



## Education Report: Release of the Reading Recovery evaluation and data reports

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| <b>To:</b>                                    | Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education |                     |           |
| <b>Date:</b>                                  | 21 February 2020                         | <b>Priority:</b>    | Medium    |
| <b>Security Level:</b>                        | In Confidence                            | <b>METIS No:</b>    | 1218179   |
| <b>Drafter:</b>                               | Chris Arcus                              | <b>DDI:</b>         | s 9(2)(a) |
| <b>Key Contact:</b>                           | Pauline Cleaver                          | <b>DDI:</b>         |           |
| <b>Messaging seen by Communications team:</b> | No                                       | <b>Round Robin:</b> | No        |

### Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is for you to:

- **Note** the findings of the Reading Recovery evaluation carried out in 2019 and that the evaluation report is to be released in February 2020
- **Note** that Minister Martin has asked for a report on the progress of the report
- **Agree** to forward this report to Hon Tracey Martin.

☒ **Agree** ☐ **Disagree**

- **Agree** that this report will be proactively released.

☒ **Agree** ☐ **Disagree**

### Summary

1. The first phase of the evaluation of Reading Recovery (RR) is complete and we are preparing to release it in February 2020 on to Education Counts. Findings and recommendations are summarised in the attached A3 (Annex 1). We have prepared a communications approach for the release of the report and the release of the annual data report for Reading Recovery from 2018.
2. The evaluation focused on the processes of implementation and outcomes for students and the wider school system. The findings reflect Reading Recovery 'as implemented' not 'as designed' and reflect implementation processes and interpretations of the model at the national, regional and school levels.

3. The independent evaluation was carried out by Synergia Ltd and drew on information obtained from
- a. a number of written data sources including guidelines and annual data on student involvement and achievement
  - b. teachers and principals in Reading Recovery and non-Reading Recovery schools
  - c. tutors and trainers from the National Reading Recovery Centre at the University of Auckland.
4. Key outcomes findings
- a. Reading Recovery reached 55% of primary schools. The percentage students successfully discontinued is steadily declining although most students (>70%) complete the intervention and read and write at a level similar to their peers in the school. Children who receive more Reading Recovery do better than those who receive less.
  - b. The strength of RR is in increasing the literacy levels of those with lower reading achievement. It does not appear to consistently support a shift in school culture and capacity to focus on literacy across the whole school.
  - c. Overall, Reading Recovery is effective in supporting children's literacy development and appears to work as well as other literacy supports and resources.
5. Reading Recovery attracts strong positive and negative interest from the schooling sector, academics and providers. Any changes to Reading Recovery we might pursue in response to the evaluation may be criticised as being too much or too little.

*Pauline Cleaver*

Pauline Cleaver  
Associate Deputy Secretary  
**Curriculum, Pathways and Progress**  
21/02/2020

*Hon Chris Hipkins*

Hon Chris Hipkins  
**Minister of Education**

4/3/20

## Background

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1. Literacy is a necessary foundation skill in our curriculum for all learners and a basic human right. A key goal of our education system is that young people leave school literate and numerate, with the skills to engage in a rapidly changing world.
2. Where progress in literacy learning is at risk we have a system of flexible supports for neurodiverse children and young people to accelerate progress that aligns with Priority 2 and Priority 4 of the Learning Support Action Plan 2019 – 2025.
3. Reading Recovery is one component of a system of literacy support for students. It aims to accelerate progress in reading and writing by supplementing classroom instruction with intensive, daily one-to-one literacy instruction to children who are not working at the same level as their peers after their first year of school. Reading Recovery is a trademarked programme developed by Dame Marie Clay and has been helping New Zealand children progress in their learning for more than 40 years. The trademark is held by the Marie Clay Literacy Trust.
4. Schools make judgments about which of the available supports such as Reading Recovery, Resource Teachers Literacy, or English language learning support, are the best fit to accelerate the literacy learning needs of their learners. All of the supplementary supports available are premised on a focus on effective classroom teaching in the first and early years in school. A range of data sources indicate a higher demand for supplementary support is needed to meet the increasingly diverse needs of learners.
5. Individual schools analyse classroom information and select those learners most in need, matching them to the most relevant supports. In 2019 1,015 schools offered Reading Recovery. The Ministry does not have access to individual student data to determine whether those students most in need get access to Reading Recovery or any other supplementary support.
6. The Ministry gathers and analyses data on students in the programme. Data include ethnicity, gender and age of the student, the amount of time spent in Reading Recovery, outcome from Reading Recovery, and entry and exit scores using three assessment tools.
7. An annual report is published on Education Counts (<https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/schooling/reading-recovery>). The report on the 2018 data is due to be released in February.
8. The Ministry of Education provides funding of around \$25,800,000.00 per annum for teacher resourcing, training and support. Schools are expected to contribute staffing and there is a component in their general staffing entitlement to enable them to offer the intervention. Schools may also use funding from other resources to 'top up' Reading Recovery allocations.
9. Across all Ministry regions decile 1 – 3 schools are prioritised for receiving Reading Recovery. The Ministry allocates up to 271 full time equivalents using a formula reflecting the number of six year olds in a region, the number of schools, and the weighted equity index for those schools. Beyond that requirement regions have developed their own formulae and processes for allocating funded teaching hours. Typically decile 1 – 3 schools are not required to contribute additional funding, deciles 4 – 7 contribute around 30% of costs, and deciles 8 -10 provide over 50% of staffing costs. This targeted adjustment was made in response to the 2007 independent evaluation of Reading Recovery.
10. The actual value of school contributions is not collated nationally. The 2019 evaluation did ask the sample schools to estimate in-school costs and found that there were no major differences in the cost of literacy development resources in Reading Recovery schools

