



Reading Recovery®
Council of North America

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Reading Recovery Salutes Outstanding Principals



Lisa McLaughlin
Deer Park Elementary
Deer Park, TX

Expert Teachers

“Our Reading Recovery teachers are special,” says Deer Park Elementary Principal Lisa McLaughlin. “You will never meet four more hard-working, dedicated teachers who will do anything to help their kids succeed. I fully attribute our success to those teachers.”

For McLaughlin, having four highly trained Reading Recovery teachers on staff is not simply a way to help 8 to 10 struggling students succeed. Through collaboration, the teaching techniques drawn from Reading Recovery are also used throughout the day with all students. After 9 years in the school, these expert teachers have earned the respect of the rest of the faculty as well as the support of the parents in the community.

Community Support for Reading Recovery

Deer Park is a blue-collar city, with many parents working at the refineries along the Houston shipping channel. In most families, both parents work. Eight years ago, when McLaughlin first arrived at the school, 8-9% of the students received free or reduced-price lunches; currently, about 20% of students do.

“In the past, when the school board was looking to trim the program, the teachers and parents said, ‘No, we believe in it (Reading Recovery) and we want to keep it,’” McLaughlin said. “I’ve never seen educators band together so tightly to keep anything as when they fought to keep Reading Recovery in the schools. Now our board members understand how important it is.”

Measurable Results

At Deer Park Elementary the Reading Recovery intervention has proved its worth. “When the school board was looking at programs to cut, one thing that really convinced them to keep Reading Recovery was that we were able to present them with data, longitudinal data, on student performances,” McLaughlin said. “We could show that students who had been through Reading Recovery in first grade—kids who had been way behind in first grade—by third grade had passed the TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) test.”

Cost Effective

McLaughlin feels the program also has proved cost-effective. “Prior to Reading Recovery, we were spending money on a lot of little programs that didn’t do any good, didn’t have any effect. So we were still spending money,” she points out. “It’s expensive in the sense that we have six classrooms but eight teachers, with two cycling in and out. It’s an additional cost of personnel, but you can’t put a price tag on the learning.”

“I was watching a behind-the-glass session, and I thought that their work really is like a brain surgeon’s,” she adds. “They’re making such important decisions about where the child is going, what to do next.”