

Florida Center for Reading Research

Reading Recovery

What is Reading Recovery?

Reading Recovery is a short term, early reading intervention for the lowest performing students in first grade. Descubriendo la Lectura is the *Reading Recovery* program for Spanish speaking students; the instruction is delivered in Spanish. *Reading Recovery* was originally developed in New Zealand by the late educator and child psychologist, Marie Clay. The program is designed to support regular classroom instruction, and its goal is to reduce the number of struggling readers in first grade by accelerating students' learning so that they are reading and achieving at the average level of their classroom peers. Teachers who have been highly trained in *Reading Recovery* techniques provide daily, intensive, one-to-one, 30-minute lessons for 12-20 weeks.

Students are selected for *Reading Recovery* by the classroom teacher's informal ranking, scores on measures from An Observation Survey (Clay, 2007), and other standardized scores. The teacher designs daily instruction based on careful observation during the lesson and by using a range of instruments including daily running records, lesson records, writing books, weekly records of text reading levels, and records of student growth in reading and writing vocabulary.

The first two weeks of *Reading Recovery* lessons are referred to as "roaming around the known." The teacher observes what the student knows and how s/he responds in the context of reading texts and writing messages. During this period of time, the focus is on building fluency and flexibility with what the student knows and extending the initial assessment by observing the student's strengths and response patterns. After this, instruction begins with the tasks that comprise the *Reading Recovery* daily lesson framework. Each day's lesson begins by rereading familiar books that may cover a range of levels. The teacher interacts with the student during this time supporting strategy use, fluency, and meaning. Next, the student reads the book that was introduced the previous day as the teacher observes and records reading behavior using a running record. Letter identification and breaking words apart follow rereading. With the teacher's guidance, the student examines letter sequence, letter clusters, and onset-rime patterns. Then, the student composes and writes a message or story and reads it, with opportunities to analyze words and sounds. The teacher writes the message on a sentence strip and cuts it up for the student to reassemble. While reassembling the cut-up message or story, the student attends to letter and/or word sequence and phrasing, and rereads the message or story. In the last part of the lesson, the teacher introduces a new book and helps the student prepare for the text. This overview may involve a picture walk, building prior knowledge, examining vocabulary, and reading a phrase or sentence from the story that is crucial to its meaning. Finally, the student reads the new book with support and prompts from the teacher. Although the lesson framework is structured, instructional techniques and activities may vary depending upon a student's need. Those differences are captured in momentary teacher decisions based on student response, the book chosen for that day's lesson, and the written message the child has composed.

An important component to *Reading Recovery* that is used before and after instruction is Clay's diagnostic, An Observation Survey (2007). It includes six reading and writing tasks that have been documented for reliability and validity (Denton,

Ciancio, & Fletcher, 2006): Letter Identification, Word Test, Concepts About Print, Writing Vocabulary, Hearing and Recording Sounds, and Text Reading. In addition to the diagnostic, there is a guidebook for teachers, a wide variety of leveled books from different publishers, a blank book for messages/story writing and word work, sentence strips for recording and reassembling cut-up messages, and magnetic letters and magnetic boards for work with letters and words. A Principal's Guide and a Site Coordinator's Guide include information that assists in supporting administrators with implementing and sustaining *Reading Recovery* in their schools.

How is Reading Recovery aligned with Current Research?

The theoretical base of *Reading Recovery* derives from cognitive psychology and aligns with the cognitive apprenticeship model of instruction (Rogoff, 1990). The intent of *Reading Recovery* lessons is that, by working intensively with the teacher, the student gradually accomplishes difficult tasks that s/he is unable to do alone. The teacher provides structured activities with modeling, guidance, and with scaffolding as the student gains competence through active participation with increasingly complex activities. As the student becomes more independent, the level of support and scaffolding is reduced. There is no scope and sequence with *Reading Recovery*. Rather, the teacher designs and conducts each day's lessons based on assessments, observations, and the student's responses within the lesson. Responsive teaching involves knowing where students are and helping them figure out where they need to go. The notion of scaffolding plays a crucial role in responsive teaching (Rayner, Foorman, Perfetti, Pesetsky, & Seidenberg, 2001).

