Book Study

Prepared by the
Kansas Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS) Project

Effective Instruction for Middle School Students with Reading Difficulties: The Reading Teacher's Sourcebook

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(Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts, University of Texas, Austin, TX.: 2007)

Electronic Book downloadable free of charge from:
http://www.meadowscenter.org/vgc/downloads/middle_school_instruction/_RTS_Complete.pdf

Book Description:
"Many students in grades 6, 7 & 8 have reading difficulties. The purpose of *The Reading Teacher's Sourcebook"* is to provide middle school reading teachers with an overview of research-based instructional approaches for teaching struggling readers….the goal of this school-wide effort is to ensure that all students can read and learn from academic text…." (1)

Target Audience:
This is a great book study for a middle school staff, especially if they are looking to select some Tier 1 reading interventions that will be used by all teachers across the curriculum.

Chapter 2: Overview of Assessment at the Secondary Level

Overview

This chapter outlines the first steps in determining which students need further reading instruction, how much, and what type. It includes very specific tips and diagrams.

Helpful Hints

If your team has not read the foreword and introduction, it would be well worth your time to stop here and read these sections as a team. These pages really set the stage for the rest of the book and purpose of our work with struggling middle school readers.

Discussion Questions

1. What measures do we currently use to identify struggling readers? Do we have measures in place already that we are not using for this purpose, but could? What, if anything, is currently done with the information we get from these measures?

2. How familiar is our staff with the Big 5 areas of reading?

3. Comment on the repercussions in your academic area of only reading 100,000 words when peers are reading 10,000,000.

4. Do we have diagnostic tools in place to specifically assess why a student is struggling with comprehension?

Chapter 3: Selecting and Administering Assessments

Overview
This chapter will provide you with more specific details about administering assessments and what to specifically look for beyond "reads below grade level." This chapter is an overview of how to assess comprehension, fluency, word recognition, and how to monitor progress.

Helpful Hints
Because of the detailed nature of this chapter, you may want to jigsaw the various areas of assessment and re-teach those sections to one another. It could easily be divided in the following ways: p. 19-21 (stop at assessing reading fluency), p. 21-24 (stop at assessing word recognition), p. 24-25 (stop at monitoring progress) and p. 25-26.

Discussion Questions

1. Why would it be important to know a struggling student's level of comprehension, silent & oral fluency, and word recognition, no matter what subject matter you teach?

2. Discuss the "1 to 10" rule. How would this apply to your content area textbooks?

3. Do we know a Michael? What are we currently doing to meet his needs? How would a different format, targeted at his reading issues, benefit him?

Chapter 4: Using Assessment Results to Plan Instruction

Overview

Chapter 3 gives us a peek into an actual classroom where we see Miss Lopez developing lesson plans and delivering direct instruction targeted at the student's individual reading deficits based on diagnostic assessment results.

Helpful Hint

This chapter is an easy one to dismiss, saying, "We don't have time for a program like the one described here." This is a good section to read with the following thought: if time and money were no object, what pieces of this would I like to see for our struggling students?

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss Figure 4.2 on p. 31. Notice how the focus of instruction varies from one group to the next.

2. Talk about the balance between providing text with challenging vocabulary and text so challenging that it promotes the use of ineffective strategies and decreases motivation to read. Consider Table 4.2 on page 32 as part of this discussion.

3. Refer to Miss Lopez's schedule on pg. 33. What barriers to you see to this working in your setting?

4. What does teaching every minute of class look like?

Chapter 5: Components of Effective Instruction

Overview

Chapter 4 gives us a nice picture of what scientific research is now saying constitutes an effective lesson. Each piece of this type of instruction is covered in an overview format.

Helpful Hints

It's good to remember that good instruction for struggling students is good instruction for ALL students. It's easy to dismiss this chapter with a "doesn't every teacher know this" attitude. Unfortunately, what I know and what I practice on a daily basis is not always the same thing. Take time to discuss the importance of these components.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important to begin the day's lesson with the objective and some sort of review?

2. Discuss the value of modeling, guided practice and independent practice (I do, We do, You do). Can you share examples of when you have done this and the payoff with students?

