

Reading Recovery®

Intervention Brief | English Language Arts Topic Area

WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE™

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Identifying and supporting students in early elementary grades with low literacy achievement is critical to help them achieve grade-level proficiency and stay on track academically. *Reading Recovery*® is an intervention that provides one-on-one tutoring to students in grade 1 with low literacy achievement. This supplemental program aims to improve student reading and writing skills by providing one-on-one tutoring, tailoring the content of each lesson to each student based on observations and analyses of the student strengths and weaknesses from prior lessons. Trained *Reading Recovery*® teachers deliver tutoring daily in 30-minute one-on-one sessions over the course of 12 to 20 weeks. *Reading Recovery*® teachers incorporate instruction in topics such as phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, writing, oral language, and motivation depending on student needs.

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) reviews existing research on educational interventions to identify evidence-based programs and practices. This WWC intervention report summarizes the available evidence on the effects of *Reading Recovery*® on student achievement in elementary school.

Goal: *Reading Recovery*® aims to improve the reading and writing skills of students in grade 1.

Target population: *Reading Recovery*® is typically used with students in grade 1 with low literacy achievement.



Did *Reading Recovery*® improve student outcomes?

Two studies of *Reading Recovery*® meet WWC standards. Findings from these two studies are summarized in Table 1. The table includes rows for each outcome domain—a group of related outcome measures—that was studied in the research. The effects of *Reading Recovery*® on other student outcomes are unknown.

Table 1 indicates whether the evidence satisfies the WWC’s requirements for strong, moderate, or promising tiers of evidence. Based on one study that meets WWC standards, there is moderate evidence that *Reading Recovery*® positively impacted student achievement in literacy immediately after the intervention. Based on a second study that meets WWC standards, there is promising evidence that *Reading Recovery*® positively impacted writing productivity and receptive communication skills immediately after the intervention and writing conventions skills 3 years after the intervention. *Reading Recovery*® had uncertain effects on student achievement in general secondary academic performance 10 years after the intervention and in mathematics achievement 3 years after the intervention.

The WWC effectiveness rating indicates whether *Reading Recovery*® resulted in improved outcomes for students who participated in the program compared with students who did not. Findings and conclusions could change as new research becomes available.

Table 1. Summary of findings on *Reading Recovery*® from studies that meet WWC standards

Outcome domain (Timing of measurement)	Effectiveness rating	Sample size	Evidence tier	Summary
Literacy achievement (End of implementation year)	Potentially positive effects	6,888 students	 TIER 2 MODERATE	One study provides strong evidence that <i>Reading Recovery</i> ® improved student literacy achievement. Because there is only one study that meets WWC standards, the intervention report provides moderate evidence that <i>Reading Recovery</i> ® improved student literacy achievement.
Writing productivity (End of implementation year)	Potentially positive effects	234 students	 TIER 3 PROMISING	One study provides promising evidence that <i>Reading Recovery</i> ® improved student writing productivity. This assessment is based on one study that meets WWC standards and includes fewer than 350 students.

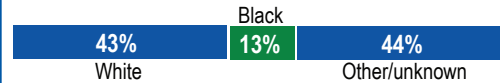
Outcome domain (Timing of measurement)	Effectiveness rating	Sample size	Evidence tier	Summary
Receptive communication (End of implementation year)	Potentially positive effects	234 students	TIER 3 PROMISING	One study provides promising evidence that <i>Reading Recovery</i> [®] improved students' skills in receptive communication. This assessment is based on one study that meets WWC standards and includes fewer than 350 students.
Writing conventions (3 years after implementation)	Potentially positive effects	241 students	TIER 3 PROMISING	One study provides promising evidence that <i>Reading Recovery</i> [®] improved students' skills in writing conventions. This assessment is based on one study that meets WWC standards and includes fewer than 350 students.
Academic achievement (Assessment on multiple subjects administered in regions across the United Kingdom 10 years after implementation)	Uncertain effects	271 students	NO TIER ASSIGNED	The research does not support claims that <i>Reading Recovery</i> [®] improved student academic achievement. This assessment is based on one study that meets WWC standards.
Mathematics achievement (3 years after implementation)	Uncertain effects	241 students	NO TIER ASSIGNED	The research does not support claims that <i>Reading Recovery</i> [®] improved student mathematics achievement. This assessment is based on one study that meets WWC standards.

