



Reading Recovery® Council
of North America

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REPORT PROVES READING FIRST OFFICIALS PUT CHILDREN LAST

A stern report issued today by the Office of Inspector General finds that the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) seriously mismanaged Reading First, a \$1 billion program aimed at improving reading skills of children most at risk of reading failure.

“This report proves that in the implementation of Reading First, USDE put favored contractors first and children last,” said Jady Johnson, executive director of the Reading Recovery Council of North America (RRCNA).

RRCNA, one of three organizations that filed a formal complaint, charged mismanagement and systematic discrimination against Reading Recovery, the oldest and most widely researched early reading intervention in the United States. Reading Recovery is targeted at first graders who are in the bottom 10-20% of their class. To date, more than 1.6 million American children have had Reading Recovery lessons in their local schools, and 75% of those who completed lessons met grade-level standards.

Despite Reading Recovery’s proven effectiveness, the report details how Reading First officials deliberately created language and made decisions that would exclude Reading Recovery, quoting an e-mail from a USDE official that said, “I’d like not to say this must include early intervention and reading remediation materials which I think could be read as ‘Reading Recovery;’ even if it says this in the law, I’d like it taken out.”

Action by USDE harmed children by causing school districts to drop Reading Recovery and institute basal reading programs with little or no research base. As a result, tens of thousands of children were shortchanged because they did not have the opportunity for a proven early intervention. To receive Reading First dollars, thousands of schools were required to buy expensive new textbooks and will be forced to use them in coming years.

The Inspector General report also recommended specific actions that USDE must take to remedy their abuse of power, including the recommendation “to ensure that future programs for which the Department is considering using Reading First as a model have internal controls in place to prevent similar problems from occurring.”

“RRCNA will be meeting with leadership to discuss reparations based on these findings,” Johnson said. “We need to see how USDE will remedy their mismanagement. In order to restore confidence in a program that was launched with much promise for our students, strong remedies must be the medicine to heal this unhealthy state of affairs.”

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To see Inspector General Report: <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oig/whatsnew.html>

To see RRCNA complaint and related documents:
<http://www.readingrecovery.org/sections/home/oigrequest.asp>