compared to those in other schools. The cost per student was estimated at just over \$2000.00 in Reading Recovery schools.

11. The 2019 evaluation of Reading Recovery was commissioned to understand if Reading Recovery remains effective in supporting schools to meet their diverse students' literacy needs. The evaluation also tested the programme's theory of change through reviewing its implementation and outcomes.
12. A Ministry evaluation working group guided the work of an external evaluator, Synergia Ltd. Foci of the evaluation were:
  - a. the processes of Reading Recovery implementation at the national (FTTE allocation and guidance to regions and provider contract management), regional (FTTE allocation and guidance to schools) and school level (selection of students, impact on wider literacy approaches in schools)
  - b. the outcomes of Reading Recovery for students and the wider school system.
13. The findings reflect Reading Recovery 'as implemented' not 'as designed' and reflect implementation processes and interpretations of the model at the national, regional and school levels.
14. A full economic evaluation (value for money) could not be carried out as there were insufficient data (particularly relating to the costs and impacts of counterfactuals – other approaches being used by schools). However, the evaluation notes that the limited data that was collected 'suggest that there are no major differences in the overall resources allocated to literacy development at schools with Reading Recovery and those without'. This would imply no major differences in the cost effectiveness between Reading Recovery and alternative approaches to literacy development.
15. We are preparing the evaluation report for release in February 2020 on Education Counts (<https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz>) to inform regional offices, schools and current and potential literacy providers about the impact and potential of Reading Recovery as currently implemented. It will inform our literacy plan as we work to enhance the design and implementation of this and other literacy approaches.
16. The plan is part of our approach to updating the New Zealand Curriculum to ensure it is fit-for-purpose. It links to the Curriculum, Progress and Achievement work programme and the NCEA work programme that together take a whole learning pathway approach to ensuring young people leave school literate and numerate, with the skills to engage in a rapidly changing world.
17. Minister Martin has asked for a briefing about the progress of the evaluation report.

#### **Ministry Annual Monitoring Data: Findings**

18. The Reading Recovery annual monitoring data are gathered directly from schools and are analysed and published each year on Education Counts.
19. We monitor Reading Recovery to make sure it is effective as part of a system response to literacy learning, and will continue to do so. Conclusions are as follows.
  - a. The 2018 monitoring data confirms a continuing decline over the past 13 years of the proportion of six year olds entering Reading Recovery – from 15% (11,054) in 2005 to 11.5% (8,936) in 2018.
  - b. In 2018, and similar to previous years, most students (74%) successfully discontinued Reading Recovery and progressed in their learning alongside their

peers, without additional support. Of the students discontinuing Reading Recovery in 2018, 17% were referred on for more specialist literacy support. This is consistent with previous years.

