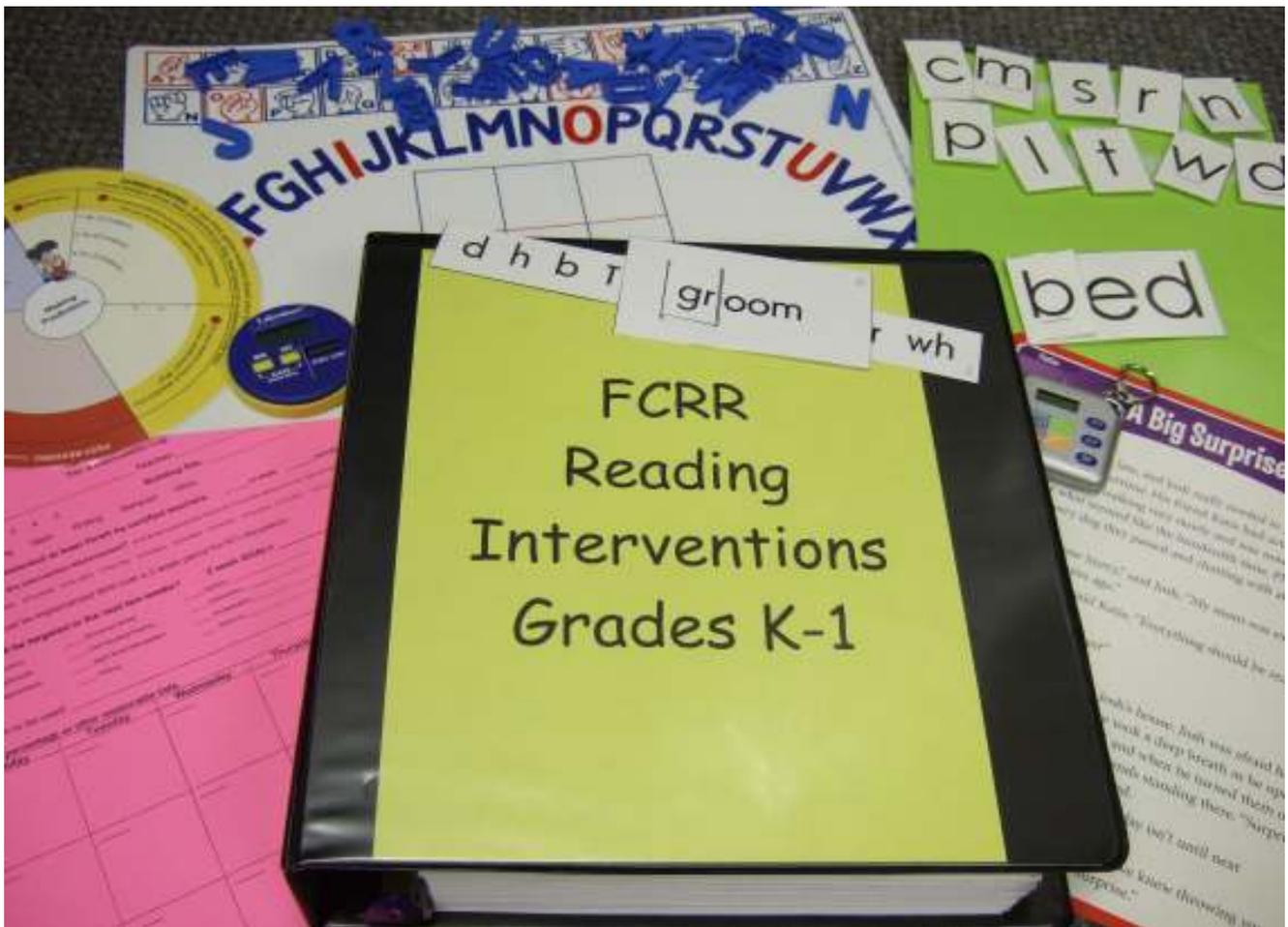
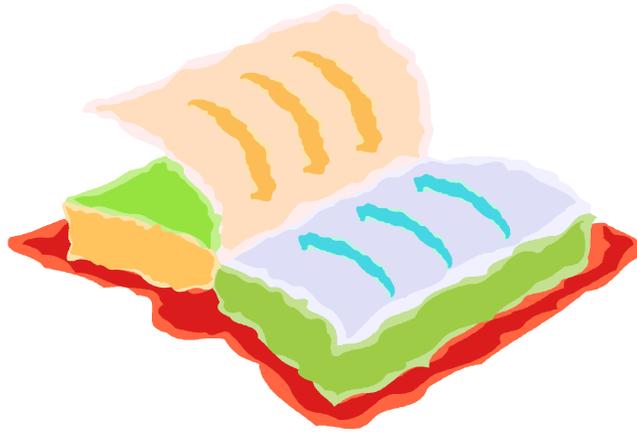
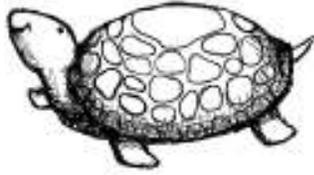


# The Oklahoma Reader



Volume 45 Issue 2 Spring 2010  
ISSN 0030-1833



Cover photograph: Central Elementary School, Yukon, Oklahoma.  
Photographed by: Kimberly Kysar.

Submit children's art related to literacy, reading, writing, or learning for the cover of the next issue. Please include a release from the child's parent or guardian. Send original art (no copies) on 8.5" by 11" paper to The Oklahoma Reader, ATTN: Dr. Stephan Sargent, Editor, Northeastern State University - Broken Arrow, 3100 E. New Orleans, Building "C," Office #129 Broken Arrow, Oklahoma 74014. Deadline for Fall, 2010 issue: August 1, 2010.

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# The Oklahoma Reader

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## Volume 45 No 2 Spring 2010

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## **The Oklahoma Reader**

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**Volume 45 No 2 Spring 2010**

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### **The journal of the Oklahoma Reading Association, an affiliate of the International Reading Association**

The Oklahoma Reading Association (an affiliate of the International Reading Association) publishes the *Oklahoma Reader* two times a year. Members of the Oklahoma Reading Association will receive *The Oklahoma Reader* as a part of membership. The OKLAHOMA READER is available to libraries and schools on the Oklahoma Reading Association website at <http://www.oklahomareadingassociation.org/>.

*The Oklahoma Reader* is published for members of the Oklahoma Reading Association and all others concerned with reading. Because *The Oklahoma Reader* serves as an open forum, its contents do not necessarily reflect or imply endorsement of the ORA, its officers, or its members.

### **Invitation to Authors**

*The Oklahoma Reader* invites teachers, graduate students, college and university instructors, and other reading professionals to submit original articles related to all areas of reading and literacy education. *The Oklahoma Reader* has a readership of approximately 1000 teachers and teacher educators. The editorial board encourages articles about classroom practice and current issues related to literacy education. *The Oklahoma Reader* also publishes research syntheses and reviews, original research, and reviews of professional materials related to literacy.

Specific instructions for authors are described on page 40.

# The Oklahoma Reader

Volume 45 No 2 Spring 2010

A journal of the Oklahoma Reading Association, an affiliate of the International Reading Association

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### Thoughts from the Editor and the Co-Editor

We would like to offer congratulations to the planning committee for the SW IRA for putting together a great conference! We learned and were challenged to think at the sessions we attended. We are sure that you have heard the term Response to Intervention in the last months as a new way of supporting the learning of all students. As it is as hot topic in the field, and because we know that there are several schools in the state that are piloting Response to Intervention, we decided to focus as much of this issue as we could around that topic. Our feature article is by one of the leading experts in Response to Intervention, Sharon Vaughn, and two of her students. Their article describes exactly what RTI is and the research that supports it. Our second feature article was written by practioners in Oklahoma who have implemented RTI in their district. They tell about their implementation journey, including their challenges and what they learned through that journey. We round out our RTI focus in three of the regular columns. Linda McElroy reviews research on RTI, Julie Collins describes policy implications of RTI, and guest authors review a book about RTI. Of course, we also have other great contributions. Lisa Delgado-Brown, literacy coach in Moore, addresses motivation for adolescents. The technology column by a guest author lists websites that will help you find leveled texts. Molly Griffis muses about how she decides what her books will be about.

Just as spring winds are blowing in changes to the weather, in June, the journal physically moves to Northeastern Oklahoma State University. Check the website for more information about the move and changes in our staffing. One big change is

that Klaudia Lorinczova, our editorial assistant for the past several years will be graduating in June. A new assistant will take over from her up at NSU.

We hope you enjoy and learn from this issue. As always, be sure to contact either one of us if you have suggestions or ideas for future issues. Enjoy the beautiful spring in Oklahoma!

*Sally Beach*  
Editor  
*Stephan Sargent*  
Co-Editor



### Message from the President

To my dear colleagues of the Oklahoma Reading Association:

Welcome back to the spring semester, 2010! I hope that everyone enjoyed some relaxation, family time, and reading time during your holiday break and that you have survived all of the ice and snow without injury! I have been fortunate to be able to enjoy some reading time lately. I have just finished reading *The Glass Castle*, by Jeannette Walls and highly recommend this amazing memoir!

The Board of Directors of your Oklahoma Reading Association is breathing a sigh of relief as many months of planning are now behind us. Recently the 33rd Southwest International Reading Association Regional Conference was held

in Oklahoma City. We were lucky that the snow and ice came a week before the conference, instead of the week of the conference! We thank the planning committee and all of the volunteers that assisted with us with keeping the conference running smoothly! I hope that you had a chance to join us for this exciting professional development opportunity and that you are now reflecting on the colleagues that you met and got to know better and the wonderful ideas and strategies that you brought back to your classroom from wonderful speakers including Tim Rasinski, David Moore, Debbie Diller, Tommy Thomason, Tyrone Howard and International Reading Association President Elect Patricia Edwards. I hope that you also were able to hear and meet authors and illustrators Pamela Munoz Ryan, Floyd Cooper, Jerry Pallotta, Sharon Draper, Brod Bagert, Darleen Bailey Beard, Mike Wimmer, Kim Doner, Anna Myers, Tami Sauer, The Bag Ladies, and Gary Dulabaum (and perhaps you are now enjoying an autographed book or two that you brought home from the conference! I know that I have several additions to my library!). Many thanks to our breakout session speakers who shared classroom tested strategies and methods of engaging your students in literacy instruction to help foster a love of learning and literacy! If you presented at the conference, thank you for your dedication and for sharing your expertise, and if you didn't, perhaps you will consider submitting a proposal for the Oklahoma Reading Association's next conference, scheduled for March, 2011. Bookmark [www.oklahomareadingassociation.org](http://www.oklahomareadingassociation.org) and watch for information about program proposals and registration.

