

## INTRODUCTION

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# Response to Intervention in the Core Content Areas: A Practical Approach for Educators

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Our school climate has been changing over the last 10 years and this means that our teachers also need to change. The current focus is on educating *all* students to the best of their ability in the general education classroom. Teachers need to find out which students are having problems, provide them support, and keep delivering more intensified supports with hopes the students will then learn the content and be successful. As a last resort, the struggling student may be referred for special education services, but only if all else fails and there is sufficient documentation of what was tried, for how long, and what the outcomes were. It is not to say that special education is a negative or bad thing, but that it should not be the first consideration when students are having academic or social difficulties in the classroom. The familiar term for this new approach is Response to Intervention (RtI). RtI is a school-based, multitiered system that has an academic and social behavior focus. This system utilizes data-based decision making in conjunction with appropriate levels of empirically based interventions. It can be quite a complex system, but if explained in the right way, it is very easy to understand. The purpose of this book is to help you understand what RtI is and how it impacts all kinds of learners in all kinds of environments.

*Response to Intervention in the Core Content Areas: A Practical Approach for Educators* discusses critical and practical issues related to RtI and how best to deal with all kinds of students in many different content-area classes. This book is comprised of 13 comprehensive and exhaustive chapters

addressing important topics related to RtI that teachers will face. In this book, Chapter 1 discusses “What Is RtI?”; Chapter 2 focuses on “Prevention and Early Identification of Students With Academic Difficulties—Tier I”; Chapter 3 addresses “More Intense Instruction—Tiers II and III of RtI”; Chapter 4 explains “Assessment Considerations in Three-Tier Approaches to Academic Instruction”; Chapter 5 provides information on “Making Data-Based Decisions in Tiers I, II, and III”; Chapter 6 explores “English Language Learners and RtI”; Chapter 7 discusses “Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students and RtI”; Chapter 8 focuses on “Assessment and Instruction in Reading in an RtI Classroom”; Chapter 9 addresses “RtI in Writing: Suggested Screening, Intervention, and Progress Monitoring”; Chapter 10 discusses “Using RtI in the Mathematics Classroom”; Chapter 11 focuses on “Using RtI in the Science Classroom”; Chapter 12 discusses “Using RtI in the Social Studies Classroom”; and Chapter 13 addresses “Data-Based Decision Making Across a Multitiered System of Support.” Each chapter gives thorough descriptions and explanations of the topics along with many practical examples that all teachers should find very beneficial. In addition, each chapter has a case study related to real teacher experiences to help you understand the process of RtI.

Chapter 1, “What Is RtI?,” discusses what exactly RtI is, why we should do it, and how it works. It also discusses how it is related to the law, the roles of the general and special educator, and resources that might be needed. Lastly, it discusses interventions and how to begin the process.

Chapter 2, “Prevention and Early Identification of Students With Academic Difficulties—Tier I,” focuses specifically on early identification and being proactive. Topics include effective teaching, student learning, and formative evaluation. It also explains when teachers should intervene, what criteria they should use, and the use of data to make data-based decisions.

Chapter 3, “More Intense Instruction—Tiers II and III of RtI,” deals with the specifics related to interventions in Tiers II and III. It discusses the characteristics of effective interventions and the steps necessary to implement them. Academic and social behavior of students are explained and discussed.

Chapter 4, “Assessment Considerations in Three-Tier Approaches to Academic Instruction,” describes the role of assessment as well as decision making in the RtI process. A major focus is on the collection of “good” useable data, where it comes from, and how we interpret it. It also discusses a student’s current progress and that progress compared to his or her peers.

Lastly, this chapter discusses obtaining proper documentation and graphing the data results in order to track progress.

Chapter 5, “Making Data-Based Decisions in Tiers I, II, and III,” provides specific information on Universal Screening as well as Tiers I, II, and III. The concept of frequent and consistent data collection is further discussed. Steps of assessment are provided, and the concept of decision making based on data is explained. Progress monitoring is also extensively discussed and elaborated on with many examples.

Chapter 6, “English Language Learners and RtI,” explores the important topic of serving English language learners. First a breakdown of just how many students fall into this category is described. Then typical models are discussed, as well as effective instruction for these learners. Next implications for RtI are explained and information about Tiers I, II, and III is summarized.

Chapter 7, “Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students and RtI,” discusses how teachers can effectively work with students who are culturally and linguistically diverse. First, problems these learners encounter are discussed, followed by a description of how RtI pertains to these individuals. The process of working with these students in the different tiers is explained, and mistakes to avoid when working with this population are summarized.

Chapter 8, “Assessment and Instruction in Reading in an RtI Classroom,” focuses on the content area of reading and RtI. The reading process is discussed, as is data collection. Next, interventions, data collection, and data analysis are explained. Many interventions are highlighted, along with an explanation of how reading comprehension occurs. Finally, the process of learning through reading is highlighted.

Chapter 9, “RtI in Writing: Suggested Screening, Intervention, and Progress Monitoring,” touches upon the content area of writing and RtI. First, the act of writing is explained and effective interventions are highlighted. Writing through the three tiers is explained. Next, the implementation steps a teacher can follow are summarized. Finally, how teachers can incorporate writing into their daily lessons and the steps of that process are explained.

Chapter 10, “Using RtI in the Mathematics Classroom,” addresses the content area of mathematics and RtI. The chapter opens by discussing mathematics and how it is typically taught. Academic tasks the student must complete to be successful are explained. Then, the chapter focuses on the collection of appropriate data at the different tiers. Progress monitoring

is discussed, and effective evidence-based strategies with implementation steps are highlighted.

Chapter 11, “Using RtI in the Science Classroom,” discusses the content area of science and RtI. Academic tasks required of students in science classrooms are explained and how RtI works in these environments is highlighted. In addition, what happens in the different tiers is explained and effective teaching methods and evidence-based practices are summarized. Also highlighted are the aspects of effective data collection methods and how to make decisions based on the data.

Chapter 12, “Using RtI in the Social Studies Classroom,” focuses on the content area of social studies and RtI. First, social studies is summarized and explained. Academic tasks required of students in social studies classrooms are explained and how RtI works in these environments is highlighted. What happens in Tiers I, II, and III is explained and effective teaching methods and evidence-based practices are summarized. Also highlighted is the aspect of effective data collection methods and making decisions based on the data.

Chapter 13, “Data-Based Decision Making Across a Multitiered System of Support,” summarizes the RtI process and is the conclusion chapter of this book. The goal is to help tie everything together and serve as a wrap-up chapter. Issues such as Adequate Yearly Progress, Universal Screening, the core curriculum, effectiveness of Tier II and III support, and effectiveness of special education are addressed. Lastly, the decision-making process is summarized and explained.

The text is written in a style that readers can comprehend and understand and is supported with many examples. In addition, the information can be easily applied by any type of teacher with any type of student in any type of setting. In preparing this book, experts in the field related to RtI were contacted to write meaningful and useful chapters and provide a detailed and comprehensive analysis of all of the different topics a teacher in an RtI environment might experience. On the whole, this book will be an added resource to all teachers working with all types of students in our schools. I am confident that readers will find this book to be helpful and useful regarding all of the aspects associated with teaching in an RtI environment. I think this book is an excellent required or supplementary text for all preservice or experienced teachers regarding the instruction of students in an RtI environment.

## CHAPTER 1

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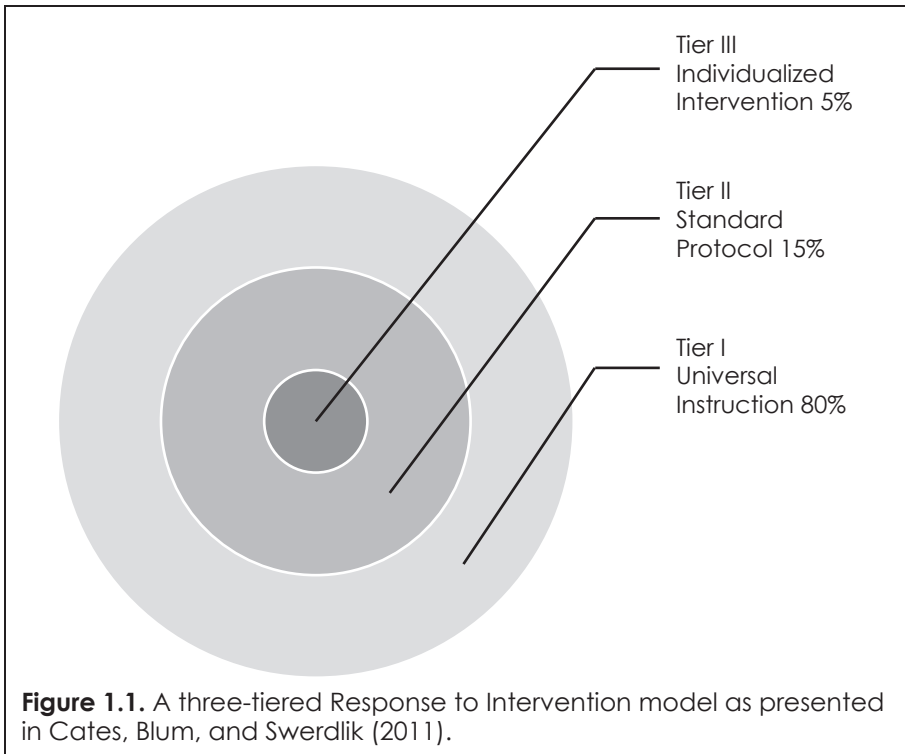
# What Is RtI?

Daniel L. Gadke, Gary L. Cates, and Mark E. Swerdlik

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Response to Intervention (RtI) is a school-based, multitiered system of academic and social behavior support that utilizes data-based decision making to match students with appropriate levels of empirically based academic and social behavioral support (Cates, Blum, & Swerdlik, 2011; National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 2005). More specifically, RtI emphasizes the systematic collection, analysis, interpretation, and utilization of data to match student levels of academic functioning and social behavior with appropriate instruction and intervention. The primary idea behind RtI is to identify students' needs early to prevent school-based problems from intensifying.

