Implementing Effective Literacy Practices for Instructing English Language Learners Within the Response to Intervention (RTI) Framework

National Center on Response to Intervention

Instructions for reading speaker’s notes.
• Text formatted in standard font is intended to be read aloud by the facilitator.
• Text formatted in **bold** is excerpted directly from the presentation slides.
• Text formatted in *italic* is intended as directions or notes for the facilitator; italicized text is not meant to be read aloud.

Welcome participants to the module [read title].

*Introduce yourself (or selves) as the facilitator(s) and briefly cite your professional experience with respect to RTI implementation.*

This training module is designed as a half-day workshop.

For this training module, you will need the following materials for participants.
• *Slides printed out (one for each participant) or emailed ahead of time*
• Companion handouts (one packet for each participant)
• Pens, pencils, sticky notes, and notepads on each table
• *IES Practice Guide: Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades (2007) (at least one per table group, printed or available on laptops)*
• Laptops (at least one per table group)
• Chart paper for vocabulary activity
• *NCRTI placemat, “Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Language Learners (ELLs) Within an RTI Framework” (at least one per table group)*
Review the agenda with participants, providing some background on IES Practice Guides and explaining the purpose of the module:

Today we will be discussing the research on effective practices for providing English language instruction to English language learners (ELLs) and how these findings relate to the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework. The research is primarily based on the Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades, which was published in 2007 by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education. We will begin this session with a brief introduction to the IES Practice Guides in general and then discuss the recommendations from the IES Practice Guide for literacy instruction for ELLs and how these recommendations can be integrated into an RTI framework. We will conclude with a discussion of action steps for schools or districts wanting to implement the recommendations, including professional development needs and additional resources.

Most of the discussion today will draw from the IES Practice Guide. However, it is important to note that the Practice Guide was published in 2007, and new research has come out since this time about literacy instruction for ELLs. A new Practice Guide on this topic will be published within the next few years, but in the meantime, we suggest following the recommendations of this Practice Guide while also noting some of the new research that can add to our understanding. For this reason, other authors are referenced throughout the presentation to supplement the recommendations from the Practice Guide authors. The slides will clearly indicate whether the information is from the Practice Guide or another author.

Estimated time
Introduction: 20 min.
Recommendations: 2 hours (may be best to take a break sometime during this period)
Professional development: 15 min.
Additional Resources/Closing: 15 min.
The objectives for this training are as follows:

*Read slide to participants.*
Throughout the workshop, we will discuss how the IES recommendations relate to RTI, so it will be important for you to have a general understanding of RTI’s essential components. The Center has developed this graphic to highlight the RTI framework. Many of you probably associate the red, green, and yellow triangle with RTI. In reality, the triangle does not represent the RTI framework; it only represents one component, the multi-level prevention system. The Center graphic takes into account all the essential components, and most importantly, the use of data to make decisions, which often is absent from the traditional RTI triangle.

If you look to the far left, you see screening; to the far right, progress monitoring; and at the bottom, the multi-level prevention system. The three outer components both require and are necessary parts of data-based decision making, which is why the arrows travel in both directions. If the three other components are in place, but data-based decision making is absent, then RTI is technically not being implemented.

In the inner ring, you will see the phrase “culturally responsive,” meaning the screening tools, progress monitoring tools, core instruction, interventions, and data-based decision-making procedures should all be culturally responsive. In the same ring, you will notice the phrase “evidence based,” implying that all components are evidence based. If these components are implemented through a cohesive model, we would expect to see improved student outcomes.
Before we begin discussing the IES Practice Guide *Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades*, we will briefly review the purpose of IES Practice Guides and how the authors developed their recommendations.
What Is an IES Practice Guide?

- Produced by the What Works Clearinghouse of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), U.S. Department of Education
- Provides specific and coherent evidence-based recommendations specific to various topics
- Intended for use by educators, particularly district-level administrators
- Addresses a multi-faceted challenge that lacks developed or evaluated packaged approaches (i.e., specific curriculum programs or materials)

(See page v of the Practice Guide by Gersten et al., 2007.)

Read slide.

In our case, the challenge is effective literacy instruction for ELLs in the elementary grades.

The audience is broad—could be administrators, curriculum specialists, coaches, staff development specialists, or teachers. However, one goal of the Practice Guide is to reach district-level administrators so that they can develop research-based policy in their school districts.

Throughout the presentation, you will see page numbers that show you where you can find the relevant information in *Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Language Learners in the Elementary Grades*. You can find this information on page v of the Practice Guide.
As of early 2012, IES had 14 Practice Guides addressing key education issues, such as assisting students struggling with mathematics or reading, structuring out-of-school time, reducing behavior problems, and turning around low-performing schools. These can be found on the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) website, http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/.
The Authors

- Nationally recognized experts on literacy and English language instruction for ELLs
- Experts in research methodology
- Brief biographies of the authors can be found on pages vii–viii of the Practice Guide.

Chaired by Russell Gersten, this Practice Guide was written by a group of nationally recognized experts in literacy and English language instruction for ELLs and research methodology. Brief bibliographies of the authors can be found on pages vii–viii of the Practice Guide.

If participants are interested in the particular authors,

- **Russell Gersten, Ph.D.:** Chair; executive director, Instructional Research Group; professor emeritus, University of Oregon; principal investigator for the What Works Clearinghouse
- **Scott K. Baker, Ph.D.:** Director, Pacific Institutes for Research
- **Timothy Shanahan, Ph.D.:** Professor of urban education, University of Illinois–Chicago; director, UIC Center for Literacy
- **Sylvia Linan-Thompson, Ph.D.:** Associate professor, University of Texas–Austin; director, Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts
- **Penny Collins, Ph.D.:** Assistant professor, University of California–Irvine
- **Robin Scarcella, Ph.D.:** Professor, University of California–Irvine
How Did the Authors Develop the Recommendations?

- Considered a wide range of evidence (e.g., peer reviewed journals, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data, and analysis of program data)
- Preference for high-quality experimental and quasi-experimental studies
- Used information about specific programs to make broader points about practice
- Using a hierarchy suggested by IES, categorized the strength of the evidence behind each recommendation as strong, moderate, or low

Read slide.

