



# Reading Recovery<sup>®</sup> in Michigan

## An Oakland University Executive Summary 2011-2012

### Introduction

Reading Recovery<sup>®</sup> is a program of professional development for teachers: university faculty train and professionally develop teacher leaders who, in turn, develop teachers to work with first grade children having extreme difficulty learning to read and write. Since its establishment in the United States, Reading Recovery has served nearly 2 million children. Oakland University is one of only 18 universities in the United States to serve as a Reading Recovery university training center. Since its establishment in Michigan in 1991, Reading Recovery<sup>1</sup> has trained over 1,215 teachers who have served almost 99,050 Michigan first graders.

### History of Reading Recovery

Internationally renowned developmental psychologist and distinguished literacy researcher, Dr. Marie M. Clay, developed a set of research-based teaching procedures found to reverse literacy failure in a short period of time. Reading Recovery, implemented first in New Zealand, came to the United States in 1984 when the first class of teachers was trained at The Ohio State University. Now implemented worldwide, Reading Recovery has expanded not only in the U.S. and New Zealand, but also in Australia, Bermuda, Canada, the Caribbean, Europe, the United Kingdom and U.S. Department of Defense Schools. The not-for-profit collaborative effort among schools and universities trains teachers to work with the lowest-performing first graders. Children are identified for service based on their scores on the six tasks of *An Observation*

*Survey of Early Literacy Achievement*<sup>1</sup> (Clay, 2002; 2006) with the lowest children selected for service first (Lose & Konstantellou, 2005). Teachers trained in Reading Recovery use the assessment information and sensitive observation to design individual literacy lessons that are responsive to each child's skills and abilities. Children meet with their Reading Recovery teacher for 30-minute lessons each day for an average of 12-20 weeks. The goal is to accelerate children's progress to within-average levels in reading and writing in a short period of time so that they can benefit from good classroom instruction (Schwartz, 2005).

Researchers attribute this accelerative progress to the responsive instructional activities provided in the one-to-one setting by teachers who have participated in Reading Recovery's professional development. Reading Recovery also serves as a pre-referral option to identify children who need longer-term specialist support (Jones, et al., 2005). Schools that implement Reading Recovery assign teaching staff flexibly to maximize children's access to the intervention and to permit teachers to apply their Reading Recovery

knowledge in their other instructional roles (Lose & Best, 2011).

### Reading Recovery in Michigan, 2011-2012

During the 2011-2012 school year, 2,108 students were taught by 253 teachers trained in Reading Recovery (61 of whom were in-training) in 189 schools in 73 school districts. When they were not teaching Reading Recovery, these teachers also taught 12,369 additional students – an average of 45.6 students each day – in their other instructional roles as classroom, special education, Title I reading, and ESL teachers. Teachers trained in Reading Recovery received professional development from 15 Reading Recovery teacher leaders who themselves received professional development in group settings from the Reading Recovery faculty at Oakland University (OU). These teacher leaders also received individualized professional support delivered by OU Reading Recovery faculty in their Reading Recovery schools and regional Reading Recovery

Table 1: Reading Recovery Demographics

#### Students

- 60% Male
- 60% Free and Reduced Lunch
- 12% Some Disability
- 67% White, not Hispanic
- 20% Black, not Hispanic
- 7% Hispanic, any race
- 3% Multiple Races, Not Hispanic
- 2% American Indian/Alaskan Native, Not Hispanic
- 2% Other Races, Not Hispanic
- 1% Asian, Not Hispanic

#### Languages (Other than English) Spoken in the Home

- 37% Spanish
- 29% Arabic
- 2% German
- 2% Hmong, Miao
- 2% Russian
- 1% Chinese
- 1% French
- 1% Hindi
- 1% Italian
- 1% Romanian
- 1% Ukrainian
- 1% Urdu
- 1% Vietnamese
- <1% Each: Korean, Polish, Japanese, Greek, Gujarathi, Serbocroatian, Hungarian

Table 2: Sources of School Funding for Reading Recovery Schools

#### Schools (N=189)

- 104 Title I Part A
- 92 Local
- 23 State
- 17 Private
- 15 Other
- 5 IDEA-Rtl
- 4 IDEA-EIS
- 3 IDEA-SpEd
- 2 Title I Part B

<sup>1</sup> In 2011, the National Center for Response to Intervention awarded high ratings for the survey tool central to Reading Recovery's evaluation and instruction. *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* received highest possible ratings for scientific rigor and is posted on the Screening Tools Chart <http://www.rti4success.org/screeningTools>. The Observation Survey is used not only in Reading Recovery, but is also widely used by classroom and specialist teachers, and researchers.

