MAKING ASSESSMENT MATTER: FROM SUMMER READING TO TODAY’S CONVERSATION

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September 25, 2015
Minneapolis, MN
This Afternoon’s Discussion

Part I.
RTI: Design and Context
- RTI fundamentals
- What is reading?
- The "at risk" student
- Preliminary case analysis

Part II.
Assessment: Unpacked
- Guiding Principles
- Identifying constructs measured
- Matching type to purpose
- Trends and Patterns
- Assessment Systems

Part III.
Analysis: RTI for Student Improvement
- Examining data
- Moving from data to an action plan

Part IV.
Leading RTI
- Adults, content, & context
- Messaging to key stakeholders

Part V.
Next Steps in this Work
- Leading advanced literacies instruction
- A Walk-through of our latest book—building off of *Making Assessment Matter*
RTI Competencies

Leader
• Understand the social, political, and cultural dynamics of decision-making and improvement processes

Strategist
• Identify key problem areas and develop an associated action plan that promotes teacher knowledge and builds best-practices for literacy instruction

Analyst
• Apply a repertoire of data-analytic strategies to identify patterns in the data and sources of student difficulty.

Designer
• Develop an efficient and comprehensive assessment battery that allows educators to understand student skills in key domains over time
Returning to Rosa Parks

As a group, identify key strategies/decisions/steps that Principal Lansdowne undertook to positively support the school’s educators through the change process, starting with buy-in and moving through to RTI implementation.
Key Elements of RTI Leadership

• The Leadership Team
  • Cross-grade, cross-content, etc.
  • 2+ year commitment
• The Mission/Values Statement
  • Closes with a pressing problem or goal
• The School-Wide Assessment Schedule
• A Data Collection-Analysis Cycle
• The Priority Action Steps and a Plan
Spotlight on Messaging

• How do we ensure the initiative’s success after the planning stage?

• NOTE: Many initiatives fail not because of the plan itself but because of its implementation
Messaging Data

Step 1 • Getting Everyone on Board

Step 2 • Visible and Accessible Data

Step 3 • Clear and Realistic Action Steps
What Matters to Stakeholders

- Universal values
- Promoting positives
- Careful use of language

- Getting Everyone on Board
- Visible and Accessible Data
- Clear and Realistic Action Steps
Discussing Scores

- “X students did badly on the DIBELS”
- “A lot of our students are struggling with reading grade-level passages fluently”
Making Steps Digestible

- Numbers and bullets, particularly in text
- Action verbs
- Tables that lay out who is in charge
- Flow charts and graphics
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Advanced Literacies

Today’s students need to develop increasingly sophisticated literacy skills to thrive day-to-day:

- communicate (orally and in writing) in diverse ways and with diverse audiences;
- need to understand and use print for a variety of purposes
  - Much more than decoding and understanding print

Stem from the new role that language and literacy skills take in society—in our neighborhoods and in the global world.
Advanced Literacies (con’t)

Reading across the disciplines e.g., content-based literacy teaching

The reading-writing connection

The language of print vs. everyday conversational language
## Getting to Advanced Literacies

### Objective

- To understand four key levers for a school-based reform strategy that promotes advanced literacies

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<td>• Data-driven supports for struggling readers</td>
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## Why these Levers?

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### To promote:

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| • A set of shared instructional practices used in all classrooms.  
• A common language for discussing instructional goals. | • Rigorous curriculum in all classrooms and across grades.  
• To reduce the burden on staff to locate high-quality materials,  
• More time to focus on instructional planning. | • Increased knowledge about literacy instruction for all  
• Increased sense of competence | • A strategic match between the reader’s individual needs |
Four Hallmarks of Advanced Literacy Instruction

1. Work with engaging texts that feature big ideas and rich content
2. Talk/discuss to build language and knowledge
3. Write to build language and knowledge
4. Study a small set of high-utility vocabulary words to build breadth and depth of knowledge

Supported by school-wide protocols
Hallmark 1. Work with Engaging Texts that Feature Big Ideas and Rich Content

- Select topics and questions that don’t have easy answers

Big Ideas, Rich Content:
- segregation
- Educational equity
Hallmark 1: Instructional Design

Work with engaging texts that feature big ideas and rich content

- Students actively work with and process text each day—more than one day with a text
  - Over a series of lessons, multiple texts are read on a single topic or concept
- Topics featured in text are multi-faceted
Hallmark 2. Talk/Discuss to Language and Knowledge

