



## CASE STUDY REPORT

# Every Child a Reader: The wider impact

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*This study was originally published in 2009 as part of the 'What Works Well' initiative, part of the National Strategies for Education in England.*

## Abstract

**Background:** The purpose of the study was to explore if a Reading Recovery teacher could have an impact on children with literacy difficulties in other schools in the wider local learning community by training and supporting Teaching Assistants to work one-to-one with them.

**Aims:** The main aim of the Every Child a Reader (ECaR) initiative is to explore the potential for Reading Recovery (RR) teachers to support tailored literacy teaching more broadly within a school, having an impact beyond those receiving intensive one-to-one support.

**Methods:** The participants were twelve Teaching Assistants from different schools who agreed to work one-to-one with at least one child for twenty minutes, at least four times each week, for a period of about ten weeks. The methods used included training experienced Reading Recovery Teachers to deliver Fischer Family Trust Wave Three, visiting Headteachers in Local Learning Community meetings, providing ongoing training and visits to observe teaching, and using a one-way screen for observation of RR sessions.

**Findings:** The main findings of the Every Child a Reader initiative were that target pupils made increased progress in both reading and writing beyond expectations, and Teaching Assistants reported a rise in self-esteem of all pupils who took part in the intervention. Quantitative evidence showed an average gain in word reading-age of 12 months and an average gain of 8 Reading Recovery book levels.

**Implications:** The findings suggest that a Wave Three Intervention is more effective when it is part of a layered approach with a literacy expert, has the full backing of the headteacher, and is monitored and evaluated at both school and LA level.

*This abstract was generated by Camtree using a large language model (LLM) and added to the original report in 2023.*

**Keywords:** Primary education; English - reading; English - writing

## Introduction

### What were your reasons for doing this type of development work?

One of the aims of the Every Child a Reader (ECaR) initiative is to explore the potential for Reading Recovery (RR) teachers to support tailored literacy teaching more broadly within a school, thus having an impact beyond those receiving intensive one-to-one support. The ECaR concept of layers of intervention involves the RR teacher working directly with the hardest to teach children but also using their literacy expertise to support and mentor teaching assistants (TAs) who deliver 'lighter-touch' interventions. The researcher set out to explore if this could be taken one step further to see if a RR teacher could have an impact on children with literacy difficulties in other schools in the wider local learning community.

### Who might find this case study useful?

- Support staff
- Headteacher
- Middle leader
- Subject leader
- Teacher

## Description

### What specific curriculum area, subject or aspect did you intend to have impact on?

- English - reading
- English - writing

### How did you intend to impact on pupil learning?

By using experienced Reading Recovery Teachers to train and support Teaching Assistants to work one-to-one with children with literacy difficulties.

Twelve TAs took part in the Professional Development programme. The participants were from schools that had elected to take part in the training. Each participant agreed to work one-to-one with at least one child for twenty minutes, at least four times each week, for a period of about ten weeks or forty-fifty lessons. Most of the participants worked with children from Key Stage 1 (aged six to seven years) but a few worked with children from Key Stage 2 (aged eight to ten years). Children who were selected for the intervention were low-attaining in literacy, but not the lowest attaining children in their cohort (i.e. not the children who would fit the criteria for entry into Reading Recovery early literacy intervention).

### What were your success criteria?

- Quantitative data in terms of pupil progress in reading age and though the bookbands.
- Qualitative data in terms of Teaching Assistants levels of confidence in delivering a one-to-one programme for children who are struggling with literacy.
- The combination of the two approaches was chosen to give a broader and informative account of the research focus on Professional Development experience.

### What information or data did you use to measure progress towards your success criteria?

- Logs or interviews
- Observation outcomes
- Periodic teacher assessment

- Test results

## Describe the CPD approaches you used

The professional development tried to:

- Ensure that theory and practice go hand in hand (the five days were spread out across the term to facilitate theory-practice links).
- Develop subject knowledge, pedagogical expertise and confidence.
- Challenge TAs' assumptions about how children learn.
- Encourage both the TA and the child to be constructive learners.
- Adopt an inquiry model as opposed to an instructional model.
- Start with the premise that all children can achieve if given the right tuition.
- Empower participants to make teaching decisions so they can tailor the intervention to meet the individual child's needs.
- There is time built into PD sessions for reflection and evaluation.

