

Another Year of Success: National Data Update 2004-2005

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The 2004–2005 school year was the twentieth for Reading Recovery in the United States, an achievement all the more remarkable when one realizes that more than 2,600 communities in 51 states and federal subdivisions were served. A network of 21 universities, 476 teacher training sites, and nearly 14,000 teachers served more than 115,000 students in more than 8,100 schools. (See Table 1.)

A well-designed and implemented intervention needs to deliver consistent results from community to community and from year to year. For 2004–2005, Reading Recovery achieved these results, as 59% of all children served and 76% of those completing a full lesson series were successful as judged by reaching average grade level and having their lessons discontinued. These

statistics—reported annually by the National Data Evaluation Center—have varied little from year to year, community to community and even student group to student group.

Reading Recovery is a short-term intervention which enables most students to successfully accelerate their progress to catch up with their peers so that specialized lessons can be discontinued in less than 20 weeks, and many (41%) in less than 15 weeks (Figure 1). Reaching average grade level in a short amount of time is the central goal of Reading Recovery.

Several ways can be used to assess whether a group of students has reached an average range of reading for a given grade level. In Reading Recovery’s annual evaluation, we compare the proportion of students

Entity	n
Universities	21
Teacher Training Sites	476
States and Federal Subdivisions	51
Systems	2,614
Buildings	8,139
Teacher Leaders	600
Teachers	13,823
Reading Recovery Students	115,717

reading at a certain level at year-end with national norms. These were derived from the norming of the Observation Survey (Clay, 2002) using a 2002–2003 national comparison group. (See Gómez-Bellengé, 2005.) This national group was subdivided into five equal achievement groups ranging from *low* to *high*. Here, we look at results for the Text Reading Level measure for the data year we’re examining, 2004–05.

If a group of students were like the national norm group, that is, if it were average, about 20% of the students would end up in each of the five achievement groups: That is, about 20% would be *low* readers, 20% *mid-low* readers, 20% *average* readers, and so on. In fall of 2004, students who were about to be served by Reading Recovery were anything but average—48% fit into the *low* group, almost double what one would expect for an average group of students. By spring, after Reading

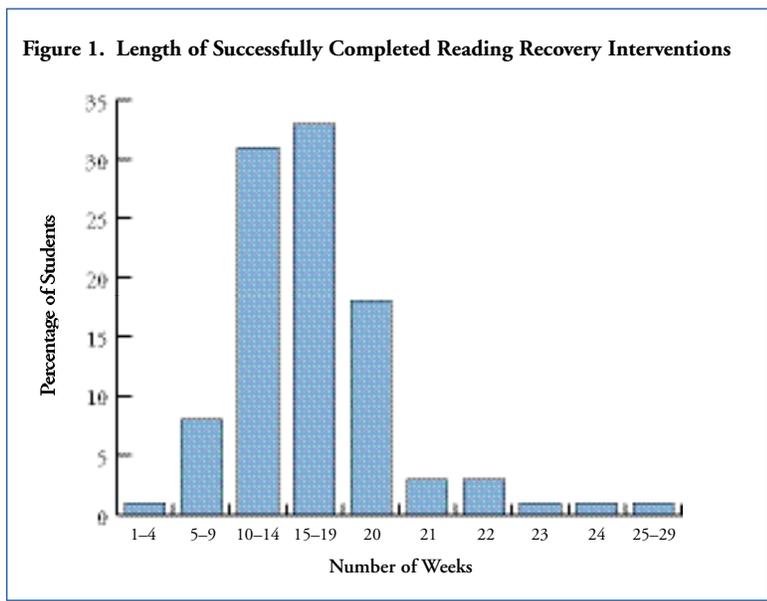
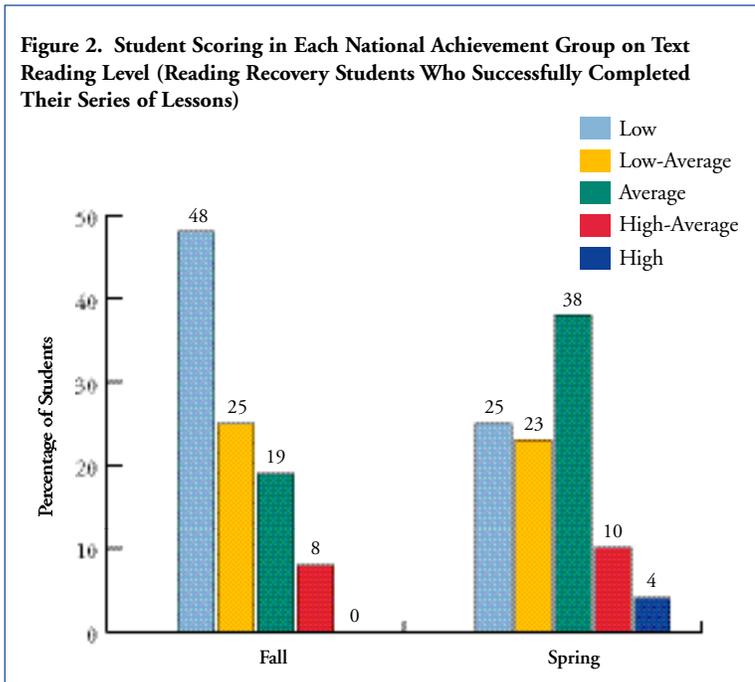


