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# The Response to Intervention Model and Its Influence on Student Reading Success

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This research paper will answer the question “what are the benefits of the Response to Intervention model on student engagement and student success?” The students benefitted from the explicit instruction that in tier two. The data was collected through interviews, pre and post assessments and a rubric. Three major themes emerged including: the effectiveness of selfmonitoring and decoding strategies is essential, motivation and interest is needed to further reading successes and students need to possess basic foundational literacy skills for application purposes. The findings indicated that through the use of interest based texts, systematic and explicit instruction and opportunities for success students’ progress will be facilitated. The implications of this research suggest that tiers two and three are supplemental.

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The Response to Intervention Model  
and Its Influence on Student Reading Success

By

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School of Arts and Sciences

St. John Fisher College

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**Abstract**

This research paper will answer the question “what are the benefits of the Response to Intervention model on student engagement and student success?” The students benefitted from the explicit instruction that in tier two. The data was collected through interviews, pre and post assessments and a rubric. Three major themes emerged including: the effectiveness of self-monitoring and decoding strategies is essential, motivation and interest is needed to further reading successes and students need to possess basic foundational literacy skills for application purposes. The findings indicated that through the use of interest based texts, systematic and explicit instruction and opportunities for success students’ progress will be facilitated. The implications of this research suggest that tiers two and three are supplemental.

### **The Response to Intervention Model and Its Influence on Student Reading Success**

The topic I have chosen to research is the Response to Intervention Model (RTI) and its influence on student reading success. In order to do so, I evaluated two components that make up this model, the pull out intervention model and the push in intervention model. However, the pull out intervention model will be focused on. This topic is something that is prevalent within schools today and causes controversy regarding which method, push in or pull out, facilitates student success in terms of reading. According to Scholin and Burns (2012) the pull out intervention model involves students being “pulled out” of the classroom to receive intervention reading services. The push in model involves teachers “pushing in” to the classroom to help identified students. The demographic that will be looked at will be students who are receiving Tier 2 intervention services according to the Response to Reading Intervention (RTI) model at a school located in upstate New York. Student motivation and success will be looked at as well as students’ perceptions of their success. In order to effectively measure the data received, teacher observations, student interviews, student surveys and Benchmark assessments will be analyzed.

This topic is of great importance because it is something that has been widely disputed by teachers and specialists. Schools throughout the United States have a 3 tiered intervention model. This model is implemented throughout school systems in the United States because it is used as a supplemental system to help provide individualized support to all students (Scholin & Burns, 2012). Tier 1 focuses on students within a classroom, while Tier 2 focuses on students who are receiving intervention services outside of the classroom. Tier 3 involves Special Education services or students who have an Individualized Education Program (I.E.P.). What tier a student is working in is determined by various factors including NYS assessment scores, Benchmark assessments and teacher observations (Scholin & Burns, 2012, Abbott & Wills, 2012, Goss &

Brown-Chidsey, 2012, Denton, Nimon, Mathes, Swanson, Kethley, Kurz & Shih, 2010). Within the ever changing education system, the emphasis has shifted towards Tier 1 intervention within schools in the United States (Goss & Brown-Chidsey, 2012). Therefore, the topic is something of great importance because it focuses on a demographic (Tier 2) who may become marginalized within the upcoming school year because the emphasis has shifted. By conducting this research, Tier 2 students will benefit because the perceptions of ability as well as actual student progress will be unveiled within a 3 tiered model (Mihandoost, Elias, Nor & Mahmud, 2011, Zentall & Lee, 2012, Pyle & Vaughn, 2012).

Within my job as a Reading Teacher through direct observations and conversations the perceptions of which model to use have been argued. Students within Tier 2 who are part of the pull out model and are highly aware of the fact that they are receiving these services, influencing their own perceptions of their ability. McDermott and Varenne (1995) believe that people's attitudes towards what is seen as ability help to shape disability. "Perceptions of ability organize perceptions of disability and vice versa" (p.332). Students who are seen as different from the "norm" may be viewed as "disabled" or lacking in skill or ability. This viewpoint correlates with the intervention model seen within the school. Since students are pulled out of the classroom they may feel that there is some skill that they don't possess that fellow classmates do (Zentall & Lee, 2012). By going to an alternate location the fact that they need extra help becomes obvious to other classmates causing the ones seeking help to become self-conscious. If the specialists pushed in to classrooms, the students that are receiving services would be less obvious. However, this differing from the "norm" is something that is socially constructed within the school's culture because of the tiered intervention system. Therefore, the culture within the institution itself is disabling. "When culture is understood as the knowledge that people need for

living with each other, it is easy to focus on how some always appear to have more cultural knowledge than others, that some can be a part of everything and others not, that some are able and others not" (p. 326). In order to combat these marginalizing perceptions, *all* students must feel that they are a part of the "norm". This involves creating a culture within the school that doesn't focus on the possibility of failure but emphasizes the possibility of student success for all. According to the other reading specialist within the school, students who are placed in intervention programs are students who the school fears won't be able to pass NYS exams or need an extra boost to meet standard curriculum goals for their grade. Meaning that the students receiving these services are not the "norm" and have the possibility of failure if they don't receive the help that they are perceived to need. McDermott and Varenne (1995) assert that "failure is the constant possibility in American schools, and by the dictates of the normal curve, it absorbs about half of the students along the way" (p.344). These viewpoints directly correlate with opinions held by Pyle & Vaughn (2012) who believe that children who are viewed as differing from the norm are more likely to be perceived as being more likely to fail, in turn impacting performance negatively.

However, this viewpoint differs from that which is widely held by classroom teachers, Principal and specialists within the school. According to teacher observation, these professionals feel that the pull out model is the most effective at this point in time, because instruction can be focused and specific to the student. The pull out model also allows for more individualized attention and structured instruction within a 30 minute window. When students are pulled out of the classroom the instruction is tailored specifically to the student and targets skills that the student needs individually. The instruction contains intensive and explicit instruction that involves emphasizing basic literacy skills (Faggella-Luby & Wardwell, 2011). When a reading

teacher or specialist pushes in to a classroom, often attention is taken away from students who need the extra attention because other students in the classroom ask for help. The intervention services may not be as structured because the help is based upon what the teacher has scheduled to work on within the literacy block. Therefore, what the student is being helped with may not be skills that they need work on because it is factored into a daily lesson. The reading teacher or specialist merely acts as an overseer and does not teach. They are an extra set of eyes that help guide the student throughout the lesson. These observations lead to the nature of my research as well as the underlying question that I will be exploring.

Before starting the capstone course, I was aware that I wanted to learn more about the effectiveness of the Response to Intervention Model (RTI) and the influence on student success and engagement. In order to explore the effectiveness, I knew that I had to conduct research to analyze the overall efficiency of the model. Using action research, I was able to target my study to focus on the Response to Intervention (RTI) model's influence on student success and engagement through various components addressed as themes. Scholin and Burns (2012) assert that the Response to Intervention (RTI) model when the tiers are used in progression and tiers two and three are seen as supplemental, the model proves to be beneficial. The Response to Intervention (RTI) model is beneficial for teachers because it provides additional resources for struggling readers in the form of reading resource. The model helps to promote success and engagement through targeted tiers that provide specific and explicit instruction for all students. The main research question within this study is how does the Response to Intervention (RTI) model benefit student engagement and success? Some of the assessment tools I used within my action research to collect data included: student questionnaires, pre and post assessments, a teacher made rubric and transcripts of student and Reading Specialist interviews. My findings



demonstrated that the students benefitted from the targeted systematic and explicit instruction received within tier two (reading resource) that was provided in addition to tier one (classroom) instruction that helped to provide a background of literacy skills. The data and findings indicated that through the use of targeted instruction that helps to promote successes motivation and engagement will be enhanced which will promote reading success. The implications for teachers and specialists included using tier two (reading resource) of the Response to Intervention (RTI) model as a supplemental resource by providing a strong systematic and explicit foundation within tier one (in the classroom), attending professional developments in order to teach the reading programs with fidelity and promoting opportunities for success. Within the implications section I suggested, teachers and specialists could provide a strong foundation through the use of literacy programs. In order to effectively use the literacy programs the teachers could attend professional developments that would help to provide the instructions of how to implement the programs with fidelity. The teachers and specialists could provide the opportunity of successes for struggling readers through the incorporation of decodable texts, as well as interest based texts.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The definition of *literacy* is something that encompasses many definitions. There are several definitions of literacy that give different perspectives, however one particular definition of literacy will be focused on. Literacy is seen as a multidimensional process incorporating the use of various roles as learners having "...many theories of literacy and literacy pedagogy that attempts to describe the conditions that are both necessary and sufficient for successful literate performance" (Freebody & Luke, 1990, p.7). Freebody and Luke define literacy as "...[being]

a social practice, with political and economic potentials and ramifications” (p.16). Literate people within society should look at text through a social, political and economic lens to help deter injustice and oppression within society. In so doing, literacy is looked at critically and is seen as “a set of social practices undertaken with others... know[ing] what to do with text in particular social context other than those of the specialized site of the classroom” (p.12). Literacy is something that occurs not only within the classroom but within society, allowing for students to become culturally responsive and aware of the world they live in. The viewpoint regarding being culturally responsive is seen as a collaborative effort through active constructivism and participation.

Literacy acquisition impacts literacy because literacy becomes a process that involves a social component. Literacy acquisition is a recursive process involving students actively taking ownership in their learning. In order to create a culturally responsive society, the way literacy is viewed must be altered to keep up with the changes in society. Literacy is also viewed as something that needs to be looked at critically through a social and political lens. Within the eyes of New York State, those who are viewed as being “literate” are students who possess the skills needed to pass New York State ELA assessments. However, this viewpoint does not encompass all students and doesn’t allow for *all* students to be viewed as successful. A portion of the definition of literacy focuses on being an advocate for all within a community and taking a political stance. In order to have a culturally responsive society, all students must be viewed as being able to achieve according to literacy standards within the United States. Through New York State’s narrow viewpoint of literacy, certain groups are marginalized (Tier 2 students). Therefore, the definition of literacy and the way students acquire language is something that will directly impact my research and how my study is conducted. Since literacy is

a partly a social construct, students' perceptions of their ability to achieve is something that will directly impact their own success.

### **“Culture as Disability”**

The theory that will guide my study is “culture as a disability” (McDermott & Varenne, 1995). Culture itself can be viewed as disabling. The culture that a person is a part of is something that is socially constructed and what is viewed as “acceptable or the norm” differs. McDermott and Varenne assert that people's attitudes towards what is seen as ability can help to shape disability, in turn impacting student success and motivation. Students who differ from the perception of the “norm” may be viewed as “disabled” or lacking in skill or ability. The “norm” within my study is defined as the children who are viewed as being in good academic standing in regards to New York State testing. Within the New York State Education System a great deal of emphasis is placed on testing. Students who do not meet the criteria or do not reach the cut off score are automatically viewed as “at risk.” In so doing, “failure is a constant possibility in American schools” (p.344). As a result, students who are “at risk” are flagged and will receive Tier 2 intervention services. The children receiving Tier 2 intervention services are the demographic that will be focused on. However, the goal for the upcoming school year is to limit the number of students receiving Tier 2 services and to turn everything back towards the classroom teachers. Tier 2 intervention is seen as supplemental and for those who really are considered “at risk” (Denton, Fletcher, Anthony & Francis, 2006).” The emphasis will also be towards the pull out method, which will help to provide additional support to those who need support to reach the goal of a “solid 2” on the New York State ELA testing. Once students are pulled out of the classroom the idea that the student has deficits in terms of literacy learning

becomes readily apparent (Scholin & Burns, 2012, Abbott & Wills, 2012, Goss & Brown-Chidsey, 2012, Denton, Nimon, Mathes, Swanson, Kethley, Kurz & Shih, 2010). The student that is being pulled from classroom instruction is acutely aware of the fact that they have to go somewhere else to receive support, leading to the dispute in what model best serves students receiving Tier 2 services. In order to combat these negative perceptions of Tier 2 students' abilities, a push in model is also used. However, while this model allows for the students who receive Tier 2 services to have some anonymity, overall the students can still perceive that they need extra support (Scholin & Burns, 2012). While the reading teacher or specialist is within the classroom, their attention typically is focused on specific students creating a similar problem. However, the focused attention can be often masked other students who aren't receiving reading services seeking help because they view the reading teacher as a specialist or "helper."

Overall, this perception of student ability may not be something that can be masked within the tiered intervention model. However, the push in and pull out models are something that could help facilitate student success. Through individualized attention and the belief that each student can achieve, a voice will be given to Tier 2 students who may have initially felt marginalized with the NYS Education System (Scholin & Burns, 2012, Abbott & Wills, 2012, Goss & Brown-Chidsey, 2012, Denton, Nimon, Mathes, Swanson, Kethley, Kurz & Shih, 2010). Through extensive research insight will be provided towards which model helps to facilitate student success, as well as allows students to have positive perceptions of their own abilities.

### **Research Question**

Within a three tiered intervention model, students' perceptions of their own abilities influence their success. The three tiered Response to Intervention Model allows for two methods of academic reading services, the push in and pull out models. Through direct teacher observation of both models, push in and pull out, I was led to pose the following question: "What are the benefits of the Response to Intervention (RTI) intervention model on student engagement and student success?"

### **Literature Review**

Conducting extensive research involves the review of many different articles and databases. When conducting research about the Response to Intervention (RTI) model, it is important to be cognizant of past research and studies, so I can frame my own. When searching, three themes emerged that were seen throughout the research articles. These will be the themes addressed within my literature review. The first theme will discuss the need for explicit and systematic instruction within all tiers of the Response to Intervention (RTI) model. This theme addresses the need for explicit instruction *within* the classroom (tier one) and the transition of that instruction into tiers two and three in the intervention model. Tiers two and three are viewed as supplemental and in addition to tier one if necessary. Students receive tier two and three services when they are falling behind grade level standards. Within the first theme a subtheme emerges. The subtheme involves the need for fidelity when teaching systematic and explicit instruction. Since tiers two and three are seen as supplemental and in addition to classroom instruction (tier one) it is important that the instruction being received in these tiers is being administered properly. Therefore, schools often provide extensive professional developments or trainings to teachers and specialists to ensure that the programs are being taught correctly and effectively. Often the instruction in tiers two and three involve using intervention programs reflecting explicit instruction to help target specific skills. The second theme addresses the need for early intervention within tier one, so as to benefit tiers two and three. Students who are viewed as “at risk” due to New York State and local assessments often demonstrate the need for intervention services at a young age (grades Kindergarten through third grade). Often, when a child struggles at a young age, it has been indicated that these problems persist throughout their school years. Therefore, early intervention helps to facilitate success before the child’s reading

problems worsen and they fall behind significantly. Students who receive intervention services in the Kindergarten through third grade years are more likely to not need intervention services later in their schooling, as opposed to children who did not receive intervention services when they were young. The third theme addresses the perceptions of students and teachers regarding a student's ability. Students receiving intervention services often are acutely aware of this fact, leading to negative perceptions of their own abilities. Therefore, it is important for teachers not to play into these negative perceptions so as not to create a negative self-fulfilling prophecy. Having perceptions that every child can succeed will also help to build intrinsic motivation within the child, in turn contributing to student success.

### **Teachers Need to Deliver Explicit and Systematic Instruction**

Instruction provided by teachers within the classroom (tier one) should provide a foundation for students to build upon. Instruction should be explicit, systematic and incorporate multicomponents throughout all content areas. Literacy is a component that is woven into other content areas, so the foundations should be built upon throughout the school day (Faggelle-Luby & Wardwell, 2011). Explicit instruction involves scaffolding and modeling by the teacher while addressing all expectations and guidelines clearly. Therefore, the child will be provided with fair guidelines and examples to help promote success. Systematic instruction involves the teacher having an idea of where they want the lesson to go. Objectives must be clearly thought out and the teacher should have them in mind so as to frame their lesson. When lessons are systematic, student progress will be heightened because the students have a direct objective or goal to work towards. The objectives correlate with the curriculum and common core, so as to confirm that the students will be provided with a foundation that will help them achieve grade level success (Denton, Fletcher, Anthony & Francis, 2006). The instruction should also include

multicomponents, meaning that more than one skill is being addressed within a lesson. This way the material is more encompassing and students will be gaining knowledge in all five literacy components. The literacy components include: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. Within tier one a strong foundation should be provided within these five components. These components are especially essential in the primary grades (Kindergarten through second grade) and can be modified according to grade and student needs. This idea carries over into tiers two and three. Tiers two and three involve the need for extensive progress monitoring, so as to chart student progress. Since the students' progress is being evaluated on a weekly, monthly and yearly basis, it is important for the intervention services to be explicit and systematic (Mellard, McKnight & Woods, 2009). Students typically receive tier two and three services for a half an hour period per day, which further supports the need for explicit instruction targeting specific reading skills the student needs so as to help promote grade level success. Tiers two and three of the intervention model are highly specific to individual student needs indicating the need for multicomponent lessons, so as to help the student perform at grade level (Scholin & Burns, 2012). The RTI model, has many components which are the targets of the instruction.

The RTI model has three tiers, each of which target specific student needs. Scholin and Burns (2012) suggest that the RTI model serves as the foundation for indicating students who are viewed as "at risk" and as the tiers progress the intervention becomes more focused and specific to student needs. The interventions become more individualized and structured. Abbott and Wills (2012) would agree with these statements, as they believe the tiers build off of each other and the emphasis for direct and explicit instruction should *begin* within tier one. Tiers two and three should be provided in addition to tier one only when students are struggling within the



regular classroom setting. However, if a strong foundation is provided within tier one, the need for tiers two and three can be seen as supplemental. Goss and Brown-Chidsey (2012) assert that if a child is identified for needing tier two services (reading intervention) the instruction should mirror instruction that is provided within the classroom. “When... students whose Tier 1 universal screening scores showed them to be at risk of reading problems [they] were provided with structured and explicit Tier 1 instruction in their area of need...” (p.65). The instruction being provided within the intervention services should cover a wide range of specific literacy skills that the child is struggling with. This idea correlates with Ritchey, Silverman, Montanaro, Speece and Schatsneider (2012) who believe that it is possible for students to be demonstrating difficulty with more than one literacy skill and that the student would need additional support provided within tier two intervention. Literacy skills often build off each other, so if a student is struggling with one component they may be struggling with all components. Wanzek and Vaughn (2009) would agree with Ritchey, Silverman, Montanaro, Speece and Schatsneider regarding viewpoints about multicomponent instruction. These authors believe that often the focus of instruction within tier two should be upon comprehension and fluency because those are the main aspects that indicate success within reading. Within the 30 minute reading intervention instruction period, “at-risk students need intensive and explicit instruction in addition to opportunities to practice reading” (Faggella-Luby & Wardwell, 2011, p.35). One such method involves repeated exposure to familiar and decodable texts.

