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READING RECOVERY  
IN ENGLAND

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**T**HIS PAPER PRESENTS FINDINGS FROM THE FIRST NATIONWIDE COLLECTION of Reading Recovery data ever carried out in England. As this is our first national monitoring, there were many issues which we urgently needed to explore to examine the implementation and to see what we could learn about ways to improve. This was our first opportunity to look at the overall effectiveness of the programme, to compare new and experienced teachers, to look at the profile of the children on entry and the levels they achieved at outcome, to look at different language groups, and to examine different measures of effectiveness. The data presented here represent very much a first look at that information to search for clues to some of the answers to these questions.

## **A Brief History of Reading Recovery in England**

**B**efore 1990, Reading Recovery had taken place in England only as a result of the efforts of individuals who had generally been trained in New Zealand and were visiting this country (e.g. Pluck, 1989). However, in 1989, one Head Teacher persuaded her county to send her to New Zealand to train as a tutor (teacher leader) and on her return in 1990, she immediately began to train teachers to implement the programme in Surrey schools. News of this venture spread and even before the professional reports appeared (Wright, 1992), there was considerable interest in the enterprise. As a result of this and with assistance from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, in 1991, Professor Marie Clay was invited to bring a team of trainers and tutors over from New Zealand for two years to the Institute of Education at London University to lead courses for tutors and teachers there. In 1991, the New Zealand team trained the first cohort of seven tutors (teacher leaders) and 37 teachers while Jean Prance, our first English tutor, trained 12 teachers in Surrey.

This initiative was further consolidated when in 1992, approval was given by the Secretary of State for Education for a national pilot project to run from 1992-95, which the Institute of Education was asked to coordinate and oversee. In the event, the pilot project was funded from the GEST initiative (Grants for Education Support and Training) for which the Local Education Authorities (Boroughs or Counties) contribute 40 percent of the funds, which are then matched by 60 percent from central government. The GEST initiative under whose umbrella Reading Recovery fell was the Raising Standards in Inner Cities scheme designed to raise achievement in inner city schools. This restricted the pilot project to schools which fell within areas already designated as deprived urban areas.

Twenty metropolitan Local Education Authorities (Boroughs) took advantage of this scheme to send tutors to train and to set up their own Reading Recovery sites with training facilities. A further five were persuaded to join the training courses, supporting the programme without additional government funds. The urban areas included Bradford in West Yorkshire in the North, St. Helens on Merseyside in the North West of England, Birmingham and Wolverhampton in the Midlands, and twelve London boroughs. Thus, in the second cohort, 25 tutors and 100 teachers entered courses based at the Institute, with outreach centres in Sheffield to cover the north of England and Birmingham for the Midlands.

By September, 1993, there were 26 Reading Recovery sites around the country, stretching from Jersey in the south to Bradford in the north, running courses to train teachers. Two trainers of tutors were also trained in anticipation of our need to become self-sustaining. Also in 1993, the government sent two of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools to New Zealand to examine the scheme there; their report was highly favourable (OFSTED, 1993) and proved influential in persuading the government that since the New Zealand team would be leaving at the end of the academic year, some system needed to be established to monitor and coordinate the national

enterprise. The Department for Education agreed to support a national coordination network consisting of the two trainers and two staff from the Institute of Education who had been involved with the training courses there. The National Network receives approximately 100,000 pounds per year from the Department for Education which covers a portion of the salaries of the four people involved, the travel costs incurred in making visits to every site, administrative costs, the cost of a one-week professional development course, the production of regular bulletins, national data-collection, and other costs. In 1994, the Department for Education agreed to extend this for one further year to cover the end of the pilot project, whose funding expired in April, 1995. Thus, just as it gets launched, the programme is threatened by uncertainty over its future. A current concern is the future funding for the implementation of Reading Recovery in the United Kingdom after 1995.

In 1993, before she returned to New Zealand (and then came on to Texas) Marie Clay analysed the data collected over the two years of the training programme consisting of the results obtained by the children taught by teachers-in-training, who had been trained by the New Zealand team, and she compiled a report noting the reactions of her team to their experiences of English teachers and schools. These impressions and the findings from these data formed the basis of a report which was presented to the tutors in February, 1994, at Tutor Development Week and which has informed our data collection subsequently.

