

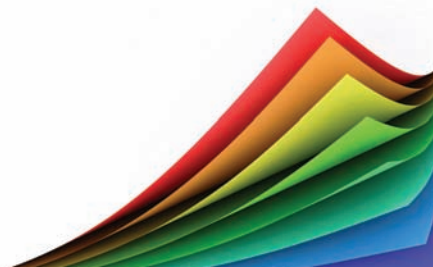


Part One

Introduction



Effective Reading Instruction: The Teacher Makes the Difference



Effective Reading 1 Instruction

THE TEACHER MAKES THE DIFFERENCE



Teacher
Knowledge

Classroom
Assessment

Evidence-Based Teaching
Practices

Response to
Intervention (RTI)



Chapter Questions

- Why invest in teacher effectiveness?
- How have political trends influenced reading instruction in our schools?
- What is reading?
- What is the primary ingredient in the recipe for every child's reading success?
- What are the seven pillars of effective reading instruction?



Key Terms

Illiteracy
Aliteracy
Reading reform
Common Core State Standards
Literacy coach
Professional development
Teacher knowledge
Classroom assessment
Evidence-based instruction
Classroom management
Response to Intervention (RTI)
Motivation
New literacies

**Motivation and
Engagement**

**Technology and
New Literacies**

**Family and Community
Connections**

Vignette: Becoming a Teacher

Selena is a college junior preparing to become an elementary school teacher. Her upcoming class on teaching children to read is not just another college class, but represents for her the real beginning of her teacher preparation and an eventual teaching career. Without doubt, teaching children to read will be the centerpiece of her classroom instructional program. Selena recalls fondly her own first-grade teacher, Mrs. Roberts, who introduced her to the world of books and reading. Selena hopes she will be a “Mrs. Roberts” to the many children she will teach over the course of her career.

Of the several professors who teach the required course on teaching children to read, Selena chose Dr. Favio’s class. With many years of successful teaching experience in public schools, Professor Favio is known for her rigorous, evidence-based, hands-on instructional

methods that get her students ready for their first year of teaching. She begins the course on the first day by asking students to read a scenario printed on the cover of the course syllabus:

On one occasion, Frank Smith (1985), a well-known literacy expert who had never taught a child to read in a classroom, was confronted with a daunting question by a group of exasperated teachers: “So, what would you do, Dr. Smith, if you had to teach a room full of 30 five-year-olds to read?” Dr. Smith’s response was quick and decisive. He first indicated that children learn to read from people—and the most important of

these people are teachers. As teachers, you need to comprehend the general processes of how children develop and learn and the specific processes whereby children learn to read.

After the students finish reading the quote, Dr. Favio continues with a question clearly intended to provoke discussion: “How did you learn to read? What do you remember about learning to read? Who helped you? Turn to your neighbor, introduce yourself, and share your thoughts in response to these questions.” Immediately the room fills with the buzz of students sharing their memories about how they learned to read. Selena shares her memories with her “elbow partner,” Terrence. She tells him how she was first introduced to books by her mom and grandma. “Did they ever read *Curious George* books to you?” asks Terrence. “These books were my favorite!”

After a few minutes of discussion, Dr. Favio asks the class to share some of their memories, which she records on a whiteboard at the front of the classroom.

- Little kids learn to read from someone who reads to them.
- I learned to read from my older sister.



- I remember writing letters and asking my mother what they spelled.
- I had a favorite book I memorized because my grandmother read it to me over and over again.
- I remember my teacher reading a great big book to us in kindergarten called *Mrs. Wishy Washy*. I loved that book!
- I watched *Sesame Street*, *Barney*, and *Reading Rainbow*. I learned the letters and some words from watching TV.

Next, Dr. Favio asks her students to define what it means to *read*. She tells them to take one minute of think time and then share ideas with their elbow partners. Selena remembers how she struggled learning phonics. Terrence remarks, “Well, I agree that beginning reading should help children decode words using phonics, but I don’t see how you can call it ‘reading’ if you don’t understand what you are reading. I mean, I can call out all of the words in my geology textbook, but *understanding* what they mean is another thing. For me, that takes some work!”

Dr. Favio invites comments from the class and records statements about the meaning of reading:

- I think reading is when you sound out letters to make words.
- Reading involves understanding what’s on the page. (Terrence’s contribution)
- I learned to read from little books that used the same pattern over and over again like the *Three Billy Goats*.
- Learning phonics is the first part of reading and comprehension is the last.
- Reading is about learning information that makes you smarter.
- Reading is the ability to put together what you already know with what the author wants you to learn.

Dr. Favio brings the discussion to a conclusion at this point. “While these are critical issues for all teachers to reflect upon, when we look at research evidence there can be no doubt that the teacher’s knowledge about teaching and learning and the skill to put this knowledge into practice make the greatest difference in whether or not a young child learns to read. And because reading is, in a very real way, the gateway to social justice, your role as a reading teacher has the potential of changing lives and, therefore, our society.”

That, thinks Selena to herself, is why I have chosen to become a teacher. ■

Teacher Knowledge

Becoming a Master Teacher of Reading

Reading is the skill that makes virtually all other learning possible. For instance, at Oxford University in England, the oldest university in the English-speaking world, for nine centuries graduates have been described as “reading” their chosen subject or field of study. Of course, Oxford students like all other students from preschool



**IRA Standards
for Reading
Professionals:**

Standard 1, Elements 1.1,
1.2, 1.3

**Response to
Intervention:
Expertise**

through college engage in all sorts of additional learning activities, but clearly reading is the primary instrument. Thus, the teaching of reading is something we must get right if our students are to have the world of learning opened to them.

In our 60-plus combined years of service as teachers, we have come to understand that master teachers of reading have a unique skill set. For one thing, they are readers themselves. They read for pleasure and personal growth and in the process serve as great role models to their young charges. Master teachers know that you can't "sell" what you don't do.

Great reading teachers, like other accomplished professionals, keep up with cutting-edge developments in their field. They regularly read professional journals like *The Reading Teacher* or the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* to learn about the latest research-based classroom practices. Almost surprisingly, we have seen that many master teachers are just a bit unsatisfied with their own knowledge or skill levels in spite of their tremendous success with student learning. They constantly seek out new ideas from colleagues and professional development opportunities that help them support children in becoming strong readers. We also know that master reading teachers see reading instruction as equal parts art and science. Though skills must indeed be taught, they believe that teaching reading is far more than simply teaching skills.

Consider the piano teacher who must teach her young pupil how to make music. The student must learn to read sheet music and then translate that information into pleasing notes from the instrument. Although teaching the skill of reading music is critical to training new musicians, time must also be spent helping students learn techniques for interpreting the written script while appreciating and taking pride in the tunes they can perform. Similarly, the reading teacher's task is to teach students how to translate alphabetic symbols on a page into the language and ideas shared by great authors. As with a fine piano, there is richness and opportunity in the instruments of reading: books, graphic novels, online readings, and much more.

In the early grades, we introduce young children to reading with fictional allies like Bill Martin's *Brown Bear* (1990) and Bridwell's (1985) big red dog Clifford. As students grow as readers we enlist Shel Silverstein's poetry and even J. K. Rowling's adventures of Harry Potter and his friends. Throughout all levels of reading development, master teachers likewise bring in great nonfiction sources so that students hone their reading skills while learning about interesting subjects like dinosaurs, weather, and the origin of the universe. In this way master reading teachers are able to help their young charges transform squiggles on a page of paper into something rich and exciting.

We begin our learning experience in this chapter by first talking about the current state of reading instruction. Part of becoming a master reading teacher is to understand our historical roots, so we begin there. In the balance of the chapter we consider the fundamental characteristics of effective reading instruction.



