

The Administrator's Overview

Section 1

Slide 1—Title Slide

This overview is intended to prepare school leaders to implement a schoolwide approach to reading intervention consistent with a response to intervention, or RTI, model.

Slide 2—Objectives

The goal of this overview is to provide a vision of a coordinated, comprehensive, schoolwide approach to reading intervention specifically designed to meet the needs of all students, including struggling readers.

Additionally, this overview will provide a description of three tiers, or levels, of intervention and the purposes of each.

Finally, we will consider the process of implementing the schoolwide approach.

Slide 3— Literacy Achievement of Eighth-grade Students

Educators who work with middle school students know that, unfortunately, not all children learn to read by the time they leave elementary school.

In 2009, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP, was administered at schools across the nation. This slide shows the percentage of Texas students who scored at each proficiency level.

The speaker pauses for 3 seconds.

Slide 4—Sample from NAEP Descriptors

What do the NAEP standards or descriptors mean in terms of students' reading ability? Over one-half of the eighth-grade test assesses students' ability to form a general understanding of text and make some inferences. Approximately 15% of the test assesses students' ability to make reader-text connections. And 30% of the test measures the examination of content and structure of text. In short, students considered proficient or advanced by NAEP standards possess the academic literacy skills necessary for school success.

Slide 5—Increasing Literacy Demands

As the national statistics demonstrate, many students leave middle school unable to read adequately and are, therefore, unprepared to learn from textbooks at the high school level and beyond.

The Texas College and Career Readiness Standards, or CCRS, were created to promote reading skills across the curriculum.

Slide 6—Middle School is Not Too Late to Intervene

Although students who fall behind rarely catch up without intensive intervention, research has demonstrated that secondary-level students can make significant gains with proper instruction.

Evidence also suggests that struggling middle school readers can improve their reading skills when key elements of a schoolwide approach to intervention are in place, particularly when there is adequate time for instruction and research-validated instructional practices are implemented.

Slide 7—Goals of the Schoolwide Approach

The schoolwide approach to reading intervention is designed to ensure that all students will be motivated to read and will be able to learn from the text they encounter in middle school, high school, and beyond. This would include content area text as well as literature.

To accomplish these goals, vocabulary and comprehension instructional routines are implemented across the curriculum. This increases the amount of practice students are provided to learn the routines. It also increases the likelihood that students will transfer the routines to the academic literacy demands of their content area classes.

Additional support for students exhibiting different kinds of reading challenges is provided in intervention settings that supplement the regular school curriculum.

Video: Literacy Leadership Team: Scheduling (1:22)

In the following video, a middle school literacy coach explains why the teachers on her campus were committed to participating in the Texas Adolescent Literacy Academies, or TALA. Pay attention to her description of how a schoolwide approach such as TALA supports both teacher collaboration and student achievement.

Video plays.

The middle school literacy coach in the video emphasized that even though their students were performing well on state assessments, the teachers chose to participate in TALA to provide consistent instruction across grade levels and subjects. By implementing a common set of vocabulary and comprehension instructional routines, the interdisciplinary teams of teachers have a common language for discussing student performance and collaboratively planning lessons appropriate for all ability levels. The campus is engaged in a schoolwide approach to improve students' ability to access and learn the content of all their classes.

Section 2

Slide 8—Schoolwide Approach to Middle School Reading Intervention

The schoolwide approach has three components, or tiers, of instruction.

Tier I includes strategies and routines that are implemented schoolwide and affect all students in the school. Part of Tier I is assuring that school personnel make a commitment to the approach and that there is a safe and positive school climate in which all students receive quality instruction based on high standards and supported by strong instructional leadership.

The second key component of Tier I consists of having science, social studies, math, and English language arts teachers implement a consistent set of comprehension and vocabulary instructional routines within the context of their content lessons.

Students who are reading below grade level, however, need additional reading instruction. In Tier II of the schoolwide model, students with reading difficulties that cannot be addressed sufficiently through instructional supports in the core educational program receive strategic intervention for about 50 minutes per day. This instruction is supplemental and is provided in reduced group sizes.

