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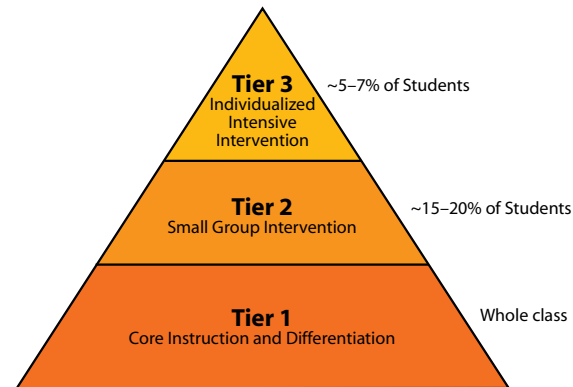
Monitoring Progress to Reach Reading Goals

by Sylvia Linan-Thompson

In today's heterogeneous classroom, monitoring progress is more important than ever. Research has long shown that teachers need to use assessment data to inform their instructional planning and decision making (Afflerbach, 2007; Edwards, Turner, & Mokhtari, 2008). With today's focus on Response to Intervention, or RtI, this principle of using assessment to inform instruction has been more formally defined and organized in a system to help connect this critical research finding to the complex logistics of classroom teaching. Response to Intervention (RtI) describes a framework that promotes the use of successive cycles of assessment, instruction, and decision-making as a means for preventing the development of learning difficulties.



Students who continue to exhibit difficulty in acquiring reading skills after one or two cycles of Tier 2 receive Tier 3 instruction. While there might be some variation in terms of the length of Tier 2 or who provides instruction, the sequence is standard. The third tier is the most intense. Because very few students (5–7 percent) need this level of instruction, students receive instruction in groups of one to three students. In many models, the third tier of instruction is provided outside the classroom



Multi-tier instruction

The cycle begins with benchmarking. The data provides the teacher with information about students' reading skills. All students receive core reading instruction or Tier 1. The classroom teacher provides the first tier of instruction to all students. This does not mean that all students get the same instruction, however. In this first tier, instruction is differentiated and scaffolded, and flexible grouping is used to maximize learning.

Students who do not meet benchmark are also provided Tier 2 instruction, and their progress is monitored with formative assessments. Assessments are used on a regular basis. If students have made adequate progress and meet benchmark, they exit from Tier 2 instruction. If they have not made adequate progress, they continue to receive Tier 2 instruction in addition to Tier 1. In most models, the first two tiers of instruction are provided in the general education classroom. The second tier of instruction is provided to students, usually 15–20 percent, who do not meet grade-level benchmarks. Targeted instruction meant to “catch them up” is delivered to these students in small, homogeneous groups.

Characteristics of effective Tier 1 instruction

Tier 1 reading instruction and core reading instruction are synonymous. For Tier 1 to be effective for all students, attention must be paid to both the content and delivery of instruction. Furthermore, it has to meet the literacy needs of all the students in the class. To accomplish this, *Reach for Reading* has ensured that the instruction is explicit and systematic, is differentiated, and that there are sufficient materials to ensure that all students have multiple opportunities to read every day regardless of their reading level.

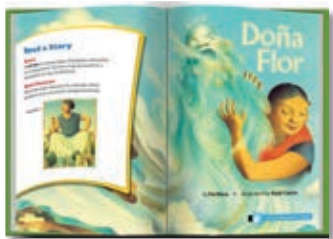
There is consensus in the research field about what constitutes effective reading instruction. Effective reading instruction builds students foundational reading and decoding skills, develops their vocabulary knowledge, teaches strategies and builds knowledge needed to comprehend and analyze text, and focuses on fluency instruction that includes increased exposure to vocabulary and print (National Reading Panel, 2000). *Reach for Reading* includes instruction in all of these areas with interactive and integrated lessons.

Additionally, because *Reach for Reading* is built around content area topics, students as early as first grade are engaged with both narrative and expository text and acquire not only new content but also the vocabulary, language, and text structures associated with a variety of texts. This enables students to apply core reading knowledge in all subjects throughout the school day.

The content of instruction is only one part of effective instruction. *How* instruction is delivered is equally important. Well-delivered and supported instruction helps to create a safe environment in which students can acquire new knowledge. The lessons in *Reach for Reading* are structured to provide several layers of support. The first level is the structure of the lessons. They provide a clear introduction, with modeling to make the task explicit for children. Guided practice is included so the teacher can ensure that children learn the task, and then there is independent practice to solidify learning. Additionally, guidance in providing corrective feedback and opportunities to check for understanding are included.

Differentiation and Tier 1 instruction

As noted earlier, Tier 1 instruction includes differentiation. To become successful readers, students need opportunities to read different types of text every day. To ensure all students have access to text they can read during Tier 1 instruction, the *Reach for Reading* program gives students a variety of reading resources. The rich, authentic literature and informational texts in the student anthologies are scaffolded with on-page supports, frequent comprehension checks, and pre- and post-reading activities that build skills, strategies, background knowledge, and vocabulary to support all learners. In addition, a range of leveled reading options are available for small group reading. In addition to providing reading practice, content-based reading at varied levels builds students' content knowledge and allows them to participate in and contribute to discussions.