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Classroom Assessment

A Brief History of Current Trends in Reading Instruction

Many would agree that the ability to read is a critical factor in living a healthy, happy, and productive life. In fact, the ability to read has been declared “a civil right” by the National Right to Read Foundation (2001). The ability to read and read well makes many life choices possible in a democratic society. Conversely, nonreaders and poor readers are often hindered in their career paths from taking full advantage of services and opportunities for themselves or their families, or in thoroughly accessing their rights and exercising their responsibilities as citizens.

Inability to Read: “A National Health Risk”

In recent years the *inability to read* has been listed as a health risk by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), an agency of the federal government. Designating *reading disability* or the *inability to read* as a national threat was based on the discovery of the many devastating and far-reaching effects that reading failure has on the quality of individuals’ lives. To clearly understand the full impact that reading failure can have, we offer the following quote from *The 90% Reading Goal* by Fielding, Kerr, and Rosier (1998):

The most expensive burden we place on society is those students we have failed to teach to read well. The silent army of low readers who move through our schools, siphoning off the lion’s share of administrative resources, emerge into society as adults lacking the single prerequisite for managing their lives and acquiring additional training. They are chronically unemployed, underemployed, or unemployable. They form the single largest identifiable group of those whom we incarcerate, and to whom we provide assistance, housing, medical care, and other social services. They perpetuate and enlarge the problem by creating another generation of poor readers. (pp. 6–7)

Today, literacy is viewed as a “tool” for achieving economic, social, and personal goals. Helping students become fully literate is seen as a remedy for a host of social ills. Stretching across a period of the past three decades, **illiteracy**—the inability to read—has been identified as a significant factor related to myriad social problems including poverty, crime, and social dependency. Add to this those who have the ability to read but are reluctant, called **aliteracy**, and the size and scope of the problems associated with failure to read are magnified in today’s society.

Government leaders and worldwide corporations have come to recognize the potential of literacy to transform lives, address social maladies, and bolster sagging economies. Many business leaders today complain that workers enter the marketplace unprepared to successfully engage in the range of increasingly complex and technologically based literacy tasks required in a changing national and global economy. This has led in recent years to legislative action in the United States aimed at improving literacy learning.

Political Responses to the Literacy Crisis

Why has literacy instruction in our schools become such a political issue? Actually, contentious debates about the “best” ways of teaching reading and writing in the United States and Canada have been ongoing for nearly 150 years. From

phonics to whole word approaches to skills-based programmed readers to whole language advocacy, the pendulum of literacy education approaches has swung back and forth between various viewpoints. In the past, however, debates about literacy policy and practice were largely confined to professionals within the educational community.

Current reform efforts arguably took root during the Reagan administration in the 1980s, when Secretary of Education Terrel Bell's blue-ribbon panel issued a report on the state of education. Entitled *A Nation at Risk* (U.S. Department of Education, 1983), the report defined education in U.S. schools to be at risk—in some ways equal to a national security threat. With the publication of this report, public suspicions began to run high about the trustworthiness of the educational establishment to make the necessary fixes to education in the United States. It also started the gradual process toward making educational changes based on research evidence rather than the popularity of trendy commercial programs that often resulted in unproven and ineffective teaching practices (American Federation of Teachers, 1999; National Research Council, 2001).

In the mid-1990s, President Clinton led an effort to improve literacy education and student learning through the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (U.S. Department of Education, 1994). President Clinton strongly supported increased professional development in literacy education and also urged the implementation of a nationwide testing program in reading and mathematics to assess whether national goals were being reached. Simultaneously, in 1995 the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) released data showing a measurable *decline* in fourth-grade reading achievement across the nation.

By the late 1990s public opinion and politicians had determined that literacy instruction was in dire need of reform. But this time, decisions on teaching literacy had to be grounded in research evidence. **Reading reform** was first to take shape in The Reading Excellence Act (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Funded and approved under the Clinton administration, it contained federal funding specifically targeted to underachieving and high-poverty school populations where lagging reading achievement needed immediate attention. It was clear that politicians would no longer allow decisions about something as socially, politically, and economically powerful as literacy to be the sole purview of the education profession.

With the election of President George W. Bush in 2000, literacy reform policy continued to gather momentum. With bipartisan support in the U.S. Congress, reform efforts were furthered by Senator Edward Kennedy's and President Bush's joint efforts to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1964, which resulted in a sweeping education reform bill known as No Child Left Behind (2001). Within this legislation, scientific or evidence-based reading research became the gold standard for making instructional decisions. Furthermore, the belief that early reading instruction should include early, systematic, explicit phonics instruction was transformed into law.

The No Child Left Behind legislation passed with one of the largest bipartisan affirmative vote margins on record since 1964. This federal intervention into state and local education provided federal funds to states in the form of Reading First grants along with a long menu of unfunded mandates to cement the reforms begun in the mid-1990s. Some saw the new NCLB legislation as federal intrusion into states' rights because functions of government not expressly mentioned in the U.S. Constitution should belong to the states, including education policy. As time went along Reading First was tainted by the scandalous if not illegal actions of some individuals

operating in the U.S. Department of Education. Among the accusations were reports of certain vendors receiving “non-compete” contracts in preferential inside deals. Some ruefully mused that NCLB seemed to be an idea that might have been created by Mother Teresa, except that it was implemented by stormtroopers. Needless to say, enthusiasm for many legitimate advances in literacy education was blunted as these scandals came to light.

In 2008, after years of mixed results across the nation and billions of tax dollars expended, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), a research division of the U.S. Department of Education, issued a report on Reading First, the federal literacy initiative. Their findings showed that students attending schools in Reading First reform programs performed no better on assessments of reading comprehension than did students in nonparticipating schools (Gamse, Jacob, Horst, Boulay, & Unlu, 2008). As a consequence, funds to support Reading First and efforts to provide professional development to classroom teachers in high-poverty, low-performing schools were cancelled by the U.S. Congress.

The historic presidential election of 2008 swept Barack Obama’s change agenda into the White House and the halls of political power. Literacy continued to be seen as a means to solve personal, social, and economic problems, as illustrated by the words of President Obama (2005) on the importance of literacy and reading instruction.

I believe that if we want to give our children the best possible chance in life, if we want to open doors of opportunity while they’re young and teach them the skills they’ll need to succeed later on, then one of our greatest responsibilities as citizens, as educators, and as parents is to ensure that every American child can read and read well.

Reading is the gateway skill that makes all other learning possible, from complex word problems and the meaning of our history to scientific discovery and technological proficiency. In a knowledge economy where this kind of learning is necessary for survival, how can we send our kids out into the world if they’re only reading at a fourth-grade level?”

As of the writing of this edition, the U.S. Congress is considering the reauthorization of the 1964 Elementary Secondary Education Act to replace the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act. In addition, under the leadership of Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, the teaching of literacy is a major plank in many states’ plans to access funds under a federal initiative called Race to the Top. President Obama has authorized waivers from NCLB requirements if states adopt the *Common Core State Standards* (CCSS) in literacy and mathematics that will ensure the United States remains internationally and economically competitive in the global marketplace. One clear message teachers might take away from this brief recitation of recent historical developments is the value of literacy to our nation. It is indeed a national priority.

Evidence-Based Teaching Practices

What Is Reading?

