SIXTH EDITION

STRATEGIES FOR READING ASSESSMENT AND INSTRUCTION

Helping Every Child Succeed

D. Ray Reutzel | Robert B. Cooter, Jr.

Strategies for Reading Assessment and Instruction: Helping Every Child Succeed

This page intentionally left blank

Strategies for Reading Assessment and Instruction: Helping Every Child Succeed

Sixth Edition

D. Ray Reutzel
University of Wyoming

Robert B. Cooter, Jr.
Bellarmine University

Pearson

Between the time website information is gathered and then published, it is not unusual for some sites to have closed. Also, the transcription of URLs can result in typographical errors. The publisher would appreciate notification where these errors occur so that they may be corrected in subsequent editions.

Pearson

For the many teachers, reading coaches, students, and professional colleagues who have given me far more than I have given them. Thank you for sharing your challenges so that we could work on them together!

—DRR

For all the small children for whom school is a place of hope.

—RBC

This page intentionally left blank

Brief Contents

This page intentionally left blank

Contents

5 Phonics, Decoding and Word Recognition Skills   **118**

7   Reading Vocabulary   211

8 Reading Comprehension: Narrative Texts 240

9   Teaching with Informational Texts   289

About the Authors

D. Ray Reutzel is Dean of the College of Education at the University of Wyoming. Previous to his current position, he was the *Emma Eccles Jones Distinguished Professor and Endowed Chair of Early Literacy Education* at Utah State University, a position he held for 14 years. He is the author of more than 230 published research reports in top tier research journals, articles, books, book chapters, and monographs. He is the co-author of the best selling textbook on the teaching of reading, *Teaching Children to Read: The Teacher Makes the Difference, 8th Edition* published by Pearson Education, Boston, MA. He has received more than 17 million dollars in research/professional development grant funding. He has been active in securing legislative and private foundations gifts in excess of 40 million dollars. He is the past Editor of – *Literacy Research and Instruction, The Reading Teacher and the current Executive Editor of the Journal of Educational Research*. He received the 1999 *A.B. Herr Award* and the 2013 *ALER Laureate Award* from the *Association of Literacy Researchers and Educators.* Ray served as President of the Association of Literacy Educators and Researchers, ALER, from 2006–2007. He was presented the *John C. Manning Public School Service Award* from the International Reading Association, May 2007 in Toronto, Canada and served as a member of the Board of Directors of the *International Reading Association* from 2007–2010. Ray was a member of the *Literacy Research Association's* Board of Directors from 2012–2015. Dr. Reutzel was elected a member of the *Reading Hall of Fame* in 2011 and is serving as its President from 2017–2019. Ray was also named as a member of the *International Literacy Association's* prestigious *Literacy Research Panel* from 2018–2021. He is also an author of school-based literacy instructional materials with *Curriculum Associates®* and is a newly appointed member of the prestigious *Literacy Research Panel* of the International Reading Association (ILA) until 2021.

Robert B. Cooter, Jr. is Professor Emeritus of Literacy Education and Research at Bellarmine University. His primary work focuses on translating evidence-based research into systemic, real classroom approaches for improving literacy learning for children living at the poverty level. Cooter previously served as editor of *The Reading Teacher* (International Literacy Association) and his best-selling college textbooks are used at over 200 universities include: *Teaching Children to Read: The Teacher Makes the Difference* (8th ed.), *Strategies for Reading Assessment and Instruction* (6th ed.), and *The Flynt/Cooter Comprehensive Reading Inventory-3 (CRI-3).*

In the public schools, Dr. Cooter previously served as the "Reading Czar" (associate superintendent) for the Dallas Independent School District (TX) and was named a *Texas State Champion for Reading* by the governor for DISD's literacy improvement successes. Robert and Kathleen Spencer Cooter and their colleague, J. Helen Perkins, are recipients of the *Urban Impact Award* from the Council of Great City Schools for their work designing and implementing effective training programs for teachers serving children in low SES elementary schools in Dallas and Memphis. Later, Cooter and his team were awarded a $16 million academic literacy research project in Memphis funded by the U.S. Department of Education using his literacy academy model for teachers. These and other projects in various states are the basis for much of Cooter's writing and literacy work with schools today.

Preface

Teaching reading effectively in today's schools is arguably as much science as it is art. To meet the literacy needs of all students, teachers necessarily begin their twork with knowledge as to how reading and writing develop based on evidence-based research and the *English Language Arts Common Core Standards*. Effective literacy teachers are able to assess student progress quickly and efficiently, and then provide effective literacy instruction to meet their needs. All of this and more must be delivered in real time, with real children, in real classroom situations.

New to This Edition

Resources Behind This Edition

The scholarly and practical resources behind the strategies in this book are many. We based the contents of this book on our direct experiences as project designers on federally and state-funded reading reform projects, most especially in high-poverty schools associated with the Reading First and Striving Readers projects funded by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE); from practices shared by incredibly talented literacy coaches in the Dallas, Memphis, Ogden, Granite, Louisville, Wyoming, and San Juan school districts, to name just a few; from ideas published in *The Reading Teacher* (International Reading Association) during our respective tenures as past editors of that journal; and from our own direct experiences in the classroom. For contemporary trends in assessment, we drew on research reported in literacy professional and research journals and books along with these landmark reports: the Report of the National Reading Panel (2000), Developing Literacy in Second-Language Learners; Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth (2006); The National Early Literacy Panel (2008); What Works Clearinghouse; and a variety of Institute of Education Sciences Practice Guides.

For The Practicing Educator

Classroom reading teachers will also discover that *Strategies for Reading Assessment and Instruction* provides an extensive and recently updated selection of evidence-based instructional practices and assessment tools that (1) inform instruction, (2) meet the needs of individual learners, (3) specifically meet the challenges of the new English Language Arts (K–5) Common Core State Standards, and (4) develop an understanding of the essentials of evidence-based reading instruction in a Response to Intervention (RTI)/multitiered systems of support (MTSS) instructional environment. Because of our emphasis on RTI/MTSS models for meeting student needs, those who teach in special education resource rooms, Title I reading programs, and university reading clinics will find that this fifth edition is particularly useful for teaching groups of students with diverse and special needs.

Advantages for Preservice Teachers

For preservice teachers, this sixth edition of *Strategies for Reading Assessment and Instruction* offers a practical resource for understanding past and present issues in reading instruction and assessment. It also provides an introduction to assessment purposes, types, and evidence, as well as access to information about RTI instructional models and practices. Teachers in training will also find the updated, ready-to-use instructional strategies useful in teacher education practicum experiences, classroom observations, clinical experiences, and in student teaching.

Using This Edition as a Tool for Professional Development Workshops

Codistributed and published with the endorsement of the International Reading Association (IRA), now International Literacy Association (ILA), *Strategies for Reading Assessment and Instruction* is a proven tool for ongoing professional development in this age of evidence-based reading assessment and instruction. Widely used in such states as Ohio, Florida, and Pennsylvania as an approved inservice reference, this book contains the latest in research on assessment purposes, types, and tools, along with new information about RTI/MTSS models of classroom instruction for more effectively meeting the needs of students within the regular education classroom setting. In addition, the updated and newly revised Chapters 1, 2, and 9 through 12 provide practicing teachers access to highly effective, reliable, valid, and classroom-proven assessments and teaching strategies that address the higher demands of the ELACCS (K–5), and presenting this information in an easy-to-use format that makes the implementation of effective reading assessment and appropriately selected instruction strategies in the classroom quick and easy. In fact, each of the previous four editions of *Strategies for Reading Assessment and Instruction* has been used as the primary resource in literally thousands of professional development study groups, professional learning communities (PLCs), and workshop sessions on evidence-based, effective, and standards-based reading instruction across the United States.

Acknowledgments

Our most sincere thanks go out to Barbara Strickland, who has been most helpful and patient in the production of this edition of SRAI. Thanks also to the reviewers of this edition:

Leania T. Alli, Linden STEM Academy; Laurie Etzel, Bailey Middle School; Susan M. Hayward, The Ohio State University; Audrey Henry, Nova Southeastern University; Michelle Kelley, University of Central Florida; and Michael Moore, Georgia Southern University.

Thank you for choosing to purchase and use this fifth edition of *Strategies for Reading Assessment and Instruction*: Helping Every Child Succeed, 6th Edition We know from long experience and many thousands of comments from previous readers that it will assist you in your efforts to develop effective, efficient reading assessment and instruction plans. Please send us your comments and observations about whether we have achieved our aim.

Best wishes as you work to help every child become a successful reader and realize his or her full potential as an individual.

D. Ray Reutzel

ray.reutzel@uwyo.edu

Robert B. Cooter, Jr.

rcooter@bellarmine.edu

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 1

Strategic Reading Instruction

Ms. Spears, a first-year third grade teacher, felt more than a bit unsure of herself. This was especially true when it came to how literacy assessment fit in with a new emphasis on implementing the Common Core Standards and the district's newly implemented Response to Intervention (RTI) model to differentiate instruction according to students' developmental needs. Where to begin, and how? This came to a head for Ms. Spears when a new student, Jason, transferred into her classroom in mid-October from a distant state.

Jason's mother was not given access to his cumulative school records from his previous school, so Ms. Spears had nothing to go on in terms of understanding Jason's current or past literacy learning needs making the formulation of an appropriate literacy instruction plan difficult. Jason's mom also informed the principal that Jason had struggled in reading over the past year. Ms. Spears decided that she would need to pull together a set of assessments to better understand Jason's reading ability. But which assessments should she use? What would these assessments need to assess? It seemed that she had more questions than answers.

Introduction: How this Book is Organized

The opening vignette is a true story that is repeated regularly in classrooms around the globe. Teachers are asked to address the reading needs of a range of learners: those developing at a typical or even at accelerated paces and invariably some learners who struggle (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2015; Polat, Zarecky-Hodge, & Schreiber, 2016; Schulte, Stevens, Elliott, Tindal, & Nese, 2016).

Strategies for Reading Assessment and Instruction: Helping every child succeed is a practical resource offering research proven (evidence-based) assessment and instructional strategies for teachers in real world classrooms. In chapters 3 through 10 of *Strategies for Reading Assessment and Instruction: Helping every child succeed* we organize these chapters into four critical areas that teachers in real-world classrooms need to know in order to help every child become a competent reader:

- *Background Briefing for Teachers* – This section of each chapter explains how reading develops and provides the critical foundation skills every student must learn to become a fluent reader. With this information at your fingertips, it will be possible to make informed decisions in planning instruction for every learner. You will also have the assurance your instructional decisions are based on solid research evidence.

- *Assessment Strategies* – Once you possess the background knowledge regarding the "must have skills," it becomes possible to choose assessment strategies that align with each skill to be learned. In chapters 3 through 10 we have selected the

Table 1.1 Classroom Profile Form: Phonological and Phonemic Awareness (A partial example)

Directions:

1. Using a colored marker, fill in each box for skills each student has learned (left to right).
2. Next, identify the **NEXT** skill each child needs to develop. (Note: It will be the first box to the right of the last box filled in.)
3. Form groups for instruction for students needing the same NEXT skill.
4. Using the IF – THEN TEACHING STRATEGY GUIDE, determine the evidence-based teaching strategy(s) to use for each group according to the skill they need to learn.
5. Update the Classroom Profile for students as each new skill is learned.

	Phonological Awareness (oral lang.)					Phonemic Awareness (oral lang.)		
	Word Awareness	Rhyme recognition	Alliteration Repetition & creation	Syllable counting	Onset/rime manip.	Phoneme identity (beginning sound)	Phoneme isolation (last sound)	Phoneme blending
Kevin								
Mallory								
Jose								
Thom								
Iris								
Trevon								

most effective and easy to use assessment strategies from the research. This will help you determine which of the essential skills each learner has mastered and which they yet need to learn. In most chapters we provide you with a convenient *CLASSROOM PROFILE FORM* for charting student progress in learning essential skills. In Table 1.1 we share a partial example on phonics and decoding skills.

- *IF – THEN TEACHING STRATEGY GUIDE: Analyzing Student Data To Plan Instruction* – One of the more complex tasks for teachers is analyzing reading assessment data gathered for each student to decide what you should teach to meet their learning needs. Put another way, we sometimes get to be pretty good at gathering assessment evidence, but then we may have difficulty analyzing our findings and converting them into powerful classroom intervention plans.

  Strategic data analysis involves what we call **IF - THEN THINKING**. Our basic philosophy goes something like this: *if* we know that a child needs to an essential skill in reading based on our assessments, *then* we know which of many strategies are appropriate for teaching that skill. In each chapter, we provide you with an "If-Then TEACHING STRATEGY GUIDE" located between the sections on assessment and teaching strategies that will help you quickly identify evidence-based teaching strategies for each essential reading skill to be learned. In Table 1.2 we present a partial example of an IF-THEN TEACHING STRATEGY GUIDE related to reading fluency development.

