

# Response to Intervention

This SLM column asks innovative thinkers to share what they're reading on identified topics and recommend them to others in education. Feel free to download the online version (<http://www.schoollibrarymonthly.com/pdf/ERdetail.pdf>) and share it with your classroom colleagues, administrators, and board members. Using these suggestions is yet another way to show your expertise and meet the needs of school library stakeholders.

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Many districts are concerned about how to support struggling students. Response to Intervention (RTI) is one model for improving student achievement and reducing negative behaviors. Educators "identify students at risk for poor learning outcomes" for behavioral or academic reasons, implement interventions or modifications, track progress, and ultimately determine whether a student is in need of special education services or has merely had a temporary setback (State of Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, n.d.). How can librarians support this effort? What should schools read, discuss, and do?

## ADVICE FROM THE FIELD

Don't waste time: find somebody who truly understands how this works and invest in training. Start with key players (e.g., administration, counselors, and building representation from math, reading, special education, and additional content teachers). Put a structure in place that makes sense; make sure everybody understands it. Have regular meetings and establish norms. Research has shown that RTI is effective, and based on our experience it is.

In our case, it was a science teacher, and he, along with special education, has made all the difference. He has a class for Tier II kids and one other teacher from our faculty, along with a special ed teacher, work with him. We have invested in providing the resources and scheduling that it takes to provide effective reading interventions. Also, make sure you use effective, research-based material and use it with fidelity. Finally, make it manageable. In our high school, it was important to assign specific people to provide intervention, give them adequate time to work with kids, and give them the opportunity to report in to a building data person (me), which made all of us accountable.

If your district is going to invest in RTI, it has to be a wholehearted effort with focus on the part of curriculum and instruction and administrative personnel. If it is piled on top of all your other duties, and you have no time to really invest in it, it will fail. If administration is looking for a place to dump kids needing interventions just so they can say they are doing RTI, students will not benefit. RTI requires tending. I see the librarian as the person who does that coaxing and tending, pulling all parties together. For RTI to be effective, the system requires management. If you can help your administration manage RTI effectively, you will become invaluable.

—Martha House, Council Grove High School, Council Grove, KS

## READING RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend *Successful Approaches to RTI: Collaborative Practices for Improving K-12 Literacy* by Marjorie Y. Lipson and Karen K. Wixson (International Reading Association, 2010).

—Laura Schiller, Oakland Schools, Pontiac, MI

In Kansas, we have *Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports* (MTSS - <http://www.kansasmtss.org>), a structure for putting RTI in place. There are reading, math, and behavior components.

—Martha House, Council Grove High School, Council Grove, KS

The book I like the best is *Pyramid Response to Intervention: RTI, Professional Learning Communities, and How to Respond When Kids Don't Learn*, by Buffum, Mattos, and Weber (Solution Tree, 2009). It ties RTI and PLCs together, which is what should happen. A simple starter article by the same authors is "The Why Behind RTI" (*Educational Leadership*, October 2010).

—Stephen Palmer, Birmingham (MI) Public Schools

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER AND DISCUSS

- ▶ How can administration support RTI so that it does not overload some teachers or exclude others' expertise?
- ▶ How will your school define RTI success and know that it is working?
- ▶ How might existing workloads be reassigned, adjusted, or reconfigured so that RTI works?
- ▶ How can the librarian's experience with impromptu one-on-one or small group conferencing help students needing temporary support?

## Reference:

State of Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, n.d. "Response to Intervention." Retrieved September 6, 2011, from <http://www.k12.wa.us/RTI/default.aspx>.