The programme has thus expanded rapidly in England and from 1991-94 has been implemented by fairly inexperienced personnel. As we embarked on the school year in September, 1994, 26 of our tutors had one year of experience in the field and a minority, six, had two years of experience behind them; three were new to this role. At September, 1994, we had two trainers, 36 tutors in 29 training sites (local education authorities) including newly established centres in Wales and Northern Ireland.

The data to be presented are taken from our first national monitoring exercise which was carried out in July, 1994. We can confidently plan one further national monitoring in July, 1995, and although the future is uncertain we hope to be able to sustain it after that date.

Two cautionary notes:

(1) *Statistical analysis*: Because these data have been collected from a large sample and are based on the Observation Survey tests administered by teachers to children, there are gaps in the data and therefore the numbers included in every analysis vary slightly. While the total sample consisted of 3,131 children; where numbers are given there may be some slight variation across subtests.

(2) *Outcomes*: In our implementation, we recognise two possible outcomes to a Reading Recovery programme: a child may be successfully discontinued or referred. Two other possibilities are also recorded: when a child leaves the school and when a child has an incomplete programme because they have not received 20 weeks of instruction (we include the two weeks *in the known* in our computation of programme length). The definition of *successfully discontinued*, for research purposes, is the same as the operational definition used by the Reading Recovery teacher on the spot: (i) the child should have a secure literacy system, as shown by scores on the Observation Survey, in general a Book Level above 15 and a Writing Vocabulary greater than 30, together with some evidence of active processing and self-correction, and (ii) should be reading at the average level of the class. We have not so far used any other standardised tests to assess the child's reading level or the class average.

There is a widespread concern in England at the present time about levels of literacy achievement and while we cannot throw any light directly on this, we became aware that in many cases the average level of literacy of the class from which the Reading Recovery pupils were drawn was considerably lower than that represented by a Book Level of 15. We have tried

to adhere to the first criterion for successful discontinuation, that the child should have a secure literacy system, but it is clear that this has been interpreted in different ways according to the grade of the class. This will be dealt with more fully in Section 2.5.

## 1. The Teachers

**1.1** Teachers for the Reading Recovery training courses were recruited from fully qualified teachers who had sound experience of teaching at Infant (lower elementary) level and who could be released to teach four children every day. In the early years this meant that head teachers (principals) and deputy heads (assistant principals) were often the only members of a school staff who could find this time (or who thought they could). In fact, it became clear that they had many other conflicting demands on their time and we are now reluctant to train teachers who hold senior posts of responsibility.

**Table 1**  
*Numbers of Teachers and Children Involved in England 1990–93*

	Number of teachers trained	Number included in 1994 survey	Number of children taught
1990	19 (in Surrey)	9 (2%)	63 (2%)
1991	49	24 (5%)	174 (6%)
1992	124	115 (24%)	778 (27%)
1993	330	328 (69%)	1886 (65%)
Total	522	476	2901

It is clear from these data in Table 1 that the majority of our informants are teachers in their year of training for Reading Recovery and they have provided data on the largest group of children. Almost 70 percent of the teachers were in training and they had provided data on 65 percent of our sample of almost 3,000 children.

One of our concerns has been to look for evidence that teachers become more effective with increased experience. We have looked for three kinds of evidence:

- (a) pupil outcomes,
- (b) length of programme, and
- (c) numbers of children taught per year.

### **1.2** *Do more experienced teachers achieve more successful outcomes?*

**T**able 2 demonstrates the imbalance in the distribution both of teachers and pupils and the preponderance of inexperienced teachers and children taught by teachers still in training. It also suggests that as teachers become more experienced they become more successful at enabling pupils to achieve successful outcomes. Although the numbers of children and teachers involved are small, over 80 percent of the pupils taught by more experienced teachers achieved success; while less than 70 percent of those taught by teachers in training are successfully discontinued.

**Table 2*****Pupil Outcome x Year of Teacher Training, For Complete Programmes Only***

Pupil outcome	Teachers Trained				Total
	1990	1991	1992	1993	
Successfully discontinued	37 (88%)	99 (83%)	353 (7%)	883 (68%)	1372
Referred	5 (12%)	20 (17%)	130 (27%)	418 (32%)	573
Total	42	119	483	1301	1945

These proportions are mirrored by the proportions referred who do not achieve the programme's goals: about 10 percent of those taught by the most experienced teachers are referred while 25-30 percent of those taught by less experienced teachers fail to reach a successful outcome.