- *Instructional Strategies* – The final part of chapters 3 through 10 is a compendium of evidence-based instructional strategies for the essential reading skills identified in each chapter (e.g., phonics, fluency, vocabulary, etc.). We provide a description of the purpose, step-by-step directions for implementing each strategy as well as a list of any needed materials.

Putting It All Together: The Teaching and Learning Cycle

The four sections presented in Chapters 3 through 10 – background briefing, assessment strategies, IF-THEN TEACHING STRATEGY GUIDE, and Instructional Strategies – can and should be applied in the classroom using an organizing structure. In Figure 1.1 we share our own organizational model drawn from reading research and our own classroom experiences. We call it the **Teaching and Learning Cycle**.

Table 1.2 If-Then Teaching Strategy Guide: Reading Fluency

"IF" your assessment shows that a student needs to learn this skill . . .	"THEN" use this teaching strategy(s) first (and page #)	Alternate Teaching Strategy(s) That Are Appropriate (and page #)
Automaticity	Choral Reading	Repeated Readings Assisted and Partner Reading Closed-Caption Television
Reading Rate	Repeated Readings	Scaffolded Silent Reading (ScSR) Choral Reading Assisted and Partner Reading
Prosody	Explicit Fluency Instruction Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction	Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction Readers' Theater Radio Reading
Phrasing/"Chunking"	Oral Recitation Lesson	Explicit Fluency Instruction Neurological Impress

Figure 1.1 The Teaching and Learning Cycle: A Continuous Process
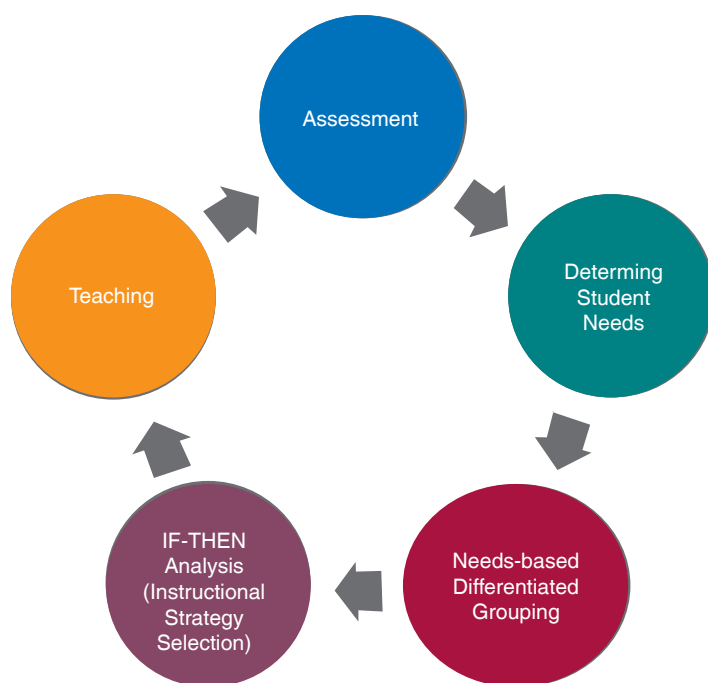
As the title of Figure 1.1 suggests, teaching and learning is an ongoing, even never-ending process until reading proficiency is reached. All good teaching begins with teacher knowledge of how reading develops which is why we include a background briefing for teachers in each chapter. The actual teaching and learning cycle begins with *assessment* to determine which essential skills students need to achieve proficient reading Next comes a review of the student assessment data, comparing each student's progress to your knowledge of essential skills so as to *determine student needs* (i.e., what they need to learn next). Using the various classroom profiling documents provided in Chapters 3 through 10 you will be able to identify which essential skills students need to learn so that you can form *needs-based differentiated instruction groups*. Because these small instructional groups are based on assessed needs, the membership of groups will change as students make progress. Once you have your groups formed according to a common need to learn a specific skill(s), you will use the *IF-THEN* TEACHING STRATEGY GUIDE to select the best strategy(s) to teach the skill. Next, you will *teach* the skill(s) using the research-proven strategy that is most appropriate. The cycle begins anew when you assess students' progress to determine whether skills taught have been mastered. If not, then you will need to determine another appropriate strategy to teach the same skill.

In the balance of this chapter we dig just a bit deeper into the first two organizational areas of this book: *background briefing for teachers* concerning reading development, and *reading assessment*.

Background Briefing for Teachers: The Foundation Skills of Reading

In the popular book by Steven Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (2013), he states that it is important to "begin with the end in mind." In terms of effective reading instruction, it critical that teachers begin by having a kind of reading development roadmap so that each student arrives at the correct destination—becoming a proficient reader. In mapping a road trip from, say, Baltimore to Los Angeles, we know that a direct route might take us through some of the states including Ohio, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Arizona. This map would not, of course, take us through states like Oregon if we wanted to get there as quickly as possible. Similarly, in mapping students' reading skill needs we must assess the critical foundation areas such as phonics, alphabet knowledge, reading vocabulary and more.

In recent decades, literacy scholars have identified essential reading foundational skills. Let's turn our attention to a brief overview of the reading foundations established through the research.

Overview of the Evidence-Based Reading Foundations

The road to proficient reading begins virtually from birth. Infants learn vast amounts of information about their world in the earliest years and begin to develop oral language to communicate what they know and what they need. Oral language is learned in these early years by listening to others around them as they communicate with the child. This is the beginning of the listening and speaking vocabularies upon which literacy skills are built (Reutzel & Cooter, 2018). **Listening vocabulary** consists of the words a person can hear and understand. **Speaking vocabulary** (a.k.a., oral language), a subset of one's listening vocabulary, is made up of words a person understands and can use in their oral language. Generally speaking, the larger one's listening and speaking vocabularies the easier it will be to learn reading and writing skills. Conversely, children who come to school with poorly developed oral language tend to fall behind in reading development over time unless this issue is corrected through language instruction.

Later, children begin to build upon their listening and speaking vocabularies and acquire early reading or foundational reading skills with the help of siblings, adults, and educators. Evidence-based research over the decades has helped us understand the essential foundational reading skills students must learn. In reading education, we often refer to the major divisions of this research collectively as the **Big Five**:

1. *Phonological and phonemic awareness:* This involves children understanding that oral language can be broken down into smaller units such as sentences, phrases, words, syllables, and phonemes (individual sounds) (e.g., Adams, 2001; Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Phonological and phonemic awareness applied in the classroom goes beyond the simple understandings just mentioned and helps children to be able to manipulate oral language elements; for example, segmenting and blending parts of spoken words. The ability to segment and blend individual sounds in spoken words sets the stage for children learning the purpose of the alphabet (alphabetic principle), phonics, and other word identification skills

2. *Phonics:* Building on phonological and phonemic awareness is phonics. Phonics is actually a teaching method that helps children match spoken sounds to written symbols in systematic and predictable ways (letter–sound relationships). Phonics

and other word recognition skills show readers how this knowledge can be used to decode words in print (Stahl, Duffy-Hester, & Stahl, 2006). Some of the critical phonics and word recognition skills we will learn about include: segmenting and blending printed words, must-know rules concerning vowels and consonants, sight words, and structural analysis (prefixes, suffixes, root words).

3. *Reading vocabulary:* Reading comprehension and writing composition are dependent on word knowledge (Kame'enui & Baumann, 2012). As children become proficient at decoding words in print and texts become more complicated, growing one's reading vocabulary is essential since reading information texts is the primary way people increase their word knowledge. Research has identified effective strategies for building oral vocabulary and word knowledge for reading and writing. You will have a collection of these at your fingertips in this chapter on vocabulary.

4. *Comprehension:* The National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000) described reading comprehension as "a complex process . . . [that uses] *intentional thinking* during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader. The content of meaning is influenced by the text and by the reader's prior knowledge and experience that are brought to bear on it" (pp. 4–5). Evidence-based research has identified effective strategies for teaching children to understand on a deep level narrative and expository (nonfiction) texts.

5. *Fluency:* Being a fluent reader involves several factors: accurate, effortless, and automatic word identification; age- or grade-level-appropriate reading speed or rate; proper use of expression (volume, pitch, juncture, and stress); correct text phrasing or "chunking"; and simultaneous comprehension of what is read (Reutzel & Cooter, 2018).

When we take a closer look at the Big Five, we see that the first two – *Phonological and phonemic awareness* and *Phonics* are directly involved in children learning to decode written language. We also come to realize that the next two – *Vocabulary* and *Comprehension* are directly related to understanding the meanings of oral and written language once it has been decoded. The final element of the Big Five is *Fluency*. Emerging research is providing evidence that *fluency*, rapid and accurate decoding of printed words, is the bridge that spans the other four elements together and can contribute to readers understanding written texts. Figure 1.2 shows the relationships between the Big Five elements

Figure 1.2 The "Big Five" Building Blocks of Reading Development
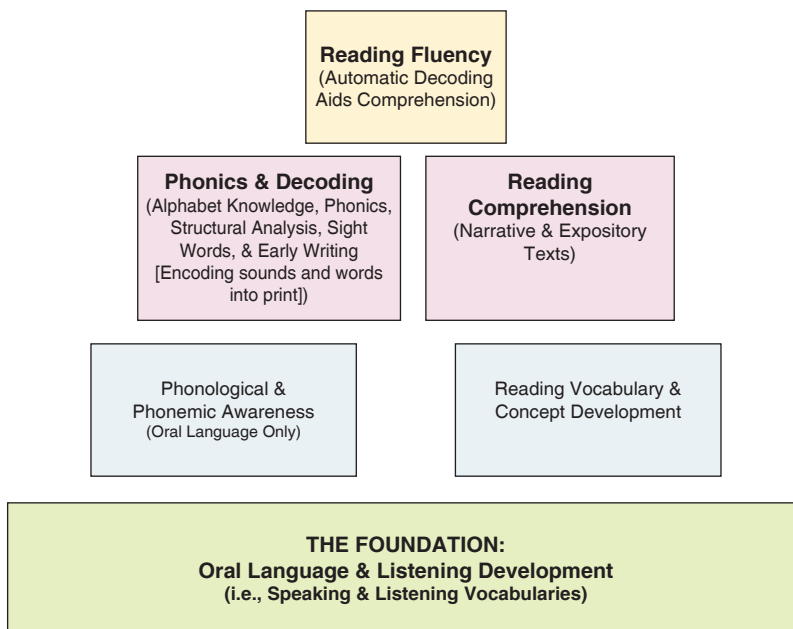
as the key building blocks of reading development. Note that all of these building blocks are constructed upon a foundation of oral language and listening development.

In Chapters 3 through 10 of this book, we present each of these Big Five areas and other essential skill areas. In these chapters you will discover the reading skills students must learn in their approximate sequence, how to assess each of those skills quickly and efficiently, and then how to translate assessment data into appropriate and effective reading instruction.

When Are The Foundation Reading Skills Taught?

Not all of the foundation reading skills are taught at every grade level since some skill sets must be learned before others can be learned. For example, we have already seen that every child must have acquired a listening and speaking vocabulary of some size for formal instruction to begin. We also know from evidence-based research that phonological and phonemic awareness need to be learned before phonics and decoding skills can be fully learned, and so on. In Figure 1.3 we present the typical grade levels

Figure 1.3 Typical Grade Levels for Teaching "Big 5" Skills Plus The Foundation Skills

Skill Areas & SRAI Chapters	Grade Levels				
	PK	K	1	2	3
Reading Fluency (Chapter 6)	███	███	███	███	███
Comprehension (text) (Chapters 8 & 9)			███	███	███
Vocabulary (Reading) (Chapter 7)		███	███	███	███
Phonics & Decoding (Chapter 5)		███	███	███	███
Phonological & Phonemic Awareness (Oral Language Only) (Chapter 4)	███	███			
THE FOUNDATION: Oral Language & Listening (Listening & Speaking Vocabularies) (Chapter 3)	███	███	███	███	███

at which the "Big 5" skills are taught as well the foundational components of oral language and listening. For your convenience, we also indicate the chapters in this book where each of these skill areas are addressed.

A logical question you may have is this: *Are reading foundational skills included in the Common Core Standards used in most states?* The answer is: *yes* and *no*.

About The Common Core State Standards

The end-of-year benchmark skills assessed on state tests are often based on the ELACCS-- the English Language Arts (K–12) Common Core Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). The ELACCS do contain many of the evidence-based reading skills found in the Big Five, but some of the reading skills are implied in the Common Core Standards (i.e., unless you have mastered some of the Big Five skills you will not be able to pass some of the Common Core Standards). In this book, we concern ourselves primarily with the K–5 standards and link our assessment and teaching strategies to specific ELACCS standards for your record keeping convenience.