Reading Recovery lessons include work in phonemic awareness and phonics. Students learn letter identification with their own alphabet book. The personal alphabet book enables isolated work with letter sounds, letter names, and words that start with that letter or sound. For the breaking words apart task, students learn to hear sounds in words, the alphabetic principle, the sequence of letters in words, and onset and rime segmenting. Students engage in word building and analysis with magnetic letters, and sound and letter manipulation with Elkonin boxes. Word work may occur briefly during any part of the lesson, as the teacher introduces the new book, as the student reads, or in the message writing portion.

Opportunities for fluency development are abundant in *Reading Recovery* lessons. On a daily basis, students strive to build overall fluency by reading and rereading familiar texts, the written messages, phrases, and individual words. Fluency practice is enhanced by teacher modeling of accuracy and expression.

Vocabulary and comprehension infuse every aspect of a *Reading Recovery* lesson. Daily lessons focus on prior knowledge building, word meanings, and on discovering a message in oral and written language through frequent discussions. These discussions are intended to provide rich opportunities for oral language development, especially important for English Language Learners. The teacher endeavors to foster and support student self-monitoring through extensive conversations, questioning, and text choice during each lesson.

The hallmark of *Reading Recovery* is a strong model of professional development that is delivered through a three-tiered system consisting of university based trainers, teacher leaders, and *Reading Recovery* teacher candidates. University trainers train the teacher leaders, and the teacher leaders provide the prospective *Reading Recovery* teachers with training, and then offer ongoing support, and coaching after the initial training. Three features characterize *Reading Recovery*

professional development for everyone who receives it: (a) they receive a full academic year of professional development followed by ongoing training sessions; (b) they work concurrently with students; (c) they make use of the one-way glass, where class members observe a lesson and discuss the student's reading behavior and possible teaching decisions to accelerate learning. Focal points of the professional development include open discussion, systematic observation and analysis of student reading behavior, self-analysis of teaching based on student progress, and the design and delivery of lessons.

An important consideration for schools and districts wishing to implement *Reading Recovery* would be in the choice of teachers to receive the training. Skill and teacher expertise are paramount to the success of the program particularly in the ability to scaffold, to make instantaneous instructional decisions, and to design and deliver lessons. The *Reading Recovery* professional development is meant to complement and enhance an already skillful teacher who has the potential to excel.

Research Support for Reading Recovery

The *Reading Recovery* program was found to have positive effects in alphabets and general reading achievement, and potentially positive effects in fluency and comprehension. A number of studies have evaluated the effectiveness of the *Reading Recovery* program. Two of the studies with an experimental design are summarized below. Several studies were not summarized due to incomplete information. (See http://www.fcrr.org/FCRRReports/PDF/Research_Criteria.pdf) Please see the What Works Clearinghouse website for these additional studies: http://www.readingrecovery.org/research/what_works/index.asp

Students from 14 different states participated in a study that compared the effectiveness of *Reading Recovery* (RR) at closing the gap between average and at-risk readers in first grade (Schwartz, 2005). Classroom teachers submitted two of the lowest 20-30% of their students for the study. The at-risk students were randomly assigned to either first round (n=37) in the first half of the school year, or second-round (n=37) service with RR. This summary will only focus on the 37 students randomly assigned to the first round of RR instruction. The 37 students who were randomly assigned to the second round of RR instruction served as the comparison group for the first round of students. It should be noted that information on student SES background was not available in the study due to the reluctance of some school districts to release such information.

Pretest and posttest measures included the six tasks from An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement by Clay (1993): The Text Level task involves the teacher taking a running record while the student reads a leveled text; Letter Identification; Concepts about Print, which involves the student responding to questions about book handling, directional behavior, visual scanning, and print language; the Ohio Word Test where the student is asked to read 20 high frequency words; the Writing Vocabulary task involves students writing every word they can think of for 10 minutes; Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words is another writing/dictation task where the student listens to a passage and then is asked to write each word as the passage is read again word by word. Prompting includes the student saying the word slowly and writing what they heard. Additional measures at posttest included the Yopp-Singer Phoneme Segmentation Task (Yopp, 1988), a sound deletion task (Rosner, 1975), the Slosson Oral Reading Test-Revised (Nicholson, 1990) designed to determine a student's level of oral word recognition, and the Degrees of

Reading Power Test (Forms JO and KO; Touchstone applied Science Associates, 2000), designed to assess general reading achievement. In addition to the *Reading Recovery* intervention, described earlier in this report, both intervention and control students received the usual classroom literacy instruction and other forms of literacy support offered in the school. Results were analyzed in separate repeated measures ANOVAs, with the alpha level set at .005. *RR* students outperformed the control group on Concepts about Print, letter name knowledge (Letter Identification task), word reading (i.e., The Ohio Word Test and the Slosson Oral Reading Test), spelling (Writing Vocabulary and Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words), and fluency (Text Level). Effect sizes for all assessments were larger than .80.