As my time as President of the Oklahoma Reading Association draws to a close, I would like to thank the outstanding job done by Dr. Sara Ann Beach at the University of Oklahoma for her work as editor of *The Oklahoma Reader*. She has been dedicated to publishing a high quality, peer reviewed journal and I appreciate the

time and attention she has devoted to this task. She has been assisted by one of her graduate students, Klaudia Lorinczova, serving as editorial assistant, and I appreciate the work she has provided. I would also like to thank the Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education at the University of Oklahoma for their support of the publication of this journal through their support of the graduate student editorial assistant. As you may know, Dr. Beach and Dr. Stephan Sargent, from Northeastern State University, are currently co-editors of our journal. Dr. Sargent will be taking over the editorship beginning with the 2011-2012 school year. I know that he will continue the high quality of the journal and wish him the best of luck as he devotes his time to this task, and I thank his university for their support as he becomes editor of *The Oklahoma Reader*.

I have greatly enjoyed my time as President of the Oklahoma Reading Association. I would like to extend a big thank you to the ORA Board of Directors for their support and teamwork during my time in office! I am glad that you choose to spend your professional development efforts with the Oklahoma Reading Association, and the International Reading Association. I am glad that you have chosen to be a member and I thank you for all that you do for literacy for the students of Oklahoma!

*Julie Collins*  
Oklahoma Reading Association  
President, 2009-2010



## **Critical Components of a Response to Intervention Framework: Essential Ideas for Campus Implementation**

**By  
Stephen Ciullo, Michael Solis, Sharon Vaughn**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education (IDEA) Act was reauthorized in 2004. This reauthorization influences schools by recommending that they use RTI as a means of supporting students at risk and with disabilities. A portion of the reauthorization included information about how schools may now use a response to intervention model as a means to classify students with a learning disability (see <http://idea.ed.gov/> for additional information). IDEA 2004 is significant because this was the first time an alternative to special education classification appeared in a federal law. Although it is not mandated, schools now have more choice and flexibility for classification. The option of using RTI may help to eradicate some of the concerns the field faced for years concerning how students are referred to and identified for special education (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). Since 2004, many schools have prioritized the implementation of an RTI framework. RTI is an educational framework that specifically focuses on early intervention for students at-risk for academic difficulties. RTI is a framework that involves using assessment to screen all students, frequently monitoring student progress, and adjusting instruction to meet individual needs and providing increasingly intensive interventions for students with instructional needs. Collaboration is essential for a successful RTI framework. A team effort including general and special education teachers, instructional specialists, ELL teachers, parents, and the school administration work together and make data-driven decisions to help students (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). This paper will explain how RTI impacts both general and special education.

RTI is a school-wide framework that cannot be narrowly defined as a means to classify students inadequately responding to evidence-based instruction with learning disabilities (LD). RTI is a series of procedures implemented by school professionals that facilitate early identification of students with learning and behavior problems with a systematic plan for monitoring their progress and providing them with appropriate interventions. This paper will address the following questions: What are the most critical components of RTI? What does RTI look like in general education? What impact does RTI have on special education and how is it implemented? What resources are available to implement RTI?

### **Critical Components of RTI**

#### Buy in

RTI is a comprehensive framework comprised of various key components. The first critical factor in RTI implementation is administrative and teacher buy-in. Without the support of district administrators, principals, and an understanding by the teaching-staff of the importance of RTI, implementation will face serious hurdles. It is best for campus administrators to articulate their support for RTI and clarify the potential benefits. Additionally, when administrators support the implementation of RTI teachers will likely be provided quality professional development to help build RTI capacity (see Sidebar 1 for building capacity resources).



### Universal Screening

A major component of school-based RTI is “universal screening” also called benchmark testing. This means that two-to-three times per year (beginning, middle, and/or end) all students take a benchmark test in reading and mathematics. This assessment provides teachers with information regarding student’s current levels of performance in the target area compared to grade-level standards. Universal screening allows teachers to identify the students who are at-risk that may benefit from small-group intervention in the area of need (Cummings, Atkins, Allison, & Cole, 2008). This immediate and data-driven intervention ensures that schools are not using a “wait to fail” approach to helping students at-risk for academic failure. Without universal screening, teachers would be relying on observation or possibly assessment tools that are not valid or reliable (Elliott, Huai, & Roach, 2007).

Which assessments are effective for universal screening? Those decisions vary from school to school and are typically made through a collaboration of teachers, principals, and district curriculum personnel. However, certain assessment tools have been validated and are commonly used in schools throughout the country. For example, in the area of reading certain states have benchmark assessments that schools can use. In Texas, schools can elect to use the state reading benchmark tool: The Texas Primary Reading Inventory (TPRI). This test is used in grades K-3 and assesses students in spelling, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and comprehension (see <http://www.tpri.org/> for additional TPRI information). Another popular benchmark assessment is “The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills” (DIBELS) which is used for students in grades kindergarten through sixth (see <https://dibels.uoregon.edu/dibelsinfo.php> for additional information). Other options include district-made assessments or universal screening measures that are included in evidence-based reading or math

programs that a district may have purchased.

### Intervention

Following universal screening, students identified as needing more intensive support are placed into small groups for intervention. While in these groups, academic growth is measured every 2 or 3 weeks by using ongoing “progress monitoring”. Progress monitoring involves giving students brief assessments, such as distinguishing different sounds orally or the number of words read correctly in a minute. These quick assessments measure how well the academic intervention provided is working. When student’s scores improve then they are responding to the intervention. When students fail to improve, then the teachers use this data to adjust instruction or provide more intensive support. For example, after 6 weeks of intervention for reading fluency, student A’s words correct per minute score went from 31 to 46. However, student B’s score went from 37 to 39. This minimal change alerts teachers that an adjustment in the intervention for student B is necessary.



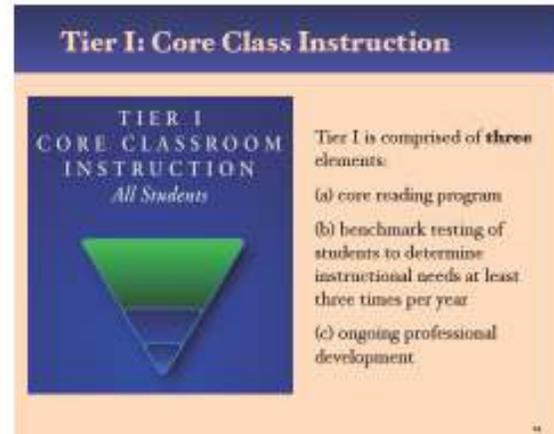
### Evidence-based Instruction

Another key component of an RTI framework is the use of evidence-based teaching practices. In 2001, the federal No Child Left Behind Act stated that schools should be using research-based methods for teaching students in K-12 (see <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml>).

Furthermore, the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004 indicates that to classify a student with LD, evidence based instruction and intervention must be documented prior to special education referral. This ensures that a lack of quality instruction was not a reason for academic delay. Now more than ever school districts have access to evidence-based interventions (See the end of the article for resources available on the web).

### Tiers

An RTI framework is typically based around the concept of “tiered” intervention. Although districts decide which specific model of RTI they will use, this article will explain RTI through the lens of a 3-tier framework. Tier 1 is typically known as the “core” curriculum. In tier 1 the general education teacher uses an evidence-based curriculum for a specified amount of time each day, e.g., 90-minutes a day in reading and 60 minutes per day in math, to instruct all students. Students identified as needing additional support through universal screening (usually 6 students or less per class), move onto tier 2. Tier 2 is provided in addition to tier 1 and consists of 20-30 minutes per day of more intensive intervention in the area of need. After examining the findings from each student’s progress monitoring record, students not improving in tier 2 intervention (typically more than 10 weeks though it could range to 20 or 30 weeks) enter tier 3, which replaces tier 2. Students in this tier receive more intensive intervention in a one-on-one or small group setting for up to 45-60 minutes per day (Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts at the University of Texas at Austin, 2005). Students not showing adequate improvement in tier 3 may be eligible for special education services for a specific learning disability. If this occurs, they will continue to receive quality tier 3 instruction, along with specific goals as set forth in their IEP (Gresham, 2002; Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003).



### **RTI within General Education**

In an RTI framework, tier one is designed to meet the instructional needs of all students in the general education setting during a 90 minute period, which occurs five days per week. Effective tier one instruction is key to developing and sustaining RTI. Early intervention begins in tier one and has the potential to provide quality instruction, address learning difficulties and remediate deficits to get student performance back on track. An effective tier one classroom shows clear evidence of direct, systematic and explicit instruction based on scientific research (National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 2005). The unique learning needs of students are defined by universal screenings (benchmark testing), progress monitoring data, teacher input, and collaboration with other professionals such as special education teachers, reading specialists, ELL specialists, and diagnosticians. Teams of teachers and administrators meet often to analyze student data and plan instruction to support student progress. The purpose of these meetings is to focus on solving problems and improving instructional decision-making. Data gets analyzed at the individual student level and at the classroom and grade level. If data indicates that several students or groups of students are having the same academic difficulty then instructional methods and materials may need to be adjusted. This means

supplementing core programs with various activities, materials, grouping procedures and teaching strategies. All of these procedures combined will redefine the instructional environment in the general education setting to assist students targeted for additional supports (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006).

For example, data indicates that students are struggling with particular phonics skills such as distinguishing between short vowel sounds according to universal screening and progress monitoring data. During planning, general education teachers in collaboration with specialists (i.e., special education teacher, reading specialist) could implement mini-lessons that last 15-20 minutes within the class period to focus on enhancing performance in that target skill area. Teachers may need to supplement this instruction with evidence-based materials outside of the core program being utilized. This instruction could be provided by the general education teacher, paraprofessional, or an instructional specialist within tier one. The student's progress monitoring data will assist in determining if the intervention is working or if alterations need to be made to the instructional delivery and materials. There are other ways to differentiate instruction in order to reach decisions about intervention for students. Students struggling with fluency could be paired up for 10 minutes of partner reading that includes repeated readings, 1-2 minute timed readings and graphing the number words read correctly. Controlled text passages can be used from your core basal reading program or supplemental passages can be used as text sources for practicing fluency. Again, ongoing progress monitoring data indicates if the curriculum and instructional strategies are effective or need to be adjusted.

