



Reading Recovery® Council
of North America

PUBLIC TESTIMONY
for the
Commission on No Child Left Behind
Successful Interventions: Helping Schools Achieve Academic Success
June 9, 2006
Madison, WI
“Reading Recovery: Helping Schools Achieve Academic Success”

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony for the record of the Commission on No Child Left Behind (Commission) hearing on Successful Interventions: Helping Schools Achieve Academic Success. This testimony describes how Reading Recovery helps schools achieve academic success and concludes with recommendations for reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act. The Reading Recovery Council of North America, Inc. (RRCNA) is a not-for-profit association of Reading Recovery professionals, advocates, and partners. The vision of RRCNA is that children will be proficient readers and writers by the end of first grade and our mission is to ensure access to Reading Recovery for every child who needs its support.

Reading Recovery is a highly respected, research-based early intervention that has reached 1.5 million first-graders who struggle with early reading and writing. Eight of ten (80%) of the hardest-to-teach children who complete lessons reach grade-level standards in 12 to 20 weeks of daily 30-minute lessons. Reading Recovery requires highly trained teachers and as a result partners with more than 20 universities and nearly 500 teacher training sites across America. The vast majority of schools with Reading Recovery use federal education funds authorized by the NCLB Act to provide professional development and instruction. Many scientifically-based peer-reviewed journal articles support Reading Recovery’s effectiveness.

Reading Recovery contributes to school success and helps schools achieve adequate yearly progress (AYP) by:

- accelerating student learning and helping children make continued progress.
- closing the reading achievement gap between white and minority students.
- reducing unnecessary retentions and referrals to special education.
- providing a Spanish reconstruction - Descubriendo la Lectura - for English language learners who receive classroom instruction in Spanish.
- reducing the cost of low-achieving students to educational systems.
- providing professional development that benefits educational systems at many levels.
- integrating research and practice through an international network of university faculty.

Reading Recovery instruction accelerates learning and helps children make continued progress:

First grade children having the most difficulty learning to read and write (approximately the bottom 20% of the class) experience accelerated progress as a result of expert instruction by Reading Recovery teachers. Children meet individually for 30 minutes daily with a specially trained teacher for an average of 12 to 20 weeks. During this short-term intervention, children make faster-than-average (i.e. accelerated) progress that permits them to catch up to their peers and continue to work on their own within an average group setting in the regular classroom program. Results indicate that Reading Recovery meets the challenge of closing the gap early, before a cycle of failure commences. Considering that these children started at a great educational disadvantage, these results are remarkable.

Numerous research and evaluation studies in the United States have demonstrated that children continue to improve their literacy performance after Reading Recovery/Descubriendo la Lectura instruction. These studies lead to the following conclusions:

1. The majority of former Reading Recovery students continue to perform within an average range of class performance.
2. Literacy performance after Reading Recovery seems to become stronger over time.
3. The need for costly long-term remediation for many children is dramatically reduced.

Attached is a fact sheet (“Continued Progress of Reading Recovery Children”) identifying studies of Reading Recovery students in five states and students receiving Descubriendo la Lectura lessons. The data demonstrate that children make continued progress academically in the classroom after receiving lessons and perform well on assessments in later grades. Because all of these studies have been published, readers can explore the details of each study.

They consistently demonstrate that children receiving Reading Recovery instruction in first grade perform at least as well as other children on 3rd and 4th grade assessments.

Reading Recovery narrows the literacy achievement gap with early intervention:

A statewide study compared students served by Reading Recovery with a random sample. The results were presented at the 2004 annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA. The study found that students who successfully completed Reading Recovery lessons, either narrowed or closed the achievement gap along race/ethnicity and income lines when compared with students in the randomly-selected comparison group. A “Reading Recovery Research Brief” is attached with further information about this groundbreaking research.

Reading Recovery reduces unnecessary retentions and referrals to special education:

Among the many studies of the impact of Reading Recovery on first grade retentions and referrals to special education are district-based analyses that Reading Recovery successfully reduced both retentions and children classified as having learning disabilities. “Reducing Retention and Learning Disability Placement Through Reading Recovery: An Educationally Sound Cost-Effective Choice” and “Demonstrating the Cost-Effectiveness of Reading Recovery: Because It Makes a Difference” are attached to describe the results in Ohio and Massachusetts respectively.