Decodable texts are texts that contain high frequency words and words that students can sound out according to phonics rules. Graves, Brandon, Duesbery, McIntosh and Plye (2011) suggest that in so doing, students’ fluency will be enhanced. These authors also believe that modeling should be provided for students as to what a fluent reader looks like. Legere and Conca

(2010) held similar perspectives regarding the need for multicomponent materials that incorporate “decodable texts so as to provide... extended practice and to build ... confidence” (p.35). If students are exposed to a variety of components within an intervention lesson, the students would look at intervention in a better light. This suggestion is due to the fact that while weaknesses are being addressed, student strengths are also being looked at. Kerins, Trotter and Schoenbrodt (2010) hold a slightly differing viewpoint. While they believe that fluency and comprehension are key components to be focused on, they suggest that “explicit phonics instruction” is a key addition for younger struggling readers (p.290). Phonics instruction is a key component in developing student success for developing readers and shouldn’t be dismissed. However, perhaps as children progress throughout their schooling the emphasis of literacy skills addressed will shift. Therefore, the general consensus of the authors discussed within theme one addresses the need for explicit and systematic instruction within *all* tiers so as to better promote student success.

When conducting the research it was concluded that another key element in determining that instruction being taught is explicit and systematic involves the issue of fidelity. Fidelity has become more prevalent in regards to Annual Professional Performance Reviews (APPR) as teachers are asked to assess their own professionalism and efficiency within the classroom. Fidelity within tiers two and three is addressed in regards to progress monitoring and programs being used to facilitate success for struggling readers. In so doing, teachers are held accountable for implementing instruction effectively and correctly. When reading intervention programs such as Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI), Wilson Foundations, etc. are administered properly, student success is promoted. These programs often have many components that target specific skills that struggling readers experience. Teachers often receive extensive training as how to

administer these programs during professional developments or summer trainings. Since reading intervention programs are often changing, it is essential that teachers keep up to date as to the latest literacy programs. Deton, Fletcher, Anthony and Francis (2006) agree with viewpoints held by Kerins, Trotter and Schoenbrodt (2010) suggesting that schools typically use more than one intervention program, due to the fact that no one program can encompass all components that a student may need. Therefore, teachers need to be well versed in many different intervention programs.

Another component that is needed to address the issue of fidelity involves progress monitoring. Within tiers two and three progress monitoring is done frequently. Progress monitoring allows for teachers to measure student growth and is done through observations, formal and informal assessments. Mellard, McKnight and Woods suggest that “progress monitoring is a formative assessment to determine if students are benefiting from instruction and whether those benefits are accruing at an adequate rate” (p.187). Progress monitoring is an easy and effective way to directly see if progress is being made. This idea directly correlates with Goss and Brown-Chidsey’s (2012) views that progress monitoring allows for teachers to determine if their instruction is effective and how it could be adjusted to match student needs based on progress made. Fidelity comes into play to ensure that the progress monitoring is being administered properly and frequently. When progress monitoring is being administered effectively, teachers will have a better indication of where a student is at in terms of the grade level. One example of progress monitoring as mentioned by Faggella-Luby and Wardwell (2011) is AIMSweb. AIMSweb is an assessment administered to assess reading fluency. AIMSweb is often administered bi-weekly and the progress can be charted on a graph so as to present a visual representation. In so doing, instruction can be modified to match student needs.

Often to make sure that both aspects (progress monitoring and reading intervention programs) are being administered correctly, teachers and specialists partake in professional development programs and are observed. These professional development programs allow for training in how to administer the programs and address the various features that are seen. According to Abbott and Wills (2012) once professional developments are attended fidelity helps to make certain that "...all staff associated with core classroom instruction and small-group interventions follow the prescribed, agreed-upon procedures" (p. 38). The procedures are in response to instruction that is received within tier one and the literacy programs are created to target specific skills. One such way to make sure that teacher fidelity is being taken into account involves observations that look at how effectively a teacher uses a reading program and if they are using the program correctly (Denton, Fletcher, Anthony & Francis, 2006). While observations can be daunting, fidelity is an essential component within tiers two and three because student progress is so highly important. Students receiving tier two and three services are already viewed as being "at risk", therefore it is essential that progress is being made. Fidelity is also assessed by teachers themselves through rubrics made by districts and states (Goss & Brown-Chidsey, 2012). In so doing, teachers are forced to be reflective on their own practices determining which areas they need to improve upon. This aspect also forces the teachers to be accountable and teach systematically and explicitly because teacher effectiveness is constantly being evaluated. When teachers frequently evaluate their practices the best outcomes are often reflected for students.

A stronger foundation provided by tier one instruction through explicit and systematic teaching will help benefit the other tiers because the number of students who are struggling with reading would have the potential to decrease. The potential to decrease is a result of targeted

skills addressed within all tiers that help to address the needs of the individual students. The idea that instruction should be explicit and systematic is presented by Abbott and Wills (2012) who believe that the foundation for instruction is provided by tier one and built upon in tiers two and three. When the instruction is explicit and systematic individualized skills are targeted, helping to promote success. The idea that the emphasis should be on tiers two and three and that instruction should be explicit and systematic correlates with ideas held by Goss and Brown-Chidsey (2012). Goss and Brown-Chidsey promote the idea that:

using highly structured and explicit instruction in all five areas of reading, gathering regular data about students progress, grouping students for instruction on the basis of their needs, and providing additional instruction for students who need it [help promote optimum success.] (p.65).

When all of these aspects are accounted for a strong foundation is built. Abbott and Wills present the idea that “the goal of RtI is to create and maintain an on-going process that uses student performance to guide implementation of high-quality instruction and intervention that is matched to student needs” (p.37). Abbot and Wills directly correlate with ideas held by Goss and Brown-Chidsey (2012) who believe that individualized and targeted instruction should be the primary focus of the Response to Intervention (RTI) model and that the instruction should be delivered by a highly qualified individual. High-quality instruction involves the implementation of intensive instruction within a 30 minute span. Schedules are often busy within the school day, providing tier two or three instruction above the 30 minute time span per day to often be impossible. Therefore, the instruction received during that time should involve scaffolding and modeling of skills as well as extensive practice (Abbott & Wills, 2012). In so doing, student success will be facilitated promoting stronger instruction being implemented within tiers two and

three. When instruction is intensive, explicit and systematic teacher accountability and fidelity are already accounted for, in turn promoting student success and motivation. All aspects build off of and influence each other. One way to make certain that instruction is explicit is to make sure that this instruction is being implemented within the primary grades. The primary grades help to formulate the foundation for all other grades and provide the basic skills necessary for future literacy successes.

### **Early Intervention Should Be Provided for Struggling Readers**

The number of students receiving intervention services for reading is something that is increasing. Due to this fact, the RTI model was put into place. Denton, Nimon, Mathes, Swanson, Kethley, Kurz and Shih (2010) identify how RTI is seen as something that is implemented school wide and a major component of the model is identifying and addressing “academic needs for learners” (p.394). Therefore, identification for intervention services is something that should happen at a young age because this is when the foundation of literacy skills are developed. Within the earlier grades (Kindergarten through second grade) the curriculum is reflective of providing students with basic skills that will help further their reading in the later years including: phonics, decoding and basic spelling patterns. Shepherd and Salembier (2011) claim that a key component of the RTI model involves “emphasis on early intervention and accountability for student progress within the general education classroom” (p. 3). This idea involves the priority being placed back within tier one. Tier one needs to provide a strong foundation, developing basic literacy skills. When tier one isn’t providing enough for a student, tier two or three interventions will be implemented. However, a problem that is increasing involves a rise in the number of upper elementary students receiving reading intervention support. Perhaps, a reason for the increase in numbers is due to the change in the

rigor of the curriculum because of the common core and the increasing emphasis on state testing. The shift in the curriculum due to the common core emphasizes literacy skills throughout all content areas. Wanzek and Roberts (2012) suggest the idea that as elementary grades progress the need for literacy skills increases. The advanced progression in literacy skills is due to the fact that, “after third grade particular challenges... [involving] general education curriculum not only in reading but also other content areas... [expect] ... the mastery of reading for building background knowledge and learning new information” (p.90). The way that questions are worded and what is expected of students in content areas becomes a matter of literacy. The focus is on reading and writing within the common core, making these the areas that children need to be highly proficient in. Therefore, many children who have not been identified but are struggling with reading fall behind. The instruction that is being received within the classroom (tier one) doesn't focus on the components that struggling readers need in upper grades. The rigor within these grades increases, and the students are expected to apply the skills gained in prior grades. Students are held accountable for writing lengthy pieces that involve extensive knowledge of literacy skills and comprehension of the stories that are being read in the classroom. The classroom is not geared for the struggling reader and often accommodations in course work are not made, forcing the child who is struggling to be held to the same standard. It is often assumed at this point that students have mastered the basic literacy skills (Wanzek & Roberts, 2012). However, this assumption is often incorrect. Wanzek and Kent (2012) correlated with several of the assertions held by Roberts. If a child is in an upper elementary grade and struggling with reading it is suggested that “applying beginning reading interventions designed for students in K-3 may be appropriate” (p.5). This idea holds true because K-3 instruction focuses on providing a foundation of literacy skills and the instruction often includes phonics and decoding skills. If a

student does not have a strong foundation of literacy skills it is appropriate to provide children with basic skills regardless of the age.

Early intervention services are something that can be decided upon when a child is even in Kindergarten. Determining if a student needs intervention services is a process that has many different components. The process involves screening of students involving various measures given by teachers and specialists within the school. At the beginning of the school year, various benchmark assessments such as Fountas and Pinnell and AIMSweb are administered to all children within the school. Various cut offs are provided for these assessments and it can be determined if the child is at grade level. For example, the Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessments provide grade level correlation charts. The AIMSweb reading fluency benchmark provides a norm chart with percentile ranges. If the child is reading below a certain percentile they may need intervention services. The percentiles are broken into ranges from 10 to 90. Students who are reading within the 10th percentile, the texts were considered to be within their frustrational range. Children reading in the 25<sup>th</sup> through 75<sup>th</sup> percentiles, the texts are considered to be within their instructional range. Children reading in the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile, the texts are considered to be within their independent range. The chart also is also broken into each grade level by fall, winter and spring semesters. The average number of words is indicated for that grade level at all those points in time. The teacher takes the number of words read by the child and indicates where they fall on the chart to determine the percentiles. It is also indicated how many words the student should improve by throughout the year. As students get older, the number of extra words that they read will decrease because decoding skills are often something that are thought to be mastered at that point in time. Simmons, Coyne, Kwok, McDonagh, Harn and Kame'enui (2008) suggest that students who are demonstrating "poor reading performance is



not only modifiable but in many cases preventable” (p.159). The prevention of further reading problems involves a strong foundation being provided within tier one and the need for early intervention. In order to prevent further reading problems, it is suggested that the RTI model while providing services needed for intervention, is most effective when administered starting from a young age (Coyne, Kwok, MCDonagh, Harn & Kame’enui, 2008). The intervention services when provided within the years of Kindergarten through second grade help to provide a foundation of literacy skills allowing for the student to possibly not need intervention skills in the future. This idea is supported by Gapp, Zalud & Pietrzak (2009) who believe that students who are placed into a reading intervention program at a young age are more likely to be able to not require intervention services as they progress throughout their schooling. Early intervention emphasizes the basic foundational skills that will help children in their future academic pursuits.

Another positive aspect regarding early intervention, are the programs that are often associated with the early years. Gapp, Zalud and Pietrzak (2009) discuss Reading Recovery and the benefits that are associated with this program. Reading Recovery is a program that is targeted for children in first grade and “is a supplementary pull-out intervention designed to provide special individualized reading and writing instruction for students...” (p.9). The Reading Recovery program is typically administered over a span of 12 to 20 weeks. Within those weeks, students work on the five basic components of literacy learning. The ultimate goal of the program is to have students reading at the grade level standard. It has been noted that due to the intensive 30 minute lessons, children who worked with this program often are “discontinued [from intervention programs]” (Gapp, Zalud & Pietrzak, 2009, p.14). Another early intervention that is mentioned is the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). DIBELS is an assessment that is used with children throughout the elementary years to assess how

effectively a student has acquired literacy skills. Clemens, Hilt- Panahon, Shapiro and Yoon (2012) discuss the effectiveness of implementing this assessment within the early intervention program. The DIBELS assessment is broken into various subcomponents. The subcomponents include: initial sounds fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency, letter naming fluency and nonsense word fluency. This format is similar to the format reflected within the AIMSweb for younger grades (Kindergarten and first grade). The assessment helps to provide various information that can help guide instruction within intervention programs and can be used as a progress monitoring tool. The notion of early intervention correlates with theme one and the need for explicit and systematic instruction. In order for students to be successful learners in reading, basic skills must be acquired at an early age. If students are provided with a strong foundation within the primary years, the number of students reflected within the intervention program within the intermediate elementary years would subside. In turn, the RTI model will be used as it is intended to be, as a supplemental support. The RTI model while effective shouldn't be solely relied on. If a student's foundation is weak and steps are not taken to address these issues, problems will often persist and worsen. While the majority of students demonstrate progress with early intervention, not all students reach grade level success.

The RTI model has proven to be effective for the majority of the students receiving tier two and three services. However, there are some students who even with tier two or three intervention services continue to struggle. Wanzek and Vaughn (2008) present this idea and refer to these students as "nonresponders" (p.126). These are students who were identified at an early age, yet do not demonstrate progress with intervention services as indicated according to progress monitoring. While the number of nonresponders is generally low, only two percent to six percent the needs for these children are not being addressed (Wanzek & Vaughn, 2008).

When children are nonresponsive to the tier they are in, often if they are in tier two they may be evaluated for tier three services. The RTI model maintains flexibility to do so because the tiers build off of each other. If the child is receiving tier three services a modification of the programs and interventions the child is receiving will be evaluated in terms of the student's Individualized Education Plan (I.E.P.). However, there are various methods that have been put in place to help minimize the number of nonresponders within early intervention. One such method to combat the lack of response to early intervention involves having the amount of time the child receives intervention reading services to become more frequent. For example, increasing the time from 30 minutes three times a week to 30 minutes four times a week. These intervention services are provided in addition to classroom instruction (Wanzek & Vaughn, 2008). Another method to improve the effectiveness of tier two and three services involves teachers pushing in to the classroom. In addition to the increased frequency of pull out interventions services, reading teachers and specialists can push in to the classroom to provide support within the ELA portion of the day several times a week. The idea of nonresponders is something that Clemens, Hilt-Panahon, Shapiro and Yoon (2012) address within early intervention services. Nonresponders are seen as children who are deemed as being unable to learn regardless of the intervention services received. However, they contradict the ideas of Wanzek and Vaughn (2008) slightly in how these students should be addressed. The students are viewed as needing to increase the intervention services as needed. Clemens, Hilt-Panahon, Shapiro and Yoon (2012) believe that in order for children who are struggling within early intervention to have success, frequent progress monitoring should occur. Progress monitoring allows for teachers to know where a student is performing at all times, therefore it should be utilized frequently. One such method involves assessing word reading throughout Kindergarten and first grade to determine student progress

toward successful grade level reading (Clemens, Hilt-Panahon, Shapiro & Yoon, 2012). Another point to consider involves looking at frequency versus intensity. Some students may be receiving frequent services, but what they are doing within the block is not intensive. Intensity is a method that involves implementing systematic and explicit instruction with repetitive features (Clemens, Hilt- Panahon, Shapiro & Yoon). The intensity of a lesson is often something that should be considered because it is a practical solution. With packed schedules in the early grades, increasing the frequency that the child is pulled out of the classroom may not be possible. Increasing the intensity of lessons within tier two and three services may be the best compromise because the lessons would be individualized to address specific student needs. Therefore, it is important to remember that while early intervention is typically successful in promoting student success, there are outliers and that one intervention method may not fit all students. The RTI model is meant to provide flexibility and address specific student needs and should allow for modifications and accommodations, so as to best benefit the student. In so doing, student progress will be accounted for as well as student motivation.

Student motivation is an area that needs to be accounted for when dealing with early intervention. Students' perceptions that they will carry throughout their schooling years are developed at this age. Faggella-Luby and Wardwell (2011) present the idea of decodable and predictable texts. These types of texts are often seen within the primary grades (Kindergarten through second grade). Children receiving early intervention supports should be working extensively with these types of texts. These texts often have familiar patterns which promote student success, in turn boosting motivation. When a child is successful they become encouraged and enjoy what they are doing creating a positive outlook on literacy learning. Students who are struggling at a young age need to foster good experiences so as not to create a negative self-

fulfilling prophecy throughout their school years. Clemens, Hilt-Panahon, Shapiro and Yoon (2012) would disagree with these viewpoints, once again addressing the nonresponders. Young children who are not responding to early intervention may become more accustomed to failures in the eyes of the state from a young age. Therefore, negatively impacting their intrinsic motivation. Negative intrinsic motivation is a pattern that these authors believe will persist throughout their school years if not addressed. However, the idea was also presented that addressing the issue of intrinsic motivation during the early intervention is something that should always be tried regardless of those who will be non-responsive. In order to increase intrinsic motivation, instruction that allows for successes should be provided for children receiving reading intervention services. Texts should be focused at the child's instructional level, which may not be at grade level. However, when the child is reading a text at their instructional level they are more likely to make gains because the fluency and comprehension of the story is something that will come more naturally. As a result, the students will increase in reading levels. The focus should also be on basic decoding, fluency and comprehension skills. The lessons should be tailored accordingly so as to match the needs of the students within each individual group. Once intrinsic motivation is accounted for within a lesson, success will be something that directly follows.

Overall, it has been concluded that early intervention is an effective method in increasing student progress and "...highlights the need for measures in which slope is predictive of later outcomes" (Clemens, Hilt-Panahon, Shapiro & Yoon, 2012). Early intervention helps to provide the foundation upon which all other literacy skills develop from. Early intervention correlates with theme one and teaching using explicit and systematic instruction. Teachers within primary classrooms should be incorporating methods that help to create positive responses through

modeling techniques and familiar texts, such as modeling “good reading skills.” (Legere & Conca, 2010). In so doing, tiers two and three can enhance the features provided within tier one so as to create a strong model to support all students. When children are struggling at a young age if the proper reading intervention is administered, children will be more likely to succeed and not continue with services in the future. The RTI model is put into place to serve students at all levels. In order to help promote intrinsic motivation and success teachers must be cognizant of the abilities of all of their students. Through extensive progress monitoring and teacher observations, students will receive the help they need from an early age. Within the changing word of education and the increase in the need for literacy skills across all content areas, student success is something that is essential because it will affect all areas of the child’s schooling. In order to do so, instruction should be geared towards achieving student success for *all* students. When that instruction model is put into place, everything else is accounted for in terms of teacher fidelity and student success. However, while promoting a strong tier one is essential, there will always be children who are struggling within that tier and need intervention services. Often the most frequent problem that is seen with these children involves motivation. In order for the RTI model to work efficiently and effectively this issue must be addressed. In order to do so, teachers must be aware of their own perceptions about students’ abilities who are receiving reading intervention. If perceptions are negative, the child will be less likely to succeed. Therefore, the RTI model allows for motivation of struggling readers to increase through repeated successes for the student. In turn, allowing for overall success within school and the promotion of positive school experiences.