Figure 2. Student Scoring in Each National Achievement Group on Text Reading Level (Reading Recovery Students Who Successfully Completed Their Series of Lessons)



Recovery, only 25% were in that *low* group (Figure 2). This is a very large shift in a short time frame for an at-risk group of students.

An intervention not only must be successful overall; it must also be successful with all student groups, especially groups that historically tend to under-perform in the area of reading. Figure 3 shows average year-end text levels for various groups. What is most remarkable about the figure is what is not there—large variations among groups. In other words, when students who were previously low readers successfully discontinue their series of Reading Recovery lessons, their reading level in spring will likely not vary substantially from the national average, even if these students also are part of groups that usually do worse than the national average on measures of reading.

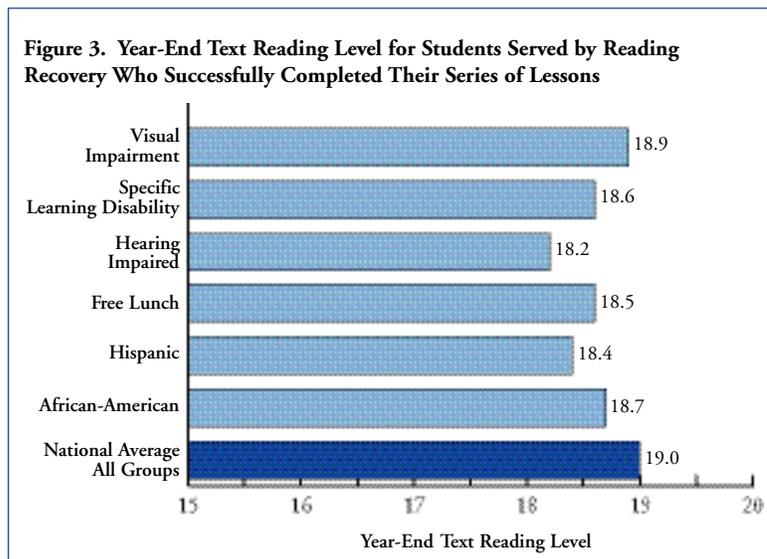
English language learners are such a group. They are not included in Figure 2 because their performance on English reading is usually determined in large part by their initial oral English proficiency level. It stands to reason that students with less English will find it more

challenging to reach average reading levels than those with higher levels of English proficiency.

Data from the national evaluation indicate that for a comparison group of students not served by Reading Recovery, the lower the initial level of oral English proficiency in fall, the lower the spring text reading level. Further, even those with the highest level of oral English proficiency, those assessed as *articulate and proficient*, had spring text levels four levels below the national norm, which is text level 20. Comparison group children rated as speaking only *isolated phrases* of English in fall averaged a text level of 12.7 in spring, more than 7 text levels below the national norm. Those speaking only *isolated words* of English in fall averaged a spring text level of only 8.9 (Figure 4).

An entirely different picture emerges for English language learners served by Reading Recovery and who successfully discontinued their series of lessons. Simply put, for these children little relationship can be observed

Figure 3. Year-End Text Reading Level for Students Served by Reading Recovery Who Successfully Completed Their Series of Lessons



between how little or how much English they could speak in the fall and how well they did on the text reading level measure in the spring. The group with the highest level of proficiency, those assessed as *articulate and proficient*, had spring text levels averaging 18.5; those speaking only *isolated words* of English in fall averaged a spring text level of 17.8, a difference of only two text levels from the national norm. The *isolated words* group was two text levels below the national norm as compared to 11 text levels for the comparison group not served by Reading Recovery (Figure 4). This difference represents a remarkable treatment effect for English learners served by Reading Recovery.

Another noteworthy highlight of the 2004–05 data relates to Reading Recovery teachers. Most answered a survey question about how many students they work with throughout the year. The most common service pattern is working with Reading Recovery students half of the day and with other students the other half of their day. Reading Recovery teachers reach an average of 8.1 Reading Recovery students per year and 35.4 non-Reading Recovery students per year for a total of 43.5 students per teacher per year. This number (43.5) extrapolated to Reading Recovery’s 13,823 teachers yields a total of 601,301, or over one-half million students served by Reading Recovery teachers during the 2004–2005 school year.

Reading Recovery in the United States continues to be served by a large network of university centers and teacher training sites that have a

significant positive impact on large numbers of at-risk students every year. This impact is equally positive across various demographic groups and even extends to non Reading Recovery students served by Reading Recovery teachers.