The hierarchy developed by IES considers both the quality and the quantity of available evidence.
In judging the strength of available evidence, the authors considered both the internal and the external validity of the evidence.

Read definitions and provide examples.

**Internal validity.** Some research designs can better support causal conclusions than others. I will talk more about this on the next slide.

**External validity.** For external validity, you want to think about the range of students that participated in the study. Results based on a multi-state study that tests thousands of students will have higher external validity than a study based on 50 students in one school because you can have more confidence that a study based on a wide range of participants and settings will translate to other types of participants and settings.

For more information about validity and the types of study designs, refer to Handout 1 of your Companion Handouts.
To determine a study’s internal validity, you will need to examine the study’s design. **Randomized controlled trials** are considered the gold standard in education research because they can be used to draw causal conclusions. In these studies, students are randomly assigned to either a treatment or a control group to test whether the treatment has an effect on student achievement. By randomly assigning students, you can be confident that there is no inherent difference between the two groups, and, therefore, any differences are due to the effect of the treatment.

Often in education, it is difficult to randomly assign students to groups because they are already assigned to classrooms, schools, and school districts. When this is the case, the next best approach is to use a **quasi-experimental design** (a design in which groups are not assigned randomly). Although not as strong as randomized controlled trials, quasi-experimental designs can have high internal validity when the intervention and comparison groups are matched on similar characteristics (e.g., a classroom in one school is matched with a classroom in another school with similar student demographics and test scores).

**Single-case designs** are those in which an individual or group serves as its own control and is studied under a variety of conditions. For example, a behavior intervention may be tested at the student’s home, at school, and at day care. In this way, knowledge is developed over time on how human behavior functions and can be used to develop explanations or theories.
Evidence for a recommendation is rated as strong when it is based on studies with high internal validity (i.e., studies whose designs can support conclusions) as well as studies with high external validity (i.e., studies that in total include a wide range of participants and settings so that recommendations can be generalized to a wide range of participants and settings). In general, this includes well-designed, randomized, controlled trials and, in some cases, quasi-experiments. Note: It has been under much debate whether single-case designs can be included as a basis for a strong evidence rating, but at this point, IES does not include them.

Evidence is rated as moderate when it is based on studies with either high internal validity or external validity, but not both.

Evidence is rated as low when it is based primarily on expert opinion based on strong findings, theories, or experience that does not meet the criteria for moderate or strong levels.

You can find more details about this in the IES Practice Guide on pages 1–3.
Now that you have some background on the IES Practice Guide recommendations, we will begin reviewing the particular recommendations of the IES Practice Guide *Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades*. 
The recommendations are as follows: Read recommendations.

As you can see, recommendations 1, 2, 3, and 5 were rated by the authors as strong. This means that these recommendations are based on studies with high internal validity and high external validity. Recommendation 4 was rated as low. This means that the evidence did not include studies with either high internal or external validity. This recommendation is primarily based on expert opinion because there is little empirical research on the topic.
The first recommendation is based on strong evidence, which, according to WWC standards, means that the evidence comes from studies with high internal and external validity, that is, the extent to which conclusions about causal relationships can be made and the extent to which results generated on a sample are pertinent to a larger population. This recommendation was based on a large number of studies that used reading assessment measures with ELLs. More information about the studies is in the appendix of the Practice Guide, which begins on page 31.
The full recommendation is as follows: “Conduct formative assessments with English learners using English language measures of phonological processing, letter knowledge, and word and text reading. Use these data to identify English learners who require additional instructional support and to monitor their reading progress over time.”
For those of you familiar with the RTI framework, the Practice Guide recommendation relates to all four essential components of RTI: screening, progress monitoring, the multi-level prevention system, and data-based decision making. When RTI is implemented, standardized and technically valid formative assessments (e.g., DIBELS, CBM) are used to identify students who may be at risk for poor learning outcomes and to monitor the progress of students who are identified as at risk. Both screening and progress monitoring are used to help determine student placement within the multi-level prevention system. Assessment data are used to inform decisions related to program quality, necessary instructional changes, and student movement between tiers.

Thus, the Practice Guide recommendation suggests that similar processes should be used with ELLs as with any other student group within an RTI framework.

*DIBELS: Dynamic Indicators of Basic Literacy Skills*

*CBM: curriculum-based measurement*
**Screening ELLs**

- Establish procedures and provide training.
- Screen all ELLs for reading problems.
- Assess phonological processing, alphabet knowledge, phonics, and word reading skills.

(See pages 10–11 of the Practice Guide.)

To carry out this recommendation, school districts should establish procedures and provide training for schools to screen ELLs for reading problems.

According to the Practice Guide authors, it is important to assess phonological processing, alphabet knowledge, phonics, and word reading skills in the primary grades because these skills will predict later reading performance in all areas: word reading, oral reading fluency, and comprehension. However, more recent research suggests that oral reading fluency does not correlate with comprehension for ELLs in the same way it does for non-ELLs (Crosson & Lesaux, 2009; Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2011a; Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2011b).
Myths About ELLs That Create Roadblocks to Implementation

- Reading problems among ELLs will resolve themselves once they develop proficiency in oral English.
- It is unfair to test children in a language that they do not understand.
- Native language assessments are more valid than English language measures.

(See pages 12–14 of the Practice Guide.)

Teachers may be reluctant to screen all ELLs and provide those at risk with additional supports based on incorrect beliefs about ELLs. As such, it is important that school districts understand these beliefs and provide research-based information to teachers that help them to overcome these roadblocks. Read slide.

First bullet. According to the authors of the Practice Guide, there is no evidence to support this position. Oral language proficiency does not predict which ELLs will have trouble reading, so it cannot be assumed that oral language and reading proficiency will develop concurrently. As with all other students, ELLs who are identified as being at risk for reading problems should receive reading interventions and should be monitored for progress.