Middle school students who have severe reading difficulties need intervention of much greater intensity if they are to become competent readers. This intensive intervention is Tier III of the model. The more intensive the intervention, the smaller the group size.

Handout 1 summarizes the key characteristics of each component.

Slide 9—Foundation of Tier I: Safe and Positive School Climate

Schools whose students have achieved high academic outcomes in spite of serious challenges, such as extreme poverty or language differences, have some common characteristics.

First, successful schools maintain a safe and positive climate. Students, teachers, and others feel that the school is a supportive place that is conducive to learning. Students are held to high expectations for academic performance as well as behavior. Teachers exhibit a firm commitment to helping all students achieve grade-level standards, regardless of their backgrounds. The faculty and staff do not accept excuses, but work together to develop solutions to problems and overcome obstacles. There is a sense of urgency in their approach to reading intervention for students who are not making adequate progress, particularly those who are not yet reading proficiently.

Successful schools do not operate in a reactive mode. They take steps to prevent difficulties from occurring, particularly those that would compromise the learning environment. These campuses have often adopted a consistent and respectful approach to discipline, such as positive behavior supports.

The safe and positive school climate is so critical to the success of the schoolwide model that other components are not attempted until this foundation is securely in place.

Slide 10—Foundation of Tier I: Instructional Leadership

Successful schools also have strong instructional leadership from the administrators, teacher leaders, and professional development coordinators. Typically, the work of a schoolwide model begins by creating a literacy leadership team to oversee the work. This group fosters a culture of change and prioritizes academic achievement by allocating necessary resources, including materials, staff, and time. Moreover, the literacy leadership team establishes a system to support all teachers as they experience challenges in implementing the various components of the model.

This is accomplished, in part, through quality, sustained professional development efforts in which all teachers and administrators are expected to participate as learners. In particular, content area and reading intervention teachers need proper preparation to meet the diverse needs of students in their classes. The research-based instructional routines included in the TALA modules can provide the basis for collaborative planning sessions where teachers and leaders meet to assist each other in developing and implementing lessons incorporating academic literacy strategies. Frequently, job-embedded approaches to professional development expand upon the notion of peer support by offering in-class coaching.

Please turn to **Handout 2: Flexible Scheduling Research Summary** and **Handout 3: Sample Middle School Schedule**.

Schools with strong instructional leadership ensure these foundational components by building them into their master schedules. Suggestions from middle schools in Texas include the following: creating advisory periods around the lunch schedule to provide different tiers of

reading intervention, offering extended instructional blocks for supplemental intervention, having one conference period devoted to interdisciplinary teams and another conference period for departmental planning, and extending the instructional day by 10 minutes in order to “bank” time for an early-release staff development.

Video: Literacy Leadership Team: Scheduling (1:22)

In the following video, a middle school principal discusses how he designs his master schedule to address the needs of his teachers and students at Tier I. Pay attention to the elements he prioritizes when creating that schedule.

Video plays.

As the video emphasized, students are grouped heterogeneously at Tier I. The principal uses reading performance data to ensure that the content area classes maintain a balance of students at various ability levels. To further support his faculty, the principal also protects common planning time for interdisciplinary teams as well as departmentalized teams. Although providing teachers two planning periods may not be feasible for all campuses, the literacy leadership team creates and protects time for teachers to regularly plan instruction in collaborative groups.

Slide 11—Foundation of Tier I: Effective Instruction

Finally, schools whose students have achieved high academic outcomes have taken steps to strengthen their core instructional program and ensure that all students have access to the general curriculum.

Research has established the key features of effective instruction. Please take a moment to review these features listed on the slide.

The speaker pauses for 10 seconds.

Slide 12—Tier I

The second component of Tier I is that all students in the school receive high-quality instruction designed to support their abilities to learn from content area academic text.

Slide 13—Goals of Tier I: Content Area Instruction

The cross-curricular component of the schoolwide model has two primary goals.

