



Briefing Paper

Reading Recovery® Council of North America

Reading Recovery Reduces Achievement Gaps

In Reading Recovery, diversity “refers to any and all the variants of individual differences and is not limited to cultural, ethnic, or linguistic diversity.”

— Marie Clay, 1998, p. 223

With the growing diversity in America’s population, the achievement gap among various groups of children is gaining national attention. Reading Recovery reduces and in some cases closes the achievement gap between

- low and average achievers,
- English language learners (ELL) and native English speakers,
- lower- and higher-family incomes, and
- various racial and ethnic groups.

With Reading Recovery, struggling first graders close this gap early and can learn with classroom peers. Without help, the gap widens as children progress through the grades. Only through attention to the individual learner will the disparity among learners cease to exist for children in today’s schools.

The Gap Between Low and Average Achievers

Reading Recovery selects first graders in the bottom 15 to 20% of their class and after a full series of lessons, 75% of students reach grade-level average. These outcomes have been consistent for more than 20 years in the U.S. The most recent evaluation report is available on the National Data Evaluation Center (NDEC) website. (www.ndec.us)

In addition to the evaluation data, several high-quality studies document Reading Recovery's ability to bring students to grade-level standard.

The Gap Between English Language Learners and Native English Speakers

Evaluation data from the NDEC support the success of Reading Recovery for English language learners (Gómez-Bellengé & Rodgers, 2006). In addition, several studies have found Reading Recovery to be appropriate for ELL students; success rates are similar to native English speakers (Ashdown & Simic, 2000; Kelly, Gómez-Bellengé, Chen, & Schulz (in press); Neal & Kelly, 1999).

The Gap Along Economic Lines

Rodgers, Gómez-Bellengé, & Wang (2004) found that the achievement gap between average- and low-performing children who were in Reading Recovery either narrowed or closed along economic and race/ethnicity lines. In a subsequent study (Rodgers, Gómez-Bellengé, Wang, & Schulz, 2005), the researchers found that early intervention (Reading Recovery) is more significantly related to students' reading performance than students' economic status.

A New Jersey researcher (Batten, 2004) concluded that Reading Recovery is an investment that reduces the achievement gap of disadvantaged urban children.

The Gap Along Racial/Ethnic Lines

Reading Recovery's ability to reduce the gap among different racial and ethnic groups was demonstrated in a study by Rodgers, Gómez-Bellengé, Wang & Schultz (2005). By controlling other variables such as socioeconomic status, researchers found that race was not statistically significant in predicting success in Reading Recovery. These findings underscore the importance of intervening early with Reading Recovery.

A Final Comment

The Reading Recovery national report demonstrates that students are similarly successful regardless of gender, race, income, native language, the location of the school, the school's racial composition, and the Title I status of the school (Gómez-Bellengé & Rodgers, 2006).

Reading Recovery is part of a comprehensive literacy plan in schools, providing a safety net for the lowest-achieving first graders without consideration to labels or expectations. Research and evaluation suggest that Reading Recovery plays a promising role in closing the gap among diverse groups of children.

References

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