General education teacher's roles will shift as they begin to analyze ongoing student data from progress monitoring to determine student progress and adjust instruction accordingly. It is important that

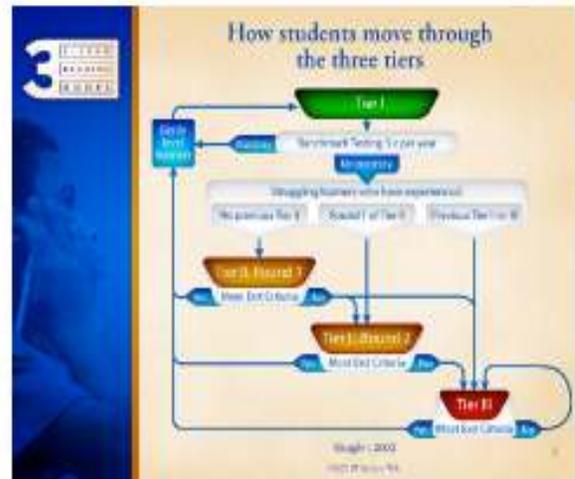
teachers continue collecting and using progress monitoring data to inform instructional decisions and document these efforts. Special education teachers and instructional specialists (i.e., reading and ELL specialists) may provide beneficial information and insights to effective implementation. In successful RTI implementation, research-based instruction is an expected feature of tier one instruction prior to any referrals for supplementary instruction or special education. Well-designed tier one instruction in the general education setting can reduce reading and math failure for the majority of students and the number of students referred for special education (Dickson & Bursuck, 1999). A well-designed and implemented tier one instruction will meet the needs of approximately 80% of students (Cummings et al., 2008). General education teachers, special education teachers, reading specialist and administrators must work together on a regular basis and provide ongoing to support to each other for tier one instruction to be effective and meaningful for students. Despite the best efforts toward effective instruction, approximately 5-7 percent of students will require additional supports or special education, (Torgesen, Alexander, Wagner, Rashotte, Voeller, & Conway, 2001). After research-based interventions have been attempted in tier one and progress-monitoring data indicates that growth levels are not acceptable for students to achieve established benchmarks, students are considered for additional instruction in tier two. Tier two instruction is when students are provided an additional instructional time beyond tier one for approximately 20-30 minutes/day five days per week. Tier two instruction takes place for a fixed period of time, provides intensive - targeted instruction with the goal of remediating academic deficits, (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003).

Similar to tier one instruction, tier two instruction is determined based on student need. Tier two instruction will look different across instructional groups depending on

what specific academic deficits are being remediated. Groups may be working on phonological awareness/phonics, fluency, vocabulary or comprehension. Phonological awareness instruction may include oral exercises of blending and chunking different sounds that students are struggling with distinguishing. Other phonological awareness/phonics instruction may include guided blending of sounds from text or modeled and guided reading of sentences. Again, the instructional focus is determined through analysis of student data and collaboration. Structured and scientifically based instruction is provided to students in small groups.

There are a variety of instructional materials and strategies to develop fluent reading, vocabulary and comprehension. Some of them include specialized passages, audio equipment, repeated readings in different modalities, and partner reading. Students should read approximately 90% of words correctly (Blevins, 2000) during independent reading so a variety of passage levels should be tried. Explicit vocabulary instruction including simplified definitions, synonyms, visuals and words used in context are all examples of potential vocabulary instruction provided through the use of research based materials. Comprehension strategy instruction such as previewing, summarizing, clarifying and questioning is explicitly taught to students to improve understanding of text (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). General education, special education, Title I, or English language learner staff members may teach tier-two groups. A team effort is essential in helping meet the instructional needs of students. Administrators provide leadership in identifying students for tier-2 instruction. Spreadsheets of student data and documentation of previous interventions provide necessary information to facilitate discussion about students' instructional progress. Data from students' progress monitoring is used by teachers and key personnel (e.g., school psychologists) to

determine students instructional needs and to facilitate the process of grouping and re-grouping based on performance. A well-implemented RTI framework provides more support for all students by allowing school personnel to make informed decisions through student data, use of research-based materials, tiered instruction, and flexibility with instructional methods.



### RTI's Impact on Special Education

#### Tier 3

While tier 3 may be considered part of general education in some RTI frameworks, we are considering tier 3 part of special education. We discuss tier 3 as part of special education since tier 3 is for those students who struggle academically to improve following tier 2 intervention and support. Although all of the students provided a tier 3 intervention might not be identified as special education, their needs are intensive (based on their minimal response to tier 1 and tier 2 intervention) and are more like the instructional needs of students in special education than those in general education. Within a 3-tier model the third tier offers more intensive intervention for students in a setting of one to three students for 45-60 minutes per day in addition to tier 1. In addition to students receiving initial intervention due to a deficit in a particular area, such as math calculation, this group also may include

students already placed in special education (Marston, 2005). In tier 3 students continue to have their progress monitored every two weeks as the special education teacher, or a reading or math specialist provides intervention to the students. Students showing limited or no improvement in tier 3 may be referred for special education consideration. At this point, a learning disability may be evident based on inadequate response to evidence-based intervention. RTI documentation, observation, and assessment data can be used to identify students with LD using this approach (Gresham, 2002; Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003).

#### Identification of Learning Disabilities

In the past, schools primarily relied on an IQ discrepancy model to identify students with LD. Using an RTI framework, schools may administer many of the same formal assessments, however, they will have the addition of other valuable data – students' response to instruction and interventions. Traditional practices of diagnosing students with disabilities have been criticized as being a "wait to fail" model. This criticism arises from the discrepancy model's diagnosis of a disability only after extreme learning difficulties are present (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). Additionally, many students from low-income homes have traditionally been unable to receive special education services because their IQ scores were not significantly different from low achievement test scores (Stanovich, 1999).

RTI offers an alternative option for the identification of LD (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). There are several ways in which RTI has the potential, or promise, to serve as an improvement over the "wait to fail" model for LD identification. Problems with the IQ discrepancy model include late identification for students with extreme learning needs, referring for special education based on potentially imprecise teacher screening with insufficient data, and low achievement scores which could be the result of inadequate instruction (Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003).

#### Changing Roles

The impact of RTI on special education extends beyond the classification of students with disabilities. For special education teachers, diagnosticians, and school psychologists, the role they play may change as schools continue to use RTI. For example, schools that have traditionally relied on a pullout model of service delivery for students with disabilities or at-risk students may begin to embark on inclusive or collaborative models of instruction. This includes the special education teacher collaborating, co-teaching, or consulting with general education teachers to differentiate small-group instruction within tier 1. "The success of core instruction with all students in general education becomes a critical determination. It is most likely the success or failure of this differentiated core instruction that leads to referrals for additional services, which in many cases can include special education" (Cummings et al., 2008, pp. 29). The way that general and special education teachers use data to inform instruction and collaborate to provide high-quality instruction in tiers 1 and 2 can make a dramatic impact on preventing academic difficulties and remediating students.

It is important to mention that IDEA 2004 does not mandate RTI, but simply presents the option. With more and more schools embracing RTI as a model of instruction and disability classification the roles of the school psychologist or diagnostician may change as well. More than ever, their expertise in differentiation, consultation with general education teachers, and guidance with a wide-range of assessments and progress monitoring may be needed. Recently, research indicates that school psychologists may serve as campus leaders for RTI implementation, data management, and providing feedback to teachers regarding how to differentiate instruction (VanDerHeyden, Witt, & Gilbertston, 2007).

### Unanswered Questions

As with any new framework in education, questions and concerns regarding implementation will occur. One commonly asked question is: how can middle and high schools use response to intervention? Presently, most of the research conducted on RTI has been done in the primary or upper elementary grades (Marston, 2005; Vaughn & Fuchs, 2003). Potential reasons for this include the idea that RTI is a preventative model of education, and students in middle and high school with academic difficulties or disabilities may already be diagnosed with a disability. Furthermore, in the area of reading, an abundance of research has focused on reading development in the area of phonics, phonemic awareness, and the alphabetic principle. However, RTI can be considered for older students with academic difficulties, particularly in the area of reading. Universal screening, progress monitoring, using tiers to provide layers of instruction for students with reading difficulties is currently being researched (Vaughn, et al., 2008). RTI is a relatively new concept and the basic principles can be applied to older students, but more research is needed to determine the impact that RTI is having on educators and students in middle and high school.

What model or framework of RTI is best? That depends on the specific needs of each campus and district. The model introduced in this article is a 3-tier framework including the standard components of universal screening, progress monitoring, and a third tier which includes intensive instruction for students with and without disabilities. However, schools may research and create a hybrid approach to RTI, which may include anywhere from 2-4 tiers depending on what district personnel feel is most appropriate.

### Getting started

In closing, administrators, educators and policy makers need to continue to view RTI for what it is: a framework for delivering high quality instruction to all students. RTI is not

a program, time of the day, and not just for some students. RTI is a framework that is based on core principles for delivering high quality instruction that include a scientifically based curriculum, universal screening, progress monitoring, tiered levels of instruction, and teamwork. Schools must serve students based on educational need rather than how they are labeled and identified. This fluid process of instruction enhances the educational potential of students by making sure that instruction is geared toward their particular needs.

There are schools across the nation successfully implementing RTI. If you are considering RTI at your school or district a good first step is to visit schools that are already implementing RTI and network with colleagues about the challenges and accomplishments they have faced. Campuses and districts considering implementation are also encouraged to reach out to universities and regional education service centers to find out what RTI services or professional development opportunities may be available locally. Administrators and teachers need to collaborate to identify the best first steps towards successful implementation. The Response to Intervention framework provides an excellent opportunity to develop teamwork, high-quality instruction and most importantly improve the academic performance for all students.



### Response to Intervention – Resources and Information

The following websites will provide you information and resources to assist school

districts with successful implementation of RTI.

- The National Center on Response to Intervention:  
<http://www.rti4success.org>
- The RTI action network sponsored by the National Center for learning disabilities:  
<http://www.rtinetwork.org/>
- Institute of Education Sciences What Works Clearinghouse  
<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>
- The Florida Center for Reading Research:  
<http://fcrr.org/>
- Intervention Central by Dr. Jim Wright  
<http://www.interventioncentral.org/>
- Building RTI Capacity by the Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk  
<http://buildingrti.utexas.org/>
- Center for Development and Learning  
<http://www.cdl.org>

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## A Response to Intervention Journey

By  
Nicole Power

Ensuring all students become successful, life-long readers is a fundamental endeavor of literacy educators. While recent endeavors have brought changes to literacy pedagogy, the National Institute for Literacy ([www.nifl.gov](http://www.nifl.gov)) reports that the number of Americans struggling with reading and writing has steadily increased over the years. At present, the NIFL contends that an estimated 14% of all US citizens are functionally illiterate. Tackling this dilemma in a proactive fashion, Bethany Public Schools (Bethany, Oklahoma: <http://bethanyschools.com/>) has explored and successfully implemented a novel approach to help readers who struggle.

### Starting Out

Bethany, Oklahoma is a small urban school district near Oklahoma City. In 2005, Bethany implemented a Problem Solving Model of Response to Intervention. Initially, Dr. Mary Stevens, director of special services, returned from a conference on RTI and could not wait to get started. Her enthusiasm for RTI was infectious! For several years Bethany's special education team had known that basing eligibility solely on discrepancy testing was not a good system. They had wrestled with this information and attempted to find ways to balance the testing with other pieces of information collected from teachers and other specialists.