First, it is necessary to teach students to understand content area vocabulary and to read and comprehend content area text. Many students, even those achieving at average levels, are

unable to understand and use the specialized vocabulary or comprehend the complex ideas found in academic text. Adolescents who struggle with reading have a further disadvantage in that they often develop counterproductive habits to approaching literacy tasks, such as skipping difficult words or sections of challenging texts. When all content area teachers teach students to use a small set of the same vocabulary and comprehension strategies, students are more likely to replace their inefficient habits with more productive routines.

The second goal of the cross-curricular component is to monitor student progress. Benchmark assessments administered at the beginning and middle of the school year can be used to identify students in need of supplemental instruction in a Tier II intervention class.

Please locate **Handout 4**. This resource provides an overview of the steps to follow to use data to guide instruction.

Video: Perspective on Implementing a Schoolwide Approach to Reading Intervention (5:40)

The following video provides a middle school administrator's perspective on implementing a 3-tier model of reading instruction and intervention. Pay attention to how she describes the role of an instructional leader in the process.

Video plays.

The administrator in the video played an active role in monitoring student data, providing ongoing professional development to staff, responding to content area teachers' concerns as they applied the literacy instructional routines, and maintaining flexibility in the schedule to accommodate student needs as they moved in and out of the intervention classes. She confronted the challenges to implementing a schoolwide approach and remarked on how the effort was starting to pay off for both teachers and students.

Slide 14—Tier II

The strong schoolwide foundation and content area support will not be sufficient for some students. Those who demonstrate a lack of progress or who do not meet state or local standards for reading performance need strategic intervention. Tier II is designed to provide relatively short-term intervention to students who do not respond adequately to Tier I effective instruction alone.

The number of students for whom strategic intervention is necessary will vary from campus to campus but is usually about 15% to 20% of the population. Too many students failing state assessments or failing to meet local benchmarks in reading usually indicates that the core instructional program needs to be strengthened.

Slide 15—Tier II: Strategic Intervention

Using the state reading test as a screener, it is possible to identify students in need of strategic intervention. Those who failed the test or who barely passed likely have reading difficulties that cannot be addressed adequately in Tier I. Additional diagnostic assessments are administered to determine the particular skill areas inhibiting their performance.

These students will require regular, explicit, systematic instruction in homogeneous groups of students within reading classes or supplemental tutoring sessions. Intervention is provided for at least 50 minutes each day. Schools with block scheduling may need to partner the reading class with a Tier I English language arts course.

At a minimum, diagnostic assessments are used to identify whether the strategic intervention is to focus on multisyllable word identification, fluency, or comprehension and vocabulary.

Research has shown that the Texas Middle School Fluency Assessment, or TMSFA, provided in the English Language Arts, or ELA, Academy is effective for planning interventions and monitoring student progress three times a year. It can be administered in about 10 minutes per student. All teachers who attend the ELA Academy will be qualified to use the TMSFA and interpret its results.

Seventh-grade students who failed the state reading test in the spring of their sixth-grade year must be administered a diagnostic reading assessment within the first 6 weeks of school. The TMSFA is one option for complying with this requirement.

Handout 5: Texas Middle School Fluency Assessment provides additional information about the TMSFA.

Slide 16—Tier II: Strategic Intervention (cont.)

Middle school students who struggle with reading benefit most from instruction using materials and approaches that have demonstrated evidence of effectiveness. The school literacy team may devise an appropriate multicomponent intervention or may opt to implement a commercial program. Either way, the team will need to ensure the materials and approaches meet the characteristics of best practice.

Handout 6: Guidelines for Reviewing a Reading Program is a tool the literacy leadership team can use to evaluate the instructional program of both Tiers II and III.

Monitoring student progress is an important component of both Tiers II and III. Reading intervention teachers administer curriculum-based measures every 2 weeks to monitor student growth in their areas of identified need. In addition, the TMSFA can be administered to students at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. Using the progress monitor-

ing data, reading intervention teachers make instructional decisions about the content, processes, groupings, materials, and scaffolding that match each student's current level of reading performance. Tracking student progress allows Tier II to be a flexible intervention. Students move into and out of Tier II as their needs warrant.

