Since we wrote the first edition of this book, implementation of RTI has grown across the United States and is used widely as a way to identify students who struggle academically and to offer the support they need to be successful. RTI may be particularly useful in the current era of high standards, including the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), since it is anticipated that more students will struggle to read rigorous texts and perform challenging math processes required by the standards. RTI offers a way for teachers and specialists to collaborate, support student learning, and assist those who are at-risk for academic failure. As a result, children and adolescents who formerly may have been assigned to special education classes through a refer-test-identify-place approach are finding that their academic problems and deficiencies are ameliorated with appropriate and effective intervention. Within effective RTI programs, those youngsters who need and deserve special education services are now being served by expert teachers in settings that are better designed to meet their needs. With many English learners, however, this scenario is not the case. These students whose home culture differs from the ways of school and whose home language differs from the language of instruction continue to be over- and underrepresented in special education. Some are referred for special education services, regardless of whether they have disabilities, in large part because many classroom teachers are ill prepared to meet their language and academic needs. In other cases, English learners are denied special education services because it is assumed their learning problems are due to their lack of language proficiency. These students languish without appropriate assistance either because of low expectations or because it is thought that they just need more time to learn English.

New To This Edition

This second edition of our book has been updated and revised to assist teachers and administrators to better meet the needs of the increasing group of English learners in United States schools. As implementation of RTI across the U.S. continues to grow and evolve, it is important to include updated research as well as classroom connections so that readers have the most recent information on research and practice. The first edition was intended to provide tools for effective RTI implementation such as forms and questions to guide development of programs. After several years of “field testing” the book, we offer an even more useful means for providing effective RTI in schools.

Some specific changes include:

● The first two chapters, “Using RTI With English Learners” (Chapter 1) and “The Big Picture: Cultural and Linguistic Realities” (Chapter 2) have been updated and recent research has been included.

● A new chapter on assessment, “Assessment and Data-Based Decision Making for English Learners” (Chapter 3) is included. In our work with schools across the country, questions about the assessment of English learners dominate discussions. In this chapter we address universal screening, progress monitoring, diagnostic measures, and data-based decision making. A sample class is presented and the reader is “walked through” the assessment process, including the use of Curriculum-Based Measures (CBM).
Preface

Chapter 4, “Tier 1: What Is Best Practice for Teaching English Learners?” has been updated and includes a new SIOP lesson plan so that readers can see the features of high-quality instruction. New research has been added to the chapter as well.

The chapter “Tier 2 and Tier 3 Interventions for English Learners” (Chapter 5) reflects the evolution of RTI implementation in schools. We suggest that the principles of intervention are similar across tiers or levels and the focus is on key elements of effective intervention, regardless of how many levels an RTI program includes.

A new chapter, “How to Distinguish Disability from Linguistic Differences” (Chapter 6), is included. Drawing on information in the first edition, this chapter expands the previous discussion about issues surrounding English learners and decisions about learning disabilities, and provides guidance about what might be expected for students learning in a second language. Included are new recommendations for assessing English learners for learning disabilities and the role of the site-based decision-making team.

The revision of the chapter “Special Considerations for Secondary English Learners” (Chapter 7) reflects changes in practice and research as related to RTI in the secondary grades. RTI initially was used mostly in elementary schools, but increasingly, secondary teachers are adopting RTI assessments and instructional practices as described in this chapter.

Each chapter includes the feature From the Field, in which a teacher, administrator, school psychologist, or other specialist shares his or her insight about a topic. Half of the interviews are new to this edition.

This edition includes a subscription to the PDToolkit for SIOP, an online site for readers that provides access to a variety of resources. Included in the PDToolkit for SIOP are video clips that illustrate ideas in the book, such as demonstration lessons or RTI team meetings, downloadable forms found in the book, and a sample IEP that addresses the needs of an English learner with learning disabilities.

We hope that this book will help educators design effective RTI programs that provide the appropriate type of instruction that English learners need and deserve in elementary and secondary schools. It is organized into seven chapters that include the following:

- **Chapter 1, “Using RTI with English Learners.”** In this chapter, we introduce Response to Intervention and discuss its purposes, goals, and components, especially as they relate to English learners.

- **Chapter 2, “The Big Picture: Cultural and Linguistic Realities.”** This chapter focuses on linguistic and academic issues for English learners, including educational, socioeconomic, and cultural factors that impact student success.

- **Chapter 3, “Assessment and Data-Based Decision Making for English Learners.”** In this chapter, we discuss the three types of assessments that are used most often in RTI models, and how to use the data from these assessments to make decisions regarding instruction and intervention for English learners.

- **Chapter 4, “Tier 1: What Is Best Practice for Teaching English Learners?”** In this chapter, we discuss research-validated instructional practices for Tier 1 for English learners, including effective literacy instruction and the SIOP® Model.
● Chapter 5, “Tier 2 and Tier 3 Interventions for English Learners.” Within the RTI framework, we discuss appropriate and effective interventions for English learners, including the five key elements for establishing Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions across grade level and content area assessments.

● Chapter 6, “How to Distinguish Disability from Linguistic Differences.” A vexing issue for educators is identifying learning disabilities in English learners. In this chapter we discuss research on second language learners and offer suggestions about identifying learning disabilities in English learners.

● Chapter 7, “Special Considerations for Secondary English Learners.” In this chapter, we provide suggestions for how to develop effective RTI programs for English learners in middle, junior, and high schools, focusing on how these programs differ from those at the elementary level.

● Appendices and Glossary. Pertinent text from IDEA 2004 is found in Appendix A. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are asked and answered in Appendix B. The SIOP Protocol is included in Appendix C. Some student scenarios for reflection and discussion are found in Appendix D. The Glossary includes terminology for both RTI and second language acquisition.

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Look for availability of eBook platforms and accessibility for a variety of devices on www.mypearsonstore.com by inserting the ISBN of this text and searching for access codes that will allow you to choose your most convenient online usage.

Accompanying Response to Intervention (RTI) and English Learners: Using the SIOP® Model, Second Edition, is an online resource site with media tools that, together with the text, provides you with the tools you need to implement the SIOP® Model within an RTI framework.

The PDToolkit for SIOP is available free for twelve months after you use the password that comes with this book. After that, you can subscribe for an additional twelve months. Be sure to explore and download the resources available at the website.

Currently the following resources are available:

● Information About the Authors

● SIOP Research

● SIOP Resources, including RTI documents

● SIOP Lesson Plans and Activities, including Tier 2 and Tier 3 lesson plans

● SIOP Videos (Note: In this section there are a number of videos that specifically address aspects of RTI. In addition, there are videos that show SIOP lessons. These video segments were filmed in classrooms with real teachers and students. They have been edited for brevity so you will not see all SIOP features in every video. The teachers who agreed to share their SIOP lessons represent a range of teacher implementation from experienced, high implementers to teachers just learning the model. We hope you will find all the videos informative and helpful as you implement RTI in your school or district.)

To learn more, please visit:
http://pdtoolkit.pearson.com
Acknowledgments

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We offer great appreciation to our contributors Mardell Nash, Vivian Chinn, Susan Leonard-Giesen, Phil Giesen, Rebecca Canges, Candice Chick, and a special “thank you” to Jacob Seinturier. As always, we feel very fortunate to have Aurora Martínez as our editor, and we thank her for ongoing advice, support, and friendship. Finally, we offer special appreciation to our co-author, co-researcher, and dear friend, Dr. Deborah Short.

je, cmt, mev
In Ms. Caliari’s class, Maribel tends to be a quiet but friendly child. One of 11 English learners (or former English learners) in the class, Maribel enjoys math and does fine, but lags behind the others in literacy. Ms. Caliari scaffolds instruction, uses teaching techniques to make the information understandable, and incorporates activities for developing academic
Chapter 1 Using RTI with English Learners

English proficiency. But Maribel continues to struggle. The RTI team at Rodriguez Elementary School considered Maribel’s test scores, classroom performance, and English language proficiency when they assigned her to intervention for 30 minutes per day. During that time, Maribel receives focused instruction in reading comprehension with specific attention to vocabulary development skills that the team determined were below what they should be. Maribel’s progress is documented regularly to ensure that the intervention is meeting her needs and that she acquires the necessary skills to participate successfully in literacy activities.

When students like Maribel struggle in school, an increasing number of districts and schools are using Response to Intervention (RTI) to provide support. RTI is an instructional delivery model that is designed to identify at-risk learners like Maribel early and to provide appropriate services to them. Since English learners are the fastest growing segment of the school population in the United States, our goal is to describe how RTI is most effectively applied to English learners.

In this book we promote the notion that RTI represents a way for schools to reshape general education into a multileveled system oriented toward early intervention and prevention of learning problems (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2012; Kampwirth & Powers, 2012). Although RTI originated from the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as a framework to both prevent mislabeling and overidentifying students as having disabilities and to identify students with learning disabilities accurately, it has had a significant impact on the design and delivery of literacy programs in elementary schools throughout the nation (Brozo, 2010) and has changed the way secondary schools address the needs of struggling learners (Reed, Wexler, & Vaughn, 2012).