Talk ➔ Read ➔ Talk
Talk/discuss to build language and knowledge

• Students are engaged in text-based talk with a purpose (to answer a text-based question; take a perspective) and a structure (small group discussion, think-pair-share)
• Students are encouraged to adopt language from the text to present their ideas/perspectives
Hallmark 3. Write to build language and knowledge

Talk → Read → Talk → Write
Hallmark 3: Instructional Design

Write to build language and knowledge

• Students are engaged in writing about the text or the topic/issue with a purpose (to answer a text-based question; take a perspective) and a structure (graphic organizer)
• Students are encouraged to adopt language from the text to present their ideas/perspectives
• Writing assignments gradually require more extended writing.
Hallmark 4: Instructional Design

Study a small set of high-utility vocabulary words to build breadth and depth of knowledge

- Students are engaged in study of a core set of words that appear across texts
- Students are encouraged to use this language when speaking and writing
Integrating these Hallmarks within an Instructional Plan

1. Develop Academic Content Knowledge by Studying Big Ideas
2. Develop Academic Vocabulary Knowledge by Studying a Small Set of Words Deeply
3. Unlock Language by Developing Word-Learning Strategies
4. Extend Learning with Language Production Projects
5. Deep Process-Oriented Interactive Learning Opportunities

Knowledge-Building Cycle
Spotlight on the Instructional Cycle

- Identify and then repeat core learning tasks from cycle to cycle
- Sequence core learning tasks developmentally
- Gradually increase the cognitive and linguistic demands

- Use multiple methods and formats
- Organize each instructional cycle around a big idea
Spotlight on Big Ideas and Corresponding Touchstone Texts

**Big Ideas**

**Multifaceted**
- Conceptually abstract
- And lend themselves to discussions around questions without one clear answer

**Engaging**
- Relevant to ELs' interests and experiences, and tap into students’ desires to be part of, and understand, the many worlds beyond school

**Content-Based**
- Can be explored through science, social studies, and the arts; ELs will return to aspects of these ideas throughout schooling

**For Example...**

**How Animals Survive in their Environments**

**Shadows and light**
- Light and shadow can make animals stand out from their background.
- **Lying flat**
  - This bird is called a stone curlew. It is well camouflaged, but you can still see its shadow. In daylight, solid things always have shadows. This helps you to see where they are.
- **From below**
  - Many water birds such as penguins are white underneath. They swim on the surface of the water and dive down to catch fish.

**Why Do Tigers Have Stripes?** By Mike Unwin
Spotlight Word Selection

Big Idea: ________________________________

Touchstone Text: ________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Target Words</th>
<th>Usefulness</th>
<th>Complexity</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For This Text</td>
<td>For This Big Idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Do Tigers Have Stripes?</td>
<td>shadow, surface, reflect, disguise, survive, recognize, attract, environment, and adapt/adaptation</td>
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For This Text

For This Big Idea

For Big Ideas to Come

Across Content Areas

In a Particular Content Area

Conceptually Abstract

Polysemous

Morphologically Challenging
Spotlight on Word-Learning Strategies

Meaningful Word Parts

Cognitive Strategies

- Recognize that the word is unfamiliar
- Look for information that will support an inference into its meaning
- Hypothesize the meaning
- Check hypothesis against context

Word Form Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Nouns</th>
<th>Adjectives</th>
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<tr>
<td>adapt</td>
<td>adaptation</td>
<td>adaptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attract</td>
<td></td>
<td>attractive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disguise</td>
<td></td>
<td>disguisable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recognize</td>
<td></td>
<td>recognizable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>survive</td>
<td>survivor</td>
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Spotlight on Language Production Projects

- **Topic**: How can we better coexist with wildlife?

- **What compelling issue will students focus on?**
  - How can we be “good neighbors” to animals, supporting their survival in and around our community?

- **What research will they need to undertake?**
  - Document dangers that animals face every day
  - Note strategies we can adopt to help animals survive in our community

- **What product will they generate?**
  - Create pamphlets ("Quick Guides") for their state's Audubon Society, focused on how to coexist with local wildlife.

