intensive initial training in literacy assessment, treatment, and instruction that they apply immediately in their work with children selected for the intervention and continue to apply as they further their learning through the professional development opportunities provided at their regional Reading Recovery site. This continuous professional learning support not only informs their work with identified Reading Recovery children but also benefits their instruction of the other struggling learners that they serve in their additional instructional roles throughout the school day.

Literacy Lessons’ Training for Special Educators and Intervention Specialists

In recognition of the benefits of teachers and students, several Michigan schools have requested that special education teachers and teachers of English language learners have access to Reading Recovery training without the requirement of teaching a full load of students (4 slots of Reading Recovery children, with a total of 4 students each year) as required by the Standards and Guidelines for Reading Recovery in the United States (2008). This training model, Literacy Lessons, allows special educators in a school to participate in the yearlong Reading Recovery training course concurrent with their special instructional roles. These teachers are introduced to the complex literacy processing model that informs Reading Recovery in order to support the learning of children who need long-term specialist help (Koskinen & Lose, 2009). School districts interested in providing Literacy Lessons training to specialist teachers are invited to contact the Reading Recovery Center at Oakland University.

References Cited

An Oakland University Executive Summary 2009-2010

Reading Recovery is a program of professional development for teachers university faculty train and professionally develop teacher leaders who in turn develop teachers to work with first grade children having extreme difficulty learning to read and write. Since its establishment in the United States, Reading Recovery has served nearly 2 million children. Oakland University is one of only 22 universities in the United States to serve as a Reading Recovery university training center. Since its establishment in Michigan in 1991, Reading Recovery has trained over 1,450 teachers who have served almost 94,680 Michigan first graders.

Introduction

Internationally renowned developmental psychologist and literacy researcher, Dr. Marie M. Clay, developed Reading Recovery. In addition to the United States, Reading Recovery is implemented in Canada, the United Kingdom, the Caribbean, and in Department of Defense Schools. The not-for-profit collaborative effort among schools and universities trains teachers to work with the lowest-performing first graders. Children are identified for service based on their scores on the six tasks of An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement (Clay) with the lowest children selected without exception for service first (Lose & Konstanlou, 2005).

Reading Recovery was created in response to the persistent achievement gap in schools and to the needs of struggling students (Darling-Hammond, 1996). Through its intensive professional development for teachers, Reading Recovery is an ideal response to struggling young literacy learners’ requirement for skilled responsive teachers (Lose, 2005).

Reading Recovery in Michigan

During the 2009-2010 school year, 3,189 students were taught by 392 Reading Recovery teachers (48 of whom were in-training) in 276 schools in 86 districts. When they were not teaching Reading Recovery, these teachers also taught 22,775 additional students – an average of 58.1 students – in other half-day roles as classroom, special education, Title I reading, and ESL teachers. Reading Recovery teachers received professional development from 19 teacher leaders who themselves received professional development from the Oakland Reading Recovery faculty both at the university training center and at their regional Reading Recovery sites throughout the state.

Results of a large-scale study indicated that money spent on improving teacher performance netted greater student achievement gains than did any other use of school resources (Darling-Hammond, 1996). Through its intensive professional development for teachers, Reading Recovery is an ideal response to struggling young literacy learners’ requirement for skilled responsive teachers (Lose, 2005).

Reading Recovery Demographics

Reading Recovery children in Michigan represented a diverse population: 60% were male; 59% received a free or reduced lunch; 12% had some disability; 65% were White, 19% Black, 8% Hispanic, 1% Asian, 1% Native American, and 6% other races. In terms of language spoken in the home, 92% were native speakers of English with 1% Arabic, 4% Spanish, and 3% speakers of a language other than English. Twenty-eight percent of Reading Recovery schools had between 20-50 minority student enrollment and 15% had more than 50% minority student enrollment.

Results

3,189 students were enrolled in Reading Recovery in Michigan in 2009-2010. A full Reading Recovery intervention lasts up to 20 weeks. Thirty-one percent of students received interventions that lasted...
Empirical Support for Reading Recovery
An independent review of the experimental research on Reading Recovery by the What Works Clearinghouse (WWCC), a branch of the United States Department of Education (USDE) Institute of Education Sciences (IES), established that Reading Recovery is an effective intervention based on scientific research. Of the 171 beginning reading programs reviewed (kindergarten through grade 3), 30 had research upon which to base a review of their effectiveness. Only Reading Recovery was found to have positive effects across all four of the literacy domains: alphabeticics, fluency, reading comprehension, and general reading achievement. See http://www.ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/

between 10-14 weeks, 25% between 15-19 weeks, and 28% of the interventions lasted 20 weeks total. Not all of the students who were enrolled received a full intervention; their interventions were incomplete due to a slot opening up for their lessons late in the year (15%, N=466), because they moved (3%, N=97), and for other reasons (2%, N=65).