The ELACCS were established as part of the Common Core State Standards Initiative with the goal that all students are college and career ready in literacy by the end of high school (Pearson, 2013; Reutzel, 2013; Shanahan, 2013). The ELACCS are organized into two major sections: K–5 and 6–12. There are four strands arranged by grade level: (1) reading, (2) writing, (3) speaking and listening, and (4) language. A complete copy can be obtained free online at www.corestandards.org.

Reading Assessment: The Basics
Principles of Reading Assessment

We discovered over the years that there are three important principles of classroom reading assessment that should guide your decision-making. These principles help teachers make critical diagnostic decisions that ultimately benefit children as they learn to read.

PRINCIPLE 1: ASSESSMENT INFORMS INSTRUCTION   The development of reading follows a clear path with precise markers along the way. Your job as a teacher is to locate where each child is in his or her developmental journey—what they are able to do so far and, therefore, which reading skill they are ready to learn next. With good reading assessment you will also be able to discover any learning gaps that may have occurred for each student. We call this the *Swiss cheese effect*: as with a piece of Swiss cheese on a sandwich, there may be good coverage, but there are some holes in the cheese. In reading, however, a student's holes in learning are invisible and only detectable through focused reading assessment. This is done by carefully charting what children *can* do from your reading assessments, rather than what they cannot do. One begins by confirming early reading milestone skills children have mastered and moving systematically through your assessments toward the more advanced skills. This will tell you where each child is in his or her reading growth and gaps that may exist. Then you will be able to plan instruction that targets skills to be learned next.

PRINCIPLE 2: BE PREPARED: GATHER YOUR ASSESSMENT MATERIALS IN ADVANCE   If you decided to repaint your living room, you would decide on the color you want use and then go to the store and purchase all the necessary supplies before starting the job: a how-to book (a roadmap for painting), paint, brushes, rollers, ladder, drop cloth, and so forth. With your tools assembled you could begin work. In assessing reading development, we also have some essential tools of the trade: the end-of-year benchmark skills, class profiling documents (Reutzel & Cooter, 2018) to record students'

strengths and needs, leveled books in the language of instruction (i.e., English and/or Spanish in many classrooms), a recorder for student readings, carefully prepared observation checklists, and progress-monitoring assessments like those presented later in this book.

PRINCIPLE 3: DOCUMENT STUDENTS' GROWTH OVER TIME   Reading assessment is not just a one-shot activity done at the beginning of the year, but an ongoing and integral part of teaching and learning. Indeed, assessment and good teaching are virtually seamless. By documenting student learning over time you create a vivid picture of each student's ability, and this gives you the information you need to plan focused, strategic instruction.

It is critical that we carry a veritable arsenal of assessment ideas in our teaching battery for each specific purpose. In the next section, we explain the four primary purposes of reading assessment for documenting student learning over time.

The Four Purposes of Reading Assessment

There are four major types of assessment: (1) screening assessment, (2) diagnostic assessment, (3) progress-monitoring assessment, and (4) outcomes assessment. The assessment strategies presented in this book tend to fall into the first three types. Screening assessments are administered to all students. They are given to provide a portrait of where students are in their reading development, as well as any preexisting deficits that may put them at risk for making inadequate progress. In short, screening tests help you know to what degree students have acquired the previous grade-level reading skills and to determine whether any students are at risk for making adequate progress in their new grade level.

Screening assessment data include scores from the previous year or grade level and assessments given at the beginning of the new school year. Because all students are assessed, these must be both efficient (quick to administer and score) and general (not exhaustive or comprehensive). Examples of screening tests are DIBELS Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) test or the Aimsweb computer-based reading assessment.

Screening tests merely sample student knowledge, ability, and skills. For example, if a student reads slowly or inaccurately on the DIBELS ORF, we only know that the student reads inaccurately and slowly; we do not know *why* this is the case (Scheffel, Lefly, & Houser, 2016). If we want to troubleshoot the observed disfluent oral reading of a student for planning targeted instruction, other assessments will be necessary to diagnose where the student is experiencing difficulty. However, if a student performs as expected according to grade-level benchmarks, then there is no need for additional assessment beyond the usual progress monitoring (discussed later).

If some students perform below expectations on literacy screening assessments, this may signal the need for an additional diagnostic assessment to troubleshoot or pinpoint the source of the problem. The purpose of diagnostic assessments is to help teachers identify specific reading problems so they can plan appropriate instructional interventions. Diagnostic assessments can be commercially produced formal tests or informal teacher-produced tasks to determine students' abilities to use reading skills or strategies previously taught.

During the school year, all student progress in reading should be consistently monitored to determine whether the instruction provided is effective with regard to end-of-year benchmark skills. To accomplish this aim, teachers use assessments called *progress-monitoring* or *benchmark assessments*. To effectively use progress-monitoring/benchmark assessments, teachers assess student progress at least three times during the school year at predetermined intervals. Students who are behind end-of-year benchmark or proficiency expectations are often monitored one or more times per week (McCook, 2007) to see if the instruction provided is working. If progress monitoring

shows acceptable literacy growth for at-risk learners, then one can conclude that the literacy instruction in use is effective and should be continued. Conversely, if progress-monitoring assessments indicate little or no student progress, then additional literacy instructional intervention may be indicated.

At or near the end of the school year, state and federal mandates often require that outcome assessments be used to determine the overall effectiveness of the literacy program for all students. Typically, outcome assessments are one of two types: (1) norm-referenced tests (NRT), in which students' literacy progress is compared with other students nationally, or (2) criterion-referenced tests (CRT), in which students' progress is judged against established literacy benchmarks or standards.

Types of Reading Assessments Found in This Book

Though there are many types of educational assessment, in this book we present the four types of assessments most commonly used by classroom reading teachers: (1) formative, (2) summative, (3) criterion-referenced, and (4) norm-referenced. Let's begin with formative assessments because they are the mainstay of day-to-day teaching and most of what we present in this book.

FORMATIVE READING ASSESSMENTS   The goal of formative assessments is to help teachers identify what students have learned during and after instruction and to decide who may need assistance and with which strategies and skills (McIntyre, Hulan, & Layne, 2011). Formative assessments can also provide diagnostic feedback about where a process, strategy, or concept understanding is working properly for a student or where there may be a breakdown that needs to be addressed with future instruction and guided practice (Lipson & Wixson, 2013). These are ongoing assessments that provide a framework for consistently monitoring student progress toward attaining goals, objectives, or benchmark Common Core State Standards or other specific benchmark objectives (e.g., "The learner will be able to orally read a 100-word passage with 95% accuracy in one minute in third-grade nonfiction texts") (Walker-Dalhouse & Risko, 2012).

Formative assessments are mostly designed and used by teachers. The results of formative assessment inform both the teacher and student about progress toward a known objective or benchmark standard. For the student, formative assessments provide feedback about accuracy, process, and effort. For the teacher, formative assessments provide feedback about lesson effectiveness, student engagement, and student responses to instruction. Formative assessments can also provide students with opportunities for peer or self-assessment (McLaughlin & Overturf, 2013).

Formative assessments yield results that are most useful in providing teachers with feedback about lesson planning, student grouping or placement, materials selection, guided and independent practice activities, and classroom environmental design modifications needed to support progress in reading and literacy. In short, formative assessments are most useful for revising, modifying, differentiating, and adjusting instruction and practice to meet student needs (McKenna & Stahl, 2015).

SUMMATIVE READING ASSESSMENTS   Assessments found in this book can often be used as summative assessments, which are used after the fact (-post-teaching) to make decisions about the effectiveness of the teaching strategies used. More formal summative assessments, such high-stakes state reading tests, are often used to determine student growth in reading and make sweeping decisions about state initiatives, reading programs, and interventions, or to provide evidence for public accountability (Lipson & Wixson, 2013).

An examination of the root of the word, *sum*, clarifies the purpose of summative assessment. Stahl and McKenna (2013) use a cooking analogy to contrast the formative and summative assessment types: When the cook tastes the soup to see if other

ingredients are needed, that's formative; when the guest tastes the soup at the dinner table, that's summative.

CRITERION REFERENCED READING ASSESSMENTS   Many of the assessments used in this book are also considered criterion-referenced reading assessments, also known as *criterion-referenced tests* (CRTs). With CRTs, student scores are referenced against specific criteria such as reading curriculum goals, lesson objectives, or benchmark standards. We learn from CRTs the degree to which students have learned specific skills, strategies, or concepts. Let's look at a couple of examples.

Imagine you have a first-grade student who must learn to quickly and accurately recognize all 26 letters of the alphabet, both upper- and lowercase letters. If the mastery criterion is set at 100% recognition, which only makes sense, then students who achieve this objective have reached mastery. A similar benchmark criterion may be that students are able to read grade-level texts with 80% comprehension as measured by correct answers to comprehension questions. Thus, a student who answers 90% of the questions correctly has met, or actually exceeded, the mastery criterion.

In summary, criterion-referenced reading assessment scores represent the degree to which mastery of a well-defined curriculum goal, lesson objective, or attainment of a standard has been met. Criterion-referenced reading assessment scores can also reflect how well a student is doing in meeting moving benchmarks over time (e.g., from grade to grade) and with a variety of tasks (e.g., text difficulty or complexity). In either case, the criterion referenced here is used to determine whether a student has met a set goal for learning a specific benchmark skill.

NORM-REFERENCED READING ASSESSMENTS   Criterion-referenced assessments in reading differ significantly from norm-referenced reading assessments, sometimes referred to as *norm-referenced tests* (NRTs). These compare an individual student's test scores to another group of students who took the same test (Pearce & Verlann, 2012; Rathvon, 2004). Some of the assessment strategies presented in this book are norm-referenced (e.g., the words correct per minute test found in Chapter 8).

Producers of commercial NRTs define the characteristics of a normative group (e.g., race, gender, socioeconomics) against which others will be compared, as well as the context of test administration by which comparisons are to be made (state, national, international). This process often involves the use of complex and rather expensive population research processes such as random sampling and statistical analyses.

By first administering the assessment to a randomly selected population of students, the test makers create what is called a *normative* or *representative* group that has within it the complex set of population characteristics found in the larger group from which the random sample was taken. Doing so creates a frame of reference against which your student or class of students can be compared, hence the term norm-referenced. As shown in Figure 1.4, student performance can be compared to the normal or average performance of the original normative group according to grade level, age, gender, and so forth. The normal or bell curve provides different ways of talking about the data obtained.

For example, many NRTs provide grade-level equivalents (GLE), means (arithmetic average), standard deviations (SD) from the mean score, percentiles (the normal curve sliced into 100 equal pieces), or standard tens or Stens (the normal curve sliced into 10 equal pieces). Student scores can then be compared to scores of the normative group (e.g., second grade students nationally). The resultant student scores could be interpreted or compared against the norms for the group. Let's say a student in your second-grade class at the end of the year receives a 2.7 grade-level equivalent score (translates to the equivalent performance of most second graders in their seventh month of instruction). This means that compared to the normative group of second graders nationally at the end of the school year (2.9 or second grade, ninth month), your student reads about 2 months behind the average second grade student nationally.