Second bullet. According to the Practice Guide authors, research shows that students do not need to know the meaning of words to identify the beginning, middle, or ending sound of a word (fundamental to decoding), which suggests that English language assessments can be given to ELLs. However, keep in mind that decoding words without knowing their meaning is abstract, and therefore a more difficult task for ELLs (August & Shanahan, 2006).

Third bullet. In order to improve the usefulness of an English test given to ELLs, teachers should ensure that ELLs understand the task. They should provide at least two to three practice items before formal administration, where the task is modeled for the child and corrective feedback is provided. One way to do this is by teaching students “stem” answers, such as, “I know the main character didn’t like his teacher because he said...” This will help ELLs to know how to formulate answers to demonstrate their understanding of what they have read.
The NCRTI website provides detailed information about a variety of assessments and their effectiveness for screening purposes. This is what the NCRTI Screening Tools Chart looks like.

You can filter the results by subject and grade level. For our purposes, we are interested in looking at assessments for elementary reading. Here you can read about the assessments themselves, including the purpose, usage, cost, technology requirements, and service and support offered by clicking on its name in the first column. You can also learn about the research conducted on the assessments under various columns, such as classification accuracy, generalizability, reliability, and validity, by clicking on the bubble of interest. For more information about using the screening tools chart, check out the NCRTI Screening Tools Chart Users Guide.
Notice that there are symbols in the NCRTI Tools Chart that represent evidence ratings. It uses a different rating system than the IES Practice Guide. Whereas the Practice Guide rates evidence as “strong,” “moderate,” or “low,” the NCRTI Tools Chart uses “convincing,” “partially convincing,” and “unconvincing” evidence or “no evidence submitted.” Each column has specific criteria that determine the ratings. To find out the criteria, click on the heading of any column.
One of the tools chart’s columns focuses on disaggregated data. When I click on the column heading, this pop-up explains the criteria for each rating regarding its use of disaggregated data. As you can see, these rating are determined by the number of types of disaggregated data available and the quality of these data. The types of disaggregated data include reliability, validity, and classification accuracy.

The disaggregated data column is useful for determining whether the assessment has been tested with various subgroups, such as ELLs. When you click on a bubble in this column, you can look at how the data were disaggregated and if there were any meaningful differences between subgroups. As you can see from this screenshot, several products have horizontal lines in that column, meaning that there is no information regarding disaggregated data. This is because the vendors who submitted the information about the assessment did not provide information regarding disaggregated data. All the information in the Screening Tools Chart is based on what the vendors send to NCRTI. However, as more people use and request information that is not currently available, vendors will be encouraged to submit more information in the future.
Practice Guide Suggestions for Progress Monitoring With ELLs

- Collect progress monitoring data more often than screening data, which is recommended to occur three times a year.
- The severity of the problem should dictate how often progress is monitored.
- Students at high risk should be monitored more often.

(See page 11 of the Practice Guide.)

Read slide.

Clarify:
The IES Practice Guide recommends that ELLs at high risk for reading problems should be monitored weekly or biweekly. These recommendations are generally consistent with NCRTI recommendations for all students. According to NCRTI, progress monitoring should occur at least once per month at the secondary level and at least weekly at the tertiary level. If you are unfamiliar with the RTI levels of intervention, this will be covered shortly.
Progress monitoring serves the same purpose for ELLs as with non-ELLs.

*Read slide.*

*Note: Confirming/disconfirming screening data can be done through the first two bullet points.*
As with screening, the NCRTI website has tools charts that provide information about assessments and their use in progress monitoring. Many of the assessments can be used for screening and progress monitoring, but some are listed in only one tools chart, based on the information the vendor sent to NCRTI. Like the Screening Tools Chart, the Progress Monitoring Tools Chart uses the ratings of use “convincing,” “partially convincing,” and “unconvincing” evidence or “no evidence submitted.” You can click on the column headings to see how the ratings are determined for each category and click on the bubbles to read about the details for the assessment of interest.
The Progress Monitoring Tools Chart also has two columns with details about disaggregated data. This can be helpful in determining whether the assessments were tested with various subgroups, such as ELLs. Unfortunately, none of the assessments show that norms were disaggregated for diverse populations, but as with the Screening Tools Chart, this information may be available in the future as users continue to request it from the vendors. By contrast, you can see that many of the vendors did provide disaggregated reliability and validity data in the last column. You can click on the bubbles to see how the data were disaggregated by subgroup and if there were any meaningful differences.
Think-Pair-Share

- What types of assessments do you use in your school district for screening and progress monitoring?
- Are they standardized?
- Do they have evidence of reliability or validity?

For these questions, participants should use their laptops to view the tools charts at www.rti4success.org.

Ask participants to follow these three steps:
1. **Think** about a particular topic (20 seconds).
2. **Pair** with your neighbor/table.
3. **Share** with your neighbor/table (2–3 minutes).

Have two or three pairs/tables orally share their lists with the entire group.
Examples of Progress Monitoring

- Estimate rates of improvement.
- Identify students not making adequate progress.
- Compare efficacy of interventions.

We will now look at a few examples of how progress monitoring can be used. Read slide.
The graph on the left shows a student with sharply increasing CBM (curriculum-based measurement) scores. The increasing scores may indicate that the student is responding to the current instructional program.

The graph on the right shows a student with fairly flat CBM scores. The flatter scores may indicate that the student is not responding to the current instruction, so perhaps an instructional change for the student should occur.

However, a visual inspection of the data points is not sufficient to tell us if the student is making adequate progress. To be sure, you can calculate a rate of improvement and compare this student’s growth rate to his or her peers or to a local or a national norm. A technique for calculating a student’s rate of improvement is taught in the NCRTI Using Progress Monitoring for Data-Based Decision Making module.
We can also see improvement by looking at trend lines in comparison to their goal lines.

On the graph on the left, the trend line is steeper than the goal line. The student is showing increasing scores; therefore, the student is making adequate progress, and the end-of-year goal may need to be adjusted to provide more of a challenge.