Prior to RTI, Bethany Schools had a pre-referral system in place similar to that in most Oklahoma schools. Typically a pre-referral system attempts to gather evidence that there is a need for special education testing before proceeding to the evaluation process. This pre-referral was a step in the right direction, but still lacked documentation of student performance and progress. A problem-solving model seemed like it was well suited to provide educators with those missing pieces of information needed to guide decisions in planning for student success. The first step in beginning implementation was to find someone who could "show the ropes." A

quick search lead Bethany educators to local RTI specialist, Dr. Gary Duhon, an Associate Professor of School Psychology at Oklahoma State University. Dr. Duhon visited with a small group at Bethany and helped explore systems currently in place that could create a foundation for implementation. He also helped faculty think about resources available in the school that could be used to build a problem solving structure. With an appropriate model in place, Bethany began providing professional development for staff.



### Screenings and Tiers

While multiple models of RTI are available, universal screenings are common to all. Bethany also implements group-administered spelling and reading comprehension screenings. Spelling and comprehension screenings are obtained from AIMSweb (<http://www.aimsweb.com/>) for a fee. There is much research connecting word knowledge and spelling ability to reading outcomes. After piloting the spelling screening, educators found that the results matched state testing outcomes and identified students that teachers also felt were struggling with reading and spelling. The specific spelling screening Bethany uses examines words correct and letter sequences correct, a much more sensitive measure of student performance and growth. Bethany's reading comprehension screening is a MAZE activity. As the students read silently, they are asked to examine every 7th word. Next, they are asked to circle a word from a choice of three that best fits the context of the story. This measure looks at reading

fluency and comprehension accuracy. It also gives students who do not read aloud well an opportunity to show their progress on a silent reading measure. Each classroom typically dedicates thirty minutes for actual administration and an additional fifteen minutes for instructions and collection of materials. Teachers spend approximately two hours grading the screenings.

It is important to remember that the purpose of the screenings is not to diagnose, but to gain the most valid data in the most efficient manner, creating a picture of students who are at risk and students who are not. More in-depth measures may be done later for students who seem to require this. None of these measures completes a picture of student abilities, but when combined and viewed with other data, such as state testing and teacher input, a more complete picture of student needs emerges. At the secondary level, state testing scores, grades, attendance, and behavior data are analyzed. At risk students are given more individualized screenings. The data gathered during this time helps guide instruction and allows struggling students to obtain immediate help.

Most models of RTI have 3 tiers. The first tier involves universal screening. Any student who does not meet predetermined standards receives differentiated instruction in addition to core instruction. Students who do not make sufficient progress receive tier two interventions. This level typically includes small group instruction in a specific area in addition to core instruction. Students who continue to struggle receive more intense interventions at tier 3 and often a special education evaluation. Bethany Schools has chosen to use a 4-tier problem-solving model. Another layer of intervention between tiers three and four affords an additional opportunity to increase the intensity and/or frequency of the intervention in order to determine what kind of help best meets the needs of the student.

In Bethany, tier 1 is composed of universal screenings and core instruction in grades K-5. During the first five years of RTI implementation, teachers strengthened the literacy block by using the results of

screenings to guide instructional decisions. Some grade levels have chosen to level reading groups across classrooms during a 30-minute block so each teacher can explicitly instruct students with common skills. The students with the most intense reading difficulties often receive extra support from specialists working collaboratively with teachers in the classroom. Other grades have chosen to rework reading groups within their classrooms based on screening results and progress monitoring.

Those students who are in need of more intensive instruction, based on screening results, receive Tier 2 services. Tier 2 services consist of low intensity interventions that focus on specific skills that the student is missing. Each intervention at Tier 2 is tailored to the needs of the individual student and carried out by general education teachers, other certified professionals, or paraprofessionals.

Students not successful with low intensity interventions then receive Tier 3 level services. These consist of medium intensity interventions that continue to focus on specific skills. General education teachers provide most Tier 3 interventions. They offer explicit instruction, correction, and feedback. Depending on the skill support needed, instruction may be carried out by other certified specialists. When a student continues to struggle despite general education interventions, he/she is placed on the most intensive end of the continuum, tier 4. At this level a certified professional conducts individual interventions. The intervention is typically more intense and frequent than the previous tiers. Explicit instruction, correction, and feedback continue to be important elements in the intervention. At this level the teacher continues utilizing prescriptive testing and investigating the learning needs of the student more thoroughly. Often, special education testing is a component of this level, but does not always result in placement.

All students who do not meet grade-level expectations are monitored weekly to ensure that they are progressing and that interventions are effective. The RTI team meets bi-weekly with all teachers to discuss individual student progress and develop

intervention strategies. Members of the RTI team include: general education teachers, speech-language pathologists, the principal, a school psychologist, special education teachers, and Title One and/or Reading Specialist. Other members who contribute their expertise are the school counselor, special education director, and paraprofessionals.

As Bethany became more familiar with RTI over the years, its educators felt more competent in its techniques and see more clearly the positive impact it has on all students in the district. Currently, Bethany is expanding RTI into the secondary settings. In the last several years, secondary educators are screening secondary students and providing professional development at the secondary level. Plans are in place to fully implement interventions and begin decision-making using an RTI model at the middle school level next year.



#### How Bethany Did It

Bethany was one of the first districts in the state to implement RTI. It has been a challenging, but rewarding, endeavor. It requires specific documentation and intervention planning, but the results are well worth the extra effort. Bethany's RTI Coordinator regularly attends team meetings, develops interventions, and assists in the eligibility process. She also collects and analyzes student data to help pinpoint curriculum strengths and target weaknesses.

Most schools utilize their school psychologists, reading specialists, and speech/language pathologists to fill this position. It is important that the RTI Coordinator have some background in data analysis and is housed at the site. Teachers will need someone with whom they can readily consult regarding student needs.

As with all change, RTI did not come easy. All members of the staff struggled to an extent with changing roles and expectations. The chief challenge that Bethany faced was professional development. Clarifying the need to change from a discrepancy model to a problem-solving model was a major step. Next, Bethany implemented training on effective interventions and how to analyze the data collected. This is an ongoing process in schools. There is always new research and better ways of helping students. Talking to professionals about techniques used that are ineffective and supplying them with information about current and valid intervention methods is important. This can be done through traditional professional development or other creative methods. One school held a contest for new, research based ideas. Teachers submitted their intervention ideas, citing the peer-reviewed journal it was based upon. They also tried this intervention with a student. The teacher with the best idea won a gift card. Another idea was to post different intervention areas in the workroom (spelling, oral reading, comprehension, vocabulary, and early literacy). Teachers posted their research-based ideas under each category. When each category had at least two ideas, all teachers had lunch provided by the parent/teacher organization (PTO). These ideas were compiled and given to each teacher as an intervention resource. Other schools have created newsletters compiled by specialists in their school. Each specialist wrote a newsletter offering ideas for effective interventions for teachers to try in their classrooms. The reading specialist gave ideas for increasing word decoding, the speech/language pathologist (SLP) wrote about comprehension strategies, and the psychologist wrote about behavior interventions. Use the resources available in

your school, keep it research based, and be creative!

Changing roles of professionals within the school was also a concern for some in the beginning. Some teachers worried that they were being asked to serve students who previously might have been referred to special education. Specialists were also concerned that they were being asked to work with general education students at the expense of their caseload students. RTI helped Bethany Schools realize that they could not make RTI fit what was already being done. They had to take a close look at how they were servicing all students and determine if they were using time efficiently, reaching as many students as possible. Bethany completely overhauled how they worked with students. Forgetting the “status quo” and designing “dream programs” was the way to go. Bethany researched new service delivery models. Some that improved services to students and helped educators find time to collaborate with each other. Yes, job boundaries have blurred somewhat. Specialists do some of the work traditionally done by regular education teachers and regular educators do some tasks traditionally viewed as roles of a specialist. Educators learned to work together to help the students. Specialists have learned a great deal about classroom management from teachers and classroom teachers have learned a lot about literacy from the specialists. Together, Bethany teachers are making huge strides toward helping students achieve more than ever!

One of the biggest challenges in keeping RTI running smoothly from year to year is to ensure that every new teacher is trained in RTI. The school sets high expectations for teachers and students. Although interventions are all tailored for individual students, Bethany has developed policies and procedures to help make sure interventions are done with fidelity.

### Tools and Resources

Bethany’s elementary is one of the largest in Oklahoma with over 700 students. Screening is a large undertaking that takes thought and planning. DIBELS administration is done with a team of at least 10 certified

professionals and some paraprofessionals trained to administer DIBELS with a high amount of integrity. Each classroom is directed to meet in a central area where several DIBELS screenings can be completed simultaneously. Each classroom is screened in about 15 minutes. Bethany uses the DIBELS data system and AIMSweb to track collected data. All data is collected within one week and results are processed and returned to teachers the following week. It is important to note that schools do not simply print out results and take action. A great deal of time is spent analyzing the results.

Schools, grade-level teams, and individual teachers must be taught how to think about what the results mean to them. Based on the results of the screening, teachers ask, "What changes must be made to the curriculum to improve instruction for all students?" If one classroom is making more progress than others, teachers of those classes find ways to share effective instruction techniques with their colleagues. It is important to think outside the box with your data and change the things that are not working.

Teachers collect intervention data using forms developed for each tier level and bring these forms with them to problem solving meetings. The forms document the specific goal towards which the student is working, frequency of the intervention, and the measurable data from each intervention session. During the meetings, student progress and team decisions are recorded on an Intervention Log. At the end of the meetings, data forms are collected and kept for records. Every student who receives interventions during the year has his/her own file folder. All intervention data, screenings, and correspondence are collected in this folder. If a student moves to another school, the folder may be sent with them so the new school has the information. If a student moves to Tier Four, much of the information in the file folder can be used to help make eligibility decisions. Bethany has also created RTI Resource Manuals for all teachers. These contain copies of forms, reminders of policy, and some of the district's "favorite" interventions.



## Results

RTI has provided many benefits for Bethany Schools. Students are receiving the attention they need without needing to "qualify" as in the old discrepancy model. It has also improved the way teachers teach - they are much more aware of curriculum strengths and weaknesses and can guide their teaching based on screening results throughout the year. Moreover, the staff is able to help many more students than was possible with the former discrepancy model. In the past up to 80 students a year were tested. If there was no discrepancy, they did not receive further help. Now Bethany provides interventions for up to 150 students per year. Approximately 50% of these students respond to interventions and are able to catch-up to their peers. Another 25% receive Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions in order to maintain success in the general education curriculum. The last 25% may receive more intense interventions through special education or other programs. With the benefits of RTI, students have been assisted before they reached the stage of needing special education. When this happens, it benefits everyone: students are encouraged, teachers receive "proof" that their teaching is effective, and parents are reassured.

Through intervention, many students have come a long way. For example, when Bethany first began RTI, a teacher attended the first meeting having already decided that a student was learning disabled (LD). In fact, she had written LD in big letters on his progress-monitoring book. The teacher was

encouraged to try the interventions and monitor progress. By the end of the year, the student had reached grade level benchmarks and no longer needed interventions. During the last meeting, the teacher agreed that interventions, not special education, were what this student had needed. She then erased the big LD letters from the progress book. Three years later, this student is successfully completing fifth-grade without interventions or special education supports. RTI provides tangible proof to teachers that they have the skills to help these struggling students. When teachers feel confident in their ability to assist all students, they are not as eager to ask for special education evaluations as their first option.