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**Anchor project in the cycle’s big idea**

**Organize the project around a compelling purpose**

**Build in opportunities for target-word use**

**Use tools to scaffold language production**
Getting to Advanced Literacies

Objective

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The Benefits of Curriculum

For Teachers
- Frees time to focus on instruction
- Supports vertical and horizontal alignment without teacher collaboration
- Serves an educative function

For Students
- Creates familiarity with a core set of learning routines
- Presents information in a predictable format
Supporting Instruction with a Comprehensive Curriculum

We can’t confuse curricular materials with good teaching

But we can support good teaching with high-quality, comprehensive curricular materials
The Curriculum-Pedagogy Relationship

Learner Outcomes

- Instruction (teachers)
  - Implemented as intended (fidelity)
  - Adapted skillfully to accomplish fidelity
- High quality curriculum
- Curriculum (materials)
The Task for Instructional Leaders

High-quality curriculum

Implemented as intended (fidelity)

Adapted skillfully to accomplish fidelity

To ensure that curriculum is implemented with fidelity and adapted appropriately (a roll-out plan, mid-course corrections)

To select high-quality curriculum (materials) and to establish buy-in

Learner Outcomes
What Makes a Literacy Curriculum High Quality?

The ‘hallmarks’ of advanced literacy are present in all lessons/across units

Students are held to high expectations (tasks/texts are appropriately challenging given grade-level expectations)*

Teachers are provided with all supports (materials, instructions) to execute lessons as written

*Most core curricula will have to be adapted to meet the needs of children performing below or above grade-level
Discussion and Learning Protocols to Promote Advanced Literacies

• Why?
  • Facilitating and engaging students in effective discussion, especially peer-to-peer, demands structures and supports

• What?
  • Protocols promote routines and manners of engagement that allow the participants to focus on the content

• Where?
  • National School Reform Faculty (www.nsrfharmony.org)
  • Built in to different curricula & interventions
    • e.g., Expeditionary Learning, Reciprocal Teaching, etc.
Protocols & Routines for Student Success

"And like once we started doing it, it was kind of like a routine. Like every day, we would get our AVNs out and start working on it, so like we got used to it. And it just helped."

"...Every time I took a test after the units, we were really confident because we went over them so many times – all different pages and stuff."

“The first time we did, it was really hard..” “Yeah, and then when we got into it, and we started having more of this, we started doing better at it.”
Elements of an Effective Staff Development Plan

- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
- Collection and use of assessment data and information
- Connected Coaching

Lever 1: Instructional hallmarks
Lever 2: Plans & materials
Lever 3: Staff development
Lever 4: Reader-intervention match
PLCs: What They Are Not

- Courses and trainings for credit or credential
- Lectures
- Large group meetings
- Team planning time
- Staff meetings
- Off-site
- Short-term
- One-time only
Effective PLCs: Elements

**Structure**
- Small group
- Skilled facilitator & teaching teams
- Ongoing, frequent sessions
- On-site

**Approach to Knowledge-Building**
- Sessions are:
  - guided by learning objectives to foster target competencies
  - interactive, using discussion and dialogue
  - incremental, building off previous sessions
  - part of a long-term plan
  - anchored in meaningful case examples

**Mechanisms for Transforming Practice**
- Leaders and facilitators:
  - provide decision-making and leadership opportunities
  - collaborate with educators to identify areas of strength and challenge
  - promote problem-solving and anticipation of roadblocks
  - encourage role-play, demonstration, and practice
Effective PLCs: Framework

1. Notice
2. Reflect
3. Build Knowledge
4. Plan
5. Try

Lever 1: instructional hallmarks
Lever 2: plans & materials
Lever 3: staff development
Lever 4: reader-intervention match
Case Example: The Improvement Framework at Rosa Parks

1. Notice
   - Stagnant scores on the state standardized assessment
   - Minimal Information on the causes of learning breakdown

2. Reflect
   - Analyze current approach to assessment
   - Classify assessments by type and purpose for use
   - Examine assessment schedule & time spent

3. Build Knowledge
   - Revised screening battery and schedule
   - Clear data systems for reporting and sharing scores
   - Assessment schedule and data use tied to instruction

4. Plan

5. Try
Coaching: What It Is Not

- A sign of something wrong
- Sporadic
- Substitute teaching
- Evaluative
- Supervisory
- Short-term
- Tied to accreditation or licensing
- Paperwork or monitoring compliance
Coaching: Elements

“With) training, you learn so much in one day, and then you forget it. Here we learn something every day and then try it out in the classroom.”