On the graph on the right, the trend line is flatter than the goal line. The student is not benefitting from the instruction, and, therefore, the teacher needs to make a change in instructional program. Remember, you should never lower the goal because a student is an ELL. Below grade-level performance should not be considered “normal” or something that will resolve itself when oral language proficiency improves. Research suggests that although ELLs may reach benchmarks a little later than students learning to read in their first language, the slope of the trend line should look similar (Linan-Thompson, Cirino, & Vaughn, 2007). If the trend line is flatter than the goal line, the instructional program should be changed or adjusted to increase a student’s scores so the scores match or surpass the goal line. When an ELL student is not making progress, the instructional program itself must be examined to determine the match between the curriculum and the student’s current level of English language proficiency (Brown & Doolittle, 2008).
Brown and Doolittle (2008) suggest that it can be helpful to compare an ELL’s progress to his or her true peers as a way to examine the instructional program provided to a group of similar students. An ELL’s true peers are other ELLs who share similar characteristics, including similar language proficiencies and cultural and experiential backgrounds. The purpose of this comparison is to identify whether a lack of progress might be specific to the one student or if there might be a problem with the instructional program given to a group of students.
In this example, we see that the student representing the blue line has not made as much progress compared with his or her true peers. Therefore, we can assume that we need to make adjustments in that student’s instructional program but may not need to make adjustments for the others.

What would you do if the student is making the same progress as his or her true peers, but none are on track? In this case, the instructional program should be adjusted for all students in the group. Comparing a student to his or her true peers should never excuse a teacher from adjusting instruction when students are not making sufficient progress.
Using average progress monitoring scores of students in different intervention groups, practitioners can compare and contrast the efficacy of interventions. Continued use of ineffective interventions can be costly and harmful to students (increases the learning gap). In this graph, intervention A appears to be more effective than intervention B. Instead of providing three different interventions to address similar issues, it might be more efficient and effective to focus resources on implementing intervention A. These types of data can also provide information about what is a realistic growth rate for students in these interventions.

Note that comparisons between interventions are useful only when two conditions are met. The interventions must focus on the same skills, and the students in each group should have similar characteristics. Even then, the ability to draw causal conclusions is limited.
As I mentioned in the previous slide, when you are making comparisons between interventions, it is important to look at the scores of students with similar characteristics. You would not want to compare two interventions if one is used by ELLs and one is used by non-ELLs.

However, it is a good idea to compare the scores of ELLs and non-ELLs using the same intervention or core instructional program. For example, here I have just taken the scores of students using Intervention A and have disaggregated them in terms of ELL status. Now I can see that there is a similar slope for ELLs and non-ELLs using the intervention. Both ELLs and non-ELLs are making progress toward meeting grade-level proficiency. Schools can use these data as one source of information for making decisions regarding what interventions to use. We will cover other sources you can use to make decisions regarding intervention programs in later slides.
The IES panel also recommends using screening and progress monitoring data to make decisions about instructional support. This, too, aligns with the RTI framework. Students are screened, and their at-risk status determines their placement in the multi-level prevention system, which determines what supports they receive and the intensity of those supports.

- **Primary prevention.** High-quality core instruction that meets the needs of most students. All students should receive primary prevention, to the extent possible. Approximately 80 percent of students receive primary prevention alone.

- **Secondary prevention.** Evidence-based intervention(s) of moderate intensity that address the learning challenges of most at-risk students.

- **Tertiary prevention.** Individualized intervention(s) of increased intensity for students who show minimal response to secondary prevention.

Progress monitoring data are used to determine when a student has or has not responded to instruction at any level of the prevention system. Students should move in and out of levels depending on their progress.
Create Explicit Decision Rules for Progress Monitoring

Articulate in writing what happens when:
- More than 80% of students are above target
- Less than 80% are below target
- Lack of progress is evident
- Student progress varies by target group (e.g., special education, low SES, and ELL)

With progress monitoring, it is always important to articulate decision rules in writing. This includes decisions for setting goals, changing instruction/interventions, referring students to special programs, and moving students to more or less intensive levels of the prevention system. For example, you may want to consider articulating in writing what happens when...Read bullets.
Think-Pair-Share

- Does your district/school have procedures for screening, progress monitoring, and placing ELLs into levels of prevention? If so, what are they?
- How are they similar or different from those used for non-ELLs?

Ask participants to follow these three steps:
1. **Think** about a particular topic (20 seconds).
2. **Pair** with your neighbor/table.
3. **Share** with your neighbor/table (2–3 minutes).

*Have two or three pairs/tables orally share their lists with the entire group.*
The second recommendation is also based on strong evidence, meaning that it has both high internal and external validity. This recommendation is based on four high-quality randomized controlled trials at various sites with different interventions that share core characteristics in design and content. Additional information about the studies is included in the appendix of the Practice Guide beginning on page 31 and in Intervention Reports on the WWC website.

*Read slide.*

Like the first recommendation, this recommendation can also fit well within an RTI framework. Within RTI, students who do not respond to primary prevention should also receive secondary prevention. In secondary prevention, students receive small-group reading interventions that have been validated and shown to be effective.
Based on the research reviewed by the authors, interventions do not need to be designed for ELLs specifically. In fact, the authors see benefits for ELLs and non-ELLs working in the same groups. However, the authors suggest that high-quality interventions used with ELLs should have these characteristics. Read slide.

**Third bullet.** It is important to be sensitive to when and what types of feedback are appropriate for ELLs. If a student is reading a word incorrectly, this should be corrected, but if a student is answering a question, grammatical errors or errors that are the result of an accent can be ignored. In this case, the focus should be on the content of the message. Grammatical and other oral language structures can be addressed at another time.

**Fifth bullet.** Collaborative techniques will enable ELLs to improve their spoken skills so that they can provide higher quality answers to questions, and their self-confidence will then be elevated. We will talk more about collaborative techniques later in the presentation.

Note: Many of these recommendations are consistent with instructional recommendations for interventions with all students.
The research reviewed by the authors also suggested that these interventions for ELLs at risk for reading problems should be provided daily for at least 30 minutes per day in small groups of 3–6 students at similar levels of proficiency. Groups can include ELLs and non-ELLs. In fact, the authors suggest that there can be advantages of grouping ELLs and native speakers together.

