Introduction

Over the last decade, multi-tiered reading instruction and RTI have received considerable attention in lower elementary grades, thanks in part to the national effort to address early literacy through Reading First (Part B, Subpart 1, of Title I funding in Public Law 107-110, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001). The research basis on effective reading instruction dates back a great deal longer—perhaps 25 years or more—but efforts to examine delivering that instruction in a layered fashion that grows increasingly individualized have developed much more recently (O'Connor, Harty, & Fulmer, 2005). These layered approaches to instruction were designed to meet several important goals.

First, they were designed to systematically shore up classroom instruction, so that more students would be provided with research-based approaches to learning to read. Second, they were designed to screen students early and provide them with supplemental interventions as needed. For example, if a second-grade student demonstrated very low scores on vocabulary and comprehension, additional interventions focused on these elements would be provided. Third, this layered approach to intervention was conceptualized as a data source to facilitate identification for learning disabilities (LD). For students who did not respond adequately to classroom instruction (Tier 1) with supplemental intervention (Tier 2), these data would be considered as relevant to interpreting more formal assessments and identifying students as having LD.

By design, RTI offered an alternative to the previous model, which required students to experience academic failure at a level sufficiently discrepant from their

IQ before they could be provided withsupplementary services to remediate the problems they were experiencing. The IQ–achievement discrepancy had been the prevailing practice for identifying students with LD, including reading disabilities, despite questions about the validity of this approach (e.g., Fletcher et al., 1994; Share, McGee, & Silva, 1989; Speece & Case, 2001; Stanovich & Siegel, 1994). What researchers recommended, instead, was an examination of how students responded to high-quality instruction (e.g., Fuchs & Fuchs, 1998; Speece & Case, 2001; Vellutino et al., 1996). This involved looking at both the level of a student's performance (as compared to the grade level or developmental benchmark) and the rate of progress the student was making (Speece, Case, & Molloy, 2003). Research conducted with elementary students helped establish a variety of procedures for using this alternative model, including how often to collect data, what type of data to collect, the effectiveness of certain types of instruction, how large or small the group size should be for students who were experiencing difficulty, and what dosage and duration of supplemental instruction might be necessary to make a difference in a student's level of performance and rate of growth.

Thus the role and function of RTI began to evolve in elementary school settings where students spent all day, primarily with one teacher who had some flexibility in how to arrange the schedule and apportion the instructional time. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2004) specifically allowed districts to adopt RTI not only for determining special education eligibility, but also for providing preventative instruction to students who were struggling though not yet identified for special education. Some states went further in requiring RTI, not simply offering it as a permissible choice along with the severe-discrepancy model (Zirkel & Thomas, 2010).

Although elementary schools, particularly grades K–3, were busily working out the details of RTI implementation, the vast majority of leaders and teachers in middle and high schools had never heard of RTI and were unprepared for how to implement RTI practices at the secondary level. In fact, there is reason to believe that when RTI was integrated into IDEA 2004, few individuals responsible for its integration considered whether or how RTI would be implemented at the secondary level (Fletcher, Coulter, Reschly, & Vaughn, 2004). In 2005, when districts were launching RTI, some decided to develop and implement RTI models from elementary through secondary grades. In many cases, these districts were designing their own RTI models at the secondary level, aligning them with the instructional elements they perceived as effective at the elementary level.

RTI at the secondary level is considerably different from RTI at the elementary level, for many reasons that are fundamental to secondary instruction. For example, whereas elementary students often have one or two academic teachers, secondary students may have five or six. Scheduling at the elementary level is largely controlled at the classroom level by teachers. Secondary RTI implementation requires consideration of the fact that most students change classes frequently throughout the day; often do not have the same teachers for their core academic courses

as their classmates do; are enrolled in courses based on graduation requirements for certain credits or Carnegie units; and are further constricted in scheduling by the placement of uniquely offered elective courses and/or co-curricular activities occurring during the school day (e.g., athletics classes, marching band, etc.). These logistical issues work against large experimental studies needed to determine whether and how RTI should be implemented, because such research requires students to be randomly (and strictly) assigned to treatment or comparison conditions for potentially large blocks of instructional time.