### ***1.3 Do experienced teachers get children through the programme at a faster rate?***

Teaching an effective outcome is only desirable if it is not at the expense of a prolonged programme. Do experienced teachers manage to achieve these results without any increase in the length of the programme? Table 3 shows the length of programme (in weeks) for successfully discontinued children according to the year of teacher training.

**Table 3*****Average Length of Programme in Weeks x Year of Teacher Training***

	Median	Mean	SD
trained 1990:	21 weeks	20	5
trained 1991:	20 weeks	20	8
trained 1992:	21 weeks	21	6
training 1993:	26 weeks	25	7

*Note.* In England we include the two weeks *in the known*.

This indicates that as teachers gain experience they also take less time to complete a child's programme. Although the trend is in the right direction, it is nevertheless worrying that the mean never falls below 20 weeks and the range, although it too narrows, remains high, especially in the training year.

## 1.4 How many children are reached by teachers as they get more experienced?

This decrease in length of programme with increased experience is reflected in the number of children reached, although this may also be affected by the number of programme places permitted. It is not always possible for schools to release teachers to offer four places on the programme at any one time; some schools have only been able to provide two or three places. Unfortunately, we omitted to collect information on the number of places available that year.

**Table 4**

*Average Number of Children Receiving the Programme per Teacher x Year of Training*

	Mode	Mean
trained 1990	6	7.00
trained 1991	8	7.25
trained 1992	8	6.70
training 1993	4	5.75

This demonstrates that as teachers become more experienced and move children faster through the programme, this enables them to get a faster throughput, so that more children can receive the programme. Thus, on three measures of teacher effectiveness our data show that as teachers get more experienced they become able to implement the programme more effectively. This is reassuring; the challenge now is to ensure that we can retain teachers in the programme so that more children can benefit from their improved performance.

## 2. The Children

### 2.1 Characteristics of the Sample

The data collected in 1994 provide the most extensive information yet available in England on the characteristics of pupils having difficulty with literacy and selected on that basis for Reading Recovery. Our sample of 3,131 children was made up of 1,955 boys (62 percent) and 1,176 girls (38 percent). Their mean age at entry to programme was 6 years, 1 month ( $SD = 3$  months).

When the programme was first trialled in England, from 1990-1992, the target group of children was drawn from those aged 6:0 to 6:6 who were in what is called Year 2 classes. However, because of different policies on admission to school, children may enter school at any time between four and five and thus by six, some children will have had more than one year at school. The criteria for admission to the programme, that the child should have received one year at school and be aged over six years, identified two separate and only partially overlapping groups: those who had been in school for one year and those aged six. During their time in England, the New Zealand training team became aware of many demands that children in Year 1 should be admitted to Reading Recovery. From September, 1993, it was decided to lower the age of selection to 5:9 in order to include children in Year 1 classes who had already received one full year of schooling. Our age group for selection to the programme is now 5:9 through 6:3 and thus the sample children are drawn from two year groups:

Year 1 children (aged 5:9 – 5:11 in September)

Year 2 children (aged 6:0 – 6:11 in September)

Our Year 1 children are aged between 5:9 and 6:1 at entry to the programme and the Year 2 children are aged between 6:1 and 6:7. Year 2 children are usually selected at the start of the school year and the children who are selected later in the year after the first group have completed their programme are more likely to be Year 1 children. It is interesting that the lowering of the age of entry to 5:9 appears to have had a marked effect on the sample selected to receive the programme since over half of them are drawn from Year 1 classes this year:

- Year 1: 1,823 children (59 percent) mean age 5:11 (SD 2 mo)
- Year 2: 1,121 children (41 percent) mean age 6:4 (SD 3 mo)

The significance of grade level is that the early literacy experiences and the school curriculum in the two years differ considerably. The teachers' expectations about the children's literacy achievements will also be very different. The recently introduced National Tests are also taken by children at the end of Year 2. These provide a benchmark for literacy attainments and schools are generally concerned that their pupils should achieve at least average levels on these tests. This has made schools more receptive to the idea of early identification and intervention and may underlie the targeting of Year 1 children.