In addition to understanding what RtI is, it is also important to understand what RtI is not. RtI is not a tangible prepackaged program that a school simply implements with its staff and students. RtI is rather a framework of problem solving through data-based decision-making service delivery. Often, RtI is confused with a simple act such as screening using reading fluency probes three times a year or providing a group of students with a math intervention. Although these examples are found within an RtI framework, RtI is much more than any one of them in isolation. Essentially, RtI is a system requiring many components including (but not limited to) screening, diagnostics, intervention implementation, progress monitoring, and evaluation.



## How Does an RtI Framework Work?

Fortunately, an RtI framework of service delivery is quite user friendly. As mentioned previously, RtI is a multitiered system of support. For the purposes of this chapter, we outline a three-tiered model as described by Cates, Blum, and Swerdlik (2011). Figure 1.1 displays a three-tiered model of student support.

### ***Tier I (Universal Core)***

The outer circle represents Tier I. Tier I curriculum, instruction, and assessment should be scientifically based and provided to all students. It is suggested that approximately 80% of the students should sufficiently benefit from Tier I services alone. The level of effectiveness is often determined by the outcome of high-stakes testing typically dictated by the school's state board of education. If the curriculum and/or instruction is not meeting the needs of 80% of the students, changes need to be made to improve either the curriculum, the instruction, or both.

The method of assessment at the Tier I level is simply review of school-level report cards (not the report cards of individual students) and screening. The purpose of assessment at Tier I is to identify (a) areas that need to be targeted at the building level for all students, and (b) students who are at the greatest risk for falling behind their peers and/or not meeting state assessment standards. This universal screening of all students should be conducted three times during the school year (e.g., fall, winter, spring) in the areas of reading, mathematics, writing, and behavior. Those students who do not meet certain predetermined levels of performance are identified as being at risk for failure and are subsequently provided Tier II assessment and intervention.

### ***Tier II (Targeted Group Interventions)***

The middle circle in Figure 1.1 represents Tier II. Tier II curriculum and instruction should be delivered to approximately 15% percent of the student population for any given area of academics and behavior. The services at Tier II should be in addition to the core universal Tier I instruction. Typically, Tier II interventions are provided in a small-group format to children who are experiencing similar problems using a scripted standardized protocol or intervention program that is scientifically based.

The goal of Tier II assessment includes minimizing the identification of false positives, or children who were identified as at risk on the screener but who do not actually need additional services. Aside from minimizing the overidentification of children, a primary purpose of Tier II assessment should be to identify the general area of weakness of a particular student. In general, although Tier II assessment reduces the need to do lengthier and in-depth assessments with every child, the assessment measures do require more time and resources to administer than a Tier I screening measure.

### ***Tier III (Individualized Intervention)***

The innermost circle represents Tier III. Tier III interventions typically involve approximately 5% of the student population. The services should be provided in addition to Tier I and Tier II services. Intervention should be provided to all students who are not making adequate progress with Tier II levels of support. Evidenced-based Tier III interventions are individualized to meet the unique learning deficits of the student. These unique learning deficits can be identified through the use of methods such as curriculum-based evaluation (Howell & Nolet, 2000) or functional assessment (Steege

& Watson, 2009). These types of assessment strategies for Tier III require increased time and resources to deliver than the screeners and diagnostic tools at Tier I and II respectively.

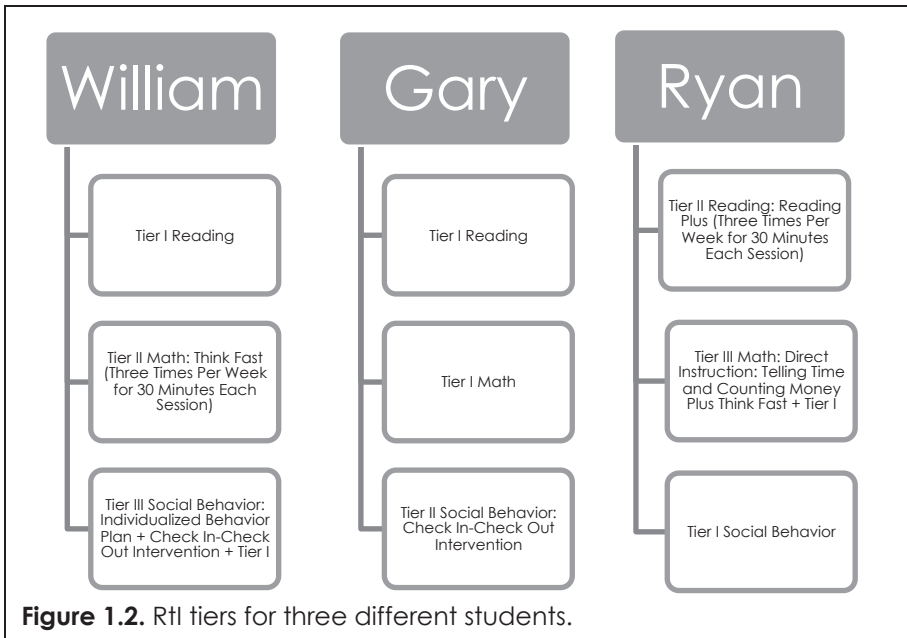
### ***RtI Model as a Whole***

Because at each tier both assessment and instruction/intervention change with regard to frequency and intensity, there are four important points to be made with regard to a three-tiered model of RtI. First, tiers are not mutually exclusive from one another (i.e., a child is not placed in one tier or another). That is, if it is determined through assessment that a child requires Tier III intervention, then the child also receives Tier II and Tier I interventions. In the example in Figure 1.2, during Tier III, William receives Tier II with Gary and Tier I with both Gary and Ryan. Second, children receiving services at the same level of intensity (e.g., Tier II) may be provided with different interventions (e.g., different Tier II reading interventions). William, if performing well in math, may have the Think Fast™ program faded to two sessions per week, while Ryan would continue to have a full three sessions per week. Third, students may spend different amounts of time in different tiers depending on their specific need. Similar to the number of sessions, the amount of time in the intervention for William could be faded after 9 weeks, while Ryan may continue to get the intervention for multiple quarters. Finally, students can be at different tiers for different needs. For example, a child may be provided Tier I services for reading, but receive Tier II services for math and Tier III services for writing. This is apparent in Figure 1.2.

### **When Does One Do RtI?**

As the definition suggests, RtI is a perpetual working system; it should be implemented at all times. The same RtI framework should address all of a student's school-based behaviors in the academic, social-emotional, and behavioral domains. In fact, it is suggested that all school improvement plans, as well as staff and teacher professional development, be strategically crafted under the RtI framework.





## Why Do RtI?

There are four major reasons for implementing an RtI framework within schools. First, it emphasizes data-based decision making. It is critical that educators be accustomed to considering a variety of data to make accurate decisions related to their instructional practices (e.g., Cates et al., 2003). Second, an RtI framework emphasizes the importance of evidence-based practice. With increased emphasis on educational accountability through such legislation as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), an RtI framework can ensure that schools are adhering to effective instructional practices and appropriately high educational standards. Third, RtI focuses on the performance of all students. Unlike traditional models of school service delivery, RtI does not focus exclusively on specific students such as those entitled to special education. Although a comprehensive RtI model can effectively facilitate the special education entitlement process (Peterson, Prasse, Shinn, & Swerdlik, 2007), it more broadly emphasizes the importance of matching the instructional needs of all students with the available resources in a school (Cates et al., 2011). Fourth, RtI may be required by law. Although no federal mandate (including NCLB or IDEA) currently exists to enforce an RtI model of educational service delivery, all states are implementing some form of RtI policy (Derby, 2011). The most

comprehensive report written on a state level mandating an implementation of RtI in July of 2009 indicated that nine states were mandating RtI. However, despite limited state mandates, another survey in 2009 indicated that about 71% of responding districts were at some level of RtI implementation (Pascopella, 2010)

### **Using Data to Make Decisions**

Unfortunately, all too often decisions are made according to anecdotal information, beliefs, feelings of school staff, and arbitrary markers. This method has found a home for itself in the world of education. RtI may help minimize this practice through the use of continuous data collection, analysis, and utilization. Schools implementing RtI continuously screen and monitor student performance across the various tiers in addition to diagnostic data collection and overall program evaluation. See Chapter 5 on data-based decision making in RtI schools for more information.

### **Evidence-Based Practice**

The use of data lends itself to evidence-based practices (EBP). Essentially, EBP is the use of data to make decisions about the educational needs of students. Specifically, EBP involves using effective and efficient educational practices through the provision of services to students based on their respective educational needs, thus minimizing learning and social behavioral concerns. EBPs are implemented in a systematic fashion specifically targeting the learning or behavioral problems that are demonstrated to be problematic (through the collection of data) early on. The level of intensity is also determined through the collection of data and regular progress monitoring during the various stages of intervention implementation.

## **Legal Basis for RtI**

Current legislation is in place that has been designed specifically to target schools and hold them accountable for the educational needs of their students. RtI serves as a vehicle for schools to be accountable for their actions and educational decisions. Such legislation includes the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (2004).

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) was signed into law in January 2002. The agenda of NCLB includes closing the achievement

gap between the majority and historically lower achieving groups, focusing on student outcomes, using scientifically based methods of instructions, and the implementation and assessment of academic standards. Schools are monitored according to student performance on statewide high-stakes tests mandated by the state board of education. Under NCLB, schools that repeatedly fail to meet minimal annual standards are provided with a series of remedial actions aimed at increasing student performance. The most serious penalties include complete restructuring of a school and its personnel.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was most recently reauthorized in 2004. The intent of the reauthorization was to parallel the mandates put into effect under NCLB. The mandates of IDEA include having all children with disabilities take part in annual state assessments and schools providing evidence that children are being provided with scientifically based instruction. Additionally, if a school does elect to include a particular student with a placement in special education, the school must document that the child has characteristics of a disability, a gap in performance, and a need for additional services (i.e., not responding to current level of services). IDEA allows for educational institutions to use RtI for special education eligibility. Because RtI emphasizes the early identification of students at risk, it may prove helpful in the early identification of students in need of special education services.

