

As Reading Recovery teachers and teacher leaders, we must reach beyond our Reading Recovery roles to advocate for struggling readers. We have to gather the important numbers and present them to district decision makers so they can make informed decisions. In these economically tough times, our district administrators are under pressure to operate in cost-effective ways. Prevention of literacy failure is a wise and responsible use of funding.

*Cynthia Owens, teacher leader
Nixa Public Schools
Nixa, MO*

Building community support through fun reading events

Reading Recovery students and teachers in Rio Rancho, New Mexico, celebrate children's progress during a Reader's Café held at the end of each school year. All students who have received Reading Recovery lessons during the year select their favorite Reading Recovery books to take along when they are bused to the hosting school. There, they enter a gymnasium decorated around a reading theme such as "Take a Ride on the Reading Railroad" where paper trains showing pictures of each student smiling out a window decorate the walls, or "Read S'More Books" where campsites complete with faux campfires provide cozy places for students to sit and read.

Each student invites parents, grandparents, cousins, and friends to attend the Reader's Café and listen to students read. Other community members—district office personnel, firemen, policemen, sheriff deputies, public librarians, the city mayor, and more—are also invited to listen to the children read and celebrate



Jesse and his handler, Theresa McKinney, are members of the Tales of Joy R.E.A.D. (Reading Education Assistance Dogs) Program within the Rio Rancho Schools and New Mexico community. Theresa, coordinator of the local program, and Jesse were first invited to participate in the Reader's Café in April 2006 and have been listening to children read ever since!

their accomplishments. The local chamber of commerce sends invitations to its members, and many local business people attend. The students love traveling from person to person, reading aloud and sharing the stories they have grown to love.

As much as the students love reading to community members, the highlight for all the children is one

special visitor they have all grown to love. Though not the actual star made famous in the series of books written by Mia Coulton, a Danny look-alike listens to children read. The role of Danny is played by Jesse, a yellow labrador retriever and reading therapy dog. Jesse brings his human friend, Theresa, and three or four of his reading therapy dog bud-

dies. These dogs are so popular that names have to be drawn to select the students who get to read to them.

After an hour of reading, students gather their books, grab a treat, and board the school bus to return to their home campus. They are beaming from their terrific experience celebrating the readers that they have become. Parents and relatives also beam as they leave. Having once been told that their children were struggling in their literacy efforts, they now are assured that their children are succeeding at becoming readers. Ask any administrator or district office personnel who attend, and they will tell you they have seen firsthand the value of the Reading Recovery intervention in the school district.

Jolene Reed, teacher leader and K-5 literacy coordinator

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Collaborating for multi-site data collection

Most of the Arkansas teacher leaders work for either an Education Service Cooperative (ESC), a consortium, or serve several districts. This year these teacher leaders embarked on a journey of collecting data during the 2012–13 school year to study how well former Reading Recovery students performed on state assessments during and after their intervention service, with the goal of reporting these data to school administrators.

We first worked through a needs assessment or program analysis to determine our data collection process. We realized the need for longitudinal data to report student progress to stakeholders and the

Arkansas Department of Education. We developed data collection tools during our first meeting. As each teacher leader met with her Reading Recovery teachers, she shared and explained pertinent data collection tools (tracking forms, class rosters, matrix for recording student data, advocacy letter, etc.).

The second phase included training Reading Recovery teachers about the steps of the data collection process. Our teachers learned how to fill in and periodically update the class roster and how to access student performance records on state assessments. Teacher leaders and teachers had to access data from either the National Office for Research on Measurement and Evaluation Systems (NORMES) or The Learning Institute (TLI) to obtain state assessment scores. We provided professional development sessions to

- inform teachers on the overall data collection process,
- individually assist teachers to navigate the NORMES or TLI websites,
- demonstrate how to access school data,
- help teachers develop codes to track students over an extended period of time (Grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 11, and 12),
- provide time for teachers to transpose their student data onto spreadsheets created by the teacher leaders, and
- analyze former Reading Recovery student data for trends, such as academic achievement and additional educational placements.

Some teacher leaders held their sessions in computer labs, while others asked teachers to bring laptops or iPads.

We plan to aggregate these data to show that Reading Recovery students can perform well on the state assessments and to report these data to administrators and other stakeholders. The Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, a long-time supporter of Reading Recovery in the state, has offered to feature the report as a Bright Spot on their website.

Arkansas teacher leaders

Deb Boerner, Northwest Arkansas ESC, Farmington; Melissa Braswell, Crowley's Ridge ESC, Harrisburg; Patsy Conner and Stephanie Copes, University of Arkansas at Little Rock; Sharon Gates, Northeast Arkansas ESC, Walnut Ridge; Gaynell Jamison, Southeast Arkansas Reading Recovery Consortium, Monticello; Jackie Long, Dawson ESC, Arkadelphia; Susan Perry, Arkansas River ESC, Pine Bluff; and Rhonda Taylor, Northcentral Arkansas ESC, Melbourne.

Collecting data to assess impact on former students

My administrators frequently ask two questions: “Are Reading Recovery students maintaining their gains?” and “How are Reading Recovery students doing on the statewide reading assessments?” So I set about enlisting my teachers in collecting longitudinal achievement data on the former Reading Recovery students in the Metropolitan School District of Perry Township in Indiana. During our September professional development I went over the data the teachers needed to collect. I sent them a template to follow and also a