FINDINGS FROM 2 STUDIES

7,171 students in the United States and United Kingdom

STUDENTS IN GRADE 1

Race:



Hispanic/Latino: 19%

Free & Reduced-Price Lunch: 55%

English Learner: 20%

Female: 40%




HOW THE WWC REVIEWS AND DESCRIBES EVIDENCE

The WWC conducted a systematic review of interventions designed to improve students' social, emotional, and behavioral outcomes and selected and prioritized studies for review using the version 4.1 [Systematic Review Protocol for English Language Arts](#). The WWC evaluated the quality and results of the selected studies using the criteria outlined in the version 4.1 [Procedures and Standards Handbooks](#) and the accompanying [Study Review Protocol](#).

The WWC considers each study's research design, whether findings were statistically significant and positive, and the number of studies contributing to this report. The WWC synthesizes evidence across studies—using a weighted average—to determine the effectiveness rating for each outcome domain. The WWC defines outcome domains in the [Study Review Protocol](#) to group related outcome measures.

Effectiveness rating	Description of the evidence
Positive (or negative) effects	The evidence base primarily includes the strongest research designs, and the average effect across all high-quality research is statistically significant and positive (or negative).
Potentially positive (or negative) effects	The evidence base primarily includes research with some limitations, and the average effect across all high-quality research is statistically significant and positive (or negative).
Uncertain effects	The average effect across all high-quality research is not statistically significant, so the WWC does not classify it as a positive or a negative effect.

The WWC considers the effectiveness rating, the sample size, and the number of educational sites (states, districts, local education agencies, schools, postsecondary campuses) across studies to determine the evidence tier for each outcome domain. When the effectiveness rating is *uncertain*, *potentially negative*, or *negative effects*, there is no evidence tier.

Evidence tier	Criteria based on evidence synthesis
Strong evidence of effectiveness	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receives an effectiveness rating of positive effects, and Includes at least 350 students in at least two educational sites
Moderate evidence of effectiveness	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receives an effectiveness rating of potentially positive effects, and Includes at least 350 students in at least two educational sites
Promising evidence of effectiveness	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receives an effectiveness rating of potentially positive effects or positive effects Includes fewer than 350 students or two educational sites

How was *Reading Recovery*® implemented?

This section provides details of how districts and schools implemented *Reading Recovery*® in the two studies that contribute to this intervention report. This information can help educators identify the requirements for implementing *Reading Recovery*® and determine whether implementing this program would be feasible in their districts or schools.

In *Reading Recovery*®, specially trained teachers identify students with low literacy achievement and tailor interactive, one-on-one tutoring lessons to meet each student's needs. *Reading Recovery*® teachers work part of the day in *Reading Recovery*® and the remaining part of the day in other capacities, such as teaching small literacy groups or classrooms. *Reading Recovery*® lessons are discontinued when students can consistently read at the average level for their grade. This milestone is based on *Reading Recovery*® teachers' daily observations and student performance on the exit assessment, which typically occurs between weeks 12 and 20 of the program.

Comparison condition: One study (Burroughs-Lange & Douët, 2007) that contributes to this intervention report included two comparison groups. One group included students who attended the study schools that offered *Reading Recovery*® but they did not receive *Reading Recovery*®. The other group attended schools that did not offer *Reading Recovery*®. Students in both comparison groups had access to supplemental literacy interventions, including *Early Literacy Support*, *Ruth Miskin Library*, *Supported Reading*, and *15 Minutes a Day*, and approximately one-third of the comparison students used these supports.

In the second study (May et al., 2015), comparison group students attended the same schools as their peers in the intervention group. More than three-quarters of comparison group students received supplemental literacy instruction, typically in small-group settings.

Reading Recovery[®] is intended for students in grade 1, who are typically 6 or 7 years old. *Reading Recovery*[®] was implemented with students in grade 1 in May et al. (2015) and with students ages 5 and 6 in the United Kingdom's equivalent of kindergarten (Year 1) in Burroughs-Lange and Douétil (2007).

WWC standards assess the quality of the research, not the quality of the implementation. Studies that meet WWC standards vary in quality of implementation. However, a study must describe the relevant components of the program and how each was implemented with adequate detail to be included in an intervention report.