Combined mandates of NCLB and IDEA place a demand on schools for increased accountability and the use of high-quality scientifically based instruction. Increased pressure on the school also demands the use of data collection and routine assessment of the students to ensure the educational needs of each child, with or without a disability, are being met. RtI serves as a vehicle for schools to meet these various demands and systematically provide students with the support they need to be successful in meeting educational standards.

## **Empirical Support for RtI**

Unfortunately, the turnaround from research to practice, especially in education, can be upward of 20 years (e.g., Skinner, 1984). That is, heavily explored and empirically supported strategies often take years before they are actually used in the school system. An additional concern is that practices that have little to no empirical support often make their way into the school systems (e.g., focusing on learning styles; see Kavale & Forness,

1987). Fortunately, RtI is rooted in years of empirical research including curriculum-based measurement (CBM; Deno, 1985), behavioral consultation (Bergan & Kratochwill, 1990), and Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS; Sugai & Horner, 2006).

CBM, as developed by Deno (1985), is a staple of RtI. The use of these tools allows for all students to be regularly assessed in a fashion that is highly effective, efficient, and representative of the curriculum that a student is exposed to. The benchmarking and progress-monitoring activities prevalent in most RtI models today are based on the idea of CBM. In addition, locating the instructional level of specific students at Tier II in the form of curriculum-based assessment (CBA) and the individual diagnostic assessment that is conducted at Tier III in the form of curriculum-based evaluation (CBE) are also similarly rooted in the CBM framework.

Although CBM, CBA, and CBE are at the heart of RtI, the modern system of RtI is really based on the work of Bergan and Kratochwill (1990), Sugai and Horner (2006), and Gresham (1991). Bergan and Kratochwill outlined a model of a Behavioral Consultation that included the evaluation of the implemented intervention. This process also included modifying the intervention based on the evaluation, if necessary, to meet the needs of the consultee. This adaptation of intervention is prevalent in the RtI framework. In addition, Sugai and Horner's Positive Behavior Intervention Supports model was introduced as a systemwide tiered prevention model focusing on intervention supports. This three-tiered system is the general framework for RtI as we know it today. Although Sugai and Horner (2006) may have provided a framework for social behavior in schools specifically, Gresham (1991) pioneered the concept of identifying students for special education based on their responsiveness to intervention.

### ***Best Practices Approach***

Although the individual components of RtI as described above have been present in many states for many years, it has only recently started to emerge as a comprehensive model for school systems (Burns & Gibbons, 2008). Prior to using RtI, schools implementing a traditional model of service delivery generally provided services to students who demonstrated a severe discrepancy from their peers on achievement tests or a severe discrepancy between their own cognitive ability and their respective level of academic performance.

Although this may appear to be a reasonable method for allocating services and resources to students, there are a number of inherent problems associated with a traditional method.

First, the traditional model only focused on students who were referred by an adult who suspected the student to be severely struggling. In contrast, a hallmark of RtI is universal screening for academic and social behavioral deficits of all students relative to their respective peers or standards-based criteria. Second, this form of assessment for the allocation of resources involves a tremendous amount of time and resources. In fact, under the traditional model, each individual assessment requires numerous hours of assessment and report writing. This is far from an efficient use of time, especially when there may be any number of children that are in need of assessment. In contrast, an RtI model requires only a few minutes of assessment per student. Moreover, many of the brief screening assessments can be administered in a group format, saving additional time and personnel resources. Third, traditional assessment methods for the allocation of services to students is often conducted with commercial instruments that seek to provide a measurement of student performance relative to a representative national sample with little regard to the actual curriculum a student may be exposed to. In contrast, the RtI framework can be constructed such that a student's actual curriculum is used for the assessment purposes.

Finally, and perhaps the greatest concern related to the traditional model of allocation of services to students is that the traditional model requires waiting for a child to demonstrate significantly discrepant performance. Unfortunately, by the time significantly discrepant performance is obtained, the child may perform lower than his peers by multiple grade levels. Moreover, an isolated academic concern (e.g., reading fluency) may have migrated to negatively impact other areas of learning (e.g., math word problems or social studies). In contrast, the RtI model of assessment requires screenings of academic and social behavior multiple times per year that allows for a detection of performance that is not following an ideal developmental trajectory. Essentially, the data collected through the traditional model are time consuming, lack functional use for interventions, are not representative of what the child is learning, and come too late. In contrast, the RtI model is timelier, can be linked to academic or social-behavioral instruction because it can be constructed from the child's current curriculum, and has a prevention focus. That is, screening for potential problems allows for early intervening steps.

## **Where Do You Implement RtI— General or Special Education?**

### ***General Education Implementation***

At the district and building levels, RtI is intended to be integrated into both the general and special education systems. Often RtI is misinterpreted to be a special education initiative, meaning it is primarily part of and implemented by special educators. Assessment and intervention within an effective RtI system should be integrated into all of the tiers discussed previously, which would include both general and special education.

It may be apparent that an RtI model of service delivery focuses on the early detection of students who are at risk for not making adequate progress. By using screening instruments that may predict academic yearly progress (AYP) outcomes, educators can help identify students who may be at risk for not meeting state-level assessment expectations. In doing so, educators can more adequately address instructional needs (through instructional/curriculum modification) and change the educational trajectories of these students through the use of targeted (Tier II) interventions. Tier II interventions can be implemented either within the general education classroom (as part of differentiated instruction), referred to as “push-in” services, or outside of the general education classroom, referred to as “pull-out” services.

Based on the particular students’ response to these targeted interventions, the interventions can either be faded (i.e., moving toward Tier I only) or intensified (i.e., moving toward Tier III) seamlessly along a continuum of educational service delivery. Typically Tier III services are more individualized and can be provided either outside (pull-out services) or inside (push-in services) the general education classroom. Although either general or special education personnel can provide these services, most often RtI services are provided as part of general education. In addition to intervention at Tier III, monitoring of student progress continues. The monitoring of progress allows for decisions to be made as to whether or not even more intensive interventions are necessary. If there is a positive response to the intervention, then a determination is made as to whether the intensity of these successful interventions can be maintained within general education or if the student meets eligibility criteria to receive these interventions as part of special education (e.g., Illinois State Board of Education, 2011).

## **Special Education Implementation**

Related more specifically to determining eligibility for special education within an RtI framework, as noted previously, IDEA (2004) permitted the use of a student's response to scientifically based interventions as a method for determining eligibility for special education. When using a student's response to intervention as a basis for special education eligibility and entitlement decisions, the following questions are asked and must be answered by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team. First, what is the discrepancy of the student's performance with the peer group and/or standard? The focus in responding to this question is on determining if the student is achieving adequately to meet age- or state-approved grade-level standards. If the student is achieving significantly below his grade-level peers or not meeting state-approved grade-level benchmarks, it must be further determined that the student was provided appropriate instruction. For example, if the majority of a student's grade-level peers are also not achieving adequately for their age or fail to meet state-approved grade-level standards, then it would be more difficult to suggest that the lack of achievement is due to a disability rather than the student not being exposed to appropriate/effective core instruction. Second, what is the student's educational progress as measured by rate of improvement? It must be determined whether the progress the student is making in response to scientifically based interventions will allow the student to close the achievement gap with her peers within a reasonable amount of time. Finally, what are the instructional needs of the student? To answer this last question, the focus is on determining that instructional needs have been identified that are beyond what can be met with general education resources alone. This is evident when the curriculum, intensity of instruction (e.g., amount and rate of practice and feedback, how explicit the instruction is, amount of time weekly the intervention is delivered), and/or environmental conditions (e.g., size of the group such as individualized or small group) are more intense as compared to the needs of other students in the general education environment.

## **What Resources Are Needed?**

In order to effectively implement an RtI system a number of resources are needed. These resources include time, space, involvement of key personnel, and funding (Cates et al., 2011).



## **Time**

Time represents a critical resource in effective implementation of an RtI system in two ways. The first is to ensure adequate time is devoted to deliver core instruction to all students. As an example, perhaps a significant number of first-grade students (e.g., more than 20%) are not adequately achieving in reading. An analysis of the core curriculum suggests that there is very limited classroom time devoted to phonics instruction. In order for the students to achieve adequately in reading, a decision is made to increase the amount of time devoted to phonics instruction to all students as part of the core instruction. The second way that time represents a critical resource centers around the need for time to be allotted during the instructional day to deliver interventions either within the classroom (push-in) or outside of the general education class (pull-out). This is typically accomplished by establishing a daily intervention time during which there is flexibility for students to move to appropriate intervention groups without missing out on core instruction.

## **Space**

In addition to time, there must also be space for the various intervention groups to meet. Many schools have limited space. Space needs to be considered when determining the length and time in the scheduling of Tier II and III pull-out intervention groups. Many schools may elect to use space such as the cafeteria, hallways, or music rooms at times when traffic is lower to decrease distractions in those areas.

## **Person Power**

As discussed in this introductory chapter, RtI involves the delivering of effective core instruction and a variety of interventions to address the academic and social-emotional-behavioral needs of students. In addition to having the time and space for these interventions, there must also be the personnel to deliver them. However, with education funding being limited, additional personnel typically cannot be hired but rather the roles and responsibilities of school personnel within an RtI system must change. These personnel include the principal, general education teachers, special education teachers, parents, and other school personnel.

