

THE IMPACT OF READING RECOVERY ON THE READING  
ACHIEVEMENT OF FIRST GRADE STUDENTS

by

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**ABSTRACT**

There are so many different intervention programs for educators to use to increase the reading achievement of below grade level students, that it can often be difficult to choose the appropriate one for the students. Most programs are scripted and are used with small groups of students. Reading Recovery is not a scripted program and is taught in a one-on-one setting. It is often criticized for its effectiveness due to the smaller number of students that are able to receive services. It becomes a matter of quantity of students over the quality of the instruction. The casual-comparative design was used with a quantitative research method to determine the effects of the Reading Recovery program on first grade students. The MAP test for the 2014-2015 academic year was the measuring tool used by the researcher for this study. The MAP test was given in the fall, winter and spring. The gains from the fall to spring of Reading Recovery students and students who received services through another program were compared. The results of the research showed that students who received Reading Recovery as their intervention program made higher gains in reading than students who were taught using another program.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Intervention programs are an extremely important component of increasing the reading achievement of below grade level students. With the abundance of reading programs available, it has become difficult to determine which programs actually produce students with significantly higher increases in reading achievement. Ladson Elementary is one of many schools in Charleston County that uses Reading Recovery as well as other programs as a reading intervention for below grade level first graders.

#### **Problem Statement**

There are many educators that are opposed to using Reading Recovery as an early intervention program because it only allows the trained teacher to serve four students per round of Reading Recovery instruction. Reading Recovery is a program that is designed for each student on an individual basis and would produce higher achievement. The trained teacher plans the lesson based on what the student has done in the previous lesson. Lessons are constructed based on what the student already knows and are scaffolded to produce higher achievement. Other programs allow for more children to receive intervention services. The general rule for other programs is no more than three students per group. These programs are scripted programs that do not cater to the individual needs of each student.

The problem being researched in this study was to determine if Reading Recovery significantly increased the reading achievement of first grade students at

Ladson Elementary using the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP). The study analyzed the data from the 2014-2015 school year to determine if students who received Reading Recovery services met their goal on the MAP test. It also determined whether Reading Recovery students scored higher than those students who were in another program. This is a program that needs to remain a part of the intervention services that are offered at Ladson Elementary based on the results of this study that show the higher achievement of Reading Recovery students. Those educators who are opposed to Reading Recovery based on the amount of students that are being served will see from a quantitative standpoint that it is a program that produced higher achievement.

### **Purpose Statement**

Reading Recovery is an intensive one-on-one intervention program used with the lowest scoring readers in first grade. It provides these students rigorous daily instruction to bring them up to grade level in a 12 to 20 week period. This program is said to significantly increase the achievement of first graders based on its intense nature and one-on-setting. Other intervention programs used generally have at least three students per group. The purpose of the study was to determine if Reading Recovery significantly increased the reading achievement of first grade students at Ladson Elementary. A significant increase in reading achievement would be defined as twenty or more points gained from the Fall MAP test to the Spring MAP test. The participants in the study were first grade students who were served in the Reading Recovery program by a trained teacher. The trained teacher provided Reading Recovery lessons to identified

students and evaluated their progress over the period of the school year. The rest of the participants were first grade students who received their intervention services through a small group, scripted program. The progress of these students was evaluated throughout the year. The study was a quantitative study using the Measures of Academic Progress as the tool for data collection.

### **Justification of the Study**

During the 2013-2014 academic year, Ladson Elementary began using Reading Recovery as an early intervention program in first grade. There has been some opposition to the program because it is a one-on-one program. There are other programs that allow more students to be served per group. This study would show that the Reading Recovery program produces students with higher achievement than those students in other programs.

Formal studies have been done on whether or not this program does produce students who score significantly higher than those students who did not receive intervention or received intervention through another program. After one year of intervention in first grade, the Reading Recovery program schools had higher vocabulary and phonetics scores than control schools (Munoz, 1999). Another study conducted by Center, Wheldall, Freeman, Outhred, & McNaught (1995), determined that at post-test, after 15 weeks of intervention, the Reading Recovery students significantly outperformed the students in the control group on all tests measuring words read in context and in isolation. There has been no formal data analysis or study at Ladson Elementary to determine whether or not Reading Recovery does produce higher student gains in reading

as compared to student reading gains in one of the other intervention programs offered at the school.