RTI Is an Opportunity

With the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Next Generation Science Standards, greater numbers of students may struggle as they are faced with more complex reading material, more challenging math and science concepts, and overall higher academic standards. There is growing concern about how to best serve English learners who are encountering new, rigorous content in a new language. High dropout rates—especially among Latinos—overall poor academic performance, and disproportionate representation of English learners in special education classes (both over- and underrepresentation) are some of the realities that contribute to this concern. In the current educational context, an RTI process offers school personnel an effective way to support student learning and make informed decisions about improving student performance. It provides a framework that enables students to receive the kind of education they need and deserve.

It may be tempting to consider RTI the latest “new thing” schools are required to do; however, since it is part of federal legislation RTI is here to stay. RTI came about because historically, when students experienced academic difficulty or behavior problems, the most common response was to wait until the problem was acute enough that they would then be referred to special education programs. This often meant waiting until students fell far behind or in some cases, until individuals had a long, documented history of behavior issues. Over the past 25 years, educators have proposed and experimented with a number of alternative approaches to strengthening the academic achievement of low-performing students as well as identifying more accurately students with learning disabilities (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007; Gersten & Dimino, 2006; Marston et al., 2007). Most recently, RTI has emerged as a more effective process for serving the needs of students with academic and/or behavioral problems.
concerns than the traditional “wait to fail” or “identify-test-qualify-place” procedure. Advocates were successful in having RTI included in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004) so that districts have a choice in how they attend to struggling learners (see Appendix A for IDEA Regulations).

We suggest that RTI be viewed as an opportunity to use a school’s or a district’s existing resources, programs, personnel, effective teaching practices, assessments, and data systems in a comprehensive way to offer an optimal learning environment for all students. A well-implemented RTI model establishes a closer working relationship among professionals who are engaged in the education of our most at-risk students. The kind of collaboration that RTI offers is commonly carried out through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), which provide a structure for teachers and administrators to engage in an ongoing process of improvement. From our experience in schools, we’ve seen myriad ways that staff work together toward this goal. PLCs often have subgroups that meet as teams for specific purposes: grade-level teams for lesson planning, aligning curriculum and instruction, and planning interventions based on data, and an RTI team for implementing the model and overseeing professional development. In addition, a site-based team (also called student study team, teacher assistance team, school-based intervention team) analyzes student data and makes recommendations about more intensive intervention for students who struggle academically and may be considered for special education services.

Effective RTI is an overarching conceptual framework that guides the entire school improvement process for all students. It provides schools with an opportunity to reduce the number of students who experience academic and behavior problems, including those who eventually become labeled as having a disability. We might think of RTI outcomes even more broadly: “to prevent the kinds of life-limiting results of inadequate academic performance such as school dropout, unemployment, incarceration, and poor health” (Fuchs, Fuchs, & Compton, 2012, p. 270). RTI was founded on the principles that (a) all children can learn when provided with appropriate, effective instruction and (b) most academic difficulties can be prevented with early identification of need followed by immediate intervention (Fuchs & Deshler, 2007).

Study of human development confirms that all individuals can and will learn under the right conditions. RTI shifts the focus away from the child having a “problem” and onto the learning conditions of the classroom and school. Students benefit when teachers create a learning environment that promotes linguistic and cognitive development using materials, teaching methods, and settings that will facilitate learning for each student.

**RTI in Practice**

Let us begin by stating that there is no single, agreed-upon “model” for implementing RTI, particularly since IDEA does not provide specific guidelines and procedures. Across the country, states and districts require elements of RTI that may vary slightly from one another, but essentially all RTI approaches contain the components seen in Figure 1.1. Some districts prefer to call the process by other names such as “response to instruction” to highlight the important role of teaching in the learning process. In this example, it is called RTI², emphasizing both instruction and intervention. The intent of RTI is to move away from looking at poor learning outcomes as an indication that there is something wrong with the student and instead to think about what teachers need to do to make the student successful. It may be
helpful to consider the process as “responsiveness of instruction” (Hiebert, Stewart, & Uzicanin, 2010), which rightly places responsibility for student improvement on teaching methods, materials, grouping, pace, and so forth.

**A Multi-Tiered Approach**

Although commonly referred to as a three-tiered approach, more generally RTI is a multi-tiered approach because there may be more than three tiers or levels in an RTI process. As shown in Figure 1.2, the tiers typically represent the following: Tier 1 is the general education classroom where all students receive instruction in the core curriculum. Tier 2 provides intervention in a specific academic area for those students who need it. Tier 2 instruction is
often done by general education teachers, and it supplements the core curriculum and classroom practice. Although Tier 2 provides additional support, general education teachers continue to be responsible for providing modifications in Tier 1 as needed to ensure student success. (Later in this chapter we will discuss specific modifications and adaptations that take place in Tier 1.) Tier 3 is usually provided by special education teachers, reading specialists, or a specially trained school professional. Teaching involves more intensive, individualized intervention and may or may not include students with identified disabilities who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). In some models, students with IEPs receive special education services in Tier 4.

In practice, RTI should be thought of as a continuum of services that increases in intensity based on student need and is recursive in nature. Students move in and out of tiered services depending on the level of intensity required to support specific skill development in language, reading, writing, or math. For example, a student may require Tier 2 intervention in math, but also receive Tier 3 intervention in reading. The duration of intervention and the decision about whether a student is dismissed from intervention or requires more intensive intervention depends on the needs of the learner. The number of levels or tiers offered is not as important as having a systematic approach in place that works best for students. When RTI is used with English learners some initial considerations include:

- how instruction (and intervention) are provided to students
- who provides this instruction
- how these students learn most effectively

The goal for English learners—and all students—is to achieve positive academic outcomes using the elements described in the rest of this section.

**Provide High-Quality Instruction**

RTI begins with solid, evidence-based instruction in the general education classroom provided by a highly qualified teacher and includes regular assessment of student progress. In the case of English learners, we propose that the research-validated SIOP® Model (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) is the most effective approach to general education instruction because it has been shown to improve the achievement of both English learners and English speaking students alike when implemented with fidelity (Echevarria, 2012; Echevarria, Richards-Tutor, Canges, & Francis, 2011; Echevarria, Richards-Tutor, Chinn, & Ratleff, 2011; Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006; Honigsfeld & Cohan, 2008; McIntyre et al., 2010; Short, Fidelman, & Louguit, 2012).

Sheltered instruction is a method of teaching that uses strategies and techniques to make instruction comprehensible for learners while promoting academic language development at the same time. The SIOP® Model is a lesson planning and delivery system that is composed of eight components, each of which reflects research-based practices that should be used systematically and regularly in the general education classroom, as discussed in detail in Chapter 4. Many of these practices are widely known, such as scaffolding, differentiating instruction, providing clear instructions and explanations, and using repetition, but they are not consistently practiced in every lesson. Using the SIOP® Model is a way to ensure that best practices become habitual.
From the Field  Best Practice for Using RTI with English Learners

Price Elementary has a diverse student population, consisting of 85% Hispanic, 9% white, 2.2% Asian, 1% African American, and 2.7% other ethnicities. Nearly 56% of the 760 students at this urban K–5 school are socioeconomically disadvantaged and 29% are English learners. There were 143 fluent English-proficient students (former English learners) with 30 English learners having been reclassified during the 2008–09 school year. The school places an emphasis on English language development in all classes; each day, a minimum of 30 minutes is set aside to work specifically on English language development, including oral language practice and vocabulary development.

The RTI process at Price is called Team Up, a name that accurately connotes school-wide collaboration. Representatives from general education, ESL, and special education meet regularly to analyze progress monitoring data and make decisions about students. All teachers receive ongoing professional development in the SIOP® Model to ensure that the features of best practice for English learners are present in instruction and intervention school-wide.

In observing classes at Price, English learners are engaged in rich, meaningful discussion and activities around text, which develops important oral language skills. Teachers use techniques designed to encourage active participation, and they provide students with the support they need to be successful in each lesson. Lessons are guided by content and language objectives, and are differentiated to meet the needs of students of varying ability levels. English learners work alongside English-speaking students on engaging tasks and assignments.

Specific RTI support in literacy occurs one period each day at the same time for all students. Students across grade levels (K–1, 2–3, 4–5) are grouped based on progress monitoring results and decisions made by the RTI team. Students with the greatest need (Tier 3) have a lower student-teacher ratio than others receiving intervention (Tier 2), which provides varying levels of intensity based on need. For example, children in grades 2 and 3 receiving Tier 3 intervention might be in a group consisting of three students working on a specific skill area (e.g., reading comprehension) with a special education teacher while another group of two students is instructed by a paraprofessional. In both Tier 2 and Tier 3, intervention is provided by both general education and special education teachers and personnel assignments are based on student need. While Tier 2 intervention might typically be delivered by a general education teacher, a particular group may require the expertise of a special education teacher for a period of time. ESL teachers also provide support since English language development is an area of emphasis during intervention in both Tier 2 and Tier 3. In other words, the composition of groups and personnel assigned to groups is fluid; one week the ESL teacher may work with a group of students in Tier 2, and the following week she may teach another group, depending on student need and available personnel. Students reading at or above grade level work together with a general education teacher during this period.