3. How are we currently offering distributed practice over time for new reading skills taught?

Chapter 6: Delivering Effective Instruction

Overview

After laying out what makes an effective lesson, the authors now put "hands and feet" on those concepts but explaining how this looks on a daily basis in a typical classroom. Often, as teachers, we really want to see something in action. Here is your opportunity!

Helpful Hints

It might be beneficial to use a piece of chart paper to look at this 4 part instructional framework on p. 65. A good activity would be to take the core beliefs of MTSS and see where each of these fit within this framework.

Discussion Questions

1. "To provide a clear objective to the student, the objective must first be clear to the teacher." Why is this sometimes difficult in the "real world"?

2. Thinking about targeted instruction as described on p. 49, how do we currently use our assessment data? What do we have for monitoring student progress?

3. How do we measure time on task, both formally and informally, in our classrooms? What have you found to be effective?

4. Discuss the difference between praise and positive & corrective feedback. As a staff, how are we at providing each of these and which holds the most "bang for the buck" with our students?

Chapter 7: Comprehension

Overview

Chapter 6 takes you through SRB comprehension strategies and includes sample lesson plans of these for your team to look at and use as a model.

Helpful Hints

The remaining chapters of this book are designed to specifically drive instruction based on your struggling reader's most pressing needs. In order to fully get the most from these sections, it is suggested that the team split up the strategies contained within each chapter and jigsaw them in discussion. For this reason, guiding questions to prep each strategy will be included with each chapter. Throughout the discussion, it would be efficient to begin thinking of which strategies would be most appropriate for your school to select that will be implemented consistently across the all content area classes.

Discussion Questions

As a staff, how specifically have we been addressing students who struggle with comprehension? Would our efforts fall more under the category of accommodations and modifications, or direct instruction based on the child's deficit? Explain your opinion on this.

Questions for Previewing Text & Question Generation
1. Why do you think question generation is so effective for so many (LD, ELL, struggling readers)?
2. How often do we pre-teach the big-idea nouns?
3. Discuss the progression from "right there" level 1 questions to more advanced question-making. Be sure and include scaffolding suggestions and share the resources available in the appendix.

Questions for Mental Imagery Log
1. Why is it crucial for students to see their teacher model this process?
2. Would you consider letting a student use their mental imagery log as a sort of "open book quiz"? When might this be a valuable option to try?
3. Why might some students opt to draw a picture rather than write a summary sentence in a box? When would this be considered acceptable/unacceptable?

Questions for Main Idea Strategy
1. A sample of the REWARDS Plus program can be downloaded from Sopris West if you think it would be beneficial for the team to look at this.
2. Walk the rest of the team through the Get the Gist strategy.

3. Discuss how this main idea form might be a nice tool for note-taking in a content area course with the textbook. How much preteaching would it take for students to use it successfully on their own?

Questions for Identifying Text Structures and Using Graphic Organizers
1. How might signal words be used to help students connect to the text structure? Share the list on p. 101-102 with the team.
2. Graphic organizers were on almost every School Improvement Plan in the state a few years back and have become almost a buzzword in education. Be prepared to discuss with your team how the use of graphic organizers as outlined in this section is different than just using them for the sake of fulfilling the School Improvement Plan. Are there other formats you have used successfully with students?

Questions for Wrap-up/Main Idea Log
1. Why does this model limit your important ideas?
2. Why 10 words or less?
3. Be prepared to walk your team through this model.

FINAL ACTIVITY ON THIS CHAPTER:
The introduction to this book talked about the effectiveness of choosing a few models that would be used in all content areas for reading so our struggling readers are asked to practice that skill over and over during the day in an attempt to replace bad habits. That being said, which of these comprehension strategies, or others we may know of and have used, would we consider:

- Tier 1 strategies (ones we will teach to ALL students and hold all accountable for using them when they read in ANY class)
- Tier 2 strategies (strategies we will choose to teach SOME students who need just a few skills and strategies)
- Tier 3 strategies (strategies reserved a FEW who need more comprehensive reading support—more than a year behind in reading)

Chapter 8: Vocabulary

Overview
Like Chapter 7, you will have a chance to explore specific strategies as they relate to vocabulary and its effect on struggling readers, including semantic mapping and feature analysis, prepared participation, teaching word parts, the vocabulary strategy, and more.