These recommendations are consistent with the RTI recommendation for all students who require strategic instruction.
Identifying Effective Interventions

- Best Evidence Encyclopedia (Johns Hopkins University): www.bestevidence.org

As with any student, when providing interventions to ELLs, it is important to use interventions that have evidence of efficacy. Now we will look at a few online resources that are helpful for identifying evidence-based interventions that you can use for ELLs at risk for reading problems. These are as follows: Read slide.

You can remind participants that WWC is part of the Department of Education in IES and is the group that publishes the Practice Guides.
### Identifying Interventions on the NCRTI Instructional Intervention Tools Chart

**www.rti4success.org/instructionTools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Study Quality</th>
<th>Study Design</th>
<th>Efficiency of Implementation</th>
<th>Proximal Measures</th>
<th>Distal Measures</th>
<th># of Outcome Measures</th>
<th>Proximal %Δ (O)</th>
<th>Distal %Δ (O)</th>
<th>Proximal %Δ (O)</th>
<th>Distal %Δ (O)</th>
<th>Data Available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academy of Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access Code</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AWARD Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Reading Decoding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The NCRTI website also has a tools chart to help you learn more about and select interventions. The Intervention Tools Chart is somewhat different from the Progress Monitoring and Screening Tools Charts. Rather than summarizing information submitted by the vendor of the product, this tools chart summarizes particular studies that have tested the effectiveness of the products. You will notice that the program column contains the names of the interventions. You can click on a program’s name to learn about the program itself. For example, you can assess whether a program meets the criteria of the Practice Guide recommendations, such as providing at least 30 minutes of explicit reading instruction per day in groups of 3–6 students.

All the other information provided in the instructional intervention tools chart is about the particular study that evaluated each intervention program. There are two columns that are pertinent when considering the use of the intervention with ELLs. In the Participants column, you can click on the bubble to see the types of participants that were included in the study and whether there were ELLs in the sample. Also, the last column shows whether any of the results from the study were disaggregated by subgroups, and you can use this information to find out if there are any meaningful differences between ELLs and non-ELLs.
WWC also serves as a useful resource for identifying reading interventions and other types of education programs. It has clearly defined and rigorous standards for reviewing programs. On the website, you can browse topics through the top menu, and then see all of the resources available related to a particular topic. In the case of ELLs, you will notice that there are 32 Intervention Reports.
Examples Are for Illustrative Purposes Only

Throughout this presentation, we may look at specific products to practice using the Web-based tools. These examples are for illustrative purposes only; we are not endorsing any specific products.
Click on an intervention report of interest, and you will find a summary of all the available research on the particular intervention and the quality of that research. Here, I have pulled up the report summary for Enhanced Proactive Reading, an intervention for ELLs struggling with reading. On the left side of the screen, there is a brief summary on the program’s effectiveness, program information, and the research. You can also click on the arrow icon to read the full report.
On the right side of the screen, the effectiveness ratings for the program are given. As you can see, WWC rates a program’s effectiveness in terms of specific student outcomes. For Enhanced Proactive Reading, the outcomes measured are for reading achievement and English language development. For each outcome, there is an improvement index score, the effectiveness rating, and the extent of evidence rating.

The improvement index is a rating, similar to an effect size, which represents the change in an average student’s percentile rank that can be expected if the student is given the treatment. The range is from -50 to +50. You can see that in this example, the program has minimal effects on student outcomes.

There are six categories used for the effectiveness rating. In this example, reading achievement is rated as having potentially positive effects, and English language development is rated as having no discernable effects. I will explain what this means exactly with the next slide.

There are two possible ratings for extent of evidence: small or medium to large. In this case, it is small for both outcomes, meaning that it is based on either one study, one school, or findings based on a total of 350 students or 14 classrooms or less. Interventions based on more evidence would be rated as medium to large.
The effectiveness rating is categorized into six ratings:

1. **Positive effects.** Strong evidence of a positive effect with no overriding contrary evidence.

2. **Potentially positive effects.** Evidence of a positive effect with no overriding contrary evidence.

3. **No discernible effects.** No affirmative evidence of positive or negative effects.

4. **Mixed effects.** Evidence of inconsistent effects.

5. **Potentially negative effects.** Evidence of a negative effect with no overriding contrary evidence.

6. **Negative effects.** Strong evidence of a negative effect with no overriding contrary evidence.

Understanding each rating will help you as you use the WWC website to identify programs.
The Best Evidence Encyclopedia is another website that can provide more information about the evidence of effects of various interventions. On the side menu, you can select the topic of interest. In this case, I clicked on “English Language Learners.” For each topic, you can then see the programs that have been reviewed, which are grouped into the categories of top-rated programs, limited evidence programs, and other programs. You can also click to read about the key findings, summary, and review methods based on a review of all programs in the topic area. There is also an option to read the full report or the educator’s summary on the right-hand side.
Each program reviewed is rated for its level of evidence, and a symbol next to each program’s name shows its rating. The categories of evidence of effectiveness are strong, moderate, limited (strong evidence of modest effects and weak evidence with notable effects), and no qualifying studies. Ratings are based on both the quantity and the quality of studies reviewed and consider the number of studies, the type of studies (preference for randomized or randomized quasi-experimental), sample size, and effect size.
Here, I have clicked on top-rated programs so that I can get the list of all programs in the ELL category that met the criteria for having strong or moderate evidence of effects. In this case, there were no programs rated as having strong evidence of effects.

The information here about each program is limited, but it is helpful to see which studies received the highest rating. If you want to find more information about the studies reviewed, click on “Full Report” at the top of the page or go to the program’s website listed in the right-hand column. However, view the developers’ websites with caution because they can be less objective and are designed to promote products.
Activity

With your table groups, review the websites and choose 1–3 reading instruction or intervention programs that you think may be helpful for supporting ELLs in your school district.