While they are aware of the sociocultural influences on students’ lives, such as poverty and linguistic differences, Price’s staff nevertheless convey high expectations and instill confidence in students by communicating their belief that all students can meet academic standards. In-class observations reveal that class assignments challenge students yet provide support and encouragement. In one lesson observed by researchers, students including English learners were eager to share their work during oral presentations at the end of the period. The same positive atmosphere is apparent in Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention. Teachers encourage students to learn skills by modeling, moving at a brisk but reasonable pace, and providing feedback to responses in a way that communicates confidence in students’ ability to succeed: “Excellent, try another example. [Student makes error.] Ok, listen again and repeat what I say. [Student repeats accurately.] Good, I knew you could do it.”
A well-implemented RTI model acts as a “prevention system” when teachers create a learning environment that catches difficulties early and they provide the type of instruction and modifications that supports student learning. With implementation of Common Core State Standards, it is particularly important that teachers be alert to learning struggles. With the proper supports, students who struggle can make the progress necessary and in some cases, learning difficulties can be ameliorated. In either situation, the goal is maximizing student achievement and reducing behavior problems.

Unfortunately, this is not always the experience of struggling students and their families. As one parent recently emailed:

If only we could get everyone who is involved in the education of our children to think about what the adults need to do to help students succeed instead of labeling children who struggle as defective and in need of fixing. My daughter has a nonverbal learning disability, which affects every aspect of her life (and mine), so I am a veteran of the special ed process. Our school district has been very good to us overall, and I am grateful for the special ed services that Cassie receives. She needs them in order to be successful in the general ed classroom. But we have encountered too many teachers along the way who seemed to feel that the onus was on Cassie to learn to do things their way rather than figuring out how they could adapt their ways to better meet Cassie’s needs.

The foundation of RTI lies squarely in Tier 1, or general education. As Brozo (2010) asserts, “Within RTI, the frontline of prevention is Tier 1, or the general education classroom, where every student regardless of ability is to receive high-quality instruction. Thus, the preventive possibilities of RTI are only as good as the Tier 1 supports classroom teachers provide students” (p. 147). Even when students receive intervention, it is a small part of the day. During the majority of the school day, English learners are in general education and should be engaged in rich, meaningful discussion and activities around text. Teaching techniques are used that encourage active participation and provide students with the support they need to be successful in each lesson. Even if English learners receive Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention, instruction in their general education classroom must reflect best practice for English learners.
From our experience, the most effective programs are those that focus on finding out what students CAN do and searching for the type of instruction, modification, or accommodation that works for them, regardless of whether they have been diagnosed with a language/learning disability. Figure 1.3 shows that there are a number of misconceptions about the purpose of RTI and its role in a school or district. It is not merely a “new way” to refer students to special education, as some teachers have called it. Although some aspects of the RTI process may be similar to conducting and documenting pre-referral interventions, RTI is not a path toward special education services. In fact, it can prevent students from being referred unnecessarily for costly services if what they need is academic skills development (Ehren, 2013). Further, RTI is not a single classroom set aside where students are sent when they experience behavior and academic problems. Rather, RTI is an approach that involves all school personnel and, as mentioned previously, presents an opportunity for collaboration. Using this school-wide process, the success of students is the responsibility of everyone, not one teacher in one location.

RTI is not about intervention—it is about focusing on effective instruction in the general education classroom and then using intervention effectively for students who continue to struggle. We want to prevent problems from occurring at the first sign of risk.
Identify Areas of Concern and Monitor Progress

Early identification and support for students at risk for poor learning outcomes and behavior problems is critical, especially given that in the past schools waited for students to fall significantly behind their peers before services were provided. Alba Ortiz, an expert in the field of bilingual special education says, “RTI may help us more quickly identify other factors contributing to low performance. It’s important to respond early. You sometimes see third graders referred to special education, but once you examine their records, you realize they have been struggling with language since kindergarten. The more time passes, the harder it is to tell ESL issues from learning disabilities” (Council for Exceptional Children, 2008, p. 2). In high school, it is not uncommon for students to be referred for special education assessment when records indicate they have experienced learning difficulties throughout earlier grades.

The RTI process begins with high-quality instruction and universal screening. Universal screening is used to determine the performance or skill level of every student and to make decisions based on the findings. For students who are underperforming, further evaluation may be necessary to determine the exact nature and scope of the problem. Language proficiency should always be considered. Perhaps the student requires increased, focused ESL or English language development rather than intervention.

When ongoing monitoring data indicate a lack of progress, an appropriate research-based intervention is implemented. The interventions continue at increasing levels of intensity as needed to accelerate students’ rate of learning. Progress is monitored closely to assess both the learning rate and the level of performance of individual students. Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention are intended to be short term, lasting a specified number of weeks. Most students will be dismissed from Tier 2 services once they have acquired the skills they need. Students receiving Tier 3 intervention may need intensive support for a longer period of time, after which they may move to Tier 2 intervention for less intensive support. Some students may be dismissed from intervention altogether, but their progress is monitored regularly in case further problems arise.

It is important to remember that Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions are not designed for students who are just having difficulty in meeting grade-level standards such as interpreting tables and graphs in math or finding a theme in a novel. Intervention is for students who have difficulty with key skills that impact more global success in content areas. For students who have difficulty in meeting specific standards, RTI provides an opportunity for educators to examine the general education classroom to ensure that research-validated instruction is in place and that teachers are meeting their students’ needs. Some general practices for improving students’ performance that supplement teaching include the following:

- conferencing with a parent or guardian
- conducting a health screening to check vision and hearing
- moving a student to another seat or to a carrel to reduce distractions
- allowing another student to translate using a student’s native language
- designing a behavior or academic contract with a student and/or family
- reducing the number of math problems or questions in any subject area for a student
- conferencing with the student, using an interpreter if needed
- providing the student with assistive technology
- adjusting the level of difficulty of an assignment
- providing sentence frames, outlines of a text or lecture, or other scaffolds
- permitting students to complete an assignment using their native language
- giving a student extended time to complete an assignment or take a test
These would not be considered interventions. These practices are part of a teacher’s repertoire for differentiating instruction as needed—the kinds of things “good” teachers do because they know these modifications and accommodations will facilitate their students’ learning. In Figure 1.4 we illustrate the distinction between accommodations, modifications, and interventions. Modifications are changes a teacher makes so that the student can be successful, such as adding a word bank to an English learner’s test. Accommodations are supports that a student has to have in place in order to be successful, such as taking a test orally instead of in writing. Whatever modifications or accommodations are provided, it is important to document them so that a comprehensive record of the student’s education is created. The Record of Modifications and/or Accommodations (Figure 1.5) is useful for a number of purposes.

1. It provides a record of what was tried previously, for how long, and its effectiveness with the student that teachers can refer to as they think about how to modify instruction.

2. It provides a historical record for teachers in subsequent grades that might guide their instructional decisions.

3. It provides a record of Tier 1 classroom modifications that might help inform decisions if a student is considered for Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention.

4. It may be useful when conferencing with parents to show the type of things that work well or to offer an account of modifications that were provided before their child was referred for more intensive intervention.

**Figure 1.4 Clarifying RTI Terms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodations</th>
<th>Modifications</th>
<th>Interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use assistive technology</td>
<td>Simplify directions, providing picture support, if needed</td>
<td>Form small groups consisting of students with similar academic profiles (3-5 students, depending on intensity required)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record reading assignment for homework and/or review</td>
<td>Reduce number of correct responses required (e.g., math problems)</td>
<td><strong>Focus on specific skills, e.g., fluency and comprehension</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give a test orally so student can express knowledge without reading and/or writing</td>
<td>Slow the pace of instruction</td>
<td>Develop targeted vocabulary, using words in context with sufficient repetition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide peer tutoring</td>
<td>Adjust the level of difficulty of an assignment</td>
<td>Select materials appropriate for student’s ability</td>
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<td>Move the student’s seat to reduce distractions</td>
<td>Give an outline for an assignment (in the native language, if needed)</td>
<td>Provide immediate, explicit feedback on responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair student with a partner who speaks the student’s native language</td>
<td>Provide sentence frames for oral participation and writing tasks</td>
<td>Increase intensity by lowering number of students in the group, providing intervention more frequently, and moving at a brisk pace</td>
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### Figure 1.5  Record of Modifications and/or Accommodations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifications/Accommodations</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<tr>
<td>Access to Recorded Books/Text</td>
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<td>Adapted Texts</td>
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<td>Assessment by Psychologist</td>
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<td>(informal)</td>
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<td>Behavior Contract</td>
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<td>Classroom Instructional Aide</td>
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<td>Cross Age Tutoring</td>
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<td>English Language Development/ESL</td>
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Note date(s) used, and outcome

(continued)
5. It provides documentation of each step of the RTI process, which is particularly important if a student eventually receives special education services. The outcomes of fair hearings and other legal challenges are often based on documentation or lack thereof (Kampwirth & Powers, 2012).

Remember that screening and progress monitoring are done for a purpose: to make instructional changes for those students identified as at-risk. So, we conduct screening and

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<td>Student Planner Monitored</td>
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progress monitoring—and then do something with it. Students who make progress are moved out of groups, which creates more time for those who need it.

**Provide Evidence-Based Intervention**

For approximately 20%–30% of English learners, Tier 1 instruction alone is not sufficient for them to be successful academically. These students require Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 interventions. The intensity and nature of interventions are adjusted depending on a student’s responsiveness. Interventions will vary by grade level and content area (i.e., reading, writing, and mathematics), but there are key elements for effective implementation across grade level and content areas. These elements are discussed in detail in Chapter 5 and include how to best group students and how to design and conduct effective interventions. Although there is limited research about which specific interventions are effective with English learners, it appears that some of the same interventions that are used with native English speakers can be used to improve the outcomes for English learners who receive core literacy instruction in English (Vanderwood & Nam, 2007).