## Empirical Support for Reading Recovery

The United States Department of Education What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) publishes intervention reports that assess research on beginning reading curricula and instructional strategies for students from kindergarten through third grade. By fall 2011, the WWC has reviewed studies for 171 programs in the beginning reading category, and only 26 met their rigorous standards. The WWC translates effect sizes from research into an improvement index that reflects the change in a student's percentile rank that can be expected if the student has the intervention. Schools use these index ratings to make informed decisions while selecting the right programs for their students. Among all programs reviewed, Reading Recovery received highest results with positive effects across all four of the literacy domains: alphabets (phonics and phonemic awareness), fluency, comprehension, and general reading achievement.

sites throughout the state. Reading Recovery students represented a full range of diversity (see Table 1). Reading Recovery schools used a range of funding sources to partially fund the intervention as noted in Table 2.

## Results

2,108 students were enrolled in Reading Recovery in Michigan in 2011-2012. A full Reading Recovery intervention lasts up to 20 weeks. Thirty-five percent of students received interventions that lasted between 10-14 weeks, 31% between 15-19 weeks, and 18% of the interventions lasted 20 weeks total. Not all of the students who were enrolled received a full intervention; their interventions were incomplete due to a slot opening up for their lessons late in the year (16%, N=346), because they moved (3%, N=69), and for other reasons (2%, N=40).

Of the 1,653 students who received a complete intervention (about 30-35 hours of instruction total), 68% (N=1,127) reached average performance levels in reading and writing and their interventions were discontinued. The remainder of the complete intervention children, 32% (N=526), made progress but not sufficient enough to reach the rigorous criteria for the discontinuation designation. These students then were recommended for follow-up support in their

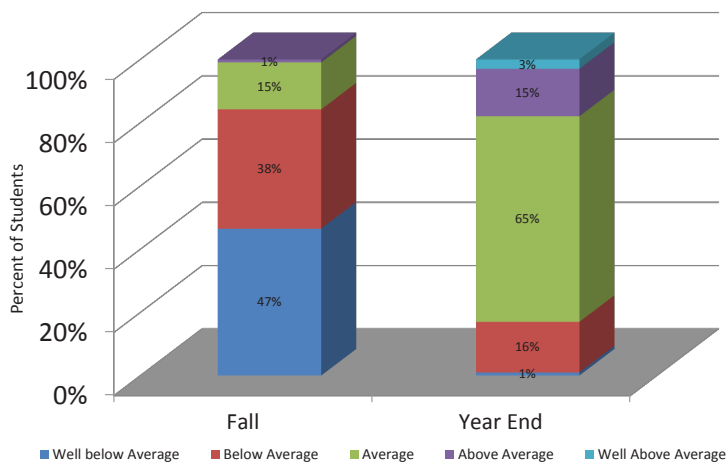
classrooms and in small group instructional settings. Of the total number of students who received a complete Reading Recovery intervention, less than 2% were referred for LD.

The change in classroom reading group placement from fall to year-end for students who received complete interventions and those whose lessons were discontinued is another indication of students' progress in literacy as illustrated in Figure 1. At the end of the school year, these once lowest performing learners have now moved to within average performance levels, resembling the normal distribution of students in grade one.

## Effect of Reading Recovery on Reading Achievement

Figure 2 demonstrates the effect of Reading Recovery instruction on the reading achievement of the lowest performing literacy learners in first grade and compares their progress to the Random Sample of their peers and the Low Random Sample of children in schools with Reading Recovery<sup>2</sup>.

Figure 1: Classroom Reading Group Placement of Reading Recovery Students with Complete Interventions and Students Whose Lessons were Discontinued: Oakland University - Michigan, 2011-2012



**Random Sample (RS) Children** – The green line at the top shows the Random Sample's progress on text reading at three points in time. These students start the year at a higher text reading level and make progress throughout the year.

**Reading Recovery (RR) Children served in the fall semester** – The blue line shows the progress of Reading Recovery children who were selected during the fall semester for Reading Recovery service. Initially the lowest-performing children, they catch up to and even surpass the Random Sample by mid-year when their Reading Recovery lessons end and continue to maintain their progress.

**Reading Recovery (RR) Children served in the spring semester** – The red line shows the progress of Reading Recovery children selected for service at mid-year when slots by Reading Recovery children served in the fall become available. Although these children made some progress in the fall without Reading Recovery, they are well behind their Random Sample peers at mid-year. Provided with Reading Recovery however, these children make accelerative progress, reduce the gap between themselves and the Random Sample and achieve within-average performance levels by year's end.

