

# Book Review

## *Successful Approaches to RTI: Collaborative Practices for Improving K–12 Literacy*

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I am truly excited about the new edited volume by Marjorie Lipson and Karen Wixson entitled *Successful Approaches to RTI: Collaborative Practices for Improving K–12 Literacy*. Developed with the editors' expert leadership and collaboration from talented reading professionals and school leaders, this text offers invaluable guidance and research on successful interventions. *Successful Approaches to RTI* is a key resource for educators who seek to develop and maintain effective instructional approaches to best serve struggling readers.

This book is published by the International Reading Association (IRA), a product of IRA's Commission on Response to Intervention (RTI) that was cochaired by Lipson and Wixson. Most of the literature available on RTI focuses on structural elements for mounting RTI initiatives within schools, assessment issues, and use of scripted programs. *Successful Approaches to RTI* takes a very different approach. This collection of articles provides clear guidance on research-based, effective instructional practices that forefront the implementation of reasoned teacher decision making, including building teacher expertise, to impact student achievement. Articles also address ways to develop and implement action plans.

The structure of the book and the combined expertise are the strengths of this volume. The long collaboration that Drs. Lipson and Wixson bring to this venture as authors, researchers, and instructional leaders is clearly demonstrated in the

to standard protocol or measurement approaches to RTI), and they dispel the "scripted program" criticisms that have appeared in some articles. The authors present research on effective and ineffective interventions so that educators can safely steer the best

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first and last chapters of *Successful Approaches to RTI*. They collaborate with Dr. Peter Johnston in the opening chapter, "Making the Most of RTI," to clearly define what the reauthorization of the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (now the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act) requires. The clarifications offered in this chapter establish clear guidelines for schools to follow. The chapter also challenges some commonly held faulty assumptions about research-based, effective approaches that have often been misrepresented in the literature. For example, both Reading Recovery and the Interactive Strategies Approach interventions are clearly described as instructional approaches (as opposed

course in today's marketplace, and best serve their most-fragile students.

In my view, the most-strategic section of *Successful Approaches to RTI* pairs chapters that describe key effective interventions—and the research that demonstrates the results expected from each model—with an article written by professionals who have implemented these approaches. The examples span K–12 settings. Donna Scanlon and Kimberly Anderson describe the Interactive Strategies Approach in the first paired set, using the example of research conducted at Roosevelt Elementary in New York state. This RTI implementation targeted kindergarten and first-grade classrooms to address knowledge gaps that are relatively small between the lowest students

and their peers at these levels. They begin with early universal screening assessments to identify the students in kindergarten who score in the lowest 30%, and then focus instruction in small groups geared to the particular needs of the children, with the goal of closing the achievement gap. Tier 2 interventions, in small groups of three students, begin only after it is evident that classroom-only instruction is not sufficient, approximately 4 to 6 weeks into the school year. They use classroom observations with more-formal assessments to determine which students have the greatest needs, shifting students out of focused Tier 2 interventions when goals are achieved. At this level, they found few instances when Tier 3 interventions were necessary.

At the first-grade level, 25–30% of the lowest students, identified using universal screening measures, are offered different interventions. If any kindergarteners continue to struggle after classroom and Tier 2 interventions, they are placed in a one-on-one Tier 3 intervention in addition to differentiated classroom instruction (Tier 1). Students who made good progress in the kindergarten Tier 1 and 2 interventions are supported for a time with this more-intense combination of services to make sure the absence of instruction during the summer didn't impact their progress. If any other students show themselves to be lower than their peers, Tier 1-focused instruction is offered as a first-level intervention strategy. They continue to make adjustments to the intensity of instructional interventions throughout the first-grade year and possibly beyond into second and third grade, if necessary. Their research suggests that the knowledge base of the teacher

and the skill of the teacher are far more important than is the program that the teacher uses.

Linda Dorn and Shannon Henderson from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock describe the statewide Comprehensive Intervention Model (CIM) that uses a systemic, four-tiered, comprehensive approach to RTI. This diagnostic model uses systematic data collection and observations of students across

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classroom, Title I, and special education contexts to place students in the most-appropriate interventions (including offering multiple layers of intervention services). These flexibly designed reading and writing interventions target K–4 classrooms, or higher, and Reading Recovery is used within their model for first-grade children struggling with beginning literacy. This article also describes the professional development program for teachers. The paired article by Kathryn Meyer and Brian Reindl describes the implementation of CIM at Washington School for Comprehensive Literacy in Wisconsin, a K–5 implementation, and the place of Reading Recovery in their district's plan is exemplified.

