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President's Message

By: Archer Israel, FLCA President
T. DeWitt Taylor Middle/High School
Reading Coach
Volusia County Public Schools

Dear FLCA Community,

What a year it is has been so far! We coaches have been swamped by the unprecedented demands of FAIR, Differentiated Accountability, state regulations (for those of us in Correct II and Correct III schools), and the record keeping and oversight that comes hand-in-hand with the Title One dollars we so desperately need.

Still, good things are happening here at my home school, T. Dewitt Taylor Middle High as we carry the renewed collegiality among faculty, and our commitment to best practices further into 2010.

Our goal at FLCA this year is to continue to develop as a resource for Literacy Coaches with quarterly newsletters, opportunities for collaboration among colleagues, and offer tools for professional development. Take a look at the professional article by Enrique A. Puig, "RTI2 and Literacy Coaching: The Evolution Continues." Puig concisely defines RTI as a framework for expanded collaboration and support for literacy development across the curriculum, cementing ever more deeply the importance of literacy coaching as a critical tool for school wide professional development.

Plans for the near future include establishing a blog for FLCA members, creating a website-based drop-box for suggestions, and hosting a summer coaching conference/seminar. Check our website for these upcoming tools and events.

Hope and Happiness-

Archer Israel

President FLCA

*Let us know what challenges and successes YOU are experiencing in your schools. We would love to post your comments on the FLCA website below the President's Message.

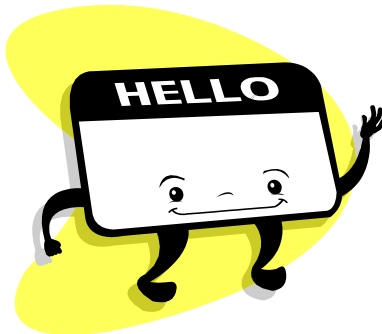
Upcoming FLCA Events

February 27, 2010 **Florida Reading Association West Coast Regional Conference**
St. Petersburg College, FL

The Hot Topics Institute is focusing on differentiated instruction, digital literacy, effective strategies, best practices and RtI. Featured speakers include noted educator and author Dr. Janet Allen, Dr. Brenda Overturf, member of the IRA board of Directors, as well as Dr. Pam Craig, Dr. Michelle Kelley, Dr. Deb Wellman, and Dr. Even Lefsky. Please see our FLCA website or visit the FRA website at <http://flreads.org> for more information.

May 7-8, 2010 **Secondary Reading Council Florida Conference 2010**
Melbourne, FL

The theme of the SRC Conference 2010 is "Riding the Wave." Featured speakers include national speaker, educator, and author, Bill McBride, authors Roland Smith and Todd Strasser, journalist Mari Mancusi, National Literacy Consultant Becky Bone, high school teacher, author and musician Mark Delaney, and the keynote speaker, author of *Adolescents on the Edge*, *Stories and Lessons to Transform Learning*, Jimmy Santiago Baca. For registration information please visit the SRC website: <http://www.flsrc.org/2010cnf/2010cf.html>



Coaches' Corner: Practical Solutions to Coaching Challenges



My Child's Reading Comprehension

By: Ginger Kirchmyer, NBCT ELA/AYA
SCHS 9th and 12th grade English Instructor

This answer is actually very simple. It's the same answer as to many other like questions: *How do I improve my guitar playing?* *How do I improve my time as a runner?* *How can I get more knowledgeable about fixing cars?* I'm sure you already know the

answer. Practice. But, what exactly does that mean with regard to reading? Do I read every day and miraculously become smarter and more competent? Yes and no. Reading will surely help. It builds stamina (believe it or not, your eye muscles get tired quickly if you aren't used to reading regularly), it exposes you to new vocabulary which will build your speaking, writing, and reading vocabulary as well as aide in improving your spelling. And, no doubt, you will improve all by yourself to a certain degree, but if this is already an area of struggle for you, you need more than independent reading to help you gain skills.