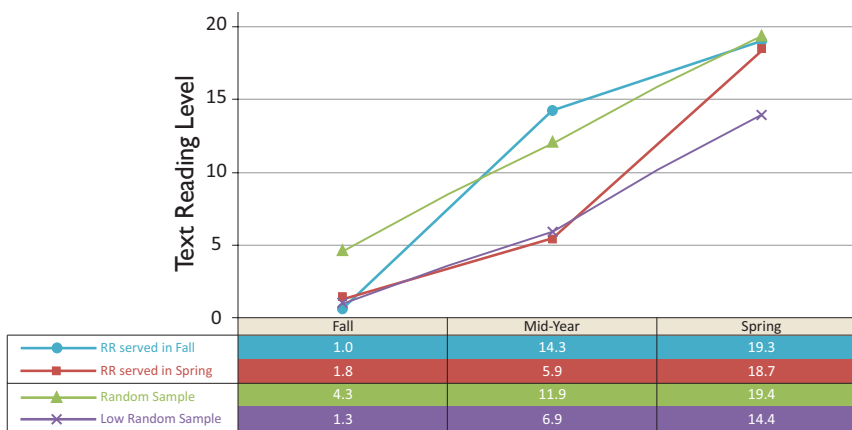
**Low Random Sample Children** – The purple line at the bottom shows the progress of the Low Random Sample. These students who did not receive Reading Recovery were low at the beginning of the school year and remain low throughout the year. While they made some progress throughout the year, it is not enough to reduce the achievement gap. Had they been able to receive Reading Recovery, it is likely they would have achieved accelerative progress and reached within-average performance levels.

These findings confirm Juel's (1988) research which showed that children who were low-performing in literacy in first grade are very likely to remain low performing in fourth grade. However, provided with contingent, responsive teaching by specially trained and professionally developed teachers, even the lowest-performing children can make accelerative progress, benefit from good classroom instruction, and continue learning with their peers (McEneaney, Lose, & Schwartz, 2006).

## United States Department of Education *Investing in Innovation (i3)* Grant

Reading Recovery is the recipient of one of four i3 federal grants to scale up Reading Recovery throughout the United States from 2010-2015. Under the i3 grant opportunity, teachers are trained at Reading Recovery Sites affiliated with 18 Reading Recovery university training centers across the country. The Reading Recovery Center of Michigan at Oakland University will provide 10 graduate credits of early literacy intervention course work, books, and instructional materials to 250 certified teachers in Michigan elementary schools. Information about the i3 grant and the application process is found at [oakland.edu/readingrecovery](http://oakland.edu/readingrecovery)

Figure 2: Gains on Text Reading Level for Reading Recovery Children



<sup>2</sup>Note: A change in national random sampling procedures implemented in 2011-2012 reduced the size of the Random Sample for Michigan; therefore the Random Sample is represented by data from three years: 2009-2010 to 2011-2012.

### Response to Intervention

The IDEA attempts to ensure that schools achieve the following (Lose, 2007; 2008):

- Provide early identification and intervention for all children struggling with literacy learning.
- Develop ways to appropriately identify and intervene on behalf of children with LD.
- Provide effective, intensive, evidence-based early intervening services.
- Monitor each child's progress using data-based documentation.
- Accelerate children's reading progress to meet annual progress criteria.
- Create a multi-tiered problem-solving team to support comprehensive literacy efforts.
- Provide the highest quality of professional development for teachers of low achievers.

### Response to Intervention and Learning Disabilities

A federal initiative that is derived from the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) offers schools facing increased enrollments of students with learning disabilities (LD) two options for addressing this growing population (Lose et al., 2007; Allington, 2009). The first option is that local education agencies can use as much as 15% of their special education funds to pay for early intervening services (EIS) and to support professional

development and literacy instruction. The second option offered by the IDEA is Response to Intervention (RTI) that can be used to provide high quality instruction based on children's needs without the requirement of labeling students at risk for school failure as LD (Johnston, 2010). The goal is to limit referrals based on inadequate instruction or limited English proficiency and to reduce the number of children identified for LD services (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). To achieve this goal, the lowest performing children must be identified early so that appropriately intensive interventions

and tiers or layers of support can be provided within a comprehensive approach to literacy instruction at the first sign of a child's difficulty.