### **Teachers Must Be Aware of Their Perceptions of Students' Abilities**

Student motivation is something that directly impacts student success. Student motivation is often influenced by perceptions of ability. Children who are struggling are often viewed as the demographic of children who aren't able to achieve grade level success. Often within this demographic are children who may have a further impairment that would impact reading, such as Dyslexia or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). These factors impact the child's ability to read, in turn impacting their motivation levels. Children who are struggling readers often are used to repeated failures causing their perceptions of their own ability and the teacher's perceptions of their ability to be negative. Mihandoost, Elias, Nor and Mahmud (2011) further this assertion and believe that "motivation is the force that energizes and directs one's drive to accomplish goals" (p.189). Therefore, if a child doesn't have motivation they will be less likely to succeed in all content areas. The source of this lack of motivation is often due to frequent academic failures which causes the child to develop negative perceptions of their ability and negative attitudes. In order to try and "...compensate for their processing and skill deficits... coping strategies [are developed]" (p.189). Often the coping strategies involve frequent laughing, refusing to do the work or frequent visits to other locations in the school, including the bathroom and the nurse. Zentall and Lee (2012) agree with the increase in avoidance behaviors seen, believing that the avoidances behaviors are the result of the shift in intrinsic motivation to extrinsic motivation involving "performance goals" (p.35). These avoidance behaviors are used to shift the focus off of the students' lack of literacy skills. As a result, students' motivation transfers from intrinsic to extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation involves the student being internally motivated to do well. Extrinsic motivation involves looking to outside factors. These factors often result in children who are struggling believe that the factors that would allow for them to

succeed are outside of their realm of control (Mihandoost, Elias, Nor, & Mahmud, 2011). The factors that are outside of a person's control often contribute to the lack of motivation and can sometimes be the result of repeated failures. Legere and Conca (2010) would agree but they take the argument one point further, believing that often the children who are typically struggling with negative perceptions are children in the older grades. At that point in time, children would have been struggling with reading for years without significant improvement, therefore negatively impacting their own beliefs about their abilities. Some of these older children may also have been receiving intervention services throughout their early education years. Often the early intervention may cause the student to feel even more frustrated, resulting in "motivational issues and prevention techniques have not been successful" (p.32). It is important to combat these perceptions early on so that they do not progress throughout schooling... "halting [students'] expectation of failure and [their] negative self-efficacy as a reader [is] important before they spir[al] further downward" (p.34). These negative perceptions of ability are also typically correlated with negative perceptions held by the classroom teacher.

Teacher perceptions of student ability are something that directly impacts student motivation and the ability to succeed. If teachers believe that a child will not be able to succeed because they are not performing at the grade level standard, these perceptions will manifest. Since the rigor of curriculum often becomes more demanding as the grades progress, teachers of older grades may be under the false perception that these students can not succeed and will view them as not being able to achieve and in need of intervention reading services. Vaughn, Wanzek, Murray, Scammacca, Linan-Thompson and Woodruff (2009) suggest that the children while they may be struggling, are not necessarily incapable of learning these literacy skills. Instead, the student may reach their potential later in their schooling. These students are referred to as "lower



responders” (p.166). The low responders are students who have not been responding to previous explicit and systematic instruction or intervention services. While the aspect of low responders can seem discouraging, “findings reveal that some students progress at a much slower rate, struggling considerably with reading after intervention” (p. 166). While these may be the case, it does not mean that these students will never learn these skills but simply at a slower developmental rate than their peers. Due to this fact, faulty conclusions are sometimes drawn by teachers, and these students become flagged for needing more extensive intervention services because they believe these students are incapable of learning. The teacher believes that these students do not possess the same mental faculties as their peers, when in actualization they may simply be developing these literacy skills at a slower rate. Pyle & Vaughn (2012) agree with these findings and further the case by looking at the rigorous curriculum and the expectations of teachers as having a negative impact on students’ perceptions of their own ability. Since the curriculum found within the older grades is often demanding and teachers are expected to have students achieving at grade level, accommodations to the curriculum are often not made for struggling readers. If a child is reading at a level that is significantly behind their peers, they will become frustrated which impacts their achievement in a negative fashion. Pyle & Vaughn state that:

challenges are individual student characteristics, such as reading multiple years behind grade level or a lack of motivation in school due to consistently low achievement, that exacerbate the necessity to read for understanding in highly rigorous content area courses required for promotion in high school and then for graduation (p.275).

Another frequent problem that is demonstrated by teachers involves the comparison of one student to their peers. Teachers within the older grades often are concerned when students

are not performing at grade level because of the rigor of the curriculum and the need for the child to perform at the same level as their peers. As a result, pressure is often placed onto the child causing additional outside stressors. Zentall and Lee (2012) demonstrate this point and how outside pressures could be one of the factors decreasing motivation. The external factors influence the student's performance and motivation levels. The negative performance can be a result of repeated "academic failures, [causing] the adult [to] pressure a child to perform at a higher level, [causing] a child's achievement motivation [to change] from intrinsically motivated to extrinsically motivated" (Zentall & Lee, 2012 p.34). This reality can become frustrating for both the teacher *and* the student. In order for student achievement, perceptions and motivation to ultimately increase, opportunities for student success must be fostered. These opportunities for success are something that can begin right within the classroom. Teachers must be aware of student abilities and plan lessons accordingly to allow for successes for all students within the classroom. Providing a strong foundation within tier one is highly beneficial but further services within tiers two and three can be provided so as to help children develop positive perceptions of ability and to demonstrate success.

The RTI model is put into place so as to help promote success for all students. The flexibility within the model, allows for students to receive the services they need and for the services to become more intensive as needed. Tiers two and three of the model allow for students who have experienced repeated failures to experience successes. Pyle and Vaughn (2012) further the belief that the RTI allows for flexibility and that teaching within tiers two and three should be reflective of this. In order to combat negative perceptions experienced by both teachers and students alike, the tier two reading intervention allows for many different opportunities to promote success. One such method, involves addressing student needs directly. Within reading

intervention, Pyle and Vaughn suggest that the pace the lesson moves at and what is taught should be directly reflective of individual student needs. Within the lesson, student motivation should be considered as an objective. In order to increase motivation “students [should be] presented... with opportunities to select text, set personal goals with [teacher] assistance, and receive positive phone calls home” (p.280). In so doing, students will become more actively engaged in their learning and will become more accountable for their own successes. Through engaging readings that are reflective of students’ interests, the student will be more focused during the lesson which will allow for more successes. Setting goals is also a beneficial strategy because it plays to the students’ internal motivations. Students are not being compared to other students but merely to themselves, allowing for students to be able to directly see the progress that was made, while not being brought down through comparisons to peers. Zentall and Lee (2012) agree that goal setting and praise are two key components in increasing motivation and allowing for the creation of positive perceptions of ability. It is suggested that intervention reading teachers can “prime” students to respond positively to the learning environment which will help to formulate positive “self-perceptions and thus improve performance” (p.35). In order to effectively prime students, teachers must have clear expectations that are achievable. When a child is doing something that is deserving of praise, it is important that the intervention teacher allows for the student to experience that success because they may not have before. In turn, students will become more intrinsically motivated because their negative perceptions of their own abilities will be curbed (Zentall & Lee). Another method to improve motivation and positive perceptions involves extensive practice through a highly structured lesson.

Reading intervention instruction should include lessons that are highly structured, explicit and systematic. The lessons should involve intensive scaffolding that allow for the teacher to

model the skill but should also provide opportunities for the student to practice the newly acquired skill. Wills, Kamps, Abbott, Bannister and Kaufman (2010) suggest the idea that within a highly structured environment students must also have the opportunity to respond to the information. The teacher should not do all the thinking, but should allow for students to draw conclusions independently. This idea correlates with Pyle and Vaughn (2012) who believe that students should be allowed to take ownership of their own learning. In order for a child to effectively learn information the teacher must allow for opportunities to gauge what the child already knows. In order to do that, students need to be responding to what they are reading. This can be done through various techniques involving comprehension questions involving in text questions and inferential questions. The true test of comprehension mastery involves the ability to answer questions explicitly found within a text and questions not stated within a text (inferential). Rictchey, Silverman, Montanaro, Speece and Schatschneider (2012) involve a model that accounts for all areas of reading mastery known as “concept-oriented reading instruction” (p.320). These authors suggest that students who are struggling with reading often are struggling with metacognitive strategies. Metacognition involves the reader thinking and assessing what they are reading. Due to the lack of metacognition, struggling readers often are not comprehending what they are reading which leads to failures which leads to negative perceptions and motivation. The concept-oriented reading instruction model looks at both comprehension and motivation. In order to address both students must be allowed to have some autonomy allowing for them to select their own reading materials and reading instruction being seen in all content areas. It is also suggested that the intervention should span across many different components so as to be more encompassing and extensive (Ritchey, Silverman, Montanaro, Speece & Schatschneider, 2012). However, in order to allow for students to take

ownership of their learning intervention teachers need to have an idea of student motivation and interests.

When addressing struggling readers it is important for intervention reading teachers or specialists to be aware of the fact that since struggling readers often experience repeated failures, they often may not be fond of reading. Zentall and Lee (2012) agree with ideas presented by Pakulski and Kaderavek (2012) who believe that it is important to gauge the student's perceptions of their own reading ability and of reading in general. One such method involves administering an inventory. Pakulski and Kaderavek (2012) indicate the importance of administering the "Elementary Reading Attitude Survey" (p.90). The survey was developed by McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth in 1995 and includes pictures of Garfield. The survey includes questions regarding views on reading as well as perceptions of reading ability. The student must circle the Garfield that they believe best identifies their beliefs. The Garifields "rang[e] from very happy to very upset" (p.90). Once the children have completed the survey, teachers can gain a better understanding of student perceptions towards reading and plan instruction accordingly. The perceptions indicated through the survey are often reflective of the demographic of struggling readers. The outcome of the survey is typically negative, thus furthering the need for instruction that increases student motivation and interest in reading. Another method that increases student motivation, success and positive perceptions is the "cross-age reading" program (p.90).

Pakulski and Kaderavek (2012) discuss the benefits of the cross-age reading program and the improvements in student motivation and perceptions. Pakulski and Kaderavek (2012) agree with perceptions held by Mihandoost, Elias, Nor and Mahmud (2011) in terms of children who are struggling experiencing repeated failures. Therefore to combat the repeated failures, children

who are struggling readers should be paired with readers who are younger than them. The cross-age reading program “was constructed to provide a genuine purpose for engaging in repeated readings with an authentic audience, [in turn]... improving [students] reading fluency and comprehension” (Pakulski & Kaderavek, 2012, p.91). The model involves struggling readers being paired with a younger student and reading to them. The books that are chosen are at the struggling students’ independent level and are decodable texts. As a result, the child is receiving practice with skills that are needed to have literacy success. Since the books are considered to be easy for the struggling reader, they are experiencing success within their reading providing positive experiences and an opportunity for success. By providing this program once a week, students will be practicing basic literacy skills and will develop positive perceptions of their own abilities. The model is also seen as being highly beneficial for the students who are listening to the story being read by the older student. The student is gaining exposure to modeling techniques demonstrated by the reader. The student is also becoming more familiar with high frequency vocabulary words which are often used within decodable texts.

Within the RTI intervention model it is important for teachers found within all tiers to be cognizant of the perceptions of student abilities and how they may be impacting these perceptions (Vaughn, Wanzek, Murray, Scammacca, Linan-Thompson & Woodruff, 2009). The model allows for flexibility and for the opportunity for all students to achieve. The argument of teachers’ perceptions of student abilities is furthered by Mihandoost, Elias, Nor and Mahmud (2011) who believe that students who are struggling often have experienced repeated failures which account for the negative perceptions of their own abilities. If teachers play into these negative perceptions, a negative self-fulfilling prophecy will ensue defeating the purpose of RTI. Therefore, in order to allow for all students to experience success a systematic approach to

teaching must be implemented, as well as opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning to be put into place. In so doing, student motivation will be increased which serves as a direct relationship and indicator of student perceptions of ability. When students have positive perceptions of their own experiences success for all will be facilitated which will deter the negative perceptions that may have been had prior, leading to future success in all content areas throughout all school years.

The RTI intervention model is put in place so as to benefit all students within a school system. The model has three tiers that build off of each other providing more extensive interventions as the tiers progress. In order for the model to function in an effective manner, tiers two and three must be seen as supplemental and in addition to a strong foundation provided within tier one. In order to correctly evaluate what tier a student should be placed in, progress monitoring is administered school wide. Students who fall below a certain cut off are flagged and screened for tier two or three intervention services (Scholin & Burns, 2012). Within all tiers of the model it is important that the instruction being received is explicit and systematic and is including all five components of literacy learning. Since the reader is behind, it is important to be cognizant of the fact that if a student is struggling with one skill it is possible that they are struggling with many different components. The instruction should provide texts that are decodable and predictable and emphasis should be placed on comprehension, decoding and fluency. The elements included within the instruction should be based individually on student needs. Since tiers two and three are seen as intervention tiers, it is important that instruction targets these specific skills (Denton, Fletcher, Anthony & Francis, 2006). When explicit and systematic instruction is provided, the number of children receiving intervention programs will decrease.

Another key component of the RTI model involves the need for early intervention. Simmons, Coyne, Kwok, McDonagh, Harn and Kame'enui (2008) suggest that early intervention allows for students who are struggling to receive services as early as Kindergarten. When students receive interventions from an early age they are more likely to not need intervention services within the future. The idea of early not needing intervention services in the future correlates with ideas held by Shepherd and Salembier (2011) who believe the early years within schooling help to provide the basic foundation upon which all other successes depend, therefore a strong foundation must be built within these years. As a result, student successes will be facilitated and student motivation will be increased. Student and teacher perceptions of student ability is the last component that influences student success and the functioning of the RTI model.

As a teacher it is important to be cognizant of your own perceptions of a student's ability and his/her chance to succeed. According to Vaughn, Wanzek, Murray, Scammacca, Linan-Thompson and Woodruff (2009) negative student perceptions lead to negative outcomes. When providing instruction within tiers two and three it is important to provide opportunities for students to experience successes. The idea of negative perceptions correlates with ideas held by Mihandoost, Elias, Nor and Mahmud (2011) who assert that students within these tiers have had more exposure to failures, in turn negatively impacting their confidence. When students experience repeated failures often they begin to lack motivation. As a result, frequent praise, decodable texts and opportunities to take ownership of learning are essential. As a result student success will be facilitated and the RTI model will function properly and effectively, so as to serve all students. This serves as the last component that makes the RTI model a beneficial tool to be used within the school system.



Throughout my research it was concluded that various components contribute to the functioning of the Response to Intervention (RTI) model. The three main components or themes, are directly interconnected and impact each other. When the RTI model is paired with systematic and explicit instruction, early intervention and positive teacher and student perceptions of ability it will be able to function properly allowing for all students to experience success. A strong foundation must be provided for within tier one, and the other two tiers must serve as a strong additional resource. Each student must be accounted for so as to determine where they best fit within the RTI model. In so doing, each student will have an equal and just opportunity to reach success within literacy throughout their school years contributing to future successes.

## **Method**

### **Context**

Research for this study took place in a school district located in a suburb of Western New York. The New York State District Report Card for the 2011-2012 school year demonstrated that 365 students were enrolled in the school, ranging from grades Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The student demographics for the 2011-2012 school year showed that the school consisted of 86% Caucasian, 5% Asian or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 4% Hispanic or Latino, 2% Black or African American and 2% Multiracial. Of the students who attended the school, 7% were eligible for free or lunch and 2% for a reduced price lunch. The school was small in size and the average class size for the 2011-2012 school year was 21 students. The school spanned from grades Kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade and there were approximately three teachers per grade level. The school also had one reading resource room, with two Reading Specialists. The research was

conducted within this setting. Each Reading Specialist saw approximately six groups of reading intervention students in a given day, but the research focused on three specific groups from three different grade levels. The grade levels that were looked at within the research ranged from third through fifth grades. The third grade reading group consisted of one student who was female. Within the third grade reading group, the student was Caucasian. The fourth grade reading group consisted of one student who was female. Within the fourth grade reading group the student was Caucasian. The last group, the fifth grade group, consisted of two students. Within that group one student was male and one was female. The fifth grade group demographics included: one African American female and one African American male. The teacher included within the study was the other Reading Specialist, who had taught for eight years and was a Caucasian female.

### **Participants**

The participants that were included within this study consisted of four students who were in grades third through fifth. Of those four participants, three were females and one was male. Within the third grade reading group, the student was eight years old. The fourth grade reading group consisted of a student who was nine years old and the fifth grade reading group consisted of students ranging from nine to ten years. The students were all eligible for tier two intervention services and none of the students had an IEP. All students had been deemed eligible for tier two services due to teacher observations and results on summative assessments, such as local and New York State assessments. The third grade reading group received small group instruction from a Reading Specialist three times a week for thirty minutes. The fourth grade reading group received instruction from the Reading Specialist four times a week for thirty minutes. The last reading group that was observed, the fifth grade group, received instruction from the Reading Specialist three times a week for thirty minutes.

Becca (a pseudonym) was an eight year old Caucasian female. She was very outgoing and was in third grade. Becca received reading intervention support three times a week. Becca was hardworking and displayed a positive attitude. Becca's motivation consistently showed that she was engaged within the subject matter as demonstrated through teacher observations and the results of her Elementary Attitude Survey. Becca demonstrated inconsistent fluency and frequently re-read lines that she read previously which resulted in some needs for assistance with comprehension based instruction.

Grace (pseudonym) was an outgoing, nine year old Caucasian female. She was in fourth grade and received reading intervention support. She demonstrated motivation for reading based upon teacher observations, but was often influenced by extrinsic motivation factors. She preferred reading in an informal setting and didn't enjoy reading when it was required, unless it was of interest to her (as indicated within the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey). She is of French heritage and that is her primary language at home which sometimes affects her comprehension and decoding strategies.

Isabelle (pseudonym) was a hardworking ten year old African American female. She was in fifth grade and received reading intervention supports. Based on teacher observations, she was highly motivated and frequently contributed to group discussion. She made frequent connections to material that was read throughout the instruction and she used context clues to formulate predictions while reading.

Tom (pseudonym) was a hardworking ten year old African American male. He was in fifth grade and received reading intervention supports. Tom is repeating fifth grade and has made tremendous gains. Based on teacher observations, he was very motivated in terms of academic

reading success. He was consistently on task and contributed frequently and without prompting. He was highly motivated to discontinue his reading support services, resulting in high intrinsic motivation.

### **Researcher Stance**

I am currently a graduate student at St. John Fisher College working towards a Master's degree in Literacy Education, Birth- sixth grade. I presently have a Bachelor's degree in Childhood and Special Education. I am certified in Childhood, Early Childhood, Special and Literacy Education. Throughout my research, acted as an active participant. Mills (2014) defined active research as "any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counselors, or other stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment to gather information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn" (p.8). As a result, the research that was conducted benefitted the population being worked with. I acted as an active participant and observer through direct observations and lessons that I taught. As a result, of these observations I modified my instruction accordingly so that I enhanced outcomes for student success.