Using RTI has helped the staff work in a more cohesive manner. Prior to RTI, each teacher or specialist had a piece of the puzzle regarding a student. Specialists rarely had time or understood the necessity of sharing this information with each other. During RTI team meetings, each person who works with a student can share “his/her piece” and complete a picture of the student. When everyone has all the information, developing a plan and working together toward achieving the goal is easier.

Another benefit is that some caseloads of specialists have decreased. This reflects the success of remediating early, before difficulties become disabilities. It also frees time for specialists to participate in co-teaching and collaborating with general education teachers in preventative efforts. Using RTI has led to a better understanding between general and special education. Bethany’s teams are more aware of each other’s expertise and work together for the benefit of all of students. Bethany also has seen the impact of RTI reflected in the Academic Performance Index (API) scores. The two years prior to implementing RTI, Bethany’s API scores were: 1258 (2004) and 1284 (2005). After using an RTI model for one year Bethany’s API scores jumped to 1390 in 2006 and continued to climb to 1441 in 2009. Great results encourage both administration and teachers to continue to use an RTI model.

### Lessons Learned

The most important part of making RTI successful is administrative support and professional development for the teachers. The first year was the most challenging, but providing effective professional development was a step in the right direction. Also, schools need to continue providing ongoing professional development. Although it is a difficult process, Bethany’s students are reaping its benefits, which is the most important reason for doing this.

Never give up! There are always going to be challenges. RTI is not something schools can implement and then breathe a sigh of relief once it is in place. There is always something that can be done better - new ideas, better interventions, and more effective ways to reach kids. Remember to celebrate your victories with children in addition to improving weaknesses. According to the most recent Oklahoma School Report Card, 35.7% of Oklahoma students are enrolled on a reading remediation program ([www.schoolreportcard.org](http://www.schoolreportcard.org)). However, through effective use of RTI, Bethany has been able to drastically improve student performance, ensuring literacy success for many students. Bethany has made a colossal step toward helping all students become lifelong readers that may work in your school, too.

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**Research Summary**  
**Linda McElroy, Ph.D.**  
**Column Editor**

**Editor's note:** *In addition to serving as the editor for this column, I decided that I wanted to enjoy actually writing the article myself. It addresses the role of teachers in Response to Intervention models. It will specifically review one research study, listed below, and discuss implications for Oklahoma teachers, administrators, and teacher educators.*

Nunn, G.D. & Jantz, P.B. (2009) *Factors within Response to Intervention: Implementation Training Associated with Teacher Efficacy Beliefs, Education, 129, (4), 599-607.*

I proudly consider myself to be “a teacher”. In my current role at a university as a “teacher educator” and in my earlier teaching in early childhood and elementary classrooms and as a reading specialist, I have always worked to help my students believe they could succeed. If you and I could sit down together to discuss the ideas in this column, I might start by reading a book to you. In this case, I might illustrate my goals by reading *The Little Engine That Could* by Walter Piper. I want my students to be able to say with confidence, “I think I can, I think I can, I think I can....” In examining current research and policies about Response to Intervention, I wanted to find ways to help my current students (preservice teachers) and their soon-to-be colleagues (inservice teachers) become more effective teachers throughout their entire careers, especially within the structure of Response to Intervention programs. These programs are well-explained through other articles in this edition of *The Oklahoma Reader*. Enormous collections of resources about many aspects of RTI are available in journals, books, professional conferences, etc. The International Reading Association has developed RTI: Guiding Principles for Educators and other Position Statements, and its website provides outstanding

resources online, through webinars and podcasts, and through its online bookstore. The amount of information seems both overwhelming and encouraging. Choosing one article to review for this column was a daunting task!

I chose to review this research study because, to me, one of the most exciting parts about RTI is the emphasis on the role of a “responsive teacher” in supporting the success of students at each of the tiers of the RTI model. This very complex process of multi-tiered, data-driven, research-based instruction continually relies on teachers who are professionals, in every sense of that word. They must provide positive interactions with children, observe how each child responds to instruction, and continually adapt and modify instructional practices that have been confirmed by research so that each child is supported in his or her literacy development. Strong preservice preparation is vital. Continuing professional development is also vital. The process of becoming “an effective teacher” is not automatic, nor is it ever really completed. Especially in a complex framework like RTI, many factors are involved.

I decided to look at research about one factor which has to do with teachers’ perceptions that support their confidence in their own professional practice. The study was about teachers’ efficacy beliefs within Response to Intervention settings. Teacher efficacy refers to a teacher’s belief that he or she is effective in having a positive influence on students’ learning. An impressive body of earlier research, such as work done by Bandura, is consistent in pointing out interrelationships between teacher efficacy, positive teacher-student interactions, and beneficial learning outcomes for the students.

The study that I will review examined some of the factors in implementing Response to Intervention within a school setting and ways that these factors influenced the teachers’ efficacy beliefs. The data came from 429 K-12 teachers and support professionals who had participated in a year-long process of professional

development and on-going follow-up in conjunction with RTI at their school sites. The participants were from small to large school districts, within one state, which had been selected as RTI pilot sites. They had received five separate days, at approximately six-week intervals, of intense training in classroom instruction based on best practices of instruction, assessment, and implementation (RTI Core Concepts and Skills Training). Throughout the year, they were involved with School-Based Collaborative Team Assignments where they worked within teams on problem-solving, assessments, intervention plans, progress monitoring, and data-based decision making. School-based implementation also included an average of three follow-up consultations with teams focused on progress with implementing the RTI process. At the end of the study, participants completed the Teacher Efficacy Beliefs and Behaviors Scale (TEBBS) as a measure of teacher efficacy. The survey included three components: Intervention Skills Efficacy (ISE), Motivational Skills Efficacy (MSE), and External Control Efficacy (ECE). Analysis examined two independent variables as possible influences on teacher efficacy within this setting. One was RTI-Involvement (RTI-INV) and was described as high, moderate, or low for each participant's evaluation of their involvement in the ongoing work of the collaborative teams at their school, based on a descriptive scenario that was provided. The second was RTI-Implementation (RTI-IMP), which was defined as the level of expertise of the school team in applying RTI principles at the school. RTI-IMP was described in four levels of increasing expertise: preparation for implementation, mechanical implementation, routine implementation, and refined implementation. Scenarios of increasing skills and commitment within the RTI process defined the four levels.

Both variables (involvement in the process and levels of expertise in implementation) were significantly associated with teacher efficacy beliefs on

two measures of the TEBBS scales. Teachers with High or Moderate involvement in the RTI process and teachers at advanced levels of implementation held significantly stronger beliefs about their Intervention Skills Efficacy. Sample survey responses in this area of Intervention Skills Efficacy include statements about whether teachers consistently attempt different ways to teach students to learn, teachers are skilled in many different methods/strategies in teaching, teachers are prepared and willing to teach all subjects assigned to them, and teachers have the necessary skills and qualities needed to produce learning.

Results with respect to Motivational Skills Efficacy were also significant, indicating that participants who had High or Moderate involvement in the RTI process and teachers who described their schools at higher levels of expertise in implementing the RTI process rated their efficacy in using motivational skills more strongly. Sample survey responses in the area of Motivational Skills Efficacy included statements examining whether teachers can reach the most difficult students, teachers give up if a child refuses to learn from them, teachers believe that students are just not motivated or that students can be motivated to learn.

Results on the third component, External Control Efficacy, did not show association with the RTI variables. The respondents, in spite of their high efficacy beliefs about instruction and motivation, still recognized factors that they perceived to be outside of their control, such as family, resources, peers, and circumstances.

We might look at the results and decide that they fit with our expectations—highly involved teachers and teachers in schools with high levels of expertise would be expected to have higher beliefs about their own influence in the process of supporting students' learning. However, achieving these high levels does not “just happen.” Some of the components that assisted the teachers are important to consider. The study included effective models of professional development. The instructional

days for the teachers were spread over the entire school year and were supported in an on-going fashion. Support came through teams of the teachers themselves as they worked collaboratively to deal with the challenges of implementing new ideas. These teams made the process applicable to individual situations, not to a theoretical “one size fits all” kind of thinking. The three additional on-site follow-up consultations focused on their progress in implementing RTI. The teachers were more able to feel successful, because they had both the responsibility for discovering (and sometimes creating) strategies that would work, and the support of colleagues who helped them in the process. While they recognized that some of the factors may still be outside of teachers’ control, they saw that many of the factors are ones that teachers can positively influence.

The real value of this study to the teachers, administrators, and teacher educators in Oklahoma is to affirm the importance of recognizing the role of each professional who is involved in Response to Intervention. It is also to acknowledge that teachers will be most effective in complex RTI environments when they are given strong support. Many other recent research studies related to RTI also document the importance of continued learning and of opportunities for collaboration while implementing the new ideas. Professional development opportunities, spread over time and supported through collaboration with colleagues, will help Oklahoma educators to exert powerful influences on the learning of Oklahoma students. Through RTI and other instructional processes, teachers can recognize children who are ready for new challenges, children who are making exciting progress, and children who need more support to enhance their progress. Teachers can find ways to support each of the individual learners. Looking at the success of the students, Oklahoma educators will be able to smile and say, “I thought I could, I thought I could, I thought I could....”

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## **Reading Policy by Julie Collins**

### **Implementing Response to Intervention (RTI)**

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a process for assessment and instruction of students, providing intervention services as necessary based on the progress monitoring assessment results, and can be used for identification of students for special education services. This process was included as an option for state implementation in the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004. The RTI process was identified as a “very hot” topic in Jack and Drew Cassidy’s annual review of “What’s Hot for 2010” article in Reading Today (2009/2010).

Change can be a challenge in our lives, particularly when it seems that a familiar process in our professional routine has been totally upended. Although RTI is a process that comes to us from the field of special education as a framework for assessing and possibly identifying students for services, the complete framework needs to be embraced and implemented schoolwide. Classroom teachers and all resource teachers in a school need to work collaboratively in order to implement an RTI program to serve the needs of their student population. It is important to keep in mind

that the goal of RTI is to support students who are struggling to read (Allington & Walmsley, 2007). As such, it is important for reading specialists and general education teachers with specific knowledge of reading development to be involved in the development and implementation of an RTI framework in your local district and school.

RTI is often referred to as a three tiered framework (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006), but in reality it can be formatted in a variety of organizational models to work best for your students and with the resources available at your school. All models of RTI include a first tier that is designed to provide high quality curriculum and instruction in the general education environment. It is estimated that 80% of students will be appropriately served through this instructional delivery (Hale, 2006; LDAA, 2006; Batsche, et al., 2005). A common three tiered framework would then include a second tier that involves targeted interventions for students identified through universal and classroom assessments as needing support; and a third tier would provide more specialized intervention for students who are not responding to the tier two interventions. Some RTI models consider tier three to be special education placement and some models include a fourth tier that would be considered special education placement (Batsche, et al., 2005).