### **Hypothesis and Related Research Questions**

It was the hypothesis of the teacher/researcher that students who participated in the Reading Recovery program would produce significantly higher scores (twenty points or more) on the MAP test and therefore, show higher reading achievement than students who participated in another program. This research study was guided by seeking data relative to address the following two research questions:

1. What percentage of those students whom received Reading Recovery services met their individual goals as measured by MAP?
2. What percentage of those students whom received reading intervention services via another program other than Reading Recovery met their individual goals as measured by MAP?

### **Research Design**

The study was a casual-comparative study. This design was chosen because the variables were occurring in the natural setting of the classroom and were not being manipulated. The variables were examined after MAP testing for the academic year was completed to determine the effects of the Reading Recovery program on reading achievement.

### **Definition and Abbreviation of Terms**

Reading Recovery: An intensive one-on-one intervention program designed to bring below grade level students in reading to grade level in a 12 to 20 week period.



Measures of Academic Progress (MAP): MAP is a computerized assessment given to students at the beginning, middle and end of the school year. It is a personalized assessment that adapts to each student's learning level and measures the academic achievement and growth of the student.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

There is often difficulty within a school or school district to decide what intervention programs produce the best results for at-risk readers. When choosing a program, published research is used to make decisions about what programs are the most successful for struggling readers. Reading Recovery is a program that has been proven to greatly improve the reading achievement of struggling readers, but it is often met with skepticism due to the smaller number of students that are served. Other programs allow for more children to receive services, but the gains in reading are not as great.

#### **Positive Effects of Reading Recovery**

The What Works Clearinghouse is an initiative established in 2002 at the United States Department of Education. Its purpose is to identify studies that provide credible reports of the effectiveness of certain programs, practices or interventions. This allows educators to make informed decisions when choosing intervention programs for schools. According to the What Works Clearinghouse, “Reading Recovery was found to have positive effects on general reading achievement and potentially positive effects on alphabets, reading fluency, and comprehension for beginning readers” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2013, p. 1).

Three Reading Recovery studies were identified by the What Works Clearinghouse as meeting the standard for review in the intervention report. These three studies (Pinnell, DeFord, & Lyone, 1988; Pinnell, Lyons, DeFord, Bryk, & Seltzer, 1994;

and Schwartz, 2005) all indicate that Reading Recovery is a positive intervention for at-risk first graders. Student outcomes in four domains were measured in the report. These domains are alphabets, reading fluency, comprehension, and general reading achievement. According to the report, “for the alphabets domain, among the two studies with a strong design, one showed a statistically significant positive effect and one showed a substantively important positive effect” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2013, p. 4). In the fluency domain, “one study with a strong design showed a statistically significant positive effect” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2013, p. 5). Positive effects were also seen in the areas of comprehension and general reading achievement. The most significant was seen in the area of general reading achievement with “three studies with strong designs reported statistically significant positive effects” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2013, p. 6).

### **Intense Training and Instruction**

Early intervention has been proven to be more effective than interventions that begin at a later age. Reading Recovery is the most intensive type of intervention due to the fact that it is a one-on-one program. Most other intervention programs serve three or more students at a time. “Research conducted by Pinnell, DeFord, and Lyons (1988) concluded that end of year gains scored by Reading Recovery students was 8.6 compared to a score of 2.4 earned by first graders who had received some other form of intervention” (Munoz, 1999, p. 6). Schwartz, Shook, & Hoffman (1993) “proved that the total performance on reading of the Reading Recovery students exceeded the average band of a group of randomly selected children not in the program” (Munoz, 1999, p.6).

Reading Recovery is a program that includes many strengths in the strategies used to increase reading achievement for at-risk students. It has been proven as an intervention that is used early enough to prevent initial weaknesses in reading from becoming serious deficits (Kepron, 1998). Reading Recovery teachers are trained over the course of a year and attend continuing classes monthly throughout their teaching of the program. Other intervention programs use brief professional developments as training. Reading Recovery also requires appropriate, well-planned goals to be set with constant assessment to determine whether the goals are being met. Reading achievement is also increased due to the “the use of direct, individualized instruction, based on skillful analysis of student performance and delivered at the child’s instructional level” (Kepron, 1998, p. 3). Other programs are taught in small groups and do not cater to the needs of each student on an individual basis. Reading Recovery is a program that was designed with specific strategies and a form of presentation of these strategies that would increase reading achievement for at-risk students.

