3 Steps to Improving Foundational Reading Skills in Special Ed

1. Assess 6 foundational reading skills
2. Review results and formulate the RTI plan
3. Develop the skills & provide accomodations

1. Assess 6 Foundational Reading Skills:
RTI Teams need to understand the importance of the skills for reading

Lexile level is a common measure for evaluating reading skills. It is, however, similar to taking body temperature: it tells you there is a problem, but **not** what is causing it or how to treat it.

Reading comprehension scores are **not** enough for instruction, especially for kids with learning or reading impairments. Reading is a complex skill that can break down in a number of ways.

Researchers identified not one, but **six** foundational reading skills! And a weakness in any one of them can inhibit students' progress in comprehension growth, preventing them from ever catching up.

If teachers knew which of those skills their students are struggling with, the teachers could efficiently plan an intervention and an effective individual learning path for each student.

Foundational Skills	Skill Description
Alphabetics through WORD RECOGNITION & DECODING	*Phonological decoding* is linking letters with their sounds to read new words. *Sight word recognition* is recognizing difficult-to-decode words. Both are needed to support vocabulary acquisition and reading fluency. <u>Low accuracy or automaticity of decoding is the primary symptom of reading disability or dyslexia.</u>
Vocabulary through MEANING & RELATIONSHIP	*Vocabulary* skill helps understand word meanings and their semantic associations ("forest" to "trees"), and is essential to reading comprehension.
MORPHOLOGY AWARENESS	*Morphology* supports development of vocabulary with the ability to identify and use prefixes, suffixes, and roots to recognize words, comprehend sentences, and learn the meaning of new words.
Comprehension through SENTENCE PROCESSING	Skilled *Sentence Processing* is the ability to comprehend sentences of varying complexity using cues such as discourse (because, while), referent (him, her, this, that), relational (less than, larger than), and logical (if, then) connectors.
Fluency through EFFICIENCY OF READING FOR BASIC COMPREHENSION	*Efficient Reading* is the ability to silently read text accurately and at an appropriate rate for understanding. Below grade performance indicates the need to practice reading with fluency to build stamina for sustained silent reading.
READING COMPREHENSION	*Reading Comprehension* is the ability to understand text by building an accurate mental model. This skill includes understanding the literal meaning, as well as making cross sentence or passage inferences. Below grade level performance indicates that students may need to listen to content area texts to build their knowledge of subjects, while learning to read content area texts.

<u>**NOTE: Capti Voice (at LRP) can assess all 6 of these foundational reading skills in as fast as 40 minutes**</u>

2. Review Results and Formulate the RTI Plan
RTI Teams need to know how to focus RTI on specific reading skills

Once RTI Team knows the student's needs, including the level of proficiency in specific foundational reading skills, the Team can formulate a focused RTI Plan with measurable goals.

The following table provides generic level-independent recommendations on how to help students develop each of the foundational skills more effectively by focusing on the areas of weakness.

Foundational Skills	Basic Recommendations
Alphabetics through WORD RECOGNITION & DECODING	Student should read words and listen to them read aloud by a fluent reader or text-to-speech. This can help students practice and check their decoding of unknown words and, with repetition, learn to recognize familiar words on sight.
Vocabulary through MEANING & RELATIONSHIP	Students should underline and look up all unknown words in a passage. Teachers can share a word lists with students to introduce new and challenging vocabulary prior to reading. Teachers should have students do vocabulary building exercises or word games.
MORPHOLOGY AWARENESS	Students first need direct instruction of morphemes, in the form of prefixes, suffixes, and base words, followed by direct instruction of affixes and roots words, and should practice combining and segmenting various parts of words, and identifying correct morphological variants within sentences.
Comprehension through SENTENCE PROCESSING	Students should highlight sentence connectors and add notes to the parts of the text that are important or difficult to understand.
Fluency through EFFICIENCY OF READING FOR BASIC COMPREHENSION	Students should read along with proficient reader silently or aloud with the audio, which helps them to identify unknown words, promotes automaticity, and helps build reading stamina. Text to speech can provide models of fluent reading. With volume off, students can practice reading faster by following the cursor.
READING COMPREHENSION	When the print is a barrier, comprehension and knowledge can still be built by listening. It is important to provide text to speech and accommodations to students so that they can keep up with subject area content learning, while they practice their print reading skills.

NOTE: Capti Voice (at LRP) provides leveled recommendations (with references to more reading)

3. Develop the Skills and Provide Accommodations
RTI Teams need to know their reading development and accommodation tools

There are numerous instructional activities that can be implemented to help student improve their foundational reading skills. Education Technology can make it possible to make learning more efficient.

[Education Modified](#) is an excellent resource for getting just-in-time instructional and pedagogical resources, getting recommendations on which tools to use, setting and monitoring IEP goals, etc.

Districts can use instructional reading products such as ReadingPlus, Achieve3000, and Read180 to help students develop the reading skills over proprietary curriculums. Unfortunately, these products:

1) Are **not** able to assess all of the foundational skills
2) Do **not** allow focusing instruction of specific skills
3) Carry curriculum, often, of **little** interest to students
4) Do **not** provide accommodations in content areas
5) Take time and focus **away** from content areas

While students are developing the foundational reading skills, teachers need to personalize and differentiate instruction, provide accommodations and scaffolding for students with disabilities.

Districts can use products such as Read&Write, Snap&Read, and Kurzweil to provide accommodations and help students access any texts they need to read in content areas. Unfortunately, these products:

1) Do **not** help assess students' reading skills
2) Do **not** help students develop reading skills

Capti Voice (exhibited at the LRP Conference) combines the capabilities of reading assessment, reading development, and disability accommodations products by enabling Districts to:

a) Assess foundational reading skills with the deepest, yet fastest assessment in the market
b) Get tailored actionable recommendations for training each of the specific reading skills
c) Provide accommodations and scaffolding for students with learning/physical disabilities
d) Utilize adaptive literacy supports for developing the foundational skills on any content

NOTE: Capti Voice enables students to develop foundational reading skills *while* reading any texts

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