Descubriendo la Lectura

Descubriendo la Lectura, the Reading Recovery intervention delivered to children in Spanish bilingual settings, served 1,860 students in 2004–2005. The network included 7 universities, 48 teacher training sites, and 267 teachers. (See Table 2.) Overall, 55% of all students served and 75% of those completing their series of lessons successfully accelerated their progress so that lessons could be discontinued.

Most of the students served by Descubriendo la Lectura fall under several historical risk factors for low reading achievement. By definition,

Entity	n
Universities	7
Teacher Training Sites	48
States and Federal Subdivisions	6
Systems	54
Buildings	219
Teacher Leaders	56
Teachers	267
DLL Students	1,860

students in Descubriendo la Lectura are all Hispanic and English language learners. In 2004–05, 64% received free school lunches, 75% were located in urban schools, 79.5% were in school-wide Title I schools, and 92% were enrolled in majority non-White schools, in itself a risk factor for academic success.

In spite of these characteristics, the averages for these groups are

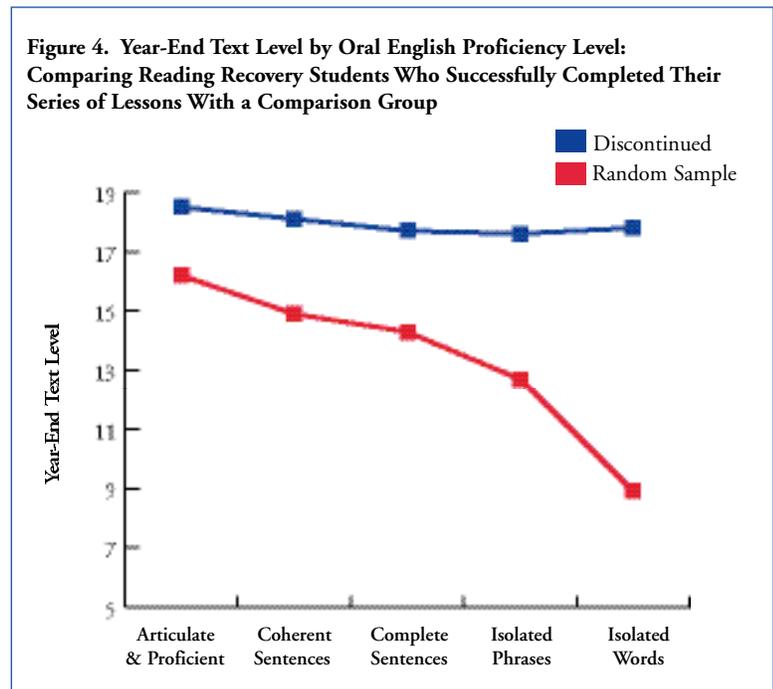
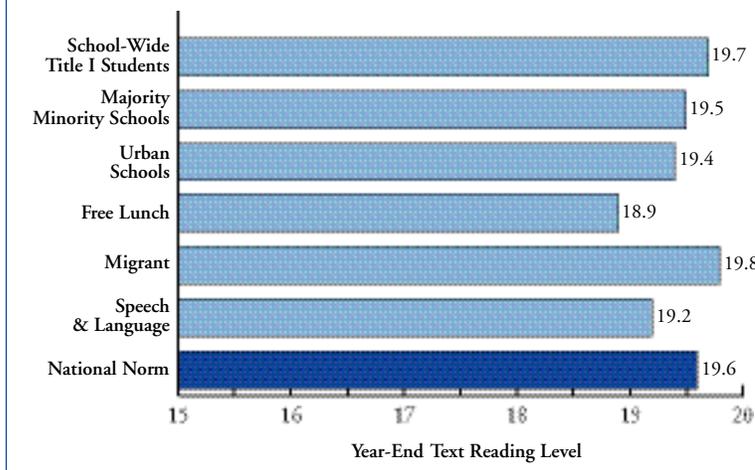


Figure 5. Year-End Text Reading Level for Students Served by Descubriendo la Lectura Who Successfully Completed Their Series of Lessons



not very far from the national norm of 20 for text reading level in the spring. Figure 5 shows spring text reading levels for various groups of Descubriendo la Lectura students. None of the year-end averages differ much from each other. This suggests evenly high levels of expectations and

outcomes throughout the Descubriendo la Lectura network.

Over the last 20 years, more than 1.5 million students have been served by Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura in the United States. This early intervention has been adopted so widely because it

has been extraordinarily successful, and it continues to be seen as highly effective, in a variety of settings from year to year. The 2004–2005 academic year data continue to provide evidence that Reading Recovery is effective with different demographic groups, including groups that traditionally do not do well because of multiple risk factors.

Additionally, the 2004–05 data reveal that Reading Recovery professionals impact not only children in Reading Recovery, but large numbers of other children in their additional service capacity within schools.

References

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