Learning educational terms, what these terms mean, and how to use them when communicating with colleagues in the field is essential for becoming a professional teacher. The term *reading* has been used for many years in a narrow sense to refer to a set of print-based decoding and rudimentary thinking skills necessary to remember

a text (Harris & Hodges, 1981). On the other hand Snow, Burns, and Griffin provide a more expanded definition:

Reading is a complex developmental challenge that we know to be intertwined with many other developmental accomplishments: attention, memory, language, and motivation, for example. Reading is not only a cognitive psycholinguistic activity but also a social activity. (1998, p. 15)

Nowadays our understanding of the reading act has been broadened to include the visual, analytical, and technological skills necessary to acquire information from digital video, handheld data assistants, computers, wireless reading devices, cell phones, or other technological learning devices (Hobbs, 2005; Malloy, Castek, & Leu, 2010; Messaris, 2005). Add to this broadened definition of reading the idea that the visual, analytical, and technological skills needed for acquiring information today are expanding. Students are challenged to use new reading skills shaped by the increasingly diverse social or cultural settings found in schools, homes, communities, businesses, groups, or in virtual social settings such as wikis, Ning social networks, and blogs (August & Shanahan, 2006; Morgan & Smith, 2008; Tracey & Morrow, 2006). As a result, the term *reading* is currently interpreted far more broadly and encompasses the learning of a complex set of strategies, skills, concepts, and knowledge enabling individuals to understand visual and print-based information presented in a variety of media or technological formats. The goal of reading instruction, then, is to empower readers to learn, grow, and participate in a vibrant and rapidly changing information-based world.

Learning to read is not a simple task and can be a struggle for many children, not to mention adults who must relearn the skill. In her book titled *My Stroke of Insight*, Dr. Jill Bolten Taylor (2006), a highly recognized brain neurologist, documented her difficulty in recovering the ability to read after suffering a stroke in her mid 30s. For her, reading was the most difficult skill she had to relearn.

As children begin the difficult, multifaceted process of learning to read, they need to acquire a set of skills, concepts, and strategies with the help and guidance of an effective teacher. In order to eventually read efficiently and purposefully, children must skillfully comprehend text, conceptually integrate information constructed from text into one's world knowledge network, and strategically solve real-world problems with print, whether presented in more traditional forms or technology-based formats. On the way to reaching the ultimate goal of reading comprehension (Kintsch, 2004)—that is, understanding the author's message and using what is learned for discovery in novel situations—students must acquire a set of reading skills or tools to get off to an early good start. As a current or future teacher of reading, do not underestimate the importance of initial or early reading skills, concepts, and strategies such as the following in making possible the achievement of reading with comprehension.

- Hearing and being able to manipulate individual sounds in spoken words (known as *phonemic awareness*)
- Recognizing and identifying a variety of upper- and lowercase printed alphabet letters
- Grasping concepts about how printed language looks and works
- Increasing oral language (speaking) vocabularies
- Understanding that sounds in spoken language “map” onto letters in written language
- Decoding words with accuracy, speed, and expression

Shanahan (2006) and others (e.g., Durkin, 1966) indicate that the earliest desire and ability to learn to read often grow out of a child's initial curiosity with writing letters and words at home. Consequently, writing very often represents not only the beginning point in many a young child's journey to learn to read but the finish line as well. As young children become increasingly aware of letters and words in the world around them, they may eventually ask how to write their names or spell other personally significant words or concepts (e.g., a pet's name or the name of a relative). When children are able to write letters and words, the "cognitive footprint," also called the *memory trace*, left in the brain is deep and long lasting—much longer lasting than those engendered by mere letter or word recognition alone. Similarly, when children can string words together to construct meaning as found in a written story, they have "comprehended" text at a deeper and longer-lasting level. In a very real sense, children's understanding of what they read is deepened and cemented when they write about it.

As children learn to write, they must also learn a set of early skills, concepts, and strategies similar to those in reading to help them on their way to achieving the ultimate goal of writing instruction—composition. To acquire initial proficiency in writing, young children need to acquire skills, concepts, and strategies such as the following:

- Handwriting (forming legible upper- and lowercase letters)
- Understanding and using mechanical conventions such as punctuation, headings, paragraph indents, and the like
- Learning to "encode" words and thoughts into print (i.e., spelling words, labeling pictures, writing sentences)

As you can readily see, it would be most difficult and terribly ineffective to separate reading from writing or writing from reading in an effective reading instruction program (Tierney & Shanahan, 1991).

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Teachers Make the Difference

Here's a question for you to consider: *What is the primary ingredient in the recipe for every child's reading success?* Answer: An effective classroom teacher who has the ability to teach reading to a group of children who have a variety of abilities and needs (Snow, Griffin, & Burns, 2005; Strickland, Snow, Griffin, Burns, & McNamara, 2002). This fact was documented in 1985 in the National Academy and Institute of Education's landmark report, *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading*. In this now classic report, commission members concluded that teacher knowledge, skill, and competence are absolutely essential in helping all learners become strong readers.

An *indisputable* [italics added] conclusion of research is that the quality of teaching makes a considerable difference in children's learning. Studies indicate that about 15 percent of the variation among children in reading achievement at the end of the school year is attributable to factors that related to the skill and effectiveness of the teacher. In contrast, the largest study ever done comparing approaches to beginning reading found that about 3 percent of the variation in reading achievement at the end of the

first grade was attributable to the overall approach of the program. Thus, the prudent assumption for educational policy is that, while there may be some “materials-proof” teachers, there are no “teacher-proof” materials. (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985, p. 85)

From experience we know, and parental attitudes confirm, that “It all comes down to the teacher,” since they [parents] are notorious for competing to get their children into classes taught by the current faculty stars of the school! And why shouldn’t they? There is nothing in this world that can replace the power of a great classroom teacher (Strickland et al., 2002, p. 4).

In a national survey by Haselkorn and Harris (2001), 89 percent of Americans responded that it is very important to have a well-qualified teacher in every classroom. The poorest children and the most powerless families often receive the least our educational system has to offer (NCTAF, 2006)—what Jonathan Kozol (1991) once labeled “savage inequalities.” More recently, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan declared anew that every student has a right to a highly qualified and effective classroom teacher (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

In a national study of 1,000 school districts, Ferguson (1991) found that every additional dollar spent on more highly qualified teachers netted greater improvement in student achievement than did any other use of school resources. In fact, research also suggests that teachers influence student academic growth more than any other single factor, including families, neighborhoods, and the schools students attend (Rowan, Corretini, & Miller, 2002; Sanders & Rivers, 1996). Successful schools that produce high student reading and writing achievement test scores, regardless of socioeconomic status or the commercial program used to provide reading and writing instruction, have teachers who are knowledgeable and articulate about their work (McCardle & Chhabra, 2004; Mosenthal, Lipson, Tornello, Russ, & Mekkelsen, 2004).

A fairly recent addition to school literacy instruction is a specialist called a reading or **literacy coach**. Jane Moore (2004), a literacy coach in Dallas, once remarked, “even Cinderella had a coach.” Much like for athletes, reading/literacy coaches help classroom teachers reflect on, plan, and improve their instructional skills to enhance student reading achievement and motivation (Burkins, 2009; Toll, 2007). Recent research has demonstrated that teachers who receive **professional development** that includes formal instruction coupled with classroom support from a reading literacy coach achieve measurably greater reading improvement in classrooms (Neuman & Cunningham, 2009).



IRA Standards for Reading

Professionals:

Standard 1, Elements
1.1, 1.2, 1.3; Standard 2,
Elements 2.1, 2.2, 2.3

Response to Intervention:

Instruction,
Responsive Teaching
and Differentiation;
Assessment;
Collaboration; Systemic
and Comprehensive
Approaches

Motivation and Engagement

What Do Reading Teachers Need to Know and Do? The Seven Pillars of Effective Reading Instruction

The remainder of this book is dedicated to those who want to learn what they need to know and be able to do to become effective teachers of reading. Drawn from decades of research describing the practices of exemplary reading teachers in elementary schools (e.g., Pressley, Allington, Wharton-McDonald, Collins-Block, & Morrow, 2001; Risko, Roller, Cummins, Bean, Block, Anders, & Flood, 2008), we have

learned what teachers know and do in their classrooms to become highly effective instructors of reading.