These decisions are monitored by the literacy leadership team, which is empowered to extend additional support to teachers in the form of professional development, resources, and expert coaching. In addition, the reading intervention teacher collaborates with students' content area and other course instructors, such as [an English as a second language teacher], speech-language pathologist, or the case manager. This ensures that the instruction in Tier II aligns with and is reinforced by that in Tier I and supplemental services.

Coordination with Tier I courses is particularly important as students transition into and out of intervention. The literacy leadership team oversees adjustments to schedules and ensures students do not experience any gaps in instruction.

Slide 17—Tier III

Tier III provides intensive intervention for students with severe reading difficulties who are significantly behind their peers. These students normally have complex problems, and they often need explicit and systematic instruction in reading words, as well as in vocabulary and comprehension.

It is not necessary for these students to pass through Tier II first. Rather, they require more intensive intervention in a Tier III setting. Only a relatively small percentage of students, about 5%, [typically are] identified for this level.

Slide 18—Components of Tier III: Intensive Intervention

Intervention can be made more intensive in several ways.

First, the literacy leadership team will need to plan a reasonable means of decreasing the group size. Tier III intervention is typically provided to very small groups with one highly qualified teacher.

In addition, students experiencing this level of difficulty will require increased instructional time through extended intervention class periods or through successive semesters of enrollment in Tier III.

Instruction in both Tiers II and III ensures very little time for students to sit passively, listening to the teacher or other students reading. Instead, instruction is explicit and follows a carefully designed scope and sequence. What makes Tier III different, however, is that instruction

is more individualized. The smaller group size creates opportunities for students to respond more frequently and for teachers to target more specific needs. For this reason, students with severe reading difficulties must be taught by highly trained teachers who are able to maximize these learning opportunities and overcome the challenges that struggling adolescents are prone to present.

If instruction is truly to be individualized, it [is] even more important to carefully monitor student progress. Intensive intervention teachers will likely make frequent refinements of the content, process, materials, and activities to meet student needs. As students meet performance goals, the literacy leadership team oversees the transition out of Tier III interventions.

If students do not demonstrate improvement, the literacy leadership team plays an important role in determining whether the intervention was implemented correctly and matched to student need. If these factors are ruled out as contributing to the lack of progress, then the team may investigate student issues such as learning disabilities.

Section 3

Slide 19—Schoolwide Approach to Middle School Reading Intervention

Each component in the schoolwide approach is an essential part of a concentrated initiative designed to ensure that all students are able to read and comprehend academic text by the end of eighth grade and that they are motivated to become actively engaged with text for many different purposes.

Implementing and sustaining a schoolwide approach requires a firm commitment from administrators, teachers, and other educational professionals at the school and district levels.

Slide 20—Implementing and Sustaining a Schoolwide Approach to Reading Intervention

Schoolwide approaches are complex and should be undertaken in manageable stages. The flowcharts on this and the next several slides are designed to guide a school through the process of implementing a schoolwide approach and prioritizing the components to undertake.

In addition, **Handout 7** provides an **Action Plan Template** with a series of objectives corresponding to the implementation phases described in the flowcharts. For example, objective 1 of the action plan template is: Create a safe and positive school climate. As shown on this flowchart, the literacy leadership team formed to implement and monitor the schoolwide approach will begin by assessing the school climate. If the climate is not safe and positive, the

literacy leadership team can use the first page of the action plan template to detail the steps, persons responsible, deadlines, and evidence that will be required to establish a school climate conducive for learning. During this time, teachers begin training in effective instructional practices consistent with a schoolwide approach.

This is an ongoing process. Depending on the initial state of your campus, faculty, and students, it may take 2 years or more to fully implement the model. Students who are experiencing reading difficulties cannot afford to lose instructional time while positive behavioral supports are put into place. Therefore, the literacy leadership team must simultaneously work on building the supports for reading instruction and intervention.

Slide 21—Implementing Tier I of the Schoolwide Approach

The literacy leadership team uses student performance data to determine the quality of the overall academic literacy instruction in the school. If large numbers of students are not meeting grade-level standards, then the needs are too broad based to be met by strategic intervention. The literacy leadership team can use the page for objective 2: Strengthen the core instructional program (Tier I) of the action plan template found in Handout 7 to delineate the steps, persons responsible, deadlines, and evidence that will be required to improve the overall academic literacy instruction in the school.