**Identify Learning Disabilities**

As we have mentioned previously, the under- and overidentification of English learners and other diverse students for special education services makes RTI appealing for reaching more accurate eligibility decisions. During referral and eligibility decision making, well-implemented RTI takes into consideration the classroom context, including quality of instruction (particularly with regard to early literacy), teacher qualification to teach English learners, students’ language proficiency match to materials and instruction, and other factors that have not typically been considered. In the past, school personnel have “seemed quick to attribute a child’s struggles to internal deficits or the home environment” (Klinger, Sorrels, & Barrera, 2007, p. 225).

If English learners have received high-quality instruction in general education that is research-validated for English learners (Chapter 4), if their language proficiency and sociocultural context has been considered (Chapter 2), and if appropriate intervention has been tried and well documented (Chapter 5), yet they are not making progress with appropriate intervention (and other factors have been excluded as influences on their learning), then identification of a learning disability would be considered.

As one veteran teacher commented about identifying students who have not responded to intervention, “Be sure you’ve tried everything before referring a student for testing. It is very costly in terms of money, time, and labor. The special education teacher isn’t teaching while she’s testing; the school psychologist can’t do other things when testing. You want to avoid unnecessary referrals.” Well-implemented RTI holds promise for providing English learners with adequate opportunity to learn so that we can more accurately identify those who have learning disabilities and provide appropriate special education services to eligible students.

**RTI Models**

In addition to variations in the number of tiers used to deliver RTI services, schools also employ different approaches in implementation. The most common are a standard treatment protocol, a problem-solving model, and hybrid approaches. Although RTI components such as universal screening and using a multi-tiered process look similar under both standard treatment and problem-solving protocols, the approaches vary in how interventions are implemented.
**Standard Treatment Protocol**

In the standard treatment protocol, one standard intervention is given for a fixed duration to a group of students with similar needs. This approach assumes that providing the same research-based intervention to similarly grouped students introduces a level of quality control (National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 2005). For example, in Roosevelt School, students who test at the “struggling” level are automatically placed in one hour of supplemental literacy (or math) instruction. This Tier 2 intervention is in addition to general education literacy instruction. Students who test two grade levels below are placed in Tier 3, which is intensive intervention. (Tier 4 is special education.) Tier 3 curriculum and instruction typically supplants the core curriculum because it is intended to offer students something different to move them at an accelerated pace. One drawback is relying on assessment results to automatically place students in Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. With English learners, some assessments are questionable and may not be accurate for this population (Figueroa, 2002; Hosp & Madyun, 2007; Ortiz & Yates, 2002; Vanderwood & Nam, 2007).

In addition, teachers may not provide adequate modifications and accommodations in the general education classroom because they have come to rely on automatically sending struggling students to intervention. They do not have the level of support that problem-solving teams provide to assist teachers with ideas for modifications, instructional techniques and strategies, progress monitoring, and interpreting data.

Finally, we run the risk of beginning to think of RTI as a curriculum that students are plugged into rather than considering all options for making the student successful. Ultimately, the teacher always provides the intervention, not the materials.

**Problem-Solving Model**

In the problem-solving model, a team of practitioners identifies and evaluates the problems of an individual student and designs and implements flexible interventions to meet that student’s needs. This model typically has four stages: problem identification, problem analysis, plan implementation, and plan evaluation. This model assumes that no one intervention is effective for all students (National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 2005). A key feature in successful RTI programs is teachers working together and examining data as a team, which may reduce the likelihood that a student will be misplaced (Haagar & Mahdavi, 2007). The team examines data and considers numerous possibilities for resolving the student’s issues. Student progress is constantly monitored, and the team takes the results and discusses options.

In some schools, grade-level teams meet with others who provide intervention such as special education and ESL teachers and reading specialists to analyze student data and plan interventions. If a student fails to make progress, she would be referred to the site-based team, which includes a school psychologist, administrator, and other staff as appropriate.

For example, in Bellevue School the grade-level team analyzes student data and brainstorms ideas for improving the performance of underachieving students (typically the lowest 20%). For some students, the classroom modifications that the team suggests and the teacher implements provide the support they needed and the process ends. If a student’s progress isn’t adequate after receiving modifications/accommodations, the team revisits the problem-solving process. The student would most likely be recommended for Tier 2 intervention, which supplements classroom instruction. A student who is in Tier 2 will require a detailed
plan about the intervention to be implemented. For example, in addition to the core curriculum and methods already in place, a student will meet with the teacher in a small group three times a week (frequency). During that time, they will work for 30 minutes (intensity) on phonemic awareness for a period of 6–12 weeks (duration of the intervention).

When the grade-level team is concerned that a student isn’t making sufficient progress in spite of Tier 2 intervention, the student’s teacher meets with the site-based team and presents documentation about the issue and what has been tried thus far. The team reviews the information and discusses the student (problem identification and problem analysis) (see Figure 1.6, RTI Intervention Record). They offer suggestions for intervention that are specific for addressing concerns about the student. The recommended interventions are used with the student (plan implementation), documenting the duration and outcome. Then the team examines the documentation and makes decisions about the appropriateness of those particular interventions based on how the student responded (plan evaluation). This team problem-solving process continues as long as the student experiences difficulty and is used when making decisions in both general education and special education, creating a well-integrated system of instruction and intervention guided by student outcome data.

The drawback of this model is that it is time and labor intensive. Also, to be effective, the problem-solving model requires a level of sophistication in terms of understanding instruction for English learners, recommending appropriate intervention based on specific student need, verifying accurate data collection and interpretation, and ensuring fidelity of intervention implementation.

Hybrid Approaches

The two approaches discussed above are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and in many cases a combination or hybrid of the two is used. Although there are various ways schools might implement RTI, in all cases it should involve a collaborative effort for making data-based decisions and efficiently allocating resources to improve student outcomes.

Making RTI Work

To begin using an RTI approach or to enhance the effectiveness of the one you are currently using, there are a number of issues to consider.

First, fidelity is critical. In education research, fidelity is defined as the degree to which an intervention or model of instruction is implemented as it was originally designed to be implemented (Gresham, MacMillan, Beebe-Frankenberger, & Bocian, 2000). Fidelity in the RTI process involves:

- **Instruction**—All students, including English learners, receive systematic, research-based teaching that is consistent and effective. Many districts commit to professional development to ensure that all teachers are highly qualified for teaching content area subjects as well as understanding effective instruction for English learners.

- **Intervention**—For students who struggle, intervention is implemented with high fidelity and in the specific way the approach was intended. Intervention involves research-validated instructional techniques and implementation approximates as closely as possible the original model used in the research.
Chapter 1 Using RTI with English Learners

- **RTI process**—Assessments are used accurately for benchmark/screening, skill diagnosis, and progress monitoring. Data are used effectively for making decisions about placement, instruction, and program evaluation. These aspects of RTI cross all tiers and are essential.

Second, an important aspect of effective RTI is documentation. Developing a comprehensive record of student performance—and how the school responded to assessment data—will provide critical information for decision making. Figure 1.6 shows a sample form that may be used to document initial concern (based on universal screening and/or teacher recommendation), the kind of modifications the teacher used in the classroom with the student.

**Figure 1.6** RTI Intervention Record: A Problem-Solving Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RTI Record</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student: ___________ Grade: ___ DOB: ___________ Date of Meeting: _________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher: _______________ School: __________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading: ______________ Math: _______________ English Proficiency Level: ______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Language: ____________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area(s) of Difficulty (Check)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Articulation ☐ Writing ☐ Social Emotional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Language ☐ Math ☐ History/Health Concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Listening ☐ Motor Skills ☐ Attendance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Reading ☐ Academic English ☐ Behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Difficulty _________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student’s Strengths ________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Accommodations and/or Modifications (use a separate line for each modification/accommodation) ____________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Began: ______________ Duration: ______________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome: ____________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific Interventions Developed by RTI Site Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the intervention(s) ______________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency ________________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration _________________________________________________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will effectiveness be measured? ________________________________________</td>
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<td>________________________________________________________________________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date of RTI Site Council Follow-up Meeting: _______________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of intervention effectiveness (after ____ weeks) ____________________</td>
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</table>
and the recommended intervention, duration, and outcome. This form reflects a problem-solving approach to RTI as noted by the “RTI Site Council.”

Third, effective RTI requires administrative support to ensure it is implemented well. In Figure 1.7 we have provided some questions for administrators to consider for implementing high-quality RTI. Teachers and other school personnel need to be aware of effective instructional practices for all students, including the research for teaching English learners presented in Chapter 4. In addition, the development of procedures for accurate assessment of students and collection and interpretation of data are critical since these results will be used to inform instructional decisions. Figure 1.8 provides some questions for teachers to consider during the planning phase when developing assessments and collecting student data. We want to create optimal

**Figure 1.7  Questions to Consider: Administrative Support**

- Are you supervising the RTI process by going into classrooms, checking lesson plans, observing instruction with English learners, reviewing data, and monitoring intervention?
- Are you using all your staff effectively by encouraging collaboration between general educators, ESL and bilingual personnel, special educators, and other specialists?
- Have you provided adequate time for teachers to discuss at-risk students? Where in the schedule could you fit that in? Is there a specific room to discuss RTI? (Not the lunch room!)
- Do you oversee the forms needed for the process? (For example, are they updated, are they accessible for teachers, are there enough copies?) Do the forms specifically address issues related to English learners (e.g., language development, cultural considerations)?
- Are your teachers qualified to work effectively with English learners?
- Are the student assessments used appropriate for English learners?
- What kind of professional development do your teachers need? Do you have a plan that prioritizes topics (e.g., providing effective instruction for English learners, understanding second language acquisition, implementing the RTI process, and monitoring progress and interpreting data)?
- Have you established relationships with culturally diverse families? Have you made sufficient effort to involve them in the RTI process as valued partners?
- Are you following through on certain students who require it? Do you contact families who aren’t following through with agreements? Is someone checking on a student who has poor attendance?