Because the research on effective reading instruction is extensive, we have attempted, as good teachers do, to make the complex simple. We know that in doing so we can increase the comprehensibility of our message. Conversely, we recognize that in making the complex simple we risk trivializing important issues around which there may be disagreement and misunderstandings. However, given the task of assisting novice and practicing teachers alike, we have opted to reduce the complexity of teaching reading to a simple organizational structure that represents the findings of research in seven distinct yet interrelated groupings we refer to as the “seven pillars” of effective reading instruction (Figure 1.1). These pillars provide a framework for highly effective reading instruction like the pillars that support great buildings.

As part of our structural approach, we have organized many of the succeeding chapters of this book around the seven pillars of effective reading instruction. Each pillar is given a particular color reflected in the table of contents, the chapter opener, and the headings within the text. This framework is based on our finding that readers learn best from a book that has a consistent and easily discernable organization and structure. We also hope that you, our readers, will construct your own knowledge of effective reading instruction using these seven pillars. To begin, we briefly describe the basis for each of the seven pillars of effective reading instruction.

Pillar One: Teacher Knowledge

Decades of educational research confirm the importance of **teacher knowledge** to the quality of instruction offered to students. For example, evidence-based research has verified the basic skills that must be learned in order to read and the approximate order in which these skills should be taught. Effective teachers approach their instruction with this important knowledge in mind.

More broadly, research reveals the beneficial impact of teacher knowledge on the quality of their instruction and student learning. Dating back to the seminal work of Coleman (1966) in *Equality of Educational Opportunity* and continuing to more current documents such as the Education Trust’s (2008) *Achievement in America*, researchers and policy makers alike have argued that improved teacher knowledge is our best hope in closing the achievement gap.

In fact, we now understand that what teachers know and do in classrooms matters even more than past research on teacher quality might have predicted (Duffy, 2004). Research conducted over the last two decades has suggested that differences in teacher classroom performance explain 15 to 20 percent of variation in student achievement (Anderson et al., 1985; Carlisle, Phelps, Rowan, & Johnson, 2006; Ferguson, 1991; Sanders, 1998; Scheerens & Bosker, 1997). Indeed, once children enter school, teachers influence student academic growth more than any other single factor including families, neighborhoods, and the schools that students attend (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Rowan et al., 2002; Sanders & Horn, 1994).

Figure 1.1

The Seven Pillars of Effective Reading Instruction



Common Core Standards. In 2009, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) began a project whose goal was to provide every teacher in the United States with a clearly stated set of standards for literacy education and other important fields of study. Known as the Common Core State Standards Initiative, teachers are provided with a consistent curriculum framework that can be used across the states to prepare children for college and/or the workforce. As of the publication date of this text, 44 states have adopted the standards.

The Common Core Standards for Reading/Language Arts and Mathematics were the first to be released and can be seen online at www.corestandards.org. In our increasingly mobile society this kind of evidence-based learning roadmap is critical if we are to ensure that all children receive appropriate instruction. You will notice the Common Core Standards are integrated throughout this text.

Pillar Two: Classroom Assessment

The ultimate goal of classroom assessment is to inform instruction. Assessments provide real-time student information so that teachers can make decisions about “next steps” for continuing student learning using effective teaching strategies. **Classroom assessment** refers to the observations, record keeping, and ongoing performance measures that a teacher uses to gather information about each student’s reading progress (Afflerbach, 2007; Flippo, 2003).

Teachers must identify which reading abilities each child has already developed in order to plan instruction targeting those she has not. Effective reading teachers are able to quickly assess each student’s knowledge, create instructional roadmaps of what children know, and then teach students according to what they are ready to learn next. Effective reading assessment happens in classrooms *before, during,* and *after* instruction has taken place. Assessment is essential for making sure every student receives appropriate instruction and then verifying that learning has taken place.

Classroom assessments help us examine students’ literacy *processes* as well as the *products* they create when using these processes. Reliable, valid, and efficient reading assessment tools and careful analyses of data (McKenna & Stahl, 2009; Reutzel & Cooter, 2011) are necessary to support effective reading instruction. Teachers also need to know how to judge the quality of assessment tools as well as how to administer and interpret scores and data obtained from a variety of assessment tools.

Teachers often design, in collaboration with peers, their own well-thought-out assessment plans to achieve the goals of an effective reading instruction program. Teachers need to consider the purposes for each assessment, testing conditions, and how much time is available to collect and, most especially, to analyze assessment data to inform, shape, and adapt later teaching. Effective reading teachers think about how to infuse their assessment efforts seamlessly into classroom reading instruction to minimize the amount of time taken away from instruction, often using informal data-gathering strategies during whole-group, small-group, and individual instruction. More recently, many teachers have employed computer software and technology like personal data assistants (PDAs) to collect and analyze assessment data “on the run” during instruction (McKenna, Labbo, Kieffer, & Reinking, 2006; Wepner, Valmont, & Thurlow, 2000).

Pillar Three: Evidence-Based Teaching Practices

Once teachers create ongoing assessment profiles for students, locating each on the literacy development continuum and determining what each is ready to learn next, they must then link student learning needs to effective teaching strategies to advance their achievement. There is substantial research evidence on preferred ways of teaching each of the essential reading skills, concepts, and strategies necessary for success in learning to read and write. Great teachers have an abundance of tools in their instructional toolbox to ensure that every child is helped to reach his or her full potential when learning to read.

One of the earliest reports describing the need for **evidence-based instruction** in reading was sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences and the National Research Council. A panel of prominent reading and education experts convened to review existing research studies in order to determine which skills, concepts, and strategies need to be taught to prevent students from falling into early reading difficulties or eventual reading failure. Their report, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow et al., 1998), was followed by a companion document, *Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success* (Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 1999) to make their findings more easily accessible to parents and teachers. In these twin reports, the National Research Council spelled out essential reading instruction components that must be taught to prevent early reading failure.

At around the same time, in direct response to a congressional mandate to examine the status of “scientific” research on teaching reading, the *Report of the National Reading Panel, Teaching Children to Read* (National Reading Panel, 2000), was jointly published by the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development, the National Institutes of Health, and the U.S. Department of Education. Similar to the *Preventing Reading Difficulties* report, a companion document titled *Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read* (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001) was distributed in order to disseminate widely the findings of the National Reading Panel (2000) report to parents and educators.

More recently, the National Early Literacy Panel (2008) issued *Developing Early Literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel*. This report examined the research evidence supporting the acquisition of early literacy skills, concepts, and strategies for students' later reading achievement in elementary and secondary schools.

We now know that highly effective reading instruction programs focus on (1) classroom management, (2) teaching instructional essentials, (3) designing print-rich and highly interactive classroom environments, and (4) supporting reading with evidence-based techniques.

Classroom Management. One of the most fundamental characteristics of effective instruction is the teacher's ability to manage the classroom (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Morrow, Reutzel, & Casey, 2006). The term **classroom management** refers to the ability of a teacher to organize, direct, and supervise the classroom environment so that effective student learning is made possible (Snow et al., 2005). Excellent classroom management (Reutzel, Morrow, & Casey, 2009) requires teachers to know and use a complex set of strategies to accomplish tasks such as the following:

- Allocate classroom space for multiple uses
- Supply and arrange classroom materials
- Communicate expectations and rules clearly within a positive classroom climate

- Employ effective instructional practices
- Train students effectively in classroom routines and procedures
- Establish a predictable and familiar daily schedule

Thus, a supportive and well-thought-out classroom management plan is integral to achieving the goals of an effective reading instruction program.

