

What Works Clearinghouse Intervention Report on Reading Recovery

What It Means to Teachers and Schools

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC)¹ Intervention Report on Reading Recovery will be welcomed by school administrators, teachers, and parents who know that Reading Recovery is an important safety net for their struggling first-grade students. This report adds an authoritative, independent assessment of experimental research evidence about Reading Recovery. The WWC assessment clearly establishes that Reading Recovery is an effective intervention based on scientific research.

In addition, the WWC report corrects misinformation about Reading Recovery's research that has been circulated by a handful of reading researchers and advisers of The U.S. Department of Education (USDE) Reading First funding stream. These critics have ignored Reading Recovery's strong positive research base and have promoted commercial package programs as a substitute for Reading Recovery's expert teachers.

As a result of the misinformation and bias among USDE technical assistance advisers and review panels, the Reading Recovery Council of North America (RRCNA) filed a complaint with the Inspector General at USDE in July 2005, and a subsequent report in March 2006, "Evidence Ignored, Learning Denied: The Attack on Reading Recovery." After investigation, the Inspector General accused Reading First leadership of a "lack of integrity and ethical values" in the management of the program.

The WWC report combined with the Inspector General's reports on the Reading First program's grant application process is validation for Reading Recovery's defense of its scientific research base and the clear right of state and local schools to evaluate curriculum based on their own community needs.

Although there have been decades of debate about beginning reading instruction, research demonstrates that no single approach is best for all children. Just like their average classmates, the lowest-performing first graders have individual strengths and confusions. Reading Recovery allows these lowest students to have 30 to 50 hours of individual instruction in order to accelerate their learning. This prevents retention in grade and unnecessary referrals to special education. Reading Recovery's strong research evidence qualifies the intervention as an essential part of compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA/IDEA).

Reading Recovery is not aligned with any specific classroom approach. After nearly 25 years in U.S. schools, evaluation data confirm that it works with a variety of classroom programs including those guided by basal textbooks and balanced literacy instruction.

Reading Recovery's highly trained teachers typically teach one half-day in Reading Recovery, and the other half-day they use their literacy expertise to teach in classrooms, work with small literacy groups, or work as reading coaches. In the 2005–2006 school year, the average Reading Recovery teacher taught 8.1 Reading Recovery students and 41.4 students outside Reading Recovery.

No other intervention has such an extensive research base and has demonstrated such strong results for first graders. The investment in Reading Recovery positively changes children's lives.

For more information and an analysis of the WWC report, visit the Reading Recovery Council of North America website at www.readingrecovery.org.

¹The mission of the WWC is "to provide educators, policy makers, researchers and the public with a central and trusted source of scientific evidence of what works in education." (<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>) They base their analysis on research studies that meet their standards for demonstrating causal validity.