Intervention Essentials

Responses to Parents' Questions About Reading Recovery

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Parents of children selected for Reading Recovery® often have questions about the intervention and what this instruction means for their child. Following are responses to commonly asked questions.

Why does the school suggest Reading Recovery first?

Reading Recovery is an early intervention providing individualized instruction in reading and writing for children experiencing challenges with beginning literacy learning. This intervention offers the learner the fastest route to success and allows them to avoid ongoing, long-term struggles with school and learning. Individualized, responsive instruction is key, and Reading Recovery offers personalized instruction from a specially trained teacher prepared to work with these learners. The individualized nature of Reading Recovery makes it the best option offered by the school.

Note: This discussion about the Reading Recovery® intervention for first-grade students also pertains to Descubriendo la Lectura (Reading Recovery in Spanish), Intervention préventive en lecture-écriture (Reading Recovery in French), and Literacy Lessons® — an intervention based on Reading Recovery theory and instruction for children up to age 9. The term "parent" also refers to the child's "caregiver."

What does Reading Recovery instruction entail?

Instruction is based on two important tenets. First, lessons are built on detailed observations of the ways the child responds to written language with a focus on problem solving and acquiring new skills. Attention is paid to what the child can do well and how to help the child use their strengths to work out what they find difficult. Second, each lesson addresses both reading and writing since these are reciprocal processes that pull from the same information sources — letters, sounds, words, language, and, sentence and story meaning. Essentially, skills acquired in one area support development in the other. The Reading Recovery teacher analyzes what each child knows and builds on these strengths throughout the lesson series.

What is the goal of Reading Recovery instruction?

The goal of each child's Reading Recovery instruction is the development of complex literacy processing systems used by proficient readers. In every lesson, the learner reads authentic stories and writes personal messages, attending to information about the code (e.g., letter sounds), working on it, and linking it to things they know. The teacher helps the child recognize and discriminate among the visible symbols (e.g. letters, letter clusters, and whole words) and make links to the invisible oral language structures in order to

- monitor their reading and writing;
- search for several kinds of information in letter sequences, word sequences, and in longer stretches of sentences and texts;
- check that one kind of information fits with all other available information;
- repeat themselves as if to confirm what they have written or read;
- correct themselves as needed; and
- make discoveries and solve new words by these means.

With increased fluency on longer stretches of progressively more complex texts, children build networks for working on written language that extends itself over time.

When, where, and for how long will this instruction happen?

The Reading Recovery intervention is short term, approximately 12–20 weeks, with recommendations for the child's continued learning provided when their lesson series ends. Lessons are 30 minutes daily in a quiet setting suitable for one-to-one instruction.

Will my child continue to participate in their classroom with their peers?

Reading Recovery does not replace the classroom reading program, the primary source of literacy instruction for all children, but provides an additional opportunity to receive support and gain proficiency. The aim of the lesson series is to accelerate each child's progress in literacy, bringing them to a level of proficiency that allows them to profit from the classroom program without ancillary support.

Will my child get instruction in phonics?

Reading Recovery lessons involve explicit instruction in phonics and word analysis skills during daily reading, writing, and hands-on activities. Reading Recovery's research-based teaching procedures address phonemic awareness, letter identification and discrimination, linking sounds with letters, analyzing the sounds in words, learning how words work, and applying advanced skills to decode unknown words when reading and to record unfamiliar words when writing. All new learning is observed, assessed, and applied in reading and writing authentic messages daily, thus ensuring the transfer of learning in isolation to real reading and writing.

How can I support my child's progress and participation in Reading Recovery?

Parents can listen to their child read the little books sent home daily, enjoying the stories and perhaps engaging in a brief discussion of the content or its characters. They can also observe their child's assembly of the cut apart message from the day's writing activity, an opportunity to see how their child's writing and reading processes are linked. These home activities provide an ideal context for parents to support their child's progress as a reader and writer.

How will I know if my child is making progress?

Reading Recovery teachers take daily records of each child's reading, writing, and word analysis work, observing what the child finds challenging or easy. They also maintain weekly records of the child's text reading levels and the new words recognized in reading and writing. This information is used to plan responsive, daily lessons and to communicate the child's progress to parents.

Parents are encouraged to visit the Reading Recovery lesson to observe their child's reading and writing and to exchange information with the teacher on behalf of their child's continued progress.

What happens after Reading Recovery lessons have ended?

Children who have acquired a processing system for literacy and have reached average levels will shift to classroom instruction only; some may need teacher monitoring for a short time to facilitate this change. Other children who are slightly below level will also transition to classroom instruction but need some additional support, typically in the form of small-group instruction, to reinforce their progress. A small number of children, having made some progress, will require longer-term support. They will be referred for instruction provided by a specialist teacher or a teacher trained in Literacy Lessons. Importantly, the period of Reading Recovery teaching will provide essential diagnostic information and recommendations for each child's continued literacy learning.

About the Author

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