- c. A lower proportions of boys, Māori learners, Pacific learners, and learners from deciles 1, 2 and 3 schools were successfully discontinued from the intervention than girls, Pākehā learners, Asian learners and learners from deciles 8 to 10 schools. This is consistent with previous years.
- d. Similarly, the number of state and state integrated schools offering Reading Recovery has continued to decline since 2005 from 67% of schools, (1,322) to 55% of state and state integrated schools (1,015 schools) offering Reading Recovery in 2018.
- e. Proportionately fewer decile 1 to 3 schools offered Reading Recovery in 2018 than decile 4-10 schools, however, a higher percentage of students received the intervention through decile 1 to 3 schools.
- f. Reading Recovery teaching hours have risen by 5.9% between 2005 and 2018 and the average teaching hours per learner has increased over that time by 11.3 hours to 47.6 hours.
- g. Reading Recovery is successful for the majority of learners who access it, and it accurately identifies those who need further and often long-term support. Schools can then plan further support including, for example, accessing Resource Teachers: Literacy who work with these learners and support classroom teachers to meet their needs.

### **2019 Independent Evaluation Report (Synergia): Findings**

20. In 2019 we contracted Synergia Ltd to carry out a formal evaluation of Reading Recovery. Synergia's findings relate to impact, reach and costs.

#### **a. Impact**

- i. Reading Recovery has a positive effect on literacy for children in the intervention, with children who receive more Reading Recovery doing better than those who receive less.
- ii. Reading Recovery appears to be more successful at sustaining benefits for children at the lower end of reading ability but does not have much influence on school wide literacy outcomes.
- iii. In NZ the outcome of Reading Recovery (the percentage students successfully discontinued) is steadily declining although most students (>70%) complete the intervention and read and write at a level similar to their peers in the school.
- iv. Attending a Reading Recovery school (but not necessarily participating in Reading Recovery instruction) is associated with a significantly higher e-asTTle reading score than not attending a Reading Recovery school. However, this benefit is not sustained, and the effect is relatively small. (NB KPMG Foundation research from the UK did show that children who had received one-to-one Reading Recovery instruction achieved significantly higher overall GCSE point scores ten years later than the comparison group which did not receive Reading Recovery.)
- v. Reading Recovery does not appear to consistently support a shift in school culture and capacity to focus on literacy across the whole school.

- vi. Overall, Reading Recovery is effective in supporting children's literacy development and appears to work as well as other literacy supports and resources.
- b. Reach
- i. Reading Recovery reached 55% of primary schools in New Zealand (n=999) in 2018.
  - ii. Slightly more higher decile schools were offering Reading Recovery but lower decile schools had a higher proportion of students taking part: 31% of year six children for deciles 1-3 versus 18% for decile 8-10 in 2018.
  - iii. Larger schools are more likely to offer Reading Recovery but students are twice as likely to take part in Reading Recovery if they are attending a smaller sized school.
  - iv. At Reading Recovery schools, 23% of six-year olds took part in Reading Recovery (n=8,921) in 2018.
- c. Costs
- i. We cannot estimate costs with high enough precision to confidently say schools with or without Reading Recovery are allocating more resources to literacy development. The data available through the survey suggests little difference but some principals choose small group approaches suggesting they see them as more cost effective.

21. Recommendations from the Synergia report include that the Ministry and providers:

- a. review the Reading Recovery model and the content delivered including current understandings of effective literacy practice
- b. communicate the purpose of Reading Recovery to schools and its effectiveness to reduce misconceptions about Reading Recovery. Integrate Reading Recovery with other literacy approaches and resources
- c. ensure Reading Recovery staff expertise is used to support and develop across – school and system wide literacy teaching and learning
- d. adapt the delivery model to include small groups, and children from a broader age range
- e. establish a feasible within-school monitoring approach that supports the evaluation of RR's impact on learner outcomes
- f. revise the national allocation process to increase the allocation and reach at lower decile schools.

**Ministry Action**

- 22. This first part of the Reading Recovery evaluation makes an important contribution to what we know about literacy outcomes and implementation across primary schools in New Zealand.
- 23. We want to create the necessary building blocks to ensure the successful development of literacy throughout schooling. We need to use the evaluation to determine whether Reading Recovery remains a building block, and if so, the extent of the change required in order to do so. Clearly, access and implementation challenges remain a significant

inhibitor to achieving the desired outcomes, and our plan must consider the implications and the practice changes required.

