



# Literacy Links

February, 2009  
Volume 5, Number 6

Monthly E-Newsletter of Maine Reading First

## UPCOMING EVENTS

March 13, 2009

Literacy  
Connections  
Conference 2009  
**“Improving  
Literacy through  
Community  
Collaborations”**

A joint project of:  
Maine Family  
Literacy Lighthouse  
Projects of the  
Barbara Bush  
Foundation for  
Family Literacy and  
the MDOE, will be  
held at the Augusta  
Civic Center. For  
registration in  
formation go to  
[www.mainefamilyliteracy.com](http://www.mainefamilyliteracy.com) .

Registrations must  
be received before  
February 27, 2009.

This is the second in a series of **Spotlights on Response to Intervention (RtI)**. Last month's issue of **Literacy Links** provided an overview of RtI, available at:

<http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage/htm> under newsletters. The next few editions will discuss topics related to the components of RtI frameworks.

## Spotlight on...

### Multiple Tiers of Intervention

In relation to literacy, teachers have many options to consider for interventions. The focus of RtI is high quality, scientifically-based instruction in **general education**. As Response to Intervention (RtI) outlines, the necessity of intervention is based on what universal screening data shows. Students whose data indicate they are lagging behind their peers may require intervention. The purpose of intervening is to accelerate students' learning in order to meet grade level benchmarks. This issue will delve into tiers of intervention within an RtI framework. Variables to consider when designing intervention instruction will be presented, and considerations for implementing a tiered framework for structuring school-wide interventions will be suggested. Additional sections of this issue will provide resources to use when selecting and designing interventions. Universal screening and ongoing progress monitoring, and how these tools support multiple tiers of intervention, will be the focus of next month's *Literacy Links*.

#### **Multiple Tiers of Intervention:**

Tiers of intervention are commonly defined as: multiple tiers of scientifically-based instructional interventions/strategies that are progressively more intense and matched to student needs. One of the important foundations of the RtI model is that tiers of instruction are available to meet the needs of each student. Although there can be any number of tiers (or tiers within tiers), multiple tiers of instruction are commonly conceptualized as a 3-tier framework based on the model introduced by Sharon Vaughn (2005). The 3-tier instructional framework is useful for establishing a common set of terms to discuss layers of instruction/intervention through which students can move flexibly.

**Tier I** is generally viewed as English Language Arts (ELA) instruction students receive in the **general education classroom**. This instruction, typically scheduled in a 90-120 minute block (preferably uninterrupted), includes all five essential elements of reading instruction, oral language and writing (Hall 2008). The ELA block is often referred to as *core reading and writing instruction*, regardless of whether a purchased program is used or the

**March 20, 2009**

**MCELA Annual Conference 2009 Continuing Conversations: English Teaching and Literacy Learning in the 21st Century**  
Southern Maine Community College - Bath Campus  
For Registration and Conference program information, including registration form, click on :  
<http://sites.google.com/site/mainecela/Home/conference>

**April 10, 2009**

Maine ASCD Proudly Presents **2009 Spring Event and Annual Meeting**, at the Augusta Civic Center. **Featuring Ellin Oliver Keene** Renowned Educator and Expert on Reading Comprehension, author of *Mosaic of Thought* and *To Understand. Email ASCD at [info@maineascd.org](mailto:info@maineascd.org) for registration information.*

school uses a teacher-designed curriculum. It is typically delivered in multiple grouping formats. Sound practice is to plan a combination of whole group and small-group instruction. Small group instruction during the core time is *not the same as* small group instruction for intervention provided to struggling readers. All students should receive small group instruction during the core instructional block. During the ELA block, students are often grouped both heterogeneously and/or homogeneously to differentiate instructional needs (Hall 2008).

