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University Relations

GSU early intervention program helps struggling readers

ATLANTA – A Georgia State University reading program has been shown to help struggling readers defy the “fourth-grade slump” – a time in later elementary school when many students can have difficulty with reading.

In a recent study, GSU professors found that students who participated in a university program called Reading Recovery consistently achieved or exceeded expectations on the reading portion of the CRCT.

Even more impressive, these students were identified as the lowest performing readers and writers in first grade but outperformed their peers by the fourth grade.

“Rather than slipping back, they continued to move forward,” said Floretta Thornton-Reid, executive director of Reading Recovery and Literacy Collaborative programs in GSU’s College of Education. “This study reaffirms the power of Reading Recovery and the power of early intervention.”

Through Reading Recovery, children receive 30-minute daily lessons taught by specially trained teachers for 12-20 weeks. The one-on-one tutoring sessions include reading instruction on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension that supplement classroom lessons.

The GSU study looked at 1,574 children who participated in the Reading Recovery program and compared their performance on the reading comprehension portion of CRCT to 31,271 peers. The students were in Grades 1, 2, 3 and 4 in metro Atlanta county schools.

“We asked, ‘Do the children continue to make adequate progress?’ And the answer is yes, they are continuing to perform,” said Susan Duncan, director of Reading Recovery at Georgia State University.

GSU is a regional training center for educators in Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama and Bermuda. Teacher leaders come to the university to learn the Reading Recovery program and then go back to their schools and train teachers in their systems.

Over the last decade, GSU has trained 66 teacher leaders and served more than 47,000 students. Teachers say the program makes a big difference in their student’s academic performance.

“Reading Recovery breaks the cycle of failure because struggling students don’t have to wait until third or fourth grade to get help from special education,” said Mary Sangerster,

a teacher leader for Habersham County School system. “The percentage of students who pass the CRCT goes up every year after they’ve received this intervention.”

For more information, visit http://education.gsu.edu/ece/reading_recovery.htm