Two unique chapters spotlight intervention plans for K–5 English language learners (ELLs). Janette Klingner and Lucinda Soltero-González, and Nonie Lesaux explore the features of, and research behind, their RTI model for ELLs. The foundation of this model is culturally and linguistically responsive assessment and instruction. The progress-monitoring component emphasizes the use of multiple measures that are sensitive to the multidimensional nature of language and literacy in diverse language populations. Alysia Hayas and Janette Klingner describe how this RTI model for ELLs is implemented in their elementary school in a large metropolitan district in Colorado that serves a linguistically diverse population. This collaborative, problem-solving approach to RTI offers multitiered instruction at every grade level within the school. It also involves classroom, special education, and ELL teachers, as well as reading specialists, speech-language pathologists, and counselors in professional learning communities. This mix of educators also serves on the school's intervention team.

Secondary educators will appreciate two articles that showcase an RTI model for secondary school settings. Sandra Goetz, Barbara Laster, and Barbara Ehren author "RTI for Secondary School Literacy." They recommend that core instruction in content classrooms for Tier 1 use interactional instructional strategies focused on vocabulary and comprehension, as well as differentiated instructional approaches to meet diverse student needs. They also emphasize the need for high student engagement and appropriately leveled instructional materials to support improvements in language and litera-

cy processes (integrated across listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Then the authors suggest intensive interventions for students who struggle with literacy (Tier 2 and Tier 3) that draw upon a variety of instructional elements and techniques to address specific needs (e.g., cognitive mapping, analysis of text structure, identifying main idea, paraphrasing, summarization, and self-questioning strategies, etc.).

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The final paired article illustrates how this interactive approach might look in middle school settings. Lynn Gelzheiser, Donna Scanlon, and Laura Hallgren-Flynn highlight how the Interactive Strategies Approach previously discussed was extended (ISA-X) into several middle schools. They use a reading teacher and special education teacher to provide ISA-X interventions in each middle school. Each teacher works with five students at a time each semester in daily 40-minute sessions (a total of 60 students) and establishes goals for motivation, comprehension, alphabets, word learning,

vocabulary, and language based upon student needs. Responsive teaching is emphasized in professional development. The goal is to help teachers be flexible decision makers in light of student needs; to bring about independent problem solving as well as to impact student achievement at this level.

The final chapter by Karen Costello, Marjorie Lipson, Barbara Marinak, and Mary Zolman is titled "New Roles for Educational Leaders: Starting and Sustaining a Systemic Approach to RTI." The authors offer guidance to help teachers take action using models and techniques described in this book, and address challenges that often face educators as they implement RTI approaches in their schools.

Readers will find this book to be a wonderful resource as they form and implement action plans to address the variety of issues educators face in regards to supporting all learners in a school setting. The leadership Lipson and Wixson provided in bringing together these highly qualified professionals is evident. The commitment and passion they show for the work they do is impressive, and the results they achieve are exemplary. They offer different solutions across a variety of settings and illustrate how multiple models and approaches, validated by research, can impact very diverse student populations. This text will certainly help Reading Recovery professionals argue against scripted programs for interventions that are instructionally sound, and the authors' suggestions and models demonstrating how Reading Recovery is a good fit with RTI are beneficial references.

## About the Author



Instrumental in Reading Recovery since its beginning at The Ohio State University in 1985, Diane DeFord has served in numerous teaching and educational leadership positions for more than 25 years; currently as the Swearingen Literacy Chair at the University of South Carolina. The author or co-author of more than 50 books and journal articles, she conducts workshops around the country, and is a frequent presenter at state and national conferences and universities. Among her books are *Bridges to Literacy: Learning from Reading Recovery* co-edited with Carol Lyons and Gay Su Pinnell. Diane has been involved in numerous research projects during the last quarter century, most recently as co-investigator for a USDE-funded South Carolina Reading Initiative.

## Reference

- Lipson, M. Y., & Wixson, K. K. (Eds.). (2010). *Successful approaches to RTI: Collaborative practices for improving K-12 literacy*. Newark, DE. International Reading Association.