



# READING RECOVERY® IN MICHIGAN

## *An Oakland University Executive Summary 2016-2017*

### INTRODUCTION

Developed by internationally renowned psychologist and literacy researcher, Marie M. Clay, Reading Recovery® (RR) is a short-term early literacy intervention for first grade children having extreme difficulty learning to read and write. The goal of Reading Recovery is to dramatically reduce the number of first-grade students who have extreme difficulty learning to read and write and to reduce the cost of these learners to educational systems.

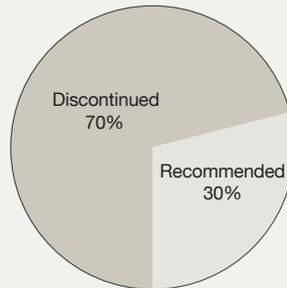
The success of RR lies in its teacher development model: university faculty train and professionally develop teacher leaders who, in turn, develop teachers to work with the most at-risk literacy learners. Children are identified for service based on their scores on the six tasks of *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement*<sup>1</sup> (Clay, 2013) with the lowest performing children selected for service first (Lose & Konstantellou, 2005). RR teachers use this assessment information and sensitive observation to design individual literacy lessons that are responsive to each child's skills and abilities.

Children meet with their RR teacher for 30-minute lessons each school day for an average of 12 to 20 weeks. The goal is to accelerate children's progress to within-average levels of reading and writing in a short period of time so that they can catch up to their peers and 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 RR professional development. Reading Recovery also serves as a pre-referral option to identify children who need longer-term specialist support (Jones, et al., 2005).

Since its establishment in the United States, RR has served nearly 2 million children. Oakland University (OU) is one of only 17 universities in the United States to serve as a RR university training center. OU RR teachers participate in a 10-graduate credit program that spans three semesters: fall, winter and summer 1. Since its establishment in Michigan in 1991, RR has trained over 1,465 teachers who have served over 111,505 Michigan first graders.

Figure 1  
Intervention Status of Reading Recovery Students with Complete Interventions: Michigan, 2016-2017



### READING RECOVERY IN MICHIGAN, 2016-2017

During the 2016-2017 school year, 248 RR teachers (28 of whom were in-training) in 162 schools taught 1,835 students in RR. When they were not teaching RR, these teachers also taught 8,523 additional students in their other instructional roles as classroom, special education, Title I reading and ESL teachers thus serving an average of 42 students each day. Teachers trained in RR received professional development from 14 RR teacher leaders who themselves received professional development and continuing certification instruction from OU RR faculty in group settings at the Reading Recovery Center of Michigan at OU, and in individual sessions at their RR sites and schools throughout Michigan.

RR students represented a full range of diversity (see Table 1). While most schools used state and local funds and Title I Part A to partially fund RR, a few schools used IDEA-EIS, IDEA-RTI or IDEA-Special Education funds as additional sources to partially fund the intervention.

### RESULTS

1,835 students were enrolled in RR in Michigan in 2016-2017. A full RR intervention lasts up to 20 weeks. Thirty-seven percent of students received interventions that lasted between 10-14 weeks, 32% between 15-19 weeks, and 22% 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 (15%, N=282), because they moved (3%, N=51) and for other reasons (7%, N=126).

Of the 1,376 students who received a complete intervention (about 30-35 hours of instruction total), 70% (N=968) reached average performance levels in reading and writing and their interventions were discontinued (see Figure 1). Of the remainder

of the complete intervention children, 30% (N=408), made progress but not sufficient enough to reach the rigorous criteria for the "discontinued" designation. These students were recommended for follow-up support in their classrooms or in small group instructional settings. Of those students who received a complete RR intervention, 2% (N=27) were referred for LD reading.

The change in classroom reading group placement from fall to year-end for students who received complete interventions and whose lessons were discontinued is another indication of students' progress in literacy as illustrated in Figure 2. At the beginning of the year, 39% of these students were well below average and 44% were below average. However, at the end of the school year, 67% were average, 18% were above average and 3% were well above average. Having received RR, these former lowest performing learners have now moved to within-average performance levels, thus resembling the normal distribution of students in grade one.