### **Method**

During this study, I collected various qualitative and quantitative data to examine the effectiveness of the Response to Intervention (RTI) model on student motivation and success. In collecting the data, students were observed and assessed over the course of five weeks and the intervention services were 30 minutes in length. During the instruction sessions, the first lesson

was devoted to collecting pre assessment data and the last session collected post assessment data, which was used as a comparison tool.

Throughout the study, the tier two instruction was aimed at targeting skills specific to the students' areas of need. The instruction emphasized comprehension, decoding and fluency skills. So as to indicate where the students were prior to the week -long sessions, the first session involved students taking an AIMSweb assessment (Appendix A) indicating fluency. Students were asked to read three passages and had to read as many words as they could in a minute. While the student was reading, the teacher marked errors that were made. When the timer went off, students stopped reading and the teacher indicated how many words were read and how many errors were made. In so doing, the teacher would have a better indication of student needs and would have something to compare results to indicating success made.

Throughout the remaining sessions, students would be engaged in activities that directly enhanced literacy skills that were specific to each individual group, in so doing hoping to facilitate student success. The Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) would be implemented throughout the half an hour block and the emphasis would be on fluency and comprehension. The program consisted of books at each reading level and included nonfiction and fiction texts. The program was designed to progress targeting certain literacy skills and word studies. The program encompassed the skills necessary to help the student succeed within an intervention program. Since the study was focused on student motivation and success, the teacher took formal and informal anecdotal notes regarding students' progress throughout the program. Student questionnaires (Appendix B) were used to help provide insight as to student motivation and enjoyment of particular lessons. In so doing, the teacher would use the information and would modify lessons accordingly. Since the LLI program was so extensive, the teacher would also

evaluate the students in terms of literacy skills mastered during the final session. Throughout the research process, interviews (Appendix C) were conducted with the other Reading Specialist so as to provide insight into viewpoints regarding the Response to Intervention model. The interview protocol involved video recording the questions that were asked to the other Reading Specialist regarding the Response to Intervention (RTI) model. The interview was later transcribed for accuracy of the responses given.

To conclude the data collection, students were re-assessed using the AIMSweb and Milestones assessments (Appendix D). The students were assessed using a multiple choice format targeting specific literacy skills within the Milestone assessment. The Milestone assessment directly indicated what skills the students have progressed with and what skills they still need to work on. The AIMSweb assessment indicated if growth had been made in terms of fluency and words read per minute. Lastly, another interview (Appendix E) was conducted with students to gauge their own perceptions of ability and motivation using a questionnaire with a teacher created rubric so as to more accurately assess students. The results of the questionnaire were charted so as to create a visual representation to easily evaluate results.

### **Quality and Credibility of Research**

When conducting action research it was important to be cognizant of the quality and credibility of the research. Mills (2011) defined various criteria of qualitative research using a model created by Guba (1981). Guba stated credibility as an essential component for validity and qualitative research. He defined credibility as “the researcher’s ability to take into account the complexities that present themselves in a study and to deal with patterns that are not easily

explained” (p.115). In so doing, the research would demonstrate fidelity and was trustworthy. In order to do so, I would be using a triangulated model within my research. Triangulation involved “...compar[ing] a variety of data sources and different methods in order to cross-check data” (p.115). As a result, the data was more valid and reliable and it was easier to determine various trends or patterns. In order to have triangulation within my research, I collected data through various means. I was an active observer and participant and collected various field notes, artifacts in the form of student assessment samples, questionnaires and transcribed interviews with the Reading Specialist.

The next component evaluated within my research was transferability. According to Guba (1981), transferability involved “researchers’ beliefs that everything [that is studied should be] context bound and that the goal of [a person’s] work [was] not to develop “truth” statements that [could] be generalized to larger groups of people” (p.116). Therefore, the research was specific and provided findings that were not yet unveiled. Within my research, I created accounts that were detailed and descriptive which would allow for the data to be evaluated in other contexts.

The next component that was accounted for was dependability. Dependability involved looking for “stability [within the] data” (Mills, 2011, p.116). Dependability was conducted within my study through the use of overlapping methods. The data received from the student questionnaires and Reading Specialist interviews helped to provide understanding towards the outcomes of the student post assessments. I used three main types of data collection, which allowed for me to evaluate any strengths or weaknesses that were apparent within the data.

The last component that I included within my research was confirmability. Mills (2011) defined confirmability as the “neutrality or objectivity of the data that [had] been collected” (p.116). In order to do so, I used triangulation and reflexivity as methods of evaluating my data. Triangulation was present through the use of various data collection means which helped me to “compare [data] with one another [and] to cross-check...” (p.116). To test for reflexivity I kept a journal with reflections of my findings so as to better assess biases that I may have had previously. All these components allowed for the data that was collected to be trustworthy and reliable which demonstrated fidelity.

### **Informed Consent and Protecting the Right of the Participants**

When conducting research an essential component involved receiving informed consent. Since my study involved the use of children, I received permission from all the parents of the participants within the study. I sent each parent a permission form that articulated the purpose of the study, and asked for them to give their permission for their child to participate in the study. Since the study involved children, I also needed their informed assent.

### **Data Collection**

When collecting my data I used three different types of data so as to ensure triangulation. The first method of data was transcriptions of various interviews that were conducted with the Reading Specialist. So as to ensure that the data followed the triangulation format, the interview was conducted through a video recording. The videos were reviewed and transcribed so as to accurately represent the findings from the interviews. The interviews helped provide insight as towards the various field notes that I took during each lesson helping to further confirm or refute



various observations made. The interviews provided insight as to motivation and progress made using a different demographic (Kindergarten through second grade) which allowed for transferability across contexts.

The next method involved the collection of pre and post assessment data so as to directly monitor growth that was made throughout the sessions. Students were measured as to growth made on both the AIMSweb and Milestones assessments. The first and last sessions were used as days to conduct assessments and students were assessed on progress made. The progress was charted so as to create a visual representation to easily determine if progress was made. Students were interviewed through informal questions presented during the last session so as to gauge their opinions on progress made and the effectiveness and overall enjoyment of the sessions. Students received a teacher made rubric which assessed themselves on progress and motivation. The growth was evaluated and helped to influence the findings that were made within my study.

### **Data Analysis**

After conducting my research it was essential to analyze the data completely in order to determine what patterns emerged. In order to do so, the first step involved analyzing the initial AIMSweb progress monitoring assessment that was given to the students to determine fluency. I used the Norm Reference Chart provided by a district within Western New York, to help determine what percentile the students were performing at. I highlighted the percentile ranges and looked for commonalities between students of the same grade level (fifth grade) used within the study. I also underlined any miscues that were made which would help me determine if the errors impacted comprehension or were simple deletions or insertions that did not affect the meaning. I searched to see if there were similarities amongst words missed by students within the same grade level used within the study (fifth grade). The last portion that was noted involved

looking at the number of errors made which would help to evaluate if the student was using metacognition or self-monitoring while reading. The same coding process was used for analyzing the post AIMSweb assessment. With the post-assessment any progress made in words read per minute was also noted. This information was used to determine if success had been made throughout the direct reading instruction sessions.

The next form of data that was analyzed involved the student questionnaires regarding enjoyment of reading and motivation. Two questionnaires were given including a teacher made questionnaire and the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey. When analyzing the teacher made questionnaire I looked for various similarities among the answers provided by the students and underlined those portions of the answers. By looking at the similarities, I was able to unveil various common perceptions amongst the students in regard to the reading program. With this information, I was able to help modify instruction to become more effective based upon aspects that students like and dislike. For the second questionnaire, the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, I took note of similar answers to certain questions. Students were given a scale ranging from a very happy Garfield to a very unhappy Garfield. I also noted the number of each Garfield that was circled, seeing if there were more frowns were circled as opposed to more smiling pictures. I also looked for commonalities amongst ratings for questions regarding interest-based reading versus questions regarding mandatory reading. This information helped me determine the students' enjoyment and motivation for reading.

Another type of data that was analyzed involved interviews with the other Reading Specialist. In order to ensure that the data was accurate, I transcribed the interview. When conducting the interview, questions regarding various components of the Response to Intervention program were evaluated. The questions were opinion based, but the information

would help to provide insight towards general opinions of the success and efficiency of the tiered model. When analyzing the results of the interviews, I looked to see if there were any commonalities amongst the views expressed and underlined these patterns. I also looked for trends that correlated with findings within my literature review.

The next type of data that was analyzed was the pre and post Milestone assessments. The assessment was administered twice throughout the course of the study to evaluate if progress was made when students received direct, explicit, systematic and targeted instruction reflective of individualized student needs. When analyzing the results of the assessments, I looked for common patterns in the questions that were missed. The Milestone assessment is broken into multiple choice questions that test a specific literacy skill, so I noted if there were any commonalities with the types of questions that were missed. In so doing, I could modify my instruction to target this specific skill. I also used two different highlighter colors to assess if the questions that were missed were text based questions or inferential questions allowing me to assess what type of comprehension questions I would need to address within my instruction. The same process was used for coding the post-assessment with one alteration. I also assessed if students mastered the questions that they had missed previously. I used the *same* assessment for the pre and post-assessment so that it could be a direct indicator of success that was made. The information provided from the assessment data provided me with information towards the effectiveness of systematic and explicit instruction received in reading resource (tier two) in terms of student success.

The last type of data that was analyzed was a teacher made rubric. The rubric helped to assess the student's own perceptions of their reading ability and reading success. The rubric used a range of zero to three. When analyzing the results, I indicated the number of each that was

circled. I also noted trends among the type of questions that students were rating themselves higher or lower in to see if the questions had to do with ability or motivation. The information provided by the rubric would allow for me to directly see the impact of a student's negative or positive perception of their motivation and ability on reading success.

Coding the data was a crucial component of analyzing the data that helped to provide insight within my data analysis. It was essential to analyze all forms of data to determine if the Response to Intervention model helps to facilitate student success and motivation. When coding the data and taking notes, three key themes emerged which will be examined within my findings.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The Response to Intervention model has three tiers that are targeted to help further student success through targeting of specific individualized student needs. The purpose of the study was to determine if the model helps to facilitate student success. While coding the data the three following themes emerged: students using self-monitoring and decoding strategies, importance of motivation and the importance of basic foundational skills. The first theme involved students being able to effectively use self-monitoring and decoding strategies when reading, in turn promoting success. The second theme involved the importance of motivation on student reading and success. This theme was broken into various components regarding student's own perceptions of their reading abilities and their interest level in terms of the text. The third theme involved students needing to possess basic foundational literacy skills that will allow them to apply these acquired skills within context. The findings found within my data and themes demonstrated that the Response to Intervention model contributes to student motivation and success. This section depicted student and teacher responses to the Response to Intervention model, as well as students' progress before and after targeted instruction within reading resource

(tier two). The findings suggest that the Response to Intervention model can help to facilitate students' success through targeted, explicit and systematic instruction of foundational skills with an application component.

### **The Effectiveness of Self-Monitoring and Decoding Strategies is Essential**

Students need to be able to possess the skills that allow for them to effectively self-monitor and decode while reading. Self-monitoring involves children thinking about what they are reading and making self-corrections. The need for self-monitoring became apparent within the AIMSweb assessments because the assessments target fluency, which correlates with the need for self-monitoring and decoding strategies as precursor skills. The use of AIMSweb progress monitoring was a clear way to see if progress was being made because it was charted in a visual format. Mellard, McKnight and Woods (2009) would agree with these assertions because the format of the “progress monitoring [was]... formative” (p.187). Formative assessments are ongoing and allow for the teacher to directly use the information to modify instruction and test improvement throughout the school year. The first form of data that was collected involved an AIMSweb pre-assessment. Students were given three probes and were timed to see how many words they could read in a minute. The probes were all at the student's grade level and typically fiction texts. After collecting the data, I analyzed the probes in regards to the AIMSweb Norms Reference Chart. The Norm Reference Chart indicated the mean words that students should be reading based upon the time of year (Fall, Winter, Spring) at their grade level and included the percentile range that the student was performing at. The AIMSweb Norms Reference Chart was provided by school districts to help teachers and specialists evaluate if students were performing at the desired “norm” for a specific time of year. The chart included the *mean* or average number of words that a student should be able to read within a minute at

their specific grade level. The chart provided the number of words that the student read and indicated a percentile range based upon that number of words. If a student fell within the tenth %ile range the text was seen as being at the frustrational range. If the student fell within the 25 to 50 %ile the text was seen as being at the instructional range. If the student was at the 90%ile the text was at the independent level. After evaluating the students' scores using the AIMSweb Norm Reference Chart, a chart was created for each individual student that evaluated the grade level norms (average number of words read for that grade level), the students' results and the level of difficulty of the text. The information regarding percentile ranges and grade level norms for each student on the pre AIMSweb assessment was indicated in Table 1.

Table 1

*AIMSweb Percentiles and Grade Level Norms for Third Grade Passages 1-3*

Name	Grade	Words Read	Average	Percentile	Level of Text
Becca	3	62	89	25%ile	Instructional
		65	89	25%ile	Instructional
		62	89	25%ile	Instructional

After looking at the data that was collected, I assessed where Becca (pseudonym) fell based on her grade level and the norms for third grade. I also evaluated the data using anecdotal notes that were taken while Becca was reading. When introducing the AIMSweb probes, I expressed to the students that they were going to be reading a passage and they had to read as many words as they could in one minute. If a student came to a word they didn't know they could skip the word and I would tell the word to them. When Becca was reading she demonstrated various decoding strategies involving sounding out and chunking the words

(teacher observation). Errors that were made while Becca was reading were noted and overall the errors were minor and did not impact meaning and comprehension. Becca eliminated the following words in the three probes. In the first probe she eliminated the words *a* and *into*. In probe two she eliminated the word *it*. In the last probe, she eliminated the words *as* and *her*.

When looking at the data, Becca read 62 words on the first probe. The average number of words for third grade for the Fall semester is 89. Therefore, Becca was reading below the grade level norm. Since Becca read 62 words, she fell within the 25 %ile which indicated the text was at her instructional level. On the second probe Becca read 65 words which was also below the average number of words for third grade students (89). Reading a total of 65 words put Becca at the instructional level for the second probe. On the final probe, Becca read a total of 62 words falling within the 25%ile. The last probe was also at Becca's instructional level. Since all the probes fell within Becca's instructional level it can be concluded that Becca can read at a third grade level with adult instruction and assistance. Becca also demonstrated metacognition while reading because her errors were minimal for each probe. The idea of metacognition influencing comprehension correlated with ideas held by Shepherd and Salembier (2011) who believed that metacognition involved a student thinking about what they are reading, resulting in minimal errors. Therefore, Becca was comprehending what she was reading helping to facilitate success.

The next student that was looked at was Grace who was in fourth grade (pseudonym). The same evaluation process was used when looking at Grace's data. Grace's pre AIMSweb scores were compared to grade level averages, reading levels and percentile ranges as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

*AIMSweb Percentiles and Grade Level Norm for Fourth Grade Passages 1-3*

Name	Grade	Words Read	Average	Percentile	Level of Text
Grace	4	98	109	25%ile	Instructional
		97	109	25%ile	Instructional
		101	109	25%ile	Instructional

After looking at the data that was collected, I assessed where Grace (pseudonym) fell in terms of grade level norms (fourth grade), percentiles and text level. Similarly to data collected on Becca, I took anecdotal notes while she was reading. Before Grace started reading the probes I introduced what we were going to be doing. She was familiar with AIMSweb, so I didn't have to explain the directions in detail. When Grace was reading she used various decoding strategies to help her determine an unknown word. She read at a consistent pace with short phrasing of words (teacher observation). Since Grace was reading in short phrases, her overall fluency was impacted and it was evident that she was focusing more on decoding. Shepherd and Salembier (2011) asserted that when a student was focusing on decoding often fluency was impacted which negatively impacted comprehension. Decoding was often perceived as a precursor for comprehension and fluency skills. While Grace was reading various errors that she made were also marked. Grace eliminated the word *is* within the first probe, which ultimately did not impact the meaning. During the second probe grace inserted the word *the* and *a*. The insertions did not alter the meaning of the sentence and were viewed as minor. Within the last probe no errors were made. However, all the texts that Grace read fell within her instructional level which indicated



that she could read texts at a fourth grade level with assistance. Grace read a total of 98 words with the average level for fourth grade in the Fall was 109. Reading a total of 98 words correctly caused Grace to fall within the 25%ile range. During the second probe, Grace read a total of 97 words which placed her at the 25%ile and she read 101 words on probe 3 which also placed her at the 25%ile. The next student that was evaluated was Isabelle (pseudonym) who was in fifth grade. The results are indicated within Table 3.

Table 3

*AIMSweb Percentiles and Grade Level Norm for Fifth Grade Passages 1-3*

Name	Grade	Words Read	Average	Percentile	Level of Text
Isabelle	5	113	122	25%ile	Instructional
		138	122	50%ile	Instructional
		109	122	25%ile	Instructional

When looking at the data that was collected, I evaluated Isabelle's fluency in terms of grade level, percentile range and difficulty of text. While Isabelle was reading I took various anecdotal notes and indicated errors that were made. While Isabelle was reading she read at a fairly rapid pace indicating that she had mastered decoding strategies (teacher observation). According to Shepherd and Salembier (2011) decoding was viewed as being mastered when the student was able to read with long phrases. While Isabelle was reading she made several errors that were written down. Within the first passage Isabelle inserted the word *the* which did not impact the meaning of the passage. Within the next two passages no errors were made. After the data was assessed it was concluded that all of the texts were at Isabelle's instructional level. On the first probe, Isabelle read a total of 113 words which was below the fifth grade average of 122. The first probe placed Isabelle within the 25%ile. Isabelle read a total of 138 words on the

second probe which was above the average. However, it was concluded that Isabelle fell within the 50<sup>th</sup>ile for the second probe. On the last probe, Isabelle read 109 words and fell within the 25<sup>th</sup>ile. The last student that was evaluated was Tom (pseudonym), who was also in fifth grade. The results are indicated within Table 4.

Table 4

*AIMSweb Percentiles and Grade Level Norm for Fifth Grade Passages 1-3*

Name	Grade	Words Read	Average	Percentile	Level of Text
Tom	5	136	122	50 <sup>th</sup> ile	Instructional
		119	122	25 <sup>th</sup> ile	Instructional
		113	122	25 <sup>th</sup> ile	Instructional

After looking at the data that was collected I assessed where Tom (pseudonym) fell in terms of the fifth grade norms, percentiles and text levels. While Tom was reading I took anecdotal notes that indicated any errors that were made while he was reading. Tom read using long phrases which indicated he had mastered decoding strategies. The mastery of decoding strategies correlated with findings held by Shepherd and Salembier (2011) who believed that decoding was a precursor to comprehension. Within the first passage, Tom eliminated the word *or* which was not essential to the meaning of the passage. In the second passage, he eliminated the words *his* and *at*. Tom made no errors during the last passage. Overall, all the texts fell within his instructional level. Tom read a total of 136 words on the first passage which was above the average of 122. The first passage placed Tom within the 50<sup>th</sup>ile. On the second

passage Tom read a total of 119 words which placed him at the 25%ile. For the last passage Tom read a total of 113 words which fell within the 25%ile.

