



# Reading Recovery Research Brief

## Closing the Literacy Achievement Gap With Early Intervention

E. M. Rodgers, C. Wang, & F. X. Gómez-Bellengé. (2004, April). Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA.

### Background

A statewide study compared students served by Reading Recovery (n=4,764) with a random sample (n=1,038). Students were disaggregated along economic and race lines. Students served by Reading Recovery are low readers by definition. Their progress was compared to the random sample from fall to spring of first grade. The progress of low readers who were African-American or who received free school lunches was compared to the progress of a sample representing the population of students who were White or who paid full-priced school lunches.

### Findings

Several broad trends emerged. First, a gap opened during first grade along race and economic lines on three measures for the random sample. This mirrors national trends. Second, for students who received a full series of Reading Recovery lessons, a gap existed in fall and remained in spring. However, these children made greater progress than the random sample on two of three measures and the effect sizes were reduced, suggesting a trend towards closing the gap. Third, for students who discontinued successfully from the Reading Recovery intervention, a gap existed in fall on all three measures. In spring, the gap was closed on two measures and reduced on the third.

### AERA Abstract

We wondered whether intervening early with specialized one-to-one teaching might be a complex enough response to make a difference to the literacy achievement gap that exists along economic and racial/ethnicity lines. We conducted a statewide study of students who received Reading Recovery (n= 4,764) and disaggregated the group along economic and race lines; we then compared their progress to a random sample of first-grade students who were White and a random sample of first-grade students who received regular-priced school lunches (our proxy for economic status). Broad trends emerged, including the opening of an achievement gap within the state random sample (mirroring national trends) and a tendency for students who received the intervention to close the gap. An argument is made that the achievement gap must be taken more seriously and that it will take a systemic effort, like the kind inherent in the design of Reading Recovery, to make a difference to the gap.