Parents, here's where you come in. Firstly, having your children read non-fiction will help them to use some critical thinking which isn't necessarily required of them in fictional reading. Novels pretty much give us all the information we're going to be required to know and understand. Non-fiction, however, makes us search out our own background knowledge; it demands more interaction during the reading process, and it evokes stronger reactions which may bring about a call to action. Why does this matter? Because these things make us work our minds....and that's the goal we have for our young people, isn't it? We want them to work their minds and always strive to be better tomorrow than they are today.

Secondly, YOU can interact with them. This has several positive effects. 1) It will surely help to improve their reading comprehension, 2) it will hopefully create a spark of interest which will make them want to read on their own, and 3) it will give you and your teen a reason to talk. Sometimes parents and teens don't quite know what to talk about because so many things in their lives are different. This can help parents and teens reestablish a bond and maybe even focus on some commonalities. I can speak from experience. As a teen, this was a ritual I enjoyed – reading and talking about reading with my mom.

So, now you're wondering what exactly I'm asking you to do when I say "interact." Well, it's actually not that hard. The first step is to read whatever they're reading. Choose an article from the paper or magazine, preferably one you could both enjoy, or go back and forth – today is an article you believe in, next time is an article of interest to your child. Maybe even ask your child to select some of the articles to take the load off of you. Then, just have a conversation about what you read. Here are some conversation starters to keep you focused on building reading comprehension skills:

- What did you think of this article? Why?
- Why do you think the author wrote this? (to inform, persuade, describe, entertain...) What makes you think that?
- Do you think there's any kind of "hidden agenda" in this article? (Like, they're trying to persuade you without you knowing it?)
- What do you think the author's viewpoint on this issue is? Why/what evidence is there of that?
- Do you trust what this author has to say? Why/not? (Is there a part of the issue not being presented here? What is it? Also, Who is the author? Are they qualified to be writing on this topic?)
- Have you ever read or heard anyone else talk about this subject? What did you learn from them?
- What do you think this word means? (Find a word in the text which has some contextual clues to provide "hints" on its meaning.)



-
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- Is there anything alike or different in this article as compared to another article you recently read? Talk about the like and differing views.
 - Ask them to interpret some of the graphs and charts from the newspaper. They REALLY need practice with this. If they're good, take 'em to the harder stuff...go to the stock market pages and see what they can find out there. (Who's doing the best?, Who took the biggest hit?, Who might be dealing with bankruptcy soon?...)
 - Predict what you think would happen if.... (Sometimes ask them to predict if there are no changes, sometimes ask them to predict if certain variables are applied – you choose.) Remember though, they should be basing their answer on the text.

The conversation should be relatively casual and as natural as possible. Don't make it like a chore, or that is how your child will look at it. Of course, they will know it's not completely spontaneous, but you can make it seem more or less "fun" by controlling how/when you do the discussing. Some of the more natural times to do this would be:

- While you're cooking dinner
- Before bedtime (yes, teenagers should have a bedtime)
- On a weekend morning, maybe while having breakfast
- In the car
- At the laundromat ☺
- While you're waiting at a doctor's office (read one of their brochures)
- At a sibling's game or other function where there's some down time
- At a restaurant (ask them some questions about the menu; it doesn't always have to be a big, long article ☺)



Remember, when they are answering the questions, keep directing them to the text. If they say, "Well, I think.....," ask "Is there anything in the article that supports that idea?" If not, maybe you could suggest they look up another, related article with a different viewpoint on the internet. That could lead into an interesting discussion on believing what you read and understanding your sources. Keep in mind that the tests which require them to have these skills are not so concerned with personal opinion; they're more concerned with students' critical thinking skills, being able to analyze, infer, synthesize, and draw conclusions from the reading, and the ability to support their ideas with evidence from text.

Good luck, and happy reading!

