

BRIGHT SPOTS

Quality Teaching



Reading Recovery, Worthington, OH

The kindergartners of West Franklin Elementary School in Columbus, Ohio start the school year handicapped by some of the lowest literacy skills in Franklin County. “If they guess right, they have a letter identification score of maybe 5,” reports Principal Dawn Lauridsen.

If these same students are struggling a year later, West Franklin uses Reading Recovery, a short-term intervention program of one-on-one tutoring, to help first-graders in the lowest 20 percent of their cohort for reading and writing quickly catch up to grade level. Every day, each of these students receives a 30-minute lesson from a specially trained teacher. Using a wide range of procedures, teachers make moment-by-moment decisions within each lesson to support the child in learning how to read.

Developed in New Zealand by researcher Marie Clay, Reading Recovery also helps children read in the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom. Since Reading Recovery came to the U.S. in 1984, student outcomes have been documented for every child served using *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement*, a tool developed by Clay. The International Data Evaluation Center compiles the data into annual evaluations.

The data show that 75 percent of the first-graders who complete the full 12- to 20-week intervention meet the grade-level standard in reading and writing. At West Franklin, all eight children who had the full program “were recovered and at grade level by the end of first grade,” says Leslie McBane, the school’s Reading Recovery teacher leader.

Reading Recovery students maintain and increase their gains in later grades. One study evaluating student performance from second through fifth grade found that “more than three-fourths of the children who successfully completed Reading Recovery achieved standardized test scores in the average or above-average range” ([W. Brown, 1999](#)). Principal Lauridsen also sees intangible progress with big payoffs: “When students come down the hall walking tall, when they come into the office and can read their books — which was the last thing they wanted to do at the beginning of the year — those are the success stories.”

WHO THEY ARE

Reading Recovery has served:

- A total of 2 million children since 1984.
 - More than 73,000 1st-graders in U.S. annually.
 - 59% White, 18% African American, 17% Hispanic.
- More than 5,400 schools in 44 states; 43% rural, 31% suburban and large town, 25% urban.

Reading Recovery’s network encompasses:

- More than 8,000 specially trained teachers.
- More than 400 Reading Recovery teacher leaders.
- 21 University Training Centers.
- Reading Recovery Council of North America.

\$3,750 cost per pupil for the 12–20-week program.

CONTACT

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i3-powered expansion

In September 2010, the U.S. Department of Education's Investing in Innovation (i3) initiative awarded the Reading Recovery Center at Ohio State University a \$46-million grant to expand the program. Ohio State and 14 other universities that offer Reading Recovery training raised \$9.1 million in matching funds from 18 private-sector donors to secure the grant.

The Reading Recovery Scaling Up What Works initiative will train approximately 3,700 teachers over the next five years. These teachers will bring their added skills to more than 90,000 Reading Recovery students and over 400,000 students in classrooms or Title I small group instruction.

The initiative will give priority to teachers from a state's bottom five percent of Title I schools, Title I schools engaged in restructuring or corrective actions, select rural schools, and schools with a large number of English Language Learners. Ohio State also will use the i3 award to explore training and distance-learning tools for teachers who are not able to travel to university sites.

Wide impact

Reading Recovery's success first and foremost depends on the quality of individualized instruction during the one-on-one tutorials. To support that quality, teachers, site-based teacher-leaders and trainers take part in a rigorous and continuous cycle of training, practice, peer-review, self-reflection and self-improvement. "It's a fabulous model," says Jady Johnson, executive director of the Reading Recovery Council of North America (RRCNA), the Worthington, Ohio-based association for Reading Recovery professionals, advocates and partners. "That's why Reading Recovery teachers are so good at what they do. They work at improvement every day, every year."

Early cost, long-term savings

Costs vary by school district, but Reading Recovery estimates that, including a \$60,000 teacher salary and benefits expense, per-pupil cost is \$3,750 for the student's 12–20 weeks in the program. However, program supporters emphasize that the cost of an early intervention with Reading Recovery often avoids greater expenses down the line: for example, special education, longer-term remedial programs or retention. In addition, Reading Recovery-trained teachers apply their skills with, on average, 42 other students in the school day — in small groups or classrooms, for example. "Training Reading Recovery teachers usually impacts the entire building in a positive way," says McBane.

Given that so many Reading Recovery students typically get back on track with their reading skills in a short period of time, RRCNA's Johnson says, "We think: do it early, do it now, use Reading Recovery and let these kids move on with their budding academic careers."

WHAT THEY ACHIEVE

- **Approximately 75% of students who complete the program read and write at grade level.**
- **Most participants do well on standardized tests.**
- **Most participants maintain their gains in later years.**
- **Highest ratings of the 150 beginning reading programs reviewed by What Works Clearinghouse (2007, 2008).**

HIGHLIGHTS

Reading Recovery:

- **Offers 12- to 20-week programs.**
- **Supplements classroom teaching.**
- **Provides one-on-one lessons by trained teachers for 30 minutes daily.**
- **Refers students who do not reach grade level to further support.**

Other features:

- **Students leave when they reach grade level and can work independently in the classroom.**
- ***Descubriendo la Lectura* supports 1st-graders in classrooms with instruction in Spanish.**
- **Teachers work with additional small groups and classrooms.**