Another study in Australia examined the effectiveness of the *Reading Recovery* (*RR*) program (Center, Wheldall, Freeman, Outhred, & McNaught, 1995). Low achieving first grade students from 10 schools were randomly assigned to either a treatment ($n=31$) or control group ($n=39$). However, the sample sizes for the analyses differed from the original assignment due to attrition. For the examination of the *RR* effect through posttest and again 15 weeks later (end of first grade) for short term maintenance effects, only those children who remained until the end of first grade were included; thus $n=22$ for the treatment and $n=30$ for the control group. Students in the treatment group received the *RR* intervention, described earlier in this report, and the control group received extra support in reading typically offered by their school. Both treatment and control groups received the usual classroom literacy instruction. It should be noted that some *RR* students also received extra literacy support offered by their school in the form of group remedial activities. Neither classroom literacy instruction nor additional support was described. Pretests and posttests consisted of 2 sets of tests. The first set included the Burt Word Reading Tests, which evaluate a student's word recognition skills, and the Clay Diagnostic Survey (1985), described in the above research summary (Clay's An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement, 1993). The second set of tests included the following standardized and criterion referenced tests: the Neale Analysis of Reading Ability-Revised (1988), designed to measure rate, accuracy, and comprehension of oral reading; the Passage Reading Test (Deno, Mirkin, & Chiang, 1982), designed to measure the median number of words read correctly in 1 minute from 3 passages; the Waddington Diagnostic Spelling Test; the Phonemic Awareness Test, which is a compilation of a variety of measures from Yopp (1988) and Bruce (1964) that include rhyme, alliteration, phoneme segmentation and deletion; the Syntactic Awareness (Cloze) Test, and the Word Attack Skills Test (1991).

A multivariate analysis of variance with repeated measures indicated that at posttest, the *RR* students significantly outperformed control students and the effect sizes were large (.42-3.05) on all measures for reading words in context and in isolation, but significance was not reached on the Phonemic Awareness Test and the Word Attack Skills Test. Short-term effects were also found for *RR* students with effect sizes ranging from .69 to 1.55. The Syntactic Awareness (Cloze) Test and the Word Attack Skills Test did not reach statistical significance. It should be noted that medium-term maintenance effects were also examined when students were at the end of second grade. However, due to some confounding factors involving attrition, the results are not described in this report.

Conclusion

In summary, the *Reading Recovery* program provides intensive one-on-one tutoring in beginning reading skills. Highly interactive, daily sessions emphasize print concepts, contextual reading, and meaning. Some studies have indicated that there is a strong level of support for alphabets and general reading growth with potentially positive effects in fluency and comprehension. Future well designed experimental studies with measures in comprehension will reinforce the existing research.

Strengths & Weaknesses

Strengths of *Reading Recovery*:

- Extensive professional development and ongoing professional development are a requirement of the program.
- Daily assessments inform instruction.
- Students are exposed to a wide variety of books, both narrative and expository.
- The close relationship between the teacher and student may be highly motivational for struggling readers.
- The reciprocal nature of reading and writing is explored and developed daily during the message composition portion of the lesson.
- Rereading texts may benefit and reinforce word recognition and comprehension skills.

Weaknesses of *Reading Recovery*:

- None were noted.

Which Florida districts have schools that implement Reading Recovery?

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 Palm Beach 561-434-8200
 Santa Rosa 850-983-5010

For More Information

<http://www.readingrecovery.org/>

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Important Note: FCRR Reports are prepared in response to requests from Florida school districts for review of specific reading programs. The reports are intended to be a source of information about programs that will help teachers, principals, and district personnel in their choice of materials that can be used by skilled teachers to provide effective instruction. Whether or not a program has been reviewed does **not** constitute endorsement or lack of endorsement by the FCRR.

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