### **Reading Recovery in the United States**

The use of the Reading Recovery program first began in the United States in 1984 in Columbus, Ohio. By 1994, 47 states were using the program as an intervention for struggling readers. Implementation in the United States has been very successful. By 2000, it was described as the “most widespread teacher-implemented, one-on-one intervention currently in use in schools in the United States” (Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes, & Moody, 2000, p. 606). The percentage of students that discontinue the program reading on grade level proves that it is a program that has positive results on reading

achievement. In 2003 and 2004, 76% of students nationally were discontinued from the Reading Recovery program (Schwartz, Hobsbaum, Briggs, & Scull, 2009). The success of Reading Recovery has been proven by its effective implementation process, which has caused the program to spread quickly through many education systems in the United States.

Many school districts across the country find implementing the Reading Recovery program in schools has produced success among at-risk readers. The success can be attributed to providing teachers with the right tools to reach the most difficult students. These students tend to become frustrated easily. Reading Recovery teachers are taught a variety of strategies that help students when they encounter difficulty in reading (Bigham, 2000). A child who is a struggling reader tends to learn differently than those students who are successful readers. Reading Recovery teachers find where the at-risk student is successful in reading and builds on that success.

One-on-one intervention allows the length of the intervention to be shortened due to its intensity. Students in the program are able to make extremely rapid progress based on the individual instruction provided (Schwartz, Hobsbaum, Briggs, & Scull, 2009). Once these students are discontinued, new students are entered into the program. Other intervention programs do serve more students per session, but the length of the program is extended due to these numbers. These small groups are generally served for an entire academic year as opposed to the 12-20 week period required for a Reading Recovery student.

### **Detecting Other Learning Issues**

The gains that students receiving Reading Recovery services make are not the only important factor in choosing this as an early intervention program. Reynolds and Wheldall (2007) indicated that after receiving a full intervention program through Reading Recovery, 70-90% of the students were performing at an average level in reading (Schwartz, Hobsbaum, Briggs, & Scull, 2009). It is important to realize that the 10-30% of students who were not able to discontinue the program due to continued at-risk performance now have a detailed assessment that can be used to make recommendations for further literacy instruction or possible special education testing (Schwartz, Hobsbaum, Briggs, & Scull, 2009). Reading Recovery is the most intensive intervention available to an at-risk student. If the student is not making significant gains, there is an overwhelming amount of data available to show that there could be some underlying learning issue.

Literature on Reading Recovery tends to indicate that it is an early intervention program that produces significant gains in reading achievement for at-risk first graders. Providing at-risk students with this intensive intervention program at an early age will move them from performing below grade level to on grade level in reading. Intervention programs that serve more students per session have not demonstrated the same positive results. It has also demonstrated that if gains are not being made in the intensive one-on-one program, there is potentially some other learning issue present. This is also a positive effect of the program because it helps identify students who need special education services as opposed to an early intervention.

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this study is to determine if Reading Recovery significantly increases the reading achievement of first grade students at Ladson Elementary. MAP data for the 2014-2015 academic year will be evaluated to ascertain if students who received Reading Recovery services as an intervention scored higher than those students who received intervention services through another program. There has not been a study such as this conducted at Ladson Elementary to determine the viability of the Reading Recovery program relative to producing higher gains in reading achievement for at-risk first graders.

#### **Participants and Instrumentation**

The population of students that will be participants in the study are the at-risk first graders who are receiving intervention services at Ladson Elementary. These are the students that scored below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile on the fall MAP test. During the 2014-2015 academic year, 8 of these students will receive their intervention services through Reading Recovery. The other students will receive their intervention through either Wilson Foundations or Leveled Literacy Intervention, which will be administered in small group as opposed to the one-on-one setting of Reading Recovery. All of the students receiving intervention services will be evaluated using the MAP data for the 2014-2015 academic year.

### **Research Design and Procedures**

The research design used in this study will be casual-comparative study, which will produce quantitative data for disaggregation and analysis. In this study the independent variable will be the intervention program each student receives. The dependent variable will be the MAP data for the students over the course of the academic year. The study will be conducted with all students receiving their intervention services in the natural setting of the classroom. There are no variables being manipulated in the study. The variables will be examined at the end of the academic year to determine the effects of the Reading Recovery program on reading achievement.