FIGURE 1.4 Normal Curve

The normal distribution and associated scales

	2%		14%		34%		34%		14%		2%	

Standard (z) Score	−3.0	−2.5	−2.0	−1.5	−1.0	−0.5	0	0.5	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0
T-Score	20	25	30	35	40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80
Percentile	0.1	0.8	2.28	6.68	15.87	30.85	50	69.15	84.13	93.32	97.72	99.20	99.90
Stens		1		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
I.Q. as a standard score ($\sigma = 16$)	52	60	68	76	84	92	100	108	116	124	132	140	148
Grades			E		D		C		B		A		

Note: Mean and Median and Mode at center (z = 0).
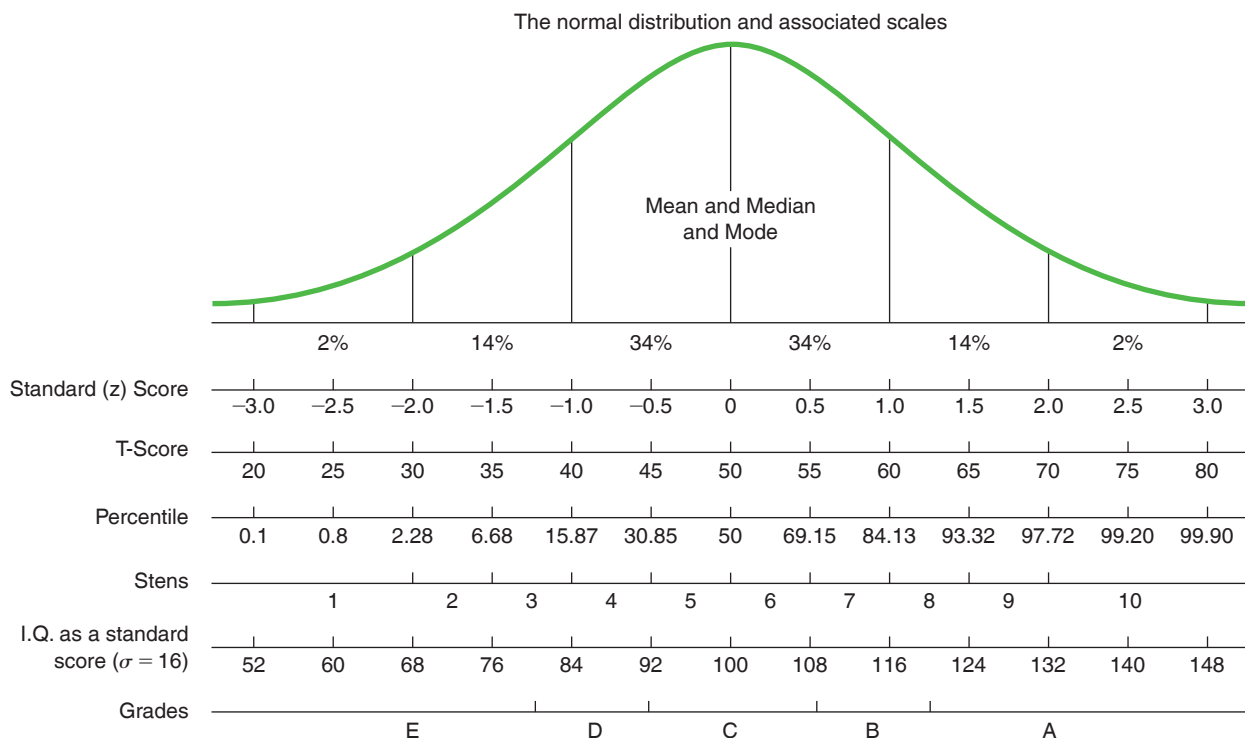
Norm-referenced reading assessments accurately compare whether your particular student or group of students scores significantly above, below, or at the average compared to the normative group. It should be noted that most high-stakes state tests are not considered NRTs because they do not compare student performance to other students nationally. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) is one example of a nationally validated norm-referenced test used in many school districts that wish to make reliable comparisons of their students' performance across state boundaries. The reading subtest scores from the ITBS, for example, can be used to compare students' reading scores locally to other students nationally.

Characteristics of High Quality Reading Assessment

There are a number of characteristics shared by high-quality reading assessments. Although published, standardized, norm- or criterion-referenced reading assessments are more likely to provide evidence of these characteristics for end users, even those assessments developed informally and locally should furnish evidence of these same characteristics if the assessments are going to be used to make decisions about student placements or the reading instruction offered to students. The amount and quality of evidence provided about these characteristics of high-quality assessments ought to be the basis on which educators make informed decisions about reading assessment selection. The two most important characteristics of high-quality reading assessments are reliability and validity.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the trustworthiness or dependability of results obtained from assessment administrations given to the same set of students under similar circumstances. The

more reliable an assessment is, the more confidence we can have that the results obtained from one administration of the assessment to another will remain stable or consistent. In other words, no educator would want to make decisions about student placements or instruction based on assessment results that vary wildly from one assessment occasion to another. A high-quality reading assessment must provide evidence of reliability.

Validity

Validity refers to the degree to which an assessment actually measures what it is claiming to measure. For example, if we claim to measure reading ability, does the assessment we have chosen actually measure a student's ability to read? This means that we must clearly define what we mean when we say a student can read. Do we mean that students can read increasingly difficult texts? Or, do we mean that a student has mastered specific reading subskills such as reading contractions, marking the number of syllables in words, or finding answers to detail questions in a 100-word passage? Reading assessment validity is judged by the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the interpretations made about the assessment results obtained by those who use the assessment, not on the assessment itself (Afflerbach, 2012, 2016; Lipson & Wixson, 2013).

Validity and Reliability in the Real World

Many educators are sometimes a little confused about the reliability and validity of high-quality assessments (McKenna & Stahl, 2013). Perhaps an example drawn from common life experiences may illustrate how these two characteristics work in daily life and would help to clarify any potential confusion.

Imagine that you are shopping for designer jeans. As you shop, you regularly see Levi-Strauss jeans on display. Although these jeans are known worldwide for consistent quality construction and durability (reliability), they are hardly considered "designer" jeans. In other words, although Levi jeans are consistently made to high-quality standards, they do not meet the standards of design and fashion associated with the concept of designer jeans. A better example of designer jeans might be Ralph Lauren, because of the optional cut, fit, and decorative trim around pockets and seams, as well as the reputed consistent high quality. It is important to note here that reliability (consistent high standards for manufacturing) is a necessary but insufficient precondition to establish validity (the cache of designer labels). In other words, jeans, whatever their label, must be consistently constructed with high-quality materials and methods, but doing so does not qualify them as designer jeans without the other characteristics associated with the idea of designer jeans also being present. It is possible for Levi jeans to be a reliable jean but not a valid jean that meets the definition of designer jeans. Similarly, a reliable assessment may not be a valid assessment, but a valid assessment should always be a reliable assessment.

Assessments that produce inconsistent results (poor reliability) cannot possibly provide adequate validity evidence. Conversely, providing adequate reliability evidence does not mean that an assessment is measuring the right things or being used in appropriate ways to draw valid conclusions from the scores obtained. The highest quality assessments provide appropriate reliability evidence for the grade and age levels to be assessed. In addition, high-quality assessments provide evidence that the assessment is measuring the outcomes and behaviors deemed necessary and important. For example, if a group of students' reading ability is to be assessed, then assessing these students' ability to accurately and fluently reading progressively more difficult texts with adequate comprehension would be expected. On the other hand, if we wanted to know whether students have learned particular skills, strategies, or concepts to be taught in a reading program or have attained specific objectives or benchmark standards, then we may ask students to perform very particular tasks, such as dividing a word into syllables, writing the contracted form of a word, or reading a group of

high-frequency sight words within a specified time limit with 95% accuracy. In short, educators should be the first ones to ask this question when selecting a new assessment: What is the reliability and validity evidence provided for using the scores obtained from administering this particular assessment?

Summary

Strategies for Reading Assessment and Instruction: Helping every child succeed (6th ed.) is an evidence-based resource providing teachers of reading and literacy specialists with:

- *Background briefings* on the latest research into the areas of reading acquisition, and the essential developmental reading milestone skills that students must learn,

- *Assessment strategies* aligned with the essential developmental reading milestone skills that can be used in busy real world classrooms so that the learning needs of each child can be determined,

- *IF-THEN TEACHING STRATEGY GUIDE* that help teachers quickly analyze student reading needs and match them to effective teaching/learning strategies, and

- *Instructional Strategies* proven to be effective in teaching specific reading skills.

In Chapter 2 we learn about Response to Intervention (RTI) and how it may be used to differentiate instruction for students when they have difficulty learning one or more reading skills.

Chapter 2

Response to Intervention (RTI): Differentiating Reading Instruction for All Readers

Alfonso is a cheerful student who tries hard to please his new first-grade teacher, Ms. Bachio. He is attentive during whole-class core reading instruction, but is unable to read kindergarten-level reading selections without assistance. In addition, Alfonso is usually not able to independently use sound/letter blending strategies taught during core reading instruction, nor does he easily learn new concepts taught during vocabulary instruction. Ms. Bachio is concerned about her ability to accelerate Alfonso's reading development. She delivers well-planned core reading program lessons, and supplements this instruction with explicit strategy, skill, and concept lessons appropriate for typically developing first-graders. What more can she do?

Ms. Bachio asked her school literacy coach, Mrs. George, for assistance. Mrs. George said, "I was just in a workshop two days ago and learned about some research-proven methods for meeting the needs of students called RTI or Response to Intervention. This is a great structure for regularly monitoring the progress of your students in achieving mastery of grade-level standards.

"I also learned about providing additional support for students like Alfonso," said Mrs. George, "that uses real-time data to place them into small groups for instruction focused on their particular learning needs . . . precision teaching is the way I look at it. After you try out an intervention for a brief period and check their progress, if the tactic isn't working, you select another intervention. If the student still doesn't learn the skill or strategy after several attempts, you can then enlist the help of other specialized teachers."

"Sounds interesting! When will we learn more about this?" asked Ms. Bachio.

"We can begin to read and discuss how RTI could be used in our school at our next grade-level PLC (professional learning community) meeting. What do you think?"

"Great!" said Ms. Bachio. "Maybe RTI is just the thing I need to help Alfonso accelerate his reading progress and attain grade-level standards," she thought to herself as she headed back to her classroom.

Successfully differentiating reading instruction is essential if elementary classroom teachers are to help their students succeed in learning to read well. *Response to Intervention (RTI),* which has become standard practice in recent years, is a model for differentiating reading instruction in order to meet the needs of all learners. In this chapter, we will learn how RTI can be used in reading/literacy instruction to assist all students to

become strong readers and by so doing make progress toward mastery of grade-level expectations and state standards. We will also see how RTI is used to fill in student learning gaps as quickly as possible in order to return students to developmental grade-level literacy instruction.

What Is RTI?

The implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI) models in school districts has proceeded at breakneck speed in the last 10 years. RTI was initiated by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) in response to the overidentification of students receiving special education services, particularly minority populations and those living in poverty. The goal was to insure that all students receive instruction appropriate for their learning needs to facilitate their progress in reading and other areas. In short, it was understood by the Department of Education that many students being identified for special education services did not actually have learning disabilities; their failure to develop as readers was often because they had not received effective instruction in the early grades. Through the RTI initiative and the professional development for teachers that would follow, the Department of Education hoped that better classroom instruction would result and the need for special education services would be reduced.

In order to implement RTI models effectively in classrooms, teachers need to know the answer to several important questions, beginning with the obvious: What is RTI? **Response to Intervention (RTI)** is a systematic approach to collecting assessment data used to differentiate instruction to meet the learning needs of those students who struggle learning to read and then quickly return them to typical classroom reading instruction (Balu, Zhu, Doolittle, Schiller, Jenkins, & Gersten, 2015; Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2010; Gersten, Compton, Connor, Dimino, Santoro, Linan-Thompson, & Tilly, 2008; Gettinger & Stoiber, 2007; Gilbert, Compton, Fuchs, Fuchs, Bouton, Barquero, and Cho, 2013; Stahl & McKenna, 2013). Said another way, if a student fails to learn an essential skill or information during normal instruction (called "Tier 1 instruction"), then the teacher should have the knowledge and skills to adapt instruction and offer alternative instruction (also a part of Tier 1 instruction). If Tier 1 instruction fails to achieve the intended results for some students over time, then and only then will students failing to learn be assessed to determine whether some sort of supplemental services may be needed. RTI is not only implemented in reading instruction but is also applied to all core areas of the curriculum and to student behavior.

The Institute of Education Sciences (Gersten et al., 2008) (Gersten, Compton, Connor, Dimino, Santoro, Linan-Thompson, & Tilly, 2009) provides five recommendations for using an RTI model to assist struggling students in the primary grades:

1. Screen all students for potential reading problems at the beginning of the year and again in the middle of the year. Regularly monitor the progress of struggling students.

2. Provide time for differentiated reading instruction for all students based on assessment of students' current reading needs.

3. Provide intensive, systematic instruction on up to three foundational reading skills in small group to students who score below the benchmark score on universal screening assessments. Typically these small groups meet between three and five times a week for 20–40 minutes.

4. Monitor the progress of Tier 2 students at least once a month. Use these data to determine whether students still require intervention. For those students still making insufficient progress, schoolwide teams should design a Tier 3 intervention plan.

5. Provide intensive instruction on a daily basis that promotes the development of the various components of reading proficiency to students who show minimal progress after a reasonable time in Tier 2 small group instruction (Tier 3).

RTI as a Reading Safety Net

As mentioned earlier, implementation of RTI is typically accomplished in most school reading programs through the use of three distinct and increasingly intensive instructional levels or tiers: primary (Tier 1), secondary (Tier 2), and tertiary (Tier 3). This three-tiered system is designed to act as a safety net to catch students before they fall too far behind the achievement of their peers. At the beginning of each year of instruction, a universal screening assessment is administered to all students to determine whether they are at risk for failing to make adequate progress in meeting established literacy skills, objectives, and standards.

Tier 1 literacy instruction is considered to be the primary level of education in RTI models for all students. This includes instruction using evidence-based literacy assessment and instruction models often in conjunction with commercial core reading programs in regular classroom settings (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2008; Gilbert et al., 2013). Tier 1 literacy instruction is intended to expose all grade-level students to a high-quality, evidence-based reading curriculum in the general classroom taught by a knowledgeable teacher. Tier 1 instruction is intended to develop all students' reading abilities and thereby reduce the number of students who develop learning problems. All students in Tier 1 instruction are individually monitored for progress in their literacy growth. Those whose levels of performance or rate of literacy growth lag substantially behind their peers' are identified to receive Tier 2 literacy instruction (Gilbert et al., 2013). Tier 2 instruction can be offered to remediate a single skill or strategy with which a student may have difficulty, or several.