**Administrator/Principal.** Research on effective RtI implementation (Cates et al., 2011; Peterson et al., 2007) has found that strong leadership by the building principal represents the most important predictor of suc-



successful implementation of an RtI system within a building. This leadership includes the principal being knowledgeable about basic RtI principles and providing strong support of the initiative. This support requires providing the critical resources including support for the changing roles and responsibilities of various school personnel, building time into the daily instructional schedule to implement Tier II and III interventions, and allowing space to provide these interventions. Further, principals demonstrate support by building into their budgets funding to purchase a variety of scientifically based standard protocol interventions to target identified academic and social-emotional-behavioral skills. Principals must also function as effective instructional leaders in their buildings to support effective core instruction provided to all students. Strong core instruction is a critical component of any effective RtI system.

**Special educator.** The special educator is frequently asked to deliver interventions to not only those students who have IEPs, but to integrate into their groups students who are in need of targeted Tier II or more individualized Tier III interventions. In addition, special educators often have a more significant consultation role in an RtI system, serving as members of grade level and/or individual problem-solving teams.

**General education teacher.** The general education teacher will frequently be involved in data-based decision making by serving as members of the grade-level team. This grade-level team within an RtI system typically determines which students require Tier II intervention and which academic or behavioral skill(s) to target, as well as analyzes progress-monitoring data to assess the student's response to Tier II intervention. Grade-level teams then arrive at decisions based on these data as to whether to continue the Tier II intervention, intensify it, or move the student back to solely core instruction. General education teachers also frequently implement these Tier II interventions through either push-in or pull-out services during a designated intervention time. Further, general education teachers are heavily involved in analyzing their core instruction if more than 20% of their students are not meeting grade-level benchmarks. General education teachers also frequently serve as members of Tier III individual problem-solving teams, either as a building-level teacher representative or as the referring teacher of the student being discussed.

**Special service personnel.** Special service personnel, who may include the school psychologist, social worker, and guidance counselor, also represent a critical resource for a building implementing an RtI system. For example, school psychologists are experts in data-based decision making including administering, scoring, and interpreting data obtained from

universal screening, diagnostic assessment, and progress monitoring. Both school psychologists and social workers serve as consultants to or are members of the building-level RtI implementation team, and grade-level and individual problem-solving teams engaging in data-based decision making. A number of school psychologists, social workers, and guidance counselors also become involved in administering universal screening measures and implementing Tier II and III academic and/or social-emotional-behavioral interventions as part of an RtI system implemented at the building level.

**Parents.** Parents also function as important resources for implementing an effective RtI system within a district and individual buildings. It is recommended (Cates et al., 2011) that parents be a part of the districtwide and individual building RtI implementation teams. As these RtI teams typically deal with implementation issues at the district or building levels and individual students are not discussed, confidentiality is not violated by having a parent representative involved on these teams. At the individual student level, parent involvement and support, as part of the individual problem-solving process, is critical to developing effective interventions for particular students. Parents frequently provide very useful information that can be part of the various stages of individual problem solving including identifying and analyzing academic and behavioral problems as well as in the development and implementation of various interventions. Research (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001) supports that parent involvement is strongly related to a student's academic achievement and developing social competence. Finally, strong parent support evidenced through an organization such as the building's Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) can provide funding to purchase curricular materials and standard protocol interventions for use at Tiers II and III as well as educate parents as to the goals, various components, and procedures of the RtI system.

### **Funding**

As noted above, it is typically the case that schools do not have additional funding to hire more school personnel, either certified teachers or teacher assistants, to implement interventions as part of a RtI system. However, if funding is available, then this can be a very valuable resource. Teachers and/or teacher assistants hired to assist in the implementation of RtI must be well trained in Tier II and/or III standard protocol interventions and be part of the problem-solving process at each stage such as collecting and analyzing progress-monitoring data. Although many schools are able to effectively implement an RtI system without additional person-

nel, funding is needed to purchase scientifically based core curricula and standard protocol interventions. The use of an Internet-based data management system such as AIMSweb or DIBELS also contributes to successful RtI implementation but carries a per pupil cost that must be funded by the school district or building.

## **Where Do I Start When I Am Ready to Implement RtI?**

Many schools that are just beginning to implement an RtI system grapple with the question of where to begin. Should the school implement universal screening in each of the basic skill areas or begin with just one area such as reading? Should the school begin by implementing problem solving at all levels including Tier III or begin by focusing on developing strong core instruction so that at least 80% of students at each grade level are meeting benchmarks in the various academic skill areas? We recommend that they begin small, focusing only on one academic area, often reading due to its relationship to success in other academic areas, and then expand the RtI system to include other curricular areas (Cates et al., 2011). Further, we recommend that if universal screening data are indicating that less than 80% of students at particular grade levels are meeting grade-level benchmarks, then the focus of RtI implementation should be on strengthening the core instruction rather than developing Tier III interventions and overloading the system with the number of students who require more individualized interventions.

Related to the need to begin small and to initially focus the building's resources on the tier that will most contribute to effective implementation of the RtI system, a careful analysis of schoolwide assessment data is necessary. These data can include those collected from universal screening, high-stakes testing, discipline records, and other sources. As these data are initially collected, it would also be important to develop an evaluation plan and data collection system based on the vision, objectives, and expected outcomes for the RTI model being implemented in the district or building. The evaluation plan should focus on student outcomes but also include school personnel, parent, and student satisfaction measures. Before evaluating student outcomes, a plan to assess and ensure treatment integrity must be implemented. Treatment integrity focuses on determining that all aspects of the RtI system are being implemented as they are intended prior to assessing outcomes. Often, educational initiatives such as RtI are not

found to lead to positive student outcomes—not because they are not good ideas but because they were not implemented as intended.

### **Example of Meeting the Needs of All Students Through a Multitiered System of Support**

Historically, traditional models of special education were designed to identify children who had significantly fallen behind their peers and provide them with special education services. RtI is a system that includes screening of all children’s academic and social behaviors relative to one another and/or criterion-based standards multiple times per year such that early detection of potential problems can be identified. Children who do not appear to be benefiting from their current academic or social behavior curriculum are provided supplemental instruction through more intensive interventions. These interventions are typically provided on a continuum within a multitiered system of support (Cates et al., 2011). The following is an example of how an RtI process may look across the tiers.

Jim is a fourth-grade student enrolled at Lincoln Elementary. During winter benchmarking, Jim was identified as being at risk in mathematics. Specifically, his math computation problem completion rate and accuracy on a universal screening measure was below a predetermined cut-off score. Moreover, his score was also below that of average peer performance. In response, Jim was administered a follow-up diagnostic assessment to ensure that the screening instrument accurately identified Jim as being at risk in addition to isolating what areas of math Jim struggles with. In Jim’s case, he was having particular difficulty with his multiplication tables.

Shortly after, Jim was admitted to a small group with four other students that spent additional time focusing on math. The group was using a scientifically based computerized packaged intervention that the school had purchased from a well-known publishing company. The group met for 15 additional minutes per day 3 days per week. The computer program targeted basic math facts. Twice a month, the instructor monitored Jim’s and the other students’ progress with a curriculum-based measurement probe similar to the universal screening measure. Although after 2 months the other students were progressing, it was clear Jim was not responding to the intervention. In response, Jim was assessed using curriculum-based evaluation procedures (Howell & Nolet, 2000) in order to

develop an individualized Tier III intervention. During the assessment, Jim's previous work was reviewed, his teachers were interviewed, Jim was interviewed, and an error analysis was done on Jim's work.

Following the completion of the error analysis, it was determined that Jim could not accurately complete any problem that involved the subtraction of a double-digit number from a double-digit number that required regrouping from the 10s column. Specifically, Jim was not following the proper procedures for subtracting a double-digit number from a double-digit number that required regrouping. After determining Jim's problem, he was supplied with an evidenced-based intervention in the form of direct instruction. Jim completed the intervention 5 days per week for 10 minutes each time. The instructor met with Jim one-on-one and monitored his progress weekly.

After approximately one month, it was apparent that Jim was responding to the intervention. That is, Jim was starting to get more subtraction problems correct. The data being collected by the Tier II standard protocol computerized packaged intervention corroborated these findings. After completing Tier III intervention for 2 months, it was determined that Jim no longer needed Tier III intervention. Currently, Jim remains in Tier II intervention.

## Conclusion

Response to Intervention is a school-based multitiered framework involving the systematic collection, analysis, interpretation, and utilization of data to match students with the appropriate unique academic and behavioral intervention(s) they may need. Overall, RtI is a prevention model aimed at identifying the needs of students early on and addressing those needs before they intensify. RtI is an all-encompassing framework that addresses the academic and social behavior needs of all students (K–12). In essence, RtI is a multitiered data-based decision-making model of service delivery that focuses on the academic and social behavior of all students. Tier I (universal core) should adequately address the needs of at least 80% of the student body; however, curriculum, instruction, and assessment methods used in Tier I should be provided to all students and be scientifically based. Assessment at Tier I has two goals: (1) use screening measures to identify the students who are most likely to fall behind and

(2) examine school- and district-level performance for areas of concern for the majority of students. Tier II (targeted groups intervention) should be delivered to approximately 15% of the student body. Services at this level are provided in a small-group format, usually using a standardized scientifically based protocol. Assessment at Tier II has two goals: (1) minimize the students who were false-positives during Tier I screening (those who appeared not to need screening, but in fact do) and (2) identify general areas of weakness for a student who is in need of further intervention. Finally, Tier III (individualized intervention) usually includes about 5% of the students in a school building. Tier III interventions should be delivered to students not making adequate progress at Tier II. The interventions provided at this level should be evidence-based and delivered more intensively (i.e., more time, smaller group, more narrow curricular focus) to meet the specific needs of a given student. The goal of assessment at Tier III is to address those specific learning needs. It is essential to remember that the tiers are not mutually exclusive of one another; Tier II is provided in addition to Tier I, Tier III is provided in addition to Tiers II and I, and a student can be receiving interventions at different tiers in different skill areas.