Table 1  
Reading Recovery Demographics: Michigan, 2016-2017

Students	
55%	Male
56%	Free or reduced school meals
16%	Some disability
63%	White, not Hispanic
14%	Black, not Hispanic
9%	Multiple races, not Hispanic
6%	Hispanic, any race
3%	American Indian/Alaskan Native, not Hispanic
3%	Asian, not Hispanic
2%	Other races, not Hispanic

#### Languages (Other than English) spoken in the home

36%	Spanish
22%	Some other language
17%	Arabic
6%	Hindi
3%	Hmong, Miao
2%	Bengali
2%	German
2%	Polish
2%	Russian
2%	Urdu
2%	Vietnamese
1%	Chinese
1%	French
1%	Korean
< 1%	Each: Dutch, Portuguese, Romanian, Serbo-Croatian, Tagalog, Ukrainian

<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 (D'Agostino, 2012). *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* received highest possible ratings for scientific rigor and is posted on the Screening Tools Chart ([rti4success.org/resources/tool-charts/screening-tools-chart](http://rti4success.org/resources/tool-charts/screening-tools-chart)). The Observation Survey is used not only in Reading Recovery, but also widely used by classroom and specialist teachers, and researchers.

## EFFECT OF READING RECOVERY ON READING ACHIEVEMENT

Figure 3 demonstrates the effect of RR instruction on the reading achievement of the lowest performing literacy learners in the fall of first grade and compares their progress to the National Random Sample of their peers and two additional categories of RR eligible students.

**National Random Sample Children** – The red line at the top shows the National 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.

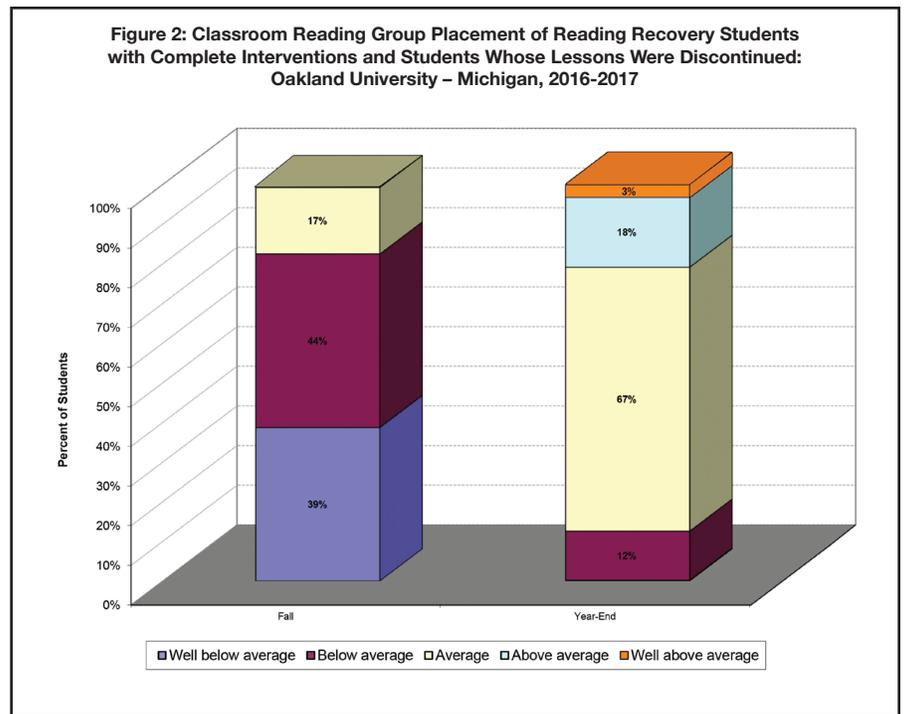
**Reading Recovery (RR) Children served in the fall semester** – The blue line shows the progress of RR children who were selected during the fall semester for RR service. Initially the lowest-performing children, they catch up to the random sample by mid-year when their RR lessons end and continue to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

**Tested Not-Instructed (TNI) Children who received other literacy support from a Reading Recovery (RR) teacher** – The green line shows the progress of the RR eligible children who did not receive RR, but did receive other literacy support from a RR teacher. These children were low at the beginning of the school year and the literacy support from a RR teacher provided in small group or classroom settings was not enough to reduce the achievement gap. Had they received the one-to-one RR intervention, it is likely they would have achieved accelerative progress and reached within-average performance levels by year’s end.