As a part of this work, all core content area teachers need to be trained and/or supported in implementing cross-curricular academic literacy routines, such as those included in TALA.

Handout 8: Teacher Self-assessment Rubric and Planning Tool for Content Area Literacy Support can be used to identify areas of strength in which teachers can provide assistance to their peers or areas in which teachers might benefit from additional professional development. Along with **Handout 9: Content Area Lesson Rubric**, the self-assessment can be useful in collaborative planning sessions to help teachers develop lessons incorporating academic literacy instruction and support.

The literacy leadership team can use **Handout 10: Walk-through Guide for Content Area Classes** and **Handout 11: Walk-through Guide for Reading Intervention Classes** to gather data on the implementation of Tier I. The team meets to analyze [these] data and determine what forms of support individual teachers might need. That support could include further training, in-class coaching, changes to a teacher's schedule, and the procurement of additional curricular materials.

This phase is ongoing and cyclical. Each year, the literacy leadership team reassesses the reading performance of students. State test data must be analyzed to determine whether students are making adequate progress and to identify those in need of supplemental instruction.

The student performance data and teacher monitoring data will help to gauge the school's progress in strengthening the core instructional program.

Slide 22—Implementing Multiple Tiers of the Schoolwide Approach

When the majority of the students are meeting grade-level standards for reading performance, the literacy leadership team is ready to create an intervention plan to address the needs of students for whom Tier I will not be sufficient.

At least once a year, the literacy leadership team reassesses the reading performance of all students and modifies the literacy intervention plan accordingly. State test data must be analyzed to determine whether students are making adequate progress and to identify those in need of supplemental instruction.

Video: Literacy Leadership Team: Classroom Observation (2:00)

In this video, a middle school principal conducts walk-throughs to collect data on teachers' implementation of the literacy instructional routines. Pay attention to the ways in which he describes using the walk-throughs to support the schoolwide approach to reading instruction and intervention.

Video plays.

As the video emphasized, instructional leaders need to monitor and support teachers as they implement new instructional routines. Conducting walk-throughs stresses the importance of an initiative and assists campus personnel in refining their practices and achieving results.

Slide 23—Implementing Multiple Tiers of the Schoolwide Approach (cont.)

The group of students in need of reading intervention will comprise those who need small-group, strategic intervention and those who need smaller-group, intensive intervention.

For both Tiers II and III, the literacy leadership team will need to determine how best to schedule students with similar reading skill needs. It may be necessary to analyze the results of one or more diagnostic assessments. Then, the team determines the number of teachers, the professional development, and the materials or other curricular components required to implement the courses.

Handout 12 provides critical elements for the literacy leadership team to consider in planning for the intervention tiers. The team can then describe the steps, persons responsible, deadlines, and evidence of implementation for meeting objectives 3 and 4 of the action plan found on Handout 7.

If no teachers are suitably equipped to offer intensive, explicit, and systematic instruction to students with severe reading difficulties, it may be necessary to purchase a commercial reading program. Because this instruction is so critical to the success of middle school students, programs and materials should be carefully evaluated by the literacy leadership team. Handout 6 can assist you in selecting an appropriate program.

Remember that the intervention components should be based on quality research published in peer-reviewed journals and should provide rules for matching students to the components.

Slide 24—Implementing Multiple Tiers of the Schoolwide Approach (cont.)

Diagnostic assessments should, at a minimum, indicate whether students need supplemental instruction in word identification, fluency, vocabulary, and/or comprehension. The measure should meet the criteria described on **Handout 13** to ensure it provides valid and reliable information on middle school students' abilities in critical reading domains. Once individual students' needs are identified, the literacy leadership team works to ensure that students are grouped as homogeneously as possible by reading skill need. To the extent possible, this takes priority over grouping students by grade level or team because it will help maximize instructional time and allow the intervention teacher(s) to better plan their instruction.