The first research question is to determine what percentage of students whom received Reading Recovery services met their individual goals as measured by MAP. Students take the MAP test three times per year in the fall, winter, and spring. Fall MAP scores are considered the baseline score. Individual goals are set at the beginning of the year after the fall MAP test has been administered. Each student who is a participant in an intervention program is expected to increase their score by 20 points by the spring MAP test. Overall growth is measured from the fall to the spring. The data will be evaluated to determine what percentage of students receiving Reading Recovery services met or exceeded the end of year goal of a 20-point increase.

The data will be located at Ladson Elementary. All data that is collected is stored in a notebook in the intervention teacher's classroom. It can also be accessed through the MAP website. The data will be collected after each MAP test is administered. The MAP test is a computerized test, which records all scores on their website. Once these



scores are recorded, a data sheet can be printed with each student's score and percentile. The fall and spring scores will be used to determine whether or not a student met their goal.

The second research question is to determine what percentage of students whom received reading intervention services via another program met their individual goals as measured by MAP. These programs are generally favored because more students are able to receive intervention services due to the small group setting. Again, a baseline score will be recorded following the fall MAP test. These students will also be expected to increase their fall score by 20 points. The fall to spring scores will be used to determine what percentage of students who received reading intervention services via another program met their individual goals.

This data will also be stored in a notebook at Ladson Elementary. It will be in the intervention teacher's classroom. The MAP data can also be found on the website following each administration of the computerized test. It generally takes 24 hours for the website to update and report all data that has been recorded following the administration of the test.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

One assumption that can be made during this study would be that the MAP testing environment is the same for each student during each administration. It can also be assumed that each student receives the same quality of intervention instruction based on the teacher delivering the instruction. Another assumption that can be made is that each student is completing all homework assignments related to their intervention program.

One limitation in this study would be that only the 2014-2015 academic year is being evaluated. The only data that will be evaluated to determine the effectiveness of the Reading Recovery program will be the MAP data. This would be another limitation of the study. A final limitation of the study will be that only Ladson Elementary is being evaluated. Other schools participating in the Reading Recovery program will not be used in the study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS**

The effects of the Reading Recovery program on student achievement were measured in this study using a casual-comparative design with the research method being quantitative. The researcher compared the scores of students receiving Reading Recovery as their intervention program with those students who received intervention services through another program. The measuring tool used for this study was the MAP test for the 2014-2015 academic year.

Thirty-two first grade students were participants in this study. Eight of them received Reading Recovery intervention services through a trained Reading Recovery teacher who designs each lesson based on the individual needs of the student in a one-on-one setting. The other twenty-four students received their intervention services through another program. These are scripted programs in a small group setting. The students took the MAP test in the fall, winter and spring of the 2014-2015 academic year. A significant increase in reading achievement would be defined as twenty or more points gained from the Fall MAP test to the Spring MAP test.

The eight Reading Recovery students received this intervention program for a period of 12 to 20 weeks. Their MAP scores were recorded for the fall, winter and spring tests. The gains from Fall 2014 to Spring 2015 were recorded and evaluated to determine if significant increases in reading achievement were made by these students. Tables 1 and 2 display the results for this group of students.

Table 1

*Points Gained on MAP by Reading Recovery Students*

Student	Points Gained	Met/Did Not Meet Goal
Student 1	13	N
Student 2	17	N
Student 3	31	Y
Student 4	29	Y
Student 5	32	Y
Student 6	17	N
Student 7	22	Y
Student 8	22	Y

Table 2

*Percentage of Reading Recovery Students Who Met Goal*

Met Goal	Did Not Meet Goal
62.5	37.5

The other twenty-four students received their intervention services throughout the 2014-2015 school year. Their MAP scores were also recorded for the fall, winter and spring tests. These gains were recorded and then evaluated to also determine if significant increases in reading achievement were made by these students. Tables 3 and 4 display the results for this group of students.