◀ Scaffolded anthology selections provide an entry point for all learners in Tier 1.



▲ Differentiated small group reading—with Explorer Collection books and trade books—matches readers and texts over a range of reading levels.

Finally, across lessons, flexible grouping formats are used to provide students with additional opportunities to practice what they are learning. Homogeneous and heterogeneous small group formats are used in addition to purposeful pairing as appropriate for the learning objective.

Multiple measures

Frequent assessments are critical to monitoring progress and identifying opportunities for reteaching for all students. A variety of assessment tools, including both formal tests and embedded informal assessments, are provided to gauge student progress and identify students who may require reteaching or students who would benefit from additional practice to build automaticity. Using a range of measures is critical to capture the multi-dimensional range of skills required to read, write, listen, and speak.

3 Spell Words with Long a ✓
Use **Letter Cards** to build *bake* and blend the word. Then have pairs use **Letter Cards** to build *same, haze, cape, grape, and frame*. When all pairs have built their words, have the class chorally blend and read the words together. Repeat for word families *-ake, -ale, -ame, and -ate* like those in the Word Bank. Assign **Practice Master PM4.4** for more practice.

bake	tale	name	gate
lake	male	game	date
make	pale	same	late
take	sale	tame	plate
rake	whale	flame	skate
snake			
shake			

Word Bank: Long a

Check & Reteach
OBJECTIVE: Read and Spell Words with Long a ✓
Read and Spell CCVc Word Patterns ✓

Dictate: *Tale. Farfallina & Marcel is a tale. Tale.* Have children write then chorally spell *tale*. If children misspell *tale*, display the word using **Sound/Spelling Cards**. Repeat the word and have children sound out the word with you. Then have children rewrite the word correctly. Repeat with this sentence: *Marcel is a male goose.*

▲ In addition to formal assessments at the end of each week, every tested skill includes point-of-use ideas for informal monitoring of progress and reteaching.

Providing Tier 2 instruction

Who needs Tier 2 instruction? Students who do not meet benchmarks benefit from Tier 2 instruction. There are a variety of factors that inhibit students' reading progress including

- limited early literacy experiences
- lack of instruction or practice
- failure to develop phonemic awareness
- failure to develop the alphabetic principle
- failure to master basic decoding skills
- ability to read accurately but not automatically
- very slow learning.

When planning Tier 2 instruction, use data to determine what students need and group them homogeneously. When children can't decode, we focus on basic word-level skills and ensure that students learn the skills needed to read words. They need to know letter sounds, how to map those sounds to letters, and blend them to read words. They also need to practice reading the words until they can read them automatically. It is also important to ensure that students are also learning language. Building students' listening and speaking vocabulary will also help them in reading words automatically. When words are known well, both the pronunciation and meaning are accessed automatically.

Reach for Reading has several components that can be used to support these students as they develop the code, including routines and resources for reteaching foundational skills identified for the early grades. For intermediate grades, a complete phonics intervention kit, *Reach into Phonics*, is provided for students who struggle with foundational reading skills. In addition, a range of digital resources provide opportunities for repeated practice for automaticity development.



▲ Comprehension Coach and *Reach into Phonics*

When children can decode but are not fluent, Tier 2 instruction focuses on building fluency in text reading. But children who are not fluent may also need to develop language and automaticity. They also need opportunities to read text at their independent reading level.

For this group of children, the *Reach for Reading* trade books are a valuable resource. Materials in the program's leveled library extend to reach students who are two years below the grade-level reading targets. These books can be used to provide students practice reading at their independent level while they build content knowledge. Further, there are several opportunities for students to practice additional independent reading. Time is allotted in pacing for the leveled library for teacher work with Tier 2 students and to conduct conferences with all students.



Some children will develop adequate decoding and fluency skills but will not comprehend what they read. These students need to learn to monitor their comprehension and to use comprehension strategies. However, to understand text, students must also know the meaning of the majority of the words they are reading:

- Pacing includes reading and rereading texts to enable the students to read once for literal comprehension and then read a second time to deepen comprehension.
- Background knowledge and vocabulary lists are provided for anthology and library reading to help students at all levels.
- Writing options provide options for all students to respond to reading in level-appropriate ways.

Building students' background also aids in comprehension. The words we can associate with topics we know about and the depth of our knowledge of specific topics facilitate our understanding of texts on those topics. Therefore exposure to a wide range of topics provides students with opportunities to develop vocabulary associated with various topics in an engaging and embedded context and thereby build their world knowledge in the process.

Conclusion

It is not enough for us to assess for accountability purposes. Teachers not only need to know how to collect pertinent data on students' learning and development, but to use it in an easy-to-implement way to make appropriate instructional decisions about grouping, reteaching, and more. The range of measures, teaching resources, and reteaching resources in *Reach for Reading* help teachers respond to individual needs and grow as capable and confident readers, writers, listeners, and speakers.

For **research citations** see page R27.