Because of different admissions policies, children will have had different lengths of school experience when they enter the programme. In England, the first class in school is called the Reception class; children may, depending on their term of entry which is affected by their date of birth and the school's admission policy, spend from one to three terms in Reception before moving into Year 1. Children selected for Reading Recovery will have had different amounts of schooling. For our sample this ranged from two to eight terms (Table 5).

**Table 5**  
*Number of Terms Completed at Start of Programme x Grade Level*

		Number of terms of school completed at start of programme						
		2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Y1	<b>41 (2 %)</b>	<b>1070 (60 %)</b>	<b>424 (24 %)</b>	<b>240 (13 %)</b>	<b>19 (1 %)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	
Y2	<b>12 (1 %)</b>	<b>176 (14 %)</b>	<b>532 (44 %)</b>	<b>261 (21 %)</b>	<b>210 (17%)</b>	<b>14 (1 %)</b>	<b>16 (1%)</b>	

Over half the Year 1 children have had three terms in school at the start of the programme and a further quarter have had four terms. Over 40 percent of Year 2 children have had four terms in school (which is probably made up of three terms in Year 1 plus one term in the Reception class). But about 20 percent have had five and six terms schooling before they enter the programme, so many children in Year 2 have had well over a year at school and 20 percent have had two years of school experience when they start Reading Recovery.

**2.2 Preschool Experience and Language Background**

About ten percent of the sample had no preschool experience, about ten percent were in play groups, and about 80 percent were in nursery schools or nursery classes. This is higher than average for England but probably reflects the fact that the programme was running in inner city areas which generally have better preschool provision than suburban or rural areas or counties.

Given the areas in which the programme was sited, it is not surprising that the children were drawn from a range of ethnic backgrounds and 20 percent were bilingual, having a first language other than English. It is not possible without further investigation to be sure whether this proportion of bilingual speakers is fairly representative of the proportion of such children in the classes from which our sample was drawn. In some boroughs there were no bilingual children in the Reading Recovery programme whereas in others they constituted over half the sample.

### 2.3 *Special Needs*

Eighty-two children (2.6 percent of the whole sample) were noted as having a Statement of Special Educational Needs at the start of the programme, i.e. before the programme commenced. Since the process of issuing a statement of special needs is usually very protracted and can take up to a year, this suggests that these children had a significant learning disability which had been noticed early in their school (or even their preschool) career.

### 2.4 *Entry and Exit Profiles of Children on the Observation Survey*

This pattern of very low entry scores together with quite a wide variation seems to be typical of most of the populations of low achievers who have received Reading Recovery (Table 6); it is similar to the Australian and the Ohio samples. The entry scores are slightly lower than those of the first Surrey cohorts, reported in Wright (1992), who are our only other English reference point.

**Table 6**  
*Observation Survey Profiles for the Whole Sample*

	Book Level	Concepts About Print	Hearing Sounds	Letter Identification	Word Test	Writing Vocabulary
Entry level (n = 2,900)						
<i>mean</i>	1.17	9.5	8.4	27.3	1.6	4.8
<i>SD</i>	1.6	3.7	8.1	15.7	2.2	5.2
Exit level (n = 1,900)						
<i>mean</i>	13.6	18.2	30.4	49.0	10.8	37.0
<i>SD</i>	4.5	3.5	7.3	7.3	3.7	15.0

However, the levels reached at the end of the programme for the whole sample, including those not successfully discontinued, while encouraging, are of limited value. More informative is the level reached for the successfully discontinued children, and here we need to examine the levels reached for different groups: those in Year 1 and Year 2, the bilingual speakers, and girls and boys.



## 2.5 The Effect of Year Group on Progress in Reading Recovery

**Table 7**

*Outcome Scores on the Observation Survey for Successfully Discontinued Children in Year 1 and Year 2*

	Book Level	Concepts About Print	Hearing Sounds	Letter Identification	Word Test	Writing Vocabulary
Year 1 (n = 645)						
mean	15.3	19.2	32.9	51.5	12.2	41.9
SD	2.0	2.6	3.9	2.6	2.2	11.8
Year 2 (n = 815) *						
mean	16.5	19.7	33.6	51.7	12.6	44.6
SD	2.3	2.5	3.5	3.4	2.2	12.6

(\* indicates a statistically significant difference between scores for Year 1 and Year 2 children)

There are significant differences between children in Year 1 and Year 2, with children in Year 1 having lower entry scores on all measures and lower outcome scores on all measures *except* letter identification. This demonstrates that for Year 1 children to be regarded as successfully completing the programme they do not have to have achieved as high a level of text reading or other literacy achievements as Year 2 children. The only measure where this does not apply is letter identification. The literacy demands on these children will be less exacting as they are in Year 1 and after leaving the programme they will have a whole year before they take the National Tests at seven.

