



Reading Recovery®
Council of North America

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Reading Recovery Salutes Outstanding Principals



Barbara Kulpinsky
Highlands Elementary School
Sugar Land, TX

“Reading Recovery is an important part of our language arts program now. It has changed us—we brought it in for the lowest-performing students, and then we realized that it had a role in the guided reading program as well,” said Principal Kulpinsky. Reading Recovery was introduced at Highlands Elementary about 8 years ago.

“The strategies that Reading Recovery provides spin off into a lot of different areas. For instance, our teachers now have a common language they use to talk about literacy teaching.”

Increased Achievement Despite a Socioeconomic Decline

During the 20 years she has spent at Highlands Elementary, Kulpinsky has seen a lot of changes. There is now a free and reduced-price lunch count, which they had never had before. Many new residents belong to “bootstrap” families, people working to raise themselves by their own efforts. And yet, over the years, despite the decline of the socioeconomic status of the community, the school's reading scores have gone up.

“Ninety-nine percent of the third graders passed the TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) reading exam. Fourth grade had 98% pass, and fifth grade had 97% pass the state exam. That's very high!” Kulpinsky reports. “And we've gotten state awards for the number of commendable students that we have. We have increased our percentage of high performers. In a community that's so bilingual, that's amazing.”

Additional Benefits Arising from Reading Recovery

Other benefits Kulpinsky has seen coming from Reading Recovery include an active parent volunteer program which usually yields about 20 specially trained parent volunteers. Reading Recovery also provides the tools and framework to create a comprehensive literacy program and an approach to tracking data on each student's performance over his or her elementary school career.

Further, Kulpinsky notes an increased satisfaction among the staff, which she describes as a “positive, upbeat group,” a low staff turnover rate, and increased communication and collaboration among teachers. There is even a benefit to the students who are not successful in Reading Recovery.

“By the time a child exits Reading Recovery, their needs are already identified and we can have an intervention in place for them,” Kulpinsky says. “There are no gaps, no waiting for a program to be put into place. Most kids do well with Reading Recovery, but it's a joy to know that when they don't, it's not a lack of teaching or parental involvement. We know exactly what is going on with each child. Reading Recovery is an early identification tool; a way to diagnose a child's needs and strengths. It has been a major factor in our success.”