In order to provide students with high quality, research-based **general education**, consider the following:

- Does the curriculum reflect what research demonstrates as the critical skills, concepts, and knowledge-base needed for the discipline?
- Is there a systematic progression of the curriculum (scope & sequence)?
- Are the materials/resources necessary to teach the curriculum readily available to teachers?
- Are there agreements about the pacing of instruction?
- Are there agreements about the amount of time allocated to instruction of various content areas across grade levels?
- Are there agreements about the grouping practices used to provide instruction (whole vs. small vs. individual)?

#### **Tiers II and III:**

Intervention groups are homogeneous by skill deficit and are typically smaller and more focused than the small group instruction provided during core class instruction. Tier II and III instruction is not provided to all students. It is for those who demonstrate need based on below-benchmark scores on universal screening.

**Tier II** can be considered the first line of intervention for students who are not at benchmark. Tier II intervention is focused and targets particular skills in which students need additional instruction and practice. In most schools, Tier II instruction occurs at a time outside the ELA block so that the *at-risk students do not miss Tier I instruction in order to receive intervention*. In many schools, the classroom teacher instructs Tier II intervention groups, and instruction may take place in the general education classroom. These skills groups are not ability groups. Keep in mind that intervention groups meet for only a short part of the day and do not make up the student's entire reading instruction. The instruction in Tier II is teacher directed; peers working together or students working independently in centers *do not* qualify as Tier II instruction. "Only through the careful guidance of a highly qualified teacher will the student get a chance to correct his /her misunderstanding and gain mastery and confidence" (Hall 2008, p.67). Peer-assisted learning models, computer-based practice programs, and work station practice opportunities directly connected to tier two interventions can be useful methods for providing additional practice opportunities, but don't replace explicit teacher instruction.

**Tier III** instruction is designed for students whose progress in Tier II has been insufficient, and/or when assessments indicate that more intensive teaching is needed. Tier III students are more likely to be behind in many skills areas. In Maine, Tier III *is not special education* but is more intensive intervention to try to improve progress and avoid the necessity of placement in special education. Tier III is different than Tier II in a number of critical



## Upcoming Maine Reading First Events

Debbie Diller is returning to Maine in August 2009! The Maine Reading First initiative will be sponsoring day long workshops with Debbie Diller on August 19 and 20. Her focus will be small group differentiated instruction. On August 19 she'll work with K-3 educators and on August 20 with grade 4-6 educators. Both sessions will be held at the Waterville Elks Lodge. Registration materials are available at: <http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/materials.html>

ways. Students in Tier III generally need more time in intervention groups to make progress, instruction is characterized by extraordinary intensity and focus, it is more systematic and paced more slowly, and offers more practice cycles for skills and concepts. It is suggested that Tier III students receive up to 60 minutes of additional instructional time, above and beyond the Tier I block (Hall 2008). This time might be broken into two 30 minute blocks to accommodate for student attention spans and scheduling requirements.

Valerie McCarty offers an explicit breakdown for flexible implementation of a three tier reading framework:

### Tier I: Core Class Instruction

Focus	For all students in K through 6
Program	Classroom Core Materials and supplemental materials
Grouping	Multiple grouping formats to meet student needs
Time	90 minutes per day or more
Assessment	Benchmark assessment at beginning, middle, and end of the academic year
Interventionist	General education teacher
Setting	General education classroom

Valerie McCarty--2008

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### Tier II: Supplemental Instruction

Focus	For students identified with marked reading difficulties, and who have not responded to Tier I efforts
Program	Programs, strategies, and procedures designed and employed to supplement, enhance, and support Tier I
Grouping	Homogeneous small group instruction (1:3, 1:4, or 1:5)
Time	Minimum of 30 minutes per day in small group in addition to 90 minutes of core reading instruction
Assessment	Progress monitoring twice a month on target skill to ensure adequate progress and learning
Interventionist	Personnel determined by the school (e.g., a <b>classroom teacher</b> , a specialized reading teacher, an external interventionist)
Setting	Appropriate setting designated by the school; <b>may be within or outside of the classroom</b>

