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# Literacy Instruction Strategies for Success

## Multi-Tier Intervention in Primary Grades

### About the video

Beginning readers develop reading skills at different rates. Some students become fluent readers easily and quickly and read far above their grade level. Other students progress at a typical pace for their grade level and meet developmentally appropriate benchmarks. Still other students lag behind peers in their grade in the development of key reading skills related to decoding, fluency, and comprehension. Many schools and teachers take a “wait and see” approach with these struggling readers, believing that they need more time to remedy their skill gaps. This approach makes it hard for students to succeed in later elementary school and middle school grades, when reading to learn becomes a more central part of the daily schooling experience. This video discusses the most effective, evidence-based practices for identifying and assisting struggling readers.

### Intended audience

This video is intended for teachers of beginning readers, school leaders, instructional and literacy coaches, administrators, and parents.

## Recommendations to support struggling readers and corresponding levels of evidence

The recommendations that follow are from the What Works Clearinghouse practice guide, [Assisting Students Struggling with Reading: Response to Intervention \(RtI\) and Multi-Tier Intervention in the Primary Grades](#).

**Table 1. Recommendations and corresponding levels of evidence**

Recommendation	Level of evidence
1. Screen all students for potential reading problems at the beginning of the year and again in the middle of the year. Regularly monitor the progress of students at risk for developing reading disabilities.	Moderate
Tier 1 intervention/general education	
2. Provide time for differentiated reading instruction for all students based on assessments of students' current reading level.	Low
Tier 2 intervention	
3. Provide intensive, systematic instruction on up to three foundational reading skills in small groups to students who score below the benchmark score on universal screening. Typically, these groups meet between three and five times a week, for 20 to 40 minutes.	Strong
4. Monitor the progress of tier 2 students at least once a month. Use these data to determine whether students still require intervention. For those students still making insufficient progress, schoolwide teams should design a tier 3 intervention plan.	Low
Tier 3 intervention	
5. Provide intensive instruction on a daily basis that promotes the development of the various components of reading proficiency to students who show minimal progress after reasonable time in tier 2 small group instruction (tier 3).	Low

Source: Gersten, R., Compton, D., Connor, C. M., Dimino, J., Santoro, L., Linan-Thompson, S., & Tilly, W. D. (2008). *Assisting students struggling with reading: Response to Intervention and multi-tier intervention for reading in the primary grades. A practice guide* (NCEE 2009-4045). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. [https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/rti\\_reading\\_pg\\_021809.pdf](https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/rti_reading_pg_021809.pdf). Reprinted with permission.

## ? Discussion questions

- To what extent do you follow the What Works Clearinghouse recommendations to support struggling readers in your classroom or district?
- What strategies have you used to support struggling readers? What has worked well? What has not worked well?
- What challenges do you face in supporting struggling readers, and what are some potential ways to overcome these challenges?
- How can school and district leaders incorporate these recommendations into their strategic planning?

For more information, view these What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guides:

- [Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade](#)
- [Assisting Students Struggling with Reading: Response to Intervention and Multi-Tier Intervention in the Primary Grades](#)
- [Improving Reading Outcomes for Students with or at Risk for Reading Disabilities: A Synthesis of the Contributions from the Institute of Education Sciences Research Centers](#)

Foundational Skills  
to Support Reading



Assisting Students  
Struggling With Reading



Improving Reading  
Outcomes



## About REL Midwest

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