

Intervention Essentials

Full Implementation Maximizes Effectiveness

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Why does full implementation in Reading Recovery® matter?

The goal of Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura—Reading Recovery in Spanish—is to efficiently and effectively lift the literacy achievement of children who are experiencing difficulties learning to read and write. School systems that choose to implement the interventions do so with the understanding that reducing the number of first graders who have extreme difficulty learning to read and write not only sets students on the path for success in literacy learning but also benefits the total school as well. *Full implementation* is essential for maximizing the effectiveness.

What is Full Implementation?

Full implementation, sometimes referred to as full coverage, means that every child who needs Reading Recovery services has access to the intervention at their school during first grade (Reading Recovery Council of North America [RRCNA], n.d.). Children making low progress in learning to read need to make accelerated growth by increasing their rate of progress relative to the expected growth by the end of first grade in order to close the achievement gap. “A school or

district has reached full coverage or full implementation when sufficient time and teacher support is available to serve all identified children (RRCNA, 2021, p. 31).

What are the Benefits of Full Implementation?

Students, teachers, and schools benefit from full implementation of the one-to-one intervention that significantly lifts the literacy achievement for each student who receives the intervention. Students develop systems for independent problem solving, often achieving several months of growth in just a few weeks of their daily, individually designed lesson series. Students who make this accelerated progress seldom need referral for long-term interventions, thus reducing costs associated with remedial instruction and referrals to special education. In addition, reducing unnecessary referrals to special education frees time for special education educators to focus their attention on those students who truly need those services.

Reading Recovery teachers identify and work with each learner's strengths and design lessons to support the student making accelerated progress. The focus on a strength-based intervention and teacher expertise lead to a positive and productive learning culture for the whole school. Working from a theory that empha-

sizes teaching for independence and thoughtful analysis of teaching decisions, schools create a culture of what Fullan & Quinn (2016) refer to as “coherence making.” Schools that operate with coherence build capacity for purposeful action and interaction, building precision in teaching and accountability.

The added benefit of full implementation includes the highly trained teachers who share their early literacy expertise to grow collaborative cultures and deepen learning within the total school. While it may take 2–3 years to achieve full implementation, planning for full implementation is an important goal in lifting achievement to within the average band of all readers and writers and reducing the number of referrals to special education or retentions in first grade.

How to Plan for Full Implementation

Reading Recovery's unique system for lifting individual student's literacy achievement in first grade requires school leaders to think both about student needs on a campus (across a district) and staffing flexibility to achieve full implementation.

Student need

To determine the appropriate level of support, teachers typically begin by identifying 20–25% of their first graders making the lowest

progress on their district early literacy performance indicators (Clay, 2005). Reading Recovery teachers then administer *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Clay, 2019) to determine the children most in need of Reading Recovery instruction. Classroom teachers and the Reading Recovery teacher or a literacy team work together to determine the students most in need and begin by taking the lowest-performing students. By annually being attentive to changes in demographics, changes in performance standards, and changes due to growth, school teams can anticipate the number of teachers who are needed to provide Reading Recovery instruction for all students who need it.

Flexible staffing

Reading Recovery teachers typically serve four students individually in daily lessons for 12–20 weeks (determined by the learner's progress). The short intensive individual instruction allows teachers to serve between 8–10 students across the school year. Because Reading Recovery instruction is only part of the teacher's day (typically a .4 FTE), this teacher may use their expertise in a variety of roles within a school during the other part of the day. Flexible staffing models include shared classroom models, English language [EL] services, small-group interventions across other grade levels, literacy coaches, or special education services (RRCNA, 2021). These flexible staffing models enable schools to achieve full implementation. When a school is fully implemented and all first-grade children who qualify for the intervention have been served by the end of the year,

teachers are able to work with kindergarten children or some second-grade students who may have moved in the district or need additional support.

An example

In a school with four first-grade classrooms, each with 22 students, a school team could anticipate that 17–20 students would benefit from Reading Recovery. To achieve full implementation, the school would need two, possibly three, teachers depending on the makeup of the campus. These two teachers would be able to have 8–10 students in their first 12–20 weeks of instruction and potentially 8–10 students in their second 12–20 weeks of instruction. Teaching for acceleration and efficient entry and exit processes will contribute to the efficiency of the implementation. Close collaboration with the classroom teachers maximizes the successful transition into classroom instruction so that the child can learn with independence.

Full Implementation Achieved

Full implementation is part of a school and district's comprehensive literacy plan. Striving to achieve full implementation in schools requires dynamic planning annually to anticipate change in student need and teacher availability. Campus leaders, teacher leaders, site coordinators, and teachers can establish systems for annually reviewing outcomes and anticipating future needs. A commitment to full implementation ensures that children most in need are able to make significant growth in their literacy learning. In addition,

the commitment to full implementation reduces the long-term costs of intervening services to educational systems. Full implementation is both a process and a goal in maximizing students' early literacy success.

References

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About the Author

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