There are many resources available to assist you in this process. The International Reading Association (IRA) has been involved in the development of legislation allowing and encouraging the RTI process (Allington & Walmsley, 2007), and is continuing to lead the way with professional resources to assist you. IRA has an RTI Commission which has recently released RTI Guidelines (International Reading Association, 2010). These guidelines are available online and can be ordered in a brochure at [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org). Additionally, IRA has published several books focused on the RTI process, which can also be found on their website.

In Oklahoma, a group of educators worked on an implementation policy manual

during the 2006-2007 school year. You can find support and information through the Oklahoma State Department of Education can be found at [sde.state.ok.us](http://sde.state.ok.us). RTI resources there are provided through the Special Education Services. You can search the site for information, past presentations, and workshop and conference updates. They would welcome working with you on implementing the RTI process.

You can also find some excellent information about RTI at the National Center for Response to Intervention, at [www.rti4success.org](http://www.rti4success.org). This site has a plethora of resources to provide information on the research behind RTI and the implementation of the process.

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### **Professional Resources**

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

**Reviewed  
By  
Marlo Lee and Rebeka Vaughn**

In many elementary schools across the nation, Response to Intervention (RTI) has become part of the academic vocabulary. Although it has become widespread, few understand the implications of RTI. Contrary to what some educators believe, RTI is not a program to be purchased. Rather, it is a multi-tiered framework that scaffolds instruction tailored to each child's individual needs. Traditionally, most American schools have utilized a discrepancy approach that has forced teachers into the "wait to fail" trap. RTI assumes a preventative approach to help children at the first sign of struggle by providing individualized, research-based interventions. In the book *Response to Intervention: A Framework for Reading Educators*, Douglas Fuchs, Lynn S. Fuchs, and Sharon Vaughn delineate a detailed layout of the framework and provide answers to the basic questions that most educators have about RTI. Published by the International Reading Association (IRA), each chapter focuses on one facet of the RTI framework, which the authors contend

consists of three tiers. The authors have created a resource that is well organized and easy to read. The text offers basic information for teachers who are already using RTI or desire to delve into an unknown world. To help the practitioner, the text includes many visual aids such as graphs and sample lessons.

Fuchs, Fuchs, and Vaughn emphasize the need for an effective, comprehensive core reading program for all readers. This layer of the reading program is entitled "Tier 1." The authors place a special importance that the core program include the five "non-negotiables" of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. The authors clearly point out that each component of instruction must build upon the other, leading to the final product of reading - comprehension. Perhaps the authors might have included specific resources or examples that teachers could use to implement this type of instruction in their classroom.

According to the authors (within an RTI approach), assessment plays an integral role by providing teachers with baseline data and progress monitoring for growth. Fuchs, Fuchs, and Vaughn describe (in chapter 2) how screenings are used at the beginning of the year to identify students who might be at risk for reading failure. After the initial screening has identified students who need additional support, progress monitoring is administered on a regular basis to track growth. *Response to Intervention: A Framework for Reading Educators* discusses the use of Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) as a frequently used tool that allows teachers to both screen students and monitor their progress. The authors contend that DIBELS allows practitioners to design and regularly adjust interventions based on students' particularized needs.

Fuchs, Fuchs and Vaughn explain the role of intervention in (Chapter 3). Based on data from the screening, students are prescribed interventions tailored to their specific needs. The authors liken this

process to that of a physician prescribing a medication for a specific symptom of an ailing patient. The authors name this level of intervention “Tier 2.” The tables included in Chapter 3 that describe intervention priorities for each grade level and include helpful guidelines for implementing effective interventions. These suggestions provide valuable tools for the educator. Both resources can immediately be implemented in the literacy classrooms.

Next, “Tier 3” is elucidated. At this intensive level of intervention, students are provided a substantial amount of support in order to make growth. The authors compare “Tier 3” to a person needing hospitalization for a critical illness. At this level, students either respond to the most intense form of intervention and move back into the regular classroom or become candidates for special education. The authors address the debate over how many tiers or levels of intervention best serve the students. Some educators argue having too few tiers will hasten the road to special education. On the contrary, having more tiers prolongs students being appropriately served through special education. Despite the debate on the number of tiers, most educators agree that the final tier (after “Tier 3”) should be referral for special education services.

As with any new initiative, there are some positives as well as a few drawbacks. The authors describe how RTI requires a large amount of personnel in order to be implemented properly. Teachers and support staff needs to not only know, but be able to implement evidence-based literacy methods to use for interventions. Moreover, assessments may take a substantial amount of time from traditional classroom instruction. Even with these few drawbacks, the positives seem to far outweigh the negatives. RTI provides a structured framework in order to best serve each child’s individual needs. Students who were once on the fast track to failure are now given the opportunity to succeed through RTI. Response to Intervention: A Framework for Reading Educators is a

“must read” for educators becoming familiar with RTI.

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## **Molly’s Musings**

**By  
Molly Levite Griffis**

### **Anatomy of a Novel**

As a writer, I am frequently asked, “Where do you get your ideas?” and I usually make up some wild story about having been stolen by gypsies as a child or having lived on the street holding a sign that reads, “God will bless you if you give me money,” so the questioner will think I have actually done and/or seen the people or plots I write about, but the truth is I had an ordinary upbringing by two wonderfully ordinary people who loved me and my sister more than any children deserved to be loved. I married a man who laughed at my jokes but who was totally lacking in imagination. When we danced, he had to wear one black shoe and one white one in order to remember which was his right foot and which was his left. But I, whose shibboleth is “...and those who were dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music.” kept on dancing and making up stories. Two of my recent books had main characters who were trudging the lonely road called Alzheimer’s. I addressed that topic not because it was “hot”, but because I had personal experiences I needed to get out of my heart

and onto paper. Foster Harris, my creative writing professor and mentor at the University of Oklahoma, advised us that pouring our troubles on to paper would soften our pain, so when a longtime friend was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer's at the age of fifty-five, I began writing about what was to become an eleven year journey to the inevitable sad exit. To better understand what her husband and son were going through, I joined an Alzheimer's support group and read everything I could get my hands on about that insidious "gypsy thief" of all that's beautiful and good in life. When I finished that adult novel (called *Marilyn and Me* and as yet unpublished), I realized that I had a second Alzheimer's story that had to be told, this time through the eyes of a young boy whose lawyer grandfather has his memory stolen "one base at a time" as Judge Benjamin Franklin Bennington describes it.

When I finished the second book (*Once in a Blue Moon* published this spring.), I realized that I desperately needed to write something funny, something that would make me (and hopefully my readers!) laugh and pull me out of the blue funk I was in from working on a heavy subject like Alzheimer's for such a long time. I had read about an oilfield town in Oklahoma named Whizbang and jotted the name down to use someday. Not long after that I got to thinking about a woman named Ruby Trotter who had meant a great deal to me as a child. My ever vivid imagination causes me to say that Ruby was my nanny, but the truth is she was a teenager who lived in the country outside my home town of Apache and wanted to live in town because she didn't like spending so much time riding the bus over muddy roads to school. Besides that, if she lived with us in the basement room Daddy fixed up for a long line of "hired girls", she had privacy, something she never could hope for at home. Ruby was killed in an automobile accident when I was six or seven and I grieved the loss of her for many years, so having her name surface in my head all these years later told me that I needed to

write a story about her, to grant her that little bit of immortality of which we all dream.

So...I had a town...Whizbang...and a character...Ruby Trotter...now all I needed was a plot and an ending. I always write the last chapter of any book I am working on first so I will know where the story is going. Now that last chapter may have to be changed a bit, but the overall theme of it...the essence of its being...remains the same.

To my surprise, as I was writing that last chapter, I discovered that the book was set in the sixties, Ruby was a pink Harley riding hairdresser who moved to Whizbang from New York City to open a unisex hair design studio (The Baptist in Whizbang had no idea what the word "unisex" meant but whatever it was they were sure it had to be Biblically incorrect!) and the people of the town were preparing to erect a banner over Main Street that read, "Welcome to Whizbang, Ruby Trotter" an amazing development because until Ruby came, cut and restyled everybody in Whizbang's hair, that banner had never been raised in praise of a woman.

Ruby made me laugh.

And someday, she's going to make you laugh, too!



## **Educating to Engage: How to Motivate Our Adolescent Students**

**By**

**Lisa Delgado Brown**

Reading is an essential skill. From the earliest moments when our youngest students enter their new school buildings for

their first taste of formal education, we focus on reading. We, as educators, know the value of a good education. We understand that to really experience lasting success our students will have to learn to become good readers. We encourage them, educate them, and hope to hook many of them early on. Somewhere between those first encounters and puberty, we begin to lose some of our students. By the time they are considered adolescents, their motivation and overall engagement in literacy activities has begun to dwindle (Wigfield, Eccles, & Rodriguez, 1998). The goal of this article is to review research on adolescent literacy in an attempt to discuss strategies and practices that will engage our adolescent students once more.

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress' (NAEP) 2007 reading assessment, reading skills are increasing for both fourth and eighth graders, particularly among struggling and average students. Results indicated the largest growth in fourth graders and eighth graders showed a one point increase overall since last year. Specifically in Oklahoma, our fourth graders scored 217 and were slightly below the national fourth grade average of 220. Of those fourth graders 22% scored in the proficient range and 35% scored below basic level. Our eighth grade Oklahoma students scored 260 and were one point below the national average score of 261. Of those eighth graders, 25% scored in the proficient range and 28% scored below basic level. Our scores demonstrate that our fourth and eighth graders are similar to the national averages in terms of their overall scores. However, it seems that there is a troublesome national trend where the percentage of our students that score in the proficient range is surpassed by those students failing to meet the minimum reading requirements. Nationwide, 24% of fourth graders were proficient, leaving 34% with only basic skills, and 34% performing below basic levels and amongst eighth grade students 27% were proficient, 43% with basic skill levels, and 27% performing below basic skills level.

Again, Oklahoma skills are comparable. The majority of our fourth and eighth grade students are demonstrating that they only possess basic to below basic literacy skills. This is a travesty, not only for the students, but schools, and society in general. The goal of our education programs center around how we can better serve not only these students in our schools, but also our adolescent students in general.