Table 3

*Points Gained on MAP by Non Reading Recovery Students*

Student	Points Gained	Met/Did Not Meet Goal
Student 9	8	N
Student 10	11	N
Student 11	26	Y
Student 12	24	Y
Student 13	26	Y
Student 14	19	N
Student 15	23	Y
Student 16	17	N
Student 17	34	Y
Student 18	15	N
Student 19	7	N
Student 20	16	N
Student 21	9	N
Student 22	21	Y
Student 23	25	Y
Student 24	15	N
Student 25	19	N
Student 26	21	Y
Student 27	21	Y
Student 28	16	N
Student 29	20	Y
Student 30	5	N
Student 31	21	Y
Student 32	7	N

Table 4

*Percentage of Non Reading Recovery Students Who Met Goal*

Met Goal	Did Not Meet Goal
45.8	54.2

Figures 1 and 2 also show the number of points gained from the Fall 2014 MAP test to the Spring 2015 MAP test by Reading Recovery students and non Reading Recovery students.

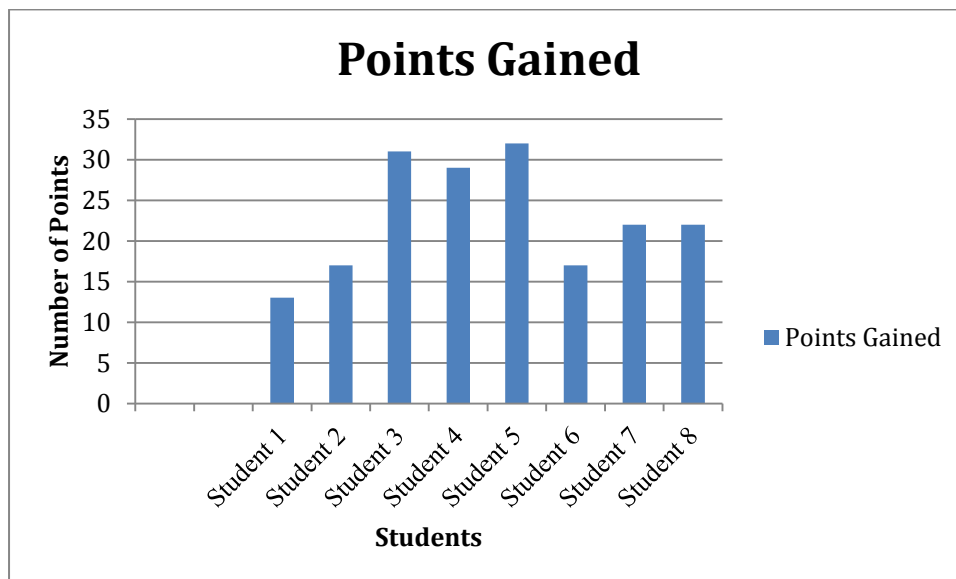


Figure 1. Points Gained by Reading Recovery Students

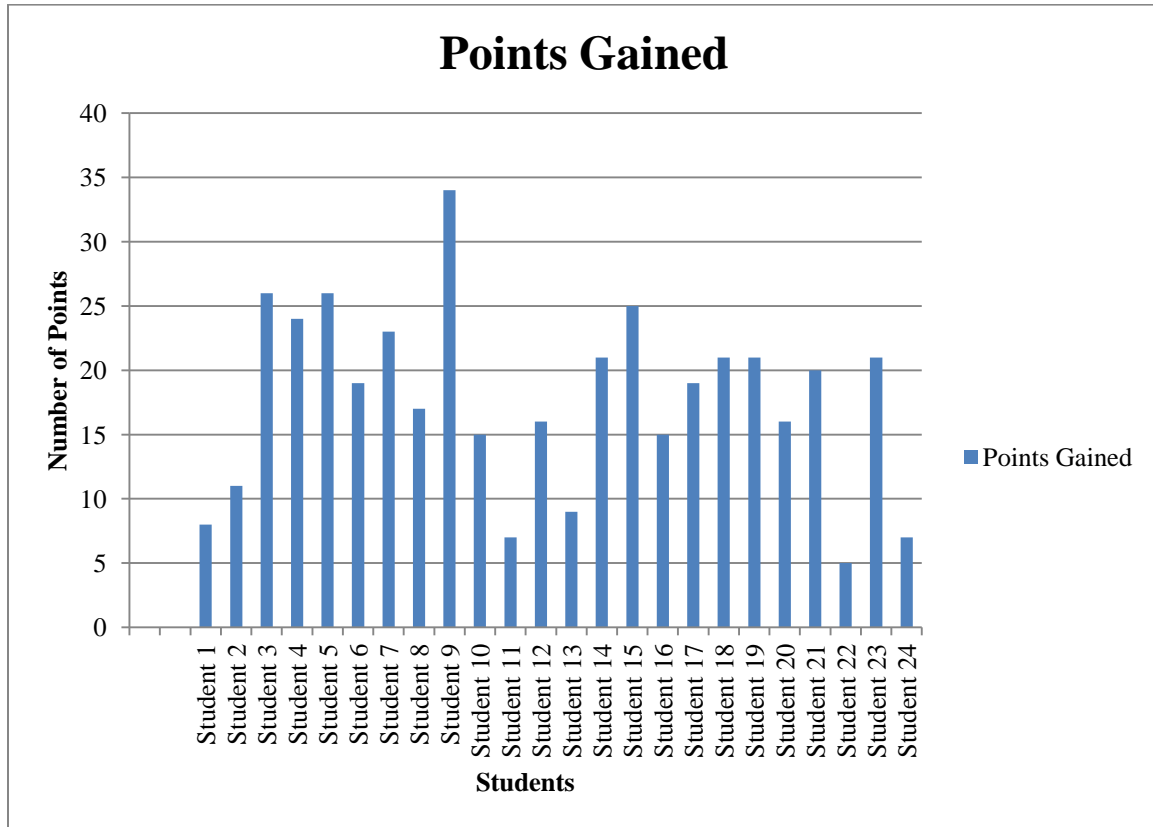
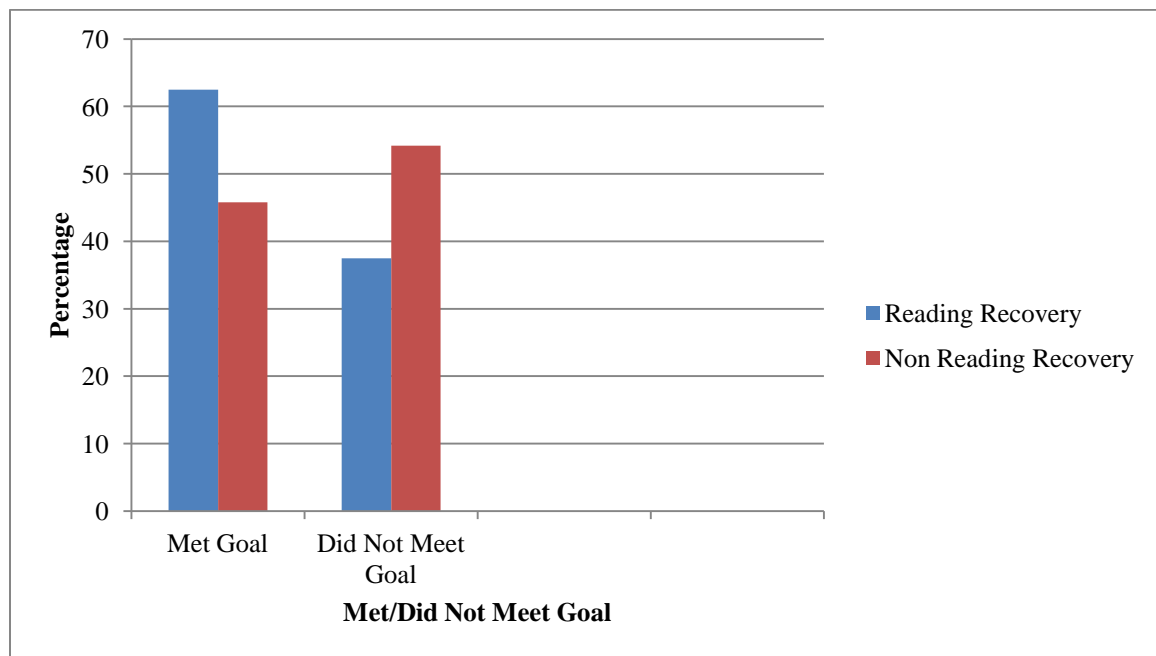


Figure 2. Points Gained by Non Reading Recovery Students

Five out of the eight Reading Recovery students increased their MAP scores from fall to spring by 20 or more points. This determined that 62.5 percent of Reading Recovery students met their goal and made significant increases in reading achievement. Three out of the eight Reading Recovery students did not meet their goal of 20 or more points from fall to spring. This determined that 37.5 percent of Reading Recovery students did not make significant gains in reading achievement.