Give participants 15–20 minutes for this activity.

When the groups are ready, have the groups share which interventions they chose. Ask them about their selection process. Which websites did they use? Were there notable advantages or disadvantages to what they chose?
In addition to providing evidence-based interventions, practitioners should also ensure that interventions are linguistically and culturally appropriate. Before a student moves from the primary level to the secondary level, it should be clearly determined that the student received linguistically and culturally appropriate instruction within the core curriculum. Then, if it is determined that the curriculum was linguistically and culturally appropriate and the student moves to secondary prevention, careful attention should be given to selecting evidence-based interventions that are also culturally and linguistically appropriate for that student.
Linguistic and Cultural Factors

- Native language
- Current levels of proficiency in first language and in English
- Early exposure to first language and English
- Country of origin
- Educational and cultural experiences
  (Brown & Sanford, 2011)

For teachers to deliver curriculum or interventions that are culturally and linguistically appropriate, they must know these factors about a student. Read slide.

NCRTI uses the term *culturally responsive* in its framework, but another way to think of it is simply being responsive to a student’s background. The next slides will show some ways that this can be incorporated into both the core curriculum and interventions.

In addition, NCRTI has developed a placemat, “Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Language Learners (ELLs) Within an RTI Framework,” which you should see on your tables. It provides helpful recommendations on how to tailor instruction based on an ELL’s stage of English language proficiency.
One way that teachers can be responsive to linguistic factors is by considering what particular sounds might be difficult for students of their language background and providing additional assistance to ELLs learning these sounds. This is important because ELLs may not be able to manipulate or discriminate differences in sounds not in their first language. This is a partial list of sounds that may be unfamiliar and more difficult for native Spanish speakers. *Read slide.*

ELLs represent 400 languages in the United States, and there will be difficulties teaching phonics to students who have difficulties pronouncing some of these sounds. Teachers should provide opportunities for students to say the words that are difficult for them and locate them in the text before reading.

---

**Sounds in English That May Differ or Do Not Exist in Spanish**

- Initial consonants: g, h, j, r, v, and z
- Letter combinations: ck, ght, nd, ng, nk, nt, tch, thr, and more
- Short vowel sounds: a, e, i, o, and u
- Diphthongs: au, aw, ew, oi, ow, oy, and ue
- Silent letters: gn, kn, mb, and wr

(August & Vockley, 2003)
Use Supplementary Materials

- Hands-on manipulatives (e.g., counting chips and globes)
- Real-life objects (e.g., coins, bills, and models)
- Pictures, visuals, and multimedia (e.g., illustrations, graphs, timelines, maps, and videos)
- High-low readers
- Adapted text
- Graphic organizers and outlines
- Highlighted and audiotaped text (Echevarría & Vogt, 2011; Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2007)

Lectures and paper-and-pencil activities that center around a standard text do not work for students who lack experiential knowledge. At the same time, “watering down” the curriculum is not an option. This can often be a challenge for teachers of older grade levels who need to teach more complex topics to students who have little exposure to English. In these cases, it is very important that the curriculum is not altered, but instead, made to be “meaningful, comprehensible, and accessible” (Echevarría & Vogt, 2011). The use of supplementary materials is one way to make curriculum more accessible for the English learner.

**Manipulatives**, such as counting chips, microscopes, and globes, **real-life objects**, such as coins, bills, and models of animate and inanimate objects, and other visual aids can reduce the language load of an activity and provide concrete examples to students whose English skills and background experiences may be lacking. **Visuals**, such as overheads, models, graphs, charts, timelines, and maps, all help students who have a hard time processing large amounts of auditory information. Consider using a science or a social studies “word wall” with pictures to build student background knowledge.

**High-low readers** and **adaptive texts** can enable all students to access the content at different reading levels. With high-low readers, the same information is provided in two or three readability levels. Those texts with lower readability levels may provide enhanced text features, such as more illustrations and highlighted key vocabulary. With **adapted text**, a piece of text from the grade-level textbook is rewritten to reduce readability demands while keeping the content intact.

**Graphic organizers**, such as Venn diagrams, T-charts, word webs, and thinking maps, can help students identify concepts and make relationships among them, and teacher-prepared **outlines** equip students with a form for note-taking while reading dense text material. These are most helpful to students if major concepts are already filled in and students provide details.

**Highlighted and taped text** are two other useful techniques. If texts can be reserved for ELLs, it is most useful for students if key vocabulary, important concepts, the topic sentence, and summary statements are highlighted. Thus, the reading demands of the text are reduced while the information itself is left intact. **Audiotaped text** (preferably text that has been highlighted) is recorded text, and students are encouraged to listen to the tape as they read the text.
ELLs come from a wide range of backgrounds, and many may be dealing with social and emotional challenges. Read slide.

Sixty percent of ELLs struggle with poverty, which can greatly impact academic, social-emotional, and health outcomes. Their parents may work several jobs and have little time to spend with their children and engage them in language development and literacy activities. At 36 months old, the vocabulary of children in professional families is double that of families living in poverty. In addition, children in poverty, especially girls, are more likely to miss school to take care of younger siblings. This not only affects achievement but also reduces their opportunities to participate in school life and identify with an educational environment.

It is important to understand the challenges that students are facing outside school and how these factors can inhibit learning. Often, these students just need more time and lots of practice to build up confidence, take risks, and improve their ability to focus. These students may also need additional social and emotional supports, such as counseling, to be successful in school.
The third recommendation is also based on strong evidence. It is based on three studies conducted specifically with ELLs and is indirectly supported by a strong body of research conducted with native English speakers. Further information about the studies underlying the recommendation is provided in the appendix of the Practice Guide, which begins on page 31.
Adopt an Evidence-Based Approach to Vocabulary Instruction

- Daily and explicit
- Emphasized in all parts of the curriculum (reading, writing, science, and social studies)
- Multiple exposure to target words over several days
- Reading, writing, and speaking opportunities
- Student-friendly definitions
- Regular review of words

(See pages 19–20 of the Practice Guide.)

