



### INTRODUCTION

Reading Recovery is a short-term early literacy intervention designed for first-grade children having difficulty learning to read and write. Children meet individually with a specially trained, highly skilled teacher for 30 minutes daily. The instruction continues for a range of 12-20 weeks. Most children served make faster than average progress in order to catch up with their peers and continue to learn independently in the regular classroom. It also can serve as a pre-referral intervention for a small number of children who may need specialized longer-term assistance. Data collected on all children provide compelling evidence of this intervention's effectiveness.

*If evidence—scientific research evidence—was the true standard for decisions, then Reading Recovery and other tutoring interventions would be available for every child who could benefit from them. (Richard Allington, 2005)*

### HISTORY OF THE INTERVENTION

The work of developmental psychologist Marie M. Clay yielded a set of research-based procedures found to reverse the failure cycle in reading for most children in a relatively short period of time. Reading Recovery, begun in New Zealand in 1979, has a national implementation there. Since then it has expanded to the United States, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

Reading Recovery was first implemented in the United States in 1984 at The Ohio State University. In the U.S., there are now 22 universities training Reading Recovery teacher leaders and nearly 500 sites training Reading Recovery teachers. More than 2,600 school districts and close to 14,000 teachers are involved in Reading Recovery. Almost 110,000 children are served annually.

Reading Recovery began in Indiana in 1993-1994 when seven teacher leaders were trained at Purdue University and 21 teachers were trained at Purdue and the Metropolitan School District of Warren Township. It has since expanded in Indiana and has served more than 60,000 children to date.

### READING RECOVERY IN INDIANA 2005-2006

#### Description

Purdue University serves as the Reading Recovery University Training Center for Indiana. University trainers provide yearlong training for teacher leaders who return to districts to train teachers. University faculty provide ongoing training, implementation support to sites, and annual evaluation of the data. During the 2005-2006 school year, Indiana Reading Recovery professionals served 5,886 children. This was achieved through the support of 23 teacher training sites serving 127 school districts and 371 schools. *Reading Recovery training, continued professional development, and implementation support were funded in part by Early Intervention Literacy Grants through the Indiana Department of Education with funds allocated by the Indiana General Assembly.*

#### Demographics

Reading Recovery children in Indiana are represented by the following population demographics:

- 57% boys, 43% girls;
- 62% received free or reduced price school lunch;
- Ethnic/racial groups—75% white, 11% African American, 10% Hispanic/Latino, and 4% multiethnic; and
- 92% were native speakers of English.

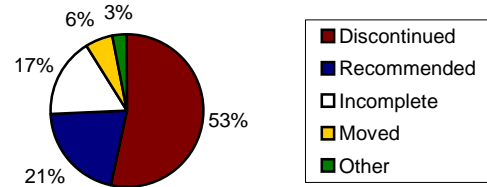
### OUTCOMES

Reading Recovery accounts for all children served, regardless of the number of lessons they received. Because the goal is successful performance within the average of the classroom, children's interventions are discontinued as soon as it can be predicted they can profit from classroom literacy instruction without further individual tutoring. Rigorous discontinuing criteria are applied.

Of all children served, even for a short period of time, 3,134 children or 54% met the stringent criteria for discontinued service in

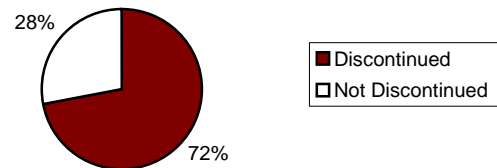
an average of 16 weeks. Another 21% were recommended for further assessment and/or consideration for longer-term instructional support after receiving a full series of lessons of at least 20 weeks (also a positive action benefiting both the child and the school). At the end of the school year, 17% percent were still in Reading Recovery with insufficient time to complete their individual interventions. Mobility during service was 6%. Due to rare and unusual circumstances, 3% were unable to complete their lessons. (See Figure 1.)

**Figure 1. End-of-Year Status for Reading Recovery Groups for 2005-2006**



Considering only children who had the opportunity for a *full* series of lessons for at least twenty weeks, the percentage who successfully discontinued service was 72%. This means that these 72% of the lowest readers in the first grade who received a full intervention reached average levels in reading and writing. They continued their school career on equal footing with their average peers as a result of this intensive, short-term intervention. (See Figure 2.)

