

Reading Recovery® at the University of Kentucky School Year 2000-2001

Proficient readers and writers develop early. For those children unable to do so, there is strong research evidence that retention in grade level and long-term remediation do not enable these low-progress children to catch up with their peers. Therefore, it is necessary to look to ways of preventing reading failure. Reading Recovery has a strong track record of providing the needed early intervention to prevent literacy failure.

The purpose of this report is to examine Reading Recovery outcomes of all students served at the University of Kentucky site. In addition, it compares their performance with a comparison group of students not receiving Reading Recovery services. It also addresses implementation issues which may be either supporting or hindering the success of the intervention.

Reading Recovery Program

Reading Recovery is designed to serve the lowest achievers in the first grade cohort. Children receive daily 30-minute lessons, which are taught by a specially trained teacher, as a supplement to classroom literacy instruction. Positive effects can be documented in any school regardless of the instructional method used in the classroom. Because the goal is successful performance within an average literacy setting in the classroom, children are discontinued as soon as it can be predicted that they can engage with and profit from classroom literacy instruction without further tutorial assistance.

In 1996, the University of Kentucky assumed responsibility for the Reading Recovery site previously administered through the Central Kentucky Education Cooperative. Currently, Reading Recovery, through the Collaborative Center for Literacy Development, is providing training for 97 Reading Recovery teachers serving 837 children. These children are in 61 elementary schools housed in 29 school systems (see Table 1). During this reporting year, three teacher leaders shared the responsibility of training teachers and providing continuing contact services to trained teachers.

Table 1 Level of Implementation

| Year | Districts | Schools | Teachers | Children |
|-----------|-----------|---------|----------|----------|
| 2000-2001 | 29 | 61 | 97 | 837 |

Research Documentation

Research documentation is based on *An Observation Survey* designed by Marie Clay. It consists of six tasks dealing with the reading and writing processes. Reading Recovery students are asked to complete these tasks at both time of entry and time of discontinuing (when children are able to function independently within the average range of their class).

Further research data are collected on a random-sample population of first graders not receiving Reading Recovery services in order to provide an “average” base across the site. Any child receiving just one Reading Recovery lesson would not be considered in the random sample. If a random-sample child is taken into the program at any point in the school year, that child’s data are removed from the random sample. This indicates, then, that the performance of the Reading Recovery students is measured against much higher levels of academic achievement.

How Successful Are Reading Recovery Children?

Reading Recovery documentation accounts for all children served *even if for only one day*. At the end of a child’s program, a status category is assigned. The five categories are: 1) discontinued; 2) recommended after a full program of 20 weeks; 3) incomplete program at year’s end; 4) moved while being served, 5) none of the above. Table 1 provides numbers and percentages of children in each category. A graphic display of percentages of the total number served is shown in Figure 1. Of all children who received even one day of Reading Recovery service, 66% were discontinued.

Table 2 End-of-Program Status of Reading Recovery Children Served at the University of Kentucky Site

| End of Program Status | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----|-------------|-----|------------|-----|-------|----|---------------|----|
| Discontinued | | Recommended | | Incomplete | | Moved | | None of above | |
| N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| 549 | 66% | 95 | 11% | 143 | 17% | 31 | 4% | 18 | 2% |

The following graphic shows that of the children receiving Reading Recovery instruction in 2000-2001, 549 (66%) became successful readers and writers enabling them to participate in literacy instruction with the average first graders in their classrooms.

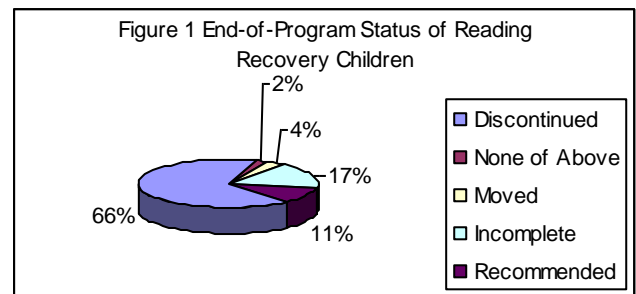


FIGURE 1

Of the remaining children, 143 (17%) did not have enough time in the school year to receive a full program, while 49 (6%) left the program for other reasons or had incomplete data. A small number of children, 95 (11%) benefitted from this intervention but were unable to reach a level of proficiency to successfully discontinue from the program.

