



Reading Recovery® Council
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Reading Recovery Recommends Additional Remedies to Restore Confidence in Reading First

The Reading Recovery Council of North America (RRCNA) said today that the recently released investigative report by the Inspector General at the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) documenting federal abuse and mismanagement of the \$1 billion Reading First program provides telling detail on how officials interfered with state and local control of curricular decisions, but it stops short of recommending strong remedies for change. RRCNA is asking USDE to adopt a series of recommendations to restore confidence in the Reading First program and to end its bias against Reading Recovery, the nation's oldest and most scientifically based reading intervention for struggling first graders.

Recommendations include:

- Public acknowledgement that there is sufficient evidence that Reading Recovery meets the federal definition of scientifically based reading research.
- Public acknowledgement that Reading Recovery is a program schools can choose under the Reading First program and other federal programs such as Title I, Part A, Title I school improvement funds, and IDEA.
- Notification of state education departments that Reading Recovery is eligible to be included under Reading First state grants and LEA subgrants.
- Inclusion of Reading Recovery professionals and other mainstream reading researchers in USDE's "convening of stakeholders" called for in the IG's recommendations.

The latest report chronicles how federal Reading First officials favored pet programs in early Reading First Leadership Academies, violated accepted ethical standards, and allowed program bias among its technical assistance providers—the professionals hired to guide states on their Reading First funding applications.

“This report adds to the growing disgrace of how officials ignored laws, promoted favorite programs, and selectively applied criteria for scientifically based reading research,” said Jady Johnson, executive director of RRCNA.

In the summer of 2005, RRCNA was one of three organizations that filed formal complaints with the Inspector General charging USDE interference in local and state curriculum decisions. RRCNA also specifically charged that Reading First officials engaged in a systematic misinformation campaign against Reading Recovery, a charge that was supported by the subsequent release of e-mails between former Reading First program director, Chris Doherty, and former chief of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Reid Lyon. The e-mails revealed a deliberate strategy to exclude Reading Recovery from any Reading First funding.

In the area of scientific evidence, the Inspector General did not issue a finding but suggested that Congress and the department should clarify what it means “for a program to be based on scientific reading research and whether this definition is consistent with program effectiveness.”

Local control of curricular decisions was supplanted by USDE and review panels as they imposed their interpretation of scientifically based reading research. As a result, superintendents and school boards across the United States invested billions of dollars into materials and professional development programs with little or no research evidence of effectiveness.

“This discussion of scientific evidence is particularly troubling,” Johnson said. “We are anxiously awaiting the department’s corrective plan due in 30 days.”