*Are the children in Year 1 any less likely to succeed than their Year 2 counterparts?*

**Table 8**

*Outcomes for Children in Year 1 and Year 2 Classes*

Year (Grade) in school	successfully discontinued		referred		left school		incomplete programme		total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
	Year 1	652	35	298	16	79	4	822	
Year 2	824	64	321	25	77	6	58	5	1280

The children with incomplete programmes are those who are mid-programme at the end of the school year. In the case of Year 1 children, it is expected that their programme will be resumed after the six-week summer vacation. For Year 2 children, it may be less easy to continue their programmes because they will enter the Junior department of the Primary school, or in some cases, a completely separate school, and liaison between Infant and Junior departments becomes more difficult. It is notable that a far higher proportion of Year 1 children have incomplete programmes. This is a by-product of the rolling programme since these children are more likely to be selected after the first children to be selected have completed their programmes. It appears from this that children in Year 1 are less likely to be successfully discontinued. But if we look at the distribution excluding those children who are still mid-programme at the end-of-year data collection point, the figures look slightly different. From these figures, there is no significant difference in the likelihood of being referred or successfully discontinued for children in Year 1 and Year 2.

**Table 9**  
*Outcomes for Children with Complete Programmes in Year 1 and 2 Classes*

	successfully discontinued		referred		left school	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Year 1	652	63	298	29	79	7
Year 2	824	68	321	26	77	6

## *2.6 The Effect of Gender on Progress in Reading Recovery*

**A**s two thirds of the children who enter the programme are boys, are there gender differences in the effectiveness of the programme?

The only measure on which girls are superior at entry and retain their superiority at outcome is Writing Vocabulary (Table 10). In terms of outcome, there are no gender differences in the likelihood of being successfully discontinued. Thus, whatever factors in the classroom and the world outside conspire to produce a disproportionate number of low-achieving boys, once they are in Reading Recovery they are as successful as girls. Table 11 shows this; the children with incomplete programmes have been excluded.

**Table 10****Scores of Boys and Girls on the Observation Survey for the Whole Sample**

	Book Level	Concepts About Print	Hearing Sounds	Letter Identification	Word Test	Writing Vocabulary
<b>At Entry</b>						
<b>BOYS (n = 1850)</b>						
mean	1.2	9.6	8.1	27.0	1.6	4.6
SD	1.7	3.7	7.9	15.7	2.2	4.8
<b>GIRLS (n = 1127)</b>						
mean	1.2	9.5	8.8	27.6	1.7	5.4
SD	1.6	3.6	8.4	15.7	2.2	5.8
<b>At Exit</b>						
<b>BOYS (n = 1157)</b>						
mean	13.5	18.1	30.2	48.9	10.7	35.9
SD	4.5	3.4	7.3	7.3	3.6	15.4
<b>GIRLS (n = 750)</b>						
mean	13.6	18.2	30.8	49.2	10.9	38.8
SD	4.6	3.6	7.1	7.3	3.8	16.5

(\*indicates a statistically significant difference between boys' and girls' scores)

**Table 11****Outcomes of Boys and Girls**

	boys		girls	
	n	%	n	%
successfully discontinued	893	65	583	67
referred	388	28	231	27
left school	103	7	53	6
total	1384		867	

**2.7 The Effect of Bilingualism on Progress in Reading Recovery**

Although only 20 percent of the children receiving the programme are bilingual, we need to know whether they benefit from it to the same extent as children who only speak English.

**Table 12**  
***Outcomes of Monolingual and Bilingual Children***

	successfully discontinued		referred		left school		total
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
monolingual	1172	66	480	27	113	6	1765
bilingual	294	63	134	29	39	8	467
total	1466	65	614	28	152	7	2232

This shows that there is no evidence that bilingual children's outcomes differ from those of the children who only speak English.