This appropriate, early identification of children needing more long-term support is a positive outcome of Reading Recovery.

In addition to collecting data on Reading Recovery children, the University of Kentucky site also collected data on a group of randomly sampled first grade children. This information was then used to set the average reading band for the site. It is important to remember that the Reading Recovery children were the lowest performing children in the first grade. The task of reading stories of multiple episodes with multiple lines of text on a page and numerous words was quite a challenge. Figure 2 represents the gain these children made in reading over the course of the school year as compared to the gain of the random sample population.

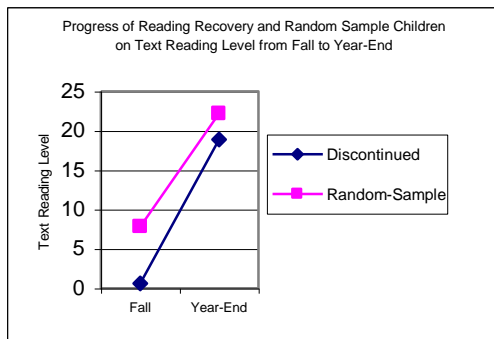


FIGURE 2

In text reading, which most demonstrates a child’s control over all aspects of the reading process, discontinued students attained an 18.5 mean gain compared to the random sample students’ mean gain of 15. With this knowledge of the reading process, discontinued children have the ability to read both fiction and non-fiction texts containing many episodes, numerous lines of text with various layouts, and approximately 250 words easily matching the reading ability of average readers.

Continued Progress of Discontinued Reading Recovery Children

An important question to ask about the intervention is whether or not progress continues after the intervention is removed. Reading Recovery children are expected to continue to improve their reading achievement with good classroom instruction. In order to support this statement, students are given the tasks of *Observation Survey* at the point of discontinuing as well as again at the year’s end. Figure 3 charts this continued growth, reflective of both a self-extending system and supportive classroom teaching.

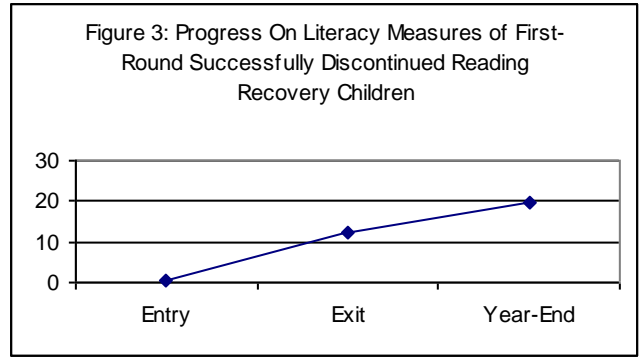


FIGURE 3

Summary and Conclusions

The goal of Reading Recovery is to have the lowest 20-25% of the first grade population in a given school district independently reading and writing with the average of their peers within a 12-18 week period of time. This site report has addressed the success of the program during the 2000-2001 school year. Of the 836 children, 66% were discontinued because they were able to achieve reading levels near the average of their peers. Many program children who did not discontinue showed significant gains in all areas of the *Observation Survey*. Reading Recovery students participated in programs that were, on average, 14.5 weeks long, averaging 3.3 sessions per week. A continuing challenge is to effectively teach children within a 12-16/18 week framework of daily lessons.

The findings here are impressive in that a group of students who were expected to experience failure in learning to read and write are now experiencing success. Reading Recovery continues to grow in this state. In June 2001, the University of Kentucky became the 25th training site in the United States. Under the leadership of Dr. Judy Embry, 10 teacher leaders are presently being trained preparing them to return to their sites next year and train additional Reading Recovery teachers. Stacy Carmichael, returning from her year of training as a teacher leader, is now training 11 Reading Recovery teachers who are simultaneously working with children in their respective schools. Dr. Marie Clay designed Reading Recovery as a system intervention. Therefore, the challenge is to make Reading Recovery grow not only in schools, but also within the school districts.

In the words of a Reading Recovery teacher, “Reading is fundamental to educational progress and with the improved teaching of reading in the early grades, the foundation for moving from ‘learning to read’ to ‘reading to learn’ will be established.” Reading Recovery is an intervention model of instruction, a safety net, which will establish that foundation for the neediest population of children.