Literature Circles

By: Archer Israel
T. DeWitt Taylor Middle/High School
Reading Coach
Volusia County Public Schools

At T. Dewitt Taylor Middle High School, literature circles have become a one of our most successful approaches for scaffolding the literacy development of reluctant readers. We have revisited the research on literature circles (Daniels, 2002) with the goal of bringing striving readers into the literacy club (Smith, 1987) by developing a codified approach of explicit practices and strategies that *simplify complexity without denying complexity*. (Gowin & Alvarez, 2005 p 23) These practices include Book Selection, Word Consciousness, Procedural Frameworks, Talk and Text, Dynamic Engagement, and Expert-Peer Collaboration. As reading coach and principal researcher on this project, I am deeply invested in sharing this perspective with my reading faculty. And yet, I am concerned to avoid the orthodoxy of rigid practice that can occur when the conversations occur primarily between the reading coach and individual teachers. While we have regularly scheduled department meetings, it is impossible to create consistent and frequent opportunities for our reading staff to collaborate and share directly with each other, without adding an additional task to their already overloaded plate. In order to foster the conversations among faculty that are so critical to the living process of strategy development and acquisition, I make a point of operating as the conduit between colleagues, sharing their words, (as unfiltered through my perspective as possible!) as I travel from class to class. As a result, I believe, of this coaching strategy, I have observed a significant increase in experimentation and adaptation of new literacy strategies among staff. With me as reporter, teachers are able to share the daily observations and refinements of strategies in their classrooms, and receive feedback about how similar strategies function in their colleagues' classrooms, to hear how the process has been tweaked to meet the challenges of specific learners in real and relevant teaching contexts—all of which contributes to dynamic action research. Below is an example of a recent innovation to scaffold Book Selection, shared and transformed among colleagues:

Reported from Mrs. Jalbert: I adapted the format of SQ3R because kids were already somewhat familiar with that. Initially I give students a form with the following headings:



- Book title,
- (S) survey front and back covers,
- (Q) question author/background/copyright,
- (R) read for vocabulary difficulty,
- (R) review 2-3 paragraphs
- (R) rate from 1-5

In the beginning we review a LOT of books, at least sixteen or so each time in order to maximize the likelihood

that students will find a book they really like. I encourage them to avoid a rating of 3, so that they can easily identify from their surveys which titles are possibilities. I include about three-quarters fiction, one-quarter non-fiction, and then am pretty purposeful in offering students a variety of genres—comedic romance, scary horror. I don't want to be sexist, but I also think about a male versus female audience. Whatever it takes to help kids find a book they really love.

Mrs. Hoch: Wow, she really reviews a lot of books. We do quite a few but not this many.

Maybe I will get a few more titles for our book selection tomorrow. I have about eleven so far. I really like the category where students think about the copyright date and author information—maybe they will realize that they are more interested in current fiction than an historical novel.

Ms. Israel (me): Or be attracted to something written by a Latino author, for example.

Mrs. Hoch: I'd like to get a copy of the format she uses for her text selection-- and I'll get some more titles. I'd like to have about 20, I guess.

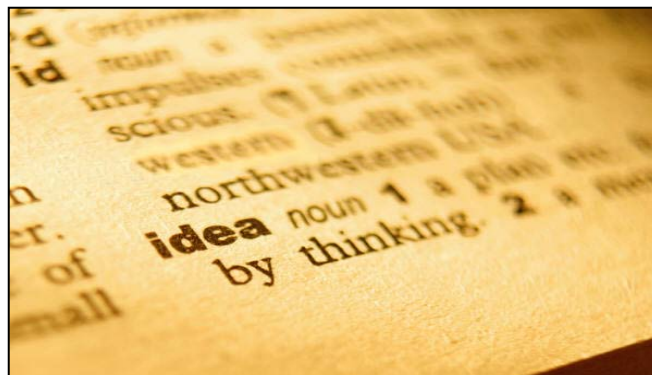
Reported from Mrs. Hoch (email communication): We just used [Mrs. Jalbert's form]. There was a little confusion about the Q part of the survey when it came to the background. So, I decided that if they could not find anything about the author, they could look for the background of the book, or the setting of the book. I also asked them to survey the book for words that were difficult for them and record two or three of those words. Those are the tweaks I have made thus far.