**Figure 1.8  Questions for Teachers to Consider: Preparing Assessments and Collecting Data**

- Are you giving ample time for the student to complete the task?
- Would another day be advantageous for testing the student because s/he is tired or ill?
- Are you testing in a place with minimal distractions?
- Are you doing the testing yourself, or are you relying on someone unfamiliar with the student?
- Will a tester unfamiliar with the child recognize progress since that person may not be aware of the child’s English proficiency level or areas of difficulty, e.g., articulation problems?
- Is the language demand too high for the student’s English proficiency level?
- Are you repeating the directions as needed? Are you checking for understanding? Can the student explain to you what you want him or her to do on the test?
- Does the student need the instructions translated into his/her home language?
- Have you pre-taught the vocabulary of the task you’re testing the student on?
conditions for students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Collaboration among school personnel facilitates understanding of student data results and increases the likelihood that the results will be interpreted accurately and used effectively. As the questions for administrators imply (Figure 1.7), time needs to be set aside for collaboration.

Further, effective RTI requires substantial professional development. Districts should create a long-term professional development plan that addresses the fidelity of both the instruction and intervention and the implementation of the components of RTI. Professional development needs to be ongoing and sustained to support teachers in:

- providing high-quality instruction and intervention
- selecting and accurately administering assessments for benchmark/screening, skill diagnosis, and progress monitoring
- using assessments for decisions about placement, instruction, and program evaluation

Finally, in Appendix B we provide answers to some frequently asked questions (FAQs) about implementing RTI and making it work effectively for English learners.

Final Thoughts

In this chapter we have discussed that RTI is a multi-tiered instructional delivery model designed to identify at-risk learners early and to provide appropriate services to them. In the current era of high standards, including the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Next Generation Science Standards, RTI offers a process for supporting students’ academic progress and for systematically addressing the needs of those students who struggle with the skills required to meet high standards. In the remainder of this book we will elaborate on many of the ideas presented in this chapter, preparing readers to implement RTI effectively. In the next chapter we will discuss factors that impact learning for English learners and should be part of the discussion whenever an English learner struggles academically or behaviorally.

For Reflection and Discussion

1. Why is RTI especially important with the advent of CCSS and Next Generation Science Standards?
2. In the Standard Treatment Protocol, what is the drawback to relying on assessment results to automatically place students in Tier 2 intervention? What about Tier 3?
3. The students at Cabrillo Middle School are supposed to be assessed every four weeks to make sure they are making adequate progress academically. However, due to absenteeism, school activities, teacher apathy, and other factors, the practice isn’t consistent. The idea of RTI is to provide a quick response to academic problems, but these students are falling farther behind without intervention, consistent documentation, and progress monitoring. If you were a district administrator in charge of implementing an RTI model, what recommendations would you make to the school administration and staff?
4. Why is fidelity such a critical issue for RTI? How might you ensure that a school staff is implementing the process with fidelity?
The challenge for English learners is that they are learning rigorous, standards-based content in a language in which they are not yet fully proficient. They attend schools with practices and expectations that they may not understand completely and that may not reflect the values of their home. So, English learners are learning the language of English at
the same time they are studying curricular content, learning how to express their ideas, and trying to understand the ways of a school environment—all through English.

As schools implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), many educators are concerned that English learners will struggle to meet these more academically demanding standards and may end up being labeled as having learning problems. To give you an idea of what it is like to try to make sense of a difficult concept, the following explanation of how to use formulas for converting radians to degrees and back might suffice. Could you explain this formula to a colleague in your own words?

A radian is the measure of an angle that, when drawn as a central angle of a circle, intercepts an arc whose length is equal to the length of the radius of the circle. The length of 1 radius stretches out to a portion of the circle. That portion is 1 radian of the circle. There is a simple formula to convert radians to degrees: 1 radian = 180. Therefore you can easily convert from one unit of measure to the other.

For some of you, the task was easy. For others, you tried with some difficulty to make sense of it, perhaps using your academic background. Some of you undoubtedly lost interest immediately and didn’t even attempt to decipher the text. Other readers may have been moderately successful in making sense of the text but with lots of energy expended. This task represents the experience of millions of students in our schools every day, except that for them the task is presented in a language in which they are not yet proficient.

The intent of this chapter is to help educators understand that in our efforts to assist students in reaching benchmarks, attaining standards, and passing standardized tests, we may lose sight of the child as a whole person. There are myriad influences and realities that impact learning, especially for English learners. Some realities to keep in mind as we discuss the education of English learners include:

1. Immigration almost inevitably includes (at least temporarily) issues such as loss of status and difficulty communicating. Students are put in the position of interpreting for their parents, which can impact family roles and lead to feelings of inadequacy. Imagine your own feeling of incompetence if you had to depend on your own child to communicate with officials, doctors, teachers, and other people you encounter in everyday life. One of the teachers with whom we worked in our research had been a physician in Mexico, yet in the United States was teaching remedial science classes in a rough inner city high school. Over the years we have met many school staff such as teacher aides who held professional positions in their home country.

2. Poverty impacts learning. More than 60% of English learners come from poor families (Garcia & Jensen, 2007). The impact of poverty on learning is significant and includes the following realities for poor children: They have a greater risk of exposure to lead, which causes lower IQ, learning disabilities, and behavior problems; they suffer from hunger and poor nutrition; their parents typically do not engage in talking and reading with them, reducing language development and early literacy opportunities (at 36 months old, the vocabulary of children in professional families is more than double that of children in families receiving welfare); and they tend not to participate in summer enrichment programs, resulting in reading losses (Barton & Coley, 2009). Poverty is also the largest correlate of reading achievement. The number of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch in a school can provide a fairly accurate estimate about test scores.

3. Separation from loved ones, even their own parents, can lead to depression, feelings of isolation, and sadness. “The separation of children from their family members during immigration is a complex and long-lasting process that generates lingering long-distance
emotional ties” (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008, p. 69). English learners born in the United States may be separated from parents or significant family members because they have returned to the home country for extended periods of time or they did not immigrate with the rest of the family.

4. Household and family responsibilities may interfere with education. Low-performing students were more than three times as likely to report missing school to help with their families than high-performing students (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008).

5. Hispanic children account for the largest percentage of English learners, yet they are the least prepared to begin their school careers. Hispanics between the ages of 3 and 5 years old were less likely to have parents involved in home literacy activities and were less likely to have school readiness skills than White or Black children (Simon et al., 2011).

6. Teacher attitudes affect student achievement. Teachers want students to behave in certain ways, and it is well documented that they give higher grades to those students they like and who behave in ways that suit their preference. These attitudes and expectations also extend to parents: Those who have time to participate in school activities are considered interested in their child’s education and those who do not participate are deemed uninterested. Thompson (2008) concluded that her study of low-performing schools illustrated “the culture of low expectations and disrespect that prevails in schools that serve many Black and Latino families” (p. 52). When minority students perform poorly on tests and earn low grades, teachers often blame the students, their parents, and their circumstances. They attribute poor performance to being lazy, not valuing education, and having parents that don’t care (Hale, 2001; Rodriguez, 2010; Thompson, 2004).

7. The challenges youngsters face when they enter American schools are particularly difficult for those who come during the middle school and high school years. They must not only learn English quickly so they can participate in interpersonal communication with teachers and peers but also acquire enough English to learn rigorous subject matter when instruction is conducted exclusively in English (Valdes, 2001).

We begin this chapter by discussing some issues to keep in the forefront of your mind as you read the remainder of this book. English learners—like all children—come to school with their own experiences, home values, and ideas. They “see” schooling through this cultural and experiential lens. We cannot cover all the issues English learners face in this chapter; indeed entire volumes are devoted to their impact on learners (e.g., Cummins, 2000; Glen & de Jong, 1996; Nutta, Mokhtari, & Strebel, 2012; Valdes, 2001), but we touch on some sociocultural and linguistic factors that impact learning and some critical issues for educating English learners.

We also discuss how effective schools can help mitigate outside-of-school factors that impact learning so that English learners experience success in school. The learning context for English learners presents a unique set of issues, and an RTI process will be more effective when educators are aware of these issues and adjust the process to accommodate these realities.

Issues Faced by English Learners in School

For more than three decades, researchers in bilingual special education have focused on the educational needs of culturally and linguistically diverse populations, the reasons many struggle in school, and the services provided to this group of students (Artiles & Trent, 1994; Baca & Cervantes, 1984; Cloud, 1993; Cummins, 1984; Echevarria, 1995; Figueroa, 2002; Gersten, Brengelamn, & Jiminez, 1994; Ortiz & Yates, 2002; Rueda, 1989; Ruiz, 1989). Over
the years, this pioneering work has continued to influence the discussion around issues that impact student achievement and well-being. In particular, we discuss the issues of language proficiency, background knowledge and experience, and cultural values and norms and their impact on schooling for English learners.

