A Report of National Outcomes for Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura for the 2023–2024 School Year

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This report features results from the Reading Recovery and the Descubriendo la Lectura interventions in the United States during the 2023–2024 school year. Information is provided about the students who participated in the interventions, the students' intervention status upon exit, and the progress the students made.

In 2023–2024, both Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura students began the year with literacy scores below prepandemic fall levels, continuing a pattern observed in recent years. However, fall scores for both groups showed improvement compared to the previous school year, reflecting a positive trend. Students' measurable progress after participating in the intervention underscores the continued effectiveness of Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura.

Summary of the Reading Recovery Implementation

Research Question 1

How many students were served and who was served in Reading Recovery?

During the 2023–2024 school year, Reading Recovery was implemented by 9 university training centers responsible for overseeing the intervention in schools located in 31 states (Table 1). There were 15,258 first-grade students who participated in Reading Recovery. These children received the intervention from 2,119 Reading Recovery teachers who were supported by 165 teacher leaders in 124 training sites serving 415 school districts. There were 1,364 schools who participated in Reading Recovery, with 44% of the students located in a suburb/large town, 36% in a rural area/small town, and 20% in an urban area.

Demographic information for participating Reading Recovery students (n = 15,258) revealed that 50% were boys and 50% were girls. The students came from different racial and ethnic backgrounds (i.e., 54% White, 17% Black/African American, 19% Hispanic, 3% Asian American, 1% Native American, and 6% were either from multiple races or other ethnic backgrounds). About 16% of students were multilingual, and 14% had an identified disability. Of the schools that reported federal lunch status, approximately 76% of students were eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Background information

At the start of the school year, teachers in schools participating in Reading Recovery randomly select two first-grade students from their school to be part of a national random sample. These students represent typical first graders and serve as a comparison group.

Table 1. Participation in Reading Recovery in the United States, 2023–2024

Entity	*n*
University Training Centers	9
Teacher Training Sites	124
States	31
School Systems	415
School Buildings	1,364
Teacher Leaders	165
Teachers	2,119
Reading Recovery Students	15,258
Started in Fall	7,103
Started at Mid-year	8,155
Random Sample for RR	2,497

NOTE: Counts for Reading Recovery students include students who were taught by both teachers trained in Reading Recovery and teacher leaders.

Demographic information revealed that the random sample students from the 2023–2024 academic year (n = 2,497) were made up of 48% boys and 52% girls and came from different racial and ethnic backgrounds (i.e., 58% White, 15% Black/African American, 15% Hispanic, 5% Asian American, 1% Native American, and 6% were either from multiple races or other ethnic backgrounds). About 13% of the random sample students were multilingual and 7% had an identified disability. Of schools reporting federal lunch status, approximately 69% of the students were eligible for free or reduced lunch.

In 2023–2024, Reading Recovery teachers had an average of 22.0 years of teaching experience and 8.8 years teaching Reading Recovery and/or Descubriendo la Lectura. These teachers provided individual literacy instruction to an average of 7.0 Reading Recovery students during the school year. In addition, these teachers worked with an average of 33.5 additional children beyond their Reading Recovery load. Thus, accounting for all teaching roles/assignments during the 2023–2024 academic year, Reading Recovery teachers instructed an average total of 40.5 children.

Research Question 2

What was the intervention status of students served by Reading Recovery?

Of the students who received a complete series of Reading Recovery lessons (n = 11,196; 73.4% of all served), end-of-intervention outcomes were as follows:

- 56.6% (n = 6,343) achieved the intervention goal of reading and writing levels commensurate with the average students in their first-grade cohort. These students were given the outcome status of *Accelerated Progress: Achieved Intervention Goal* and can continue making progress without additional support beyond the classroom teacher.
- 21.2% (n = 2,369) made significant progress in their levels of reading and writing achievement but did not reach the average of their peers after completing a full series of lessons. These students were given the outcome status of *Progressed: Monitoring and Support are Essential for Ongoing Literacy Progress*. Although these students have a literacy processing system under construction, they will need continued monitoring and support to continue making gains.
- 22.2% (n = 2,484) made progress during the intervention, but additional evaluation along with ongoing intervention were considered essential for literacy progress to continue after completing a full series of lessons. These students were given the outcome status of *Recommended: Additional Evaluation and Ongoing Intervention are Essential for Ongoing Literacy Progress*. They deserve immediate consideration by the school team, classroom teachers, and specialists to monitor and support their ongoing progress.