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) states that "the challenges associated with adolescent literacy extend beyond secondary school to both college and elementary school." (NCTE position statement, 2007). Similarly, the International Reading Association (IRA) asserts that "literacy development is an ongoing process, and it requires just as much attention for adolescents as it does for beginning readers" (IRA position statement, 1999). Adolescent literacy is a process that starts early on, far before students reach adolescence. In fact, early literacy practices have been found to reinforce further literacy development, regardless of language, with respect to English reading acquisition throughout students' early years and at least through middle school (Reese, Garnier, Gallimore, & Goldenberg, 2000). Elementary school students are mastering the skills that will continue to serve them as they advance educationally. However, high school teachers still have students who are lagging in several fundamental areas. These teachers do not have instructional time to spare; they cannot catch up their students and teach all the content they are expected to impart to them throughout the course of the year. These problems have plagued us for decades. With regard to literacy, it seems that good readers are more likely to increase their proficiency, whereas struggling readers continue to struggle; essentially the Matthew effect continues where the rich continue to get richer, the poor get poorer and the gap between the two grows exponentially in terms of overall literacy acquisition (Stanovich, 1986).

### What is engagement?

“Acquiring literacy is an empowering process, enabling millions to enjoy access to knowledge and information which broadens horizons, increases opportunities, and creates alternatives for building a better life.” - Kofi Annan, Political activist

The underlying question is what sparks a students' literary engagement, and how does that connect to their reading activities and achievement. Literary engagement is crucial not only to reading, but in all content areas. Literary engagement can be described as “the integration of motivations and strategies in literacy activities” (Guthrie et al., 1996). In order to engage students, we need to incorporate teaching practices that will make learning interesting for them. Engagement can be seen as malleable and responsive to changes in a student's environment. Further, teachers can use engagement as a tool to measure and evaluate not only how students perform academically, but also to explore how they think (Fredericks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Engagement can be used to a teacher's advantage once we learn not only how to inspire it, but also how to adapt it to the needs of our various learners.

Students are different, in personality, cultural background, appearance, and learning styles. Motivational strategies that work for one student may not work for all. Students' engagement can be fostered by first recognizing that they will likely respond differently to motivation strategies employed by their teachers. For example, competition does not motivate all students, and may lead some to disengage (Baker & Wigfield, 1999). As educators, our goal should be to provide activities that not only motivate students, but also to promote activities that lead to an increase in a student's intrinsic motivation. In fact, intrinsic motivation was found to be a significant predictor in students' overall reading abilities and abilities to understand text (Wang & Guthrie, 2004). Teachers can encourage students' intrinsic motivation by employing teaching practices that have been found to heighten

their interests, such as highlighting personal relevance, promoting student preferences, utilizing the classroom social environment, and fostering self-regulation strategies (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000). Once students are interested, their motivation should instinctively switch from external to intrinsic (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000). Teaching practices are an essential component in not only transmitting to students what they need to learn, but also more as a method to entice them and stimulate their learning. Our teaching practices effect student engagement. Researchers have found commonalities amongst highly engaging teachers such as having established encouraging classroom communities (both academically and socially), having clear expectations for students, modeling and monitoring scaffolding, using manipulatives and predictions in problem solving and strategy use, encouraging self-regulation, and valuing teaching and student learning (Raphael, Pressley, & Mohan, 2008). Combining several engaging practices will ultimately lead to a more stimulating learning environment (Raphael, et al., 2008). Further, by adapting classroom curriculum to provide additional supports which accentuate students' strengths, teachers will be more able to help all students, even those that struggle (Alvermann, 2002; Moje, Young, Readence, & Moore, 2000).

The importance of the social atmosphere of a classroom in either strengthening or weakening changes in adolescent students' motivation and engagement should not be underestimated. How students view their classrooms socially, and how they relate to their teachers are especially important (Ryan & Patrick, 2001). Students absorb information through shared experiences and involvements in their classroom environments. These shared experiences lead to an increase in the students' overall motivation as they interact within these learning environments (Hickey, 2003). The classroom then emerges as an instrumental element. Thus, in order to further motivate

students, teachers should relate the practice and process of learning in some way to students' lives (Hickey, 2003; Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000). Our adolescent learners need to relate to their activities and assignments. If they are able to connect activities to their own lives, intrinsic motivation is once again likely to increase (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000). Reading curriculum should be responsive to student needs, both in interest and in fostering their own individual reading abilities (Ivey, 1999). Another way to increase adolescent engagement and motivation is through incorporating technology use in the classroom. In a recent meta-analysis study, researchers found that incorporating technology use in the classroom had a positive increase amongst adolescent's engagement and motivation (Moran, Ferdig, Pearson, Wardrop, & Blomeyer, 2008). As our society continues to depend upon technology use more, it seems logical to work to incorporate and strengthen student's abilities in this field. Technology has the ability to change the ways that children learn literacy in the real world, and in the classroom. To be truly literate in modern society, learners have the need to not only be able to read, but they also must have the ability to critically evaluate these texts. Incorporating more of these types of literacy skills into the classroom, will not only further engage our students, but also better prepare them for the global community that faces them (Gee, 2003).

Another issue that needs consideration revolves around what students want and value from their own literacy instruction. As educators, we have had training and have incorporated recommended literacy teaching methods, but our practices may not be in line with student opinions. One key factor that emerges as crucial to the development of adolescent literacy is offering students choice, thus encouraging a sense of autonomy. In fact, students have reported more connections to their learning environments and increased levels of interest in their studies when they felt their teachers were offering autonomous support

(Shih, 2008). This sense of autonomy was so important that 63% of students have reported free reading time was a favored classroom activity (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Students also reported that silent reading time and teacher read alouds helped them to further understand their reading materials. Ironically, students reported that certain specific assigned books were both a motivator to read (31%) and the cause of a bad reading experience (5%) (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Interestingly, in voluntary out-of-school book clubs, where students have gathered and discussed books of their choice, students have reported that they were interested and motivated by these communal social settings (Alvermann, Young, Green, & Wisenbaker, 1999). Where, then, is the discrepancy? Students enjoy book clubs, we have incorporated them in our classes to stimulate our students and encourage communal collaboration, but the response is not always great. Students in the afterschool book club reported that in-class discussions were not personally relevant to them, and therefore not engaging (Ivey & Broaddus 2001, Alvermann et al., 1999). Additionally, using texts that adolescents value serves to not only increase their engagement, but also helps marginalized learners (defined as outsiders due to differing cultural, religious, race, class, gender, or sexual orientation) (Moje et al., 2000).



#### Beyond Skinner

"We should not teach great books; we should teach a love of reading."

- B.F. Skinner, Psychologist

Obviously, B. F. Skinner was not operating under the tedious requirements of the No Child Left Behind mandates. The goal then is teaching the great books, without destroying a student's love of reading. One suggestion would be to provide students some autonomy in their choice of reading materials. While this may not be something that occurs regularly, there are times when it is feasible. Tiffany Hunt and Bud Hunt (2004), both high school instructors, suggest picking out a central theme for students. Teachers could then offer some books that would meet the thematic criteria and let students choose which book they prefer to read. In offering students a choice, we are empowering them and hopefully hooking more of them. While it is impossible to please all students, hopefully we can help more students approach these great books for the right reasons. It is when students read a book (or do not) for the sole purpose of an assignment that they likely become alienated from the reading process (Hunt & Hunt, 2004).

#### Bridging the gap

"No matter how motivated the students, and regardless of their levels of reading sophistication, asking them to read Romeo and Juliet without adequate preparation is likely to create in them a certain level of frustration and possibly even indifference."

-Lois T. Stover, College Instructor

In order to engage students when choice is not an option, teachers can build a bridge between adolescent readers and the texts they are required to read. To accomplish this, teachers should not only make connections for students between the text with their lives, but also incorporate lessons on the language that is used (syntax and vocabulary), offer pointers on how to read the selection (i.e.: how to read a play), and discuss pertinent themes that the students may be unfamiliar with (Stover, 2003). Sometimes the reasons that students do not choose to read or enjoy required books can be a mystery. It is possible that the reasons could be related to

gender differences (O'Donnell-Allen & B. Hunt, 2001). For example, boys may view Romeo and Juliet as a text that is more feminine. Teachers need to be aware of those underlying reasons and try to offer reasons that students would like to read the text.

Another idea offered to help students connect to texts is utilizing the concept of a 'third space' which students can use as a scaffold in order to reconcile their own understandings of the world and how others see the world (Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo, & Collazo, 2004). A third space is a combination of home/community and school-based understandings that learners bring into their overall conceptions and knowledge of given texts. These third spaces act as bridges for students, offering a link for students between their own understandings of concepts to those presented in their classroom curriculum (Moje et al., 2004). Teachers can help students create third spaces for themselves by teaching them strategies that will help them to critically analyze the texts that they are reading. Teachers can also incorporate the use of peer collaboration and class discussions to further facilitate students' making meaningful connections between themselves and the texts. The more complete their third space becomes, the stronger the bridge between the student and the text will become.

#### Conclusion

Students respond to high expectations. In the global environment that is emerging we need to teach our students not only to be prepared to deal with our current requirements, but for ones we have not begun to imagine. Research has shown that teachers who employ the use of higher-level questioning in their classrooms not only challenged their students, but also helped their students think more critically about their reading (Taylor, Pearson, Peterson, & Rodriguez, 2003). Likewise, students exposed to "more intellectually challenging content" in their language arts courses appeared to have superior reading

achievement abilities than those that did not (Carbonaro & Gamoran, 2002). In essence, it is the combination of what is taught and how it is taught that will further increase student reading and engagement. Engagement has emerged as an essential component in our classroom teaching practices. Students need to be engaged in their learning. The more engaged a student becomes, the better reader they will grow to be. Ideally, teachers should incorporate a sense of autonomy when possible in their instructional practices. Teachers need to encourage collaboration and self-regulation amongst their adolescent students. By incorporating students' background knowledge and helping them make meaningful connections between texts and their lives, teachers facilitate the emergence of intrinsic motivation. Intrinsically motivated readers are likely to continue to be better readers throughout the course of their lives.

As teachers, we have our work cut out for us. We can set up our classrooms to foster engagement, we can incorporate the best teaching practices, and we can encourage our learners to become their best selves possible. However, the real power lies within each of our students, as responsive learners. This article has sought to offer suggestions for increasing a student's overall engagement based upon current research. For our adolescent literacy learners, motivation and engagement are essential factors to their continued academic successes.

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**Technology**  
**Jiening Ruan, Ph.D.**  
**Column Editor**

**Editor's note:** *This article discusses issues related to matching texts to readers. It also reviews websites that support teachers in finding appropriate leveled texts for their students.*

***Matching Text to Readers***  
**By**  
**Charlene Huntley**

Children need many opportunities to read if they are to get better at reading. The research is clear; the more students read, the better they become (Morrow, 1992; Krashen, 2004; Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, & Cox, 1999; Allington, 2006). Also, children

need access to a variety of interesting books they can read. Reading easy and instructional level texts develops vocabulary, fluency, and good reading strategies. The majority of reading opportunities should result in high levels of success (Cunningham & Allington, 2007). Too often classrooms are filled with books too difficult for the students to read. When words are too difficult, it causes an overload on cognitive processes, which results in a breakdown in reading strategies. When this happens children not only lose meaning, they also develop a negative attitude about reading (Allington, 2006). On the other hand, when the books are too difficult, children may get frustrated with those books or even give up on reading them altogether.