**Language Proficiency**

Overall, English learners underperform in school compared to their English-speaking peers (Simon et al., 2011) and English proficiency is the greatest predictor of academic success for English learners—more than all other factors combined (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). When we refer to academic English proficiency, it is more than simply “learning English.” The social, conversational speaking ability that one learns through exposure to a language is different from the academic language proficiency required in classroom settings and on standardized tests.

Academic language development is particularly important since academic English proficiency is highly predictive of educational success. Academic language is defined in a number of ways, such as the language of the classroom, the language of academic disciplines (science, history, mathematics, literary analysis), and the language of texts and literature. It is more abstract and decontextualized than conversational English and is not typically found in everyday settings. The ability to perform on tests, to extract meaning from text, and to argue a point verbally and in writing are essential skills for high levels of academic attainment. These and other language skills are required by the Common Core State Standards and are an essential part of schooling. Inherent in these skills is oral language proficiency which, in addition to being the foundation for participation in academic tasks, is significantly correlated with higher grades and even more strongly with achievement test outcomes (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008).

A large part of academic language development involves vocabulary (Nagy, 2012). General academic vocabulary crosses curricular areas (Coxhead, 2000; Zwiers, 2008) and domain-specific vocabulary is associated with each content area. General terms include those found in all academic texts such as analysis, cooperation, and definition. Domain-specific vocabulary is associated with a discipline and includes terms such as divisibility, histogram, unit conversion, variability, and expanded notation in math; conflict, colonization, interpret, relief map, longitude, and plateau in social studies; and magnetism, attraction, consumers, investigation, and igneous rock in science. Although English Language Arts (ELA) would seem to have terms for general language development, in reality the study of ELA includes specific terms such as homographs, characteristics of nonfiction, citations, text features, conjunctions, and logical fallacies.

Research findings highlight the importance of providing high-quality English language development (ELD) for English learners (August & Shanahan, 2006). Effective teaching includes both content and language objectives in every lesson to ensure that there is an explicit focus on language development along with the topic or skill being taught. Further, ELD may be accelerated by providing a separate period in which the instructional focus is solely on language development (Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010).

**Background Knowledge and Experience**

Students come to school with a wealth of knowledge, and their previous cultural, language, and literacy experiences influence their ways of learning. In a culturally diverse classroom, students’ background knowledge and experiences don’t always align with the materials and
content of the curriculum. Here is an example. This is a high stakes test you must pass. What are these sentences referring to? You have one chance to answer:

1. This type does not have a high cantle.
2. It is designed to provide optimal movement, including classical dressage.
3. A piece of equipment may vary in style based on discipline, but most feature some type of cavesson noseband.
4. Most standards require, as a minimum, jodhpurs.

If you don’t have background in English horseback riding, then you most likely did not pass the test! So much of what we understand is based on our background experiences—or lack thereof. English learners are responsible for learning and understanding content that is based on assumptions of common experiences and may be, quite literally, foreign to them and their background experiences. Effective instruction for English learners connects new concepts with students’ experiences and past learning. When students have knowledge of a topic, they have better recall and are better able to elaborate on it than those with limited knowledge of the subject (Chiesi, Spilich, & Voss, 1979; Marzano, 2004).

Some educators mistakenly think that the Common Core State Standards call for the elimination of linking text to students’ background. As reading expert P. David Pearson pointed out, asking students to read without using background is like telling someone “You can breathe but don’t use oxygen.” The intent of the CCSS is for lessons to be more text driven with less time spent on general discussion, predicting, or “sharing” as prereading activities. Teachers ensure that English learners understand the topic or idea in the text and may spend a few minutes making it relevant for students, but the bulk of the lesson is grounded in the text, asking students for text evidence as a basis for discussion comments, for example, “Tell me why you think that” or “Show me where it says that in the text.” Prereading preparation should focus on providing students with the tools they need to make sense of the text on their own (Shanahan, 2012/2013). Since rereading text is a prominent feature of the kind of lessons CCSS call for, English learners, like all students, will pick up some meaning on their own and the teacher will fill in the gaps as the text is read again.

**Cultural Values and Norms**

Cultural values are deeply engrained in us, although they may appear in subtle ways. They influence the way we interact with others, make sense of our environment, and deal with conflict. In fact, they permeate many aspects of daily life. Cultural norms and values are influenced by any number of factors including one’s racial or ethnic group, the family’s religious beliefs and practices, educational level, and socioeconomic status. Figure 2.1 shows other possible influences on one’s culture.

School values and expectations are sometimes at odds with those found in the home and it may not be easy for students from culturally diverse families to adjust to these differing expectations. For example, the Common Core State Standards call for students to develop and use argumentation skills, a type of communication that may be in conflict with the student’s cultural norms. Also, English learners may feel distant from peers and teachers because of differing parental expectations. In one study, 80% of immigrant students acknowledged that their parents had different rules than those of American parents (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). Other examples of cultural norms and values include notions of modesty and concepts of beauty, ways that language is learned and used, approaches to problem solving, order of time, and incentives to work (Hamayan, 2006).
Education professionals who are knowledgeable about individual students’ cultures should be included in the decision-making process of RTI because culturally appropriate interpretation of behavior and of data is critical when examining the academic progress of English learners.

The influences on learning discussed above are at the student level. We now turn to institutional influences, both those that impede learning and those that facilitate academic achievement.

**Factors Associated with Underachievement**

Researchers specializing in the status of English learners and children of immigrants suggest a number of factors that impact these students’ well-being (Padron, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002; Rumberger, Gandara, & Merino, 2006; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008).

**Lack of Qualified Teachers**

English learners, particularly those from low-income backgrounds, continue to have poor academic, social, and postsecondary outcomes (Barton & Coley, 2009; McCardle et al., 2005). There are many reasons that account for these outcomes including quality of teaching. Although teacher quality is strongly related to student achievement (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2000), teacher preparation programs in general education and special education have not kept pace with the need for more teachers who are qualified to work effectively with these students (Trent, Kea, & Oh, 2008). Few programs provide the kind of courses and experiences that adequately prepare new teachers to work effectively with English learners. Less than one-sixth of pre-service teacher preparation includes training on working with English learners (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008).

One key factor beyond actual preparation for the job is the amount of experience teachers have in the classroom. It has been established that five or more years of teaching is considered the turning point in effectiveness. Hispanic students tend to have less experienced teachers, which impacts student achievement. Twenty percent of White 8th graders had teachers with four or fewer years of experience while 30% of Hispanic 8th graders did (Barton & Coley,
Factors Associated with Underachievement

2009). Further, schools with high concentrations of English learners are less likely to have fully certified teachers than those with low concentrations of English learners, even after accounting for differences in poverty (Rumberger, Gandara, & Merino, 2006).

Finally, teacher turnover has a significant and negative impact on student achievement in both math and English Language Arts, and it is particularly harmful to the achievement of students in schools with large populations of low-performing and Black students (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). This finding is important for English learners because teacher turnover rates are especially high in schools serving low-income, non-White, and low-achieving student populations. Nationally, about 30% of new teachers leave the profession within five years, and the turnover rate is about 50% higher in high-poverty schools as compared to more affluent ones (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003).

All of these factors combine to provide a picture of English learners as disadvantaged, not because of their language, economic status, or cultural differences, but because they have not had the benefit of teachers who have the professional preparation and experience to teach them effectively.

Inappropriate Teaching Practices

English learners require adjustments to teaching (discussed specifically in Chapter 4) that enable them to understand the instruction. Too often English learners find themselves in classes where instruction is presented as if they are native English speakers. This kind of teaching hampers their access to the subject matter and their acquisition of the academic English they need to be successful in school.

In studies where researchers observed classrooms with English learners, instruction tended to be in whole-class settings with students generally doing passive activities, such as watching and listening. Teachers spent more time explaining than questioning, cueing, or prompting students, and they didn’t encourage students to extend their oral responses, inadvertently denying them the opportunity to practice using academic English. The lessons were teacher dominated and included few authentic activities and little content that related to the students’ lives outside of school (Ramirez et al., 1991; Rothstein & Santana, 2011; Waxman, Gray, & Padron, 2003).

Further, separating students by ability level for their classes (or by school) continues to be common practice, creating a “poverty of learning” for less advantaged students (Futrell & Gomez, 2008). Studies confirm that minority students and low-income students of all ability levels are overrepresented in the lower tracks and underrepresented in the higher tracks. In our own experience in mostly urban schools, we have witnessed the inequitable situation that research bears out. Segregating English learners from middle-class native English-speaking peers may be particularly harmful because the native language-speaking peers serve as language models, which facilitates English language development (Rumberger, Gandara, & Merino, 2006).

RTI has the potential to ameliorate entrenched practices of tracking students by monitoring each student’s progress, changing grouping accordingly, and providing effective instruction tailored to the individual’s level of English proficiency.

At-Risk School Environments

English learners are heavily concentrated in urban areas and attend schools that are often under-resourced and in which the school climate may be volatile. Students’ perceptions about violence have been found to be highly related to their academic achievement
This finding is significant given that between 2001 and 2005, Hispanic students reported an increase in the presence of gangs in schools (38.8% compared to 16.6% of White students) and Hispanic students were more likely to be involved in physical fights (18.3% compared to 11.6% of White students) (Barton & Coley, 2009).