Of the total group of students selected for Reading Recovery (n = 15,258), not all students were able to complete the intervention (26.6%, n = 4,062). The following reasons were given for this:

- 21.1% (n = 3,224) of students were unable to complete a full series of instruction before the end of the school year. These students were given an exit status of *Incomplete*.
- 2.7% (n = 407) of students moved during the school year while still enrolled in the intervention. These students were given an exit status of *Moved*.
- 2.8% (n = 431) of students' lessons were concluded early due to unusual circumstances based on a decision made by someone other than the Reading Recovery teacher. These students were given an exit status of *None of the Above*.

Table 2. Counts and Percentages of Reading Recovery Students by Exit Status, 2023–2024

Exit Status	*n*	% Full Program	% Total
Accelerated Progress	6,343	57%	42%
Progressed	2,369	21%	16%
Recommended	2,484	22%	16%
Incomplete	3,224		21%
Moved	407		3%
None of the Above	431		3%
Total	15,258		

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and when summed may not equal 100%.

Counts and percentages of all students who participated in the Reading Recovery intervention in 2023–2024, by status, are presented in Table 2.

Research Question 3

What was the progress of the Reading Recovery students on the literacy measures of the Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement?

The assessment used to examine Reading Recovery students' literacy skills was *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement* (Observation Survey; Clay, 2019). The Observation Survey consists of six tasks, administered individually by a Reading Recovery teacher, that measure children's reading and writing behaviors. These tasks provide insight into students' understanding of print concepts, the English writing system, phonemic awareness, and their ability to read and write words. The six tasks are Text Reading Level, Letter Identification, Ohio Word Test, Concepts About Print, Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words, and Writing Vocabulary.

The Observation Survey was administered multiple times during the 2023–2024 academic year (e.g., fall, mid-year, and year-end) to both Reading Recovery students and a random sample of comparison students. To address research question three, we analyzed scores at three time points for full program Reading Recovery students by outcome status and the random sample students. Table 3 shows the means for each group at fall, mid-year, and year-end. Additionally, Figure 1 shows line graphs illustrating the means for each group at the three time points across all six tasks.

Table 3. Mean Scores on the Six Tasks of the Observation Survey, by Time of Year and Group, 2023–2024

	Outcome Status			
Task/Time of Year	AP	P	R	RS
Text Reading Level				
Fall	1.4	0.8	0.5	5.0
Mid-year	14.9	9.6	4.9	12.6
Year-end	19.7	13.1	6.8	18.5
Letter Identification				
Fall	48.9	46.2	40.9	50.0
Mid-year	53.4	52.9	51.1	52.7
Year-end	53.6	53.2	51.9	53.3
Ohio Word Test				
Fall	4.1	2.3	1.4	8.8
Mid-year	18.0	14.8	9.5	15.2
Year-end	19.4	17.6	12.9	18.3
Concepts About Print				
Fall	12.6	11.7	10.3	14.7
Mid-year	20.4	18.9	16.5	18.3
Year-end	21.2	19.6	17.4	20.3
Hearing and Recording Sounds in Words				
Fall	22.2	17.0	11.5	27.1
Mid-year	35.8	34.3	29.9	33.7
Year-end	36.1	34.8	30.8	35.0
Writing Vocabulary				
Fall	11.2	7.7	5.2	18.0
Mid-year	46.4	37.2	26.5	38.0
Year-end	53.4	42.7	31.0	49.7

Note: AP = Accelerated Progress; P = Progressed; R = Recommended; RS = Random Sample
The mid-year means were calculated using only scores from first round Reading Recovery students at exit, as mid-year is when second round students begin the intervention.

Figure 1. Plots of Mean Scores by Time Point on the Observation Survey Tasks for Full Program Reading Recovery Students by Outcome Status and for Random Sample Students, 2023–2024

Note: The mid-year means were calculated using only scores from first round Reading Recovery students at exit as mid-year is when second round students begin the intervention.