There are four major reasons for its implementation. First, RtI utilizes data-based decision making to target the needs of students. Additionally, the framework emphasizes the use of evidenced-based practices. Further, RtI addresses the needs of all students, not just those who have been identified as needing special education services. Finally, although there is currently no federal mandate for RtI, data suggest that all states are implementing the framework in some form or another and a number of states currently mandate its practice.

RtI is a universal framework intended to meet the needs of all students. That being said, RtI should be integrated in both special education and general education settings. In fact, IDEA (2004) now permits the use of data collected using the RtI framework to officially determine eligibility for special education services. Instituting a schoolwide multitiered framework requires certain resources. First and foremost, it requires time. Time is necessary to deliver additional interventions to children. This additional time can be achieved through push-in or pull-out services. Space is also necessary. Most buildings do not have whole rooms they can dedicate to RtI, so using hallways, empty rooms, and isolated classroom areas should be utilized. Additionally, funding is of great importance. Most schools are not afforded additional fiscal resources to allocate toward the hiring of new staff or the purchasing of additional materials. That being said, it is essen-

tial for schools to often “work with what they have” and reallocate current staff responsibilities. Finally and perhaps most importantly is person power: Administrators, special and general education teachers, specialists such as school psychologists and social workers, and parents must unite to effectively implement RtI.

Strong leadership is essential for the successful and lasting implementation of RtI. Principals who are knowledgeable about RtI and enthusiastic about the framework play perhaps the most vital role in successful implementation. Special education teachers play an integral role for intervention delivery to students who have IEPs and those who do not but need Tier II and III interventions. General education teachers play an equally important role, especially as members of a grade-level RtI team. General education teachers often determine when students need Tier II interventions and are often heavily involved in data collection at Tier I (i.e., screeners and progress monitoring). Special service personnel such as school psychologists, social workers, and guidance counselors are often readily available to offer their assistance with data analysis/interpretation and intervention delivery. Finally, parents should be recruited as part of a school or district’s RtI initiative. Parent support can spread RtI awareness and support and lead to fundraising that can be used to help a school meet the financial demands of initiating RtI.

Knowing where to get started with the implementation of an RtI framework is often perplexing. The general rule is to start small and go slow. A schoolwide needs assessment should be completed to find out specifically where the school should start. Focusing on one academic area at Tier I is often the place to begin; ensure a strong core curriculum and a sound method of data collection (i.e., screening). All too often, schools with the greatest intention and ideal resources struggle with doing too much, leading to the lack of effective implementation of RtI before it is even put in place.

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## CHAPTER 8

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# Assessment and Instruction in Reading in an Rtl Classroom

Linda Wedwick and Sarah Urbanc

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### Introduction

Samantha is a typical third grader in Mrs. Smith's room at Central Elementary School. She has been at Central since kindergarten. From the outside, it appears that Samantha learned to read on target with her peers. The literacy curriculum utilized in Mrs. Smith's classroom is research based and implemented with fidelity and integrity. Samantha does not seem to be responding favorably to the lessons and is beginning to fall behind with the increased complexities of third-grade reading material.

Mrs. Smith decided to begin gathering data on Samantha in order to pinpoint her areas of strength and weakness. The entire class took part in a fluency benchmark, and Samantha's words read per minute were on grade level. Other informal reading experiences have led Mrs. Smith to believe that Samantha is a fluent reader, yet she is having difficulty comprehending what she has read. As her teacher, Mrs. Smith must consider how Tier I instruction will support Samantha's progress in reading.

Tier I instruction is that which all general education students receive, and there is a fundamental belief that schools must use a research-based curriculum (Marston, 2005). However, researchers are uncovering that

students are having problems in reading due to a lack of proper instruction and not necessarily a learning disability (Johnston, 2010) or as the result of the curriculum. Instructional decisions will have the most impact on a student's reading progress.

Teachers like Mrs. Smith will need to support every student's reading progress through a variety of assessment and instructional responses. Therefore, the focus of this chapter will be on best practice Tier I instruction and what to do when reading problems still occur. This will be explained through the use of a case study outlining the reading difficulties of one particular student, Samantha. In the first part of this chapter, we will discuss an instructional framework for reading instruction, followed by a number of tools that can be utilized for data collection in order to provide a comprehensive assessment that can be used to provide information about a student's reading process. More specifically, a focus on comprehension will be evident and an in-process comprehension tool will be shared, including directions for implementation. We will revisit Samantha, our third-grade student, presenting specific data from her assessments, and finally our instructional response. Although we provide a literacy framework, we are working under the assumption that educators have a literacy curriculum they must abide by; therefore, our strategies and methods will be presented in a way that can supplement any program.

## **Instructional Framework for Reading**

The National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) report led many schools to focus their reading instruction on five components of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Consequently, some interpreted the findings from the NRP report to mean that reading consists of these five skills, and therefore, that instruction should focus on these skills in isolation (Howard, 2009). Reading, however, is more complex, and "instruction is more effective when teachers interweave the [skills] to support the goal of making meaning rather than teach one in isolation" (Howard, 2009, p. 12). If teachers teach these skills in isolation, there will be students who struggle and students who have difficulty remembering what they read. We do not suggest that these components be ignored in our instruction; rather, we believe that meaningful assessments and instruction will incorporate them without a narrow, isolated lens in which to base instruction.

We understand that educators do not always have the opportunity to choose the curriculum they teach. With that being said, teachers are often looking for ways to supplement the core curriculum in order to ensure that the needs of all learners are being met. In terms of reading instruction, the following instructional framework can be incorporated into any curriculum to support current best practice.

### ***Gradual Release of Responsibility***

As educators, we know that students do not learn information or skills at the same rate or at the same level of mastery. Rather, the skills that we teach need to be scaffolded to meet the needs of each individual learner. By following a gradual release of responsibility framework, we can allow each learner to be supported, yet learn at a pace that is appropriate to him or her.

When introducing a new concept, educators should start by using a shared-reading technique. Shared reading is when an educator reads aloud to students, modeling strategies or skills being taught, and gradually invites them to take part in the process (Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003). By reading aloud, educators provide students with an example of fluent reading, as well as create an opportunity to think aloud (Dewitz, Jones, & Leahy, 2009). A think aloud is when educators model the use of a comprehension strategy or other literacy skill by voicing their thoughts out loud in order to reveal the thought process for others (Duke & Pearson, 2002). After the first read, educators should reread the text, this time using a think aloud to help bring emphasis to the strategy or skill being highlighted.

Once educators feel students are ready to take the next step in internalizing the skill, educators should incorporate the strategy during guided reading. Guided literacy instruction “is designed to support and empower the development of knowledge they [students] need to move towards independence” (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2009, p. 7). The role of the educator is again one of modeling and explicit instruction (Rasinski & Hoffman, 2003). The area being targeted by educators can be worked on in a small-group setting of five to six students (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001). Because the group is small, educators are in a better position to monitor student comprehension and skill application. During this time, educators should conference with students to gain insight into their level of skill acquisition. Small groups provide a setting in which students can take risks without feeling intimidated.

Prior to completely releasing the responsibility of the strategy or skill directly to the student, teachers should initiate one last think aloud. This

time, however, the students should conduct it. This gives educators the opportunity to understand how students are processing the information from the modeled portion of the lesson (Duke & Pearson, 2002). Students who are demonstrating an understanding of a skill are then encouraged to further practice this skill on their own with the remainder of the text. Students who are not showing a command over the skill are then shown further examples of its application until they are able to successfully master the skill on their own.

The final step in the gradual-release model is independent practice. During reading instruction, independent practice should be incorporated, because students need the opportunity to independently practice and apply skills after modeling (Fisher et al., 2009). Students in primary grades should spend at least 20–30 minutes each day independently reading, and intermediate students should take even more time on this task (Cunningham & Allington, 1999). Students should be encouraged to make connections with the text, applying the reading and comprehension strategies discussed during whole-group instruction (Fisher et al., 2009). While reading, students may utilize graphic organizers or interact with the text through a reader response journal; these types of activities have been proven to help students sort their ideas in a way that leads to further understanding (Hancock, 2000).

## **Comprehension**

Because reading is a complex process and making meaning is the goal of any reading event, comprehension must be the basis for our assessment and instruction. All components work together and not in isolation and allow students to make meaning from what they have read (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007; Pikulski & Chard, 2005). Although comprehension is one of the five components of reading discussed by the National Reading Panel Report, we agree with Howard (2009) and Taberski (2009) that comprehension should be thought of as the umbrella under which phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary should be taught.

Rather than focus on comprehension after the oral or silent reading is complete, teachers can assess comprehension on two dimensions: comprehension in process and retelling (Goodman, Watson, & Burke, 2005). Comprehension in process is a more suitable alternative to accuracy. The purpose of assessing comprehension in process is to determine the quality of the miscues that readers make. Miscues are those instances when a reader deviates from the printed text. Although some researchers refer to

these deviations as errors, we espouse Goodman's (1996) theory that miscues are not random, uncontrolled behavior, but rather cued by the reader's background experiences and knowledge of language. Investigating these instances of deviation and the reader's comprehension in process reveal how a reader is interacting with a text. We will demonstrate data collection with an in-process tool that is combined with a retelling.

## Data Collection

According to the International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English's Standards for the Assessment of Reading and Writing (2010), the goal of assessment is to improve teaching and learning. Assessment and instruction must be inextricably linked, and our assessments must be comprehensive enough to measure what we want readers to do. For example, if a teacher's assessment for fluency is a one-minute timed reading, the implication is that children will think they are reading when they read fast. Often these children focus only on speed and not on making meaning.

Prior to analyzing a student's reading process, it is important to take a step back and get to know the child as a reader. The first assessment an educator can use is a reading perception tool such as the Burke Reading Inventory (Burke, 1980). The Burke Reading Inventory is used to gather data about a student's perceptions of her own reading abilities and provides insight to the educator as to the strategies students think they use during reading (Goodman et al., 2005). It is known that students' beliefs about their own reading ability (and the reading process in general) affect the ways in which they learn to read (Goodman et al., 2005). By uncovering these beliefs, educators can better plan their next instructional moves.