Teaching Instructional Essentials. The following aspects of literacy have been documented as instructional essentials in the aforementioned federal research reports (Burns et al., 1999; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; National Reading Panel, 2000):

- Oral language development
- Concepts of printed language
- Letter name knowledge and production
- Sight word recognition
- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension
- Writing/spelling

Designing Print-Rich Classroom Environments. When planning print-rich, highly interactive classroom environments, teachers assess, arrange, and demonstrate the use of literacy tools and materials available in the classroom. Providing children access to various kinds and difficulty levels of print materials is a large part of provisioning and arranging literacy tools and materials (e.g., story and information books, poetry, graphic novels, maps, posters, etc.) in print-rich classroom environments (Neuman, 1999; Neuman & Celano, 2001, 2006).

Effective reading teachers treat classroom walls as creative palettes for designing both aesthetically pleasing but also instructionally useful displays for student work, instructional charts, and other information. The design and maintenance of a classroom library, the grouping and accessibility of reading and writing tools in the classroom, written invitations and encouragements displayed on walls, and directions on how to participate in upcoming literacy events are just a few of the many considerations for teachers to become accomplished environmental designers and managers (Hoffman, Sailors, Duffy, & Beretvas, 2004; Wolfersberger, Reutzler, Sudweeks, & Fawson, 2004).

Supporting Reading with Evidence-Based Techniques. The final essential component of an evidence-based reading instructional program is, not surprisingly, evidence-based reading support. Evidence-based support for high-quality reading instruction includes such practices as the following:

- Engaging in volume reading and writing in school and out on a regular basis
- Using various media and technologies to increase world knowledge
- Modeling reading and writing strategies for children and encouraging them to use these strategies to generate, process, and interact with text
- Connecting literature study to content learning in other curriculum areas (i.e., science, math, and history)
- Providing systematic, explicit, and sustained concept, skill, and strategy instruction in each of the essential elements of reading instruction

Pillar Four: Response to Intervention (RTI)

Response to Intervention (RTI) models of instructional delivery (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2008; Lipson & Wixson, 2009) are becoming an increasingly popular evidence-based approach to meet the diverse needs of students. RTI models incorporate many of the excellent practices that have previously been described in research on instruction.

When using RTI models, all students are initially screened to determine their progress in achieving established literacy benchmark skills, objectives, and standards. Students who are shown in initial screening assessment to be on track in their literacy development continue to receive core reading instruction, called “Tier 1” developmental reading instruction. For students having difficulty, Tier 2 reading interventions are intended to fill in learning gaps as quickly as possible and return students to core (i.e., developmental) reading instruction. If Tier 2 instructional intervention fails to accelerate or positively affect a student’s literacy learning, then Tier 3 evidence-based interventions are used with greater frequency and delivered in even smaller groups or individually until the student shows a positive response. In our discussions of RTI, we include the various forms of differentiated instruction that can be included in Tiers 2 and 3.

RTI models encourage teachers to integrate high-quality evidence-based instruction and frequent use of reliable and valid assessments in a systematic way to serve the needs of diverse learners. See Figure 1.2 for the RTI framework. A wonderful online tutorial for those just learning about RTI is found at Vanderbilt University’s IRIS Center (<http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/index.html>).

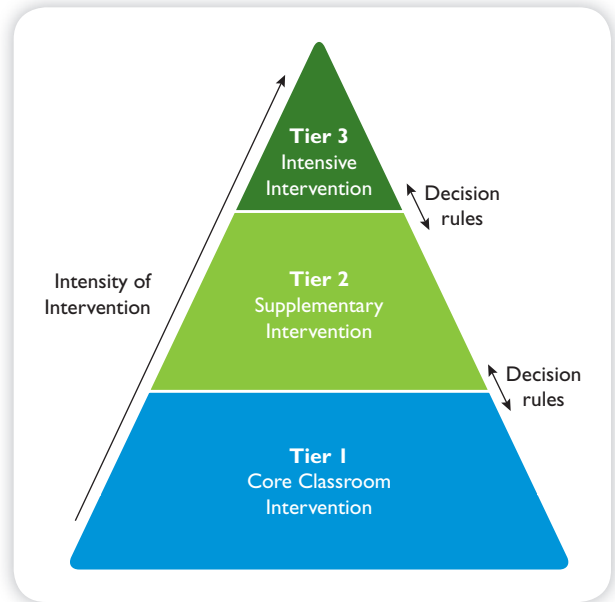
Differentiating Instruction. Great teachers are able to differentiate instruction in order to meet every child’s diverse learning needs, including English learners (ELs). As one example, in many school districts English is not the first language for a large percentage of students. Students may speak Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Arabic, Hmong, or other languages in their homes. In these instances, teachers need to discover a variety of ways to help students learn to read and write in English as a second language (August & Shanahan, 2006).

It has been estimated that up to 20 percent of students come to school having various learning differences, such as attention deficit disorder (ADD), dyslexia, cognitive challenges (i.e., “slow learners”), oral language deficiencies, or behavioral disorders (BD). The goal for teachers is to help *all* students succeed in learning to read. Differentiating reading instruction is essential if we are to help every child achieve.

Excellent reading teachers provide instruction that is responsive to the *specific* needs of every child based on ongoing assessment findings. How one goes about adapting reading instruction to address students’ evolving needs is of critical importance for all teachers (Reutzel & Cooter, 2011). Today’s

Figure 1.2

Response to Intervention (RTI) Model



teachers need abilities such as the following to provide effective instruction for diverse learners:

- Facility with a variety of assessment tools for multiple purposes and techniques for translating student data into effective teaching plans
- Knowledge of teaching interventions that make use of multiple instructional strategies because we know that one size does *not* fit all
- Understanding of multiple organizational and classroom management techniques

A workable model for many teachers is to begin with a simple, limited, and manageable small-group instructional system, placing children with similar abilities and needs for instruction in groups numbering four to eight. Over time and with experience, these same teachers can gradually expand their practice using a range of instructional strategies to include the following:

- Daily intensive, small-group, teacher-guided reading instruction in appropriately challenging text levels
- The use of student-selected books and other readings at appropriate reading levels
- Sensibly selected classroom spaces, often called *learning centers*, for independent practice of previously taught concepts, strategies, and skills accompanied by clear rules, directions, schedules, and familiar routines

Culturally Sensitive Reading Instruction. Another important aspect of providing effective reading instruction is a recognition of cultural diversity. Students bring to school differing cultural experiences that, when recognized by the teacher, can be used as strengths to leverage learning of the school curriculum (Au, 2010). Although the empirical or data-based evidence for culturally sensitive instruction is only now emerging, doing so makes sense. Au (2010) recommends that classroom reading instruction balance competition and cooperation in classroom activities. She also advocates analyzing reading lessons to determine possibilities for classroom dialogue in small groups or pairs.

Finally, teachers should teach students how to discuss topics with one another appropriately in the classroom through modeling and dialogic routines (e.g., “This is how I say it. Now you say it.”). Use of Response to Intervention (RTI) models and culturally sensitive instruction, when implemented well, help teachers consider ways to make their instruction responsive to the needs of ELs, struggling readers, and students from a wide range of differing cultural perspectives (Optiz, 1998).

Pillar Five: Motivation and Engagement

Gambrell and Marinak (2009) have referred to **motivation** as a key “pillar” of effective reading instruction not addressed in the National Reading Panel report (2000). Wigfield (1997) describes motivation as a complex of interrelated social and emotional dimensions that influence children’s choices to engage in reading:

- *Efficacy.* The sense that “I can do this”
- *Challenge.* Easy and more difficult tasks
- *Curiosity.* The desire to know or find out
- *Involvement.* Active, intentional control of one’s thinking
- *Importance.* Personal value or worth
- *Recognition.* Praise, certificates, awards, and so on
- *Grades.* A specific form of recognition in schools
- *Interaction.* Working cooperatively with others
- *Competition.* Working to win or be the best

- *Compliance*. Working to avoid punishment or negative recognition
- *Enjoyment*. Seeking the pleasurable and avoiding the difficult

Turner and Paris (1995) reduce this motivation construct to what they call the six Cs: (1) choice, (2) challenge, (3) control, (4) collaboration, (5) constructing meaning, and (6) consequences.