Eleven out of the twenty-four non Reading Recovery students increased their MAP scores from fall to spring with gains of 20 or more points and therefore, 45.8 percent met their goal. Thirteen out of twenty-four non Reading Recovery students did not increase their scores by 20 or more points and therefore, 54.2 percent did not meet

their goal. Figure 3 shows the comparison in percentages between Reading Recovery and non Reading Recovery students.



*Figure 3.* Percentage of Students Who Met/Did Not Meet Goal

The percentage of Reading Recovery students who met their goal of 20 or more points was higher than the percentage of non Reading Recovery students who met their goal. It is also interesting to note that a higher percentage of students receiving their intervention services through another program did not meet their goal than those who did meet their goal. These results show a significantly higher increase in reading achievement by students in the Reading Recovery intervention program and therefore, the hypothesis is correct.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to determine if Reading Recovery significantly increases the reading achievement of first grade students at Ladson Elementary. A significant increase in reading achievement would be defined as twenty or more points gained from the Fall MAP test to the Spring MAP test. This test was the tool used to collect student data. The thirty-two participants in the study took the MAP test in the fall, winter and spring of the 2014-2015 academic year. The scores were then compared and analyzed to determine whether Reading Recovery students or students receiving intervention services through another program made higher gains. It was determined that 62.5 percent of Reading Recovery students met their goal of gaining 20 or more points from the fall test to the spring test. It was also determined that 45.8 percent of students who received their reading intervention through another program met their goal of gaining 20 or more points from the fall test to the spring test. These results concluded that Reading Recovery significantly increased the reading achievement of the students whom participated in the program.

#### **Conclusions and Implications**

Reading Recovery is a program that can be met with opposition by many educators because it is designed as a one-on-one program. Trained Reading Recovery teachers are only able to serve four students per round of instruction. There are generally two full rounds in an academic year. Lessons are designed based on the individual needs

of each student and do not follow a script. Educators often are proponents of other intervention programs because they allow the teacher to serve a larger number of students. These programs generally allow up to three students per group and are scripted. The design of the Reading Recovery program allows students the individual attention necessary to produce higher achievement in reading. Successful completion of the program by students leads to performance within the average achievement range with no additional reading services necessary (Munoz, 1999).

The Reading Recovery program identifies first grade students that are below grade level in reading and at-risk for failure in reading. It provides intensive one-on-one lessons designed to increase achievement and discontinue students on grade level. “The goal of the program, developed by Marie Clay in New Zealand, is to produce a self-extending system of inner control, self-monitoring, and self-correcting behaviors in reading and writing” (Mounts, 1996, p. 3). The one-on-one setting allows the trained teacher to design lessons specifically for the needs of the child based on what is known and unknown. The What Works Clearinghouse (which was created to provide a source of scientific evidence of what works in education) reported positive findings about the effectiveness of the Reading Recovery program. The full report provides more detail but overall gave the program an excellent rating compared to other early intervention programs (Reynolds, Wheldall, & Madelaine, 2009).

In this study, the researcher compared the MAP test scores of Reading Recovery students and non Reading Recovery students for the 2014-2015 academic year. The scores were analyzed to determine if students made significant gains (20 or more points)

from the fall to the spring. The average number of points increased on the MAP test from fall to spring by Reading Recovery students was 22.87. The percentage of these students who met their goal for the academic year was 62.5. The average number of points increased on the MAP test from fall to spring by students in another intervention program was 17.75. The percentage of these students who met their goal was 45.8. The What Works Clearinghouse which provides educators with evidence regarding what works in education, clearly supports this research. “Reading Recovery was found to have positive effects on general reading achievement and potentially positive effects on alphabetic, reading fluency, and comprehension for beginning readers” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2013, p.1).

### **Recommendations**

This research indicated that students who participated in the Reading Recovery program significantly increased their reading achievement. Students receiving their intervention services through another program did not make the same gains. The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study:

1. This study should include the sustained effects of Reading Recovery for students over a period of several years.
2. This study should include other testing instruments.
3. This study should be conducted with new groups of first grade students over a period of several years.
4. There is a need to conduct research on the effects of Reading Recovery on students with learning disabilities.

5. There is a need to conduct research on the effects of Reading Recovery on English Language Learners.
6. There is a need to conduct research with students of other trained Reading Recovery teachers.

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