In addition to utilizing a reading perception assessment, additional tools can also be used to gain a more holistic view of a child's reading process. For example, teachers may use ongoing running records; conduct observations and/or hold conferences; analyze reader response journals, rubrics, and/or graphic organizers; or use reading fluency tests. If possible, an educator may even conduct miscue analysis for more in-depth information. A "miscue analysis examines readers' control and use of the language cuing systems and reading strategies while reading orally" (Goodman et al., 2005, pg. 131). Language cuing systems consist of syntax (the structure of language), semantics (the meaning), and graphophonics, which are the visual features of the print.

Although miscue analysis produces a plethora of information, it can be rather timely and requires a high degree of training to be done properly. Therefore, we propose a new tool—one that will reveal a student’s level of comprehension without going through a full miscue analysis. The In-Process Comprehension Rubric can be used by any educator during a child’s independent reading time and examines his in-process comprehension. When coupled with a retell, this tool gives a wide view of a student’s reading ability, without focusing on one isolated component of reading. An example of the In-Process Comprehension Rubric will be provided later in this chapter.

## Interventions

Interventions are very fluid in the sense that “no instructional method, approach, technique, strategy, or scheme has ever been found to be 100% effective” (Shanahan, 2008, p. 105). Therefore, it is often left to the personnel designing and implementing the interventions to select the appropriate instructional approach to best aid the students in becoming successful learners. It is important to remember that students who receive extra help should spend that time reading from continuous text and not in isolated skill instruction (Allington, 2009). Oftentimes we see students being pulled from their classrooms in order to receive instruction. We do not recommend this approach for reading because of the content instruction they miss when they are not in the classroom. Also, the amount of time spent with interventions should not be the same for each child. The number of minutes each child needs will depend on his or her grade level and individual needs. However, upper elementary students may need additional time due to the fact that they are usually further behind their peers.

In order to select the most appropriate intervention, meaningful data are necessary. Instructional responses or interventions should not be based on one assessment that determines one aspect of reading. Additionally, assessment data must include a reader’s transaction with continuous text.

## Case Study

In this section, we will present a framework for assessment. The data collected from Samantha will be used to demonstrate the framework and the accompanying tools for assessment. The main tool we will use is the In-Process Comprehension Rubric. This tool was adapted from Goodman,

Watson, and Burke's (2005) Miscue Analysis and reflects a sociopsycholinguistic view of reading. In a sociopsycholinguistic view of reading, the reader's construction of meaning is central to assessment and instruction. Additionally, reading is considered a process that integrates skills, context, and background knowledge, rather than isolated skills. Therefore, the rubric encompasses the complexities of comprehension, indicating that comprehension should be the priority in reading assessment, but also takes into account the need for teachers to have an assessment tool that is not too time consuming.

### **Samantha's Data**

The Burke Reading Inventory (BRI) helped Samantha's teacher understand how Samantha viewed reading and readers. On the BRI, Samantha indicated that she likes school and her teacher. She loves to have someone read to her, but does not like to read to others because she says it takes too long. Samantha believes that good readers read fast and do not make mistakes. Samantha would like to be called on more by her teacher during reading time but believes only good readers are called on. She believes that making no mistakes and reading fast looks like fun and may be what she needs to finish a whole book during reading time at school. She also believes that this is the only way that she will get called on to read. When Samantha comes to something she does not know, she usually skips it or tries to sound it out. Occasionally she will seek help from Mrs. Smith, who prompts Samantha to break up the word and sound it out.

From this data, Mrs. Smith learned that Samantha understands reading to be fast and accurate. This view is likely the result of previous instructional approaches and assessment tools. However, because Samantha's difficulty appears to be comprehension, Mrs. Smith needs to look deeper into Samantha's reading process. Samantha's lack of focus on comprehension and meaning making during reading requires an assessment tool that encompasses more than accuracy and rate. Therefore, Mrs. Smith used the In-Process Reading Comprehension tool.

For the case study, Samantha read *Judy Moody Gets Famous!* by Megan MacDonald. The text is Samantha's independent reading time material and is third-grade appropriate. To gather data on Samantha's reading process, Mrs. Smith begins by conducting a reading conference with Samantha and asking her to read orally from the book. As Samantha reads, Mrs. Smith analyzes the oral reading on a sentence level, using tally marks to identify whether the sentences make sense within the context of the story.



(See Appendix A for complete step-by-step directions.) It is important to remember that a sentence can still be marked acceptable and have miscues, as long as the miscues do not alter the overall meaning of the text. Mrs. Smith has Samantha continue reading until she has read enough text to provide a sufficient, meaningful retell. Finally, Mrs. Smith asks Samantha to tell what she remembered about what she read. This retelling should be open-ended at first and followed by some teacher prompts that help the reader extend her responses or recall parts she may have inadvertently left out.

After conducting the retell, Mrs. Smith concludes the reading conference and allows Samantha to continue her independent reading. Mrs. Smith can quickly determine an in-process comprehension percentage, as well as score the remainder of the rubric. From Samantha's oral reading of *Judy Moody Gets Famous!*, 90 out of the 97 sentences Samantha read retained the text's meaning. This led to an in-process comprehension score of 93%.

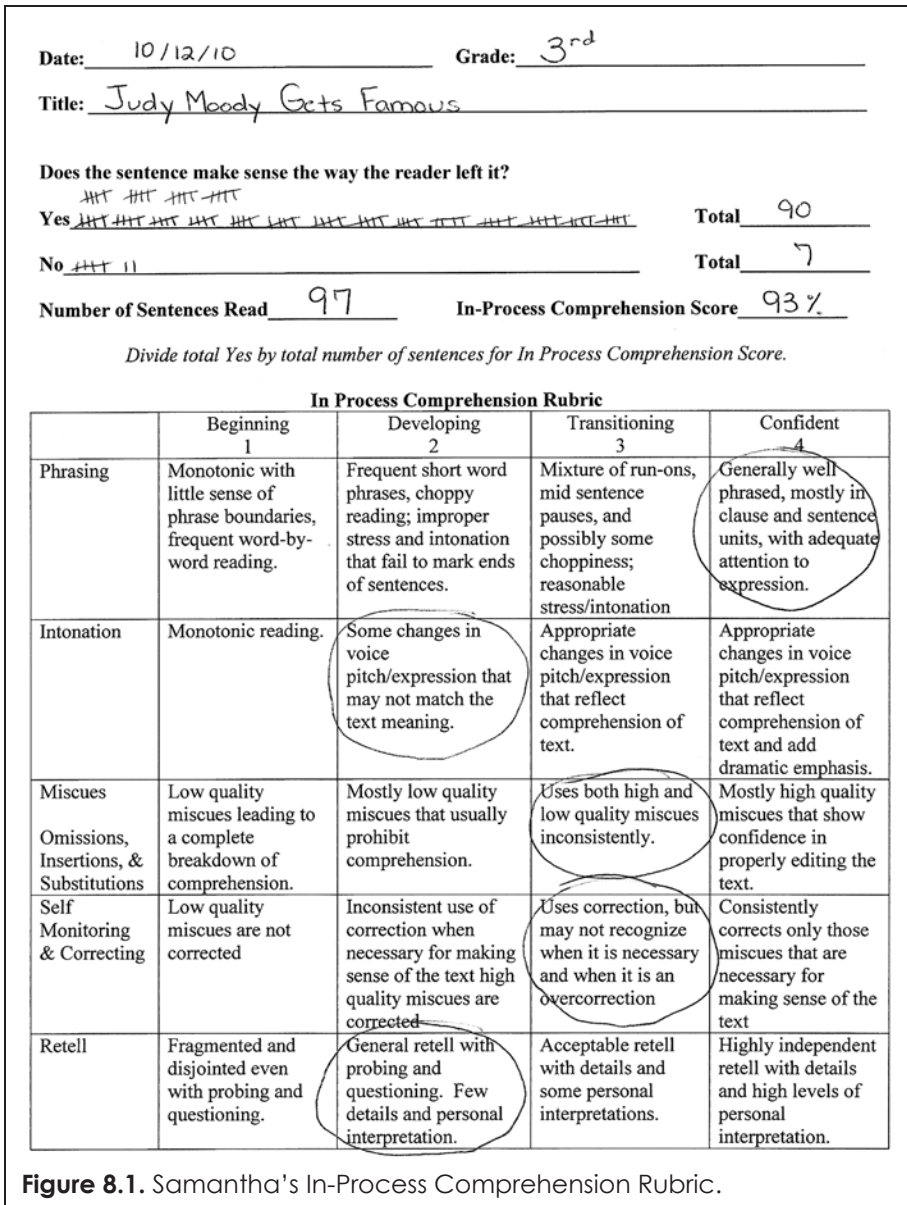
The In-Process Comprehension Rubric provides a more in-depth look at the specific comprehension components. Instead of looking at fluency alone, it is important to start breaking down the processes that make up comprehension in order to pinpoint, if necessary, the specific area(s) students need further instruction in.

### **Data Analysis**

Once the information has been collected, the next step is data analysis. We will explain behaviors that developing and proficient readers exude in each category, while focusing on Samantha's outcomes.

**Phrasing.** Readers who show a high level of comprehension chunk text into syntactically meaningful phrases when they read (Rasinski, 1994). Students who do not properly use phrasing often sound choppy and read text as single isolated words. Also, they may fail to take punctuation into consideration when chunking text. As students move through the developing and transitioning phases, their understanding of how texts and punctuation work increase as they begin to recognize familiar patterns (Flood, Lapp, Squire, & Jensen, 2003). However, students' oral reading will still contain a mixture of run-ons and mid-sentence pauses and will sound partially choppy.

