Although Reading Recovery emphasizes daily one-to-one intervention sessions with highly skilled teachers and eschews technology in the Reading Recovery lesson itself, Reading Recovery is not adverse to using technology to facilitate program evaluation and monitoring. That is where National Data Evaluation Center (NDEC) comes in.

NDEC is a unit of the Reading Recovery and Early Literacy, Inc., a nonprofit co-operation housed within the School of Teaching and Learning, College of Education at The Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. The NDEC’s primary mission is to process evaluation research data for all Reading Recovery programs in the United States. It fulfills a mandate set in the Standards and Guidelines of the Reading Recovery Council of North America that requires Reading Recovery sites to provide annual site reports.

Reading Recovery sites are responsible for collecting and maintaining data at the school, district, and site levels. The NDEC helps sites carry out this function. It processes data that allow sites to prepare site, district, and school reports. The data include student performance information and background statistics on teachers, schools, and school districts.

NDEC also assists Reading Recovery university training centers by providing them with data needed to prepare reports, responding to requests for information, engaging in research, and supporting Reading Recovery programs at all affiliated sites.

Each year, NDEC’s staff of six, including Director Francisco Gómez-Bellengé and Assistant Director Jason Thompson, processes data from about 560 teacher training sites, 3,400 school districts, 10,500 schools, and 200,000 Reading Recovery, Descubriendo la Lectura, and comparison group students. NDEC produces over 1,000 standard reports for school districts, teacher training sites, and universities. NDEC also provides technical assistance to nearly 800 teacher leaders and more than 40 university trainers.

All of this work is heavily dependent on a range of new computer technologies developed by NDEC computer engineers and engineering consultants. Most visible is the NDEC Web site, used by more than 9,000 teachers to enter data on over 92,000 students during the 2000–2001 school year.

As data is entered, NDEC checks for errors at several stages in the process and produces a variety of reports automatically. A staff of three systems analysts, working with computer consultants, develops and maintains the database, the Web site, and the reporting software. About 600,000 lines of computer code are involved in running NDEC operations.
For teacher leaders, having their data on the Web signifies a fundamental change in their ability to manage a teacher training site. Most sites involve many schools and often considerable distances. In the past, information was transmitted via school or U.S. mail or during teacher leader visits. By having access to all their data in real time, teacher leaders are better able to support teachers as they work with children and as they enter their data.

Teacher leaders are able to produce a variety of interactive reports called Instant Reports from the Web site as soon as data are entered, allowing them to get accurate snapshots of what is happening in different schools or school districts during the school year. By having this capability, the evaluation process has become even more relevant to sites.

There are two types of evaluation research: formative evaluations and summative evaluations. Good evaluation research designs are often a mixture of these two approaches. A formative evaluation's emphasis is on providing stakeholders with information they need to improve processes, that is, how things are done. A summative evaluation provides data on outcomes, that is, the results of a process.

The Reading Recovery research design incorporates both approaches. In the year-end reports, teacher leaders are provided with detailed information on the implementation of Reading Recovery. By having access to some of these process data during the school year, teacher training sites that do Web-based data submission can impact and improve the delivery of Reading Recovery services even while the school year is still in session.

Reading Recovery’s outcome data include the six measures of the Observation Survey, data on special education placement rates, and data from comparison groups of students. At year end, decision makers are able to use evaluation data to inform their goal setting and decision making for the upcoming year. This information, a series of nearly 70 tables and charts, is available minutes after the teacher leader finalizes the data submission to NDEC.