Descubriendo la Lectura is effective for children whose initial instruction is in Spanish:

Reading Recovery has been reconstructed for children whose initial instruction is in Spanish. The intervention is known as Descubriendo la Lectura (DLL). Researchers have compared the subsequent performance of children served by DLL with a random sample of their peers in Grades 2 and 3. Major findings include:

- Classroom teachers perceived DLL and random sample students as comparable in literacy abilities and group placement.
- DLL children read at text levels above their peers on oral Spanish reading tests and equivalent to their peers on SABE-2.

Reading Recovery is cost-effective prevention that helps schools achieve academic success:

When Reading Recovery teachers work with the lowest-performing students, they interrupt the cycle of failure, helping most of the lowest achievers learn like successful first grade readers and writers. Reading Recovery reduces the cost of literacy failure to the educational system and serves as a reliable diagnostic and identification process for the few children needing longer term support.

Public school administrators have estimated cost savings associated with Reading Recovery when compared with retention and referral to special education programs. A study by the Massachusetts State Legislature reported that every \$3 invested in Reading Recovery saved \$5 in other costs. A Fall River, Massachusetts estimate found a five-year cost avoidance of \$1.7 million through implementation of Reading Recovery.

Reading Recovery professionals benefit schools and districts on many levels:

Reading Recovery teachers provide individualized instruction for half the day and work with many other children in a variety of teaching options during the other half of their day. It is estimated that Reading Recovery teachers positively impact four times as many students in the second half of their day in addition to students receiving individualized lessons. Not only can they provide classroom instruction, and/or provide small group instruction, many Reading Recovery teachers also serve as staff developers for other educators.

In addition, after more than 20 years of implementation in the U.S., Reading Recovery trained professionals have advanced to other leadership roles in educational systems, including curriculum directors, funds administrators, principals and superintendents.

Reading Recovery professional development integrates research and practice:

Outstanding professional development and continuing education are hallmarks of Reading Recovery. Reading Recovery conducts ongoing professional development at three levels: university trainers, teacher leaders, and teachers. The three-tiered model of professional development beginning at the university level assures that the most recent research data can be integrated into practice and evaluated for effectiveness.

University trainers have broad responsibilities that include: training teacher leaders in post-masters graduate study and preparing them to train teachers at the district level, collaborating with other faculty members and schools toward comprehensive school reform through early literacy initiatives, and conducting research and program evaluation.

Recommendations for reauthorization:

Reading Recovery contributes to the academic success of students, schools and districts by providing research, professional development, and instruction that helps the lowest-performing first grade students overcome obstacles to literacy and become successful learners. As such, the Reading Recovery Council of North America recommends the following:

1. Retain and enhance recognition of and support for instructional and systemic components of successful schools in the reauthorization, including:

- Emphasize accelerated learning to close the achievement gap and help students achieve at grade level.
- Recognize teacher quality as a critical component of student and school success, through high quality, on-going professional development.
- Preserve state and local control by retaining the High Objective Uniform State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE) option for state teacher quality systems.

2. Modify the Reading First statute in Title I, Part B to clarify that one-to-one instruction is an eligible use of funds by codifying the intent of language from the Conference Report to Accompany HR 1, Government Printing Office, printed December 13, 2001, p. 768:

“The Conferees intend State educational agencies and local educational agencies to be able to select from a wide variety of quality programs and interventions to fund under Reading First and Early Reading First, including small group and one to one instruction, so long as those programs are based in research meeting the criteria in the definition of scientifically based reading research.”

Further, modify the statute to permit integration of the Reading First program with the consolidated application that many states submit to the U.S. Department of Education for federal funds.

3. Modify the definitions of scientifically based research and scientifically based reading research to integrate relevance as well as rigor and to recognize successful research-to-practice models.

The Reading Recovery Council of America welcomes questions and feedback regarding this testimony. Please contact Jady Johnson, Executive Director 614.310.7323 for further information.

Extensive information about Reading Recovery, Descubriendo la Lectura and RRCNA is available on our web site at: www.readingrecovery.org

More information about the Commission on No Child Left Behind is available at: http://www.aspeninstitute.org/site/c.huLWJeMRKpH/b.938015/k.40DA/Commission_on_No_Child_Left_Behind.htm