Table 4. Average Scores and Gains on the Observation Survey Total Score From Fall to Mid-Year to Year-End for Full Program Reading Recovery Students by Outcome Status and Random Sample Students, 2023–2024

	Observation Survey Total Score Average				
Group	Fall	Mid-Year	Gain Fall to Mid-Year	Year-End	Gain Mid-Year to Year-End
Started Lessons in Fall					
Accelerated Progress	381	528	147	549	21
Progressed	363	497	134	517	20
Recommended	341	451	110	470	19
Started Lessons at Mid-Year					
Accelerated Progress	400	472	72	552	80
Progressed	386	443	57	521	78
Recommended	356	408	52	483	75
Random Sample	424	501	75	537	36

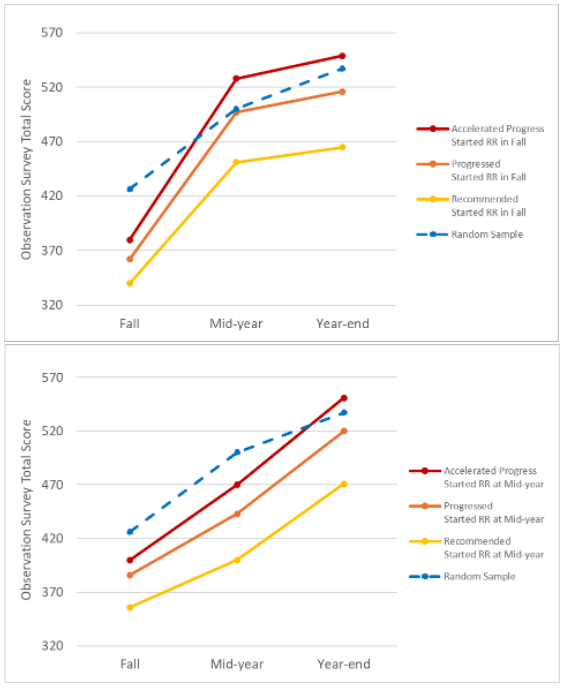
Research Question 4

What was the average gain in literacy skills from fall to mid-year to year-end of full program Reading Recovery students by outcome status and the random sample students?

To answer research question four, we calculated average fall, mid-year, and year-end Observation Survey Total Scores for full program Reading Recovery students by outcome status and for the random sample students. For Reading Recovery students, the averages were adjusted based on the timing of their participation in the intervention (e.g., fall, entry, and year-end scores were used for students who began the intervention in the second round).

As shown in Table 4 and Figure 2, full program Reading Recovery students in all outcome status categories started the school year with Observation Survey Total Scores below those of the random sample students. However, these students demonstrated strong growth during the intervention. While the random sample students made steady progress throughout the year, their average year-end score was lower than that of most Reading Recovery students.

Figure 2. Average Growth in Literacy Skills From Fall to Mid-Year to Year-End for Full Program Reading Recovery Students by Outcome Status and for Random Sample Students, 2023–2024



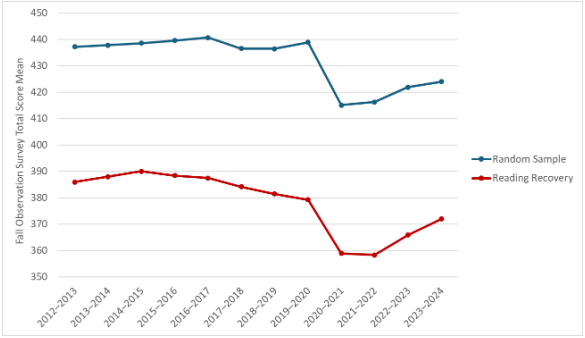
Research Question 5

How have Reading Recovery students and random sample students' mean fall Observation Survey Total Scores changed over time?

To address research question five, we analyzed data from schools that have implemented Reading Recovery since the 2012–2013 school year. As shown in Figure 3, a gap in mean fall Observation Survey Total Scores between Reading Recovery students and the random sample students was observed each year. This gap is expected, as Reading Recovery participants are selected based on having the lowest literacy skills in their schools, while random sample students represent typical first graders.

