

A Response to Intervention

by author Michael Opitz, Ph.D

Given that the ultimate goal is to discover what children know and need to know in order to advance as readers, teachers sometimes need to intervene and design a program tailored to their students' individual needs.

Allington and Baker (2007) remind us that in order to be most effective, reading instruction must include three essential elements:

- High-quality reading instruction that occurs throughout the day and that includes cross-curricular books
- Strategy lessons with time for independent practice applying the strategies when reading
- Additional expert support and more intensive reading instruction beyond what the classroom teacher can provide

Renewed interest in intervention came about as the result of the 2004 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which calls for multiple levels of instruction to meet the needs of all children in regular classroom settings. Response to Intervention (RTI) is the vehicle for carrying out this mandate. RTI is a process of implementing high quality, scientifically researched instruction, monitoring student progress, and

adjusting instruction based on student response (NASDE and CASE, 2006). The goal of RTI is to expand the range and diversity of prevention and intervention options for reading problems to provide alternate means for identifying children with learning disabilities.

RTI is about designing and delivering the best possible literacy instruction and paying attention to how children perform to determine the appropriate next steps. But just how to structure those next steps is open to question. Some advocate the use of a standard protocol (Vellutino, Scanlon, Small, & Fanuele, 2006) in which students are identified for a series of successive intervention tiers. All students are provided with the same intensified instruction, hence the label *standard protocol*.

Others propose a problem-solving model to deliver intensified instruction (Grimes & Kurns, 2003). As with the standard protocol, identified students receive a series of successive intervention tiers. However, this model differs in that the specific instruction provided to the student varies according to individual need, which is determined by looking at each student's performance on some type of

Intervention by Design meets the needs of RTI

- Provides intensive intervention
- Supports the problem-solving model
- Uses a diagnostic / prescription / progress-monitoring approach
- Tracks and analyzes data with the Data Management Tool



assessment. As delineated by Grimes and Kurns (2003), this problem-solving model involves four steps:

1. Define the problem.
2. Plan an intervention. (i.e., plan instruction)
3. Implement the plan. (i.e., provide the instruction)
4. Evaluate student progress.

After student progress is determined, teachers need to decide what to do next. Should the student continue to receive the same level of intensified instruction? Should the student receive yet another, less intensified level of support to learn specific content? Questions such as these can only be answered by looking at each student's individual performance.

Given these two models, **Intervention by Design** is based on the problem-solving model for two main reasons:

- It closely resembles the kind of assessment and instruction that is indicative of effective intervention programs (Allington & Walmsley, 2007; Allington & Baker, 2007).
- Both the instructional design and the philosophical premises on which it is based

coincide with **Literacy by Design**. The result is instruction that is congruent with and seamlessly links to classrooms using **Literacy by Design**. The result is a coherent curriculum for children.

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