Of the 2,560 students who received a complete intervention (about 30-35 hours of instruction total), 76% reached average performance levels in reading and writing and 616 (24%) made progress but not sufficient enough to reach average performance levels. These students were recommended for follow-up support in the classroom, while a small number of these students were recommended for additional intensive intervention. (See Figure 1).

Effect of Reading Recovery on Reading Achievement
Figure 2 demonstrates the effect of Reading Recovery instruction on the reading achievement of the lowest performing literacy learners in first grade and compares their progress to the Random Sample of their peers and the Low Random Sample of children in schools with Reading Recovery.

Reading Recovery (RR) Children served in the fall semester – The blue line shows the progress of Reading Recovery children who were selected during the fall semester for Reading Recovery service. Initially the lowest-performing children, they catch up to and even surpass the Random Sample by mid-year when their Reading Recovery lessons end and continue to maintain their progress.

Reading Recovery (RR) Children served in the spring semester (at mid-year) – The red line shows the progress of Reading Recovery children selected for service at mid-year when slots used by Reading Recovery children served in the fall become available. Although these children made some progress in the fall without Reading Recovery, they are well behind their Random Sample peers at mid-year. Provided with Reading Recovery however, these children make accelerative progress, reduce the gap between themselves and the Random Sample and achieve within-average performance levels by year’s end.

Low Random Sample (RS) Children – The purple line at the bottom shows the progress of the Low Random Sample. These students who did not receive Reading Recovery were low at the beginning of the school year and remain low throughout the year. While they made some progress throughout the year, it is not enough to reach the achievement gap. Had they been able to receive Reading Recovery, it is likely they would have achieved accelerated progress and reached within-average performance levels.

These findings confirm Juel’s (1988) research which showed that children who were low-performing in literacy in first grade are very likely to remain low performing in fourth grade. However, provided with contingent, responsive teaching by specially trained and professionally developed teachers, even the lowest-performing children can make accelerative progress, benefit from good classroom instruction, and continue learning with their peers (McEneaney, Lose, & Schwartz, 2006).

Response to Intervention and Learning Disabilities
A federal initiative that is derived from the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) offers schools facing increasing numbers of students with learning disabilities (LD) two options for addressing this growing problem (Allington, 2009, Lose et al., 2007). The first option is that local education agencies can use as much as 15% of their special education funds to pay for early intervening services (EIS) and to support early intervention and literacy instruction. The second option offered by the IDEA is Response to Intervention (RTI) that can be used to provide high quality instruction based on children’s needs without the requirement of labeling students at risk for school failure as LD (Johnston, 2010). The goal is to limit referrals based on inadequate instruction or limited English proficiency and to reduce the number of children identified for LD services (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). To achieve this goal, the lowest performing children must be identified early so that appropriately intensive interventions and tiers or layers of support can be provided within a comprehensive approach to literacy instruction at the first sign of a child’s difficulty.

Reading Recovery has a strong track record of preventing literacy failure for many first graders. Results support the investment of resources for this prevention effort. Yet, Michigan is still far from providing Reading Recovery to all the children who need it. Many of the participating districts experience the impact of low coverage. Almost six out of seven students in Michigan who need Reading Recovery do not have access to the intervention. Ideally, 20% of the state’s first graders should have access. Policy makers and all who are concerned about closing the achievement gap, and enabling children to succeed in school and take full advantage of opportunities in post secondary education and the workforce, could achieve greater equity by providing the intervention to the 23,105 first graders that could benefit from Reading Recovery.

Reading Recovery: An Evidence-Based Approach to RtI
In her seminal article, Learning to Be Learning Disabled, published over 20 years ago, Marie Clay (1987) gave validity to support the idea that many children labeled LD are in fact instructionally challenged through a series of unfortunate experiences either before, or very early, in their formal schooling. However, provided an appropriate early intervention to support their accelerative learning and response to instruction, the number of children identified as LD can be reduced to only 1-1.5 percent.

For over 25 years in the United States, Reading Recovery has operated as an RtI approach. Professionally trained and developed Reading Recovery teachers design instruction tailored precisely to the child, delivered daily and one-on-one, in support of the literacy learning of the most at-risk children (Clay, 2005a; 2005b). While many children respond quite well to whole group and small group instruction, evidence has shown that the lowest performing learners provided with the Reading Recovery intervention are able to make accelerative progress and continue learning with their peers in the classroom without further intervention or placement in special education for literacy difficulties– a considerable cost savings to districts.

Because teaching the most struggling learners is very challenging, schools that implement Reading Recovery not only respond to their lowest performing young learners’ literacy-learning needs, but also to the professional development needs of their teachers. Reading Recovery teachers receive...
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are invited to contact the Reading Recovery Center of Michigan. In 2009-2010, seventeen special education teachers participated in Literacy Lessons training, a total of 45 special education teachers trained since 2006. In 2009-2010, train alongside Reading Recovery teachers enabling school districts to optimize teacher expertise in response to a range of struggling literacy learners in their schools.

References Cited

Reading Recovery

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