In conclusion, it was evident that the students were making progress with specific explicit and systematic literacy instruction. While all students were generally reading below the average number of words for their grade level, the texts were at the students' instructional level. Since the texts were at the instructional level the students were able to read grade level texts with adult instruction and assistance.

The next portion of data collection involved a post AIMSweb assessment that was administered to determine if the students had made progress while receiving direct systematic and explicit instruction within reading resource. The students were given one passage and were asked to read as many words as they could in a minute. The first student that was assessed was Becca. Her post AIMSweb assessment results are indicated within Table 5.

Table 5

*AIMSweb Post-Assessment Percentiles and Grade Level Norms for Third Grade Passage*

Name	Grade	Words Read	Average	Percentile	Level of Text
Becca	3	93	89	50%ile	Instructional

After looking at the data I assessed if progress had been made after the administration of the pre-assessment. While Becca was reading anecdotal notes were taken *was* to help confirm conclusions that were drawn. Similarly to Becca's pre-assessment, she read at a slow pace with short phrases. The slow pace was indicative that Becca was using self-monitoring strategies because she was thinking about what she was reading. When Becca was reading she eliminated the word *was* which did not impact the meaning of the overall passage. Becca read a total of 93

words which was above the average number for third grade (89). As a result, the text fell within Becca's instructional level. She made progress from the pre to the post-assessment and went up a percentile range. Within Becca's pre assessments she fell within the 25%ile range and within the post-assessment she fell within the 50%ile range. These conclusions indicated that the emphasis within tier two around comprehension and fluency promoted success causing the progress monitoring to be an effective measure of growth (Ritchey, Silverman, Montanaro, Speece & Schatshneider, 2012). The next student that was evaluated was Grace. Her results are indicated within Table 6.

Table 6

*AIMSweb Post-Assessment Percentiles and Grade Level Norms for Fourth Grade Passage*

Name	Grade	Words Read	Average	Percentile	Level of Text
Grace	4	72	109	10%ile	Frustrational

When looking at the post-assessment data I evaluated if progress had been made. In so doing, I could directly see if the students were benefitting from the supplemental instruction. The anecdotal notes that were taken also were beneficial indicating types of errors that were made. When Grace was reading she continued to use short phrasing. The short phrasing indicated that the focus for Grace was still on decoding. As a result, fluency was impacted as she attempted to use various decoding strategies to sound out unknown words (teacher observation). These results concluded with findings held by Shepherd and Salembier (2011) who emphasized the need for mastery of decoding strategies prior to further reading success. When Grace was reading she made several errors. Grace read a passage about a boy who liked to go exploring a finds a cave. She eliminated the word *explore*, which was a crucial word within the passage because it

correlated with the main idea. Other errors that were made included the elimination of the words *a*, *into* and *previous*. Grace read a total of 72 words which was below the fourth grade average (109). Grace demonstrated regression from the pre to the post assessment. Within the pre-assessment her scores fell within the instructional range. During the post assessment her score fell within the frustrational range within the 10%ile. The overall regression of the results from the pre to post-assessment could be reflective of the increase in the rigorous curriculum within fourth grade. Wanzek and Roberts (2012) correlated with these findings because they feel that as the elementary grades progress the need for literacy skills increases within all content areas. Within the upper elementary grades the need for mastery of basic literacy skills (decoding and fluency) becomes essential because the texts become increasingly more difficult. Therefore, if a student did not possess the literacy skills needed they will struggle with reading grade level texts. Within Grace's reading groups the texts that were chosen were below grade level texts. Grace was currently reading at a mid- third grade level. Therefore, since the AIMSweb probe was at a fourth grade level it was evident that the text was too difficult. In conclusion, in order for Grace to have success within supplemental reading instruction, texts must first be mastered at her level. When texts are mastered at her level she will gain literacy skills (decoding and fluency) which will promote success within grade level texts. The next student that was assessed was Isabelle. Her results are indicated within Table 7.

Table 7

*AIMSweb Post-Assessment Percentiles and Grade Level Norms for Fifth Grade Passage*

Name	Grade	Words Read	Average	Percentile	Level of Text
Isabelle	5	91	122	10%ile	Frustrational

The post assessment data was evaluated to see if Isabelle had made progress and was benefitting from tier two instruction. Anecdotal notes were taken to assess errors that were made. When Isabelle was reading she read at a rapid pace (teacher observation.) As a result, Isabelle made several errors that impacted the comprehension of the passage. The passage was about a boy who had an Aunt who had an extensive library that had library elves. The words missed within the passage included: *made* and *rare*. The word *made* was used in context regarding “..[what] *made* Aunt Heidi’s library really special was the library’s elves” (AIMSweb probe, line 4). The word *rare* was used as a description for the elves which was also an essential component within the reading. Isabelle read a total of 91 words which was below the fifth grade average of 122 words. The number of words that Isabelle read indicated that the text was at her frustrational level and she fell within the 10%ile. Isabelle regressed from the pre to the post assessment. The regression correlated with findings held by Wanzek and Roberts (2012) who believed that with the new Common Core the curriculum within the upper elementary grades has become more rigorous. Therefore, students who are not strong readers tend to struggle because the emphasis on the mastery of literacy skills had become crucial. Isabelle was reading at a mid fourth grade level (according to Fountas and Pinnell assessments). Therefore, the text at the fifth grade level proved to be too difficult. In conclusion, similarly to Grace, in order for Isabelle to become successful she must master texts at her level to help promote literacy skills (decoding, fluency and

comprehension). Once these skills are mastered she would be able to read texts at the fifth grade level. The last student that was assessed was Tom. His results are indicated within Table 8.

Table 8

*AIMSweb Post-Assessment Percentiles and Grade Level Norms for Fifth Grade Passage*

Name	Grade	Words Read	Average	Percentile	Level of Text
Tom	5	138	122	50%ile	Instructional

After collecting the data I evaluated if progress had been made from the pre to post assessments. I had also taken anecdotal notes which aided in my assessment of the results. When Tom was reading he read at a rapid pace (teacher observation). While Tom was reading he made several errors that did not impact the overall meaning of the passage. Tom eliminated the words *when*, *of* and *Aunt*. Tom read a total of 138 words which was above the fifth grade average of 122. As a result, he fell within the 50%ile making the text at his instructional level. Tom demonstrated progress from the pre to the post assessment. Within the pre assessment his scores ranged from the 25%ile to the 50%ile. The post assessment percentile score indicated that Tom had not regressed but had maintained reading within the 50%ile. Therefore, it was concluded that Tom had been benefitting from the fluency instruction provided within the reading sessions.

In conclusion, after evaluating the post assessment data it was concluded that all the students were benefitting from the direct, systematic and explicit instruction. In order for the students to have continued success, the students must read texts at their reading level. While the texts that all the students are reading are below their grade level, in order to promote the learning of literacy skills (decoding, fluency and comprehension) the students must practice using texts at their own level. As a result, the students will feel confident and with practice with easier texts

will be able to read grade level texts with adult assistance. These findings correlated with ideas held by Zentall and Lee (2012) who believed that struggling readers should practice with texts that are at their own individual reading level in order to build confidence and motivation. Confidence and motivation are key elements in promoting reading success. The topic of motivation and interested was discussed within my second theme.

### **Motivation is Needed to Further Reading Successes**

In order to be successful when reading it was imperative that students possessed intrinsic motivation to learn. The intrinsic motivation was directly influenced by the student's own perceptions of their reading ability. Often times, reading perception was influenced by the extent to which the student had been receiving reading services and based upon repeated reading failures. Therefore, for struggling readers the motivation often becomes reflective of *extrinsic* factors. The idea of extrinsic factors was presented by Mihandoost, Elias, Nor and Mahmud (2011) who felt these factors were often out of the students' realm of control. The lack of the realm of control was often what caused a student to become less motivated. The idea of the realm of control was in conjunction with Legere and Conca (2010) who believed these perceptions were often felt within the older grades. The findings of these authors held validity when applied to the findings within my study. In order to determine the influence of motivation on student reading success I formulated a questionnaire and gave the students a pre-made attitude survey.

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey was a measure that directly assessed student interest levels with various types of reading. The survey was broken into components reflecting mandatory reading and interest based reading. The use of a survey was an effective method to quickly assess the student's perceptions towards reading which directly influences motivation.



Zentall and Lee (2012) would agree with the administration of the survey as well as Pakulski and Kaderavek (2012) who felt that it was an important educational tool for a teacher to gauge general perceptions. When the students were given the survey, they were asked to circle various pictures of Garfield that described their feelings towards a particular aspect of reading. Upon the completion of survey, the data was analyzed in regards to how many of each Garfield was circled and how many interest based reading or mandatory reading. The data was also assessed in terms of grade level to see if there were any correlations among perceptions of reading. Table 9 indicated the outcomes of enjoyment during interest based reading and mandatory reading.

Table 9

*Reading Scores on Elementary Reading Attitude Survey*

Interest Based Reading %	Mandatory Reading %
75%	25%

After analyzing the data, I looked for various correlations among common questions and feelings that were held in terms of interest or mandatory reading. In order to effectively evaluate the data I had looked at the number of positive responses indicated within interest based reading as compared to mandatory readings. When I evaluated the data it was evident that 75% of the time the students enjoyed reading when it was in an interest based and only enjoyed reading 25% of the time when it was mandatory. Interest based reading included instances such as reading a book of your choice and receiving a book for a present. Attitudes were negative and a frowning Garfield was circled for questions that asked students to read out loud. The findings correlated with ideas held by Legere and Conca (2010) who believed that struggling readers should be exposed to interest based texts so as to spark motivation towards reading. Since struggling

readers are often perceived to have more negative attitudes towards reading, books that are reflective of the student's interests should be incorporated.

As I continued to evaluate the data it was also interesting that the students who had the most negative perceptions towards reading were Grace and Isabelle who both had demonstrated regression within the fluency assessment. These findings correlated with ideas held by Legere and Conca (2010) who believed that children who harbor negative feelings towards reading are often found within the older grades because they have been in the program for years. The frustration of the continuation of reading support services from year to year without having services discontinued, created the negative feelings and perceptions about reading. The trend was not reflected in Tom's results, as he overall had a positive attitude towards reading. Tom was repeating fifth grade and based upon teacher observations has had an increase in confidence towards his own reading ability. Therefore, the positive attitude was reflected in his answers to the survey. Tom's increased confidence and success within reading correlated with ideas held by Pyle and Vaughn (2012) who believed that once students start to experience repeated successes their confidence and motivation for reading will increase. Since Tom was repeating fifth grade, he had been exposed to a lot of the materials that are used. Therefore, he had prior background knowledge to help facilitate his success. The overall outcomes of the survey indicated that the students generally have a positive attitude about reading and that they enjoy reading more when it is interest based.

The next piece of data that was analyzed was the results of the teacher made questionnaire. The students were asked various questions regarding the overall experience found within the reading program and how long they have been a part of the program. The questionnaire was introduced by the teacher stating "today you are going to be receiving a

questionnaire about the overall experience you have been receiving during reading. Please answer the questions honestly because the feedback will help me to become a better teacher and learn more about my job” (teacher questionnaire, November 2013). The results of the questionnaire would allow for the program to be modified based upon the student feedback. I asked the students to fill out the questionnaire and the findings were coded and the results were evaluated.

The first question that was asked to the students was “how long have you been in the reading program?” (teacher questionnaire, November 2013). This information would allow me to determine if the students had received early intervention services. The answers to this question were split and Becca and Grace had been a part of the program for many years (3 or 4) and had received early intervention services providing them with the basic skills that would be beneficial within later years including: phonics, decoding and basic spelling patterns. Shepherd and Salembier (2011) furthered these findings believing that early intervention was highly beneficial to help students gain skills that will allow for the possibility of services to be discontinued later. The discontinuation of services proves to be significant because the emphasis within the Response to Intervention (RTI) model is being placed on tier one. Therefore, tiers two and three are viewed as supplemental and students who are discontinued have reached grade level standards. Isabelle and Tom just started the program and started receiving intervention services because of teacher observations and scores on Benchmark assessments. Both students were reading at a level that was below grade level standards (mid fourth grade) and had been flagged for receiving services. Therefore, since both students did not receive early intervention services the need for reading services became more essential. The next question that was asked was in regards to genre preferences and enjoyment of books that have been read within the reading

program. The question asked was “what is your favorite genre and what books have you enjoyed reading?” (teacher questionnaire, November 2013). The results were indicated within Table 10.

Table 10

*Student Questionnaire Genre Preference Percentages*

<u>Question</u>	<u>Percentages</u>	
<u>Question:</u>		
What is your favorite genre	<u>Fiction</u>	<u>Non-Fiction</u>
and what books have you	75%	25%
enjoyed reading?		

In the table above, you could see that three out of four students enjoyed reading fiction texts. When asking this question, I wanted to gain further understanding of what interests the students so as to plan my instruction accordingly. The results demonstrated that the students typically enjoyed books that were found within the fiction genre or books that were humorous. One student answered “I liked *The Everything Sandwich* because it was funny which made it interesting” (teacher questionnaire, 2013). The students were indicating that books within the fiction genre and books that are humorous are more captivating because the fiction genre allows for creativity. These findings correlated with ideas held by Zentall and Lee (2012) who believed that fiction texts often are seen as more interesting because they allow for students to gain different perspectives through connections built with characters. Students learn through the use of fiction texts because students align and make connections to aspects of their own lives. When students are interested they are more likely to feel motivated because the topic within the reading are captivating. The Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) program that was used within the

reading instruction incorporated the use of both types of texts (fiction and non-fiction) and aligned with the Common Core so as to most effectively prepare students. When looking at the data it was also noted that Tom was the only student who enjoyed reading non-fiction texts, which could possibly be a result of his age and gender. Tom responded by saying “I like learning new information from non-fiction books” (teacher questionnaire, 2013). The enjoyment of non-fiction texts and Tom’s response indicated that he enjoys texts that are factual or teach him new information. Zentall and Lee (2012) confirmed findings that boys typically prefer non-fiction texts because of the aspect of learning new information. Young boys often do not gravitate towards texts that don’t provide information that has a factual or realistic component. The next question involved the overall enjoyment of the reading program. The question asked was “do you enjoy coming to reading?” (teacher questionnaire, 2013). The results of the responses are reflected within Table 11.

Table 11

*Student Questionnaire Reading Enjoyment Percentages*

<u>Question</u>	<u>Percentages</u>	
<u>Question:</u>		
Do you enjoy coming to reading?	<u>No</u>	<u>Yes</u>
	0%	100%

In the table above, you can see that all students enjoyed coming to reading. One student stated “I enjoy coming to reading because it helps me learn to read better” (teacher questionnaire, 2013). The statement indicated several things including the student’s own perception of their reading ability. The student felt that coming to reading was beneficial based on the word “enjoy.”

However, the student also believed that she had a deficit in her reading ability and needed assistance. The conclusion of her negative perception of her own reading ability was confirmed by the statement “it helps me learn to read better.” This perception of reading ability was confirmed by Wanzek and Roberts (2012) who believed that students who experienced repeated failures often had a more negative perception of their own abilities. The findings of all students enjoying coming to reading sparked several other questions including “what could make the reading program more effective?” (teacher questionnaire, 2013). All students indicated that they would enjoy books that aligned with their personal interests. One student asserted “I want to read books about dolphins because I love dolphins” (teacher questionnaire, 2013). Based on the information provided, several aspects became apparent. It was consistent among all students that books involving personal interest would help to increase motivation within reading and would allow for the overall experience within the program to become more enjoyable. The idea of incorporating interest based books allowed me to conclude that since these students are struggling readers they do not enjoy reading. Therefore, if the books are interest based they will be seen as captivating because they will reflect elements of things that the student enjoys. Zentall and Lee (2012) furthered the assertions in relation to interest reading. While it can be perceived as difficult to incorporate texts that are based upon student interests because of the Common Core and curriculum, it is essential for increasing motivation. Through the incorporation of interest based texts, students will become more intrinsically motivated which will help to promote successes within reading. The next component that emerged, involved Tom questioning the need to be within the reading program. Based upon teacher observations and field notes (2013) it was evident that Tom perceived himself as a successful reader. This perception was concluded when Tom was asked in an informal conversation before a reading

session. I had stated to him that he was demonstrating progress within reading and asked him “how be believed he was doing?” (teacher and student conversation, November 2013). Tom stated “I feel like I am doing well in reading and that it is being less difficult for me. I used to struggle but not anymore” (student response, November 2013). Since he repeated the grade, he exhibited confidence within his reading. Therefore, he began to question his need to be within the program. The overall perception of reading ability and motivation was assessed within the teacher made rubric.

The last piece of data that was used to assess student motivation and perception of ability involved a teacher made rubric. The rubric was handed out during one of the reading sessions and students were asked to “answer the following questions regarding how they feel about their own reading ability and interest level (Teacher Made Rubric, November 2013). The students would circle a rating that they felt was appropriate with a range from zero to three. A three was the highest rating meaning that they felt very strongly that they exhibited this and a zero indicated that they feel that they don’t exhibit this component of motivation or have the indicated ability. The first question that was asked was “when you come to reading do you think you are motivated to do your best work?” (Teacher Made Rubric, 2013). The results are indicated within Table 12. Table 12 indicated the percentages of the numbers circled by each student.

Table 12

*Teacher Made Rubric Motivation Percentages*

<u>Question</u>	<u>Percentages</u>			
<u>Question:</u>				
When you come to reading do you think you	<u>3</u>	<u>2.5</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
are motivated to do your best work?	75%	25%	0%	0%

When formulating the questions for the rubric I wanted to assess various components of motivation and perception of reading ability using age appropriate language. The results of the rubric showed some discrepancy among ratings. According to the data provided within Table 12, it was concluded that three out of four students believed that they showed motivation when they came to reading. The results indicated that the students perceived that they demonstrated a positive attitude in order to show motivation. The findings within the data allowed me to conclude that the students were cognizant of the “Student Teacher Compact” that had been created at the beginning of the year. The compact reflected ideas of demonstrating motivation while at work in order to do your personal best. As a result, the students were internalizing the components of the compact and increasing their overall motivation. It was also apparent that the students believed that they possessed intrinsic motivation which comes from within each individual. Mihandoost, Elias, Nor and Mahmud (2011) confirmed these findings and believed that in order for a student to demonstrate success they must have internal motivation so as not to become distracted by external factors within the reading environment. The next question that was asked within the rubric was “do you feel that you use reading strategies that help you have success in reading?” (Teacher Made Rubric, 2013). This question was asked in order to evaluate



if the students felt that they were applying strategies that have been taught throughout the reading sessions independently. The results were indicated in Table 13.