Helpful Hints
Again, the remaining chapters of this book are designed to specifically drive instruction based on your struggling reader's most pressing needs. In order to fully get the most from these sections, it is suggested that the team split up the strategies contained within each chapter and jigsaw them in discussion. For this reason, guiding questions to prep each strategy will be included with each chapter.

Discussion Questions

1. How much do you believe a lack of vocabulary accounts for a child's inability to read at grade level?
2. Talk about the difference between common words, academic words and content-specific words. Keep in mind there is a difference between exposing students to content-specific vocabulary and holding them accountable for these words through a vocabulary quiz. Which words have I currently been holding kids accountable for learning? Do I need to re-think this?
3. It might be helpful for the team to each bring one of their current textbooks, choose an upcoming chapter and discuss which words would be the words to teach as a team. There is a great rule of thumb for selection at the bottom of p. 141. Sharing the words we have chosen with teachers of other content areas might be a great way to test our lists.

Questions for Semantic Mapping
1. We know for vocabulary to "stick" within the brain it must somehow hinge to prior knowledge. How do semantic maps aid in that process?
2. Why is the writing activity included in the section on monitoring student learning?

Questions on Semantic Feature Analysis
1. What is the purpose behind non-examples as well as examples when exploring a new vocabulary word?
2. Be ready to walk your team through the Frayer model, using a vocabulary word from your content area.
3. Can you also walk them through a semantic feature analysis? (Remember that teaching others is the highest level of learning!)

Questions for Prepared Participation
1. Note that the teacher tells the students that they are going to have the opportunity to practice and learn new words at the onset of this lesson. Why would this be an important opening objective to share?
2. Be prepared to model a lesson of prepared participation from your content area.

Questions for Possible Sentences
1. Using the notes in the introduction, explain the benefits of using Possible Sentences as a strategy.
2. Model a sample word pairs chart from your content area to show team members what this looks like in action.
3. What are other ways to promote Word Consciousness with your students?

Questions for Teaching Word Parts
1. Share with your team the importance of re-visiting word parts with students. It may be that while they have completed worksheets in grade school, the dots have never been connected to how this can be used to decode unfamiliar words.
2. Walk your team through the word part clue evaluation chart. Is this something that could be used in your content area? How?
3. Discuss which Latin and Greek roots are most common in each of your content areas.

Questions for Using Context Clues
1. Discuss the fact that recent research considers using the context one of the least effective strategies. How is the set up for this strategy different that what you have seen in the past using the context?
2. Be prepared to explain the Context Clues chart.
3. What is the benefit in having a student write their own definition rather than the dictionary or glossary definition?

Questions for The Vocabulary Strategy
1. Note that this strategy is a combination of the Word Part strategy and context clues.
2. Be prepared to walk your team through the Vocab Strategy using the cue card from the appendix.

FINAL ACTIVITY ON THIS CHAPTER:
    The introduction to this book talked about the effectiveness of choosing a few models that would be used in all content areas for reading so our struggling readers are asked to practice that skill over and over during the day in an attempt to replace bad habits. That being said, which of these vocabulary strategies, or others we may know of and have used, would we consider:
*   Tier 1 strategies (ones we will teach to ALL students and hold all accountable for using them when they read in ANY class)

- Tier 2 strategies (strategies we will choose to teach SOME students who need just a few skills and strategies)
- Tier 3 strategies (strategies reserved a FEW who need more comprehensive reading support—more than a year behind in reading)

Chapter 9: Fluency

Overview
Chapter 9 follows Chapter 7 & 8 format, but now takes on the issue of fluency. While fluency strategies are included, the author does a great job of making sure the readers understand that fluency is much more than speed.

Helpful Hints
See Ch. 8 hints for suggested format.

General Discussion Questions

1. It is important to understand as a team that speed should never be the goal of fluency, but rather reading at a speed that makes comprehension easy. Discuss the characteristics of a fluent middle school reader at the bottom of p. 191. What would we consider the characteristics of a non-fluent reader?