**Table 13**  
***Scores on the Observation Survey for Monolingual and Bilingual Children***

	Book Level	Concepts About Print	Hearing Sounds in Words	Letter Identification	Word Test	Writing Vocabulary
<b>At Entry</b>						
<b>MONOLINGUAL CHILDREN</b>						
mean	1.2	9.8	8.7	27.9	1.7	5.1
SD	1.7	3.6	8.1	15.2	2.2	5.3
<b>BILINGUAL CHILDREN</b>						
	*	*	*	*	*	*
mean	0.9	8.4	7.1	24.5	1.4	4.1
SD	1.5	3.9	7.7	17.1	2.1	4.8
<b>At Exit</b>						
<b>MONOLINGUAL CHILDREN</b>						
mean	3.6	18.2	30.4	49.0	10.7	36.9
SD	4.4	3.4	7.3	7.1	3.6	15.4
<b>BILINGUAL CHILDREN</b>						
mean	13.4	17.9	30.7	49.0	11.1	37.3
SD	4.9	3.9	7.0	8.0	3.8	17.5

(\* indicates a statistically significant difference between the two language groups)

It is clear from this that on entry to the programme bilingual children are scoring lower on all the subtests of the Observation Profile, but by the end of the programme there are no differences between them. Multiple regressions carried out on the Observation Survey outcomes shows that the only one for which language exerts a significant effect is the Word Test ( $p > = .05$ ).

**Table 14**  
*Outcomes for Bilingual and Monolingual Children in Years 1 and 2: The Effect of Year Group and Bilingualism*

		successfully discontinued		referred		left school	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
Year 1	monolingual	548	65	233	28	57	7
	bilingual	99	55	61	34	20	11
Year 2	monolingual	624	67	247	27	56	6
	bilingual	195	68	73	25	19	7

This suggests that bilingual children in Year 1 are less likely to have a successful programme outcome than those in Year 2. By Year 2, bilingual children are as successful as monolingual children. What may account for this?

### The Effect of Fluency

The term *bilingual* covers children whose fluency in English differs widely. We asked the Reading Recovery teachers to rate the bilingual children's fluency in English on a four-point scale (fairly widely adopted in the UK) which rates a newcomer to English as 1 and someone with near-perfect fluency as 4. While such a rating is admittedly crude, it may enable us to see whether a certain level of English is necessary in order to benefit from the programme. However, the stages of fluency appear to be evenly distributed across both Year groups.

**Table 15**  
*Teachers' Ratings of Fluency for Bilingual Children in Years 1 and 2*

	Year 1		Year 2	
	n	%	n	%
stage 1 beginner	41	25	63	24
stage 2	86	52	140	53
stage 3	32	18	48	18
stage 4, fluent	6	5	12	5
total	165		263	

Teachers rate about a quarter of the bilingual children in both years as beginners and half the bilingual children, in both Year 1 and Year 2, at Stage 2 (gaining familiarity). We have unfortunately no other independent measure of the fluency of these children; however it may be that our teachers were not using the fluency ratings accurately and that, rather than using it as a criterion-referenced rating scale according to the descriptions given, they were norm-referencing and tended to have higher expectations of bilingual children in Year 2. The similar distributions across the fluency bands are thus an artifact of teachers' expectations.

The relationship between level of fluency and outcome is affected by Year group. A child who is new to English in Year 1 has a 50 percent chance of being successfully discontinued, while a similar child in Year 2 has a 60 percent chance. The likelihood of being successfully discontinued is greater for Year 2 children at each stage of fluency.

**Table 16**

*Relationship Between Level of Fluency in English and Outcome for Year 1 and Year 2 Children*

	Year 1				Year 2			
	successfully discontinued		referred		successfully discontinued		referred	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
beginner, 1	17	50	17	50	34	59	24	41
stage 2	47	60	31	40	96	74	34	26
stage 3	24	80	6	20	40	83	8	17
fluent, 4	5	83	1	17	12	100	0	0
total	93		55		182		66	

### ***2.8 The Contributions of Grade, Gender, Bilingualism, and Entry Scores to Outcome Measures***

Multiple regressions were carried out on all the Observation Survey measures to explore the relative contributions of these factors to outcome. Initial test level is significantly related to outcome level on all the Observation Survey measures, as is year in school. Gender is only related to writing vocabulary and bilingualism to performance on the Word Test. Age at entry to the programme is negatively related to Concepts About Print, Hearing and Recording the Sounds in Words, Letter Identification, and Writing Vocabulary.