## What CPD materials, research or expertise have you drawn on?

Brockbank, A and McGill, I (2000) *Facilitating Reflective Learning in Higher Education*. Open University Press, Oxford  
 Brooks, G. (2007). *What works for children with literacy difficulties: the effectiveness of intervention schemes*. 3rd Edition. DfCSF/NfER: Slough  
 Canning, J. (2004), unpublished report on findings from a pilot of the Fischer Family Trust Wave 3 intervention.

Gross, J. (2006) *The Long Term Costs of Literacy Difficulties*. London: KPMG Foundation  
 Hatcher, P.J, Hulme, C., Miles, J., Carroll J., Hatcher, J., Gibbs, S., Smith, G., Bowyer-Crane, C. and Snowling, M. (2006) Efficacy of small group reading intervention for beginning readers with reading delay: a randomised control sample. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 47 (8) pp. 820-827.

HMI (2002) *Teaching Assistants in Primary Schools: an evaluation of the quality and impact of their work – A Report by HMI*. London: HMI 434  
 Hurry, J. (2000) *Intervention Strategies to support children with difficulties in literacy during Key Stage 1: Review of Research* London, UK, Institute of Education, University of London.

Hurry, J. and Sylva, K. (2007) Long-term outcomes of early reading intervention. *Journal of Research in Reading*, Vol 30, Issue 2, pp 1-22.

Lyons, C. Pinnell, G.S. DeFord, D.E. 1993, *Partners in Learning Teachers and Children in Reading Recovery*. Teachers College Press: New York  
 Lyons, C. A. (2003) *Teaching Struggling Readers: how to use brain research to maximise learning*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann  
 Primary National Strategy (2004) *Teaching Assistants in Year 6: lessons learnt from the Teaching Assistants in Year 6 pilot 2002-03*. London: DfES publications.

## Who provided you with support?

- External agency

## How were you supported?

Support from the National Strategies Primary Literacy Consultant Team and the Institute of Education, London.

## Impact

### What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

Target pupils made increased progress in both reading and writing beyond expectations.

Class Teachers and Teaching Assistants reported a rise in self-esteem of all pupils who took part in the intervention. All children were reported to have a more positive attitude to literacy.

#### Pre-test – Post-test Measures

Selected tasks from the 'Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement' (Clay 2002)\* were chosen to inform teaching and measure progress. 21 children were tested.

In order to enhance the validity of the research, a standardised reading test, The British Ability Scales II Word Reading Test (BAS) (Elliot, 1996)\*\*, was used to assess the word reading ability of the children before and after the intervention. This test gave each child a standardised reading age which could be used to measure progress.

Over the course of the four to five months (13 teaching weeks), children made an average book level gain of eight Reading Recovery levels (e.g. from Bookband Pink to Yellow or from Bookband Red to Blue), with similar gains in writing. British Ability Scales word reading test results show an average gain in word reading-age of 12 months over the period of the intervention suggesting progress in word-reading at more than twice the expected rate. The children were tested using the Writing Vocabulary Test (Clay 2002). The mean pre-test score was 22 words spelt correctly (SD 12) and the mean post-test score was 38 (SD 16).

### Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

Most school staff attributed the progress made by the children to their participation in the intervention, supporting the researcher's hypothesis that there was a likely link between the Professional Development of the Teaching Assistants and the children's progress.

### Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Periodic teacher assessment
- Test results

### Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Logs or interviews
- Observation outcomes
- Pupils' work

### Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

#### 2006-7

- 21 children from years 1-5 (12 TAs)
- approximate time span 4 months (13 teaching weeks)
- mean gain in reading age – 12 months
- mean gain of 8 Reading Recovery book levels (from Bookband yellow to orange) in 37 lessons
- mean gain in writing vocabulary – raw scores from 21-37.

#### 2007-8

- mean gain of 10 Reading Recovery book levels (from Bookband yellow to orange) in 45 lessons

- mean gain in writing vocabulary - 13 words spelt correctly in pre-test to 28 words in post-test. (Timed allowed = ten minutes)
- most children entered the intervention working at phonic phase 3 and most children were working at phonic phase 5 at the end of the intervention

Qualitative data on levels of confidence and self-esteem.

### What has been the impact on teaching?

In general, TAs were consistent in what they identified as factors which contributed to effective professional development. They identified challenging their assumptions about how children learn and, furthermore, how they themselves learn as key to the success of the PD. Similarly, there was a degree of consensus as to the factors that proved to be challenges or barriers to effective professional development: sufficient time to teach the children regularly proved to be a significant challenge in the early stages. Interestingly, this was less difficult to achieve in schools with an RR teacher, as TAs in these schools felt they had good support in the implementation of the intervention.

