

Programme title:

Reading Recovery

Website/for more information see:

<https://www.readingrecovery.ac.nz/index.php>

What claims does the company make/what does the programme target?

Originally developed by psychologist and educator Marie Clay at the University of Auckland in New Zealand, Reading Recovery is one of the oldest and most widely-implemented reading intervention programmes (May et al., 2013). The Ministry of Education of New Zealand supports and funds Reading Recovery as part of its Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (National Reading Recovery Centre, 2011). Within the U.S.A., the programme is federally funded by the Department of Education, serving 152,000 students across 48 states prior to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (May et al., 2013).

Reading Recovery specifically targets the lowest-achieving 15 to 20 percent of 1st-year readers and writers (i.e., six year olds), who are then selected to receive the intensive intervention. Claims report that an estimated 75 percent of these students will reach proficiency within the 12- to 20- week intervention period (Ashdown & Simic, 2000; Allington, 2005; Center et al., 1995; D'Agostino & Murphy, 2004; Pinnell, 1989; Pinnell et al., 1994; Quay et al., 2001; Schwartz, 2005), which is corroborated by findings of the International Data and Evaluation Centre (IDEC). For the remaining 25 percent who fail to attain grade-level achievement during this period, referral for further evaluation for special needs services is streamlined by the large amount of diagnostic information collected throughout the assessment for and administration of Reading Recovery (May et al., 2013).

The fundamental goal of Reading Recovery is to reduce the number of students who struggle with literacy, but the intended long-term consequences of this principle goal are to reduce future social and economic costs of poor literacy, including truancy, dropout, and underemployment (May et al., 2013). By identifying and effectively referring students who may need more robust or ongoing special education, Reading Recovery aims to apply these long-term goals to all students entering the programme, and not just those that achieve grade-normalised literacy proficiency in 12 to 20 weeks. Furthermore, with an intensive early intervention model, Reading Recovery may preclude special education referrals for children who could attain grade-level proficiency with short-term individualised attention (Aldridge, 2004).

What it involves:

Reading Recovery is an intensive early literacy intervention designed to reduce the number of children who struggle with reading and writing (Aldridge, 2004). The driving philosophy of the programme is that expertly delivered, individualised, short-term, responsive instruction can alter the course of literacy achievement, enabling students with poor literacy to catch up with their peers and maintain grade-normalised proficiency. Remedial instruction is provided in the core skills of literacy: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension. Through the programme, students are expected to develop independent problem-solving strategies for word-identification, self-monitoring, self-correction, and interpretation of text (May et al., 2013).

Students who are identified as having literacy difficulties and subsequently selected to receive Reading Recovery will have five 30-minute sessions per week one-on-one with a specially trained teacher for a period of 12 to 20 weeks (May et al., 2013). As all instruction is highly individualised, these lessons are shaped by and for each student's abilities and skill deficits. For this reason, considerable emphasis is placed on the quality of the instruction delivered, and training for Reading Recovery teachers begins with in-residence postgraduate training and mentorship for teacher leaders, followed by a year-long training and

professional development programme for teachers working directly with students (Clay, 1987). The overall goal of reducing the number of children with literacy difficulties is achieved through four critical systemic changes to the educational system: change in the behaviour of teachers, change in the behaviour of children as a result of teaching, change in school organisations due to both teachers and administrators, and change in funding by the social/political authorities (Clay, 1987).

Prices:

Reading Recovery is available on a nonprofit, no-royalty basis as a collaboration between universities and the school districts; the costs of the programme are the initial training tuition and the ongoing professional development, as well as programme materials and data evaluation fees. This cost can be estimated at approximately US\$100 per student for materials, and US\$350 annually per school plus US\$45 per Reading Recovery teacher for annual data evaluation (What Works Clearinghouse, 2013). However, as Reading Recovery is implemented as a large-scale, government-funded intervention across thousands of schools and educators, it is not necessarily effective to compare the overall costs (including training) with those provided by external corporations or available in external clinics.