Tier 2 literacy instruction, considered to be the secondary level of prevention in RTI models, is intended to provide struggling readers with evidence-based reading instruction that is targeted to address a student's area(s) of greatest need as compared to typically developing peers (Gersten, Compton, Connor, Dimino, Santoro, Linan-Thompson, & Tilly, 2008; Gilbert et al., 2013; Stahl & McKenna, 2013). Tier 2 literacy interventions are intended to fill in students' literacy skill gaps as quickly as possible and return them to Tier 1 or core literacy instruction. Tier 2 interventions are typically delivered in small-group settings. Tier 2 literacy instruction does not supplant Tier 1 literacy instruction, but rather extends and supplements it. This means that Tier 2 literacy instruction is sometimes offered outside the typically scheduled core reading block timeframe. Students attend their usual core reading instruction program, and then receive additional Tier 2 instruction three or more times per week, typically 20–40 minutes each time, in the targeted skill area(s). Reading Recovery is one example of a proven Tier 2 short-term intervention strategy in reading and writing (Institute of Educational Sciences, 2013). Strategies contained in this book, when matched to identified student skill needs, are also suitable for providing supplemental Tier 2 instruction.

Frequent and regular progress-monitoring assessment, usually at least monthly, is used to determine the success of Tier 2 supplemental reading instructional interventions with students. If students respond to Tier 2 instruction positively, they are returned to exclusive Tier 1 literacy instruction. If, however, students fail to respond to Tier 2 instruction, meaning that they are failing to make significant progress over time with the instructional strategies being tried, then alternative teaching strategies should be tried. If efforts continue to be unsuccessful, students might be suspected of having a learning issue that keeps them from benefitting from high-quality, generally effective literacy instruction. In such cases, these students may be considered for Tier 3 literacy instruction, but only after diagnostic testing has been conducted.

With Tier 3 literacy instruction, students are provided with even more frequent, intensive instruction (Gilbert et al., 2013; Stahl & McKenna, 2013). Depending on the situation, Tier 3 instruction may be offered in addition to standard Tier 1 instruction, or in the case of pull-out special education interventions, could take the place of Tier 1 instruction. All instructional interventions and modifications are documented and must be offered for a minimum of 8 weeks. If after this time period of Tier 3 instructional interventions and modifications, the instruction fails to accelerate or positively impact

a student's literacy learning, this may signal a reading disability that will require the attention of specially trained school personnel, such as a reading specialist or special educator. This three-tiered instructional model is shown in Figure 2.1.

In summary, RTI models integrate high-quality, evidence-based reading instruction coupled with frequent use of reliable and valid screening and progress-monitoring assessments. This is done in a systematic way to address students' literacy instructional needs in a timely and effective manner. Online tools we highly recommend for those just learning about RTI are the training modules offered by the IRIS Center at Vanderbilt University: http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu.

There are several concepts that are central for teachers to understand when implementing RTI models (see Figure 2.2) (McCook, 2007).

One of the key concepts for implementation of RTI models is the systematic and planned use of valid and reliable assessments (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2008). Such assessments have undergone extensive evaluation to be certain that the scores obtained actually measure what they are supposed to measure in stable, consistent, and dependable ways. Another concept central to the use of RTI models is making instructional

Figure 2.1 A Response to Intervention Model
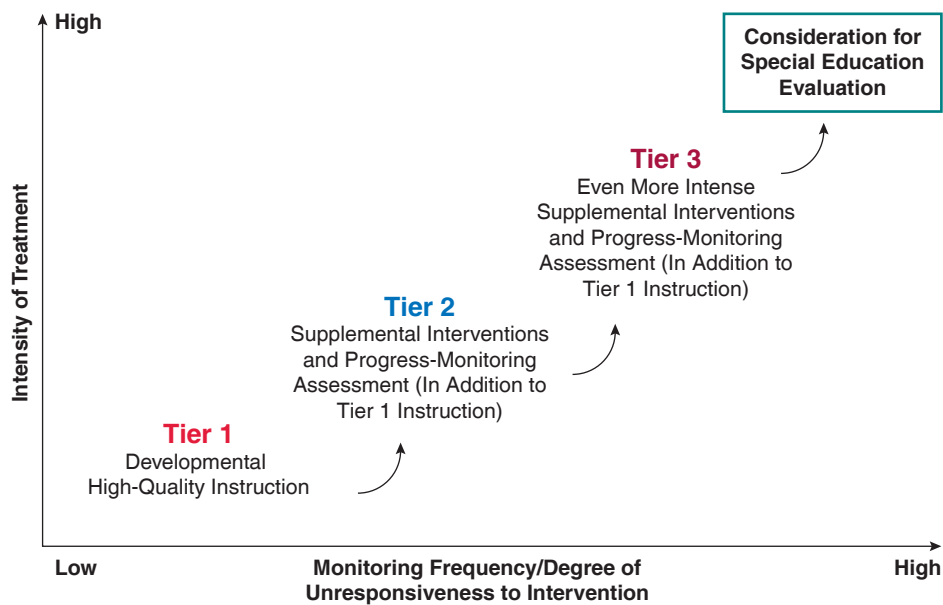
SOURCE: Adapted from Knox Country Schools (Tennesee).

Figure 2.2 RTI Three-Tiered Instructional Model
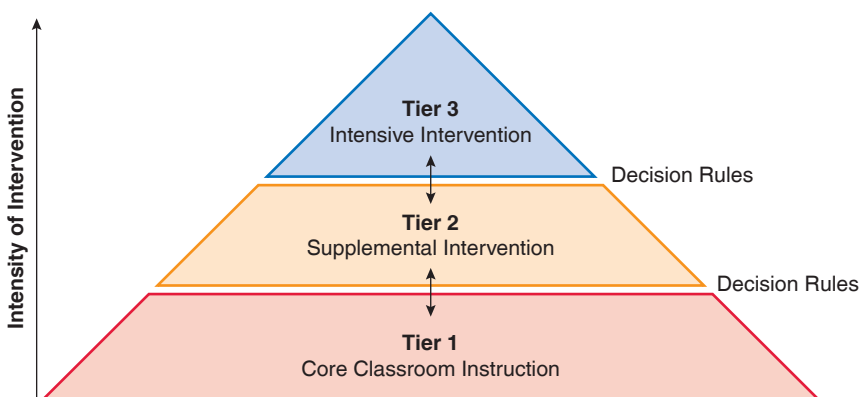
SOURCE: McCook, J.E. (2007). Implementing a response to intervention (RTI) model. Striving Readers Grantee Annual Conference. Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Education.

decisions based on systematically collected assessment data rather than on impressions, hunches, or incidental observations—what some call *kid watching* (Haager, Klinger, & Vaughn, 2007; Stahl & McKenna, 2013).

Evidence-based core literacy instructional programs and practices in Tier 1 literacy instruction are an expected feature of effectively implemented RTI models. Teachers who effectively implement evidence-based, Tier 1 core literacy instructional programs and practices have been shown in multiple studies to endow students with consistent, replicable learning advantages over other interventions (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2010; Gilbert et al., 2013). To learn which of the many published core or Tier 1 literacy instructional programs have been found effective, we recommend consulting the What Works Clearinghouse website, available through http://ies.ed.gov/.

How Is RTI Implemented?

Effectively implementing RTI models relies heavily on understanding and applying the logic of problem-solving models, based on the work of Brown-Chidsey and Steege (2010, pp. 8–11) (Figure 2.3).

This model provides teachers with a step-by-step guide for effectively implementing a problem-solving process to support the use of RTI models in the school or classroom. In the remainder of this chapter, we discuss the effective implementation of an RTI model three-tiered literacy instructional program. We begin with implementing effective Tier 1 literacy instruction.

Figure 2.3 Twelve Steps for Implementing an RTI Model of Reading Instruction

1. Collect universal screening data early in the year to identify potentially at risk students.
2. Implement evidence-and standards-based core literacy instruction programs and practices in Tier 1 reading instruction.
3. Collect progress-monitoring assessment data on all students at three equally spaced benchmark intervals during the academic year.
4. Identify students who score below established literacy benchmark targets or indicators during the year for Tier 2 instruction.
5. Provide additional evidence-based and targeted literacy instruction in small groups (Tier 2) for identified students scoring below established benchmarks.
6. Frequently monitor student progress in Tier 2 small-group literacy instruction to determine students' responses to the intervention.
7. For those students who are making progress with Tier 2 supplementary reading instruction, continue until they can be returned to Tier 1 instruction and meet established literacy benchmark targets or indicators.
8. Review Tier 2 small-group literacy instruction for revision or discontinuation based on results of frequent progress monitoring of students.
9. For those students who do not make progress with Tier 2 supplementary reading instruction, move these students into Tier 3 reading instruction.
10. In Tier 3 reading instruction, teachers revise their instruction to increase intensity, duration, or frequency of literacy instruction groups to meet students' data-based, literacy instructional needs.
11. After making revisions to increase intensity of Tier 3 reading instruction, continue to review student response to the reading instruction or intervention using progress-monitoring assessments on a weekly, if not daily, basis.
12. If after additional revisions to Tier 3 instruction are attempted students show the need, based on progress-monitoring assessments, for even more intensive, additional instructional support, they are recommended for comprehensive literacy diagnostic evaluation to determine eligibility and need for special education, Title I, tutoring, and speech-language or English language learning programs.

SOURCE: Brown-Chidsey, R., & Steege, M W. (2010). Response to intervention: Principles and strategies for effective practice (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Implementing Effective Tier 1 Literacy Instruction

Effective Tier 1 literacy instruction is first and foremost anchored in the findings of scientific research evidence on best practices. Scientific research evidence is derived from studies that report the results of experiments in which one or more instructional interventions are tested against a control or comparison instructional intervention (Stanovich & Stanovich, 2003). Scientific research reports are published in blind peer-reviewed research journals such as *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *Reading Research Quarterly*, and *Journal of Educational Research*. Blind peer review means that the reviewers do not know the identity of the authors submitting the report for potential publication, thus protecting against reviewers selecting studies for publication based on an author's reputation or acquaintance and not on the quality of the study. For an instructional intervention to be considered **evidence based**, findings or results from multiple studies must come to the same conclusion about its effectiveness. Findings from a single study or even several studies (less than a dozen or so) are usually deemed insufficient to qualify an instructional intervention as evidence based. Thus the bar for claiming an instructional practice is evidence based is extremely high, and as a result, classroom teachers would be well advised to use these practices in their literacy instruction. Teachers can familiarize themselves with evidence-based literacy instructional practices by consulting documents available on the following websites: www.nationalreadingpanel.org, the National Early Literacy Panel (NELP) Report at http://lincs.ed.gov/, and www.reading.org. Next, we discuss essential components of evidence- and standards-based literacy instruction and describe characteristic teacher practices that promote highly effective literacy instructional outcomes when used with students consistently in elementary school classrooms.

Essential Components of Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction

This book presents evidence-based assessment and teaching strategies for your use. We now know that high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction programs and practices focus instruction on the following essential components of effective literacy instruction (Bursuck & Blanks, 2010):

- Oral language development
- Concepts of print
- Letter name knowledge
- Sight word recognition
- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension
- Writing/spelling
- Abundant reading and writing
- Motivation
- Explicit strategy instruction
- Instructional scaffolding
- Increasing background knowledge
- Strategic review
- Deliberate integration of skills

- Advance organizers
- Opportunities for practice
- Efficient teacher talk
- Brisk pacing of instruction
- Systematic feedback and error correction

An equally important component of evidence-based reading instruction is student access to appropriately challenging reading and writing using a variety of text types, such as books, poetry, graphic novels, and so on (Neuman, 1999; Neuman & Celano, 2001; Neuman & Celano, 2006). Printed texts and printmaking supplies or materials may include but are not limited to:

- A variety of interesting and appropriately challenging reading and writing materials, including both good literature and informational books
- Supportive and assistive technologies for learning to read and write
- Sociodramatic, literacy-enriched play in kindergarten
- A variety of paper, writing media, binding materials, stencils, etc.
- A computer having word processing software and a printer

Recent research suggests that key elements of evidence-based interventions typically expected in RTI literacy interventions programs including explicit instruction, cognitive strategy instruction, content enhancements, and independent practice opportunities are not frequently used in RTI school-based programs (Ciullo, Lembke, Carlisle, Thomas, Goodwin, & Judd, 2016).