2. Talk about the type of instruction listed on p. 192 & 194 that improve fluency. How often can/do we provide that type of practice (selecting appropriate text, modeling and repeated readings, and reading with corrective feedback)?

Questions for Partner Reading
1. Talk your team through the method for dividing students for partner reader. Note to consider from Louisa Moats: because your top 2 or 3 readers could be 2-3 grade levels above the rest of your students and your lower readers could be 2-3 grades below, it might be worthwhile to break these "outliers" off into their own groups and then use this method for grouping the remaining students.
2. Why would the slightly stronger reader be the first reader?
3. Why is the discussion of the passage included after the first reader finishes?
4. Be ready to walk the team through the procedure on page 196.

Questions for Reader's Theatre
1. Reader's Theatre has mixed reviews among reading experts. LETRS Module on fluency says there is no research that supports its effectiveness in building fluency, although it is a fun activity that might be used to motivate readers. Be prepared to discuss the pros and cons of using this with students.

Questions for Tape-Assisted Reading
1. Discuss the feasibility of this strategy: location, materials, barriers, motivation of student to do this, etc.
2. Be prepared to discuss how students demonstrate improved fluency with this method.

FINAL ACTIVITY ON THIS CHAPTER:

The introduction to this book talked about the effectiveness of choosing a few models that would be used in all content areas for reading so our struggling readers are asked to practice that skill over and over during the day in an attempt to replace bad habits. That being said, which of these fluency strategies, or others we may know of and have used, would we consider:

- Tier 1 strategies (ones we will teach to ALL students and hold all accountable for using them when they read in ANY class)
- Tier 2 strategies (strategies we will choose to teach SOME students who need just a few skills and strategies)
- Tier 3 strategies (strategies reserved a FEW who need more comprehensive reading support—more than a year behind in reading)

Chapter 10: Word Recognition

Overview

At the heart of our most struggling readers is usually an issue with basic decoding skills. While Chapter 10 introduces you to some strategies for decoding, it will be important to the team to consider staff development for teachers who may be teaching these skills, since this is not a familiar area for most middle & secondary teachers.

Helpful Hints

This chapter will take a hard look at decoding. It will be crucial for your staff to have an understanding of some of the inner-workings of the decoding process (syllable types, irregular words, etc.)

Discussion Questions

1. Most of us are immersed in our content areas, but are unfamiliar with basic decoding skills. What would it take (professional development, study groups, etc.) to get us "up to speed" in this area of reading?
2. Understanding that basic decoding may be the underlying issue for our most struggling readers, how might we begin to address teaching syllable patterns?
3. Consider using Figure 10.4 on p. 223-229 to analyze your current reading program. Where do we see areas that need attention that aren't being addressed in our current comprehensive reading programming?

Specific Questions for teaching "The Silent e Syllable Type"

1. Note that this is just a sample lesson for directly instructing one syllable type. Closed is always the first type we teach since over 50% of running text is this type of syllable.
2. Walk the team through a syllable lesson. Why is the activity of sorting syllable types included in this model?

Specific Questions for The Multisyllable Word Reading Strategy

1. This sample also comes from REWARDS by Sopris West. Again, looking at a sample off of their website might also be helpful.
2. Why do most of our struggling readers break down when they see a multisyllable word? (Hint: a typical poor reader sees the first 2-3 letters of an unfamiliar word, makes a guess and moves on)
3. Be prepared to walk your team through the multisyllable strategy on page 211.
4. Why would we avoid irregular words when teaching this strategy?

FINAL ACTIVITY ON THIS CHAPTER:

The introduction to this book talked about the effectiveness of choosing a few models that would be used in all content areas for reading so our struggling readers are asked to practice that skill over and over during the day in an attempt to replace bad habits. That being said, which of these word recognition strategies, or others we may know of and have used, would we consider:

- Tier 1 strategies (ones we will teach to ALL students and hold all accountable for using them when they read in ANY class)
- Tier 2 strategies (strategies we will choose to teach SOME students who need just a few skills and strategies)
- Tier 3 strategies (strategies reserved a FEW who need more comprehensive reading support—more than a year behind in reading)