**Redesign:**

**Response to Intervention (RTI) Model in a Kindergarten Classroom**

**By Teresa Seely**

**Current Status: Response to Intervention (RTI) Model**

When the school year began, my students were tested using our district mandated testing. The test we are required to give is called the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) test. This test is a screener for early literacy skills and helps to identify the at-risk population of students in our building. Out of the 18 students in my class, close to 70% percent of my entering kindergarteners demonstrated below level literacy skills, requiring daily interventions. As a teacher at a previous Reading First School, I have been required to use the federally funded Response to Intervention (RTI) model for interventions since I began teaching at this at-risk, high poverty school. I would also like to include information on technology use in conjunction with traditional RTI tiered interventions.

***For this project redesign, I would like to work on a resign plan to more actively incorporate technology in my RTI intervention block.*** I would like to include technology each class has been given recently. This technology includes 6 iPod Touches and 1 iPad per classroom. I would also like to include the use of computerized lessons using the Starfall reading program online. We currently do not use these technologies as a form of intervention, rather as an enrichment activity or free choice selection. My goal is to have active engagement and learning using technology. I would also like my students to view technology as a learning tool, not just a source for non-educational game playing.

**Best practices currently used**

As stated above, our school currently follows the Response to Intervention (RTI) model and offers three tiers of instruction and intervention lessons on a daily basis. The RTI model and the three tiers can be easily illustrated and simplified for any teacher or parent to understand. Simply stated, RTI dictates how often a student receives additional teacher directed lessons and leveled interventions each day outside of the regular literacy time block.

*Here is an example of how the three tiers are currently used in my kindergarten classroom:*

*Tier 1- Whole group and small group classroom instruction provided to all students on a daily basis. This includes our regular guided reading groups, weekly Harcourt literacy based centers and early literacy lessons in the core reading program: Harcourt Trophies. Time- 90 minutes per day.*

*Tier 2- A second level of direct instruction given to strategic and intensive students outside of the Tier 1 lessons above. This is done by either the classroom teacher or a trained para-professional. Time- 15-20 minutes per day.*

*Tier 3- A third level of individualized and differentiated phonics and literacy instruction for intensive students. This is currently done as a part of our in a pull out intervention program. Time- 15-30 minutes per day.*

**Student Experiences During Response to Intervention**

At my school, we are fortunate enough to still have two important federally funded programs that help our students: Title One funding for para-professionals and a small class size grant that keeps our classroom under 18 students in all classrooms K-2. Because of these two programs, my intensive and strategic students experience regular individualized instruction on a daily basis. For example, our teacher to student ratio is 5-to-1 during our daily literacy review intervention using the Kindergarten Peer-Assisted Literacy Strategies (KPALS). This is a result of having myself, plus two para-professionals, in my classroom during our KPALS lesson. During our intervention times, our students seem to look forward to learning in a small group or individually with a teacher. I have found that my students tend to take academic risks when they are in a small group or individual setting, making their interventions a very actively engaging activity.

**What are students able/not able to do?**

My students who are a part of our interventions are often lacking in many areas regarding early literacy skills. This includes a lack of oral language skills due to lack of parental involvement prior to entering school. A lack of prior knowledge also prevents many of these students from offering ideas when it comes to classroom discussions during our reading block.

This does not however prevent them from opening up to learning new things at school. My students are very eager to learn literacy concepts, participate in songs, enjoy being read to and also love to please their teachers. All of my class has shown growth in their early literacy skills according to our mid-year DIBELS testing results.

**Differentiation options in place**

In Chapter 17, page 412 of B*est Practices in Literacy Instruction* by Lesley Morrow and Linda Gambrell (Morrow & Gambrell, 2011), the authors address the issue of differentiating instruction to meet individual student needs. The authors state the importance of providing daily, sustained, high-quality literacy instruction in the following areas:

* Oral Language
* Concepts of Print
* Phonemic Awareness
* Alphabetic Principle
* Fluency
* Vocabulary
* Comprehension Strategies
* Writing & Spelling

According to BPLI, these elements of literacy need to be taught *explicitly*. Explicit instruction includes the teacher providing the following when introducing a concept: modeling, explaining and scaffolding to meet students’ individual needs (Morrow & Gambrell, 2011). Differentiation options are in place in my classroom on a daily basis, mainly because the RTI model requires individualized lesson planning to meet student needs.

**Rationale for change**

**In my professional development plan, I hoped to achieve the following by the end of the semester:**

**Objectives:**

* **To apply the theories and effective models used in best practices for early literacy and pre-reading skills at the kindergarten level.**
* **To differentiate my instruction to meet the literacy needs of all students in my classroom.**
* **To effectively utilize my district mandated reading series through the best practice frameworks I discover during the semester.**

In order for me to reach these objectives, I decided to focus on the implementation of technology to help enhance the best practices already in place for differentiation and interventions. In this project redesign, I would like to further incorporate technology as an integral part of our RTI intervention program and to help support all three tiers of interventions taking place on a daily basis. I believe providing an interactive (technology supported) intervention program will increase student engagement during intervention time. This redesign offers differentiation by providing literacy based learning opportunities through educational software using iPods, iPads and computers.

