



RTII for English Language Learners

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“We lament that we have to spend so much of our careers documenting competence, when it should simply be assumed, suggesting that ‘language minority’ students have the intellectual capabilities of any other children, when it should simply be acknowledged, and proposing instructional arrangements that capitalize fully on the many strengths they bring into classrooms, when it should simply be their right” (Moll & Gonzalez, 1997).



Challenge 1: *According to progress-monitoring data, more than half of the English language learners are not reaching benchmarks.*



Recommendations

- When many students are not progressing, **change instruction:**
 - Has the instructional program been validated with students like those in the class?
 - Is instruction at an appropriate level for students' language and learning needs?
 - Is the program well-implemented?
 - Are teachers sufficiently differentiating instruction to meet diverse student needs?
 - Is the environment conducive to learning?
- This will require:
 - **observing in classrooms** and supporting instruction
 - *developing and capitalizing on local expertise.*
- Use progress monitoring to ensure that instruction is adjusted to meet the needs of individual students *and* classrooms of learners.

Challenge #2: *In many cases, our screening and progress monitoring assessment batteries do not provide a comprehensive view of literacy skills or identify our ELLs who are at-risk for later reading difficulties.*



A Common Scenario: Early Literacy Measures

Lesaux



**Letter Names &
Letter Sounds**

**Phonological
Awareness**

Word Reading

Accuracy

Efficiency



• **Oral Language**

• **Background
Knowledge**

• **Interest**

• **Motivation**

• **Understanding of
Purpose**

Vocabulary

Metalinguistic Skills

**Word
Learning
Strategies**

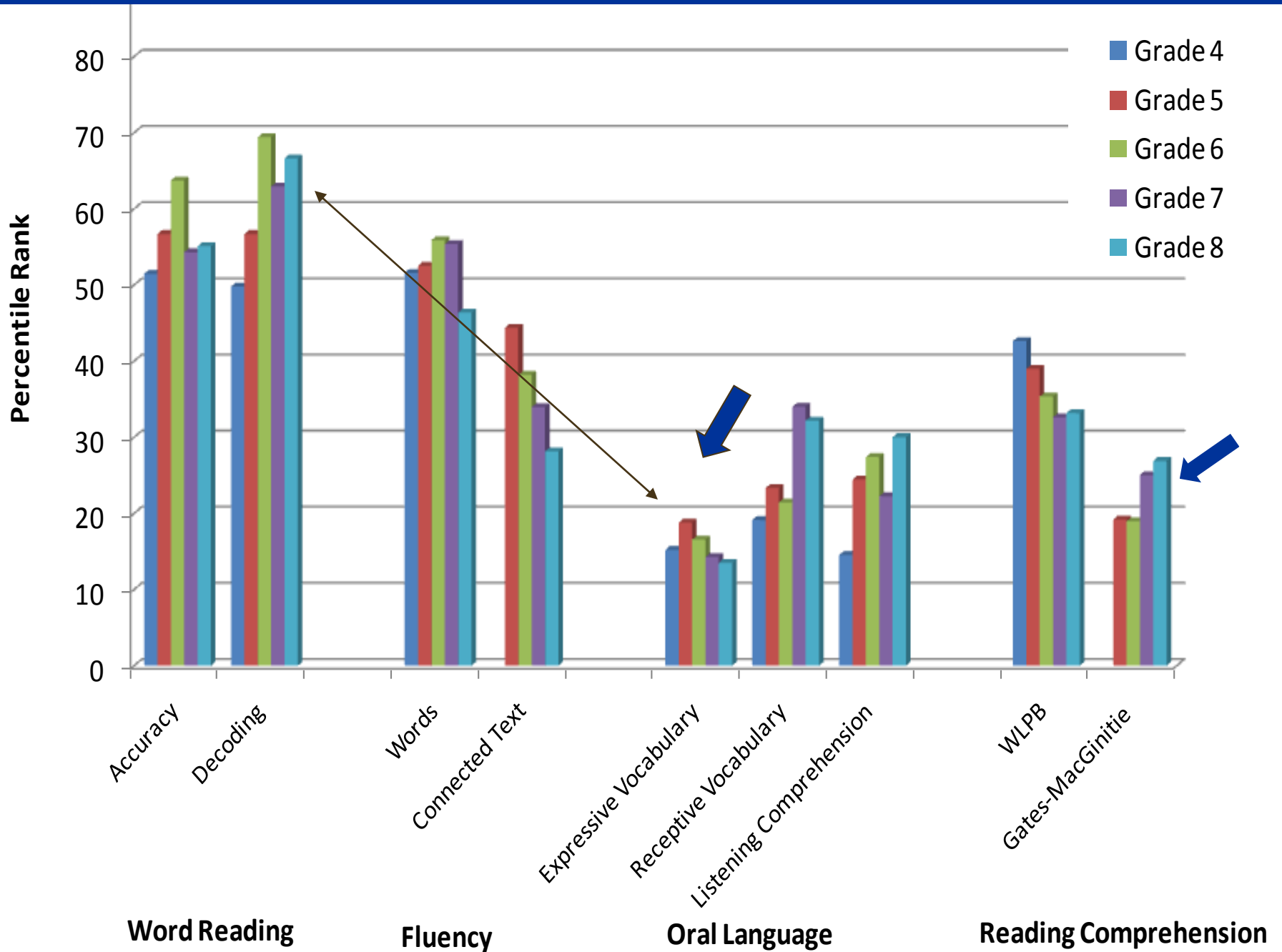
**Knowledge
of word
function or
type**

• **Text Characteristics**

**Organizational
structure**

**Sentence
structure**

The Gap between Reading Words & Comprehending Text (Lesaux)



Recommendations

- Use *multiple* assessment methods to provide a comprehensive view of learning.
 - No single best test or assessment strategy.
 - Different assessments tap into different skills and knowledge.
- Use RTI assessment strategies that reflect the multi-dimensional nature of language and literacy.



Challenge 3: *School personnel are confused by what it means for practices to be “evidence-based” for ELLs.*



What Do We Mean by “Evidence-based”?

- The RTI model is based on the principle that instructional practices or interventions at each level should be based on scientific research evidence about “what works.”
- However, it is essential to find out ***what works with whom, by whom, for what purposes, and in what contexts***—



One size does not fit all.

- When deciding if a practice is appropriate for implementation as part of an RTI model, it should have been validated with students like those with whom it will be applied.
- The National Reading Panel report “**did not address issues relevant to second language learning**” (2000, p. 3).



