



RTI & Differentiated Reading in the K–8 Classroom

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Study Guide

This study guide is a companion to *RTI & Differentiated Reading in the K–8 Classroom*. The authors of this practical resource integrate innovations in response to intervention (RTI), differentiated instruction, and instructional technology to provide a powerful new approach to literacy instruction.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers either to work their way through the entire book or to focus on specific topics of interest. It can be used to identify key points, test comprehension, or raise questions for further consideration.

We thank you for your interest in *RTI & Differentiated Reading in the K–8 Classroom*, and we hope this guide proves useful as you work to improve reading instruction and achievement for all students.

—Chapter 1—

Dramatic Changes in Reading Instruction

1. Approximately what percentage of students encounter difficulty in reading during their early elementary years?
2. Describe the first tier of the RTI pyramid. Approximately what proportion of students should have their instructional needs met by these practices?
3. Describe the second tier of the RTI pyramid. Approximately what proportion of students should have their instructional needs met by these practices?
4. Describe the third tier of the RTI pyramid. Approximately what proportion of students should have their instructional needs met by these practices?
5. What five essential elements are common to all approaches to RTI?
6. Explain how recent brain research provides a foundation for differentiated instruction.
7. Name four distinct benefits of differentiated instruction for students and teachers.

—Chapter 2—

Structuring the Primary Class for RTI and Differentiation

1. What are three initial questions a teacher must consider when planning differentiated instruction?
2. What two criteria are used to create small instructional groups? How can a teacher assess students using these criteria in order to place them in the most appropriate instructional groups?
3. Describe the use of literacy stations in differentiated reading instruction. Why is this instructional structure especially well suited to differentiation?
4. Select one of the instructional techniques presented in Teaching Tip 2.1. Explain the technique and its usefulness in differentiated instruction. Then, create a lesson for your classroom that employs this technique, or integrate it into an existing lesson.
5. Select three types of literacy stations to consider in detail. Describe their shared characteristics, and explain how each targets a different aspect of differentiated reading instruction. Use these observations to create a new type of literacy station for your classroom.

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6. Why is it especially important to monitor students' progress in the course of differentiated instruction? Describe one technique recommended by the authors that could be especially beneficial or easily implemented in your classroom.

—Chapter 3—

RTI and Differentiated Instruction for Early Literacy

1. What basic understandings of words and written language do the authors identify as forming *emergent literacy skills*? What factors may hinder the development of these skills in some students?
2. In what way do the authors suggest that speech abilities may affect phonic awareness and thus impact reading instruction?
3. What are *phonemes*? What is their function in written language, and why are phonemic skills foundational to reading development?
4. How do *phonological skills* differ from *phonemic skills*? Given the types and variety of syllables in English, why might phonological instruction prove difficult for an emergent reader?
5. In the RTI case study, what assessments did Ms. Higgins use to determine that a move from Tier 1 instruction to Tier 2 intervention was appropriate for DJ? What specific evidence did these assessments provide that indicated to her that Tier 2 intervention was needed, rather than, for example, informal tutoring?

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6. What is *instructional fidelity*? Why is it so important for implementing research-based instructional programs and for progress monitoring?

7. Describe the difference between Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. In the case study, in what specific ways did DJ's Tier 3 interventions differ from his Tier 2 interventions?

—Chapter 4—

**RTI and Brain-Compatible Differentiation Strategies for Mid-Elementary
Reading Instruction**

1. How do the reading skills required in mid- and upper-elementary instruction differ from those developed in the early elementary years? How do the phrases “reading to learn” and “learning to read” reflect these changes?
2. In what way do the authors suggest students growing up in the 21st century differ neurologically from previous generations? What influences do they cite as causes for these differences?
3. What are some specific ways gender differences manifest in boys’ and girls’ learning style preferences? How might differentiating instruction on this basis be beneficial ? (For example, does tailoring instruction to gender-based learning styles offer new opportunities for increased student engagement?) How might it be problematic?
4. What does each letter in the acronym *SHEMR* represent? Describe each of the five steps in this approach to instructional planning. How does each component contribute to effective differentiated instruction?

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5. What are *content enhancements*, and how do they improve student understanding and retention? What content enhancements have you observed in classrooms? Which of the enhancements discussed by the authors might you implement in your classroom?

6. Describe the importance of assessment and progress monitoring, and the importance of precision in the data, in guiding Ms. Thompson’s approach to KD’s reading instruction and intervention.

—Chapter 5—

Differentiated Reading Instruction in the Elementary Content Areas

1. The authors note at least three distinct challenges presented by upper-elementary reading instruction. What are these unique challenges, and how do they differ from those found in early elementary instruction?
2. What characteristics do the various approaches to cognitive strategy instruction share? What is their purpose, and how might they benefit a struggling upper-elementary reader?
3. Many of the cognitive strategies the authors discuss teach skills that are important across all grade levels and subject areas. Select one of these strategies and describe how it might be applied in an upper-elementary or secondary subject area.
4. How is problem-based learning especially well suited to differentiated instruction? What benefits might it provide in addition to strengthening literacy skills? (For example, how could it be beneficial to unmotivated learners or learners who struggle in multiple subject areas?)
5. Describe each step in the general, five-step outline that the authors recommend for structuring problem-based instruction. What academic, cognitive, and literacy skills are involved in each step?

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6. What four criteria for evaluating problem-based learning do the authors describe? Do you agree with the way each is weighted in determining a grade? How might the rubric be modified to emphasize different proficiencies or to align with different subject areas?

7. Summarize each of the seven steps involved in teaching a particular learning strategy.

—Chapter 6—

**Guiding the Transition in Reading Instruction:
Activities for Professional Learning Communities**

1. What two specific changes in classroom structure and instruction do the authors envision as a result of the combined influence of improved differentiation, implementation of RTI, and the use of computer technology?
2. The authors recommend a number of actions that individuals and professional learning communities can take both to prepare for and to bring about these changes. Are you, your school, or your district already doing any of these things? Which could you commit to working toward this year?