Valerie McCarty-2008

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**The Maine Reading First Literacy Leaders' Network (LLN) is underway for the 2008-09 school year. To learn more about the LLN, visit: <http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/materials.html> or contact: [Leeann.Larsen@maine.gov](mailto:Leeann.Larsen@maine.gov)**

*"The greatest minds do not necessarily ripen the quickest"*

--John Ubbock



*"The surest way to corrupt a young man is to teach him to esteem more highly those who think alike than those who think differently"*

--Fredrich Nietzsche

## Tier III: Intensive Instruction

Focus	For students identified with marked reading difficulties, and who have not responded to Tier II efforts
Program	Programs, strategies, and procedures designed and employed to supplement, enhance Tier I and II
Grouping	Homogeneous small group instruction (1:1, 1:2)
Time	Recommended: Minimum of 60 minutes (or 2X30 minutes) per day in small group in addition to 90 minutes of core reading instruction
Assessment	Progress monitoring of on target skill every week or two, to ensure adequate progress and learning
Interventionist	Personnel determined by the school (e.g. .a classroom teacher, a specialized reading teacher, an external interventionist)
Setting	Appropriate setting designated by the school; <b>may be within</b> however is frequently <b>outside of the classroom</b>

Adapted from work of Valerie McCarty-2008

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### **Considerations for designing multiple tiers of intervention:**

As schools begin designing plans for RtI, it is important to keep in mind that there is no single correct process or method of intervening. Multiple tiers of intervention are often more powerful if they are structured to provide flexibility and seamless teaching within the tiers. There are an increasing range of materials and techniques currently available for intervention. In looking for solutions to setting up interventions, schools should consider the following instructional variables:

- Focus of intervention content (single element to many elements)
- Explicitness of instruction (low to high)
- Instructional routines (limited to specific)
- Opportunities to practice (few to many)
- Size of instructional group (large to small)
- Opportunities for feedback (few to many)

In addition to these considerations, Richard Allington stresses several specific practices that should be part of intervention for struggling readers in his text: **What Really Matters in Response to Intervention** (2009). Allington underscores the focus of RtI as a framework for accelerating learning for struggling students by providing explicit small group instruction for all students, and increased intensity in teaching struggling learners. He notes that a critical piece of research-based teaching practice is to match texts to students' reading levels for instruction in all settings and subjects across the school day. This not only insures that direct instruction in reading and writing is appropriate for the students' instructional levels, but that students are also able to apply new learning, use strategic reading strategies, and practice efficient reading in every content area. Along with explicit teaching, accelerated learning is directly related to the amount of opportunities struggling learners have to read and to apply skills using appropriately leveled materials (Allington, 2009).



## Save the Dates

Grade 5-9  
Teachers

**You'll Reach  
Every Reader  
When You  
Differentiate  
Instruction**

Laura Robb, veteran educator, author and literacy coach, is coming September 11, 12, & 13, 2009. She will work in three locations across Maine, one location each day. These workshops will be sponsored by the University of Maine College of Education and Human Development. Contact Amy Cates at 581-2438 for registration information.

A major component of designing intervention is to coordinate intervention supports by providing connections between tiers of instruction (core classroom, supplemental, and intensive interventions). The content of skills and strategies being taught should be coordinated for students across instructional settings. Additionally, students need ample and appropriate practice/application opportunities across the day. To do this, teachers will need collaboration time to plan for coordination of teaching across settings, to support students' learning across the day, week and year.

### **Considerations for Implementing multiple tiers of intervention:**

To support teachers in achieving these goals, Maine DOE RtI guidance document outlines some considerations when designing an intervention process:

- Will a standard approach (one intervention program for all at risk students) or a problem solving approach (matching intervention strategies and programs to identified needs of at risk students) be used to plan for intervention supports?
- How will multiple tiers of instruction be scheduled and coordinated?
- What types of resources (both human and materials) and provisions (supports) are already available to set up multiple teaching tiers? What resources and provisions are still needed?
- What is a feasible in relation to frequency and length of sessions (in all 3-tiers of instruction)?
- What variation is needed in the duration of interventions? How will this be achieved?
- How will the school tracking effectiveness and modify teaching approaches and materials to accommodate the varied needs of struggling learners?