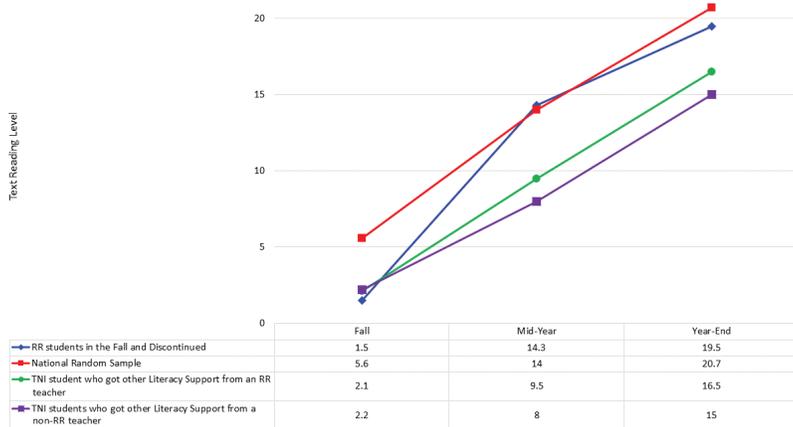
**Tested Not-Instructed (TNI) Children who received other literacy support from a non-Reading Recovery (RR) teacher** – The purple line shows the progress of the RR eligible children who did not receive RR, but did receive other literacy support from a non-RR teacher. These children were low at the beginning of the school year and the literacy support from a non-RR teacher puts them behind the TNI children who received other literacy support from a RR teacher. Had they received RR, it is likely these children would have achieved accelerative progress and reached within-average performance levels by year’s end.

Juel’s (1988) research showed that children who are low performing in literacy in first grade are very likely to remain low performing in fourth grade. The findings illustrated in Figure 3 demonstrate that the lowest performing children require the daily one-to-one instruction provided by RR. 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).

While RR’s success with the most at-risk literacy learners is well established, it is not an immunization against all future social, emotional, health, and educational risk factors that may affect students’ literacy futures. Clay (2005) has advised that RR children should be monitored for multiple years and provided follow-up support if their literacy achievement begins to decline. Indeed, research by D’Agostino, Lose, & Kelley (2017) led them to conclude “Schools cannot expect to provide RR in first grade and not concern themselves about the future learning trajectories of participating students” (p. 126). School administrators, classroom teachers and RR educators should work together to ensure that these initially low-performing students continue to progress.



**Figure 3: Comparison of Text Reading Level for Reading Recovery to Random Sample Students, and Tested Not Instructed Students Who Did and Did Not Receive Supplemental Literacy Instruction from a Reading Recovery Teacher: Oakland University – Michigan, 2016-2017**



## 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. The most recent WWC report of RR, released in October 2014, is based on the results of the first in a three-part series of research reports of the U.S. Department of Education’s 5-year \$54 million dollar *Investing in Innovation (i3) Grant to Scale-up Reading Recovery* by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE). The study met the WWC’s group design standards “without reservation” rating, the highest design rating that the WWC assesses. Additional WWC reports of RR effectiveness were released in 2007 and later in 2013 with evidence of positive effects on student outcomes in general reading achievement, alphabets, fluency and comprehension.

The Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) released its 4-year evaluation of one of the largest and most well documented expansions of a U.S. instructional curriculum (May, et al., 2016, 2015). The independent evaluation of the Investing in Innovation (i3) scale-up of

## 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.

Reading Recovery was a collaboration between CPRE and the Center for Research on Education and Social Policy (CRESP) at the University of Delaware.

This multi-site randomized control trial (RCT) involved nearly 7,000 first-grade students in more than 1,200 schools. The study, which found medium to large effects on student achievement in reading, contributes to a growing body of research on the conditions for, and impacts of, scaling up instructional programs. As part of the scale-up, 3,747 teachers trained in Reading Recovery with i3 grant funds provided one-to-one Reading Recovery lessons to 62,000 students and taught an additional 325,000 students in other instructional settings. In Michigan, over 250 teachers were trained in Reading Recovery through Oakland University under the i3 grant.