1. *Choice* does not mean that students are free to choose any text in the world to read. To offer choice, for instance, may mean choosing from two different information books on rocks and rock formations. When students know that they can make *some* choices, they are more willing to persist and remain engaged while reading.

2. *Challenge* can encourage increased reading motivation and engagement. Turner and Paris (1995) suggest that the common attitude that children prefer “easy” reading text materials over more difficult or challenging texts is just not supported in research. In fact, children enjoy a sense of being challenged.

3. *Control* involves sharing how texts and tasks in the classroom are presented with students to promote greater engagement in reading. Children need to feel and sense that they have an integral role to play while reading a text.

4. *Collaboration* requires that students discuss, interact, and work together with each other and their teachers to construct the meanings of texts. Collaboration results in greater student insight into the thinking processes of others as they learn new information from texts. Focused conversations also enhance reading comprehension by adding multiple understandings about text information to enhance individual comprehension.

5. *Constructing meaning* is a process of conscious selection, control, and use of various strategies while engaged in reading a text. The National Reading Panel (2000) found sufficient scientific support for implementing a number of comprehension strategies in classrooms (presented in Chapter 7).

6. *Consequences* is a concept that refers to the expectations stated and the resulting outcomes if expectations are not met. For example, if the expected outcome involves completing or participating in an open rather than a deterministic task, such as contributing to a discussion rather than getting the “right” answers to questions on a worksheet, then students interpret their failures in comprehension differently. When seeking correct or “right” answers, they often feel that they just do not have enough ability (Turner & Paris, 1995). On the other hand, if through discussion they detect that they missed some important element in the text, they often view this failure as the result of improperly selecting or applying effective comprehension strategies rather than not being “smart enough” or “not having the ability.”

As a fundamental part of providing effective reading instruction, research clearly demonstrates the power of motivation on student reading achievement. In a 2004 study reported by Guthrie and Humenick, motivation accounted for 17 to 40-plus percentile points on standardized achievement tests of students’ reading abilities. Such increases from the mean performance on reading achievement tests demonstrate that student motivation is among the most powerful determiners of students’ future reading achievement.

Pillar Six: Technology and New Literacies

New literacy studies (NLS) has been defined as “the skills, strategies, and insights necessary to successfully exploit the rapidly changing information and communication technologies that continuously emerge in our world” (Leu, 2002, p. 310). Thus,

NLS has to do with how literacy practices are linked to people's lives, identities, and social affiliations (Compton-Lilly, 2009). A great deal of NLS research focuses on children's interactions with technological texts and views these interactions as meaningful and purposeful (Compton-Lilly, in press). Most notable is the ongoing work of the New Literacies Research Team (NLRT) at the University of Connecticut and Clemson University.

Findings about computer-assisted instruction (CAI) drawn from a meta-analysis of 42 studies have found that primary-grade children's overall learning experience is enhanced using CAI over conventional teaching approaches for acquiring a variety of beginning reading skills. The new literacies research group at the University of Connecticut has shown that online reading requires the development of a set of comprehension strategies: (1) reading online to generate a problem or question from one's social context, (2) reading to locate information online, (3) reading to critically evaluate information online, (4) reading to synthesize information online from multiple sources, and (5) reading to communicate and exchange information online with others.

According to these researchers, online reading comprehension strategies function in a manner similar to phonic and phonemic awareness skills in offline reading comprehension. If one cannot decode words accurately and effortlessly offline, comprehension becomes very difficult. But online, if you cannot read to locate and critically evaluate information, it becomes very difficult to answer the question or solve the problem that initially motivated one's online reading. Online reading comprehension can be supported by helping students learn to evaluate the accuracy and validity of information claims found during online reading (Mokhtari, Kymes, & Edwards, 2008).

McKenna and colleagues (2006) recommend the use of new technology for a variety of purposes, from crafting multimedia reports to presenting sight word lessons to first-grade students. **New literacies** (NLs) present many opportunities for engaging, interactive demonstrations of literacy skills, concepts, and strategies. NLs offer varied socially mediated opportunities for students to work together through e-mail, blogs, or instant messaging to conduct research and create project reports from the large amount of free materials readily available over the Internet. NLs also extend the teacher by offering students technologically driven practice of reading skills, concepts, and strategies via CD, DVD, and online media and "virtual" teachers. Reading teachers today will need to learn how to use and seamlessly integrate NLs into their daily reading and writing instruction.

Pillar Seven: Family and Community Connections

It has been said that 80 percent of student learning occurs outside of school. We know from research, for instance, that children who have been read to a great deal before entering kindergarten have a much stronger language base and are far more likely to succeed in reading (Snow et al., 1998). Parents and many involved others in the child's extended family and community are often interested in helping children develop as readers—if they know what to do. Thus, teachers can add great power to a child's literacy learning program by educating the adults in their lives in proven reading development strategies that make sense in our busy world.

Reading teachers in the twenty-first century no longer have the luxury of viewing home involvement as merely a good or even an important idea. There is now substantial agreement among literacy researchers and master teachers that parents can make powerful contributions to their children's success in early literacy learning

(Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Paratore, 2003). Therefore, teachers who can reach out to parents and homes are vital to young children's progress in learning to read successfully. For example, in a large-scale federally funded study of 14 schools in Virginia, Minnesota, Colorado, and California, teachers, administrators, and parents were interviewed, surveyed, and observed to determine the characteristics of effective schools and classroom teachers. As described in *Beating the Odds in Teaching All Children to Read* (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 1999), a key school-level factor clearly associated with the most effective schools in teaching at-risk children to read successfully was outreach to homes and parents. According to the researchers

The four effective schools made a more concerted effort to reach out to parents than the other schools. Efforts included conducting focus groups, written or phone surveys, and having an active site council on which parents served. (p. 2)

These findings were echoed in research from a major urban school district in a high-poverty environment. In *Perspectives on Rescuing Urban Literacy Education*, R. Cooter (2004) described results of a privately funded "failure analysis" to learn what teachers must know and be able to do to reverse the 76 percent reading failure rate for the district's third graders. Five "pillars" or instructional supports, the report concluded, were necessary to ensuring reading success—one of which was family and community involvement. "Most parents help their children at home [with reading] if they know what to do; thus, teachers must be supported in their efforts to educate families in ways they can help their children succeed in the home" (p. 22).

There are many examples of excellent family literacy programs that may serve as models for teachers as they make plans to reach out to families. Project FLAME (Family Literacy Aprendiendo, Mejorando, Educando), a program designed for parents and children learning English, is one example of a nationally recognized family literacy program (Rodriquez-Brown, Fen Li, & Albom, 1999; Rodriquez-Brown & Meehan, 1998; Shanahan, Mulhern, & Rodriquez-Brown, 1995). Other examples include the Intergenerational Literacy Project (ILP) (Paratore, 2003) and Project EASE (Jordan, Snow, & Porche, 2000), in which parents significantly influenced their children's early literacy development prior to school and substantially benefited their children's early reading progress once in school.

Effective teachers of reading focus on building strong, sturdy, and easily traversed bridges between the classroom and the homes of the children they serve in order to help every child have a successful experience in learning to read and write.

Summary

We return full circle to our earlier question: *What is the primary ingredient in the recipe for every child's reading success?* We hope that by now you understand the significant role you will play or are now playing in the reading success of each and every child you teach. You are the hero in every child's literacy learning drama. Research confirms that your knowledge and skill in the teaching of reading is incredibly important.

A common myth about teachers goes something like this: "Those who can, do. Those who can't, teach."