The success of any intervention is based on how well materials and method of teaching are matched to a student's needs. Research has shown that a collaborative problem-solving approach by school staff to be most effective when developing, implementing, and modeling the intervention process. The goal in problem-solving is to match intervention to students' needs. To do this, teams of educators need to use consistent reliable data sources. **Universal screening** of academics is necessary to determine students at-risk of not meeting established benchmarks; and **continuous monitoring of student progress** is required to determine that students are meeting goals and to inform ongoing instructional decision making. These topics will be the focus of next month's newsletter.

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## Description of Instructional Ideas...

### **Tools for Reviewing Reading & Intervention Programs**

**Resources for provision of multiple tiers (materials):** When searching for intervention tools it is important to keep in mind the considerations for interventions listed above, and the fact that any



**Institute for  
Designing Whole  
School Plans for  
Response to  
Intervention, K-8**

This institute will be sponsored by the University of Maine College of Education and Human Development on August 10-12, 2009. Contact Amy Cates at 581-2438 for more information and registration materials.

materials are only effective when used by highly skilled teachers. The following websites are offered as resources for decision making when selecting materials.

- <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc>

The What Works Clearing House (WWC) is designed to connect educators to research about the effectiveness of interventions and practices in education. A new guidance document outlines how to use information in the reviews to select processes and materials that will maximize student learning. Just click on **Using the WWC: A Practitioner's Guide** once you are at the website.

- <http://www.fcrr.org/FCRRReports/index.aspx>

The Florida Center for Reading Research conducts reviews of core, supplemental, and intervention related reading programs. These reports can be useful when searching for specific interventions to target student reading needs. Additionally, FCRR provides a tool with criteria for examining reading interventions. School districts are encouraged to conduct their own reviews to determine whether or not reading programs are aligned with current reading research. **The reviewing tool is available for download at:** <http://www.fcrr.org/FCRRReports/guides/grrp.pdf>

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## Summary of Professional Texts...

It is very difficult to select one text for teachers when they have questions concerning intervention, but several are offered here as a starting place.

- McLaughlin, M. & Fisher, L. (2006). **Research-based reading lessons for K-3: Phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension**. New York, NY: Scholastic. ISBN-13: 978-0439754620
- McLaughlin, M., Homeyer, A., & Sassaman, J. (2006). **Research-based reading lessons: Grades 4-6**. New York, NY: Scholastic. ISBN-13: 978-0439843812
- McKenna, M & Walpole, S. (2007). **Differentiated Reading Instruction, Strategies for the Primary Grades**. NY: Guilford Press. ISBN-13:978-1-59385-412-6
- Block, C., & Pressley, M. (2001). **Comprehension Instruction: Research-based best practices**. NY: Guilford. ISBN-13: 978-1572306929
- Block, C., Morrow, L.M. and Parris, S.R. (2009). **Comprehension Instruction Second-Edition: Research-based best practices, (Solving Problems in the Teaching of Literacy)**. NY: Guilford. ISBN-13: 978-1593857004



*"The aim of education should be to teach us rather **how to think**, than what to think— Rather to improve our minds, so as to enable us **to think for ourselves**, than to load the memory with the thoughts of other men.*

--James Beattie



## Children's Literature...

### Maine Author

**The Dump Man's Treasures** (2008) was written by Lynn Plourde and illustrated by Beth Owens and is available from DownEast Books. The ISBN is 978-0-89272-725-4.

Plourde and Owens deliver a heartwarming message about the treasures to be found in books, in reading together, and in friendship. For those of us whom remember weekly trips to the local dump (before landfills and recycling), we connect to "Mr. Pottle" the "Dump Man" as he recycles. His special fondness for reclaiming and redistributing books to the community is rewarded when he falls ill and the children of the community come to his rescue. Owens' vivid watercolors "capture the chaos and beauty of a dump and show Mr. Pottle's determination to let nothing of value go to waste."