## **3. How Well is the Programme Working in England?**

**3.1** The data presented so far show that in many respects the programme works in England as it has elsewhere: it takes in low-achieving children and raises their levels of literacy achievement. If the criterion of success is taken to be the proportion of children who are classified as

*successfully discontinued* on leaving the programme, then we may feel reassured. Of more concern is the large proportion who do not achieve a successful outcome. If we consider only the children for whom programme outcomes are available, the proportions for each outcome are shown in Table 17.

Given that nearly 70 percent of our teachers are in training and that they provided the data on 65 percent of our children, the fact that two-thirds of the children are successfully discontinued is explicable. However, our referral rates still seem higher than those reported elsewhere. This too may be associated with our inexperienced group of teachers and tutors and provided that we can increase the proportion of the teaching work force who are more experienced, we should see the programme become more successful year by year.

**Table 17**  
*Outcomes for Children with Completed Programmes*

successfully discontinued	1476	66 percent
referred	619	27 percent
left school	156	7 percent
total	2251	

### 3.2 How long does the programme take?

Reading Recovery teachers are a highly trained resource and the programme strives to ensure that they enable children to progress as quickly as possible to reach the average level of their classmates. From the point of view of cost-effectiveness and efficiency, a prime concern must be the length of the programme.

**Table 18**  
*Mean Number of Weeks for Each Year Group (+ Standard Deviation)*

	successfully discontinued			referred			left school			incomplete programme		
	n	mean	(SD)	n	mean	(SD)	n	mean	(SD)	n	mean	(SD)
Year 1	652	23	(7)	298	26	(7)	79	10	(8)	822	9	(5)
Year 2	824	24	(7)	321	27	(6)	76	15	(8)	58	13	(7)

This makes it clear that we are not achieving a maximum of 20 weeks in the programme. We are taking on average three or four weeks longer than that. But most of these children are being taught by teachers in training who, as we have seen, take longer to complete a child's programme.

However, another interesting aspect is that children who are eventually referred receive on average three weeks more time in the programme than their successful counterparts. Is this caution on the part of fairly inexperienced teachers to reach a decision or does it represent the reluctance of teachers to withdraw the programme's support; or may it be that it is harder for teachers to work effectively with children who are especially slow to accelerate? Table 19 also shows the pressure on teachers to complete the programme for children in Year 2, who will be less likely to be able to receive the programme in the following year. This is reflected in the very few unfinished programmes for this year group, which may also affect the teachers' desire to hang on until the child can be successfully discontinued (or not).

A school year in England lasts 190 days, or 38 weeks. Thus, given the time taken to select children, we shall be unlikely to get two cohorts through in a year unless we can reduce the length of the programme to 17 weeks. At present we are clearly some way from achieving this. This must be a cause for concern for those striving to achieve effective implementation.

### 3.3 Interruptions to Teaching

Earlier indications from the New Zealand team who provided the training in 1991-93 had been that teachers were often unable to teach their children regularly every day. We therefore collected information on teacher absence for illness and other reasons.

**Table 19**  
*Average Number of Lessons Lost, By Child Outcome*

Reason for teacher missing lesson:			
	teacher off sick	teacher absent for other reason	total
Child:			
successfully discontinued	4	8	12
referred	5	10	15
left school	3	4	7
incomplete programme	1	4	5

Thus, teacher absence may prolong the programme by two to three weeks. But while teachers' absence through ill-health is unavoidable, teachers missing Reading Recovery lessons because they have been asked to carry out other duties (covering classes for absent colleagues, attending courses, and assisting with National Testing) is a factor which doubles their absence rate and which must be tackled by the school. It is intriguing that children who are eventually referred miss twice as many lessons because the teacher is absent for reasons other than ill-health. It may well be that children whose programmes are intermittently interrupted are less likely to have a successful outcome than those with fewer interruptions. The children, too, missed lessons.