The authors concluded that the evidence suggests that vocabulary instruction should include these characteristics.

*Read slide.*

The goal of these strategies is for students to develop an understanding of word meanings to the point where they can use these and related words in their communication and as a basis for learning.
Develop District-Wide Lists of Essential Words for Vocabulary Instruction

- Choose words carefully. Rich vocabulary instruction is time intensive, and only a handful of words should be taught at a time.
- Teachers should have the lists as they plan reading, social studies, science, and mathematics units.
- Teachers may choose to add to lists when problem words arise in the classroom.

(See page 20 of the Practice Guide.)

Read slide. Some authorities recommend teaching only 8–10 words per week; others suggest 2–3 words per day. Be judicious when choosing words for intensive vocabulary instruction. You may also want to leave room for teachers to add their own words based on the needs in their classrooms.
Recent research suggests that these approaches to vocabulary instruction can be effective for both ELLs and native English speakers. As stated previously, multiple exposure of target words is important, and these studies show that exposure can come in a variety of forms, including use of visuals, such as illustrations and graphic organizers, use of videos, paired activities between ELLs and English proficient students, group discussions, and writing activities (August et al., 2009; Vaughn et al., 2009).

Note that these studies were conducted with middle school-aged students.
Although the IES recommendation focuses on the integration of vocabulary instruction into the core curriculum, it should be integrated into all levels of the RTI framework. At the primary level, vocabulary skills are taught to all students—not just students identified to be at risk for reading problems or ELLs. For students at risk for reading problems who are receiving secondary or tertiary prevention, vocabulary instruction should also be included in small-group or individualized interventions.

Interventions that incorporate vocabulary instruction can be found on both the NCRTI Instructional Intervention Tools Chart and the WWC website.
Providing vocabulary instruction is important for both ELLs and native speakers; however, ELLs may need additional assistance with words that native speakers may already know and are not necessarily part of the academic curriculum. For example, ELLs may not know words such as bank, take, sink, or can, yet textbook publishers will assume that students know these words and not include them as vocabulary targets. Teachers should provide students with brief instruction during lessons that emphasize the meanings of common phrases and expressions, not just single words. They can also draw attention to potentially confusing words and phrases during instruction.

Emphasize the Acquisition of Everyday Words That Native Speakers Know

- Provide brief instruction during lessons.
- Emphasize the meanings of common phrases and expressions as well as single words.
- Draw attention to potentially confusing words and phrases.

(See page 21 of the Practice Guide.)
As a reminder, any examples shown throughout the presentation are for illustrative purposes only and are not endorsed by NCRTI.

Using the NCRTI Instructional Intervention Tools Chart, you can explore intervention programs that include vocabulary instruction. If you are not sure whether a program includes vocabulary instruction, you can click on the program name and read the descriptive information that pops up, as I have done in this example.
The WWC website can also help practitioners identify evidence-based vocabulary programs. From the home page, click on “Literacy” or “English Language Learners” under topics. After making your selection, you can narrow your search by typing “vocabulary” as your search term. As you can see, there are 12 Intervention Reports for programs that focus on vocabulary. You can then evaluate the effectiveness of these programs by reading the reports and their evidence ratings.
This recommendation is based on a low-level of evidence, meaning that it is primarily based on expert opinion, rather than on a large quantity of rigorous studies. Further information about the research underlying the recommendation can be found in the appendix, which begins on page 31.
Academic English is the language of the classroom; of academic disciplines (e.g., science, history, and literary analysis) in texts and literature; and in extended, reasoned discourse. It is more abstract than conversational English. Those knowledgeable about academic English would know that some conversational words, such as fault, power, and force, take on special meanings when used in science. These concepts may need to be explicitly taught to ELLs.
The panel recommends that to carry this out, school districts should integrate daily academic English instruction into the core curriculum. *Read slide.*
ELLs do not need to be able to read and write in English before they are taught the features of academic English, so instruction should start in the earliest grades. This should include teaching related to the following: Read slide.

As mentioned previously, specialized vocabulary is more likely to occur in nonfiction texts, so ELLs should be frequently exposed to nonfiction texts. Students should also be taught to use text features, such as pictures, photographs, diagrams, and captions, as clues to understanding specialized vocabulary.
The authors also recommended that school districts require teachers to devote a specific block (or blocks) of time each day to build academic English in ELLs. They explain that this has three distinct advantages. *Read slide.*

Some may find it difficult to devote a specific block to building academic English in ELLs. However, building academic English can and should be included in the block of time that is already devoted to reading instruction. Virtually all students would benefit from it, so one solution would be to deliver academic English instruction to both ELLs and native English speakers.
Recent research suggests that an effective approach to teaching academic English is to start with carefully selected grade-level texts from which to identify target words. Texts with accessible engaging content should be selected that also contain words that are frequently used in academic writing. Nonfiction texts typically contain more of these words. To identify the target words in text, instructors can use word lists, such as the academic word list (AWL; Coxhead, 2000), an empirically based list of words that occur frequently in texts across many academic disciplines. In these studies, a 5–8-day cycle was devoted to promoting deep processing of these words, through whole-group, small-group, and individual activities with opportunities for listening, speaking, reading, and writing the words. In a study by Snow et al. (2009), students were given opportunities in their English language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science classes throughout the week to read, write, and discuss a dilemma using the target words. These studies suggest that a text-based approach to teaching academic English can be effective in classrooms with both ELLs and native English speakers.

Note that these studies focused on a middle school–aged population.
Activity

Begin to develop a list of important vocabulary words that you would want to include on a school-wide or a district-wide list.

Provide groups with sample words to get them started. You may wish to start with the Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2000) mentioned on the previous slide, which can be found at [http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/resources/academicwordlist/](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/resources/academicwordlist/).

Give participants 2–3 minutes to brainstorm individually on words that they would like to see on a district list. Table groups may want to divide up to each cover a different grade range.

Then, give the groups about 5 minutes to discuss their lists as a group and decide what words to take out or add. Give participants time to write their words on chart paper and post around the room.