Both groups experienced a sharp decline in mean fall scores in 2020–2021 following school closures due to the global pandemic: 439 vs. 415 for random sample students and 378 vs. 358 for Reading Recovery students. In 2023–2024, mean scores for both groups improved but remained below prepandemic levels: 424 vs. 439 for the random sample and 373 vs. 378 for Reading Recovery students. Notably, Reading Recovery students began the 2023–2024 school year with a mean Total Score 6 points higher than the students in the previous year, compared to only a 2-point increase for the random sample students (Figure 3). This difference reflects a steady increase in fall scores each year since the pandemic among students with the lowest literacy skills.

Figure 3. Fall Observation Survey Total Score Means of Reading Recovery and Random Sample Students, 2012–2013 to 2023–2024



All Reading Recovery students demonstrated substantial progress in their literacy skills during the 2023–2024 school year, as evidenced by their average growth on the Observation Survey. In just 9 months, Recommended students showed an average growth of 10.4 months, Progressed students showed an average growth of 12.3 months, while Accelerated Progress students had an average of 13.1 months of growth. Notably, the combined year-end average Total Score of students with an outcome status of Accelerated Progress *and* Progressed (77.8% of full program Reading Recovery students) exceeded the year-end average Total Score of the random sample students (539 vs. 537, respectively). This significant growth underscores the effectiveness of the Reading Recovery program in driving substantial literacy skills.

Summary of the Descubriendo la Lectura Implementation

Research Question 1

How many students were served and who was served in Descubriendo la Lectura?

The Descubriendo la Lectura intervention, a reconstruction of Reading Recovery in Spanish, was designed for first graders who receive their initial literacy instruction in Spanish. Table 5 provides details about participation in Descubriendo la Lectura in the United States during the 2023–2024 academic year. There were 308 children participating in the intervention who received instruction from 47 teachers. These students attended 51 schools in 22 school districts located in 8 states, and the teachers were supported by 20 teacher leaders. The schools these students attended were in a suburb/large town (57%), urban area (37%), and rural area/small town (6%).

Demographic information for the participating Descubriendo la Lectura students (n = 308) revealed that 48% were boys and 52% were girls. Additionally, 96% of the students were identified as Hispanic. English was not the primary language at home for 95% of all Descubriendo la Lectura students, and 16% had an identified disability. Of the schools that reported federal lunch status, approximately 96% of the students were eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Table 5. Participation in Descubriendo la Lectura in the United States, 2023–2024

Entity	*n*
University Training Centers	3
Teacher Training Sites	19
States	8
School Systems	22
School Buildings	51
Teacher Leaders	20
Teachers	47
DLL Students	308
Started in Fall	156
Started at Mid-year	152
Random Sample for DLL	153

NOTE: Counts for Descubriendo la Lectura students include students who were taught by both teachers trained in Descubriendo la Lectura and teacher leaders.

Background information

At the start of the school year, teachers in schools participating in Descubriendo la Lectura randomly select four first-grade students from their school to be part of a national random sample. These students represent typical first graders and serve as a comparison group.

Of the students in the random sample from the 2023–2024 academic year (*n* = 153), 44% were boys and 56% were girls. In addition, 93% were identified as Hispanic. About 90% of the random sample students were multilingual and 11% had an identified disability. Of those schools who reported students' lunch status, approximately 93% of the students were eligible for free or reduced lunch.

In 2023–2024, Descubriendo la Lectura teachers had an average of 20.1 years of teaching experience and 7.2 years teaching Descubriendo la Lectura and/or Reading Recovery. These teachers provided individual literacy instruction to an average of 6.0 Descubriendo la Lectura children during the school year. In addition, these teachers worked with an average of 22.8 children beyond their Descubriendo la Lectura load. Thus, accounting for all teaching roles/assignments during the 2023–2024 academic year, Descubriendo la Lectura teachers instructed an average total of 28.8 children.

Research Question 2

What was the intervention status of students served by Descubriendo la Lectura?