- Challenge 4: *Many school personnel are unsure how to distinguish between language acquisition and learning disabilities.*



Sequential Bilinguals and Simultaneous Bilinguals

ELLs with LD exhibit difficulties in their first language as well as in English.

- When students are sequential bilinguals, it is not hard to determine whether difficulties are evident in both languages.
- When students are simultaneous bilinguals, it is much more challenging to determine if difficulties are the result of language acquisition or LD.
- We need a new way to think about the process of simultaneous language acquisition (Escamilla).

(Some) Similarities b/w LD and Language Acquisition

<i>Behaviors Associated w/ LD</i>	<i>Behaviors when Acquiring an L2</i>
Difficulty with phonological awareness	Difficulty distinguishing b/w sounds not in L1
Slow to learn sound-symbol correspondence	Confusion w/ sound-symbol correspondence when different than in L1
Difficulty remembering sight words	Difficulty remembering sight words when word meanings not understood
Difficulty retelling a story in sequence	May understand more than can convey in L2
Confused by figurative language	Confused by figurative language, anaphora, words with multiple meanings

- Challenge 5: *School personnel are unclear about differences between learning to read in English as one's first language and learning to read in English as a second or additional language.*





- There are important differences between learning to read in one's L1 and L2 (August & Shanahan, 2006).
- Learning trajectories for emerging *simultaneous* bilinguals are not well understood.
- Benchmarks and expected rates of progress may not be the same (Linan-Thompson, Cirino, & Vaughn, 2007).
- Some recommendations (e.g., the IES guide) put too much emphasis on phonological awareness and letter naming at the expense of other skills, such as oral language, vocabulary, and comprehension.

2nd Tier

- Tier 2 is a level of targeted support that *supplements* the core curriculum and is based on student needs as identified through progress monitoring and other means.
- Interventions are instructionally, culturally, and linguistically responsive and appropriate.



3rd Tier

- Students are provided with more intensive support.
- Instruction at this level is:
 - tailored to the individual needs of the student,
 - even more intensive,
 - of longer duration.
- Students with disabilities must also be provided with access to the general education curriculum and be instructed in the least restrictive environment.



In conclusion...

- RTI must be a comprehensive, school-wide approach, requiring:
 - coordinating curriculum and assessment considerations,
 - addressing teachers' professional development needs,
 - attending to school climate issues,
 - and enhancing leaders' capacities to orchestrate and respond to multiple (often contradictory) reforms (Adelman & Taylor).
- Sustained implementation of RTI will require strong leadership, collaboration among special educators, general educators, and families, and a well-established infrastructure (Burdette, 2007).



For more information...

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