24. As well as understanding these evaluation findings, we equally need to understand the other supplementary supports and their relative impacts in order to ensure the literacy plan provides the flexibility for schools to select the supports that best meet their learner needs. The indications from this study about Reading Recovery costs being on par with other supports warrants this investigation.
25. As part of the data privacy and using work underway in the CPA work programme we also need to consider the consequences of the Ministry not having access to individual data to make the most effective decisions on which learners get access to literacy (and other) interventions. Reading Recovery is a prime case where we cannot target intervention resources effectively across all schools (a national benchmark for access to the intervention). We are arguably leaving learning to chance for those who may need it most.
26. We can respond to some recommendations immediately. These responses include working with staff at the National Reading Recovery Centre at the University of Auckland to consider adjusting the national allocation formula, strengthening communications and advice around the selection of students, integrating Reading Recovery into schools' literacy approaches and maintaining ongoing monitoring and any necessary support of ex-Reading Recovery students. (The Ministry online guidance about Reading Recovery has been updated to reflect this.)
27. We will require the second part of the evaluation in order to review aspects of the design of the Reading Recovery programme to better understand how Reading Recovery reflects current research into effective literacy teaching and learning and to identify how it adapts to new understandings to ensure it meets the needs of the increasing diversity of students in our schools.
28. Our curriculum literacy plan aligns with Priorities 2 and 4 of the Learning Support Action Plan 2019 – 2025 as part of the systematic approach to how we identify learning needs and provide flexible supports for neurodiverse children and young people.
29. An enhanced, more flexible Reading Recovery approach will be part of the comprehensive set of tools and resources to help educators and parents to better meet the needs of neurodiverse children and young people and in supporting learners who don't qualify for the highest level of support and resourcing. The plan is part of our approach to updating the New Zealand curriculum to ensure it is fit-for-purpose. It links to the Curriculum, Progress and Achievement work programme and the NCEA work programme that together take a whole learning pathway approach to ensuring young people leave school literate and numerate, with the skills to engage in a rapidly changing world.
30. We will provide you with broader advice on our plans to improve literacy progress and achievement across the pathway so learners will be equipped to be successful throughout schooling and to achieve the co-requisite for NCEA by 2023 in April 2020.

#### Key Risks, Mitigations and Benefits

31. Reading Recovery attracts strong positive and negative interest from the schooling sector, academics and providers. Any changes to Reading Recovery we pursue may therefore be criticised as being too much or too little, depending on whether the critic is a supporter or detractor of Reading Recovery. It is vital, therefore, that any decisions about the future of Reading Recovery are positioned firmly in its contribution to the wider literacy learning investments and are supported by evidence of its effectiveness.
32. This interest will continue to be managed through a clear communications approach acknowledging the success of the approach (typically over 70% students in Reading

Recovery successful complete their lesson series) as well acknowledging the slow but continued decline in numbers successfully completing.

33. We will also communicate how we are working with the National Reading Recovery Centre to develop enhancements to the current programme, as well as identifying how Reading Recover contributes to the system wide literacy plan for all students, and for a sustained system shift.
34. There has been interest in the release of the report. We are releasing the Reading Recovery evaluation report in February to ensure we have had the opportunity to engage with a range of experts with varying perspectives of literacy learning and to actively consider the findings and recommendations. We will also use the report to continue working with the National Reading Recovery Centre to consider how we might strengthen the model.

#### Next Steps

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35. With your agreement, the Ministry intends to release the evaluation in February 2020, on to Education Counts (<https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz>). The findings of the evaluation will be used to inform the ongoing development of Reading Recovery, and the overarching literacy learning approach. The 2018 Annual Reading Recovery data report will be released concurrently and onto the same site.

#### Proactive Release

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36. We recommend that this report is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

#### Annexes

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- Annex 1: Reading Recovery: An executive summary for the 2019 process and outcome evaluation of Reading Recovery



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## Reading Recovery: An executive summary for the 2019 process and outcome evaluation of Reading Recovery

### WHAT IS READING RECOVERY (RR)?

- RR was developed by Marie Clay in 1977 and has been available in New Zealand for 40 years.
- RR is a one-to-one intervention targeted towards students with the lowest literacy levels for their cohort after one year of school. It is designed to accelerate students' reading and writing to the average level of their peers.
- RR is delivered by specially trained teachers. The training is provided through tutors at RR centres.