**Table 20**  
***Average Number of Lessons Missed by Children***

Child missed lesson because:	off sick	absent for other reason	total
Child			
successfully discontinued	9	3	12
referred	15	3	18
left school	10	2	12
incomplete programme	4	1	5

Of interest here is that children's absence through ill-health adds two weeks to a programme and children who do not achieve success in the programme tend to have more absence. It is easy to speculate on the relation between absence through ill-health and poor progress in school. Other reasons which cause children to miss lessons are such things as sports day, swimming galas, trips, and visits.

#### **4. Issues for Implementation**

**W**henever Reading Recovery is transplanted from its native soil in New Zealand to other terrains, some adjustments are necessary to align the programme with the educational system of the new country while not jeopardising those features which ensure its success.

##### ***4.1 Age of Entry***

**W**e have already made one adaptation to the programme by accepting children on to the programme at 5:9. This has introduced a group with lower literacy levels at entry and also at outcome. It may be that since these children will have longer to make use of the mainstream programme before national testing at seven this will be beneficial in the longer term. Schools are now able to offer an early intervention programme to those falling behind in Year 1. We shall have to wait until the follow-up next year to see whether there is any difference between Year 1 and Year 2 children in their ability to maintain the progress they have made on the programme.

##### ***4.2 Bilingualism***

**W**e need to be aware that younger and less fluent bilingual children, in effect, those who are struggling at the early stages of learning English, have difficulties with the programme. We shall be addressing the problem of how to find ways to match the early texts we offer them to their style and level of English. At present it may be premature to use lack of fluency with English as a reason for excluding young bilingual learners from the programme.

### **4.3 *Withdrawal***

For the past ten years there has been a movement towards mainstreaming children with learning difficulties which has produced an ideological resistance to any programme which involves an element of withdrawal from the classroom. We have encountered resistance to this aspect of Reading Recovery.

**4.4** The New Zealand team who trained our tutors and teachers from 1991-93 commented that while they found English teachers to be very sensitive and caring to the children they taught, they felt that they had very low expectations about what could be achieved especially by children from disadvantaged backgrounds. A possible disadvantage of the widespread ideology of child-centredness is that teachers become reluctant to demand high academic achievements from pupils who appear to be struggling.

### **4.5 *Classroom Literacy Programmes***

There is great diversity in the approaches to literacy used by class teachers in England and a general eclecticism which makes their practices hard to categorise. We know that the relation between the Reading Recovery programme and the mainstream curriculum is important, but we have not so far been able to explore this further. The GEST funded projects have been monitored by a member of the Schools Inspectorate who has been impressed by the benefits which the programme offers to the literacy practices of the whole school. The National Network will now be disseminating the principles of Reading Recovery more widely and seeking ways to incorporate them into the mainstream literacy programme. The implications for initial teacher training must also be explored.

### **4.6 *Expense***

Education authorities are always concerned to know how much the programme will cost and we have found it helpful to be realistic in our costings which show how the initial outlay, in terms of setting up the training site and training a tutor (teacher leader), are offset over a number of years to produce a less expensive programme over time. The largest element in cost is the salary of the teacher but we have been able to show that the cost per child is halved over a five year period as the initial outlay is offset and more children receive the benefit. The costs of the programme must of course be offset against the cost of special educational provision for children whose persistent literacy problems require further long-term specialist help. There are also incalculable benefits for the school as a whole.

### **4.7 *National Coordination***

As a relatively inexperienced group, we have found it essential to establish networks of communication and to have a national coordination team to ensure uniformity and quality control of all aspects of the programme. So many problems were new to us that it was crucial that decisions were reached after full consultation and were applied nationwide. Our current concern is how to maintain some national coordination after the end of 1995.

## 4.8 Funding

The biggest single problem will be how to continue to implement the programme when the special funding provided by the government ceases in April, 1995. Twenty projects have submitted bids to a new government funding body and in January, 1995, it was announced that 12 of them had been successful in securing funds for a further five to seven year period. That leaves a number of tutors understandably anxious about their futures and makes expansion of the implementation hard to anticipate. Thus, just as it begins to operate on a scale large enough to show results, the whole project is threatened with strangulation by financial restriction.

## Conclusion

This is both the first and the last report of the *English* national monitoring of Reading Recovery, as next year's cohort will include groups from Wales and Northern Ireland.

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