“It wasn’t like the coach was there to crack the whip on you, or to observe you and make sure that you were doing everything right. She never gave that feeling. You felt like she was there to help better everything.”

“The activities were based on the classroom observations, not ‘cookie cutter’ activities... they were built around what was actually going on in the classroom.”
Supporting Adults for Positive Change: Key Shifts for Instructional Leaders

Populations included in RTI

- RTI is for struggling students only
- All students participate in RTI through daily instruction, and some receive supplemental instruction and intervention

Assessments

- Any assessment can be used to screen students for literacy risk
- Screening assessments: assess code- and meaning-based skills separately; are uniquely suited to surface difficulties; play a vital role in RTI

Increasingly complex conceptualizations of RTI

- RTI is special education renamed; mechanism to support struggling students
- RTI is a school-wide system to identify instructional targets, improve daily instruction, and inform intervention groupings and strategies

Implementation

- RTI is a system that can be quickly implemented with minimal time investment
- RTI needs to be carefully organized and professional learning provided over an extended period of time
Data-Driven Intervention

All students in mainstream classroom settings included in the assessment system

Assessment used to guide instructional planning and support – NOT for high stakes decisions or to label students

Students flagged as at-risk or below-benchmark should receive targeted instructional support

Lever 1: instructional hallmarks
Lever 2: plans & materials
Lever 3: staff development
Lever 4: reader-intervention match
Common Barriers to High-Quality Implementation

- **Low-quality interventions**
  - not evidence-based

- **Lack of fidelity of implementation**
  - checklists, outside monitoring

- **Insufficient implementation process**
  - time, frequency, duration, knowledge of educators about the program/initiative

- **Inconsistent professional development**
  - Staff transition in/out of schools, training opportunities

Lever 1: instructional hallmarks
Lever 2: plans & materials
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Cases Example

*Rosa Parks Revisited: Concerns and Challenges*

- Some staff are concerned they aren’t seeing any results from the intervention period. Others are concerned there isn’t sufficient programming for the newcomers.

- The principal has been weighing the overall strategy for boosting literacy, thinking about the balance between the time and resources needed for offering supplemental services and the time and resources needed for developing stronger daily classroom practices, to be offered to all students.
Planning Intervention for Struggling Readers at Rosa Parks

**Short-Term**
- Sharpen decisions about programs

**Long-Term**
- Screen for difficulties
- Monitor progress in skill development
- Match interventions to specific skills weaknesses

**Recursive Implementation**

Become a more critical consumer: understand reading and analyzing the approach

Create a comprehensive assessment system
Data Informs Instruction at Every Level

Rather than purchasing new programs to address problems, strategic data gathering allows schools to:

• Better implement current programs
• Match students to intervention efforts
• Identify target areas for professional development
• Follow student progress to inform further planning
Planning Intervention for Struggling Readers at Rosa Parks

How are at-risk students identified for intervention?

What is the nature of the intervention?

How is ‘response’ to intervention defined?

How do we match students to the intervention provided?

Who is the educator implementing the intervention?

What happens to non-responders?

Lever 1: instructional hallmarks

Lever 2: plans & materials

Lever 3: staff development

Lever 4: reader-intervention match
SITE-BASED LITERACY REFORM: COORDINATING THE FOUR LEVERS FOR STRATEGIC CHANGE

Lever 1: instructional hallmarks
Lever 2: plans & materials
Lever 3: staff development
Lever 4: reader-intervention match
Leading RTI: Four Key Distinctions

Advanced Literacy
- 1. Performance vs. Specific Skills/Competencies
- 2. Code vs. Meaning

Reform Strategy for Lasting Impact
- 1. Structure vs. Process
- 2. Output vs. Outcome
1. Literacy Performance vs. Specific Skills/Competencies

- Letter Names & Letter Sounds
- Phonological Awareness
- Word Reading

Finding the Main Idea; Predicting; Summarizing; Making an Inference, etc.

