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Reading Program Included in USDE What Works Clearinghouse

Emporia State University's Reading Recovery University Training Center is proud to announce its inclusion in the U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse.

"Being included in What Works is the equivalent to getting a five-star rating," said Connie Briggs, director of ESU's Reading Recovery program.

The program, a popular early literacy intervention for struggling first grade readers, has been a target of criticism in recent years from the Bush administration. Earlier this year the USDE's inspector general found since the implementation of the No Child Left Behind legislation's Reading First program, educational advisors and federal reading officials sought to keep states from using money from the federal officials to pay for Reading Recovery despite its effectiveness and scientific research base.

"We are pleased that the What Works Clearinghouse has recognized Reading Recovery's strong scientific research base. The announcement confirms what teachers, parents, and administrators across the U.S. have learned – Reading Recovery works!" said Judy Johnson, Executive Director of the Reading Recovery Council of North America.

Imported to the United States from New Zealand in 1984, Reading Recovery is an intensive, one-to-one tutoring program that targets the lowest-achieving first graders. It is used by more than 100,000 students a year in 7,500 schools across the country, according to the council.

In the What Works review, which was posted online March 26, the clearinghouse found the program had "positive effects" – the highest evidence rating possible – on students' alphabetic skills and general reading achievement. The reviewers also determined that the program had "potentially positive" effects on fluency and comprehension outcomes, the next-highest rating, on students' reading fluency and comprehension.

An analysis of the WWC report can be found at www.readingrecovery.org/pdfs/WWCanalysis07.pdf.

More information about what the report means to teachers and schools can be found at <http://www.readingrecovery.org/pdfs/WWCwhatitmeans07.pdf>.

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Reading Recovery in Kansas

- During the 2005-2006 school year, 138 teachers worked with 1,069 children in 105 schools across 66 districts.
- In 2005-2006, 80% of students in Reading Recovery who completed their series of lessons reached grade level proficiency in reading and writing.
- Among 1,069 children who completed their series of lessons successfully, only 3 (0%) were referred and placed in special education for reading difficulties.

Excerpts from "Tutoring Program Found Effective, Despite Cold Shoulder Under Reading First"

By Debra Viadero and Kathleen Kennedy Manzo," Education Week, March 30, 2006

The review by the clearinghouse is not the first report from the Education Department to prompt questions, indirectly or directly, about the department's handling of the \$1 billion-a-year Reading First program.

A scathing report issued last fall—the first of six conducted in a broad review by the department's inspector general—determined that federal officials had steered the grant-application process to ensure that particular reading programs were widely used by schools. At the same time, the Sept. 22 report found, those officials also actively worked to shut out other programs, such as Reading Recovery, despite their research track records. Reading Recovery was one of three organizations whose complaints to the inspector general prompted the inquiry.

In May 2002, a group of reading researchers also launched a campaign against the one-on-one tutoring program, outlining in a three-page paper arguments against allowing use of the program in Reading First schools. The researchers questioned the program's effectiveness and what they saw as its high cost. They offered summaries of studies on Reading Recovery that proved, they contended, that "it is not successful with its targeted student population, the lowest-performing students."

Among the 31 researchers who signed the statement were several who served as advisers to the Education Department on Reading First. They included Sharon Vaughn, who became the director of the Reading First technical-assistance center for the central region, based at the University of Texas at Austin.

According to Reading Recovery's Ms. Johnson, the negative publicity and the department's efforts made a sizable dent in the popularity of the program. The number of students participating, she said, dropped from 159,000 a year in 2002 to around 109,000 four years later.





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