Essential Components of Standards-Based Literacy Instruction

Implementation of the Common Core State Standards has proceeded swiftly (CCSS; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers [NGA Center & CCSSO], 2010). As outlined in Chapter 1, classroom teachers need to become familiar with the state-level English Language Arts (ELA K–12) Core Standards and be able to interpret those standards into effective reading instruction in elementary classrooms (Reutzel, 2013).

The identified state core standards are found within the grade level–specific ELA anchor standards at the state level for elementary teachers. Within each grade-level anchor standard, there is a brief description of what a student at that grade level should be able to do to meet the standard. For example, in the grade 2 reading standard for literature, Key Ideas and Details, we read the following:

1. Ask and answer such questions as who, what, where, when, why, and how to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.
2. Recount stories, including fables and folktales from diverse cultures, and determine their central message, lesson, or moral.
3. Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

Each of these three areas of focus within the standard can be rephrased as an individual teaching and learning objective. For example, here is an objective based on the standard's first focus area: Students will be able to ask and answer who, what, where, when, why, and how questions with at least 80% accuracy to demonstrate understanding of key details in text. With this clear objective, teachers will then be able to plan and deliver lessons aimed at improving students' abilities to meet this standard when reading grade 2 literature texts. Some of the most important elements of teacher preparation and professional development are gaining necessary knowledge of each of their grade-level CCSS standards; understanding how to restate the standards as measurable

teaching/learning objectives; and then planning, designing, and delivering carefully crafted lessons that help students meet the standards.

Ravitch (2010) advocates putting into place a carefully developed, coherent, and rich curriculum to support the teaching of core state standards as follows:

> We should attend to the quality of the curriculum—that is, what is taught. Every school should have a well-conceived, coherent, sequential curriculum. A curriculum is not a script but a set of general guidelines. . . . The curriculum is the starting place for other reforms. (p. 231)

So, the fact of the matter is simply this: Standards are not curriculum! *Standards* are intended to serve as grade-level goals for learners. A *curriculum* is a comprehensive, evidence-based program of study that, if implemented correctly, will help children achieve the state-required standards. Put another way, standards are the destination, and curricula are the vehicles that get children to the learning destinations. Unfortunately, many publishers have yet to develop validated curricula for teaching the core state standards that can be used with great confidence, and for considerably greater cost, than providing teachers with the support and know-how to develop their own curriculum, objectives, and lessons to teach core state standards. A well-conceived, coherent, sequential CCSS curriculum such as Ravitch (2010) advocates will not only specify what is to be taught but also how and in what sequence skills, strategies, and concepts will be taught, from the simple to the complex.

Other economically developed nations have diligently labored to develop globally competitive standards and curricula that specify what students should learn to be prepared for college and careers. U.S. teachers and teacher educators are often playing a game of catchup in comparison to teachers and teacher educators in other developed nations. For example, teachers in Japan are allowed to invest a great deal of time during the normal school day in collaborative planning with other teachers to prepare well-constructed, tried-and-true lessons that address national and international learning standards, like those necessary to master the core state ELA standards, and they arrange these lessons in a sequence to support student learning progressions from simple to complex. This process used by Japanese teachers is called *lesson study* (Durbin, 2010).

In **lesson study**, teachers identify a standard to be taught, restate this standard as a measurable objective, and collaboratively write out a lesson plan to address the teaching of that standard with a set of increasingly difficult and complex texts. After writing the lesson plan and preparing the necessary materials to teach the lesson, one of the teachers teaches the lesson to a group of students in a classroom and the other teachers observe the lesson carefully as it is taught to determine ways the lesson can be revised and improved to provide optimally effective instruction. After observing the lesson, the teachers meet again as a group to revise the lesson and then make it available to all of the teachers at grade level to use in their classrooms. In this way, Japanese teachers become experts at crafting objectives, curriculum, and lessons that are standards based and classroom tested. One of the authors of this book and a group of three collaborating second-grade teachers developed a lesson using lesson study to address the following second-grade core state standard writing standard:

> Write opinion pieces in which [students] introduce the topic or book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply reasons that support the opinion, use linking words (e.g., because, and, also) to connect opinion and reasons, and provide a concluding statement or section.

One of this book's authors went into one of the second-grade teachers' classrooms to teach the lesson while the teachers observed. After the lesson was taught, the teacher observers and the author suggested revisions to the lesson. The resultant lesson plan is found in Figure 2.4. A checklist for writing opinions is found in Figure 2.5 (p. 10), along with the mentor text "Pizza, Pizza, Pizza," and the group composition that resulted from the teaching of the lesson in Figure 2.4.

Figure 2.4 Lesson Study Example: Writing Lesson for Common Core State Writing Standard #1a, "Identifying Major Elements of Mentor/Model Opinion Texts"

Time	Lesson Sequence	Expected Student Response	Materials Needed
	Explanation Today, boys and girls, we will be learning how to find three major parts of a well-written opinion using a checklist. Everybody has their own opinions about different things. Because everybody has opinions, they need to be able to express their opinions clearly and well. Opinions can be expressed in both speaking and writing.	Attend and listen.	• Write objective on the board. Objective: Students will be able to identify the three major parts of a well-written opinion using a checklist and close reading.

	Modeling
	Today, I will model for you how to close read an opinion text using a checklist with three criteria. (Show them the checklist).
	    First, I will share with you this opinion writing checklist. The circles in the checklist represent the three criteria. The first criterion for a well-written opinion is the topic; a topic is what the opinion is about. An opinion is a statement of an opinion. An opinion is what you think about something. Opinions are statements that express a personal way of thinking that others may not agree with. The second criterion in the checklist is the statement of an opinion. The reasons are the third criterion for a well-written opinion. The third criterion in the checklist is at least three reasons to support an opinion. We will be using this checklist to do some close readings of sample written opinions.
	    Close readings are when a reader reads a text, looking carefully to see if the author uses the criteria for a well-written text. When we close read an opinion, we will look specifically to see if the author has used the three major criteria for a well-written opinion: topic, statement of an opinion, and at least three supporting reasons, as we have in our checklist.
	    Here is an opinion text titled, "Pizza, Pizza, Pizza!" I am going to model a close reading of this opinion text by thinking aloud and using our opinion writing checklist. I begin by reading the title.
	    Then I look at my checklist and ask myself, does the author state a topic? I think to myself, yes! The author states the topic: Pizza!
	    So, I put a checkmark in the first circle on the opinion writing checklist. (Put a checkmark in the circle). Then I write the topic on the line: Pizza. I keep reading the pizza opinion to see if the author states an opinion, or what they think or feel about the topic.
	    (Read more of the opinion text.) As I read this next part, I noticed that the author states an opinion by saying "Pizza is the best food in the world!" So, I put a checkmark in the second circle on the opinion writing checklist. (Put a checkmark in the second circle). Then I write the statement of opinion on the line: "Pizza is the best food in the world!"
	    I continue reading the Pizza opinion looking for the last criteria in the opinion writing checklist: three supporting reasons for the opinion. (Read Pizza to the end.) Now, I ask myself, does the author state three supporting reasons for the opinion? So I reread the last part to see if there are at least three reasons for the opinion. I notice that three reasons are included. The three reasons are: 1) it comes in so many flavors; 2) you can put on it whatever you want; 3) it is good anytime, hot or cold. So, I put a checkmark in the third circle on the opinion writing checklist. (Put a checkmark in the third circle). Then I write the three reasons on the three numbered lines on the checklist.
		Students are to attend to the teacher's demonstration during this modeling part of the lesson.	• Checklist for three major parts of a well-written opinion (see Figure 2.5)
			• Mentor text, "Pizza, Pizza, Pizza!" on a chart paper
			• Highlighter

	Guided Practice
	Now let's practice a close reading of another opinion text together.
	    Here is another opinion text titled, "Avengers: The Movie!" I am going to model a close reading of this opinion text by thinking aloud and using our opinion writing checklist. I will ask you to help me as I go along.
	    Let's read the title together. Next, we look at the checklist and ask, does the author state a topic? I think to myself, yes! The author states the topic of Avengers: The Movie. So, I put a checkmark in the first circle on the opinion writing checklist. (Put a checkmark in the circle). [Student name], can you please write the topic on the first line on the opinion writing checklist? Next, I will continue reading the "Avengers: The Movie!" opinion to see if the author states an opinion, or what they think or feel about the topic.
	    (Read more of the opinion text.) As I read this next part, I noticed that the author states an opinion by saying "Avengers is the coolest movie ever!" So, I put a checkmark in the second circle on the opinion writing checklist. (Put a checkmark in the second circle). Then I write the statement of opinion on the line: "Avengers is the coolest movie ever!"
	    I continue reading the "Avengers: The Movie!" opinion looking for the last criteria in the opinion writing checklist: three supporting reasons for the opinion. (Read "Avengers" to the end.) Now, I ask myself, does the author state three supporting reasons for the opinion? So I reread the last part to see if there are at least three reasons for the opinion. I notice that three reasons are included. The three reasons are: (1) All the best superheroes are in it; (2) The Hulk does a smack down on Loki; (3) Iron Man saves the world by flying an atom bomb into space where it explodes. So, I put a checkmark in the third circle on the opinion writing checklist. (Put a checkmark in the third circle). Then I write the three reasons on the three numbered lines on the checklist.
	
	Continue guided practice over several days using at least two opinion model texts per day, gradually releasing to the students the steps of close reading of an opinion text with the whole and smaller groups.
	    Move this process into small groups. Work together for several more days before asking individual students to do it on their own.
			Point to the steps in the chart as you do them.

	Independent Practice Now, you will do this by yourself.		Give individuals opinion texts and checklists to use.
	Assessment Show me how you would close read an opinion text by telling me what criteria you are looking for during your close read. Next, tell me how well the author meets the criteria you are using during your close read.		Give students an opinion text and ask them tell you the criteria for a well-written opinion and how well this text matches those criteria.

Figure 2.5 Opinion Writing Checklist

Name _____

- Does the author state the topic? What is the topic? Write it here:

  _____

- Does the author state his/her opinion? What is the opinion? Write it here:

  _____

- Does the author state at least three reasons for the opinion? What are the reasons? Write them here:

  1. _____

  2. _____

  3. _____

Close Read Mentor Opinion Writing Text
Pizza! Pizza! Pizza!

I think pizza is the best food in the world because it comes in so many flavors! Also, you can put whatever you want on it. Finally, it tastes good anytime, hot or cold.
Resulting Group Composition by 2nd Graders

Avengers: The Movie!

Avengers is the coolest movie ever! It is so cool because all the best super heroes are in it. The Hulk does a smack down on Loki. At the end, Iron Man saves the world by flying a bomb into space where it explodes.

Teacher-developed and teacher-validated lessons resulting from lesson studies in Japan are accorded such high value that national bookstores routinely stock and sell these lessons to other teachers and the public. Think about how lesson study could be used to build the capacity of all U.S. teachers to design effective, evidence- and standards-based reading lessons and curricula. For more information about lesson study, we have found http://tdtrust.org/what-is-lesson-study to contain valuable information as a part of their professional learning community (PLC) activities. After locating this site, search for "What is lesson study?"

The lessons resulting from the process of lesson study are validated in the context of the classroom and have been demonstrated to be effective. They are to educators what treatment protocols are to medical practitioners. No serious effort to reform medical practice would leave to chance something as valuable and effective as treatment protocols. Yet in U.S. educational reform efforts such as English Language Arts Common Core Standards (ELACCS) implementation, effective, clinically validated lessons that routinely and effectively employ evidence-based practices that help students master established standards are habitually overlooked by policy makers and are not yet available from commercial publishers.

Leading and Managing a Classroom Effectively

It is critical that teachers feel competent and confident in orchestrating students, space, time and materials in a classroom. Here we think of classrooms having flexible but orderly routines that support students' increasing independence as learners. When teachers are able to manage a classroom where more than one thing at a time takes place students' opportunities to learn in appropriate ways and at appropriate levels are substantially increased (Pianta, LaParo, & Hamre, 2007; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2013). This allows the teacher time to work with small groups and individuals so that student work is targeted to meet varied learning needs.

There is a strong relationship between a teacher's confidence in managing the classroom and his or her capacity to teach intellectually rich content. McNeil (2000) explains

that teachers who value tight control in the classroom and favor orderly classrooms often create and deliver *lower* level student outcomes. The goal is to offer learning tasks that encourage student discussion, use of varied materials, and higher-level thinking. It appears from past research that successful teachers approach classroom management as creating positive and effective learning environments. These classrooms embody such attributes as acceptance, trust, relationships, respect, flexibility, and student self-determination instead of an overemphasis on teacher authority (Agne, Greenwood, & Miller, 1994; Brophy, 1998; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2013).

Establishing Classroom Routines

Children develop a sense of security when the events of the school day revolve around a predictable sequence of literacy learning events and activities. Students find comfort in familiar instructional routines and daily classroom schedules in a well-organized and managed classroom (Morrow, Reutzel, & Casey, 2006). There are any number of ways to organize activities and instruction for Tier 1 literacy instruction. However, one of the most critical considerations for the teacher is time allocation and scheduling.