In terms of phrasing, Samantha's oral reading places her in the confident level (see Figure 8.1). She was able to chunk and phrase text in a syntactically appropriate way, paying attention to both phrases and punc-



tuation. Her fluent reading *should* allow her to shift focus from decoding to comprehension (Pikulski & Chard, 2005).

**Miscues.** A miscue occurs when the observed response (what the child reads) does not match the expected response (what the author has written; Goodman et al., 2005). They present themselves in the form of omissions (words left out), insertions (words added in), and substitutions (one word or phrase for another). Teachers and students often refer to miscues as

“mistakes.” However, this can be misleading. The very nature of the word “mistake” signals that the reader unintentionally read something other than the expected response. This is not always the case, especially when analyzing miscues of high versus low quality.

Beginning and developing readers often produce low-quality miscues. Low-quality miscues are those that change the meaning of a text, therefore leading to a breakdown in comprehension (Goodman & Goodman, 2004). An example of a low-quality miscue would be the substitution of *hamster* for the word *house*. As you can see, the reader’s prediction would lead to a rather large breakdown in meaning if not corrected.

As readers become more proficient, they are able to create fewer low-quality miscues. However, their number of high-quality miscues may actually increase. High-quality miscues are those that do not inhibit comprehension, and therefore should not be referred to as mistakes (Goodman & Goodman, 2004). For example, saying *home* instead of *house* would not lead to a loss in comprehension. Proficient readers often miscue because they have become confident in editing text, thereby showing a higher level of meaning making.

To score Samantha’s miscues on the rubric, Mrs. Smith circles transitioning, because Samantha still produces low-quality miscues that affect her ability to make sense of text. She does show a certain level of comprehension due to her sporadic use of high-quality miscues; however, at this point both uses are inconsistent.

**Self-monitoring and correcting.** All readers miscue; however, it is what they do following the miscue that provides insight into their comprehension of the text (Goodman & Goodman, 2004). Self-monitoring refers to the consistent use of strategies such as rereading, reflection, and asking questions to ensure meaning is being made from the text one reads (Schwartz, 2005). When a reader is successfully self-monitoring, low-quality miscues will get corrected to reestablish meaning making, and high-quality miscues will be confirmed as meaningful.

Readers at the beginning level of self-monitoring and correcting often focus on each individual word as they read. Subsequently, low-quality miscues are produced. If a reader is not monitoring his understanding, these miscues will often go uncorrected, leading to a breakdown in overall comprehension (Schwartz, 2005).

As readers become more proficient, they begin to focus on meaning making, and therefore begin to monitor their understanding. This in turn leads to the correction of miscues that do not fit the schema the reader

has built for the text up to that point, therefore enabling a deeper level of comprehension to occur (Goodman & Goodman, 2004).

Although we are focusing on self-monitoring and correcting, not all miscues need to be corrected (Goodman & Goodman, 2004). Remember that high-quality miscues are not mistakes but rather a reader's way of interacting with the text in a personally meaningful way. Therefore, even though they do not match the expected response (what is in the text), they do not need to be corrected. This can lead to an overcorrection of text, again shifting the reader's focus away from meaning making back to just getting all of the words right. Overcorrection also inhibits fluency. Therefore, confident readers should only correct miscues that are necessary for maintaining meaning.

Samantha's self-monitoring and correcting is in the transitioning range. She is not yet confident with applying comprehension strategies. We feel this is partly due to misunderstanding about the purpose for reading—comprehension. This lack of understanding leads to her inconsistent use of the self-monitoring strategy. Although Samantha corrected some miscues, she also overcorrected by correcting both low- and high-quality miscues, showing an inconsistent focus on comprehension and meaning making.

**Intonation.** A reader's intonation reflects her ability to predict text structures and adjust her pitch, pause, or stress accordingly (Goodman et al., 2005). When a reader shows a high level of proficiency, she is able to phrase words, produce high-quality miscues, and monitor her understanding. All of these components come together to allow the reader to connect with a text by understanding its deep complexities.

Readers at the beginning stages of intonation use are easy to spot. They often have very little understanding of the way texts are formed syntactically, and therefore are unable to predict the various text structures that may be found within a text (Flood et al., 2003). This inability often leads to a word-by-word reading that sounds monotonic and flat. On the other hand, proficient readers are able to use appropriate changes in pitch and expression to reflect a deeper level of comprehension. They are able to predict a wide variety of simple and complex text structures and punctuation and adjust accordingly in their ability to maintain meaning (Flood et al., 2003).

Samantha's flat intonation in her oral reading was an immediate red flag that indicated a potential comprehension problem. Although she seems to have an understanding that a voice is supposed to "change" as a person reads, she lacked the ability to predict unfamiliar text structures.

This prohibited a deeper connection to the plot and characters and an overall comprehension of the text.

**Retell.** The final step to the In-Process Comprehension procedure is to have the reader retell the text she has just read. A retell allows the reader to explain the text in a way that is meaningful to her. The unaided portion of a retell acts as the window to the mind of the reader, allowing the educator insight into the interpretations the reader made and the level of comprehension that was constructed while reading (Goodman et al., 2005).

A less proficient reader will often provide a retell that displays minor details or insignificant facts. At times, she will be able to provide meaningful details when prompted. This shows an inability to make the distinction as to what holds meaning in a text and furthers comprehension and what does not (Shea, 2006). A proficient reader's retell will provide an acceptable level of details from the story with personal interpretations of the text. She can often do this without the need for prompting, because she has made meaningful connections to the text and understands the concepts such as main idea, characters, setting, and plot (Shea, 2006). Sometimes, a reader's limited retelling of a text is a learned behavior. In other words, if the reader is not accustomed to being asked what she remembers about the text, she may begin by just providing a one- or two-sentence summary. If readers have only been expected to answer literal and limited inferential questions after reading, they may need teacher modeling of retelling.

Samantha's retelling of *Judy Moody Gets Famous!* scored in the developing range. Her retell was sequential, and she only briefly commented on the overall plot and then told what happened at the end of the chapter. She was able to recall some surface information, as well as most of the secondary characters, but was unsure about their relationship to the main character. Samantha understood parts of the basic plot line of the chapter, but was not able to infer any of the higher level meaning from those facts. She had holes in her retelling where she simply shrugged her shoulders and said she could not remember. In some cases, she invented information that was not in the text or pictures and was not a result of her miscues. Some basic inferences about the characters' feelings were extracted through teacher prompting.

**Instructional response.** Based on Samantha's scores, we can begin to put together a reader profile that identifies areas of strength and weakness. Prior to doing so, it is important to look at the complex systems that interact with each other in order to allow comprehension to occur. The four cuing systems readers use to make meaning are the graphophonic, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic systems.

The graphophonic system is responsible for spelling, punctuation, print features, and oral language sounds (Goodman et al., 2005). The syntactic system deals with the relationship between words and sentences within a text (Goodman et al., 2005). The semantic system focuses on the meaning of words and phrases as well as how they influence each other (Goodman et al., 2005). Finally, the pragmatic system influences the semantic system and considers the context in which language occurs (Goodman et al., 2005).

Based on Samantha's scores and retell, she shows an inconsistent use of the cuing systems and a weakness in integrating these systems to produce meaningful high-quality miscues. These results are consistent with the analysis of her miscues and their indication that she gives most of her focus to graphophonic cues at the expense of meaning construction. She is able to pick up surface information as she reads, but does so irregularly. Her focus on graphophonic cues and her weakness in using predicting and confirming strategies are affecting her ability to make meaning of the texts she reads.

However, in terms of strengths, Samantha is confident in phrasing text. This is what allows her to appear to be a fluent reader. She is also confident in her use of the graphophonic system, as many of her miscues looked and sounded similar to the text. Finally, she scored in the transitioning range for miscues and self-monitoring, and these scores indicate that Samantha understands that words hold meaning, but she does not understand that the overall purpose of reading is meaning making throughout the entire text. This is shown by her production of numerous low-quality miscues, as well as the correction of the high-quality miscues.

The developing scores in intonation and retell pinpoint the areas of weakness that most likely led to her breakdown in comprehension. However, since intonation should not be taught in isolation, Samantha will receive instruction on the very purpose of reading and how to make meaning through context clues, as well as be able to predict sentence patterns that are both simplistic and difficult. Also, because she has the necessary decoding skills to "sound out" words, her teacher's instructional responses will further focus on making meaning from the sentence and entire text level, resulting in an increase in comprehension.

**Establishing a purpose for reading.** Based on Samantha's scores and responses, it appears that she has adopted a model of reading that focuses on accuracy and speed. Therefore, Mrs. Smith decides to first focus on lessons that help Samantha establish a purpose for reading. While engaged in reading, a reader can take an aesthetic or efferent stance (Rosenblatt, 1978).



An aesthetic stance follows Rosenblatt's reader response theory in which each reader brings different purposes and experiences to a text, therefore constructing his own meaning and feeling (Rosenblatt, 2004). Conversely, an efferent stance is when a reader's purpose is to identify or take away a specific piece of information (Rosenblatt, 2004). Readers often adopt this stance when they read nonfiction texts. The reader, rather than the teacher, should establish the purpose for reading. Establishing a purpose prior to reading will help the reader access background knowledge about text expectations and make deeper connections with the text. These connections elicit a more complex level of overall understanding and meaning making.

At first, setting a purpose for reading can be difficult for emerging readers, especially those like Samantha who generally feel the purpose of reading is to say all of the words quickly and correctly. In order to allow students practice in selecting a purpose for reading, one can take a variety of genres of text and work together to set a purpose for reading. In fact, you can use your own basal reading series or read aloud materials. Prior to reading any text, work together to establish a purpose based upon information gathered from a picture walk and genre discussion. When setting the purpose, it is important to keep the end in mind. What do you hope to achieve by reading this text? Is it to gather new information, be entertained, or elicit a specific response? By identifying the purpose for reading, the reader is better able to use previous knowledge to make predictions in texts to continue to build a knowledge base and extend the meaning-making process.