Following the activity, have 1–2 groups share their lists. Ask them why they selected certain words. Ask them if they chose any words that may be important for developing academic English.

Participants can then type up the lists of words or write their list in Handout 2 of the Companion Handouts.
The last recommendation was based on a high level of evidence. It was based on several high-quality experiments and quasi-experiments with ELLs. In addition, many peer-assisted studies have been conducted with native-English-speaking students, and the results have consistently supported positive student learning outcomes. More information about the studies supporting this recommendation is provided in the appendix, which begins on page 31.
Schedule 90 Minutes per Week for Paired Reading and Language Arts Activities

- Pairs of students should be at different ability levels or English language proficiencies.
- Activities should practice and extend material already taught.
- Tie activities to areas that emerge as key targets from district’s evaluation data.

(See page 29 of the Practice Guide.)
Although there was no experimental research on this topic, the authors acknowledged that the use of partnering for English language development instruction is a promising practice, based on research on peer-assisted learning in other areas of language arts. They provided some example activities that students can do in pairs during English language development instruction. Read slide.
Peer-assisted learning programs have been widely researched, and examples of such programs are offered on both the WWC website and the Best Evidence Encyclopedia website.

On the WWC website, you can find peer-assisted learning programs in the same way that you can find vocabulary programs. Start by selecting “Literacy” or “English Language Learners” on the home page and then do a search to narrow your results. Here, I typed in the word peer, and several programs that incorporate peer-assisted learning came up.
The Best Evidence Encyclopedia has also reviewed several programs that use peer-assisted learning. For example, when I clicked on top-rated programs for beginning reading, one of the programs listed was Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS). I can then read about the PALS program in the full report or the executive summary or visit the program’s website. More peer-assisted learning programs can be found in the other reading categories of the Best Evidence Encyclopedia.
WHERE TO GO FROM HERE: PLANNING, RESOURCES, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
What Professional Development Will My School or District Need?

Recommendation 1:
- Train school-based teams of teachers to examine formative assessment data to identify ELLs at risk and determine what instructional adjustments will increase progress.
- Teams can be by grade or across grade levels.
- Reading coach should play a key role on teams.
(See page 12 of the Practice Guide.)

The Practice Guide provides guidance regarding professional development needed to implement each recommendation. I will now go through each of the recommendations regarding professional development. For the first recommendation, the authors recommend the following: Read slide.

NCRTI has published an Information Brief titled Using School Leadership Teams to Meet the Needs of English Language Learners that provides guidance for forming these leadership teams. It can be found at http://www.rti4success.org/pdf/Using%20School%20Leadership%20Teams%20to%20Meet.pdf.
For the second recommendation, the authors recommend that training and ongoing support be provided to school staff providing the small-group instruction. The authors noted that research shows that training in this area is most effective when all personnel who work with ELLs participate together in the same professional development activities. They also suggest that the professional development should train teachers on how to appropriately pace the interventions and implement the interventions as outlined in the teacher manuals and training materials. This will help ensure that the interventions are implemented with fidelity.
For the third recommendation, the authors recommend that schools form teacher study groups that work together to plan effective vocabulary instruction. These study groups can be guided by available texts that provide evidence-based approaches to vocabulary instruction.
Activities in these study groups should include hands-on activities, such as transforming textbook definitions into student-friendly definitions, identifying crucial words in students’ texts, and developing daily lesson plans for intensive vocabulary instruction.
What Professional Development Will My School or District Need?

Recommendation 4:
- Provide teachers with ongoing professional development to help them learn how to teach academic English.
  - Should address English morphology, syntax, and discourse.
  - Should include practical activities, such as analyzing texts used by students.

(See page 25 of the Practice Guide.)

For the fourth recommendation, the authors suggest providing ongoing professional development to help teachers learn how to teach academic English. The professional development needs to be ongoing and address basic features of English morphology, syntax, and discourse. It should also include extensive practical activities, such as analyzing texts used by students for academic English instruction. This could also be an activity of the teacher study groups suggested in the third recommendation.
The authors recommend that school districts provide professional development for teachers setting up peer-assisted learning systems. According to the authors, the professional development should be scheduled during the early part of the school year so that teachers can practice immediately with their own students. This training could be provided to reading coaches, who should also observe teachers as they get started and help them with difficulties.
The IES Practice Guide provides a checklist for carrying out the recommendation on pages 7–8. This is a great place to start to see what your school district is already doing and where more planning and professional development is needed. To assist your teams in the planning process, there is also a professional development planning sheet in Handout 3 of the Companion Handouts.
As mentioned previously, the NCRTI, WWC, and the Best Evidence Encyclopedia websites have some great resources for investigating formative assessments and intervention programs.

In addition, the Center on Instruction, Colorín Colorado, and the Center for Applied Linguistics have some useful resources for instruction with ELLs, including research summaries, practitioner guides, professional development modules and training materials, and tools.
In addition to the tools charts on the NCRTI website, you can explore state resources at state.rti4success.org. You can click on specific states on the map to view their resources, or you can search by topics using the menu at the top. Select “English language learners” or type in your own topic of interest. You can also click on “Advanced Search” and choose “English language learners” under “By RTI Topic.” The advanced search will also allow you to select which specific states’ information you would like to view.
References


References


References


References


CLOSING
3-2-1 Activity

- Three things you learned
- Two things confirmed
- One thing you plan to do

Ask participants to think back on the presentation. Have them write three things they learned, two points that were confirmed, and one (or more) things they would like to do following the training. After giving participants a few minutes, have them share what they wrote with their table groups. After 2–3 more minutes, invite the table groups to share any common answers.
Questions?

National Center on Response to Intervention

www.rti4success.org
National Center on Response to Intervention

This document was produced under U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs Grant No. H326E070004. Grace Zamora Durán and Tina Diamond served as the OSEP project officers. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the Department of Education. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any product, commodity, service, or enterprise mentioned in this publication is intended or should be inferred. This product is public domain. Authorization to reproduce it in whole or in part is granted. While permission to reprint this publication is not necessary, the citation should be www.rti4success.org.