



### What We Do

An innovative literacy journey is happening at 14 Pinellas County Schools. Reading Recovery is a highly effective, short-term reading intervention program, featuring one-to-one tutoring for low achieving first-graders. The nationally acclaimed program helps struggling students reach grade level proficiency, increasing their opportunity for academic success as they progress through the early grades. Participating schools have some of the district's largest populations of low-income students, many of whom start school not prepared for kindergarten. And studies show that by the time they reach first grade, they are already behind in their reading ability.

Pinellas County Schools examined schools in need of the greatest help and decided to implement the Reading Recovery program, providing the resources and training to give a cohort of teachers the knowledge they needed to put the program into action. Some 15 to 20 percent of first-grade students in these schools, who are not catching on to concepts that make reading and writing possible, will receive this crucial intervention after screening their reading ability at the start of the school year. To date, all Reading Recovery students have had an average of 1.5 year's worth of growth in literacy proficiency as compared to one year's worth of growth for the average student.

### By the Numbers 2021-2022

- 1** The grade level for which the program is tailored, helping struggling first-graders reach grade-level proficiency
- 15** The number of Pinellas County elementary schools selected for the program, with two to be added in 22-23
- 130** Number of students who participated in one-on-one instruction
- 70** The percentage of students expected to improve to first-grade level in the program

### A Passion for Reading in Pinellas

Reading Recovery was developed in the 1970s by New Zealand educator Marie Clay and has been used in the U.S. since 1984. The program ranks as the most researched reading intervention program in the What Works Clearinghouse, an initiative of the U.S. Department of Education.

In Pinellas County, two teachers at each school work with students having the greatest difficulties, spending between 12 and 20 weeks with them. When a student achieves grade-level reading proficiency, and can read grade-level text independently, that child moves into a small, teacher-led reading group and a new student joins the program for one-on-one instruction.

"What attracted me to become part of this program is that I have a master's in reading and I just love children's literature. I love helping children to read and the fact that I actually get to combine reading and my other love—helping children grow—makes this the perfect job for me."

— Michelle Early  
Campbell Park Elementary

# MORE ABOUT READING RECOVERY

## Program Background and Objectives

The district recruited two nationally regarded lead teachers to launch the program in 2019, allowing the initiative to start with 12 schools and 24 teachers. The program has since expanded to a total of 14 schools. Individual students receive a daily, half-hour lesson for 12-to-20 weeks from a specially trained Reading Recovery teacher. There are two such teachers at each of 14 schools (Bay Point, Bear Creek, Campbell Park, Fairmont Park, Frontier, Gulfport, High Point, Lakewood, Maximo, Melrose, Ponce de Leon, Sandy Lane, Woodlawn and 74th Street Elementary). During their lessons, students learn to read an array of very short books. The teachers review the previous day's reading and introduce a new story to read. Along the way, students learn to write and read their own stories, and are aided by magnetic letters that assist in visualizing how words are put together. They are also taught various reading and phonetic skills during their reading and writing exercises. As soon as students meet grade-level expectations and demonstrate they can continue to work independently in the classroom, their one-on-one lessons are discontinued, and new students move into the program for individual instruction. Meanwhile, the progress of students who have been promoted is supported and monitored in small work groups during the school day within the first-grade classroom.

## Positive Outcomes

This level of individual, high-intensity and successful intervention has not previously existed in Pinellas County Schools. According to the Reading Recovery Council of North America, there are two fundamental positive outcomes for students: Since 1984 when Reading Recovery began in the United States, approximately 70 percent of students who complete the program meet grade-level expectations in reading and writing. Follow-up studies indicate that most Reading Recovery students also do well on standardized tests and maintain their gains in later years. Parental involvement is a crucial part of the program's success. Parents are involved in multiple conferences to understand the program, consent to participation, observe the individual sessions, engage in homework, and receive updates on student progress.

## Professional Development

Reading Recovery teachers undergo extensive professional development, including a minimum of three hours each week through a university partner, to ensure that the strategies and program are being followed properly. Professional development for all Reading Recovery professionals begins with an academic year of graduate-level study and continues in subsequent years. According to the Reading Recovery Council of North America, Reading Recovery teachers—supported by a teacher leader—“develop observational skills and a repertoire of intervention procedures tailored to meet the individual needs of at-risk students.”

## Looking Ahead

The plan is to bring Reading Recovery to a handful of other schools and, at several larger schools, add a third teacher. Foundation and district leaders are excited by the initial results and potential of the program—both in raising individual students to reading proficiency and the level of expertise teachers develop. In addition, they are increasing the knowledge of their peers, who are teaching the same skills—making a lasting difference to so many young students at a critical juncture in their education.



**Pinellas Education  
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