In highly unstable environments where students feel at risk, threatened, or detached from a chaotic school climate, they are less likely to connect with peers, teachers, and staff. The impact on achievement is an interesting one. Positive relationships in school are important for the academic adaptation of students. Relational engagement is strongly correlated with behavioral engagement, defined as students doing their best on class work and homework, turning in assignments on time, paying attention and behaving appropriately in class, and maintaining good attendance. Not surprisingly, behavioral engagement is highly correlated with grades (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008).

Factors Associated with Educational Success

English learners do well in some schools and poorly in others (EdSource, 2007). There are a number of factors that contribute to a student’s performance in the classroom; in the following section we discuss some of the factors associated with success.

High Expectations for All Students

Student performance and achievement tend to rise and fall according to teacher expectations (Dudley-Marling & Michaels, 2012). Years of research have focused on the self-fulfilling prophesy in the classroom, where teacher expectations affect student achievement and behavior (Brophy & Good, 1970). In our own work, we have seen that when there is a school climate that values all students and expects each individual to achieve high standards, students outperform similar schools that do not hold high expectations (Echevarria, Short, & Vogt, 2008). The misperception of immigrant students as “pobrecitos” (poor little things) may lead to coddling of nontraditional students, which robs them of challenging learning experiences and prospects for achieving success (Adger & Locke, 2000).

High school is a critical time for college preparation or vocational and technical studies, yet in many urban areas students and staff alike have all but given up on the idea of achieving standards and graduating. Some high schools are beating the odds by offering to all students opportunities that are usually reserved only for the “best” students. Providing a rigorous program of study along with other features that engage students, these “High Schools That Work” are seeing positive outcomes as a result of having high expectations (Bottoms, 2007). In another successful program, even reluctant readers in high-poverty schools were taught to use critical thinking skills to discuss, argue, and write about topics, overcoming the misconception that these students “aren’t up to” the challenge of a demanding curriculum (Schmoker, 2007).

Effective Teaching Practices

Specific, proven teaching practices discussed in detail in Chapter 4 provide the kind of instruction English learners require and deserve. Overall, highly effective teaching for English learners has a number of characteristics (Kelly, Gomez-Bellenge, Chen, & Schultz, 2008).
Factors Associated with Educational Success

First, instruction is differentiated for learners so that they are provided with many opportunities to use reading, writing, and oral language in numerous ways across multiple academic content areas. In addition, teachers scaffold students’ literacy attempts so that they will feel free to take risks. Effective teachers respect students’ “funds of knowledge” (Moll et al., 1992) and integrate students’ own experiences into lessons, which provide motivation to learn. Finally, use of small group instruction, one-to-one tutoring, extensive reading, and cooperative learning also enhances learning for English learners.

Within an RTI framework, when students struggle academically, the effectiveness of teaching is examined as a starting point. Jeanette Klinger and colleagues (Klinger & Edwards, 2006; Klinger, Sorrells, & Barrera, 2007) propose that decisions about instruction and intervention are guided by questions and concerns such as:

- How do we ensure that the child has in fact received culturally responsive, appropriate, quality instruction?
- How do we account for language and culture when designing interventions, conducting research, and generalizing findings?
- What do we mean when we say that instruction or intervention is “evidence-based”? What criteria are applied?
- In considering “evidence-based” interventions, what works with whom, by whom, and in what contexts?
- What does it mean when English learners do not respond to “research-based” instruction?
- To what extent might students be struggling because of limited English proficiency?
- Has adequate support in English language development been provided?
- To what extent has the “research-based” instruction been validated with English learners?
- Are most of the English learners in the classroom succeeding, while just one or two are not? Or are most English learners struggling?
- How should we decide what additional support to provide?

These questions and the issues they represent highlight the importance of effective teaching practices. Fundamentally, these questions point out that RTI isn’t only about how students respond to instruction and intervention, but is also about how teachers and other personnel respond to English learners’ needs.

Relationships of Respect

In her research about ways to help raise achievement for low-income students, Ruby Payne (2008) found that establishing positive relationships with students is a critical factor. She cites the following actions that indicate a teacher has respect for students, which were identified by students themselves:

- The teacher calls me by my name.
- The teacher answers my questions.
- The teacher talks to me respectfully.
- The teacher notices me and says, “Hi.”
- The teacher helps me when I need help.
These seemingly simple acts of respect toward students, coupled with awareness of the sociocultural influences on students’ lives and the diversity of their life experiences, enhance communication and build positive relationships (Villegas & Lucas, 2007).

The Important Role of Parents

The importance of parent support is indisputable. Parents’ involvement in their child’s education is a factor that contributes to student achievement. Parents are also an important support to schools; they create a sense of community between the school and neighborhood, they offer assistance to staff, they are often our best informants about students, and they provide critical insights into cultural attitudes and practices.

Sometimes educators are puzzled when parents of English learners don’t participate as fully as expected. Actually, culturally and linguistically diverse parents care very much about their children’s success in school and want them to obtain as much education as possible, even through college (Goldenberg, 2006). A study that examined immigrant parent attitudes found that many parents make significant sacrifices in immigrating to the United States, with aspirations of a better life for themselves and their families. Seventy percent of the parents interviewed said that opportunity for their families was the main motivation for immigrating, with 18% explicitly stating that their children’s education was the primary reason for coming. Further findings revealed that students themselves value education and recognize the importance of school. The overwhelming majority of students interviewed stated that school prepares you to get ahead and that studying hard leads to success (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008).

Why Don’t They Come?

If parents hold such high hopes for their children and communicate to them the value of education, then why is it a common teacher perception that parents are apathetic about their children’s education? What are some barriers to active participation? The following are some of the many reasons that parents of English learners may not be as fully involved in the school as teachers might expect:

- **Language.** An obvious barrier to participation is not speaking English proficiently. It is likely uncomfortable for parents to be in a situation where they cannot understand the speaker and, in turn, are not understood themselves.

- **Unfamiliarity with the way schools function.** Culturally diverse parents may not understand the importance school personnel place on activities such as back-to-school night, parent-teacher conferences, and open house. Even if they are informed about such activities, they may think it is a courtesy letter and not realize that participation is expected. Further, parents may have responsibilities that preclude their participation, such as work or providing care for elders or young children.

- **Intimidation.** Many parents of English learners have low education levels and often find the level of discourse used and amount of information communicated overwhelming. Further, they may feel that they don’t have much to contribute to a discussion with highly educated professionals, particularly in cultures that hold educators in high esteem. Finally, they may have had the common experience of immigrant parents who have been made to feel powerless against the “system.”
Lack of awareness of their important role. Parents in general are not familiar with the research on the influence they have on their child’s learning. This is especially true with immigrant parents. In many other countries, parents are not encouraged to actively engage in their children’s education, and it is the unspoken norm that this is the teacher’s job (Sobel & Kugler, 2007). Once parents understand their role, they generally become willing participants (Goldenberg, 2004).

Economic circumstances. Most immigrant parents arrive in the new country with very few resources. The poverty rate for children growing up in immigrant homes is double that of native-born families in the United States. These parents most likely cannot take time off work to attend meetings and activities.

Student’s ability/disability. Having a child who struggles in school because of academic and/or behavior issues can be painful for parents. Conferences that focus almost exclusively on the student’s poor performance associated with a disability are a reminder of the dashed hopes and dreams these parents had for their child. Parents may avoid attending meetings so that they aren’t put on the defensive or aren’t made to feel like their parenting is being criticized by school personnel. Teachers need to be sensitive about depending on parents to “fix” the student’s behavior, motivation, and academic issues because most likely the parents deal with many of the same problems at home—and look to the school for solutions. We want to work in partnership with parents, not overburden them with additional responsibilities. Further, parents respond to having a child with a disability in many different ways. You may know someone whose child struggles academically or socially, yet embraces the attitude that all kids have different strengths and they consider their child’s difficulties a part of life. You may know someone else in the same situation who is constantly looking for the right teacher, doctor, or therapist to “cure” the problem. Just as individuals differ in their responses, there are also various cultural tendencies. In some cultures, having a disability brings shame on the family, whereas parents from other cultures may consider disability simply a fact of life. School personnel must be aware of cultural attitudes toward disability and, in every case, be extremely sensitive in their interaction with parents of students with disabilities.

What Can We Do?
The characteristics of effective schools include a welcoming attitude toward parents and formation of connections with the community (Shannon & Byslma, 2007). We want to create a school environment that welcomes parents as partners, supports their needs, and provides opportunities for family and community involvement. Following are a few suggestions for garnering the support of families of English learners:

Be respectful. School personnel must be welcoming to parents in word and deed. Some front offices in schools are toxic because the staff’s attitude is unfriendly at best and sometimes even hostile. Administrators have the responsibility to set a positive, respectful tone in the school that is reflected by all staff. In particular, parents are affected by the attitude of their child’s teacher.

Create a sense of community. With the goal of shared responsibility for the school’s success, parents and the school engage in a number of ways. Some schools have sophisticated programs that provide leadership training for immigrant parents, English as a Second Language classes, and parent resource centers. If that level of resources
isn’t available, there are other options for establishing an interdependent relationship between families and schools. Relatively simple yet important events such as weekly Coffee with the Principal communicate to parents that they are essential partners in the schooling endeavor.