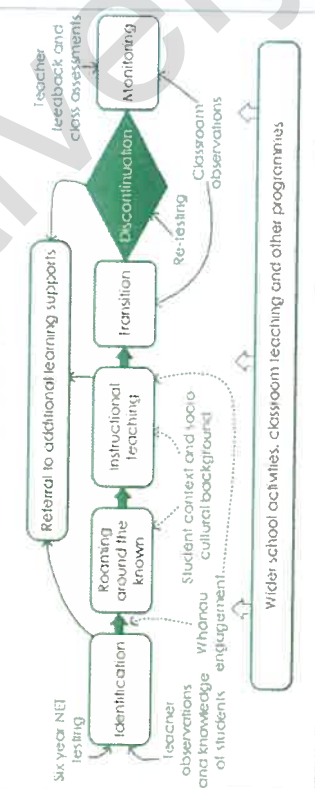
### WHY EVALUATE READING RECOVERY?

- To understand if Reading Recovery is supporting today's schools to meet students' literacy needs. This is important given the changing population and school context since the development of the programme.
- To test the programme's 'theory of change' through reviewing the implementation and outcomes of Reading Recovery.
- To provide a rapid review of Reading Recovery to enable timely evidence to support future decision-making, including decisions relating to ongoing delivery and potential improvements.

### HOW DID WE UNDERSTAND SUCCESS?

- A rubric was developed (**highly effective** – effective – **moderately effective** – **ineffective**) to evaluate the effectiveness of RR through a summative process and outcome evaluation. An economic evaluation was not feasible with the available data.
- Mixed methods approach: programme data, e-astle data, an online survey, site visits and interviews with schools (RR and non-RR), and interviews with stakeholders from the Ministry of Education and National Reading Recovery.

### HOW IS READING RECOVERY DELIVERED AT SCHOOLS?



### WHAT ASPECTS OF SCHOOLS' CONTEXT AND APPROACHES TO DELIVERY AFFECT RR?

- Differences in students' literacy levels**  
"Children in some schools get picked up at higher levels. In this school, most of the children are coming in really low, Level 1, 2, 3 at the most probably. But some schools might be picking children up at Level 6 because that's really low at their school."
- Differences in the approaches to ongoing monitoring following discontinuation from RR**
- Differences in the integration of RR with other literacy supports**  
"We also have Rainbow Reading, so for our children that aren't [Reading Recovery] we give them at least 10 weeks. It's a lower level of support but it's not great to have children go from a really high level of support to nothing."

### IS READING RECOVERY MAKING A DIFFERENCE?

- RR appears to be **effective** in increasing the literacy development of children that took part
- RR data shows more sessions led to more growth in students' literacy levels.

- RR has a **similar** effect on average class literacy levels compared to other literacy supports
- This is evident in e-astle data across years 4-10.

- RR is **effective** in lifting literacy levels of children with the lowest literacy
- This is evident in the e-astle data, and interview data.

- RR is **ineffective** in developing literacy capability and culture within schools
- This is evident in the online survey and interview data.

### WHO IS BEING REACHED?

- 55% of Primary Schools**
- Lower decile schools had a higher proportion of students taking part than higher decile schools.
- RR is **effective** in reaching its target group with most students having low literacy levels for their age
- Māori and Pacific students were more likely to receive RR than other ethnic groups.

- RR is **ineffective** in providing the right dosage to those who need it most
- Students in low decile schools had lower literacy levels on entry than students in higher decile schools and on average had lower RR sessions
- Māori and Pacific students had lower literacy levels on entry and on average Māori students received fewer sessions.

### KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Revise the **national resource allocation** to increase the allocation and reach at lower decile schools.
- Adapt the delivery model to include **small groups**.
- Increase the **flexibility of the identification criteria**, such as broadening the age range.
- Integrate RR with other literacy development resources or programmes** to better support children's transition back to the classroom.
- When integrating with other literacy development approaches consider options that recognise and respond to the needs of different children. This could include buddy programmes, lower level literacy supports, initiatives designed to enhance school attendance and engagement, and approaches that are responsive to transience and absenteeism.
- Establish an **approach to ongoing monitoring that is feasible within the current school context** and less dependent on the RR teacher.
- Consider the role of RR teachers in a train-the-trainer model and/or offer RR training to teachers working with the youngest primary school children to **support system wide literacy development**.

### WHAT INFLUENCES THE REACH OF RR?

- The national algorithm for resource allocation does not ensure RR reaches those with greatest need.
- The perception from some schools that RR is out dated, does not align with their pedagogy and does not provide value due to its limited impact beyond individual students prevents schools from offering RR.
- The inflexibility of the delivery model limits reach (one to one sessions and six year olds only).
- Student absenteeism meant that students who might benefit from RR were not offered it.
- Delays in **accessing other literacy supports** for students can result in some students' accessing RR while they wait for additional support.