Table 2. Implementation of components of *Reading Recovery*[®]

Component	Description of the component	How it was implemented
<i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] teacher training sites	<p>Teacher leaders train and provide ongoing support and professional development to <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] teachers. Teacher leaders are selected by the school district or consortium of schools or districts implementing <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] to be employed at a <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] teacher training site. Teacher training sites are located in public schools and operated by the school districts and are affiliated with one of 12 partnering universities in the United States. Teacher training sites serve as the hub through which <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] teacher leaders train, certify, and provide ongoing professional development for <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] teachers. Teacher leaders, along with their district administrators, establish and maintain the teacher training sites.</p>	<p>Neither study provided details about the <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] teacher training sites</p>
<i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] teacher leaders	<p>Teacher leaders spend 100% of their time on <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] activities.</p> <p>Teacher leaders must hold a master's degree and have teaching credentials. District staff also consider candidate teaching experience and leadership potential upon selection into the program. Teacher leaders receive their <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] certification after completing a yearlong training. The yearlong training includes two components: completing graduate coursework and completing supervised practicums. First, teacher leader candidates complete about six graduate courses over one academic year in literacy assessment, literacy development, literacy research, program evaluation and data monitoring (including data collection, analyses, and reporting procedures), adult education and supervision, and administration of <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] programs in elementary school settings. Universities with a two-semester academic year typically hold three graduate courses per semester for teacher leaders in training, with a possible additional course scheduled during a special session such as a summer semester. Second, teacher leader candidates complete practicum experiences supervised by university instructors that involve conducting the screening assessment and teaching students in <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®]. Through the practicum, they also participate in trainings to prepare them to train new <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] teachers. During the training year, teacher leader candidates are released from most teaching responsibilities so they can attend the graduate courses and participate in the practicum experiences.</p> <p>Upon completing the yearlong training, teacher leaders fulfill several responsibilities set forth in the <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] Standards and Guidelines. These include implementing <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] with students, training teachers and maintaining the teacher training site, and participating in their own ongoing training and professional development activities. Teacher leaders spend about 40% of their time teaching <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] to students in their district and spend their remaining time training or supporting <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] teachers or participating in ongoing professional development. Teacher leaders are expected to provide initial training for up to 15 teacher candidates and provide ongoing support for 40 to 60 <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] teachers or teachers in training annually. They conduct at least six group professional development training sessions per year as well as several individual coaching sessions in the teacher's instructional setting. Teacher leaders also receive ongoing professional development from university-based <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] faculty, including attending four to six annual training sessions, an annual national Teacher Leader Institute, and an annual national or state <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] literacy, language, and research conference.</p> <p>Teacher leaders also typically perform additional tasks in their district that fall within the scope of the <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] teacher leader role. These additional tasks are determined by their administrators, the district's needs, and their professional certifications. For example, many teacher leaders are literacy specialists who oversee reading and language instruction provided in classrooms and in remedial settings. Teacher leaders may also support classroom and specialist teachers and monitor the schoolwide or districtwide literacy programs.</p>	<p>Neither study provided details about the training of <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] teacher leaders.</p> <p>Based on survey results from one study, 46% of teacher leaders reported that they supported 1 to 20 teachers (including teachers in training), 28% supported 21 to 42 teachers, and 9% support 43 or more teachers (May et al., 2015). <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] teacher leaders in this study met 87% of the <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] implementation standards, as defined in their Standards and Guidelines, including attending 73% of training sessions and 98% of professional development sessions.</p>