In the absence of sounder guidance, it is perhaps understandable why some districts attempted to move the RTI models developed for elementary schools into middle and high schools. However, this has created consternation among teachers and administrators, as well as acknowledgment among researchers that the ill-fitting procedures need to be rethought (Fuchs et al., 2010). We think it is important to state that the features of effective instruction inherent in RTI are not what is disputed (see Chapters 2 and 4 for more information on effective instruction). Rather, the problems center around how to effectively organize and implement the structural components of RTI (see Chapter 1 for an overview) in a secondary setting, as well as what the purpose of RTI might be when it is used with adolescents for whom the time of "early identification" has already passed.

Practitioners and researchers alike agree that middle and high school students should receive high-quality instruction in general education classes, but the question for many is this: How do we bolster the quality of this instruction to enhance overall reading for learning? In this book, we pose possible answers to this question by providing instructional guidance on how to teach vocabulary and comprehension across the content areas, as a means of preventing many students from experiencing difficulty.

There is also little disagreement that students with considerable needs in reading require additional reading intervention. Instead, the concerns are how to organize the instructional schedule to provide this reading intervention, what the content of the reading instruction should be, and who should provide it. Again, in this book we tackle these difficult issues, which cannot be addressed adequately with embedded vocabulary and comprehension support alone.

The basic tenets of a tiered approach to instruction, including a comprehensive analysis of performance data collected at regular intervals, are the basic tenets of RTI that apply at all grade levels. Over the past several years, we have developed, implemented, and evaluated through experimental studies the efficacy of procedures and practices for implementing RTI at the secondary level (Vaughn, Cirino, et al., 2010; Vaughn, Denton, & Fletcher, 2010; Vaughn & Fletcher, 2010; Vaughn, Wanzek, et al., 2010; Vaughn, Wexler, Roberts, Barth, Cirino, et al., 2011). We have also designed professional development (e.g., Reed et al., 2009) for secondary teachers to enhance their classroom reading instruction, and we have developed and implemented both Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. We intend to display in this book our practical understanding of what it takes to implement effective RTI practices in a

secondary setting. Some of the frequently asked questions we address include the following:

- Which teachers are responsible for Tier 1? Is it the English teachers? Is it only for inclusion or co-taught classes?
- How do you deliver a "90-minute core" of reading instruction when a class is only 45 minutes long? Does this mean that all English classes have to be double-blocked?
- Do we have to have intervention classes if our state is meeting Adequate Yearly Progress goals or the state's criteria for acceptable school performance?
- How do we know who needs intervention and in what areas?
- What types of assessments are we supposed to give, and how often do we give them?
- What do we do with all the assessment results?
- How do we know what to teach in intervention? Is there a certain program we're supposed to use?
- Are interventions occurring in the regular/general education class? How does one teacher deliver the regular instruction plus intervention?
- Who teaches the intervention classes?
- Does intervention happen every day? Can it be before or after school?
- Is there a certain length of time that intervention has to last?
- How do we schedule all these classes?
- What do we do about changing students' schedules when there is no other class available at that time?
- Who will teach us about RTI, and where do we go if we have more questions?

These questions (and more) may have occurred to you as well. The chapters of this book have been planned to provide answers to some of the most pressing issues middle and high schools face when implementing RTI in the area of reading. We have chosen to focus on this subject area because students' vocabulary and comprehension skills (as well as the complementary skill of writing) affect their ability to learn and succeed in all content areas (Torgesen, Houston, Rissman, Decker, et al., 2007). Therefore, a great deal of the information is specific to the research base for reading instruction and intervention with adolescents. However, other information pertains to the processes and procedures of RTI in general and may be applied to multi-tiered instruction in other areas, such as math or behavioral support. Where appropriate, we have indicated the information that can be more broadly applied.