There seems to be a fairly wide range as to the duration of literacy instruction in elementary school classrooms, but many schools require 120 to 180 minutes of instruction each day in reading and writing. Shanahan (2004) also recommends the allocation of at least 120 minutes per day for Tier 1 literacy instruction. As shown in Figure 2.6, this total time allocation of 120 minutes of Tier 1 literacy instruction is further subdivided into four 30-minute literacy instructional blocks focused on the essential elements of evidence-based literacy instruction: word work, fluency, writing, and comprehension strategies.

The purpose of the 30-minute word work instructional block is to develop students' phonological and phonemic awareness, concepts about print, letter name knowledge, decoding and word recognition, and spelling concepts, skills, and strategies. During these 30 minutes, the effective literacy teacher provides the whole class with explicit instruction on each of these word-related skills, strategies, and concepts. Students receive clear verbal explanations, or "think- alouds," coupled with expert modeling of reading and writing concepts, skills, and strategies. Having clearly modeled reading and writing word work concepts, skills, and strategies, teachers then provide students with guided or supervised practice.

The purpose of the daily 30-minute fluency instructional block is twofold. First, students are given brief, explicit lessons that help them understand the elements of fluent oral reading: accuracy, rate, and expression. Students also see and hear the teacher model the elements of fluent oral reading. Modeling is followed with the teacher involving students in reading practice to develop oral reading fluency. Effective Tier 1 literacy teachers use various formats for oral reading fluency practice, such as choral reading including such variations as echoic (echo chamber), unison (all together), antiphonal (one group of students reading against another), mumble reading (whisper), a line per

Figure 2.6 Example of a 120-Minute Tier 1 Literacy Instruction Block
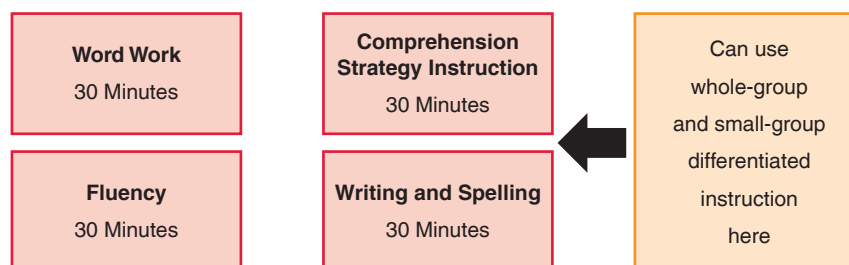
child, and so on. For those who are unfamiliar with these choral reading variations, we recommend Opitz and Rasinski's (2008) *Good-Bye Round Robin* or Rasinski's (2010) *The Fluent Reader*. Students can also read in pairs, with same-age peers or older peers from higher grade–level classrooms. Each pair alternates the roles of reader and listener. After each oral reading, the listener provides feedback. Students can also prepare oral reading performances, for which effective Tier 1 literacy teachers can select one of three well-known oral reading performance approaches: readers' theater, radio reading, or recitation.

The purpose of the writing instructional block in Tier 1 literacy instruction is to develop students' composition skills, spelling, writing mechanics, and grammatical understandings. Effective instructional practices used within this time allocation include modeled writing by the teacher; a writer's workshop including drafting, conferencing, revising, editing, publishing, and disseminating; and direct, explicit, whole-class instruction on each of these writing skills, strategies, and concepts. We also strongly recommend that daily lessons provide a time allocation for sharing children's writing in an "author's chair" or some other method.

The purpose of the comprehension strategies 30-minute instructional block is to develop students' vocabulary and comprehension strategies. Effective instructional practices used within this time segment include explicit instruction on vocabulary concepts using a variety of methods and requiring a variety of responses, such as word play and word awareness (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002; Johnson, 2001; McKenna, 2002). As for comprehension instruction, effective Tier 1 literacy teachers focus attention on explicitly teaching evidence-based reading comprehension strategies, including question answering, question asking, story and text structure, graphic organizers, monitoring, summarizing, and activating/building background knowledge. Effective Tier 1 literacy teachers also teach students to use a set or family of multiple comprehension strategies such as reciprocal teaching (Palincsar, 2003), concept-oriented reading instruction (Guthrie, 2003; Swan, 2003), and transactional strategies (Brown, Pressley, Van Meter, & Schuder, 1996) to be used strategically while interacting with a variety of texts over long periods of time (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Reutzel, Smith, & Fawson, 2005).

Systematic Instruction

Systematic instruction means that classroom teachers teach each grade level's identified scope or range of literacy concepts, skills, and strategies using a school's or district's adopted reading curriculum, or for many new teachers, the school's adopted core reading program. Systematic instruction also means that teachers teach this planned range of reading concepts, skills, and strategies in a predetermined sequence or order as spelled out in the core reading program or district-adopted reading curriculum. The range and order of literacy concepts, skills, or strategies to be taught in core reading instruction are typically found in the scope and sequence chart usually located in each grade-level core reading program's teachers' manual or edition or in a similar chart in a school- or district-adopted reading curriculum. It is important to note that *systematic* does not mean that teachers pace the instruction of information as prescribed in many core reading program teachers' editions or district/school curriculum guides. To provide appropriate instructional pacing, teachers need to observe student responses to the current pace of instruction and then make needed adjustments.

Explicit Instruction

Explicit instruction is described as instruction in which teachers state clear, concise, and measurable instructional objectives to be taught. It also implies a carefully structured approach to introduce new knowledge and show multiple examples of the new knowledge in action, ample practice of the skill by the learners, and a final demonstration of

their mastery of the new knowledge. This model for explicit instruction is what is often termed *gradual release of responsibility*.

A clear, concise, and measurable instructional objective describes a specific literacy concept, skill, or strategy to be taught along with the cognitive thinking processes needed, the assigned tasks to be completed, and the level of acceptable performance. An example might be: Students will learn to blend letter sounds in consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words containing a short /a/ vowel sound to pronounce at least 20 words per minute with 95% accuracy. Next, teachers provide students with explanations about why it is important to learn the identified literacy concept, skill, or strategy, as well as when and where it will be useful in literacy (Duffy, 2009). Next comes teacher modeling and thinking aloud about how to consciously perform the thinking process steps needed to effectively use a literacy strategy independently (Duffy, 2009; Hancock, 1999). After modeling, the teacher "scaffolds" or closely guides and coaches students' use of the concept or strategy with a gradual release of responsibility for using the associated thinking processes during subsequent lessons over many days, weeks, or months (see Figure 2.7) (Duffy, 2009; Hancock, 1999; Raphael, George, Weber, & Nies, 2009).

We repeat with emphasis: Tier 1 literacy instruction provides all students with increased, targeted, intense instruction and practice to meet individual literacy learning needs. For some students, Tier 1 literacy instruction offers much needed time for double doses (or more) of teacher-directed explicit instruction and guided practice to learn a previously taught but not yet mastered literacy skill, concept, or strategy. For other students, Tier 1 literacy instruction offers the opportunity to extend and accelerate the acquisition of advanced literacy skills, strategies, and concepts in literature circle groups or book club discussions beyond those typically taught at grade level.

Tier 1 literacy instruction is not intended to address all individual or specific literacy learning needs, but rather to provide all students grade-level, developmental, evidence-based literacy instruction. High-quality Tier 1 literacy instruction is systematically and explicitly taught to the whole class of students and in small groups using either a commercially published or locally developed literacy instructional program. Evidence-based Tier 1 literacy instruction requires that teachers allocate at least 120 minutes for daily instruction. As previously noted, this allocated

Figure 2.7 Gradual Release of Responsibility Model of Instruction
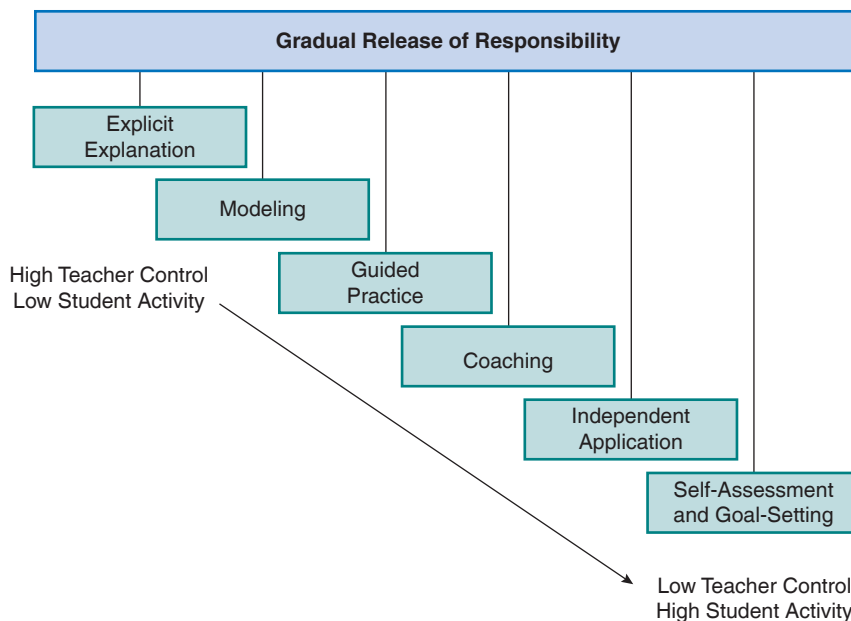
instructional time is often distributed across four essential components of effective literacy instruction: word work, fluency work, comprehension strategy instruction, and writing. Shanahan (2004) has reported increased student achievement when high-quality, evidence-based Tier 1 literacy instruction is provided to all students, as described here.

Implementing Effective Tier 2 Literacy Instruction: Triage in Classrooms

The concept of triage is well known in medical circles, but is not as familiar in educational settings. *Triage* in medicine is the process of determining the patient's needs and the priority of medical treatment options based on the severity of the condition. Similarly, in RTI models, Tier 2 literacy instruction is a bit like educational triage in elementary classrooms. When children are placed into Tier 2 literacy instruction, their instruction is targeted to known gaps or weaknesses in their current literacy performance as determined in Tier 1 instruction and assessment. During an initial period of time, usually about 8 weeks, teachers match evidence-based literacy instruction to the area of a student's greatest need. They frequently monitor the effectiveness of the instruction, modify instruction where necessary, and finally determine other teaching options if the student does not respond to the instruction provided.

According to the RTI Network (2009) and others, Tier 2 literacy instruction is intended to assist students not making adequate progress in the regular classroom in Tier 1 literacy instruction. Tier 2 literacy instruction is typically taught by the classroom teacher, although other educators and service providers, such as reading specialists, tutors, or aides, can be asked to assist. Nevertheless, the responsibility for designing, documenting, and coordinating effective Tier 2 literacy instruction rests with the classroom teacher. Struggling students are provided additional targeted and intensive reading instruction in small-group settings matched to their needs on the basis of levels of performance and rates of progress (Gregory & Chapman, 2002; Tyner, 2009; Wilkinson & Townsend, 2000; Wonder-McDowell, Reutzel, & Smith, 2011). Depending on the severity of learning issues, students who continue to struggle after receiving Tier 2 literacy instruction may be considered for more intensive Tier 3 interventions.

Another concept central to the success of Tier 2 literacy instruction is "curricular alignment." Teacher-directed Tier 2 literacy instruction must make sure that students receive supplemental instruction aligned with Tier 1 core classroom literacy instruction, especially when someone other than the classroom teacher is working with students (Allington, 1994; Davis & Wilson, 1999). Alignment of Tier 1 and Tier 2 literacy instructional programs has been shown to significantly and positively affect literacy growth among at-risk students (Wonder-McDowell, Reutzel, & Smith, 2011). Because the classroom teacher typically provides both Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction, problems of curricular alignment are usually avoided.

Small-Group Tier 2 Reading Instruction

Small-group Tier 2 literacy instructional planning begins with student screening and progress-monitoring assessments. If a previous year's assessment data are available, teachers should study these data in addition to those universal screening data obtained in the early fall, in order to determine the degree of summer literacy loss (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2013). Small-group Tier 2 reading instruction should not proceed without conducting a universal screening assessment of *all* students within the first week or two of a new school year.

From their review of student assessment data, teachers can begin to see which students are potentially at risk for literacy problems early in the year. The teacher should then place these potentially at-risk students on their watch list during the first few weeks of literacy instruction. When the past year's and the current year's data are taken in combination, teachers can then determine which students need to be monitored more closely.