Another equally distasteful myth alleges that "Teachers are born, not made." Neither could be further from the truth. Teachers today must understand a great deal about how children develop and learn generally, how they develop and learn to read specifically, and how to assess and adapt instruction in a classroom filled with diversity. Today's teachers are expected to know more and do more than teachers at any other time in our history. Teachers must master and put into practice a body of knowledge related to language development, children's

literature, curriculum standards, classroom management, and evidence-based instruction practices. They must be able to assess students' strengths and needs, plan effective instruction that focuses on the essential elements of reading instruction, and ensure that every child makes

adequate yearly progress so that no child fails to achieve his or her potential. In the end, the expert teaching of reading requires some of the best minds and talent to be found in our nation!

Field and Classroom Applications

- Read *Using Research and Reason in Education: How Teachers Can Use Scientifically Based Research to Make Curricular and Instructional Decisions* (Stanovich & Stanovich, 2003). Working with other members of a small group, list ten reasons why teachers should rely on the results of research evidence to inform their instructional and curricular choices. Share your group's list with the rest of the class. Collapse all of the small-group charts into a single class chart.
- Read "Beginning Reading Instruction: The Rest of the Story from Research" at www.nea.org/reading/images/beginningreading.pdf. Compile a list of research-supported practices in reading instruction in addition to those found in the *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read* (National Reading Panel, 2000).
- Organize into small research groups. Select a grade level from kindergarten to third grade. Read *Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children's Reading Success* (Burns, Griffin, & Snow, 1999). Prepare a class presentation on student accomplishments in reading and writing at the grade level you selected.
- Read the Executive Summary of the *Developing Early Literacy* report from the National Early Literacy Panel, available at www.nifl.gov/earlychildhood/NELP/NELPreport.html. In small groups, prepare a brochure or pamphlet that explains to parents, teachers, and school administrators the best early predictors for success in learning to read. Share your pamphlet with your class or with parents at your first open house.

Recommended Resources

Print Resources

- Armbruster, B. B., Lehr, F., & Osborn, J. (2001). *Put reading first: The research building blocks for teaching children to read*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. Available at www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/reading_first1.html
- August, D., & Shanahan, T. (2006). *Developing literacy in second-language learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on language-minority children and youth*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Burns, M. S., Griffin, P., & Snow, C. E. (1999). *Starting out right: A guide to promoting children's reading success*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- National Early Literacy Panel. (2008). *Developing early literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel*. Jessup, MD: National Institute for Literacy. Available at www.nifl.gov/earlychildhood/NELP/NELPreport.html
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching children to read*. Washington, DC: Author. Available at www.nationalreadingpanel.org/Publications/researchread.htm
- Pressley, M. (2002). *Beginning reading instruction: The rest of the story from research*. Washington, DC: National Education Association. Available at www.nea.org/reading/images/beginningreading.pdf
- Pressley, M. (2003). A few things reading educators should know about instructional experiments. *The Reading Teacher*, 57(1), 64–71.
- Shanahan, T. (2003). Research-based reading instruction: Myths about the National Reading Panel Report. *The Reading Teacher*, 56(7), 646–654.
- Slavin, R. E. (2003, February). A reader's guide to scientifically-based research. *Educational Leadership*, 60(5), 12–16.
- Snow, C. E., Burns, M. S., & Griffin, P. (1998). *Preventing reading failure in young children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

- Snow, C. E., Griffin, P., & Burns, M. S. (2005). *Knowledge to support the teaching of reading: Preparing teachers for a changing world*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Stanovich, P. J., & Stanovich, K. E. (2003). *Using research and reason in education: How teachers can use scientifically based research to make curricular and instructional decisions*. Washington, DC: National Institute for Literacy. Available at www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/pdf/Stanovich_Color.pdf
- U.S. Department of Education. (2001). *No Child Left Behind*. Washington, DC: Author. Available at www.ed.gov/index.jhtml
- U.S. Department of Education. (2003). *Identifying and implementing educational practices supported by rigorous evidence: A user-friendly guide*. Washington, DC: Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy. Available at www.ed.gov/rschstat/research/pubs/rigorousavid/guide.html

Web Resources

- www.reading.org
Issues of *The Reading Teacher* and the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*
- www.nationalreadingpanel.org
The National Reading Panel report (2000), available free
- www.nifl.gov/earlychildhood/NELP/NELPreport.html
The National Reading Panel report (2008), available free
- <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/index.html>
IRIS Center at Vanderbilt University online tutorial for RTI
- www.newliteracies.uconn.edu
NLRT comprehensive website, including video cases, a team blog, articles, and many other valuable resources for teachers interested in learning more about new literacies

STANDARDS

for Reading Professionals and Guiding Principles for Educators

Becoming a Master Teacher of Reading

IRA Standards for Reading Professionals

Standard 1: Foundational Knowledge

Element 1.1

Candidates understand major theories and empirical research that describe the cognitive, linguistic, motivational, and sociocultural foundations of reading and writing development, processes, and components, including word recognition, language comprehension, strategic knowledge, and reading-writing connections.

Element 1.2

Candidates understand the historically shared knowledge of the profession and changes over time in the perceptions of reading and writing development, processes, and components.

Element 1.3

Candidates understand the role of professional judgment and practical knowledge for improving all students' reading development and achievement.

Candidates use instructional approaches, materials, and an integrated, comprehensive, balanced curriculum to support student learning in reading and writing.

Response to Intervention

6. Expertise

All students have the right to receive instruction from well-prepared teachers who keep up to date and supplemental instruction from professionals specifically prepared to teach language and literacy (IRA, 2000).

- Teacher expertise is central to instructional improvement, particularly for students who encounter difficulty in acquiring language and literacy. RTI may involve a range of professionals; however, the greater the literacy difficulty, the greater the need for expertise in literacy teaching and learning.
- Important dimensions of teachers' expertise include their knowledge and understanding of language and literacy development, their ability to use powerful assessment tools and techniques, and their ability to translate information about student performance into instructionally relevant instructional techniques.

- The exemplary core instruction that is so essential to the success of RTI is dependent on highly knowledgeable and skilled classroom teachers (IRA, 2003).
- Professionals who provide supplemental instruction or intervention must have a high level of expertise in all aspects of language and literacy instruction and assessment and be capable of intensifying or accelerating language and literacy learning.
- Success for culturally and linguistically diverse students depends on teachers and support personnel who are well prepared to teach in a variety of settings. Deep knowledge of cultural and linguistic differences is especially critical for the prevention of language and literacy problems in diverse student populations.
- Expertise in the areas of language and literacy requires a comprehensive approach to professional preparation that involves preservice, induction, and inservice education. It also requires opportunities for extended practice under the guidance of knowledgeable and experienced mentors.

What Do Reading Teachers Need to Know and Do? The Seven Pillars of Effective Reading Instruction

IRA Standards for Reading Professionals

Standard 1: Foundational Knowledge

Candidates understand the theoretical and evidence-based foundations of reading and writing processes and instruction.

Foundational knowledge is at the core of preparing individuals for roles in the reading profession and encompasses the major theories, research, and best practices that share a consensus of acceptance in the reading field. Individuals who enter the reading profession should understand the historically shared knowledge of the profession and develop the capacity to act on that knowledge responsibly. Elements of the Foundational Knowledge Standard set

expectations in the domains of theoretical and practical knowledge, and in developing dispositions for the active, ethical use of professional knowledge. Expectations are founded on the concept of a profession as both a technical and moral enterprise, that is, competent performance for the betterment of society.

Elements 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 (See previous)

Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction

The Curriculum and Instruction Standard recognizes the need to prepare educators who have a deep understanding and knowledge

of the elements of a balanced, integrated, and comprehensive literacy curriculum and have developed expertise in enacting that curriculum. The elements focus on the use of effective practices in a well-articulated curriculum, using traditional print, digital, and online resources.