Progress monitoring of students in the intervention classes occurs somewhat informally every 2 weeks. Teachers administer curriculum-based measures that assess whether students have acquired the skills taught. Teachers analyze the data and then either raise expectations or further adapt their instruction.

At least three times per year, students should be administered more formal progress monitoring instruments. The literacy leadership team meets to analyze these data and determine whether any students are ready to be moved from Tier II intervention classes. Students who achieve grade-level standards need schedule changes that the team must facilitate.

As they did with Tier I, the literacy leadership team also monitors the teachers' implementation of the intervention components and provides support as needed. Students in intervention classes often have experienced many failures by middle school and, therefore, have a tendency to exhibit challenging behaviors. The literacy leadership team plays a critical role in ensuring intervention teachers have thorough support in the form of training, in-class assistance, and materials.

Slide 25—Sample Walk-through Form and Scoring Guide

We will now review an example of how teacher monitoring is used to gauge implementation and plan supports. Please locate **Handout 14: Sample Walk-through Guide for Reading Intervention**.

The speaker pauses for 2 seconds.

In a recent visit to Mr. Taylor's reading intervention class, school Principal Mrs. Jackson observed Mr. Taylor implementing syllable types and fluency instruction. Using the descriptive statements on the walk-through form, the principal rated Mr. Taylor's implementation in three categories: word identification, fluency, and effective instruction. In the word identification instruction category, Mrs. Jackson observed implementation of the elements for grouping and syllable types instruction. She circled a 1 to correspond to the descriptive statements most representative of Mr. Taylor's instruction in each of those three elements. She did not observe instruction in prefixes, roots, and suffixes. Therefore, Mrs. Jackson circled the *N* for that element. She did observe students working in groups to apply their knowledge of the word parts while reading text, so she circled a 2 for the last element in this category.

In the fluency instruction category, she circled a 2 to correspond to the descriptive statements most representative of Mr. Taylor's instruction in each of those two elements.

Mrs. Jackson did not observe Mr. Taylor providing instruction in vocabulary or comprehension, so she circled the *N*s on the elements in those categories.

Mr. Taylor's ratings from the walk-through form are tabulated on the scoring guide, seen here.

Mrs. Jackson observed four elements in the word ID instruction category. She rated implementation of the first three elements at a level 1 and implementation of the final element at a level 2. This made for a sum of 5. In the fluency instruction category, Mr. Taylor's implementation of both elements was rated at a level 2, for a sum of 4. In the effective instruction category, Mr. Taylor's implementation was rated as a level 1 in five of the elements and a level 2 in one of the elements. Therefore, the sum of the scores on all six elements was a 7. Since Mrs. Jackson did not observe instruction in the vocabulary or comprehension categories, the sums and elements are both 0.

When the scores are added together and divided by the total possible points for the elements observed, Mr. Taylor's implementation reveals 67%, or partial fidelity to the TALA instructional routines. Mrs. Jackson will now need to determine the type of support that can be provided to Mr. Taylor to improve his implementation fidelity.

Mr. Taylor's instruction in fluency was rated at the highest level, so he currently does not need additional training or assistance in this category. His instruction in syllable types and effective instruction were rated at lower levels of implementation. In reviewing the form and discussing her observations with the literacy leadership team, Mrs. Jackson determined that syllable types instruction was the primary area of difficulty for Mr. Taylor. His implementation of effective instruction was limited because he was unfamiliar with syllable types. This is

the first year that Mr. Taylor had provided his students explicit instruction in word identification, and the literacy leadership team believed he was still honing his skills in this area. They decided to provide Mr. Taylor release time to review the curricular materials with the district literacy specialist and develop lesson plans. They also asked the district literacy specialist to come to Mr. Taylor's class once a week for the next month to demonstrate lessons. At the end of the month, the principal will observe Mr. Taylor again to determine whether additional support is necessary.

Slide 26—Summary

This module was developed to acquaint school leaders with the components of a schoolwide approach to literacy instruction and intervention, as is consistent with RTI. Specific instructional routines appropriate for use in the three tiers are explained in detail in Units 1–3 and 5–7 of TALA. In addition, the TMSFA administration and score interpretation procedures are explained in Unit 4 of TALA.