

**Subject area:** Reading (Literacy and Language Arts)

**Grade Levels:** 1<sup>st</sup> grade

**Title of Instructional Method, Strategy, or Approach:** Reading Recovery

**Description of Reading Recovery:** Developed in 1976 by Marie Clay in New Zealand, and introduced to the US in 1984, Reading Recovery is an early intervention for children having difficulty with entry level reading skills. The goal of RR is to “dramatically reduce the number of first-grade students who have extreme difficulty learning to read and write and to reduce the cost of these learners to educational systems” (Reading Recovery Council of North America, Online).

Reading Recovery is composed of three main components: The Diagnostic Survey, the Tutoring Session, and Teacher Training. Teachers, who are trained in RR instruction, focus on the student’s strengths, not deficits. Reading Recovery has been implemented in 38 states, the District of Columbia, four Canadian provinces, Australia, England, and New Zealand (Education Research Consumer Guide, Online).

Fitzgerald and Ramsbotham (2004) conducted a study on Reading Recovery effectiveness in first-graders. The study took place in a public elementary school in a Southeastern urban community. There were 139 first graders divided into six classrooms. Teachers chose the students based on their kindergarten portfolios, and judging their literacy level. The student with the highest literacy was identified, then the student with the lowest literacy, then the student with the second highest literacy, etc. Thirty percent of the lowest-achieving students were tested with the reading recovery teachers. The lowest performing students from that thirty percent were chosen to participate in the study.

The students were assessed on letter identification, word reading ability, concepts of print, reading level, word writing, and ability to hear sounds and words at the start of the program and at the end. The Reading Recovery lessons were performed in the typical format (discussed in implementing RR). The lessons were conducted over a twenty-week time period.

The students started this program at approximately the same level and continued to show advances at the same level. In the end, the students gained strategies for both reading and writing. Not all students gained all cognitive strategies addressed in the program, although they did show improvement.

**References:**

1. Fitzgerald, J., Ramsbotham, A. (2004). First-graders' cognitive and strategic development in reading recovery reading and writing. *Reading Research and Instruction* 44 (1), 1-31.
2. Reading Recovery Council of North America. (2007). *Reading recovery: Basic facts*. Retrieved August 26, 2007 from [http://www.readingrecovery.org/reading\\_recovery/facts/index.asp](http://www.readingrecovery.org/reading_recovery/facts/index.asp).
3. Thomas, R.L. (1992). Reading recovery. *Office of Research: Education Consumer Guide* 3. Retrieved August 27, 2007 from <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/OR/ConsumerGuides/readrec.html>.

**Implementing Reading Recovery into the classroom:** Students who qualify for RR receive a half-hour lesson each day of school for 12 to 20 weeks (decided by the facilitator). Specially trained teachers, who have enlisted at least a year in specialized training, give the lessons. The lessons are discontinued when the students meet grade-level expectations, and can work independently in the classroom. Each RR lesson consists of reading familiar books, reading a book from the day before, working with letters and/or words using magnetic letters, writing a story, assembling a cut-up story, and reading a new book. There are over 2,000 small books of increasing difficulty that a teacher can choose from to help the student build knowledge. The teacher creates problem-solving opportunities and provides only enough support to help develop the techniques, without giving the answers. While the student is participating in the lessons, the teacher takes records of what the child is doing. These anecdotal notes aid in planning the next lesson.

**Other considerations:** Training can be pricey, as can the one-on-one teaching method. Reading Recovery is for individuals, rather than a whole classroom. Each lesson is individually prepared

for that student, which may result in quite a bit of work for a teacher who has multiple students in the RR program. It is important to note, however, that most students who complete the program can perform within the average achievement range of grade-level students, and don't need additional help in the future (Education Research Consumer Guide, Online).

**Additional Links:**

<http://www.ndec.us/> This site provides educators with data they need to evaluate their RR program.

<http://www.sfusd.k12.ca.us/programs/rr/RRoverview.html> An overview of RR from California State University.

[http://www.readingrecovery.org/reading\\_recovery/faq/videos\\_page.asp](http://www.readingrecovery.org/reading_recovery/faq/videos_page.asp) Videos of RR in action.

**EIU Candidates:** Laura Jennings, Jackie Martin, Conny Melvin, Colleen Mullane, and Andrea Purvis