By matching texts to students' reading levels, they develop reading strategies as they learn to read for meaning. Reading an easy book requires less energy and concentration. Students become more automatic in their use of reading strategies, resulting in a greater sense of control. They are much more likely to enjoy the reading experience. With a positive attitude toward reading, students will tend to engage in more reading, and in the process, build up automatic word recognition and fluency. Now they can turn their energy toward thinking about meaning as they interact with the text (Fountas and Pinnell, 1999). Books at students' instructional level contain enough challenges but not to a level that frustrates them. These books provide students with opportunities to problem-solve using their newly learned reading strategies.

In order to help teachers more intentionally provide books for children at appropriate levels, several systems have been developed. Most systems take into account text features, text layout, picture support, text structures, and familiarity with content and language (Allington, 2006). They typically range from Kindergarten through 5th grade reading, dividing the text gradients into 3-4 levels per traditional grade level.

The following websites focus on various aspects of leveled books, matching texts to readers, and other issues related to reading instruction using leveled text. These websites have been chosen because of their potential usefulness to teachers and parents. A brief description and overview of specific features are provided for the websites listed.

- Heinemann Publishing Non-Fiction Leveled Text Resource

<http://heinemannclassroom.com/index.asp>

This free website provides leveled lists of non-fiction books that are written to support, reinforce, and extend the existing curriculum. The books, written specifically for national curriculum standards, are available for purchase. They are leveled according to three systems: Guided Reading, Accelerated Reader, and High Interest-Low Vocabulary. Each is aligned with standards and specific content themes. This site also provides a variety of useful teaching tools to support planning for instruction. The webpage, hosted by Heinemann Press, lists contact information and a site map for navigation. The pages have lots of text, making it a bit “busy; however, it is ad-free.

- Info: Reading Programs

<http://readingprograms.info/>

This free site, hosted by Google, searches the internet and media in order to find useful information for teaching reading. It provides a correlation chart of seven book leveling systems, including Guided Reading and Lexiles. It offers several web links to many useful sites, such as OKAPI, which enables teachers to obtain a readability level on any book. It also has a Reading Resource page that lists both free and fee-based resources available for reading. No contact information is provided and there are some ads by Google.

- The Lexile Framework for Reading: Matching Readers with Texts

<http://Lexile.com/>

Lexile Framework for Reading is a free, user-friendly website offering access to a variety of tools for matching text to readers. The Lexile Framework is one of the most used book leveling systems by educators and book publishers. The website provides a lexile analyzer for determining a specific book's lexile level. Book Finder provides easy access for creating book lists for specific reading levels. A lexile map provides an overview for how books are leveled within this system. Research and theoretical foundations are available, as well as easily accessible menus offering valuable information for educators and parents.

- Lit2Go

<http://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/>

This website is a free, on-line collection of stories and poems in Mp3 format, which can be downloaded. The stories are also available in pdf format and can also be viewed as a webpage. Each story is identified by reading level, suggested reading strategies and specific Florida standards. They can also be sorted by author, title, and database. An author section provides a short biography for each. Overall, the site is well organized, straightforward, and easy to navigate. It offers a site map, contact information, frequently asked questions, on-line help, and is ad-free. It is hosted by the University of South Florida.



- McCarthy-Towne School – Leveled Book List Resource

<http://home.comcast.net/~ngiansante/>

This website, designed by Nancy Giansante, is very friendly in appearance and is easy to navigate. The visuals and layout make the information readily accessible. The site offers a correlation chart for the Guided Reading leveling system it uses. It is cross-listed on several websites focusing on reading. It is designed to provide support for both teachers and parents. Contact information is provided. Though it is free, there are no ads.

- Reading A-Z

<http://www.readinga-z.com/>

Reading A-Z is a subscription program which offers 2,200 leveled books available for download and printing. The cost is \$84.95 per year, with reduced rates offered for schools and school districts. Sample books are available for free. In addition, the site provides lesson plans, running record forms, reader's theater, and supporting worksheets for most of the books. A correlation chart for most leveling systems is provided. Reading A-Z was voted Best Reading Program for 2008 and was selected for the Teachers' Choice Award by Learning Magazine for 2006. It is ad-free, provides on-line help, and makes contact information available.

- Saskatoon Public Schools – Instructional Strategies Online

<http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/PD/instr/strats/guided/guided.html>

This free website, hosted by Saskatoon Public Schools, offers a great deal of useful information addressing guided reading that utilizes leveled books, such as grouping for guided reading, leveled texts, literacy centers, and teacher resources that include sample guided reading lesson plans. This is an excellent source for guided reading strategies ranging from Kindergarten through 12th grade. Books are sorted by traditional grade levels and Reading Recovery levels. Many other useful resources that relate to reading instruction

are available. It is ad-free, easy to navigate with a “friendly” appearance, and provides contact information.

**About the author:** *Charlene Huntley is an Assistant Professor at Oral Roberts University in Tulsa, Oklahoma where she teaches literacy courses for undergraduate education majors. She has 20 years experience as a special educator and elementary classroom teacher. Currently she is pursuing a doctoral degree in Literacy at the University of Oklahoma.*

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## Oklahoma Reading Association Membership Form

ORA DUES: \$20 Local Council name or # \_\_\_\_\_  
(Enter "At Large" if you do not belong to a local council)

Local dues \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Check \_\_\_\_\_ Cash \_\_\_\_\_  
College Student Dues: \$5 \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Higher Ed. Institution \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information – Please PRINT legibly

Date _____ mm/dd/yy
Name (Last, First) _____ MI _____
E-mail _____ (email is important for membership renewal dates)
Mailing Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone Number _____ Please enter the number that is best to reach you.

ORA Membership: New \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

IRA Membership: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, IRA # \_\_\_\_\_ Expires \_\_\_\_\_

Remit only ORA dues to:  
**DAWN EVERETT**  
**SEILING SCHOOLS**  
**101 N ELM**  
**SEILING, OK 73663**  
**580.922.7381**

If you receive the Oklahoma Reader or Newsletter **by mail** your ORA dues will be **\$25: Oklahoma Reader/Newsletter** \_\_\_\_\_ online (free with ORA dues) or \_\_\_\_\_ mail (\$5 more)  
All areas are required to check membership status on-line, especially middle initial.  
[www.oklahomareadingassociation.org](http://www.oklahomareadingassociation.org)

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## Editorial Review Board Application

Name \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_

Current Job. \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

*Have you ever reviewed articles for a journal or newsletter?*      Yes      No

*If so, which journal(s) or newsletter(s)?* \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Educational background: Please list your degrees:*  
\_\_\_\_\_

*List all teaching certifications that you hold.*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Circle the areas that you could review articles about. These areas should be ones on which you have expertise or special interest.*

- |                          |                          |                        |                    |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Fluency                  | Adolescent               | Critical Literacy      | Comprehension      |
| Adult                    | Spelling                 | Early childhood        | Vocabulary         |
| Comprehension strategies | Phonics/word work        | Phonological awareness |                    |
| Literature               | Assessment               | Reading Policy         | Struggling readers |
| Writing                  | Professional development | Language skills        |                    |
| Content area reading     | Research skills          | Reading research       |                    |

*List any publications you have or presentations that you have made.*

# The Oklahoma Reader

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## Guidelines for Authors

Authors are requested to submit only unpublished articles not under review by any other publication. A manuscript (1500-3500 words) should be typed, double spaced, not right justified, not hyphenated, and should follow APA, 6th edition guidelines (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association). Tables and graphs should be used only when absolutely necessary. Include a cover page giving the article title, professional affiliation, complete address, e-mail, and phone number of the author(s). Special sections have specific requirements which are described below. The editors reserve the right to edit all copy.

Submit the manuscript electronically as either a Word or rich text file attached to an e-mail message. The e-mail message should include information about which section the manuscript is being submitted for (articles, Teacher to Teacher, Teacher Research, Research Summary, and Professional Resources), the title of the manuscript, and a brief description of the topic. All correspondence regarding the manuscript will be electronic. Send manuscripts to **Klaudia Lorinczova, Editorial Assistant at [klorinczova@ou.edu](mailto:klorinczova@ou.edu)**.

**Teacher to Teacher:** Submit descriptions of teaching activities that have helped students learn an essential literacy skill, concept, strategy, or attitude. Submissions should be no longer than 1500 words, typed and double-spaced, and follow the following format:

-  Title (if adapting from another source, cite reference and provide a bibliography).
-  Purpose of activity, including the literacy skill, concept, strategy, or attitude the students will learn.
-  Description of activity with examples, questions, responses. Please provide enough detail so someone else can implement the activity.
-  How activity was evaluated to know if purpose was achieved.

**Teacher Research:** Submit manuscripts that describe research or inquiry conducted in classrooms. Submissions should be 1000-2000 words, typed and double-spaced following guidelines of the APA, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, and follow this format:

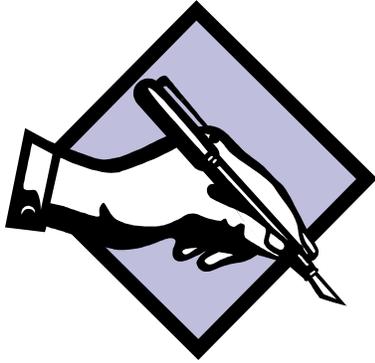
-  Description of the question or issue guiding the research/inquiry, including a short review of pertinent literature
-  Description of who participated in the study, what the sources of data were, how the data were gathered and examined.
-  Description of the findings and conclusions from the research/inquiry.

**Research Summary:** Submit manuscripts that summarize either one current published piece of research or two to three related studies. Submissions should be 1000-1500 words, typed and double-spaced following guidelines of the APA, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, and following this format:

-  Introduce and describe the study or studies, including purpose, information about who participated and in the study, how and what type of data was gathered, and the findings or conclusions.
-  Discuss the implications of the study or studies for classroom teachers. The implications could include a discussion of what the study told us about literacy learners and literacy learning and/or what the study implies teachers should do to support learning.

**Professional Resources:** Submit reviews of professional resources of interest to teachers or reading specialists. Resources reviewed could include books for teachers, books for children, curriculum packages, computer programs or other technology, or games for children. Reviews of technology will be forwarded to Dr. Jiening Ruan, editor of the Technology and Literacy column for her review. Submissions should be 500-1000 words, typed and double-spaced following guidelines of the APA, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, and following this format:

-  Title, author, publisher of the resource.
-  Short description of the resource.
-  Critical review of the resource, including strengths and weaknesses.
-  Short discussion of how the resource might be useful to a teacher.



***Doing something in your classroom that really helps  
kids learn literacy skills?***

***Researched an issue or problem in your classroom?***

***Read a great professional book?***

***Learned something new about  
Research-based best practices?***

Write about it for ***The Oklahoma Reader***.

*Share what you know and do with others by submitting an article, an activity description, a research summary, a review of a professional resource, or a summary of your own action research.*