Table 13

*Teacher Made Rubric Reading Strategies Percentages*

<u>Question</u>	<u>Percentages</u>			
<u>Question:</u>				
Do you feel that you use reading strategies that help you have success in reading?	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
	100%	0%	0%	0%

The results of the data in Table 13 indicated that all four students believed that they applied the literacy strategies that had been taught to them throughout reading resource sessions. The strategies involved various decoding skills such as looking for root words and chunking. It was concluded that the students felt they used these strategies because before they started using them they struggled with decoding unknown words. Therefore, with the aid of these strategies the decoding component becomes easier. This conclusion was furthered with an informal student and teacher conversation before a reading session. One student indicated that they “believed that they use decoding strategies but sometimes they need reminders when they come to a word they don’t know” (Student and Teacher Conversation, November 2013). Perhaps, with more practice using the strategies it will become routine. Shepherd and Salembier (2011) furthered these conclusions because they believed that using reading strategies was necessary for struggling readers. Since reading was something that was difficult for them, reading strategies served as a tool to help the student. In conclusion, the positive responses from the students indicated that

they believed they had mastered the basic reading strategies that help to facilitate success. The next question that was asked to students was “do you think you have a positive attitude towards reading that helps you to feel more motivated?” (Teacher Made Rubric, November 2013). This question was asked to help perceive if the students believed they displayed a positive attitude which was an essential component when reading because it impacts motivation. The results were indicated within Table 14.

Table 14

*Teacher Made Rubric Positive Attitude Percentages*

<u>Question</u>	<u>Percentages</u>				
<u>Question:</u>					
Do you think that you have a positive attitude towards reading that helps you feel more motivated?	3	2.5	2	1	0
	50%	25%	25%	0%	0%

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After looking at the data found within Table 14, it was evident that there was discrepancy among the answers given by the students. Two students (Becca and Grace) rated themselves highly and gave themselves a three. The perception of having a positive attitude correlated with the results that were found within their attitude surveys. Both students generally displayed a positive attitude towards reading which was reflected in their answers. In order to gain more insight into this conclusion, I asked a further question to validate the results. I asked the students “what factors made them believe that their attitudes were positive?” (Student and Teacher Conversation, November 2013). One student responded by saying “I always read the books and don’t complain. I always enjoy the books we read” (Student Response, 2013). This statement

allowed for me to conclude that the student's enjoyment of the reading material allowed for them to display positivity towards reading. In turn, the positive attitude allowed for the student to feel more motivated. However, Isabelle and Tom did not possess positive attitudes towards reading. The negative perceptions in regards to Tom were contradictory when compared to previous perceptions within the first questionnaire. In order to draw conclusions about the contradictions I asked Tom a further question. I asked him "why did you give yourself a rating of 2.5?" (Student and Teacher Conversation, 2013). Tom stated "Well, I don't always like coming to reading because I feel like I don't have to be here. I know how to read. So, I don't always have a good attitude when I come to reading" (Student Response, 2013). The discrepancy that was seen among the younger and older students could be indicative of frustrations with the rigorous curriculum and repeated failures that may have been experienced. Zentall and Lee (2012) support the findings regarding possible repeated failures. Students within the older grades were more likely to have negative perceptions of their own abilities because they have experienced repeated failures within reading. Since Tom and Isabelle were both new to the reading program, the failures may have persisted which cause negative perceptions. The students have also indicated that "they don't like being pulled out of the classroom" (Student and Teacher Informal Conversation, November 2013). Due to this fact, the students perceived that there was a deficit that was causing them to have to attend tier two reading services. The negative perceptions of their own motivation and abilities were the key components influencing intrinsic motivation. Therefore, it was essential for students to have opportunities to experience successes within reading so as to promote positive attitudes and overall motivation.

After evaluating the results of the entire rubric, it was concluded that there was discrepancy among ratings between younger and older students. The younger students were often

more lenient with their ratings. The older students were harsher in their ratings because of their overall attitudes towards reading. The students were more negative because they were new to the program and had been experiencing repeated failures within the classroom as indicated by the students. Zentall and Lee (2012) supported these findings and believed that older children are often more likely to possess negativity towards their own reading abilities because they perceive themselves as not being a strong reader. Therefore, in order for the student to feel motivated teachers and specialists must provide opportunities for students to be successful.

### **Students Need to Possess Basic Foundational Literacy Skills for Application Purposes**

Students need to possess basic foundational literacy skills including: phonics, decoding and basic spelling patterns in order to facilitate success within reading. The foundational skills are developed within the early years (Kindergarten through second grade) and help to provide a base for all other skills. If students do not possess these basic skills, they will struggle and will be in need of tier two interventions to help promote grade level success (Coyne, Kwok, McDonagh, Harn & Kame'enui, 2008). The need for a foundation of literacy skills was also supported by Gapp, Zalud & Pietrzak (2009) who believe that students who are placed into a reading intervention program are more likely to discontinue services in the future. The findings of these authors correlated with findings within my study. The first form of data that was analyzed involved an interview with the other Reading Specialist. The interview was administered and transcribed for authenticity. The first question that was asked was "do you think early intervention is beneficial and could possibly help a student discontinue services in the future?" (Reading Specialist Interview, November 2013). This question was asked because the push within schools was towards tier one and having tiers two and three be supplemental. Therefore,

the hope would be for students to eventually have services discontinued so that the numbers seen within tiers two and three would drop. Early intervention was essential for students to have services be discontinued because the students have not experienced repeated failures (Zentall and Lee, 2012).

After looking at the findings found within the first interview question, it was apparent that the Reading Specialist believed that early intervention was essential in promoting further reading success. The Reading Specialist asserted that “early intervention was very beneficial and helps students meet grade level expectations” (Reading Specialist Response, November 2013). This statement allowed me to conclude that she believed that the direct instruction received within reading resource helped the students to gain the necessary literacy skills to help promote success. The Reading Specialist also believed strongly that the students should be receiving reading support within tier one (the classroom) so as to benefit struggling readers. She stated “through explicit instruction on specific targeted areas in addition to strong tier one instruction students will be successful” (Reading Specialist Response, November 2013). This statement allowed me to conclude that Reading Specialists help to provide additional practice with literacy skills. With students receiving practice with these skills within reading resource and the classroom, they will become successful. The evidence for strong tier one instruction was supported by Faggelle-Luby and Wardwell (2011) who believed that instruction should be systematic and explicit and should cover multicomponents. Therefore, once a strong foundation is provided within tier one and a student was still struggling tier two services may become necessary. It was also evident that the Reading Specialist’s views correlated with findings held by Shepherd and Salembier (2011) who believed that early intervention services combined with strong tier one instruction would allow for students to possibly discontinue services in the future.

The next question that was asked involved the effectiveness of two specific models found within tier two involving: the push in and pull out classroom models. The question asked was “what model do you think is more effective push in or pull out of the classroom?” (Reading Specialist Interview, November 2013). This question was asked to determine if the Reading Specialist believed that one component of tier two was more beneficial for students.

After evaluating these findings, it was apparent that the Reading Specialist believed that pulling students out of the classroom was more beneficial. She believed that when pushing in to the classroom it could be beneficial if there is a plan of what program to use with the student. She stated “If the services are push in you need to have a collaborative relationship with the teacher whose classroom you are pushing into and establish what intervention you will be using” (Reading Specialist Response, November 2013). This statement allowed me to conclude that being familiar with programs that would benefit an individual student and serving as an additional aid to the teacher would be beneficial. When working in collaboration with the teacher, each person’s (teacher and specialist) expertise would be utilized. The Reading Specialist’s viewpoints were correlated with findings found by Scholin and Burns (2012) who mentioned the pull out and push in intervention models within the classroom. The Reading Specialist saw the benefits of both models but believed that the pull out method allowed for more specific targeted instruction that correlated with student needs. However, when the student was pulled out of the classroom it could also be seen as detrimental because the students were missing targeted tier one instruction within the classroom. She stated “one benefit of pushing into the classroom was that the student was part of the class for more of the day” (Reading Specialist Response, November 2013). This statement allowed me to believe that she felt that since the students who receive reading support often receive other services, it was important for

the student to feel a part of their classroom. In so doing, collaborative relationships would be fostered and the student would not perceive themselves as having a deficit that was making them be pulled out of the classroom. With the emphasis being placed back on tier one, in order for students to grow as readers they must be receiving targeted, explicit and systematic instruction from both tier one and tier two which is seen as supplemental. The findings of the push towards tier one correlated with findings found within question three of the Reading Specialist Interview. The next question that was asked was “how do you feel about the push towards tier one and building a strong foundation within the classroom in hopes of lowering numbers for tier two and three services? Do you think this is realistic and beneficial?” (Reading Specialist Interview, November 2013).

When evaluating the findings, it was evident that overall she believed that strengthening tier one would be beneficial but would be difficult with the new Common Core and APPR standards. She stated “I believe in theory it is great to push towards tier one instruction. I think that as teachers strengthen their tier one instruction that there may be fewer needs for students to receive additional support” (Reading Specialist Response, November 2013). This statement indicated that it would be beneficial but may not be realistic. This was concluded by the statement “in theory.” She felt that not lowering the numbers within tier two and three was possible because of the new rigor found within the curriculum. The findings indicated that the push towards stronger tier one instruction was something that would be beneficial to all students because the instruction that would be provided would be targeted and tier two would be seen as supplemental and as extra targeted practice. Within the changing world of education teachers found within tier one (classroom) become more fearful with the push towards tier one because of the possibility of lower ratings with APPR because of the demographic of struggling readers. She

asserted “along with mandates (Common Core and APPR) it can be challenging to meet the needs of all learners, and provide the levels of support that all students need in tier one instruction” (Reading Specialist Response, November 2013). This statement allowed me to conclude that within the changing world of education the possibility of being able to lower the number of students may not be realistic because of the fear of APPR scores being negatively impacted. However, the push towards a strengthened tier one is necessary because the tiers build off of each other. The findings for a push towards a stronger tier one was strengthened by Denton, Fletcher, Anthony and Francis (2006) who believed that tier one instruction should provide scaffolding that aligns with specific targeted goals and objectives. In so doing, reading success will be facilitated for students who were initially struggling because they will be receiving a strong foundation provided within tier one, allowing for the model to become more effective because tiers two and three will become supplemental as intended. The next question that was asked was “how do you think students can become more motivated to read” (Reading Specialist Interview, November 2013).

After analyzing the findings within question four of the reading specialist interview (2013) it was apparent that the perception that was held by the Reading Specialist involved taking the time to get to know each one of your students and incorporating materials that would be seen as engaging, such as interest based texts. She stated “I think it is important to try to get to know your students and to see what is motivating them” (Reading Specialist Response, November 2013). This statement allowed me to conclude that she believed that establishing personal relationships with each student was essential. Students who receive reading services often do not like reading, therefore incorporating aspects of things they enjoy would prove to be motivational. This idea was furthered when she asserted that “I think it is helpful to try to read



books that are interesting to students and that can “hook” them” (Reading Specialist Response, 2013). This statement indicated that she incorporated reading materials that involved things the students enjoy. The viewpoints of interest based texts correlated with findings found by Zentall and Lee (2012) who believed in providing interest based texts because they would allow for the struggling readers to experience successes. The viewpoints held by the Reading Specialist had similarities to the findings within my student questionnaires. Both the Reading Specialists and students believed that books reflective of interests were beneficial in promoting reading success and increasing intrinsic motivation. The next question asked was “what reading programs do you think are the most beneficial in targeting specific skills” (Reading Specialist Interview, November 2013).

After evaluating the findings, it was evident that the Reading Specialist believed that there more than one program would be beneficial to use with students because a single program does not encompass all literacy skills. She stated “I believe that there are several reading programs that are beneficial, and that the program that is used with a child needs to be one that aligns with student needs” (Reading Specialist Response, November 2013). This statement indicated that through the incorporation of many programs the student will be benefitted. The Reading Specialist must also be familiar with several programs, so as to know what program would specifically target individual student needs. When looking at the findings, it was apparent that the beliefs held by the Reading Specialist were similar to findings held by by Faggelle-Luby and Wardwell (2011) who believed that instruction should be multicomponent involving the incorporation of decoding, fluency and comprehension skills. The Reading Specialist’s viewpoints were similar because she believed that not just a single program could encompass all of the components necessary to promote reading success. As a result, more than one program

should be used that targets specific needs of individual students. The last question that was asked was “How do you think students’ perceptions of their own reading abilities influence success in reading? How do you think teachers perceptions of students’ abilities influence success in reading?” (Reading Specialist Interview, November 2013).

When analyzing the findings from the Reading Specialist Interview (2013) student and teacher perceptions of reading ability were viewed as indicators for motivation. Both students and teachers influence perceptions of ability. If a student believes that they are not a strong reader, they will be less likely to succeed because it becomes a negative self-fulfilling prophecy. If teachers believe that a student can’t succeed the feelings will be projected on the students. The Reading Specialist believed that the student’s perception of the ability would influence success. However, she furthered these beliefs by responding “I also believe that a student’s work ethic and motivation can also impact their success in reading” (Reading Specialist Response, November 2013). This statement furthered the belief that intrinsic motivation was an essential component for students to possess and influences their overall success. If a student does not have motivation, they will be influenced by outside factors. Zentall and Lee (2012) furthered these beliefs as they felt that intrinsic motivation was one of the factors influencing student success. If a child perceives themselves as being a struggling reader, they will be less likely to be intrinsically motivated because the factors motivating them will become *extrinsic*. In order to combat these negative viewpoints of reading ability, the teacher must provide opportunities for success. She believed that “I think it is important to help students recognize the areas that they are succeeding in, and work to build off of those successes” (Reading Specialist Response, November 2013). This indicated that students need opportunities to be successful because they

have often experienced repeated failures within reading. Therefore, the teacher or specialist must provide texts at the student's level to help promote success and get them to grade level standards.

The last form of data that was evaluated involved the pre and post Milestones assessment. The Milestones assessment was administered to the students during reading sessions. The students were asked to read a passage and answer multiple choice questions. The multiple choice questions were broken down based upon a specific literacy skill. The test was administered twice, in the form of a pre and post-assessment to see if direct progress had been made after direct and systematic targeted instruction. The findings of the *Milestones Pre-Assessments and Post-Assessments* were analyzed individually. In so doing, I could directly see if progress had been made. The results of Becca's assessments were indicated within Table 15.

Table 15

*Becca's Milestones Scores*

Score on Pre-Assessment	<u>Skills Missed</u>
33%	Recalling Facts and Details, Sequencing, Cause/Effect, Comparing and Contrasting, Predictions, Word Meaning, Conclusions/Inferences, Summarizing
Score on Post-Assessment	<u>Skills Missed</u>
50%	Sequencing, Predictions, Comparing and Contrasting,

Conclusions/Inferences,  
Fact/Opinion, Summarizing

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When looking at the data, it was evident that Becca had made some progress between the pre and post assessments. On the pre assessment Becca answered 4 out of 12 questions correctly. The pre assessment was given before Becca had received direct and systematic instruction of specific skills. The pre assessment proved as an evaluation of the literacy skills that the student had mastered prior to instruction. When Becca was working she stated “this is hard” indicating frustration. Becca claimed that she had never answered questions targeting many of these skills. Therefore, impacting her score negatively. Her frustration allowed me to conclude that Becca was not retaining skills that she was previously taught. Therefore, she did not possess the skills necessary to be successful. The information from the pre assessment allowed for me to target the specific skills that she had missed to help promote success on the post assessment. On the post assessment Becca answered 6 out of 12 questions correctly. She had made progress but still missed several of the same skills including: sequencing, comparing and contrasting, conclusions and inferences. Therefore, instruction would need to be modified accordingly in order for Becca to become successful. The findings correlated with Denton, Fletcher, Anthony and Francis (2006) who evaluated the need for instruction that was targeted towards specific foundational skills. While some progress was made, it would be necessary for Becca to receive practice with these skills within reading resource and the classroom. The next student that was evaluated was Grace. Her scores are indicated within Table 16.

Table 16

*Grace's Milestones Scores*

Score on Pre-Assessment	<u>Skills Missed</u>
75%	Main Idea, Predictions, Word Meaning
Score on Post-Assessment	<u>Skills Missed</u>
83%	Predictions, Figurative Language

When looking at the data, it was evident that Grace had made some progress between the pre and post assessments. On the pre assessment Grace answered 9 out of 12 questions correctly. Grace had not received systematic and explicit instruction of the skills before the post assessment. However, it was apparent that she possessed extensive background knowledge of these skills. Grace had stated “we do this in my classroom” (student response, November 2013). This allowed me to conclude that Grace was receiving additional support with tier one (classroom). The information from the pre assessment allowed for me to target the specific skills that she had missed to help promote success on the post assessment. On the post assessment Grace answered 10 out of 12 questions correctly. She had made progress but still missed one of the same skills (predictions). This allowed me to conclude that Grace had not had much exposure to predictions prior to the assessments. I had modified the instruction to target predictions but I needed to include more practice with applying the skills. Therefore, instruction would need to be modified accordingly in order for Grace to become successful. The findings correlated with Denton, Fletcher, Anthony and Francis (2006) who stated the need for practicing the skills. Often

students know what the skill is but have not had practice with answering questions involving that specific skill. While some progress was made, it would be necessary for Grace to receive more practice with predictions. The next student that was evaluated was Isabelle. Her results are indicated within Table 17.

Table 17

*Isabelle's Milestones Scores*

Score on Pre-Assessment	<u>Skills Missed</u>
75%	Cause/Effect, Predictions, Word Meaning
Score on Post-Assessment	<u>Skills Missed</u>
83%	Cause/Effect, Word Meaning

When looking at the data, it was evident that Isabelle had made some progress between the pre and post assessments. On the pre assessment Isabelle answered 9 out of 12 questions correctly. Isabelle had stated that “she learned all of these skills already” (student response, November 2013). This statement showed validity in regards to her scores. This allowed me to conclude that Isabelle had worked on these skills in prior years and continued to work on these skills within the classroom. The information from the pre assessment allowed for me to target the specific skills that she had missed to help promote success on the post assessment. On the post assessment Isabelle answered 10 out of 12 questions correctly. She had made progress but still missed the same two skills (cause/effect and word meaning). This allowed me to conclude that Isabelle had retained what she had learned about these skills. Therefore, in order for her to be successful

further mini lessons would need to be provided so she could work on these skills. According to Denton, Fletcher, Anthony and Francis (2006) often the reason why students struggle with specific skills was the lack of exposure. Therefore, in order for Isabelle to continue to be successful these skills must be targeted. The last student that was assessed was Tom. Tom's scores are indicated within Table 18.

Table 18

*Tom's Milestones Scores*

Score on Pre-Assessment	<u>Skills Missed</u>
67%	Cause/Effect, Comparing/Contrasting, Conclusions/Inferences, Summarizing
Score on Post-Assessment	<u>Skills Missed</u>
92%	Conclusions/Inferences

When looking at the data, it was evident that Tom had made some progress between the pre and post assessments. On the pre assessment Tom answered 8 out of 12 questions correctly. Tom had prior exposure to the skills since he was repeating fifth grade. This allowed me to conclude that the repeated exposure was benefitting Tom. The information from the pre assessment allowed for me to target the specific skills that she had missed to help promote success on the post assessment. On the post assessment Tom answered 11 out of 12 questions correctly. He mastered many skills but still struggled with conclusions and inferences. This allowed me to conclude that Tom had retained what she had learned about these skills. I also concluded that based on Tom's confidence in his own reading ability it was contributing to his success. Tom has stated "I know that I am doing well in reading this year" (student response, November 2013).