Evidence for efficacy:

The evidence in support of Reading Recovery is substantial, as it has been assessed by a large number of university research groups, government institutions, and international data collection agencies. The vast majority of this research concludes that most low-literacy students who undergo the Reading Recovery programme will achieve grade-level proficiency in reading and writing after 12-20 weeks of the intervention, and associates participation in Reading Recovery with a significant reduction in special education referrals (Ashdown & Simic, 2000; Allington, 2005; Briggs & Young, 2003; Brown et al., 1999; Center et al., 1995; D'Agostino & Murphy, 2004; Hooligan & Hurry, 2013; May et al., 2015; Pinnell, DeFord, & Lyons, 1988; O'Connor & Simic, 2002; Pinnell et al., 1994; Pinnell, 1989; Quay et al., 2001; Quirk & Schwanenflugel, 2004; Rowe, 1995; Ruhe & Moore, 2005; Schmi/ & Gregory, 2005; Schwartz, 2005; Wasik & Slavin, 1993). The U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences' What Works Clearinghouse Intervention Report (2013) concluded from a meta-analysis of research on Reading Recovery a positive effect with no overriding contrary evidence in alphabets, reading fluency, and comprehension, and strong evidence of a positive effect with no overriding contrary evidence in general reading achievement. As of 2011, Reading Recovery was the only one of 171 literacy programmes to attain "positive" or "potentially positive" designations in all four of these domains from the What Works Clearinghouse (May et al., 2013). The findings of one particularly well-designed, large-scale recent study characteristic of the reports described above are briefly summarised below:

Year One Results From the Multisite Randomized Evaluation of the i3 Scale-Up of Reading Recovery (May et al., 2015): This study was a multisite randomised control trial assessing the efficacy of Reading Recovery in 184 schools. From the original sample, the study included 433 matched pairs of 1st grade students who met criteria for Reading Recovery, half of which were to receive the intervention immediately (treatment group) and half of which were to participate in a second round of Reading Recovery only after the first round of students finished (control group). The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) revealed significant positive effects in both reading measures (reading words and comprehension), with means over one-half of a standard deviation greater for the treatment group, and significant positive overall effect of the treatment. This represents a growth rate that is 38%

greater than the national average for the ITBS. These findings suggest that Reading Recovery has the anticipated positive impact on the literacy skills of 1st grade students with reading difficulties.

Furthermore, the majority of studies that have examined the long-term duration of the effects of Reading Recovery have identified lasting impacts of the intervention (Briggs & Young, 2003; Brown et al., 1999; Holliman & Hurry, 2013; Pinnell, 1989; Rowe, 1995; Schmi/ & Gregory, 2005; Ruhe & Moore, 2005; Wasik & Slavin, 1993). One such study is briefly described below:

The Effects of Reading Recovery on Children's Literacy Progress and Special Educational Needs Status: A Three-Year Follow-Up Study (Holliman & Hurry, 2013): This study was a follow-up of 241 children three years after the implementation of the Reading Recovery intervention. These were divided into three groups: children who had received Reading Recovery (73), children in Reading Recovery schools who did not meet criteria for the intervention (48), and children who attended schools that did not offer Reading Recovery (120). As measured by the National Curriculum standards, children who had received Reading Recovery were performing a full level ahead of comparison children at non-Reading Recovery schools, and were significantly less likely to have been identified as having a special education need. The study also went on to demonstrate that children who received Reading Recovery performed at comparable levels to children from the same schools who had not met criteria for the intervention, suggesting a "whole-school effect" of Reading Recovery. This could be attributed to the additional intensive training of specialised teachers, and the increased availability of teacher attention, which would otherwise be diverted by the lowest-achieving students.

Evidence against efficacy:

Although Reading Recovery has been widely researched and consistently demonstrated to have significant positive effects on the reading and writing abilities of students at the lowest literacy achievement levels, the structure of the intervention programme gives rise to some methodological concerns in designing robust and rigorous scientific research studies. Because of the selection policies and completion process, designing an equivalent comparison group is highly difficult, and designing a randomised control study is likewise challenging as selection of students to receive the intervention is inherently nonrandom (Holliman & Hurry, 2013; May et al., 2013; May et al., 2015). For these reasons and others, the application of the rigorous evidence standards of the What Works Clearinghouse narrowed the pool of research on Reading Recovery in 2013 from 202 studies to just three that met the research standards for the report (What Works Clearinghouse, 2013). However, as described above, all three of these randomised control trial studies demonstrated significant positive effects of Reading Recovery, which were independently verified by the What Works Clearinghouse report.

Conclusions:

With all of the above factors taken into consideration, there is a significant amount of published, peer-reviewed evidence supporting the efficacy of Reading Recovery as a literacy intervention for low-achieving first-year students, as well as its effectiveness in reducing the overall number of special education needs referrals. The significant positive effects of this programme on the reading and writing skills and general education outcome of these students have been replicated in large-scale studies and supported by rigorous investigations by university research groups, government institutions, and internal data collection agencies. Importantly, the effects of Reading Recovery have been consistently demonstrated to persist even three to five years after the intervention.

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