*The Dump Man in my town refurbished bicycles and bike parts for all the children. What was your Dump Man's specialty?*

## News from Maine Reading First...

We want your suggestions! As you peruse the monthly editions of *Literacy Links*, you might have topic ideas for the spotlight, instructional strategy, children's literature, professional text, or web site resource sections. We'd love to hear your suggestions. Please email them to: [geecon@fairpoint.net](mailto:geecon@fairpoint.net).

### Check it out...

These websites provide engaging practice of some basic word work and reading skills:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/>

The British Broadcasting System provides this site for educators worldwide. To access materials and lessons for teaching word work and reading skills, search under schools/word and pictures for online video resources.

These interactive activities are free to download.

<http://www.harcourtschool.com/index.html>

This site provides a variety of tools for teaching literacy.

Search under reading/language arts and spelling for specific models. Activities include skills and strategies for



**SNEAK PREVIEW**

**Coming soon!**

2008-2009  
Literacy Links—

- ❖ Purposeful Text selection
- ❖ Strategies for non-fiction comprehension

reading, grammar, and spelling for grades 1 to 6. Each display models a specific skill with audio, and could be easily correlated to any program or teaching sequence to provide deeper understanding and align with school curriculums.

[http://www.readwritethink.org/student\\_mat/index.asp](http://www.readwritethink.org/student_mat/index.asp)

The IRA/NCTE website gives literacy teachers multiple supports including Lessons at all grade levels K-12. Lessons are organized under Grade Band, Literacy Strand, and Literacy Engagement. This easy to follow set-up helps you narrow searches to specific activities for phonics, spelling and word work at all levels.

**Newsletter Archives**

Earlier editions of *Literacy Links* available on the Maine Reading First website at <http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>

Edition	Spotlight Topic
March, 2005	Maine Reading First
April, 2005	Maine Reading First Course
May, 2005	Reading Fluency
June, 2005	Vocabulary
September, 2005	Phonemic Awareness
October, 2005	Phonics
November, 2005	Comprehension
December, 2005/January, 2006	DIBELS
February, 2006	Literacy Centers
March, 2006	Interactive Read Aloud
April, 2006	Nonfiction
May, 2006	Word Walls
June, 2006	Classroom Design
September, 2006	Shared Reading
October, 2006	Automaticity
November, 2006	Using Assessment to Guide Instruction
December, 2006	Deepening Comprehension
January, 2007	Selecting Quality Children's Books (part 1)
February, 2007	Selecting Quality Children's Books (part 2)
March, 2007	Making Instruction Explicit
April, 2007	Motivation and Engagement
May-June 2007	Grouping for Instruction
September 2007	Making Instruction Systematic
October, 2007	Pacing Instruction

November, 2007	Managed Independent Practice
December, 2007	A Deeper Look at Phonemic Awareness
January, 2008	Phonics at the K-2 Grade Span
February, 2008	Phonics and Word Work Grades 3-5
March, 2008	Vocabulary Revisited
April, 2008	A Deeper Look at Vocabulary Instruction
May-June 2008	Fluency Revisited
August 2008	Fluency Assessment
September-October 2008	The Revised Maine <i>Learning Results</i> English Language Arts Standards
November 2008	Comprehending Comprehension
December 2008	Comprehension Strategies
January 2009	Response to Intervention (RTI)



For additional information about any of the items in this newsletter or to sign up to receive this e-newsletter, please email [Leeann.Larsen@maine.gov](mailto:Leeann.Larsen@maine.gov)

Click here to view the Maine Reading First website  
<http://www.maine.gov/education/rf/homepage.htm>

The professional development opportunities and materials are listed in *Literacy Links* for informational purposes only and are not necessarily endorsed by the Maine Department of Education's Maine Reading First Initiative.