Reported from Mrs. Jalbert: When the students are more familiar with the format, I use an abbreviated version. At this point they're already very good at formulating the questions, so we just use survey where write down a descriptive adjective—they have to do that before they even open the book. Then we combine read and review. They write whether the book seems easy medium, or hard, and try to get a feel for the author's language to see if it's something they think they will like. At this point in the year know the students pretty well, and might not offer as many selections. For example, this last book selection the whole class chose either Code Talker or Dying to Cross.

Israel: Where do students get their adjectives from? I see snooze-fest as one of the options.

Jalbert: We brainstorm those with the students.

There is an obvious dynamism that happens as I carry the conversational text among colleagues, that has an immediate transformational impact on classroom practices.



Ideas from the Front Lines

RtI² and Literacy Coaching: The Evolution Continues

By: Enrique A. Puig, Morgridge
International Reading Center, UCF

The French philosopher/historian Michel Foucault (1969) has been quoted as saying “Do not ask me to remain the same.” Truer words could not have been spoken, especially when discussing the evolution of the literacy coach as a factor in educational reform. The role of the literacy coach has evolved from reading expert to that of someone with expertise on the art and science of learning and instruction with children (pedagogy) and/or the art and science of learning and instruction with adolescents (hebegogy). Equipped with pedagogical and hebegogical knowledge and wisdom, the role of the literacy coach has evolved from the traditional reading specialist who worked with students and provided instructional recommendations to colleagues- to a lead-learner seeking instructional solutions with mentor-colleagues. The difference is the shift literacy coaches have made over time from being the expert to the co-learner to the lead learner. As lead-learners, literacy coaches are now faced with another evolutionary move while climbing another rung on the professional learning ladder. In this brief article, I’ll define the concept of Response to Intervention (RtI) and address the evolving role of the literacy coach in the *de rigueur* RtI school reform. From this point on, I will borrow from the California Department of Education and refer to the reform as Response to Intervention/Instruction (RtI²)

since the reform effort for all intent and purposes is about instruction.

What is RtI²?

While there is no singular approach or definition for RtI², the literature generally states that it is a solution-seeking framework for thinking about tiered instruction, intervention, and assessment for all students (Millard & Johnson, 2008; Little, 2009). Essentially, the framework addresses eight core features: quality classroom instruction, research based instruction, assessment, universal screening, monitoring progress over time, on-going program monitoring, research based interventions, and fidelity measures (Mellard, 2004). Overall, the majority of the literature on RtI identifies three tiers of intervention even though some educators have played around with the thought of four (Gersten et al, 2008) or nine tiers. The supplementary tiers, while usually not recognized as part of an RtI model, take into account long-term special education and other challenges such as health care, parental involvement, and community involvement.

Tier 1 intervention/instruction is simply good classroom teaching that takes into account whole group and small group instruction. Tier 2 intervention/instruction is more specific targeted instruction with teaching decisions made on time, group size,

or materials. For those students that do not respond to Tier 2 intervention/instruction, Tier 3 intervention/instruction is implemented and may include more targeted instruction such as one to one tutoring. Although the genesis of RtI² is grounded in special education (IDEA, 2004), its impact is primarily on general education instruction, intervention, and assessment to support students who are experiencing academic or behavioral challenges (Batsche et al. 2005; Cummings et al. 2008; Little, 2009).

The evolving role of the literacy coach

With the advent of RtI², the demand for highly knowledgeable, effective, and efficient literacy coaches is increased to scaffold teachers and school-based literacy leadership teams (Puig & Froelich, in press). In an RtI² model, the literacy coach has to respond to colleagues at multiple levels or tiers. This means that the literacy coach has to be a keen observer to support teacher-colleagues in reflecting on what is occurring with the students and how teachers are going to interact with what is occurring. Once again, as in most educational initiatives or endeavors, flexibility is key and literacy coaching on a growing continuum of professional learning becomes a critical necessity.

