



Reading Recovery® Council  
of North America

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **READING RECOVERY DOCUMENTS ABUSE OF POWER BY U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN READING FIRST PROGRAM**

### **Evidence submitted to Inspector General and Government Accountability Office**

The Reading Recovery Council of North America (RRCNA) today submitted a report to the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) documenting intimidation, conflict of interest, and bias in the implementation of Reading First, a \$1 billion annual program aimed at improving reading results for children most at risk of reading failure.

The report presents specific instances of abuse including the following:

- USDE interference with state and local control;
- biased criteria for awarding federal funds with no regard for legislative language and intent;
- involvement of Reading First officials and consultants who are also authors of commercial programs funded by Reading First;
- a campaign of misinformation against Reading Recovery, one of America's oldest and most effective reading interventions; and
- retaliation against critics who raise concern about Reading First .

Reading Recovery is a highly respected tutoring program that has reached 1.5 million first-graders who struggle with early reading. Eight of ten lowest-performing 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. It is a not-for-profit enterprise operated by schools and universities. Many peer-reviewed journal articles support Reading Recovery's effectiveness.

The report charges, "Little or no credible evidence exists that any of the early interventions funded under Reading First will achieve results comparable to Reading Recovery."

Among the findings are these:

- Reading First seldom funds Reading Recovery lessons for lowest-performing first-graders despite substantial research evidence of its effectiveness. This despite legislative language that requires USDE to fund only programs with a clear research record of accomplishment.
- Reading First officials and consultants publicly deny evidence of Reading Recovery's scientific research base. At the same time, programs with little or no evidence of effectiveness have received millions of dollars in federal funds.
- Reading First officials and consultants benefited financially as authors of textbooks, assessments, training programs, and consulting contracts paid for with Reading First funds.
- Reading First implementation was flawed from the beginning by a lack of transparency. USDE evaded public accountability by issuing non-regulatory guidance instead of proposing regulations and engaging in meaningful public dialogue. "Rules" guiding the application process are as undocumented as they are non-negotiable.
- Those who disagree or raise concerns about Reading First are subject to retaliation. The president of the RRCNA was dismissed from her state consulting positions within 3 weeks of the Council's request of the USDE Inspector General to conduct an investigation.

In the spring of 2006, USDE is poised to implement the same kind of curriculum control in other federal programs including IDEA and math-science curricula. The report states, "Before USDE broadly applies the mistakes of Reading First to other funding streams, evidence must be reviewed and corrections made."

For a copy of the full complaint, visit [www.readingrecovery.org](http://www.readingrecovery.org).