The next step is to observe and monitor the progress of these potentially at-risk students' performance in Tier 1 reading instruction for 6 to 8 weeks before making a decision about providing additional Tier 2 literacy instruction. If these or other students are not making progress in Tier 1 literacy instruction similar to their peers, they should be further assessed to determine areas of greatest literacy need using a component-based reading assessment model such as those discussed in Chapter 1 and in later chapters of this book. Once a student's area of greatest literacy instruction need is clearly identified, these students can be placed into Tier 2 small-group instruction where they receive targeted, intensive instruction intended to fill their literacy learning need. Figure 2.8 depicts an iterative process teachers might employ when creating and managing RTI Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction groups.

Once Tier 2 small literacy instruction groups have been established, teachers need to turn their attention to preparing all students in the classroom to function successfully in the multiple literacy activities in the daily classroom schedule. The first few weeks of school are an ideal time to train students in classroom management, including the many activities and expected procedures for transitioning between instructional group settings during periods of small-group and independent literacy learning activities.

Figure 2.8 Tier 1 and Tier 2 Literacy Instruction in the RTI Decision-Making Process
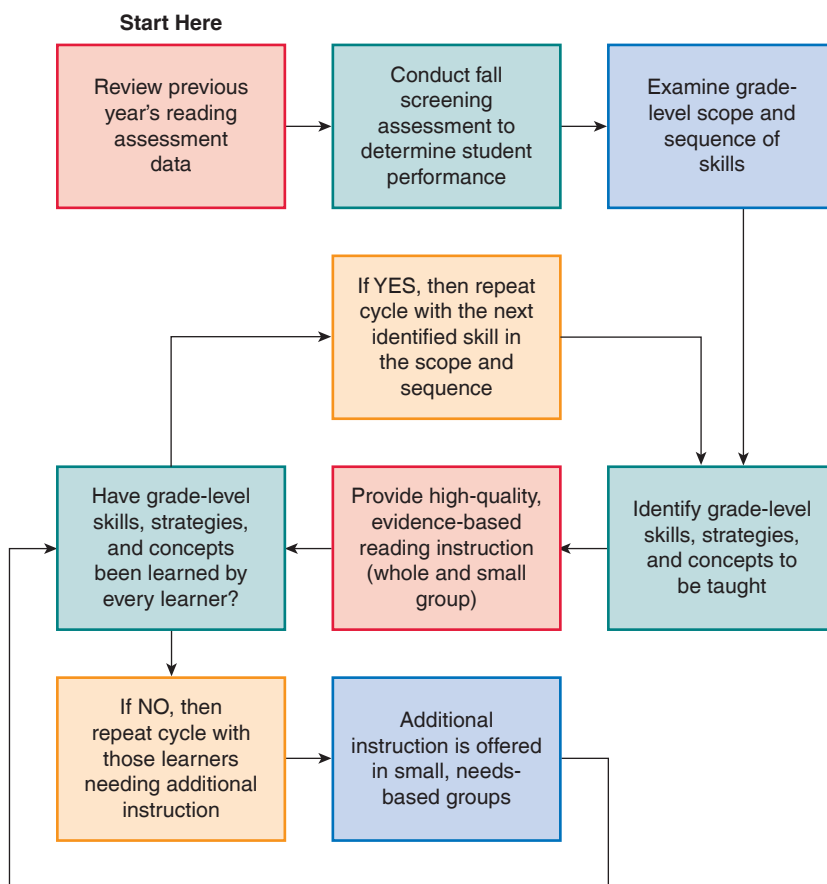
Managing a Classroom When Implementing Tier 2 Instruction

Teachers must plan productive work for those students who are not participating in Tier 2 small-group literacy instruction and who are not under the direct supervision of the classroom teacher. Teachers often ask us what they should do with the other children who are not in their Tier 2 groups. Many elementary classroom teachers use learning centers, stations, or independent work activities. When planning such formats to support or accompany Tier 2 small-group literacy instruction, there are several important decisions to be made.

Teachers need to consider how many learning centers they can reasonably manage while simultaneously providing a small group of students with Tier 2 supplemental literacy instruction. For an inexperienced teacher, managing the complexities of multiple literacy learning centers may seem too much. Literacy learning centers are not the only effective way to give students meaningful practice in reading and writing. Pairing students with peers or buddies can provide them with effective reading practice when not participating in small-group literacy instruction. Involving other educators in Tier 2 classroom literacy instruction—such as reading recovery teachers with differentiated assignments, aides, tutors, or reading specialists—can provide additional personnel and supervision for other small groups in a classroom.

For more experienced teachers, the question is not whether to use literacy learning centers or stations but rather how to design effective centers that promote literacy learning. Unsupervised literacy learning centers are established primarily to give students independent or peer-assisted practice in applying literacy concepts, skills, or strategies previously taught by the classroom teacher. Therefore, if an educator is not supervising centers, then the activities and tasks to be completed independently should never represent new or novel learning experiences.

Several key features are associated with effectively designed literacy learning centers. Literacy learning centers should provide students with practice in the essential components of evidence-based reading instruction—fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, and word recognition. Literacy learning centers that focus on low-level completion of seatwork activities or participation in easy, repetitious games to keep students occupied are not the most effective use of classroom or practice time. Students need well-defined and structured assignments requiring them to demonstrate task completion.

Procedures for using literacy learning centers need to be explicitly taught, modeled, and practiced under the guidance of the teacher prior to allowing students to engage in the independent use of literacy learning centers. Likewise, procedures for transitioning among a variety of literacy learning centers should be explicitly taught, modeled, and practiced to reduce transition times. Teachers who design effective literacy learning centers clearly display the literacy learning objectives, standards, or benchmarks, as well as the rules or behavior expected in literacy learning centers and the directions for completing assignments, tasks, or work in the centers.

Training students to make efficient movements between literacy centers and into and out of various classroom activities is essential for minimizing transition times and maximizing literacy practice and instructional time. Experience has taught us the value of using timers or stopwatches to motivate students to accomplish transitions briskly and without dallying. A worthwhile goal is to reduce transition times to a single minute. We recommend a quick four-step process to make this happen, as shown in Figure 2.9. An excellent resource for more information about designing and implementing effective literacy centers is found in Morrow's *The Literacy Center: Contexts for Reading and Writing* (2002).

Figure 2.9 Making Efficient Transitions When Using Literacy Centers

1. Signal students to freeze and listen for directions using a hotel registration bell, turning off the lights, or similar method.
2. Provide brief, well-sequenced, and repetitive oral directions coupled with displayed written directions. For example, say and display something like: (1) put materials away and (2) line up. Children must listen or read to get the directions for what is to be done.
3. Signal using your hotel bell, lights, or similar method for students to follow the oral and written displayed directions.
4. Signal students to move to the next classroom literacy center or return to their regularly assigned classroom seats.

Implementing Effective Tier 3 Literacy Instruction

As classroom teachers continue to monitor students' progress and responses to Tier 2 small-group literacy instruction, they systematically determine whether students are responding to the instruction offered. This determination will lead to one of four possible decisions or outcomes:

- Option 1: Tier 2 instruction has met the student's greatest literacy learning needs, and he or she can be returned to Tier 1 literacy instruction without the need for continued Tier 2 support.

- Option 2: Tier 2 literacy instruction is working well, but the student has not yet closed the gap between the current level and where the student needs to be in order to be returned to Tier 1 instruction without Tier 2 support. As a consequence, the student continues in Tier 2 support for a time and then he or she is returned to Tier 1 core literacy instruction.

- Option 3: If, after at least 8 weeks of Tier 2 literacy support focused on the at-risk student's areas of greatest literacy learning need, the student is not making progress according to ongoing progress-monitoring assessments, then a conference should be held with other consulting teachers to choose alternative approaches to meet the student's needs. These new interventions should be tried for at least another 8 weeks, accompanied by ongoing progress-monitoring assessment. After these interventions have been tried, another conference is scheduled by the classroom teacher with other consulting teachers to discuss the student's progress and possible next steps. For those students having persistent reading difficulties, there is a fourth option.

- Option 4: For students not making adequate progress after at least 16 weeks of documented Tier 2 support, a conference should be scheduled to discuss possible educational options.

The conference is typically attended by the classroom teacher (required), other consulting teachers (e.g., Title I reading specialist, reading recovery teacher, the school intervention teacher), a special education teacher, the principal, and a certified diagnostician. The purpose of the meeting is to examine records assembled by the classroom teacher detailing Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction provided to the student. From this discussion there are several possible outcomes. First, alternative literacy instruction strategies, or possibly research-proven commercial programs, may be suggested for further Tier 2 instruction targeted to the student's learning needs. If this is the case, the intervention will be put in place along with continuous progress-monitoring assessments for at least 8 weeks, followed by another conference to determine effects.

A second possibility is that the student may be considered for Tier 3 literacy instruction in which he or she receives even more intense literacy instructional support. Tier 3 literacy instruction and ongoing assessment is usually provided by the classroom teacher and/or other specialized educational providers such as reading specialists, Title I teachers, or special education teachers as consultants (McCook, 2007). For students to be formally placed into a special education classroom, a licensed diagnostician must first conduct a full assessment and the results must confirm a learning disability. It is estimated that only 1% to 5% of children will require special education assistance.

Students who are not responsive to Tier 2 classroom literacy instruction require additional diagnostic assessment and often more specific and intensive literacy interventions. Tier 3 literacy instruction and assessment is provided by the classroom teacher and/or other specialized educational providers such as reading specialists, Title I teachers, or special education teachers as consultants (McCook, 2007).

The intensity of interventions can be increased in one of three ways in Tier 3 interventions. First, the size of the group for the Tier 3 literacy instruction can be reduced. Supplemental Tier 3 instruction should be offered in smaller groups (1:2 or 1:3) or individually, in addition to core literacy instruction. Second, the frequency of the Tier 3 instruction can be increased from say, three times a week to daily instruction. Third, the duration of the instruction in Tier 3 can be increased from, say, 20 minutes to 40 minutes. Finally, the length of the Tier 3 reading intervention time period can be extended from a low of 8 weeks to 24 weeks (Vaughn, Denton, & Fletcher, 2010).

We recommend that Tier 3 literacy instruction occur at a minimum of five 30-minute sessions per week, or longer if possible. Progress-monitoring assessment on targeted literacy skills should occur as often as twice a week or, at a minimum, weekly, to ensure adequate progress and learning are occurring (McCook, 2007).

As previously noted, in the rare cases where Tier 3 supplemental instruction is not successful, the student may then be referred for further diagnostic testing to determine whether he or she may qualify for special education services, as illustrated previously in Figure 2.1, which shows a model for three-tier RTI instruction along with a fourth step, consideration for special education evaluation and services.

Special educators are becoming more and more informed about how to use RTI procedures in making eligibility decisions for students requiring special education services. For those special educators seeking more information about how to use RTI processes to provide effective Tier 3 assessment and instructional services, we recommend *Response to Intervention: Principles and Strategies for Effective Practice* (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2010).

"Outsourcing" Is Out

In the past, when students failed to make adequate progress in reading and writing they were often referred for out-of-the-classroom special services. This "outsourcing" of teaching interventions was due to federal regulations regarding how struggling students were to have access to such special programs as Title I and special education under Public Law 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act. These regulations tended to lead to special service providers working outside of the regular classroom instead of as team members with the classroom teacher.

Today, many classroom teachers are working harder than ever to differentiate literacy instruction in their classrooms. They are now able to work with other educators as a team to offer the best learning experiences possible within the context of the regular classroom. School leaders and policy makers have positively viewed shifts in practice associated with the use of RTI models. This is so much the case that the use of RTI models has been made part of the law in the reauthorization of two federal educational programs: No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education

Act (IDEA). In so doing, educational leaders and policy makers at the federal level have set up an expectation that RTI methods will become a common feature of literacy instruction and assessment in today's classrooms. However, at this juncture, RTI is still not a federal mandate for the states, but that day is probably coming.

Recommended Resources

Brown-Chidsey, R. & Steege, M W. (2010). *Response to intervention: Principles and strategies for effective practice* (2nd ed.). New York: Guilford Press.

Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L. S., & Vaughn, S. (2008*). Response to intervention: A framework for reading educators.* Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Gersten, R., Compton, D., Connor, C.M., Dimino, J., Santoro, L., Linan-Thompson, S., and Tilly, W.D. (2008). *Assisting students struggling with reading: Response to Intervention and multi-tier intervention for reading in the primary grades. A practice guide* (NCEE 2009-4045). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practice guides/.

Marinak, B. A., Gambrell, L. B., & Mazonni, S. A. (2013). *Maximizing motivation for literacy learning, Grades K-6.* New York: Guilford Press.

Rathvon, N. (2004). *Early reading assessment: A practitioner's handbook.* New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Reutzel, D. R. & Jones, C. D. (2013). Designing and managing effective learning environments. In D. R. Reutzel (Ed.), *Handbook of research-based practice in early education* (pp. 81–99). New York: Guilford Press.

Stahl, K. A. D. & McKenna, M. C. (2013). *Reading assessment in an RTI framework.* New York: Guilford Press.