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**RECIPROCAL TEACHING AS
A SCHOOL-WIDE
INCLUSIVE STRATEGY**

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ABSTRACT

Informed selection, development and implementation of inclusive teaching practices are critical with the move towards more inclusive education evident in recent major policy changes in New Zealand.

In this thesis, guiding questions for validating inclusive teaching practices were extended to include a school-wide approach. These questions guided a review of the literature on reciprocal teaching (RT), a metacognitive method for teaching reading comprehension, to examine its potential as an inclusive method. They were also used to examine the findings from two implementation studies using RT within inclusive and culturally diverse urban classrooms in a school-wide approach.

In the high school study, RT was introduced after a systemic analysis showed the need for a school-wide approach to pervasive reading comprehension problems. In a collaborative effort between departments, English, social studies and learning support teachers were supported in incorporating RT into the regular curriculum and timetable. Four classroom teachers with two support teachers were trained and ran eight RT groups for the lowest reading comprehenders within seven classrooms.

In the primary school study, RT was incorporated into four Year 4 and 5 inclusive classrooms at syndicate level. Half of each class (Group One) was matched on reading comprehension (high, medium, and low) and in prior experience of RT, with the other half of each class (Group Two). Group One completed the intervention in the first part of the year, whilst Group Two formed a no treatment comparison condition. Group Two completed the intervention in the second part of the year.

In both studies, teachers and teacher aides were trained and supported into the use of the new procedure, including in-class observations, feedback and regular discussions during intervention. In the primary school study, specific adaptations to the RT method were also made by read aloud, tape-assisted, and prior repeated

practice methods, for students new to the English language, and those with special needs.

Statistically significant gains on reading comprehension scores were observed with the 20 high school students who received an extended RT programme (with 12 to 16 sessions), whereas no significant differences were observed with 26 students in the short programme (6 to 8 sessions) and control groups. Follow-up assessments of extended programme students showed maintenance of comprehension gains. This study highlighted the need to introduce preventative and inclusive metacognitive instruction methods not only at high school, but also earlier.

With intervention in the primary school study, low comprehenders ($n=41$), including those who had prior experience with RT, made practically significant gains not only on reading comprehension, but also on decoding. Further, all students ($n=103$) made significant gains on a measure of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies, but not on measures of reading comprehension and reading attitudes. Analysis of data on programme adherence showed that students had high participation rates and regular use of all four cognitive strategies throughout the intervention. In terms of programme adherence by instructors during the group dialogue, there was an appropriate focus on idea rather than word level, but scaffolding was only partially evident.

Teacher feedback in both studies supported the feasibility of the method for regular teachers working together with support staff during the introductory phase. The high school study also showed that this arrangement can work for several years, and that RT will be effective - if students are provided with more than 12 sessions, and if adequately sustained at a class teacher and school-wide level.

Both studies contribute to our understanding of the potential of RT as an inclusive instructional procedure, illustrating that RT can be incorporated at a school-wide level as a means of early intervention to address widespread reading problems and

facilitate more inclusive practices between regular teachers and special needs staff.

Implications are also discussed in terms of strategic resourcing for remediation, value for staff development in inclusive methods, and school commitment to sustaining inclusive and early intervention within a school-wide approach.

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