These findings correlated with ideas held by Zentall and Lee (2012) who believed that a student's own perception of their reading ability will contribute to their success. Since Tom views his reading ability positively, it was influencing his reading success

After looking at the data, it became evident that the targeted specific instruction was seen as beneficial to help the students learn the various skills. For the initial pre-test, the prior background knowledge was looked at. When evaluating the pre-test several key skills were missed by several students including: word meaning in context and cause and effect. Based upon these initial results, I taught mini lessons that targeted those specific skills for hope of future mastery. Denton, Fletcher, Anthony and Francis (2006) evaluated the need for instruction that was targeted towards teaching specific foundational skills. When looking at the data from the pre-assessments it was essential that I modified instruction to match these specific needs. When looking at the post data all students demonstrated progress being made. However, some skills still proved to provide trouble, such as word meaning and context and cause in effect. Based upon these results, further lessons will be needed in order to further solidify the application of the skill. Teaching of specific literacy skills combined with the chance for application will allow for future reading successes.

### **Implications**

After conducting my research there were several implications that resulted due to my findings that could benefit Elementary Teachers and Reading Specialists. These implications involve teachers using tier two (reading resource) of the Response to Intervention (RTI) model as a supplemental resource by providing a strong systematic and explicit foundation within tier one (in the classroom), attending professional developments in order to teach the reading programs with fidelity and promoting opportunities for success.



When teachers use tier two of the Response to Intervention (RTI) model as supplemental, the push becomes towards tier one. According to Goss and Brown-Chidsey (2012) and Scholin and Burns (2012) in order for the Response to Intervention (RTI) model to work effectively, the tiers need to build off of each other, with each tier becoming more specific and targeted as the tiers progress. The tiers are used to match each specific student's needs. The systematic and explicit instruction should incorporate the use of different foundational literacy components including: phonics, decoding and comprehension (Faggelle-Luby & Wardwell, 2011). When students are receiving tier two instruction within reading resource, they gain skills that will help promote future reading success. The emphasis becomes towards decoding, comprehension and fluency skills upon which all other literacy skills depend. Within my research, the need for a strong foundational base of literacy skills became necessary within the Milestones pre and post-assessments. All the students demonstrated that they had a foundational base of fundamental literacy skills, but needed further instruction to help solidify the concepts. Since the Milestones assessment is in a multiple choice format, it also becomes necessary that students have time to be able to *apply* these skills. After taking the post-assessment the students improved as a whole but some skills that had been targeted within lessons leading up to the post-assessment proved to still need some clarification and practice. The finding of needing more practice indicated that students needed additional practice with these literacy skills within the classroom setting and not merely within reading resource or the classroom solely. As a result, students would have extensive repeated exposure to skills to help facilitate comprehension. Clemens, Hilt- Panahon, Shapiro and Yoon (2012) suggest the idea of intensity referring to the repeated exposure of systematic and explicit instruction of literacy skills. The idea of intensity correlates with my findings, implying that the instruction of the basic skills should be emphasized within tier one

and strengthened within tier two if reading resource services are deemed necessary. One way that teachers can implement the finding of the need for explicit instruction within tier one involves the incorporation of teaching a foundational literacy skill through mini lessons. However, once the skill is introduced children need the opportunity to *practice* and *apply* the skill. Reading Specialists within tier two can apply the incorporation of teaching a foundational literacy skill through the use of literacy programs that aide in teaching the specific skills that an individual student is struggling with. However, when using the literacy programs it is essential that the programs are implemented with fidelity.

Another implication for teachers and Reading Specialists involves attending professional developments in order to teach supplemental reading programs to assist struggling readers with fidelity. Fidelity involves implementing the programs with complete professionalism. Deton, Fletcher, Anthony and Francis (2006) agree with viewpoints held by Kerins, Trotter and Schoenbrodt (2010) suggesting that schools typically use more than one intervention program in order to address all student needs. Therefore, it is essential that teachers know how to effectively teach the programs in order to assist struggling readers. Some programs that are typically used include: Wilson FUNdations, Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). In order to make sure that the aspects are being administered correctly, teachers and specialists can partake in professional development programs. The professional development programs allow for extensive training of how to administer the programs and the various components. Abbot and Wills (2012) agree with ideas held by Denton, Fletcher, Anthony and Francis (2006) who further this implication with the finding that professional developments fidelity guarantees that teachers and specialists are all using the same procedures. As my findings indicate, using the literacy programs to aide

instruction of foundational literacy skills including: decoding, fluency and comprehension is essential in order to help promote the success of struggling readers. Reading Specialists could also help to create a professional development to teach other staff members within the school the benefits and procedures associated with the literacy programs.

The last implication that teachers and specialists should consider based on my research involves promoting opportunities for successes for students who are not confident in reading. Zentall and Lee (2012) agree with ideas suggested by Pakulski and Kaderavek (2012) who introduced the ideas of repeated failures for struggling readers. Therefore, the students have a negative perception of their own reading abilities. The finding of assessing student perceptions of abilities was demonstrated through the use of teacher made questionnaires and a reading attitude survey. Within the findings of my study, it was apparent that the students' perceptions influenced their motivation and overall success. Therefore, teachers and specialists must provide opportunities for students to feel successful. One such method to implement the opportunity for success, involves teachers and specialists incorporating decodable texts within the classroom. Decodable texts typically are texts that children can easily master which will help to boost confidence. Another method that teachers and specialists can implement involves the use of interest based texts. Through incorporation of texts that are reflective of student interests from time to time, students will feel more motivated and excited to learn. In turn, the enjoyment and success within reading will be enhanced.

### **Conclusion**

The Response to Intervention (RTI) model when used in progression of tiers proves to promote student reading success. The research was conducted to indicate what benefits the Response to Intervention (RTI) model has on student engagement and success. After conducting my research my data and findings indicate that through the use of systematic and explicit instruction provided within tier two, student success can be facilitated. It was also concluded that through the use of interest based texts and opportunities for students to feel success, engagement will for students will be fostered. During the first session, students were given AIMSweb progress monitoring assessments to assess fluency. During the remaining sessions, the students received targeted systematic and explicit instruction using the Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) program. The students also took a pre and post assessment of literacy skills (Milestones) and questionnaires. The students overall benefitted from the instruction provided through tier two of the Response to Intervention Model because it proved to increase success through results of pre and post assessments. The research that was conducted posed a limitation involving time. When conducting the research, it was difficult to get everything accomplished within a 30 minute window. Therefore, the collection of the data had to be split up over multiple sessions that were ongoing. It was also difficult to find additional time if needed to conduct the research that aligned with student schedules. If I were to conduct this study again I would increase the sample size of students. Even though the results indicated that the Response to Intervention Model (RTI) is beneficial, I think that with more students represented more trends regarding progress would be apparent. Another limitation involved the range of grades that were represented within the data. It was difficult to find students who wanted to participate within the study, but if I were to conduct the research again I would want to include students from the early

grades (Kindergarten through second grade). In so doing, I could assess if early intervention was proving to be effective resulting in later dismissal from tier two services. After evaluating the data, a further question has emerged that would promote further research. The question involves the effectiveness of systematic and explicit tier one intervention (classroom) and the effect on the number of students receiving additional tier two and three services. Therefore the findings concluded that, as teachers or specialists, it is essential for us to consider the benefits of the Response to Intervention Model (RTI) when it is used effectively. Tiers two and three should be used as supplemental and in *addition* to targeted instruction provided within tier one (classroom.) In conclusion, teachers should consider the opportunities for student successes within reading so as to increase motivation, engagement and enjoyment of reading. In turn, student success will be facilitated within tier two of the Response to Intervention Model.

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**Appendix A: AIMSweb Assessments (by grade level)****Benchmark Period #1-Fall Grade 3 AIMSweb R-CBM Passage 1 of 3**

It rained all day long. The wind and rain knocked the remaining	12
Leaves to the ground where they were swept into the street. Today was	25
a typical fall day.	29
Just two days ago, the sun was out and the temperatures were very	42
Pleasant. Raking leaves into large playful piles was very relaxing.	52
The family worked together gathering the maple leaves into piles.	62
Kids will be kids, and they loved jumping and hiding in the leaves. Even	76
their dog liked to romp around in the leaves. It was fun for everyone.	90
The next day, the weather changed slightly Clouds began to roll	101
into the area and darken the sky. It did not rain then, but it was clear	117
that winter was near. The family thought that the ground would be	129
covered in no time. Winter was approaching fast.	137
They awoke to the rain hitting the roof of their home. It was a light	152
rain, so they figured it would rain all day. They were right. Now the kids	167
would not be able to play in the leaves. The leaves were all wet and	182
brown. They were no longer dry and colorful.	190
The winds picked up speed and sent the piles of leaves blowing	202
across the yard and into the street. The kids thought they were pretty	215
lucky to have been able to play in the leaves yesterday.	226
Later in the day, the street sweeper came into their neighborhood	237

and, with its mighty vacuum, gobbled up the leaves that had found their way into the street. The leaves were gone. 250  
258

That night the kids were tucked into bed for the evening. As they slept, the rain turned to snow. 271  
277

The kids dreamed of sledding and snowmen. The next morning their dreams came true. Snow! 287  
292

Total Corrects: \_\_\_\_\_

Errors: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix A: AIMSweb Assessments (by grade level)**  
**Benchmark Period #1-Fall Grade 3 AIMSweb R-CBM Passage 2 of 3**

Billy was sitting on the sidewalk curb holding his favorite old baseball glove. 11  
13

“Hey Billy!” he heard. “Weren’t you supposed to meet me half an hour ago at the park? Why are you sitting here instead of moving?” 25  
38

“I’m waiting,” Billy replied. 42

“Waiting for what?” I asked. 47

“I’m waiting for Mr. Sanchez to leave for work. It shouldn’t be much longer.” 60  
61

“Billy, your Mom said it was all right for you to play with me at the park. I don’t understand why you’re waiting for Mr. Sanchez.” 77  
88

Billy sighed as he explained, “Well, Mr. Sanchez’s car is parked in the driveway, right across the street. See? And the park is across the street and down the block.”

I shook my head because I didn’t understand what Billy was talking about. This morning he was excited about playing baseball with the guys. He was a pretty good shortstop, even though he wasn’t quite five years old.

“I know where the park is and so do you. So explain to me again why you are sitting here?”

“I already told you. I’m waiting for Mr. Sanchez,” replied Billy. I looked across the street. There was no sign of Mr. Sanchez coming out of his house.

“Mom said I can’t cross the street if I see any cars,” Billy continued, “and I see Mr. Sanchez’s car. It’s right there in his driveway!”

“Oh, Billy!” I laughed. “I’m sure your mom meant you should not cross the street if you see any cars driving in the road! She just wants to make sure that a moving car doesn’t hit you. She’s not worried about the parked cars! Come on. You can walk with me to the park!”

“Oh, Sam. You’re so smart. Thanks for being my friend. Let’s go play ball.”

Total Corrects: \_\_\_\_\_

Errors: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix A: AIMSweb Assessments (by grade level)**  
**Benchmark Period #1-Fall Grade 3 AIMSweb R-CBM Passage 3 of 3**

Mama frog carried her babies upon her back. They rode there as	12
she swam in the water and hopped along the edge of the creek. In fact,	27
the only time they jumped off her back was when Mama frog caught	40
then something to eat.	44
Those baby frogs just love to eat black bugs. Green flies, though,	56
were their favorites. “Mama, Mama, “they would holler from her back.	67
“Please catch us something to eat. We are very hungry. Growing	78
babies need lots of insects to get big and strong.”	88
“That’s true, but I am very tired,” said mama frog. “I have been	102
carrying you around all day. I must rest now.”	111
Mama frog swam beneath a lily pad and closed her eyes. She tried	124
to sleep, but she couldn’t because her baby frogs continued hopping	135
around on the lily pad above.	141
“Will you three settle down?” the mama frog demanded of her	152
babies. “Your mama is very tired.”	158
“Okay, Mama,” the baby frogs said. “We’ll keep quiet.”	167
Just then, one of the baby frogs saw a green fly buzz by. It zoomed	182
low over the water and right by their eyes. That was too tempting for	196
them to ignore.	199
“I’m going to catch the green fly,” one of the baby frogs told his	213
brother and sister. “Since Mama is going to take a nap, I’ll catch our	227

lunch. Someone has to take care of us!”	235
The baby frog waited for the green fly to buzz over again, and then	249
she jumped with all her might and opened her tiny mouth. The green fly	263
flew right in.	266
The mama frog watched. “My babies are growing up,” she said.	277
“Maybe it is best if I just relax. They are doing well by themselves.”	291

Total Corrects: \_\_\_\_\_

Errors: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix A: AIMSweb Assessments (by grade level)**  
**Benchmark Period #1-Fall Grade 4 AIMSweb R-CBM Passage 1 of 3**

As soon as the temperature drops, people start getting excited up in	12
Nome, Alaska. They never go to bed at night without peeking out their	25
windows first. They want to see what the weather is doing. If a light	39
snow is falling, they know that by morning the roads will be dangerous.	52
That’s where the sled dogs come into play.	60
Sled dogs are fun, peppy, medium-sized dogs. Their colors are	71
different, but they all have thick, downy coats of fur. The dog’s tails curl	85
up when they are excited.	90
There’s nothing a sled dog loves more than the cold, fierce winds of	103
winter. Even though most owners build shelters for their sled dogs, the	115
dogs prefer to sleep outside. They tuck their noses into their tails. They	128

snuggle their bodies deep in the snow.	135
Sled dogs are playful, intelligent, and very vocal. They do not bark.	147
Instead, they howl like wolves. It's not uncommon for a pack of sled	160
dogs to have a group howl at sunset and sunrise.	170
A person who owns sled dogs can be sure that their sleep will be	184
disturbed on the mornings after a deep snow has fallen. The dogs will	197
be up on the roofs of their doghouses, welcoming the snow with their	210
longs yowls of anticipation. "Wake up, wake up, WAKE UP!" They seem	222
to be howling. "We want to play in the snow!"	232
The two most important things in a sled dog's life are running and	245
pulling. Quite simply, that is what they are born to do.	256
A sled dog will like nothing better than to trot in front of a person on	272
skis or a sled filled with supplies. They've been known to race with their	286
owners on bikes or rollerblades. Pulling is a good way for them to get	300
exercise and stay in shape all summer long. It's also great for the dogs'	314
owners.	315
Together the dog and person team can romp and play in many	327
ways during the snowless months. Nothing beats the thrill, however, of	338
winter's return and a dog sled run through the snow.	348

Total Corrects: \_\_\_\_\_ Errors: \_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix A: AIMSweb Assessments (by grade level)**  
**Benchmark Period #1-Fall Grade 4 AIMSweb R-CBM Passage 2 of 3**

Charlie Clark had been a mailman for thirty years. He was used to	13
delivering mail in all types of weather. He'd delivered letters on	24
delightful days, and he'd delivered letters on dreadful days.	33
Charlie was proud of his work and happy with his job. Never, in all	47
his years as a mailman, had Charlie ever had a problem with a mailbox.	61
Other mailman complained about mailboxes on their routes, but not	71
Charlie.	72
He didn't have any worries until one day when he noticed there was	85
a new box on his route. The mailbox was nailed to a branch of a dead	101
tree. It was battered, dented, and badly rusted. The flag at its side was	115
crooked and bent.	118
Charlie felt bad about it. "People should treat their mailboxes with	129
more respect," he muttered as he dug through his bag.	139
He had letters addressed to the box, so he pulled it open and set	153
them inside. He was about to pull his hand out when the box bit him. It	169
had a grip on his hand and wouldn't let go.	179
Charlie looked up and down the street for someone to help him, but	192
there was no one in sight. He wrestled with the box for an hour, until the	208
box spit out his hand.	213
The next day he had more letters addressed to that box. With the	226

letters in hand, he stopped in front of it. He waited for something to	241
happen, but the box was quiet today.	248
Charlie quickly slipped the letters inside and almost got his hand out	260
before the box latched onto him again.	267
This time Charlie and the mailbox had a fierce battle. Charlie hit	279
and kicked the box, but still the box wouldn't let go. Finally, Charlie was	293
out of breath, and he had to stop. He rested his head on the mailbox.	308
Suddenly, he had an idea. "There, there," he told the mailbox,	319
Patting it gently. "Why don't you let me go so I can deliver the rest of my	336
mail?"	337
The mailbox began to purr and let go nicely.	347

Total Corrects: \_\_\_\_\_

Errors: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix A: AIMSweb Assessments (by grade level)**  
**Benchmark Period #1-Fall Grade 4 AIMSweb R-CBM Passage 3 of 3**

It was difficult moving to a new house. When I was eight, we left	14
our old neighborhood and moved to a new one. We packed my dresser,	27
my bunk bed, my computer, and my scooter. In every room of the	40
house, boxes were piled high like building blocks.	48
The house felt still. I walked from room to room trying to remember	61

what each one used to be like. As I walked through the living room, I	76
noticed orange scribble marks on the wallpaper. My younger brother	86
made those marks when we used to play art museum. Entering my	98
bedroom, I noticed a large scratch on the hardwood floor. That was	110
where my puppy, Clyde, and I used to play fetch with his toy kitten.	124
Wandering down the hallway, I noticed pencil marks near the bathroom	135
door. That was where my father used to measure me to see how tall I	150
had grown each birthday. I already began to miss the wallpaper on the	163
walls and the light fixtures on the ceilings.	171
“This has always been my house,” I thought. “I don’t want to leave.”	184
There had to be some way I could keep my house.	195
Looking out my bedroom window, I noticed the tree house Dad and	207
I constructed years before. I hurried to the backyard, climbed up to my	220
tree house, and decided not to go unless my tree house went too. I	234
would keep the tree house to myself, and then I would be happy.	247
Just then my neighbor Logan arrived to say goodbye. “I wish you	259
could stay, but I know you’ll have even more fun at your new house,” he	274
said sadly.	276
Suddenly, I began to think of someone beside myself. I thought	287
about my house, my yard, and my neighbors. I would miss everything,	299
but I was going to get a new house, a new yard, and new neighbors.	314
Logan, though, was just losing a friend. I realized then that Logan	326
needed the tree house more than I did.	334

“Goodbye, Logan. Take care of the tree house,” I said. “It’s all	346
yours.”	347
The smile on Logan’s face made me feel much better.	357

Total Corrects: \_\_\_\_\_ Errors: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix A: AIMSweb Assessments (by grade level)**  
**Benchmark Period #1-Fall Grade 5 AIMSweb R-CBM Passage 1 of 3**

The fox wasn’t wise like the owl, thrifty like the squirrel, hard working like the	15
beaver, or determined like the robin. The fox was sly and secretive.	27
She slept most of the days away in her den with her kits curled around her. She	44
went out to hunt only on nights when the moon was hidden by clouds. Not many of	61
the other animals saw her during the day or met up with her at night.	76
“I know that nasty fox is stealing hens from the henhouse,” the squirrel told the	91
owl one afternoon as they sat on a branch and gossiped.	102
“That’s why she doesn’t show her red nose around here during the day. That	116
thieving fox makes me angry.”	121
The owl didn’t say anything. She thought about the rabbit she’d caught that	134
Morning and held her tongue. What would the squirrel have to say about her after	149
she’d heard that she ate rabbits for breakfast?	157
That evening at sunset as the fox slipped out of her den, her fur was a fiery red in	176
the light of the setting sun and her eyes were black and clever. She was just about	193
to slip under the farmer’s fence when she heard someone snicker at her from a tree	209

branch above.	211
It was the robin, “Good evening fox,” she said. “Where are you off to this fine	227
night? There was a ruckus at the farm yesterday morning. I heard it when I flew	243
over in search of worms. It seems some creature has been sneaking into the	257
henhouse and stealing hens. You wouldn’t know anything about that, would you?”	269
The fox ignored the rude robin and slipped under the fence, but instead of	283
heading toward the farm as she did most nights, she cut down to the river.	298
Beaver was working on his dam, and he watched with awe as the fox caught	313
three fish in a row and tossed them on the shore. He’d always known the fox was as	331
smart as she was sly.	336

Total Corrects: \_\_\_\_\_ Errors: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix A: AIMSweb Assessments (by grade level)**  
**Benchmark Period #1-Fall Grade 5 AIMSweb R-CBM Passage 2 of 3**

Leo went to the forest every day to gather firewood. He would collect the wood	15
tie it into small bundles, and carry the bundles home each day. He would pack his	31
lunch and stay in the forest until sunset. At noon he would have his lunch, and at	48
noon a bird would visit him. It was white with ash-colored wings and was larger than	65
a dove but smaller than an eagle. Leo always shared a morsel of his food with the	82
bird. Leo called it Jayto and would talk to it from time to time.	96
One very hot summer day, Leo began to eat his lunch and Jayto arrived right on	112
time. Leo gave him some of his lunch and the bird eagerly pecked at it. It was so	130
hot, Leo decided to take a nap. As he lay down, the bird began to peck and caw at	149

him. The bird was able to convince Leo to follow him. Jayto kept flying small  
distances waiting for Leo to catch up. Finally they came upon a broken stone wall.

