The Effectiveness of Reading Recovery

[Type the document subtitle]

Jordan Robert Moss
5/17/2011

Reading recovery is a short term program that identifies and helps struggling first grade readers catch up to grade level. The program consists of daily one on one instruction with a trained professional completing various activities at an intense pace. Over the 40 years that Reading Recovery has been implemented in school across American, the program has received a tremendous amount of praise. On the other end, Reading Recovery has received some criticism during its stay on the top of the early reading intervention program short list. Reading Recovery has helped students across America become better readers and students with nothing in the foreseeable future to change that fact.
For nearly forty years the field of reading has worked diligently to find a way to improve the reading abilities young readers. Researchers have identified ways teachers can enhance the learning of these students early in the educational experiences. Programs such as Reading Recovery have found great success aiding and helping young readers learn how to read as well as catching them up to grade level. A program like Reading Recovery, though, does not occur without a cost. Understandably, the weak economy poses problems for public school budgets, but school systems must take every step to protect and sustain effective reading programs such as reading recovery.

In the 1970’s, Marie Clay developed Reading Recovery in New Zealand to identify and help early struggling readers, with the sole purpose of this program being to dramatically reduce the number of low-achieving first graders who have extreme difficulty learning how to read and write. A goal the team achieves by working closely with the child in a one-on-one setting. These students are identified after students take a reading test, only the lowest scoring kids get consideration for the reading recovery program. Once the students have been selected, they start a 12-20 week program that includes 30 minutes of intense, one-on-one daily instruction with a reading recovery teacher. The process is fast pace and two the point with no time being wasted between activities. When a child works with a reading recovery teacher, he selects a familiar book that fits within his reading level. As he reads out loud, the teacher takes anecdotal notes, making few interruptions. The teacher then asks comprehension questions, and then the two of them complete a variety of literacy activities including writing and reading skills. Once the two have completed the array of activities, the student will read aloud a new unfamiliar text. When
observing a reading recovery session in action, one might marvel at the speed that the two work together. The goal, as outlined by Marie Clay decades ago, involves the close partnership between teacher and struggling reader.

For reading recovery to be an effective program it, “relies on knowledgeable, experienced, and well-trained teachers who interact with students using RR techniques with the aim that students acquire strategies for self-improvement and monitoring their own reading behavior” (Reynolds & Wendell 2007). Successful reading recovery teachers implement different types of assessments and activities to pull the readers along in the reading and writing process. Some activities that students and teachers commonly use in a reading recovery room are re-reading one or more previously introduced texts, identifying letters and words, writing a story, hearing and writing sounds in words, cutting the story up and then reassembling and reading it, introducing a new book, and reading the new text. These activities should all be done in the 30 minutes of daily instruction. The focus of the early intervention is to accelerate the students learning and catch them up to grade-level by the end of treatment.

Although reading recovery has been around for over 40 years and definitely seems to be highly effective there are still many critics of this program. The number one knock on reading recovery would be the cost of the program. Reading recovery is a very expensive program that a lot of school cannot afford. These costs include teacher training and professional development workshops, books and materials, classrooms, and time. Reading recovery only helps a handful of students a year which makes people question if these outrageous expenses are worth the results. In 2003, the cost per reading recovery student was calculated at $6,603 per student (Reynolds & Wendell 2007) and that was eight years ago. Reading recovery also requires a commitment from
the school, the school corporation, the district, and the government in order to locate all of the funds needed to be successful. Although it has been implemented for 15–20 years in some education systems, RR has not demonstrated that it has dramatically reduced literacy failure within education systems (Reynolds & Wendell 2007). A common argument against Reading Recovery is that only a hand full of students receive the services they need to become more affective readers, why can’t schools provide these services to more students. In retrospect the cost of these services does not add up to the number of students serviced.

Despite the cost of the program for students and schools the benefits that come from the implementation of this early reading intervention program are tremendous. Reading recovery provides a system-wide, short-term, early intervention program for young children at risk, while building on a child’s strengths and teaches for strategies thereby producing independent learners without the need for future remediation. Another benefit of this program is that it reduces the number of students retained in first grade and provides accelerated progress for at-risk students. RR can also prevent the social and psychological problems associated with long-term failure and remediation. Another great pro for reading recovery is that it trains teachers to be careful observers of children's reading behavior and good instructional decision makers. (The Benefits of, 2010) This applies not only to the reading recovery students but also the students in general classrooms. Teachers can collaborate and share the reading recovery methods with each other thus allowing all students exposer to these proven methods of reading instruction. The School of Education at Georgia State University states, reading recovery applies the most recent research in early literacy theory to meet the needs of each student. They also stated that RR involves parents in the on-going educational process. (The benefits of, 2010) Great benefits have allowed this
program to be tested and withstand all the doubters and critics through the years proving that it is an effective and rewarding program.

Reading recovery is the golden standard when it comes to reading intervention programs. The success and longevity is matched by no other and the pros by far outweigh the cons. Although schools are cutting programs and teachers, reading recovery is one program that schools and students across the world cannot afford to lose. Reading recovery has provided a blueprint of how to plan, promote, and implement intervention into schools.