The CPRE/CRESP evaluation revealed that students who participated in Reading Recovery significantly outperformed students in the control group on measures of overall reading, reading comprehension, and decoding. These effects were similarly large for English language learners and students attending rural schools, which were the student subgroups of priority interest for the i3 scale-up grant program. The study included an in-depth analysis of program implementation. Key findings focused on the contextual factors of the school and teachers that support the program's success and the components of instructional strength in Reading Recovery. The RCT revealed medium to large impacts across all outcome measures. Access the report at <http://www.cpre.org/reading-recovery-evaluation-four-year-i3-scale>.

## ONE-TO-ONE AND SMALL GROUP LITERACY INTERVENTION

Some administrators have argued that small group instruction delivered by teachers trained in RR 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 RR. 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 Response to Intervention (RTI) should 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

For over 30 years in the United States, RR has operated as a Response to Intervention (RTI) approach. Reading Recovery-trained and professionally developed teachers deliver one-to-one daily lessons, tailored precisely to the child, in support of the literacy learning of the most at-risk children (Clay, 2005; 2016). While many children respond quite well to whole group and small group instruction, evidence has shown that the lowest performing learners provided with the RR 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 and a viable RTI approach. (For implementation and staffing of Reading Recovery within an RTI approach, see Lose & Best, 2011).

## READING RECOVERY AND LEARNING DISABILITIES

In her seminal article, *Learning to be Learning Disabled*, published 30 years ago, Marie Clay (1987) gave validity to support the idea that many children labeled learning disabled (LD) are in fact instructionally challenged through a series of unfortunate 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.

A federal initiative that is derived from the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) offers schools facing increased enrollments of students with 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 (Lose, 2005). The second option offered by the IDEA is 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 are 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.

## INVESTING IN TEACHER EXPERTISE: LITERACY LESSONS™ AND LITERACY SUPPORT

Two additional professional development programs, based on the complex literacy processing theory that informs RR, are available to Michigan educators through the Reading Recovery Center of Michigan at OU: *Literacy Lessons (LL)* for special educators and teachers of English language learners and *Literacy Support (LS)* for classroom teachers and reading interventionists.<sup>2</sup> Like RR, LL and LS teachers participate in a year-long professional program, affording them the opportunity to extend their literacy knowledge and practice while also teaching two Reading Recovery-eligible first grade students daily, a minimum of four students during the training year. Following the initial training, they continue to apply their knowledge with children in classroom or small group settings and provide daily, one-to-one lessons to at least one low-performing student from their elementary classroom rosters or specialist caseloads (Lose & Konstantellou, in press; Konstantellou & Lose, 2009). The addition of LL and LS educators enables schools to extend intervention services to students beyond grade one and foster a culture of collaboration among instructional staff, on behalf of all students.

<sup>2</sup>Beginning in 2006, teachers of special education and teachers of 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. 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, 66 special education and ELL teachers have participated in Literacy Lessons training and 69 classroom and reading specialists have participated in Literacy Support training.

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## READING RECOVERY REGIONAL TRAINING SITES\* AFFILIATED WITH THE READING RECOVERY CENTER OF MICHIGAN AT OAKLAND UNIVERSITY

- Bloomfield Hills Schools
- Dowagiac Union Schools
- Eastern Upper Peninsula Intermediate School District
- Genesee Intermediate School District
- Grand Rapids Area
- Jackson County Intermediate School District
- Kalamazoo Public Schools
- Oakland Regional
- Port Huron Schools
- South Lyon Community Schools
- Troy School District (new in 2017)
- Walled Lake Consolidated Schools
- Warren Woods Macomb Area (new in 2017)

\*School districts or consortia of school districts comprise each of the state's 13 Reading Recovery Regional Training Sites.

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*This report was prepared by Dr. Mary K. Lose.*

*Reading Recovery has a strong track record of preventing literacy failure. Results support the investment of resources on 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. Thus, 9/10 students 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 could achieve greater equity by providing the intervention to the over 20,920 first graders that could benefit from Reading Recovery.*