



Reading Recovery Salutes Outstanding Principals

Reading Recovery®
Council of North America

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Teri McClure
Roosevelt Elementary School
Council Bluffs, IA

“Reading Recovery is so efficient at getting kids accelerated,” said Principal Teri McClure. “It teaches the teacher to look for clues about the way the student learns.”

District-Wide Value Placed on Reading Success in Primary Grades

When McClure arrived at Roosevelt Elementary there was no Reading Recovery. But she had support for the program in spite of budget limitations. “Our superintendent is good at gathering information,” she said. “Also, reading instruction in the primary grades is important to all the administrators in our district, even those in secondary schools. It’s a priority.”

McClure was an administrator in another primary building where Reading Recovery started in the district 12 years ago. When the district became a teacher training site, McClure’s elementary school was selected to house the training center. Moving to Roosevelt 8 years ago, McClure was instrumental in getting Reading Recovery fully implemented as soon as possible. Today Reading Recovery is fully implemented in all 14 elementary schools in the district.

Roosevelt Elementary is a neighborhood school with 460 students. There is only one bus serving the school because most students walk from their homes. About 70% of students are on free or reduced-price lunch. McClure estimates that 20–24% of all first graders need extra help with reading. The population is mobile, with many families living in temporary housing like motels. Students leave and come back to the area, and attendance is a struggle.

Reading Recovery Part of School’s Approach to Literacy

When Reading Recovery was first introduced to the school it was necessary to explain the intervention to the other classroom teachers. But as the Reading Recovery-trained teachers worked on literacy strategy with the other faculty members, the staff began to see their role as part of the overall literacy program. “We look at Reading Recovery as one piece of what we’re doing,” McClure said.

For teachers, Reading Recovery has been part of a larger change in the school’s approach to literacy. Reading First has also played a role in implementing their new approach in the classroom.

“The old staff development plan was twice a year, but now our expectations are much higher. Today we provide staff development every week, from 2:30 to 4 p.m.,” McClure says. “We start by studying a teaching technique. We look at the theory first, then practice, and then we share results. It’s slow, because to embed a technique in a teacher’s practice takes time. But if we do something in staff development, we expect to see the technique used in the classroom.”

Parents Get Involved in Their Children’s Education

The other component of Reading Recovery is working with the child’s parents, McClure said. Students must take home books and their written story on a sentence strip every day. The Reading Recovery teacher can tell if the parents are supporting the child. For children who are not getting the needed attention at home, someone at school is assigned to work with them.

“Most parents understand the program,” McClure said. “They know their kids are far, far behind. Entering the child into a program like Reading Recovery helps the parents understand that they need to get involved in their child’s education. The parents recognize that the one-to-one instruction is a great opportunity for their kids, and they don’t want to squander it.”

Student Success is the Bottom Line

For McClure, student success is the bottom line. “Our goal is to get as many kids as possible reading,” she said. “Reading Recovery looks at the student’s strengths and needs, developing a program that uniquely fits each child.”

“I’d hate to think where we’d be without Reading Recovery, because it serves the lowest-achieving kids in our first-grade population. With Reading Recovery they have a way to catch up to their average classroom peers.”