Leo had once heard that a rich businessman used to live here long ago. One  
day he left for a foreign country and never returned. His wife lived alone for a long  
time, and it was said that she buried her jewelry box and that a strange bird stood  
guard over it attacking anyone that got near.

Was it possible that Jayto was this bird? Suddenly the bird flew from the wall to  
the ground and started pecking. Leo helped the bird, and sure enough, they  
uncovered a jewelry box. It was filled with gold, diamonds, rubies and other  
precious stones.

Leo decided not to go back to town for fear that his treasure would be taken from  
him. With Jayto on his shoulder, he traveled to a large city far away. He became a  
rich man and built a beautiful mansion. The mansion had a large garden filled with  
ponds and flowers. Jayto had all the mangoes that he could eat, and Leo lived a  
long and happy life.

Total Corrects: \_\_\_\_\_

Errors: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix A: AIMSweb Assessments (by grade level)**  
**Benchmark Period #1-Fall Grade 5 AIMSweb R-CBM Passage 3 of 3**

It's like a jungle in my grandmother's house because she has so many plants. 14

Even though she has enough plants out in her front yard, she still insists on having 30

more. There are rows of tulips near her house, big clumps of ferns, and hedges of	46
roses in the back. There are also pots of houseplants inside.	57
She brings as many of her outdoor plants inside as she can for the winter.	72
“I don’t want the poor dears to freeze,” she tells me, as I stare in awe at her	90
rooms filled with greenery. “Besides,” she likes to say, “a house full of plants is	105
much cozier than a house without. And mark my words, there’s more magic in a	120
house filled with plants.”	124
“Okay, Grandma,” I say because I don’t want to argue with her.	136
One night I slept in a sleeping bag on the floor of my grandma’s front parlor. The	153
front parlor by far has the most plants in the house. My two older brothers call it the	171
jungle room because we can no longer see the wallpaper. All we see when we walk	187
in the door are leaves and colorful flowers. It actually smells quite nice.	200
I was secretly excited to be camping out there because it would almost be like	215
sleeping in a real forest minus the hard ground. Grandma made a fire in the	230
fireplace that night so I could roast marshmallows and read books. I read until	244
around midnight. At about that time, the fire went out and my aching eyes dropped	259
shut. I closed my book and laid my head on the pillow.	271
It was then that I heard the rustling and the whispers.	282
“Hey,” a tiny voice called out in the darkness, “do you think they’re all asleep	297
yet?”	298
“Be quiet,” another one hissed. “We’ve got one right in the room with us.”	312
I heard more rustling of leaves and whispers, more hissing and scolding, and	325
then I saw them. Gnomes, I guess, is what they’re called. They were short and	340

skinny with pointed ears and glowing green eyes.

348

They thought I was asleep, so they didn't bother me much.

359

Total Corrects: \_\_\_\_\_ Errors: \_\_\_\_\_



**Appendix B: Student Questionnaire**

1. How long have you been in the reading program?
  
2. What is your favorite genre and what books have you enjoyed reading?
  
3. Do you enjoy coming to reading?
  
4. What things do you feel could make the reading program better?

**Appendix C: Interview with Reading Specialist**

1. Do you think early intervention is beneficial and could possibly help a student discontinue services in the future?
2. What model do you think is more effective push in or pull out of the classroom?
3. How do you feel about the push towards tier 1 and building a strong foundation within the classroom in hopes of lowering numbers for tier 2 and 3 services? Do you think this is realistic and beneficial?
4. How do you think students can become more motivated to read?
5. What reading programs do you think are the most beneficial in targeting specific skills and why?
6. How do you think the students' perceptions of their own abilities influence success in reading? How do you think teachers' perceptions of students' abilities influence success in reading?

## **Appendix D: Milestones Assessment**

### **Third Grade Milestones Assessment**

Here is a personal story that John wrote. Read the story. Then do Numbers 1 through 12.

The basket was on the dining room table when I got home. Like other baskets I had seen, this one was pale brown with a high stiff handle. Its rim was rounded and smooth. What made this basket different was its base. A colorful repeating pattern was around the bottom of the basket. One picture showed a group of Native-American children dancing around a small fire. In between each picture of the children was a picture of a rising sun.

The basket fascinated me. I had never seen anything this beautiful. I thought that it must have been made by a skilled basket weaver who was also a talented artist. However, something else about the basket held my attention. I couldn't take my eyes off one of the pictures. My eyes were fixed on the children dancing around the fire.

The real world seemed to fade away. Slowly, the sound of beating drums filled my head. I smelled the sweet smoke of burning wood. I felt my feet dancing around the fire to the beat of the drums. The sun was rising. Like the children in the picture, I was dancing to welcome the new day. I felt happy and at peace. The children I danced with were my friends and family.

A strange ringing noise began to drown out the beat of the drums. The noise would not stop. With each ring, I was drawn further away from the children and the fire. Soon, I was back in the present. I turned away from the basket with a strange sense of loss. I walked towards the sound.

**Finding Main Idea**

1. What is a good title for the story?
  - A. “A Special Basket”
  - B. “The Drum Beat”
  - C. “The Fire Dance”
  - D. “A New Day”

**Recalling Facts and Details**

2. Which of these was not pictured on the basket?
  - A. the sun
  - B. drums
  - C. children
  - D. a fire

**Understanding Sequence**

3. Which of these happened first?
  - A. John was back in the present.
  - B. John felt his feet dancing around the fire.
  - C. The real world seemed to fade away.
  - D. A strange ringing noise began to drown out the beat of the drums.

**Recognizing Cause and Effect**

4. The children pictured on the basket are dancing to
  - A. stay warm
  - B. recall the past
  - C. welcome a new day

- D. show how happy they are

### **Comparing and Contrasting**

- 5. How was the basket different from all the other baskets John had seen?
  - A. It was made by Native Americans
  - B. It was pale brown with a high stiff handle
  - C. Its rim was rounded and smooth
  - D. It had a colorful repeating pattern of pictures around the bottom

### **Making Predictions**

- 6. Predict what John will probably do next.
  - A. He will answer the phone.
  - B. He will dance around a fire.
  - C. He will ignore the ringing sound.
  - D. He will watch the sun rise.

### **Finding Word Meaning in Context**

- 7. In the story, the word *fascinated* means
  - A. “frightened”
  - B. “gave energy to”
  - C. “changed”
  - D. “held the attention of”

### **Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences**

- 8. At the end of the story, John feels a sense of loss. This suggests that John feels
  - A. tired

- B. happy
- C. sad
- D. excited

**Distinguishing Between Fact and Opinion**

9. Which of these is a fact from the story?
- A. The basket was on the dining room table when I got home.
  - B. I thought that it must have been made by a skilled basket weaver.
  - C. I had never seen anything this beautiful.
  - D. The real world seemed to fade away.

**Identifying Author's Purpose**

10. Why did John probably write the story?
- A. to explain why Native Americans make baskets
  - B. to convince readers to use their imagination more often
  - C. to make readers picture the basket and its effect on him

**Interpreting Figurative Language**

10. The words *couldn't take my eyes off* mean that John
- A. was tired of looking at the basket
  - B. couldn't stop looking at the basket
  - C. blinked his eyes
  - D. couldn't see

**Summarizing**

11. Which of these is the best summary of the story?
- A. John sees a beautiful basket on his dining room table.

- B. After the real world fades away, a strange ringing brings John back to the present.
- C. A picture on a Native-American basket makes John's imagination come alive.
- D. John pretends that he is living in another place and time.

#### **Fourth Grade Milestones Assessment**

Here is a story about a girl named Maria. Read the story. Then do Numbers 1 through 12.

Crack! The ball flew hard and high. Roberta dropped the bat and began to race around the base. The ball whizzed toward Maria. She reached to nab the ball, but it zipped right past her glove. The ball smacked the ground and rolled twenty more feet before Maria scooped it up. She spun and threw frantically, but Roberta was already safe at home plate. The game was over and the Bears had won. Maria left the field thinking "I can't wait until we play the Bears again next Saturday. I won't let the Red Rocks down then."

On the following day, Maria was in her room. Her books were scattered like leaves on her bed. She would have been studying, but instead she was thinking about next Saturday's game against the Bears. Her mother stopped in her room.

"Maria," her mother said. "Your great grandmother is coming to Flagstaff. You have never met her and this may be your only chance. She may never come here again because she is very old. We'll drive to Flagstaff to visit with her."

"Good," Maria said excitedly. "When is she coming?"

"This weekend," her mother replied. "We'll leave tomorrow. We won't be back until Sunday."

Maria shrieked, "But Mama, I have my big game on Saturday. I can't miss that!"

“I’m sorry Maria,” her mother said. “The game is probably very important to you. But surely you don’t want to miss meeting your great grandmother.” Maria could only nod in agreement as tears filled her eyes.

At school the next day, her teammates chattered about next Saturday’s game. Finally, Maria had to explain why she wouldn’t be there. Her teammates seemed to understand.

Later, Maria and her family left for Flagstaff. On Saturday morning, Maria listened to the weather report. Unexpected storms had hit her hometown. The weather was sunny in Flagstaff. And Maria was all smiles when she hugged her great grandmother for the first time.

### **Finding Main Idea**

1. The best title for this story is
  - A. “Maria and the Red Rocks”
  - B. “The Unexpected House Guest”
  - C. “The Big Game”
  - D. “A Happy Meeting”

### **Recalling Facts and Details**

2. Maria’s mother wants Maria to
  - A. stop playing softball
  - B. help with dinner
  - C. meet her great grandmother
  - D. spend more time talking



**Understanding Sequence**

3. Which of these events happens last in the story?
  - A. The Red Rocks lose the ball game
  - B. Maria's mother steps into Maria's room
  - C. Maria's family leaves for Flagstaff
  - D. Maria listens to the weather report

**Recognizing Cause and Effect**

4. Why was Maria upset at first about seeing her great grandmother?
  - A. Maria knew her great grandmother was very old
  - B. Maria had seen her great grandmother often
  - C. Maria would miss a big game
  - D. Maria's teammates were upset with her

**Comparing and Contrasting**

5. How did Maria's feelings change in the story?
  - A. from disappointed to miss the game to happy to be able to meet her great grandmother
  - B. from relieved to miss the game to sorry to see her great grandmother
  - C. from upset to miss school to happy to leave her teammates
  - D. from glad to hear about the bad weather to nervous about meeting her great grandmother

**Making Predictions**

6. Predict what Maria will find out after she returns home.
  - A. The game between the Red Rocks and Bears was cancelled.
  - B. The Bears won the game against the Red Rocks.
  - C. Maria forgot to finish her homework.

D. The weather in Flagstaff became rainy.

### **Finding Word Meaning in Context**

7. The word *postponed* in the last paragraph means

- A. “moved to a new location.”
- B. “cancelled forever”
- C. “put off until another time”
- D. “held immediately”

### **Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences**

8. A reader of this story can conclude that

- A. Maria’s team lost the second game due to bad weather.
- B. Maria did not like her great grandmother.
- C. Maria will get to play in her game.
- D. Maria was unhappy about the bad weather.

### **Distinguishing Between Fact and Opinion**

9. Which of these is an opinion expressed by Maria’s mother?

- A. “The game is probably very important to you.”
- B. “Your great grandmother is coming to Flagstaff.”
- C. “We’ll drive to Flagstaff to visit with her.”
- D. “We won’t be back until Sunday.”

### **Identifying Author’s Purpose**

10. The author wrote this story mainly to

- A. describe a ball game
- B. explain to the readers how to win a ball game

- C. persuade children to listen to their parents
- D. entertain readers with an interesting story

### **Interpreting Figurative Language**

11. The phrase *scattered like leaves* describes how Maria's books were
- A. spread around
  - B. organized in neat stacks
  - C. hanging off the edge of her bed
  - D. in one huge pile

### **Summarizing**

12. Which is the best summary of the story?
- A. A girl is unhappy that she has to meet her great grandmother.
  - B. A girl travels to meet her great grandmother instead of playing in an important ball game.
  - C. A girl wishes for a magic solution to a problem.
  - D. A girl explains how to win a big game.

## **Fifth Grade Milestones Assessment**

Here is a folktale from China. Read the folktale. Then do numbers 1 through 12.

### **The Wise Man's Pillow**

Long ago, a young farmer came to an inn. He struck up a conversation with an old man.

"I can see from your priestly robes that you are a man of learning," said the young farmer.

"Perhaps you can share your wisdom with me. I am most unhappy."

"You look strong and healthy," said the old man. "Why are you unhappy?"

"Look how poorly I am clothed," said the young farmer.

"You wear the clothing that all farmers wear," said the old man.

“Yes, they are farmer’s garments,” sighed the young an. “But I wish for rich robes. I want to improve myself. I would like to be a man of high station! I would like to serve the emperor. I would bring great honor to my family.”

The old man took out a porcelain pillow from his traveling bag. The pillow was shaped like an open tube. “Lay your head on this pillow,” the old man said. “Then your wish will be granted.”

The young farmer put his head down on the pillow. In his dreams, he entered one of the large openings in the pillow. He found himself back in his own home. Soon after, he married a wealthy young woman. He had money for schooling. He studied hard and passed exams to become a judge. Three years later, he had risen to a post in the emperor’s court. Not long after that, he became the emperor’s prime minister. The emperor trusted him completely. But the other court officials became envious. They began to talk about the prime minister behind his back. They convinced the emperor that he had been betrayed by the prime minister. The prime minister was sentenced to death for the crime of treason. About to die, he felt utter terror. He opened his eyes and found himself back at the inn, a young farmer once again.

The young farmer bowed to the old man. “Thank you for the lesson you have taught me,” he said. “I know now what it means to be a man of high station!”

The farmer left the inn and returned to the fields.

### **Finding Main Idea**

1. The folktale is mostly about
  - A. an unusual pillow
  - B. ancient China
  - C. a wish for a better life

D. hope and trust

**Recalling Facts and Details**

2. Which of these is something that the young farmer complains about?

- A. his clothes
- B. his need for a wife
- C. poor health
- D. the emperor

**Understanding Sequence**

3. The boxes tell you about some of the events from the farmer’s dream

The young farmer becomes a judge.		Court officials are envious.
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>

Which of these belongs in box 2?

- A. The young farmer marries a wealthy woman
- B. The young famer enters a pillow
- C. The young farmer passes exams
- D. The young farmer becomes a prime minister

**Recognizing Cause and Effect**

4. Why did the emperor think that the prime minister had committed treason?

- A. the prime minister had lied
- B. court officials told lies about the prime minister
- C. the prime minister had betrayed the emperor
- D. the emperor saw the prime minister talking to court officials

**Comparing and Contrasting**

5. What is the main difference between the farmer at the start of the folktale and at the end?
- A. At the start, the farmer wishes for wealth and power.
  - B. At the start, the farmer is strong and healthy.
  - C. At the end, the farmer is trusted by the emperor
  - D. At the end, the farmer is unhappy

**Making Predictions**

6. Predict what the farmer will do next.
- A. return to the inn to make another request of the old man
  - B. return home to marry a wealthy woman
  - C. visit the emperor's court
  - D. go and work on his farm happily

**Finding Word Meaning in Context**

7. In paragraph five, the word *garments* means
- A. "farming tools."
  - B. "rags."
  - C. "robes."
  - D. "items of clothing."

**Drawing Conclusions and Making Inferences**

8. At the end of the folktale, you can conclude that the young farmer has learned
- A. that people of high station are evil
  - B. never to wish and dream again
  - C. to serve the emperor wisely

- D. that a high station does not bring happiness

**Distinguishing Between Fact and Opinion**

9. Which of these is an opinion about the young farmer?
- A. He rested his head on a porcelain pillow
  - B. He asked the old man for help
  - C. He should be proud of the work he does
  - D. He stayed in an inn

**Identifying Author's Purpose**

10. Why was the folktale told?
- A. to teach a lesson about accepting one's position in life
  - B. to describe the life of a farmer
  - C. to persuade people to change their lives
  - D. to explain how a magical pillow worked

**Interpreting Figurative Language**

11. The phrase *behind his back* means
- A. "at a later time"
  - B. "in secret"
  - C. "in a nearby place"
  - D. "in a jealous way"

**Summarizing**

12. What is the best summary of the folktale?
- A. A young farmer finds himself inside a magical pillow and rises to a high station.

- B. A young farmer is granted his wish for wealth and power and learns that a high position can come at a high cost.
- C. A wise man has a magical pillow, which he uses to teach a young farmer an important lesson.
- D. In ancient China, the court of the emperor turns out to be a dangerous place for a young farmer.