- **Make specific suggestions for helping children academically.** Despite low levels of education, most families have at least one adult or older sibling who can assist children with homework. Also, parents can take their child to the library, look through books and talk about the pictures using the home language, and show enthusiasm for books and reading. In one school where we conducted research, parents attended regularly scheduled after-school “make and take” sessions where they learned, for example, the importance of using flash cards for memorizing math facts and vocabulary words. During the session, parents created a set of materials to use at home.

- **Encourage parent volunteers.** Even parents with low levels of education can have a role in the classroom. They may assist the teacher, work in small groups reviewing math facts or vocabulary cards, volunteer to share an experience or talent (music, cooking, or crafts), and participate in field trips and other events. This kind of participation helps bridge the home-school cultural divide that often exists.

- **Have interpreters available.** Students are often unreliable interpreters because they may screen information (Sobel & Kugler, 2007). Schools should invest in having reliable, trustworthy interpreters on hand both to provide information to parents and to assist parents in communicating with school personnel. The relationship is most effective when it is two-way, instead of just having school personnel unilaterally communicating with parents. Interpreters must be trustworthy because often the information being communicated, especially around the RTI process, is sensitive and needs to remain confidential.

- **Maintain regular communication.** Effective schools regularly send home newsletters that inform parents of what is happening at the school and include resources for parents. The National Center for Learning Disabilities has excellent resources for parents in Spanish to encourage early language and literacy development (http://www.getreadytoread.org/) as do the websites Colorín Colorado (www.ColorinColorado.org/families) and Reading Rockets (http://www.readingrockets.org/article/18935). In addition to written communication, regular phone calls to report a child’s success and home visits are ways to establish good working relationships with families.

### Parents and RTI

With effective RTI, parents are informed about their child’s progress on a regular basis and their help is enlisted to support the instructional program at home. The From the Field box on page 33 features the insights shared by a veteran special education teacher who for many years team taught elementary students with a general education teacher in an inclusive setting called A Community of Learners. Students who are old enough should also be part of the process since participation by the student creates buy-in that improves the result of intervention (Hosp & Madyun, 2007). During a meeting, the student and parent are given an opportunity to offer their perspective and to discuss whether they agree with the school’s assessment of areas of difficulty and suggested intervention. Documentation of each participant’s input is important (see Figure 2.2) and a contract among the student, teacher, and parent helps ensure optimal results.
Figure 2.2  Parent/Student/Teacher Contract

K–8 Intensive Intervention Plan: Parent/Student/Teacher Contract

Student's Name: ____________________________________________________________

Grade: ___________________  Birth Date: ________________________________

School: _________________________________________________________________

Date of Meeting: __________________________________________________________

To be completed by teacher:

1. Basis for determining the academic concern (Circle all that apply):
   ✓ Standards Test
   ✓ Classroom Assessment
   ✓ Report Card Grades
   ✓ Classroom Work Samples
   ✓ Other

2. Language Arts
   ✓ Phonemic Awareness
   ✓ Phonics
   ✓ Reading Comprehension
   ✓ Vocabulary Development
   ✓ Language Development
   ✓ Writing
   ✓ Spelling

3. Mathematics
   ✓ Number Sense
   ✓ Addition
   ✓ Subtraction
   ✓ Multiplication
   ✓ Division
   ✓ Skill Application
   ✓ Other

4. Performance Goal (state expected outcome from intervention):
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

5. Describe the intensive intervention program that would best achieve the performance goal:
   ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

Completed by: ____________________________________________________________

(continued)
Parents should be informed about what progress monitoring is and what it means for their child. (See http://www.studentprogress.org/family/factsheet.asp for family resources and a fact sheet in English and Spanish.) As mentioned previously, a community worker or other person may be enlisted to assist families in understanding the process and in holding schools accountable. The following questions are important for parents to ask, particularly if their child is being considered for Tier 3 or special education services.

1. Is my child’s teacher trained in effective instruction for English learners so that I know my child has been provided sufficient opportunities to learn?

2. What research-based instructional programs are being used, and what research supports the effectiveness of the program(s)?

3. Have the programs been validated on culturally and linguistically diverse populations?

Figure 2.2 (continued)

To be completed by the parent and student:

6. As a parent I agree with the intervention plan and will be responsible for:
   - Finding out how my child is progressing by attending conferences, looking at schoolwork, and/or calling the school.
   - Providing him/her with a quiet place to study, free of interruption.
   - Supervising my child’s homework daily.
   - Providing at least 20 minutes daily for my child to read silently and/or aloud.
   - Providing additional instruction for my child (family member, neighbor, friend, tutor).
   - Sending my child to school every day and on time.
   - Monitoring the Minder Binder/Student Planner.
   - Other plans to assist my child: ________________________________

7. State the dates of implementation:
   - Start Date: ________________________________
   - Completion Date: ________________________________

I approve the Intensive Intervention Plan for this student:

Teacher’s Signature ________________________________
Date ________________________________

Principal/Designee Signature ________________________________
Date ________________________________

I approve the Intensive Intervention Plan for my student:

Parent/Guardian Signature ________________________________
Date ________________________________

I agree with the Intensive Plan, will follow it and will put forth my best effort and cooperation with my teachers and parents.

Student Signature ________________________________
Date ________________________________
All parents want their children to succeed in school both academically and socially. However, for many parents involvement in their child’s education is a daunting and uncomfortable process. Numerous factors influence this such as: limited understanding of the English language, lack of education, or feelings of intimidation about participating in the school process. Many parents depend on older siblings to navigate the educational path for their younger siblings, which at times is an unrealistic expectation placed upon the sibling.

How can we as educators help parents become more involved with a child who is struggling in school and become active participants in their child’s education? For research has time and again shown that a parent’s involvement in their child’s education is a key factor in that child’s success in school.

The Response to Intervention Model (RTI) provides levels of support for students before they begin to fail. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 both address the issue of helping students before they fall too far behind in school. With the RTI model educators are now examining a more comprehensive approach to early intervention in the classroom as well as outside of the classroom setting.

One of the key components of RTI in schools across the nation is assisting parents in recognizing the areas where their child is struggling and participating in an integral way in their child’s progress in school. Many times parents express concern when the school district wants to “put a label” on their child, for fear that the child will be placed in special education classes and characterized as a child who needs extra assistance throughout his or her education. Without the knowledge behind them, many parents feel intimidated about contacting their child’s classroom teacher and approaching the school district for help. They feel frustrated when they see their child failing in school but do not have the necessary expertise to assist the child through the various academic and behavioral supports that are necessary for him or her to succeed.

With the new processes in place using the RTI model, it is important for educators to inform parents in the early stages of a child’s education and to be specific about the areas that the child is having difficulty with. They need to provide research-based data to back up their reporting and to inform parents of the interventions that will be employed to assist their child. Educators need to value parent input and realize that most parents really know their child and want to help him or her succeed.

A timetable needs to be clearly defined and parents need to see what the regular education expectation is for that particular skill that is deficient and impeding the child’s progress. ... Parents need to be assured that the specific intervention will be done in a timely manner. The district should also provide parents with written material about their data collecting and the various programs being used to help their child improve his or her academic performance.

It would be beneficial for the district to provide parent workshops led by knowledgeable professionals with hands-on training for parents. The workshops could possibly provide parents with specific activities on how they can assist in helping their child succeed at home as well as in the school setting.

On a personal note as an educator I remember a meeting with parents of a special needs student and the parent later told me “I felt like I was at a meeting where no one really cared about my opinion. I felt like everyone was drinking out of ceramic mugs and I was given a Styrofoam cup.” Educators need to be aware of the sensitive nature of dealing with both parents and the child who is struggling in school.
4. What process is used to match the intervention(s) to my child’s academic, cultural, and linguistic needs?

5. How many weeks and minutes per day of instruction will my child receive in this program?

6. Given my child’s English proficiency level, will this amount of time be sufficient?

7. How is my child’s progress being assessed?

8. Is my child’s English proficiency being taken into consideration in the assessment?

9. Is a written intervention plan provided in my home language as part of the RTI process?

10. How can I know that the interventions are being carried out as intended (with fidelity)?

11. What training is required to effectively teach the research-based programs?

12. Is my child’s teacher trained in the intervention program as recommended by the publisher?

13. Does the training also include issues related to effective teaching for English learners?

Once parents are informed about and understand the importance of high-quality instruction and progress monitoring, some type of communication about the student’s performance is sent home regularly. If the student is receiving Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention, parents need to be informed of the results every couple of weeks (or more frequently) as data are collected and interpreted.

**Final Thoughts**

Understanding the issues that impact English learners is important, but perhaps never more so than in the current era of high academic standards, including the Common Core State Standards. There has been a long history of underachievement for English learners and the reasons are numerous. While there are factors outside of school that contribute, schools have not always supported culturally and linguistically diverse students in the ways they have needed in order to be successful academically. It is our hope that educators will learn and implement practices that respect students and their families, which will result in effective instructional programs for all students.

**For Reflection and Discussion**

1. The importance of having background knowledge and experiences that align with the content of lessons is undisputed. In your own learning, what are the conditions that facilitate understanding of new concepts or material, and what are impediments to learning?

2. Given the various facts about English learners and their families presented in this chapter, what do you consider to have the greatest impact on teaching and learning?

3. In what ways might you change your approach to working with English learners and their families after reading this chapter?