a specially trained teacher for 30 minutes each day. For students who complete the full series of lessons, 75% learn to read at grade level within 12-20 weeks and then continue their progress with good classroom teaching. In the 2005–2006 school year, the average Reading Recovery teacher taught 8.1 Reading Recovery students and 41.4 students outside Reading Recovery.

Professional development for teachers – an important element in Reading Recovery’s success – occurs in more than 400 training sites across the U.S., with 22 universities providing oversight and support for teacher training. Unlike commercial programs, Reading Recovery is a not-for-profit partnership of schools and universities.

Since its introduction in the U.S. in 1984, Reading Recovery has served more than 1.6 million children, making it one of the nation’s oldest scientifically based reading interventions. More than 15% of the nation’s elementary schools with first grades now use Reading Recovery as their safety net intervention for children who might otherwise not learn to read.

To learn more about Reading Recovery and its research base, visit www.readingrecovery.org.

To find out more on WWC, visit <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>.

The full WWC Intervention Report on Reading Recovery is available at http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/reports/beginning_reading/reading_recovery/.