### Quotes you think are relevant to the impact on teaching

'It has been extremely rewarding finding out how to help the children I work with learn to read and write. The children's progress has been remarkable - and their parents are so pleased too!'

'My class teacher has really noticed an improvement in (Child's name) reading and writing. He is more able to cope with work in class now too!'

'The children I work with are much more independent in class now.'

'The PD has really given me confidence to work with children who are struggling. I have a much better idea of how to help them now!'

'I now know how to use the running records to analyse reading behaviour and to use that analysis to inform my teaching for the next day.'

'Time with colleagues talking about the lessons we observe has helped me to reflect on my lessons.'

'I have gained so much confidence in teaching children to read I really enjoy working one-to-one now.'

'I now know why I am doing the things I do!'

### Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from observation and monitoring
- Teacher perceptions

### Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

Feedback from Teaching Assistants, Class Teachers and pupil progress data provide evidence for impact on teaching.

### What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

Initially the schools were reluctant to release the Teaching Assistants from their whole class support to work one-to-one with children on a daily basis. After the first cohort of children had received the intervention the children had made such good progress that schools were far more likely to release TAs to work one-to-one. Most Headteachers have seen the benefits of using the expertise of local Reading Recovery Teachers to support

children with literacy difficulties.

## Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

Feedback from participants in schools suggest that data collected on children's progress convinced headteachers and governors that it was worth investing in one-to-one tuition. The the conclusions of the research were in keeping with the findings of the Independent Review into the teaching of Early Reading (Rose, 2006) 'In sum, no matter which provision applied, the most successful intervention arrangements were planned as part of the total programme for teaching reading and monitored carefully. The driving and coordinating force was, more often than not, a well trained, experienced member of staff, such as the coordinator for literacy or SEN; above all, the arrangements had the full backing of the headteacher.'

## Summary

### What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

The findings of the research suggest that a Wave Three Intervention is more effective when:

- Senior management values the work of the TA, giving them regular time to work with the children and where there are regular opportunities to discuss the child's progress with the class teacher.
- It is part of a layered approach where a literacy expert is consulted to select the most suitable intervention for a particular child's needs.
- It is part of whole school provision to raise standards (i.e. children who are taking part in the intervention also have quality class teaching to accelerate their gains).
- Measures are in place to ensure that the TAs deliver the intervention with fidelity to the programme (e.g. ongoing professional development and visits to their teaching).
- The impact of the intervention is continually evaluated and monitored at both school and LA level to ensure sustainability.
- It has a time-limited focus (although this needs some flexibility if the TA is not able to teach regularly or if the TA is in training).

### What key resources would people who want to learn from your experience need access to?

- Reading Recovery Teachers
- Fischer Family Trust Wave Three Literacy Intervention (Training and resources).

### What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

- Materials from Fischer Family Trust Wave Three
- Primary Strategy Letters and Sounds

### If another individual or school was attempting to replicate this work, where would they start and what would the essential elements be?

- Train experienced Reading Recovery Teachers to deliver Fischer Family Trust Wave Three.
- Ensure Reading Recovery Teachers were placed strategically across the Local Authority.
- Visit Headteachers in Local Learning Community (or cluster) meetings and present an overview of the training.

## What further developments are you planning to do (or would you like to see others do)?

### Implications for future training

Monitor and evaluate the impact of the intervention each year at both school and LA level to ensure sustainability.

### Further plans include

Use ECaR Lead Teachers to take the lead in the delivery of the training (both initial and ongoing training) with the Teacher Leader having a strategic overview.

Rose highlights the importance of 'fidelity to the programme' (2006 p48). With this in mind, the researcher has built in termly ongoing training, including visits to observe their teaching for all TAs who take part in the PD.

Observing the lesson behind the screen was mentioned by all participants as an extremely powerful learning experience and so the researcher aims to build in further opportunities for this in future training. (This is a one-way screen used for observation of RR sessions.) The Teacher Leader has also filmed eight lessons to be used for PD in ongoing sessions.

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## About 'What Works Well'

This case study was originally published as part of the 'What Works Well' section of the National Strategies for Education in England. The National Strategies were professional programmes aiming for improvements in the quality of learning and teaching in schools in England. 'What Works Well' involved teaching practitioners from all phases and areas of education sharing accounts of real developments which had improved learning and teaching, and made a difference to pupil progress. 'What Works Well' case studies were designed to support practice transfer and include sufficient detail and resources to enable others to implement the effective practice described. They were reviewed by experts prior to publication as 'User Generated Content' (UGC) under a licence which encouraged reuse and derivative works, but which precluded commercial use.

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