

From: Stephanie Metzger (b)(6)
Sent: Monday, June 21, 2010 3:56 PM
To: WhatWorks
Subject: RE: What Works Clearinghouse (WWCPC 2177)
WWC:

I will provide my concerns about the WWC "standards" in a series of emails, if that is acceptable to you. They all surround the WWC's rating(s) of Reading Recovery.

First, I wish to ask how the 1997 Baenen (et.al.) study ever made its way to eventually meet the WWC's standards. It is clear that in reviewing this study, the WWC wisely chose to include only one of the cohorts (84 students who received the intervention and 84 who did not during the 90-91 school year...n=168) in its review of "effectiveness." However, "outcomes" in this study were "measured" in quite a dismal fashion. Clay's Observation Survey is hardly a valid assessment of "reading," and only 3 of the survey subtests were administered. I am attaching a summary of a study of Clay's Observation Survey for your consideration. Please keep in mind that although an "interrater agreement" study of the survey has been conducted in the past, the "text reading level" subtest is hardly a valid measure of "fluency." It does not consider speed at all (correct words per minute) but rather, makes use of a "running record," whereby teachers "tic off" words read correctly. This subtest is subjective, and hardly an adequate measure of speed, accuracy and expression...all described by the National Reading Panel as essential components of fluency.

Additionally, how could the WWC consider retention in first grade to be a reliable measure of "outcome"? I have been a school psychologist for decades, and it has always been clear to me (and to serious researchers) that retention decisions are subjective and fraught with problems. For one thing, when students receive Reading Recovery, its program's teachers are often involved in the retention decision-making process, and almost invariably, vote against retention for children they have served. Retention as an outcome? Really? You cannot be serious.

Finally, it is very clear that the state assessment in North Carolina was used as a third measure of "outcome." Your review does not describe whether the the 84 students who received the intervention (Reading Recovery) were in the first round, the second round, or were provided the intervention at the end of the year when a "slot" opened up and thus, may have received only a partial round. Clearly, if all 84 students were in the first round (and thus, a full round), who knows what "other" intervention may have been provided after the Reading Recovery teachers, themselves, were finished with the students. My experience has been that one has to "wait" until after the first round is over in order to change an intervention that is clearly not working for many, many students. Often, after the first round, children who are not "discontinued successfully" are then placed in small groups where teachers provide systematic instruction to close a gap that has grown even wider during the 20 weeks they were enrolled in the program. Using an end-of-year assessment to measure outcome does not really mean anything, because it does not consider what else may have been tried for students who were struggling after they completed 20 weeks of the program.

I am amazed that the Observation Survey, retention decisions, and an end-of-year statewide assessment were touted in this study as reliable, valid measures of outcome of the Reading