Of the students who received a complete series of Descubriendo la Lectura lessons (*n* = 213, 69.2% of all served), end-of-intervention outcomes were as follows:

- 44.6% (*n* = 95) achieved the intervention goal of reading and writing levels commensurate with the average students in their first-grade cohort. These students were given the outcome status of *Accelerated Progress: Achieved Intervention Goal* and can continue making progress without additional support beyond the classroom teacher.
- 26.8% (*n* = 57) made significant progress in their levels of reading and writing achievement but did not reach the average of their peers after completing a full series of lessons. These students were given the outcome status of *Progressed: Monitoring and Support are Essential for Ongoing Literacy Progress*. Although these students have a literacy processing system under construction, they will need continued monitoring and support to continue making gains.
- 28.6% (*n* = 61) made progress during the intervention, but additional evaluation and ongoing intervention were considered essential for literacy progress to continue after completing a full series of lessons. They were given the outcome status of *Recommended: Additional Evaluation and Ongoing Intervention are Essential for Ongoing Literacy Progress*. These students deserve immediate consideration by the school team, classroom teachers, and specialists to monitor and support their ongoing progress.

Of the total group of students selected for Descubriendo la Lectura (*n* = 308), not all students were able to complete the intervention (30.8%, *n* = 95). The following reasons were given for this:

- 27.9% (*n* = 86) of students were unable to complete a full series of instruction before the end of the school year. These students were given an exit status of *Incomplete*.
- 1.0% (*n* = 3) of students moved during the school year while still enrolled in lessons. These students were given an exit status of *Moved*.

- 1.9% (n = 6) of students' lessons were concluded early due to unusual circumstances based on a decision by someone other than the Descubriendo la Lectura teacher. These students were given an exit status of *None of the Above*.

Counts and percentages of all students who participated in the Descubriendo la Lectura intervention in 2023–2024, by status, are presented in Table 6.

Research Question 3

What was the progress of the Descubriendo la Lectura students on the literacy measures of the Instrumento de observación de los logros de la lecto-escritura inicial?

The assessment used to examine Descubriendo la Lectura students' literacy skills was the *Instrumento de observación de los logros de la lecto-escritura inicial* (Instrumento de observación; Escamilla et al., 1996). Like the Observation Survey, the Instrumento de observación consists of six tasks that measure children's reading and writing behaviors and are administered individually by a Descubriendo la Lectura teacher. These tasks provide insight into students' understanding of print concepts, the Spanish writing system, phonemic awareness, and their ability to read and write words. The six tasks are Análisis Actual del Texto, Identificación de Letras, Prueba de Palabras, Conceptos del Texto Impreso, Oír y Anotar los Sonidos de las Palabras, and Escritura de Vocabulario.

Table 6. Counts and Percentages of Descubriendo la Lectura Students by Exit Status, 2023–2024

Exit Status	*n*	% Full Program	% Total
Accelerated Progress	95	45%	31%
Progressed	57	27%	19%
Recommended	61	29%	20%
Incomplete	86		28%
Moved	3		1%
None of the Above	6		2%
Total	308		

Note: Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number and when summed may not equal 100%.

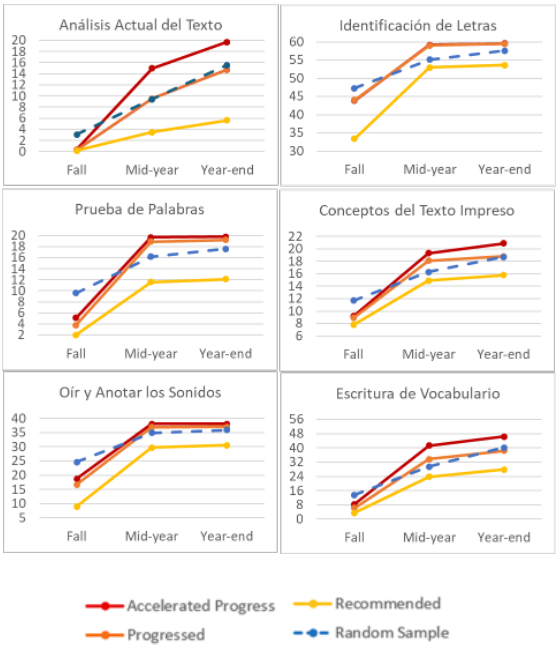
The Instrumento de observación was administered multiple times during the 2023–2024 academic year (e.g., fall, mid-year, and year-end) to both Descubriendo la Lectura students and a random sample of comparison students. To address research question three, we analyzed scores at three time points for full program Descubriendo la Lectura students by outcome status and the random sample students. Table 7 shows the means for each group at fall, mid-year, and year-end scores. Additionally, Figure 4 shows line graphs illustrating the means for each group at the three time points across all six tasks.