**Figure 2. Students Receiving a Full Program**

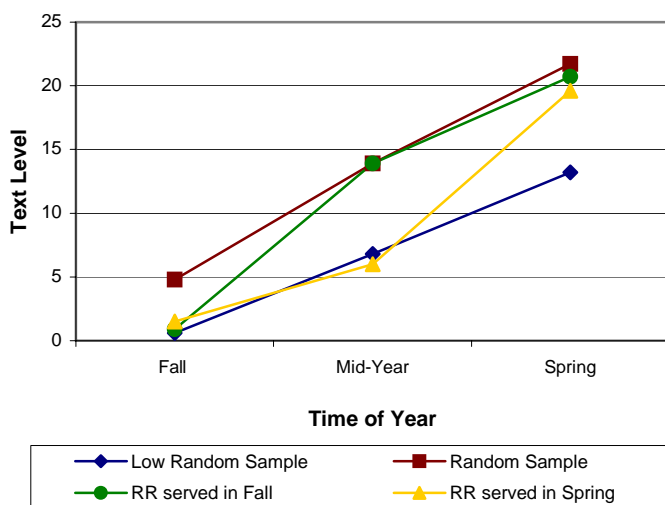


#### Comparison of Text Reading Level Gains

The goal of the Reading Recovery intervention is to provide children with the necessary instruction to allow them to benefit from their classroom instruction. This requires accelerated progress on their part since they begin the year as the lowest achieving children in the classroom. A measure of success in reaching this goal is to compare their text reading level in the fall and spring to that of a group of first graders randomly selected from the entire population of first-grade students at schools with Reading Recovery in Indiana and a group comprising low achievers in the random sample. As children who were selected first in the fall for Reading Recovery complete their interventions, teachers select new students to replace them. This design allows us to review treatment effects of the intervention. It might be expected that the students who are not selected for Reading Recovery until spring might make slow

progress while waiting for the intervention, but once they are selected, their progress would accelerate. The green line illustrates how the students served in the fall compare to the random sample (red line) by achieving the same text reading level by mid-year and retaining it until year end; the yellow line shows how the children picked up at mid-year begin to make progress at that point and achieve it by year end; and the blue line illustrates how a group of low students who do not participate in the intervention do not achieve grade level progress, but rather continue to be low achievers. *These data provide quite compelling evidence that having Reading Recovery available in a school can alter the paths of progress of low-achieving students, eliminating the numbers of students who are not being successful in regular classroom instruction.*

**Figure 3. Text Reading Level Gains: Comparison of Reading Recovery Student Groups Served in Fall and Spring and Two Random Sample Groups**



### Other Literacy Gains

Reading Recovery students who successfully completed the intervention (discontinued) also performed very well on all other assessment tasks at the end of the year. They outperformed the random sample comparison group on Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words (phonemic awareness assessment) and the Ohio Word Test (words read in isolation). The students who successfully completed the intervention matched the average scores of the comparison group on Letter Identification. Successful Reading Recovery students (discontinued) wrote an average of 57 words compared to an average of 59 words for the comparison group. The average score on Concepts About Print for students who successfully completed the intervention was 20.6 out of a possible 24 items, compared to 20.7 for the comparison group.

### Reduction in Special Education Placement

Reading Recovery has led the way in leaving no child behind. It dramatically reduces the numbers of children with reading difficulties and the cost of those children to school systems. Although Reading Recovery children were the lowest readers and writers when entering grade one, only 5% of the children receiving a full intervention were placed in special education services. Only 2% of the full-intervention children were placed in LD programs for reading, compared to 1% of the randomly selected comparison group. No child whose series of lessons was successfully discontinued was placed in an LD reading program in Indiana.

The 2004 revised Individuals With Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEIA) addresses the need for Early Intervening Services (EIS) and children's Response to Intervention (RTI). The IDEIA provides school districts with the discretion to use up to 15% of their federal special education funds on professional development for teachers and on qualifying EIS. Reading Recovery, as an effective intervention with scientifically-based reading research, is an excellent example of an EIS.

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*The centerpiece of Reading Recovery is the development of readers who are self-regulated strategy users. . .*  
*(Michael Pressley, 2005)*

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### Retention in Grade One

Few Reading Recovery children were retained in grade one; 8% of all children who had a full intervention, whether discontinued or not, were actually retained. Of the children who were retained, half of those were for reasons other than reading difficulties. Only 1% of the children whose interventions were successfully discontinued were retained for reading difficulties.

### Reading Placement in Classrooms

Classroom teachers described dramatic changes in reading group placements across the year for Reading Recovery children who successfully completed the intervention. In the fall, 78% were in the low group; by year-end, only 10% were in low group placements.

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*Reading Recovery, based on a learning-to-read paradigm that has served young struggling readers well, has spared many children the despair, shame, and desperation of being the one who can't read like others in their classes. (Richard Vacca, 2005)*

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## IMPLEMENTATION FACTORS AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY

All outcomes should be considered within the context of the implementation decisions made by districts. Known to contribute to program success are (a) the level of coverage within a school and within a district, (b) protection of time for teaching sessions, (c) quality of teacher training, (d) knowledge of administrators and classroom teachers, and (e) ownership of the intervention by all stakeholders. Indiana is still far from providing Reading Recovery to all children who need it and many of the participating schools experience the impact of low coverage.

Reading Recovery has a strong track record of *preventing* literacy failure for many first graders. Results support the investment of resources in this prevention effort. Policy makers need to know which interventions are successful in improving student outcomes in measurable ways. Reading Recovery meets the cost effectiveness test with student outcome data. It is the goal of the Purdue University Reading Recovery faculty to do all that is possible to assure literacy for *all* children in Indiana.

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*When asked, "Don't you think it's too expensive?" we have steadfastly answered, "The evidence shows it works." We also added the overused tagline, "Pay now or pay a great deal later."*  
*(James Flood and Diane Lapp, 2005)*

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