- Accuracy
- Efficiency

Oral Language

- Vocabulary
- Word Learning Strategies

Knowledge of word function or type

Metalinguistic Skills

- Background Knowledge
- Interest
- Motivation
- Understanding of Purpose

Text Characteristics

- Organizational structure
- Sentence structure
## 2. Code v. Meaning

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<td>- Constrained, i.e., mastery oriented</td>
<td>- Unconstrained, i.e., not mastered</td>
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<tr>
<td>- e.g., 26 letters, 44 sounds</td>
<td>- e.g., 50,000 words by 12(^{th}) grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>- e.g., word reading automaticity</td>
<td>- e.g., relevant cross-content knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Typically in place by 3(^{rd}) grade</td>
<td>- Develops from infancy through adulthood</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Highly susceptible to instruction in a relatively brief period of time</td>
<td>- Requires sustained instruction, through adolescence</td>
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5 Levels of Word Knowledge

- Rich, decontextualized knowledge of a word’s meaning, its relationship to other words, metaphorical use
- Enough knowledge to understand but not enough to recall and use appropriately
- Narrow-context bound knowledge
- General sense
- No Knowledge

Advanced Literacy
• 1. Performance vs. Specific Skills/Competencies
• 2. Code vs. Meaning

Label vs. Concept
3. Structures vs. Processes

**Structures**
- the tangible, concrete elements of an improvement plan

**Processes**
- the interactions and continuous learning that result from the effective use of these structures

Reform Strategy for Lasting Impact
- 1. Structure vs. Process
- 2. Output vs. Outcome
3. Structures vs. Processes (con’t)

- **Framework**
  - 1. Notice
    - Classroom-based coaching
    - Assessment tools
  - 2. Reflect
    - PLC
    - Coaching conversations
    - Assessment data
  - 3. Build Knowledge
    - PLC
    - Coaching conversations
  - 4. Plan
    - PLC
    - Coaching conversations
  - 5. Try
    - Classroom-based coaching
    - Assessment tools

- **Processes**
  - Notice and document challenges and strengths
  - Identifying patterns that shed light on strengths and barriers to instructional improvement
  - Learn, discuss, and design a strategy that addresses identified challenge
  - Plan strategy use, with support from coach and planning guide
  - Implement plan while responding flexibly to children
Case Example: A New Curriculum

**STRUCTURE.** Select high-quality curriculum (materials) and to establish buy-in

- 1. Structure vs. Process
- 2. Output vs. Outcome

**PROCESS.** Educators are supported to implement the curriculum with fidelity and adapt it appropriately (a roll-out plan, mid-course corrections)

**High-quality curriculum**

**Implemented as intended (fidelity)**

**Adapted skillfully to accomplish fidelity**

**Learner Outcomes**
4. Outputs vs. Outcomes

**Outputs**
- Products of program activities

**Outcomes**
- Changes in participant behaviors, knowledge, and skills

Intended Results

Kellogg Foundation, 2004
4. Outputs vs. Outcomes

- Key Structures → Outputs → Outcomes
- Site-Based Initiative

Desired Overall Outcome (e.g., raised achievement; reduced sped placements, fewer students needing intervention)

Reform Strategy for Lasting Impact
- 1. Structure vs. Process
- 2. Output vs. Outcome
SUMMING UP
There are three key crucial hallmarks of an effective school-wide RTI model.

**Hallmark 1:**
Comprehensive, continual screening of developing literacy skills

**Hallmark 2:**
Excellent Tier 1 (Core) Instruction

**Hallmark 3:**
Ongoing student assessment

Tiered instruction for struggling students

Detailed plans and specialized practices to ensure additional tiers of instruction are in place when needed
Summing Up

- RTI holds significant promise for supporting diverse learners
- Attend to HOW and WHAT is assessed
  - Include measures that have an external criterion
  - Measure both code- and meaning-based skills

- Assessment-instruction links mean *first* identifying the collective’s needs and then matching students’ with particular difficulties to appropriate supports and interventions
Summing Up (cont.)

• RTI requires strong leadership (analyst, strategist, and designer with instructional know-how!)
  • Provides both the necessary structures and processes for successful implementation
  • Differentiate between short- and long-term goals and corresponding outcomes
  • Uses data to inform mid-course corrections
Summing Up (cont.)

- Within a successful RTI framework, tiers of instruction need to promote advanced literacies for all children; this requires:
  - A shared understanding of what, exactly, advanced literacy instruction entails
  - High-quality instructional plans and materials
  - Sustained approaches to staff development
  - Data-driven supports for strugglers readers