Table 7. Mean Scores on the Six Tasks of the Instrumento de observación, by Time of Year and Group, 2023–2024

	Outcome Status			
Task/Time of Year	AP	P	R	RS
Análisis Actual del Texto				
Fall	0.4	0.3	0.3	3.5
Mid-year	15.0	9.5	3.5	9.6
Year-end	19.6	14.7	5.6	15.6
Identificatión de Letras				
Fall	43.9	41.9	33.4	48.9
Mid-year	59.2	58.0	53.0	55.1
Year-end	59.7	58.1	53.5	57.9
Prueba de Palabras				
Fall	5.1	3.9	1.9	10.1
Mid-year	19.7	18.9	11.6	16.2
Year-end	19.8	19.2	12.2	17.8
Conceptos del Texto Impreso				
Fall	9.2	8.9	7.7	12.0
Mid-year	19.3	18.1	14.9	16.3
Year-end	20.8	18.7	15.7	18.7
Oír y Anotar los Sonidos de la Palabras				
Fall	18.5	16.9	8.8	25.7
Mid-year	38.1	37.0	29.7	34.9
Year-end	38.3	37.1	30.5	36.1
Escritura de Vocabulario				
Fall	8.3	6.4	3.5	14.6
Mid-year	41.3	33.6	23.7	29.9
Year-end	47.2	38.4	27.8	40.7

Note: AP = Accelerated Progress; P = Progressed; R = Recommended; RS = Random Sample
The mid-year means were calculated using only scores from first round Descubriendo la Lectura students at exit, as mid-year is when second round students begin the intervention.

Figure 4. Plots of Mean Scores by Time Point on the Instrumento de observación Tasks for Full Program Descubriendo la Lectura Students by Outcome Status and for Random Sample Students, 2023–2024



Note: The mid-year means were calculated using only scores from first round Descubriendo la Lectura students at exit as mid-year is when second round students begin the intervention.

Research Question 4

What was the average gain in literacy skills from fall to mid-year to year-end of full program Descubriendo la Lectura students by outcome status and the random sample students?

To answer research question four, we calculated average fall, mid-year, and year-end Instrumento de observación Total Scores for full program Descubriendo la Lectura students by outcome status and for the random sample students. For Descubriendo la Lectura students, the averages were adjusted based on the timing of their participation in the intervention (e.g., fall, entry, and year-end scores were used for students who began the intervention in the second round).

As shown in Table 8 and Figure 5, full program Descubriendo la Lectura students in all outcome status categories started the school year with Instrumento de observación Total Scores below those of the random sample students. However, these students demonstrated strong growth during the intervention. In only 9 months, Recommended students showed 10.1 months growth on the Observation Survey, Progressed students averaged 12.3 months growth, and Accelerated Progress students averaged 14.2 months growth. While the random sample students made steady progress throughout the year, their average year-end score was lower than that of most Descubriendo la Lectura students.

Research Question 5

How have Descubriendo la Lectura students and random sample students' mean fall Instrumento de observación Total Scores changed over time?

To address research question five, we analyzed data from schools that have implemented Descubriendo la Lectura since the 2012–2013 school year. As shown in Figure 6, a gap in mean fall Instrumento de observación Total Scores between Descubriendo la Lectura students and the random sample students was observed each year. This gap is expected, as Descubriendo la Lectura participants are selected based on having the lowest literacy skills in their school, while random sample students represent typical first graders.

Both groups began to rebound after experiencing a decline in mean fall scores in 2021–2022, reflecting the impact of school closures during the global pandemic. Over the past 2 years (2022–2023 and 2023–2024), the mean fall Total Scores for students starting the Descubriendo la Lectura intervention have continued to rise, increasing from 432 in 2022–2023 to 438 in 2023–2024. In contrast, the mean score for the random sample remained unchanged at 472 for both academic years.