### Response to Intervention and Teacher-Student Ratio

Some administrators have argued that small group instruction delivered by teachers trained in Reading Recovery is just as effective as the instruction delivered daily and one-to-one by these same teachers. To address this question Schwartz, Schmitt, & Lose (2012) used a randomized control trial methodology to evaluate the effect of variations in teacher-student ratio on intervention effectiveness delivered by teachers trained in Reading Recovery. Even with the expertise of these teachers, students in the 1:1 condition scored significantly higher on the text reading measure than students in the 1:2, 1:3, and 1:5 group conditions. The researchers concluded that a sound approach to RTI would be comprehensive with provision for one-to-one early preventive instruction for the lowest performing learners, effective small group instruction for less struggling older learners, strong classrooms for all, and longer-term intervention for the very few children who continue to need intensive support in later grades.

### Reading Recovery: An Evidence-Based Approach to Response To Intervention

In her seminal article, *Learning to be Learning Disabled*, published 25 years ago, Marie Clay (1987) gave validity to support the idea that many children labeled LD are in fact instructionally challenged through a series of unfortunate

*Reading Recovery has a strong track record of preventing literacy failure for many first graders. Results support the investment of resources for this prevention effort. Yet, Michigan is still far from providing Reading Recovery to all the children who need it. Many of the participating districts experience the impact of low coverage. Over 9 out of 10 students in Michigan who need Reading Recovery do not have access to the intervention. Ideally, 20% of the state's first graders should have access. Policy makers and all who are concerned about closing the achievement gap to enable children to succeed in school so that they can take full advantage of opportunities in post secondary education and the workforce could achieve greater equity by providing the intervention to the 20,961 first graders that could benefit from Reading Recovery.*

Results of a large-scale study indicated that money spent on improving teacher performance netted greater student achievement gains than did any other use of school resources (Darling-Hammond, 1996). Through its intensive professional development for teachers, Reading Recovery is an ideal response to struggling young literacy learners' requirement for skilled responsive teachers (Lose, 2005).

experiences either before, or very early in, their formal schooling. However, provided an appropriate early intervention to support their accelerative learning and response to instruction, the number of children identified as LD can be reduced to only 1-2 percent.

For over 25 years in the United States, Reading Recovery has operated as an RTI approach. Reading Recovery trained and professionally developed teachers design instruction tailored precisely to the child, delivered daily and one-to-one, in support of the literacy learning of the most at-risk children (Clay, 2005a; 2005b). While many children respond quite well to whole group and small group instruction, evidence has shown that the lowest performing learners provided with the Reading Recovery intervention are able to make accelerative progress and continue learning with their peers in the classroom without further intervention or placement in special education for literacy difficulties – a considerable cost savings to districts.

## Training Programs for Special Educators and Interventionists

Many Michigan schools that have fully implemented Reading Recovery have requested that other members of the instructional staff have access to the Reading Recovery training without the requirement of teaching four students daily. Two training programs, *Literacy Lessons® (LL)* for special educators and teachers of English language learners and *Literacy Support (LS)* for classroom teachers and reading interventionists, are provided to these teachers as they train alongside teachers in Reading Recovery. These LL and LS teacher trainees are introduced to the complex literacy processing model that informs Reading Recovery while teaching two students daily, a minimum of four students in one-to-one lessons. Following their training year, they apply their new expertise as they continue teaching at least one child, one-to-one, each year from their class rosters or intervention caseloads (Konstantellou & Lose, 2009).

## Reading Recovery Regional Training Sites\* Affiliated with the Reading Recovery Center of Michigan at Oakland University

Bloomfield Hills Public Schools  
 Detroit Public Schools  
 Dowagiac Union Schools  
 Eastern Upper Peninsula Intermediate School District  
 Genesee Intermediate School District  
 Jackson County Intermediate School District  
 Kalamazoo Public Schools

Oakland Regional  
 Oakland University-Grand Rapids  
 Portage Public Schools  
 Port Huron Area School District  
 South Lyon Community Schools  
 Walled Lake Consolidated Schools

\*School districts or consortia of school districts comprise each Reading Recovery Regional Training Site.

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<sup>3</sup>. Beginning in 2006, teachers of special education and English language learners, working in Michigan schools that have implemented Reading Recovery, participated in training for intervention specialists under a special training model, *Literacy Lessons®*. In 2009, another training model, *Literacy Support*, was added to the university training center's options for classroom teachers and reading specialists in Reading Recovery schools. Both of these 8-graduate credit training programs in literacy processing permit teachers to train alongside Reading Recovery teachers, enabling school districts to optimize teacher expertise in response to the diversity of struggling literacy learners in their schools. Since 2006, 49 teachers of special education and ELL and 42 classroom and reading specialist teachers have participated in the *Literacy Lessons* and *Literacy Support* training programs.