



Reading Recovery Research Brief

Predicting the Literacy Achievement of Struggling Readers: Does Intervening Early Make a Difference?

Rodgers, E. M., Gómez-Bellengé, F. X., Wang, C., & Schultz, M. M. (2005, April). Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Purpose

This report is the second in a series of research studies that addresses whether Reading Recovery can narrow or close the literacy achievement gap that has been documented along race/ethnicity, economic status, and language lines. In order to address this question, the authors compared the text reading levels of struggling first-grade students who received Reading Recovery lessons and those who did not, and then examined whether having Reading Recovery lessons was related to their reading progress.

Method

A sample of 744 students was selected at random from the 2002–2003 national Reading Recovery data sample in order to form two matched groups of low-performing students. One group of low-performing students received a full series of Reading Recovery lessons; the other group did not. Spring and fall text reading levels for both groups were disaggregated and compared along these lines: sex, race/ethnicity, native language, and economic status.

Findings

The most significant finding was that having Reading Recovery lessons was more significantly related to students' spring text reading level than any of the other factors, including economic status — long thought to be a potent predictor of reading achievement. This finding demonstrates the effectiveness of Reading Recovery to affect the literacy outcomes of struggling first-grade students and close or narrow the achievement gap.

Comments

A complex response to the achievement gap is called for because the reasons for the gap are complex. Societal factors play out within and outside the school that are resistant to change and affect each child's future. While we cannot draw a causal relationship between

the teachers' Reading Recovery professional development to the progress of the Reading Recovery students, the results of Pinnell, Lyons, DeFord, Bryk, and Seltzer's (1994) quasi-experimental study lead us to think that the instruction, one-to-one nature of the teaching, and the teacher professional development likely account for the students' achievement. An investment in Reading Recovery, in which teachers receive specialized preparation to work with the lowest-achieving children, may constitute a complex response to the literacy achievement gap.

Full text of the AERA research paper is available online in the Research Section at www.readingrecovery.org.

Reference

Pinnell, G. S., Lyons, C. A., DeFord, D. E., Bryk, A. S., & Seltzer, M. (1994). Comparing instructional models for the literacy education of high risk first graders. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 29(1), 8–39.