Component	Description of the component	How it was implemented
Reading Recovery® teachers	<p>Teachers generally spend 50% of their time on <i>Reading Recovery</i>® activities and their remaining time on typical duties not related to <i>Reading Recovery</i>®.</p> <p>Teachers selected for <i>Reading Recovery</i>® training must be certified, experienced teachers of early elementary students. Teachers complete a full academic year of <i>Reading Recovery</i>® training with graduate credit under the instruction of a registered <i>Reading Recovery</i>® teacher leader. Training takes place at a university-affiliated teacher training site located in a public school.</p> <p>As part of the yearlong training, <i>Reading Recovery</i>® teachers receive a weeklong training on administering, scoring, and interpreting the Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement, which is a screening assessment of reading and writing skills developed by <i>Reading Recovery</i>®. The weeklong training is followed by ongoing in-person professional development for the rest of the academic year, which focuses on program implementation and delivery, including learning how to design daily lessons individualized for each student. Ongoing professional development includes both group sessions with other trained <i>Reading Recovery</i>® teachers and individual coaching and observation sessions in the teacher's school. Teacher leaders provide the training and professional development. Professional development sessions take place at least six times a year.</p> <p>During their yearlong training, teachers implement <i>Reading Recovery</i>® with about four students daily to practice applying the teaching principles they learned. Teachers must implement <i>Reading Recovery</i>® in person to a minimum of eight students in total over the school year.</p> <p>After completing the training, teachers must maintain their registration as a <i>Reading Recovery</i>® teacher by meeting certain requirements, as described in the Standards and Guidelines, such as continuing to implement the intervention with at least eight students per year, collecting and submitting data on student progress to the teacher leader, and participating in ongoing professional development (typically no less than six sessions during the school year). Teachers must also participate in one <i>Reading Recovery</i>® conference approved by the <i>Reading Recovery</i>® Council of North America. Registration lapses after 1 year if teachers do not maintain these requirements.</p>	<p><i>Reading Recovery</i>® teachers in training in both studies participated in a yearlong graduate course and were guided by a <i>Reading Recovery</i>® teacher leader at one of the training centers. Teachers in training also received on-site coaching and support from their teacher leaders.</p> <p><i>Reading Recovery</i>® teachers in Burroughs-Lange and Douëttil (2007) had received this <i>Reading Recovery</i>® training at some point in the past.</p> <p><i>Reading Recovery</i>® schools in this study had been implementing the program for an unspecified period of time before the start of the study.</p> <p>May et al. (2015) did not provide details about the timing of <i>Reading Recovery</i>® training and professional development for teachers.</p>
One-on-one tailored lessons with Reading Recovery® teachers	<p>Teachers use their training experiences and <i>Reading Recovery</i>® resources, such as the text <i>Literacy Lessons Designed for Individuals</i>, to plan and tailor one-on-one 30-minute daily lessons for each student. <i>Reading Recovery</i>® does not provide lesson plans. Teachers tailor lessons to each student's needs based on previous observations and analyses of the student's strengths and weaknesses during daily lessons and assessment activities, which teachers record using <i>Reading Recovery</i>® forms. Teachers tailor lessons by incorporating instruction as needed in topics such as phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, writing, oral language, and motivation. Lessons consist of reading familiar or novel stories, manipulating letters and words, writing stories, and assembling stories by identifying the correct sequence of events.</p> <p>Student lessons take place during school hours and require about 50% of each <i>Reading Recovery</i>® teacher's time. Teachers spend their remaining time on typical duties not related to <i>Reading Recovery</i>®. Students are pulled out of their regular non-literacy instruction at times established by the classroom teacher, administrators, and the <i>Reading Recovery</i>® teacher. <i>Reading Recovery</i>® students continue to participate in their classroom's typical literacy instruction.</p>	<p>Teachers in both studies implemented the <i>Reading Recovery</i>® instructional strategies in tailored lessons. Students were pulled out of their regular classroom instruction for daily 30-minute one-on-one lessons. Based on survey results, <i>Reading Recovery</i>® teachers in one study met 95% of the standards for implementing <i>Reading Recovery</i>® with fidelity, including having implemented 98% of the required lessons (May et al., 2015).</p>

Component	Description of the component	How it was implemented
Student assessment and placement	<p><i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] is implemented with the students with the lowest achievement scores on the Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement. Classroom teachers typically identify a subset of students with low prior achievement in literacy to take the screening assessment. This assessment is administered to these students before the intervention, and, if selected, at the end of the intervention and at the end of the school year. Based on daily observations and formative assessments, <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] teachers monitor student reading performance. When the student is reading consistently at grade level and demonstrates readiness to exit the program, typically within 12 to 20 weeks, the exit assessment is administered. A <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] teacher other than the one working with the student, or the teacher leader if another <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] teacher is not available, administers the exit assessment that determines whether the student should be discontinued from the program. Assessments at the other time points may be administered by the student's <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] teacher.</p>	<p>Both studies screened students before the intervention using the Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement. Deviating from <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] standards, in Burroughs-Lange and Douëttil (2007), research assistants trained in the assessment administered it at screening and follow up. In May et al. (2015), <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] teachers administered the test after completing a weeklong summer training focused on administering, scoring, and interpreting the test. Follow-up assessments in this study were conducted by either a teacher leader or a <i>Reading Recovery</i>[®] teacher other than the one working with the student.</p>

Note: The descriptive information for this intervention comes from the program website, <https://readingrecovery.org/>; the two studies that meet WWC standards; and from correspondence with *Reading Recovery*[®] Community, the developer. Practices, policies, and routines of both teachers and teacher leaders are described in the Reading Recovery Council of North America's [Standards and Guidelines](#).

For more information about *Reading Recovery*[®]:

About *Reading Recovery*[®]

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LEARN MORE



Read the full [intervention report](#) to learn more about *Reading Recovery*[®], how it was implemented in the studies that meet standards, and what the studies found. Visit the [WWC website](#) for summaries of evidence on other interventions and to learn more about the research the WWC has reviewed.