According to the article on [www.rtinetwork.org](http://www.rtinetwork.org) entitled: *Using Technology to Enhance RTI Implementation* byMatthew K. Burns (n.d.), the author states his belief that “Response to Intervention (RTI) is perhaps the most significant educational reform initiative in this country in the past 50 years.” The article focuses on the importance of using technology when working with students during RTI interventions to increase student engagement. According to the author, the RTI Action Network of the National Center for Learning Disabilities has identified high-quality classroom instruction, tiered instruction/intervention, ongoing student assessment, and family involvement as the essential components of RTI. The use of technology for teacher tracking and student use of technology provide ways in which technology could facilitate the successful implementation RTI interventions (Burns, M. n.d.).

**Standards addressed**

In Best Practices in Literacy Instruction (Morrow & Gambrell, 2011), the authors list general reading standards for early literacy. They include the following: displaying emergent reading behaviors, understanding concepts of print, letter knowledge, word recognition, language development, listening & reading comprehension strategies and writing skills. During the Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention block, I plan to mainly focus on letter identification, phonics skills, sight word recognition, reading strategies and essentials of writing. During my Tier 1 lessons, we will work in whole group and small groups on the other standards, such as emergent reading behaviors, concepts of print and oral language development.

**Concepts**

The following concepts will be taught using technology during the redesigned Tier 2 & Tier 3 time slot:

**iPad**- Teacher will work with individual student on the iPad and will monitor development.

**iPods**- Students will have individual iPod to work with while teacher monitors progress in a small group (2 to 3 students)

**Applications (Apps)** Description of 3 new apps downloaded to be used for interventions and reteaching of early literacy concepts:

*Bob Books- Offers 4 levels of word building activities, provides visual cues, verbal cues and offers support as needed.*

*Hungry Monster- Focuses on short vowels sounds, touch & drag to build CVC words, self corrects as needed.*

*I Like Reading- Student can read to self or be read to, highlights words and tracks print left to right.*

**Computer-** Teacher will work with one or two students on the computer using the following educational literacy program:

*Starfall- Learn to read with phonics program, letter sounds, leveled reading, decodes words or student can check words once he/she has read them, highlights words, left to right tracking.*

**Anticipated outcomes/Objectives**

* + - **Skills and specific knowledge**

I expect my students to be actively engaged while using technology during their intervention time. I believe they will increase their knowledge of letters, phonics, and sight words. My students will also be able to decode words, increase fluency and write CVC words easily.

* + - **Assessments/evidence of learning**

Using the DIBELS test, I will be able to track performance in letter identification, first sound fluency, phoneme segmentation and decoding skills using CVC nonsense words. I will also keep running records on sight word recognition as it aligns with our Harcourt reading series wall word list.

* + - **Performance standards/rubric**

In order for the standard to be met, I would like to see an increase in movement from intensive to strategic or strategic to benchmark according to the DIBELS test. I would also like my intensive and strategic students to be able to identify sight words with 80% accuracy.

**Instructional strategies**

Due to the fact that the majority of my students have been classified as either an intensive or strategic student, I will run the Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions during the hour long block between lunch and prep time. All students (benchmark, strategic and intensive) will be actively working on literacy activities during this one hour block, with the teacher and 2 para- professionals providing intervention support during this time frame. This type of classroom environment provides differentiation, active engagement and scaffolding of literacy activities for the entire class.

**Materials, technology, and other resources**

As stated, the materials being used for the technology based interventions are 6 iPods, 1 iPad and 1 computer. The other assessment resources include DIBELS data, Harcourt learning materials and teacher running records.

**Compare and contrast existing practice with new practices**

Although the Reading First program has been dissolved, our school continues to abide by the basic premise taught to us during our Reading First years: Children in high poverty or at- risk schools need to have explicit and systematic literacy instruction combined with a multileveled intervention system to increase student achievement. We are also required to keep running records of weekly progress using district required intervention logs. This will not change with the inclusion of technology in the RTI intervention model. The new intervention practices that incorporate the use of technology will only enhance the RTI intervention model already in place throughout our building.

**Parent – Teacher Partnership**

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| Using my Wiki Page as an online resource, I would like to provide links to the Starfall program and explanations of the Apple apps we use in class during interventions. I also plan to include these websites and apps in my weekly newsletter. I will invite parents to “play and learn” with their child using technology at our Open House in May. This will provide an opportunity for parents to see firsthand how technology can be a positive part of an early childhood education curriculum. Print |