In an RtI² model, the need for a highly knowledgeable literacy coach means that the literacy coach has to be more than well versed on understanding literacy learning as a process to support teacher-colleagues and literacy leadership teams in solution seeking enterprises. Moreover, since assessment is an integral part of RtI², a clear understanding of literacy learning as a process is essential to prevent

misinterpretation of static (e.g. FCAT, FAIR, etc.) and dynamic (e.g. reading records, writing rubrics, etc.) assessments. In addition, an effective and efficient literacy coach is equipped with sufficient knowledge and experience to be able to respond, as a literacy coach, to instruction in tier 1, 2, or 3. Furthermore, the literacy coach has to be adept at shifting gears among tiers of instruction with teacher-colleagues and simultaneously guide the literacy leadership team in making sound instructional decisions grounded in a thorough analysis of static and dynamic assessments.

Moving on...

In this brief article I've defined RtI² based on current literature and personal professional experiences. I have also delineated particular topics to continue an on-going conversation with mentor-colleagues on the evolving role of the literacy coach within an RtI² model of school reform to support the education of third millennium students. As time moves on, I encourage you to continue investigating the evolution and the economy of literacy coaching at the elementary, middle, and high school level and ultimately the benefits of having a literacy coach to support teacher-colleagues, literacy leadership teams, and students.

RtI² offers us an opportunity to re-view and re-vision the role of the literacy coach. It's an opportunity to study how literacy coaches can go beyond impacting individual classroom teachers in literacy instruction to supporting all students in all content areas as the continuum of coaching (Puig & Froelich, in press) continues to evolve and expand. I close by planting the seed that effective and

efficient literacy coaches are proficient ethnographers seeped in the culture of the classroom, school, and community. This, of course, begins by establishing a common language to communicate clearly, sensitively, and respectfully within the heteroglossia (Bakhtin, 1981), the multiple vocabularies, that occur in school.

Resources

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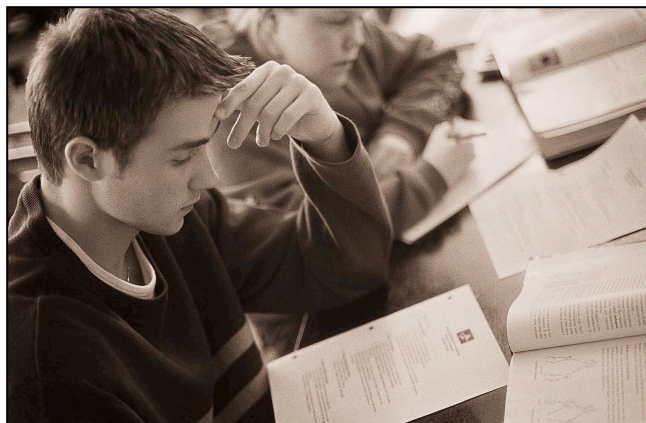
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Mellard, D. (2004). *Understanding responsiveness to intervention in learning disabilities determination*. Lawrence, KS: National Research Center for Learning Disabilities.

Mellard, D. F., and Johnson, E. (2008). *RTI: A practitioner's guide to implementing response to intervention*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

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Bits and Pieces

UCF Book Festival- Call for Volunteers!
The 2010 UCF Book Festival will be held April 16-17, 2010, at the UCF Arena. The Book Festival, one of Florida's premier literary events, will feature renowned national and local authors, book signings and sales, exhibits, workshops for authors, writers and educators, and special children's activities. We are excited to hear that the Florida Literacy Coaches Association is interested in volunteering for this event. Volunteers will be asked to commit for either two (2), four (4), or six (6) hour time slots during the hours of 7:00am and 6:00pm on Saturday, April 17, 2010. We offer a

wide range of volunteer opportunities including: moderating or assisting with author book signings and panels, providing hospitality, information, or transportation to and from the airport, assisting in the exhibit hall, or serving as escorts. Volunteers will also be provided with refreshments.

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ATTENTION!!!

Encourage your fellow coaches to join!

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