**Rereading.** Once a purpose for reading has been established, it is important for Samantha to put these new beliefs into practice. This can be done through the rereading of texts. Rereading helps readers improve their phrasing of texts in order to become more fluent. In a reading conference, Mrs. Smith first reads aloud a short passage to Samantha and then has her read the same passage while trying to match the intonation. As the fluent reader, Mrs. Smith follows the repeated reading with a discussion about how the text was read and how intonation shifted. By conducting a think aloud, the less proficient reader is able to gain insight into how to manipulate text in meaningful ways in order to produce and evoke meaning and feeling (Block & Israel, 2004). Samantha will practice multiple readings from an array of texts that will specifically invoke various feelings based on the purpose.

Teachers should remind the reader that texts are usually not going to invoke only one feeling throughout the entire text. Rather readers should be able to identify the cues in the text that alert a reader to the type of pre-

dictions to make while reading that inform them as to the proper level of intonation (Block & Israel, 2004).

**Retrospective miscue analysis.** In order to help Samantha understand the complexities that lie within the four cuing systems and the strategies she currently uses (or does not use) to make meaning, we recommend that Samantha participate in ongoing retrospective miscue analysis sessions (Goodman, 1996). Retrospective miscue analysis (RMA) is a process in which readers reflect on their own reading process by listening to audio recordings of their oral reading. When readers reflect on their miscues, they come to understand that reading is a process of meaning making rather than a disconnected act of accuracy. RMA can be conducted by taping children reading and then playing it back, allowing them to have a conversation about their miscues and strategies they used to resolve the text. Goodman (1996) recommends a series of 40-minute RMA sessions in which the teacher and student discuss five to seven miscues. Depending on the confidence level of the student and her attitude about herself as a reader, teachers can preselect high-quality miscues and gradually introduce readers to low-quality miscues that were not corrected. Initial sessions should help readers recognize that they are making smart miscues and “that they are using strategies that support their meaning construction as they read” (Goodman, 1996, p. 603).

In the reading conference with Samantha, Mrs. Smith discovered that Samantha thinks good readers do not make mistakes when they read. Therefore, Mrs. Smith will need to begin the RMA sessions with Samantha, preselecting several high-quality miscues that Samantha made in order to emphasize the smart decisions she made while reading and how these smart miscues led to meaning construction. Mrs. Smith may then want to focus on the smart miscues that Samantha corrected so that Samantha can learn that correcting a miscue that already maintains meaning of the text is unnecessary. Finally, Mrs. Smith will engage Samantha in a discussion to reveal her thought process during the times that she produced low-quality miscues without correcting. By allowing Samantha to take part in a reflection of her own miscue analysis, she will be better able to understand how meaning making occurs in text, further leading to her development of an emphasis on comprehension and a holistic view of reading.

**Retelling.** After conducting the above lessons, it is important to look at the output of meaning—the retell. The reader’s retelling of a text provides necessary data for assessment, not just for the teacher to assess a student’s understanding, but for the student to assess herself. Through a retell, the student can evaluate whether she has truly understood what she has read or



if she needs to revisit parts of the text to monitor his understanding (Shea, 2006). A retell should be treated like any other skill one expects students to display, meaning that it requires modeling and explicit instruction. Students may actually recall more than what they say in a retell, because they are not aware of what is actually important in a text. By providing explicit instruction in how to give an effective retell, the teacher will be able to better analyze whether the student did not comprehend the text or if she was just unaware of which information was important.

An effective retell consists of several parts in which students will need modeling, practice, and teacher feedback. Shea (2006) suggests that a retelling include an introduction; summary; and connections, interpretations, reactions, evaluation, and conclusions (CIREC; Shea, 2006). An introduction normally includes basic information regarding the text such as title, author, and genre or topic. The summary of the text will differ depending upon the genre of the text. A narrative text will include information regarding story elements such as characters, setting, and plot. However, expository-type texts will provide information that revolves more around the main idea and purpose set for reading. It is left to the reader to recognize the structure of the expository text such as compare/contrast or persuasion. The final step to an effective retell is CIREC (Shea, 2006):

- C: Tell how this compares with what you knew before.
- I: Share your thinking.
- R: Explain your reactions. How did it make you feel?
- E: Tell what was exciting or interesting and talk about the writer's style.
- C: What conclusions have you made so far?

By teaching Samantha the types of information that can indicate importance to a text, she will be able to better provide a retell that includes these data instead of just the exact words she remembers reading. Explicitly teaching the parts of a retelling and providing Samantha with many opportunities to practice will help her to further recognize the need to make meaning while she reads. With teacher feedback, Samantha will be able to shift her focus from just the surface level meaning to that in which she is able to interpret, showing an increased connection and level of meaning making with the text.

## Conclusion

Reading is a multifaceted, complex process consisting of more than just the ability to read quickly and accurately. The purpose of reading should be comprehension or making meaning. We also cannot assume that comprehension will automatically follow quick and accurate reading. Therefore, assessment and instruction should focus on what we want readers to do (Howard, 2009; Owocki, 2010). Otherwise, our instruction may only focus on isolated skills without attention to making meaning.

Conducting the above lessons with Samantha (or any reader with similar difficulties) will help to address her overall lack of comprehension. The miscues that Samantha had been making were evidence that she had not been taking comprehension into consideration when reading. This was also evidenced by her inconsistent use of predicting and confirming. As a result of the process she was using, Samantha substituted words that had a high level of graphic and sound similarity at the expense of meaning. Therefore, we recommended intervention activities that immersed her into the complexities of comprehension in the areas of establishing a purpose for reading, rereading, retrospective miscue analysis, and giving meaningful retells.

Using a comprehensive assessment tool, like the In-Process Comprehension Rubric introduced in this chapter (see Appendix 8A), teachers can gather data about readers that provide a broader lens for instructional responses in Tier I settings. Assessment over a period of time with this rubric can show a pattern of increased focus on the purpose for reading—meaning construction.

## **Appendix 8A**

### **In-Process Comprehension Rubric**

Teachers often wonder if students comprehend the texts they are reading. However, educators often feel that without having read the text themselves, they are unable to have meaningful discussions with students with regard to what they are reading. The attached rubric will allow you to just “drop in” on students and spot check their comprehension at any step along the way in order to ensure that they are indeed comprehending what they read. If they are not, this tool will provide insight into the breakdown of the student’s reading processes.

#### **Preparation:**

1. Make one copy of this sheet and the attached rubric for each student whom you would like to “drop in” on.
2. Place paper on a clipboard and complete the reader, teacher, date, and selection fields for the first student.
3. Read the rubric prior to starting. This will allow for easy markings after the reading.

#### **Directions:**

1. Drop in on the student, sit shoulder to shoulder with her, and read the following:
  - a. “Please finish the sentence or paragraph you are currently reading, and then stop. I am going to have you read out loud to me. Keep reading until I tell you to stop. I will not interrupt you or help you, so just read how you would normally read. After you are finished, I am going to ask you to tell me about what you just read. Begin whenever you are ready.”
2. As the student reads, use the yes or no lines on the next page to keep a tally of the sentences. If the sentence makes sense within the context of the story, mark a yes; if it does not, mark a no. A sentence can score a yes, even if there are miscues, as long as the miscue does not alter the overall meaning of the text.
3. Please note that this is not a timed read; rather, the student should continue reading until she has read an amount that is sufficient for a retell—meaning that she has read something significant that can be discussed.
4. Once you ask her to stop reading, tell her the following:
  - a. “I want you to think about everything you have just read. Please tell me in your own words everything you remember.”
5. If necessary, you may jot notes in the margin about the details of the retell.
6. Total the yes and no sentences to produce a comprehension score. Then mark the appropriate boxes on the rubric.
7. Pinpoint areas of weakness and provide interventions or enrichment as needed based upon results.

Reader: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Does the sentence make sense the way the reader left it?

Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \_\_\_\_\_

No: \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Sentences Read: \_\_\_\_\_ In-Process Comprehension Score: \_\_\_\_\_

*Divide total number of yes responses by total number of sentences read for In-Process Comprehension Score.*

*Note.* Adapted from *Reading Miscue Inventory: Alternative Procedure* (p. 251), by Y. M. Goodman, D. Watson, and C. Burke, 2005, Katonah, NY: Richard C. Owen. Copyright 2005 by Richard C. Owen.

## In-Process Comprehension Rubric

	Beginning 1	Developing 2	Transitioning 3	Confident 4
<b>Phrasing</b>	Monotonic with little sense of phrase boundaries, frequent word-by-word reading	Frequent short word phrases, choppy reading, improper stress and intonation that fail to mark ends of sentences	Mixture of run-ons, mid-sentence pauses, and possibly some choppi-ness, reasonable stress/intonation	Generally well phrased, mostly in clause and sentence units, with adequate attention to expression
<b>Intonation</b>	Monotonic reading	Some changes in voice pitch/expression that may not match the text meaning	Appropriate changes in voice pitch/expression that reflect comprehension of text	Appropriate changes in voice pitch/expression that reflect comprehension of text and add dramatic emphasis
<b>Miscues (Omissions, Insertions, and Substitutions)</b>	Low-quality miscues leading to a complete breakdown of comprehension	Mostly low-quality miscues that usually prohibit comprehension	Uses both high- and low-quality miscues inconsistently	Mostly high-quality miscues that show confidence in properly editing the text
<b>Self-Monitoring and Correcting</b>	Low-quality miscues are not corrected	Inconsistent use of correction when necessary for making sense of the text, high-quality miscues are corrected	Uses correction, but may not recognize when it is necessary and when it is an overcorrection	Consistently corrects only those miscues that are necessary for making sense of the text
<b>Retell</b>	Fragmented and disjointed even with probing and questioning	General retell with probing and questioning, few details and personal interpretation	Acceptable retell with details and some personal interpretations	Highly independent retell with details and high levels of personal interpretation

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