Because some states and school districts have more aggressively pursued implementing RTI at the secondary level than others have, we assume that you, our readers, will have differing levels of prior knowledge about the model and

about reading instruction. For some of you, the information in this book may seem very different from what you have been told about RTI, because we advocate for practices that are uncharacteristic of how the framework is applied in elementary schools. For others, all the information—including even what *RTI* stands for—will be new. Still others of you will be somewhere in between with a little knowledge about RTI and/or adolescent literacy, but not enough information to put all the pieces together in a functional, coherent whole.

Given the breadth of information provided here and the wide range of backgrounds that our readers bring to the task, we have structured the book to facilitate reading it in different sequences. Let's start by looking at the order and contents of the chapters:

- **Chapter 1** ("RTI in Reading: An Overview"): why we need to apply RTI in the area of reading for adolescents; what traditional RTI is and includes; how RTI differs at the secondary level; how RTI intersects with special education; and what the benefits are of moving to an RTI model.
- **Chapter 2** ("Step 1: Implementing Effective Tier 1 Instruction"): what effective instructional practices support students' literacy, how to select materials or strategies for Tier 1; how to use screening assessments; what professional development is needed to support teachers in implementing Tier 1; how to create a school environment conducive to learning; and how to establish a team to oversee RTI in the area of literacy.
- **Chapter 3** ("Step 2: Establishing Interventions in Reading"): how to determine which students need reading intervention, what methods for scheduling intervention courses are possible in middle and high schools; how Tier 2 differs from study skills classes; how Tier 2 will differ from Tier 3 if multiple intervention tiers are provided; what group sizes are most appropriate for intervention; how assessment data can be used to place students into intervention tiers; what methods can be used to diagnose the specific needs of students who are struggling with reading and to monitor their progress in those areas; and what to consider when selecting an intervention teacher.
- **Chapter 4** ("Step 3: Guidelines for Tiers 2 and 3"): how to provide effective instruction in intervention classes; how to use formal and informal progress monitoring to guide instructional decisions; what can make instruction more intensive and individualized; how to select intervention materials and programs; what roles different personnel fulfill in an RTI model; and how to provide professional development to support the intervention tiers.
- **Chapter 5** ("Step 4: Refining Implementation of RTI"): what is negotiable and non-negotiable in the design and implementation of RTI at the secondary level; how to communicate the non-negotiables; how to determine when a school is ready to improve its implementation plan; and how to use a case study of a high school to evaluate implementation and to plan for overcoming roadblocks and taking next steps.

- **Appendices A–C:** sample bell schedules and master schedules from middle and high schools of different sizes and configurations.
- **Appendix D:** samples of literacy strategies applied to content-area material.
- **Appendix E:** samples of literacy strategies used in reading intervention.
- **Appendix F:** resources for additional information on RTI and RTI-related topics.

Now let's take a look at some of the options for proceeding through this book, so that you can determine what might be best for you. We list them by your possible role and background:

- You serve in any role at a school that is about to begin RTI implementation, and you know very little about RTI: Read the chapters in order.
- You are familiar with the concept of RTI, and you are a general education teacher who does *not* have responsibility for reading intervention: Read Chapters 2 and 5, and review the appendices.
- You are familiar with the concept of RTI, and you are a reading intervention teacher: Review Chapter 2 before reading Chapters 3–5 and the appendices.
- You serve in any role at a campus that has been involved in implementing RTI, *or* you have been involved in an in-depth study of RTI: Select particular topics within the chapters that reflect your current questions or interests.
- You are an administrator: Read Chapters 1 and 5, as well as Appendices A–C and F.

Throughout the book, we provide many cross-references to other chapters or sections, so that if you have skipped ahead to a particular topic or chapter, you can link back to information you might need to fill in any gaps in your knowledge that arise. We have tried to recreate in static print format a reading experience that is akin to reading online with hypertextual links to pertinent supporting information. If at any point you need more information than we have been able to provide here, refer to the websites in Appendix F, which are categorized by type of resource.

We know from firsthand experience that implementing the essential components of an RTI framework at the secondary level requires considerable time, effort, and resources. We hope that this book serves as a valuable guide for success.