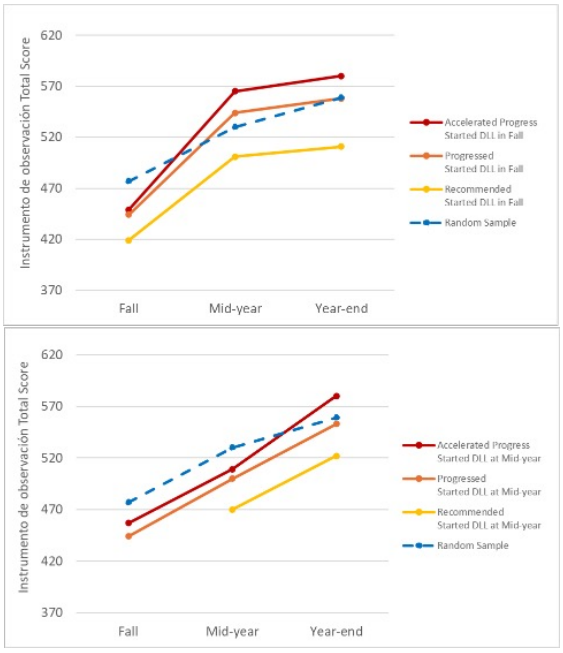
In 2023–2024, the lingering effects of learning disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic continued to present challenges for teachers (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2024). However, fall Instrumento de observación Total Scores of students selected for the

Table 8. Average Scores and Gains on the Instrumento de observación Total Score From Fall to Mid-Year to Year-End for Full Program Descubriendo la Lectura Students by Outcome Status and Random Sample Students, 2023–2024

	Instrumento de observación Total Score Average				
Group	Fall	Mid-Year	Gain Fall to Mid-Year	Year-End	Gain Mid-Year to Year-End
Started Lessons in Fall					
Accelerated Progress	449	565	116	580	15
Progressed	444	544	100	558	14
Recommended	420	502	82	511	9
Started Lessons at Mid-Year					
Accelerated Progress	457	509	52	580	71
Progressed	444	500	56	547	47
Recommended	—	470	—	522	52
Random Sample	477	530	53	559	29

NOTE: No Total Fall Score mean was calculated for Recommended students because only one student who started at mid-year had fall scores.

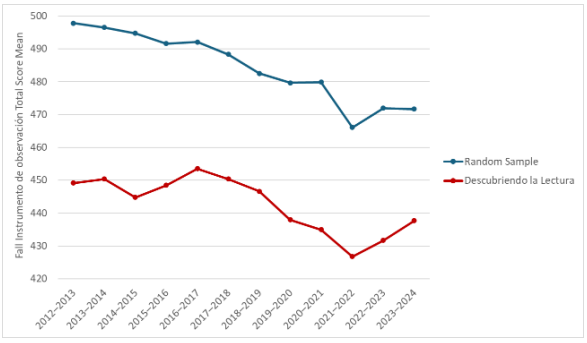
Figure 5. Average Growth in Literacy Skills From Fall to Mid-Year to Year-End for Full Program Descubriendo la Lectura Students by Outcome Status and for Random Sample Students, 2023–2024



NOTE: No Total Fall Score mean was calculated for Recommended students because only one student who started at mid-year had fall scores.

Descubriendo la Lectura intervention have risen steadily over the past 3 academic years: 428 in 2021–2022, 432 in 2022–2023, and 438 in 2023–2024. In contrast, the fall Total Scores of random sample students plateaued after a modest increase from 466 to 472 in both 2022–2023 and 2023–2024. The upward trend in fall scores for intervention students indicates that first graders entering in 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 had stronger literacy skills each year since the pandemic.

Figure 6. Fall Instrumento de observación Total Score Means of Descubriendo la Lectura and Random Sample Students, 2012–2013 to 2023–2024



Conclusion

Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura teachers in 2023–2024 continued to make a meaningful difference in the lives of tens of thousands of first-grade students across the United States. The data in this report highlight the effectiveness of these interventions in strengthening early literacy skills among students experiencing difficulty with learning to read and write. The positive outcomes reflected in this report emphasize not only the value of Reading Recovery and Descubriendo la Lectura but also the importance of maintaining and supporting these first-grade interventions to build a strong foundation for future literacy success.

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NOTE: All data are from the IDEC national summary reports for Reading Recovery and for Descubriendo la Lectura in the United States for the respective academic years cited.

About the Authors

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