Element 2.1

Candidates use foundational knowledge to design or implement an integrated, comprehensive, and balanced curriculum.

Element 2.2

Candidates use appropriate and varied instructional approaches, including those that develop word recognition, language comprehension, strategic knowledge, and reading–writing connections.

Element 2.3

Candidates use a wide range of texts (e.g., narrative, expository, and poetry) from traditional print, digital, and online resources.

Response to Intervention

1. Instruction

RTI is first and foremost intended to prevent problems by optimizing language and literacy instruction.

- Whatever approach is taken to RTI, it should ensure optimal instruction for every student at all levels of schooling. It should prevent serious language and literacy problems through increasingly differentiated and intensified assessment and instruction and reduce the disproportionate number of minority youth and ELLs identified as learning disabled.
- Instruction and assessment conducted by the classroom teacher are central to the success of RTI and must address the needs of all students, including those from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Evidence shows that effective classroom instruction can reduce substantially the number of students who are inappropriately classified as learning disabled.
- A successful RTI process begins with the highest quality core instruction in the classroom—that is, instruction that encompasses all areas of language and literacy as part of a coherent curriculum that is developmentally appropriate for preK–12 students and does not underestimate their potential for learning. This core instruction may or may not involve commercial programs, and it must in all cases be provided by an informed, competent classroom teacher.
- The success of RTI depends on the classroom teacher's use of research-based practices. As defined by IRA (2002), *research based* means “that a particular program or collection of instructional practices has a record of success. That is, there is reliable, trustworthy, and valid evidence to suggest that when the program is used with a particular group of children, the children can be expected to make adequate gains in reading achievement.”
- Research on instructional practices must provide not only information about what works, but also what works with whom, by whom, in what contexts, and on which outcomes. The effectiveness of a particular practice needs to have been demonstrated with the types of students who will receive the instruction, taking into account, for example, whether the students live in rural or urban settings or come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- Research evidence frequently represents the effectiveness of an instructional practice on average, which suggests that some students benefited and others did not. This means that instruction must be provided by a teacher who understands the intent of the research-based practice being used and has the professional expertise and responsibility to plan instruction and adapt programs and materials as needed (see also principle 6, Expertise).
- When core language and literacy instruction is not effective for a particular student, it should be modified to address more closely

the needs and abilities of that student. Classroom teachers, at times in collaboration with other experts, must exercise their best professional judgment in providing responsive teaching and differentiation (see also principle 2).

2. Responsive Teaching and Differentiation

The RTI process emphasizes increasingly differentiated and intensified instruction or intervention in language and literacy.

- RTI is centrally about optimizing language and literacy instruction for particular students. This means that differentiated instruction, based on instructionally relevant assessment, is essential. Evidence shows that small-group and individualized instruction are effective in reducing the number of students who are at risk of becoming classified as learning disabled.
- Instruction and materials selection must derive from specific student–teacher interactions and not be constrained by packaged programs. Students have different language and literacy needs, so they may not respond similarly to instruction—even when research-based practices are used. No single approach to instruction or intervention can address the broad and varied goals and needs of all students, especially those from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- The boundaries between differentiation and intervention are permeable and not clearcut. Instruction or intervention must be flexible enough to respond to evidence from student performance and teaching interactions. It should not be constrained by institutional procedures that emphasize uniformity.

3. Assessment

An RTI approach demands assessment that can inform language and literacy instruction meaningfully.

- Assessment should reflect the multidimensional nature of language and literacy learning and the diversity among students being assessed. The utility of an assessment is dependent on the extent to which it provides valid information on the essential aspects of language and literacy that can be used to plan appropriate instruction.
- Assessments, tools, and techniques should provide useful and timely information about desired language and literacy goals. They should reflect authentic language and literacy activities as opposed to contrived texts or tasks generated specifically for assessment purposes. The quality of assessment information should not be sacrificed for the efficiency of an assessment procedure.
- Multiple purposes for assessment should be clearly identified and appropriate tools and techniques employed. Not all available tools and techniques are appropriate for all purposes, and different assessments—even in the same language or literacy

domain—capture different skills and knowledge. Particular care should be taken in selecting assessments for ELLs and for students who speak an English dialect that differs from mainstream dialects.

- Efficient assessment systems involve a layered approach in which screening techniques are used both to identify which students require further (diagnostic) assessment and to provide aggregate data about the nature of student achievement overall. Initial (screening) assessments should not be used as the sole mechanism for determining the appropriateness of targeted interventions. Ongoing progress monitoring must include an evaluation of the instruction itself and requires observation of the student in the classroom.
- Classroom teachers and reading/literacy specialists should play a central role in conducting language and literacy assessments and in using assessment results to plan instruction and monitor student performance.
- Assessment as a component of RTI should be consistent with the *Standards for the Assessment of Reading and Writing* developed jointly by the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English (2010).

4. Collaboration

RTI requires a dynamic, positive, and productive collaboration among professionals with relevant expertise in language and literacy. Success also depends on strong and respectful partnerships among professionals, parents, and students.

- Collaboration should be focused on the available evidence about the needs of students struggling in language and literacy. School-level decision-making teams (e.g., intervention teams, problem-solving teams, RTI teams) should include members with relevant expertise in language and literacy, including second-language learning.
- Reading/literacy specialists and coaches should provide leadership in every aspect of an RTI process—planning, assessment, provision of more intensified instruction and support, and making decisions about next steps. These individuals must embody the knowledge, skills, and dispositions detailed for reading specialists in IRA's (2003) *Standards for Reading Professionals* (and the accompanying revised role definitions from August 2007).
- Collaboration should increase, not reduce, the coherence of the instruction experienced by struggling readers. There must be congruence between core language and literacy instruction and interventions. This requires a shared vision and common goals for language and literacy instruction and assessment, adequate time for communication and coordinated planning among general education and specialist teachers, and integrated professional development.

- Involving parents and students and engaging them in a collaborative manner is critical to successful implementation. Initiating and strengthening collaborations among school, home, and communities, particularly in urban and rural areas, provides the basis for support and reinforcement of students' learning.

5. Systemic and Comprehensive Approaches

RTI must be part of a comprehensive, systemic approach to language and literacy assessment and instruction that supports all preK–12 students and teachers.

- RTI needs to be integrated within the context of a coherent and consistent language and literacy curriculum that guides comprehensive instruction for all students. Core instruction—indeed, all instruction—must be continuously improved to increase its efficacy and mitigate the need for specialized interventions.
- Specific approaches to RTI need to be appropriate for the particular school or district culture and take into account leadership, expertise, the diversity of the student population, and the available resources. Schools and districts should adopt an approach that best matches their needs and resources while still accomplishing the overall goals of RTI.
- A systemic approach to language and literacy learning within an RTI framework requires the active participation and genuine collaboration of many professionals, including classroom teachers, reading specialists, literacy coaches, special educators, and school psychologists. Given the critical role that language development plays in literacy learning, professionals with specialized language-related expertise such as speech-language pathologists and teachers of ELLs may be particularly helpful in addressing students' language difficulties.
- Approaches to RTI must be sensitive to developmental differences in language and literacy among students at different ages and grades. Although many prevailing approaches to RTI focus on the early elementary grades, it is essential for teachers and support personnel at middle and secondary levels to provide their students with the language and literacy instruction they need to succeed in school and beyond.
- Administrators must ensure adequate resources and appropriate scheduling to allow all professionals to collaborate.
- Ongoing and job-embedded professional development is necessary for all educators involved in the RTI process. Professional development should be context specific and provided by professional developers with appropriate preparation and skill to support school and district personnel. Professional expertise is essential to improving students' language and literacy learning in general as well as within the context of RTI (see also principle 6).