

Specialized Literacy Professionals

A Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association

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Specialized Reading Professionals Officers

CHAIR: Barbara Klebanow
1100 Hayward Avenue
Mount Vernon, NY 10552
914-668-5250

SECRETARY: Jack Cassidy
Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi
ECDC 6300 Ocean Drive
Corpus Christi, TX 78412
101-625-8611
jack.cassidy@tamuc.edu

TREASURER: Gary L. Shaffer
1809 Country Club Drive
Tallahassee, TN 37386-4832
931-455-4312

NEWSLETTER EDITORS: Mary Ellen Skidmore
11 Sunset Drive
Whispering Pines, NC 28327
& Jack Cassidy
(see above)

The Literacy Professional

A publication of IRA's *Specialized Reading Professionals* Special Interest Group

An Interview with Camille Blachowicz: The Vocabulary Queen

By Jack Cassidy, Ph.D.
Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi



(Camille Blachowicz is Professor of Education at the National College of Education of National-Louis University, where she is Director of the Reading Center and Reading Program. In her long career as an educator, Dr. Blachowicz has been a classroom teacher, team leader, and reading specialist as well as a university educator and staff developer. Her research has been supported by grants from the Spencer Foundation, the Fudbright Council and the International Reading Association. She and Peter Fisher are the authors of Teaching Vocabulary in all Classrooms and the chapter on vocabulary research for the third Handbook of Reading Research. She is also a longtime member of the Specialized Reading Professionals SIG and an author on the Scott Foresman reading series published by Pearson Education.)

1. When I first began doing the "What's Hot" column, vocabulary was definitely not "hot." However, for the last few years, it has been a "hot" topic. Why do you think that has happened?
Obviously, one of the major factors was the Report of the National Reading Panel, which highlighted some of the significant scientific research on vocabulary and stated that there was enough of this research to draw some conclusions about what constitutes effective vocabulary instruction. As you well know, attention given to certain topics is somewhat cyclical. I think we are in a cycle now in which people are thinking about curriculum and attention to vocabulary has to be part of any focus on curriculum. Also, we have a bit more research on oral language, and the results of that research support an emphasis on vocabulary instruction.
2. When and why did you first become interested in vocabulary instruction?
When I started teaching, I began with a "low" language arts group of third and fourth graders. Some of my students were English language learners and all of them had vocabulary issues. Some had more generalized language problems and some had very idiosyncratic meanings for their vocabulary. I quickly realized that if they were to have any success in reading, we had to focus on vocabulary instruction.

Continued on next page.

Dr. Cassidy, Continued

4. More recently, you have become interested in fluency, another "hot" topic. How are vocabulary and fluency related?
Knowledge of words should precede automaticity, and automaticity is a key factor in fluent reading. Of course, you do have "word callers"; fluency and vocabulary knowledge are related but are different animals.
5. What do you hope to accomplish in the remainder of your career?
That's a horrible question – makes me feel old. But, I'll try to answer it. I'm really interested in mentoring new faculty. The best thing that professors can do when they are in the fourth quarter of their careers is to help their junior colleagues. I have now written something with every one of my doctoral students--the last is *Vocabulary Across the Curriculum*, an Action Tool which just came out from ASCD.
6. What's your favorite food?
Anything but okra.
7. What are you reading for fun?
I'm reading a biography of Rudolf Nureyev. Next on my list is *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain* by Maryanne Wolf.
8. What about Camille Blachowicz might our readers find surprising?
I'm a REALLY, REALLY, REALLY good cook. I enjoy it; it's very relaxing. I'm really quite domestic. Unless we go to a restaurant, I've cooked dinner for my husband every night for the forty-one years that we have been married. He really lucked out!
9. What's your favorite avocation?
I love the theater, movies, travel, reading – all of which I hope to keep doing for many years.

✓ Check the Red Check

Do you have a red check on the mailing label on the front of this newsletter? If you do, it means, your membership in our SIG is about to expire. If you have two red checks, it means, your membership has already expired. In either case, it is time to RENEW your membership. Our SIG includes as its members many prominent leaders in the field including present IRA Board members, Linda Gambrell, Maureen McLaughlin, Maryann Manning, Taffy Raphael and Ray Reutzel as well as former Presidents Ira Aaron, Richard Allington, Mary Austin, Jack Cassidy, Jerry Johns, Walter MacGinitie, Kathryn Ransom, Doris Roettger-Svoboda, and Timothy Shanahan. Many former IRA Board members also belong.

The Literacy Professional

Our Members Publish

(In this column, we list some of the 2006-2007 publications of our members whose names are listed in boldface. For the next issue, please e-mail Jack Cassidy (jack.cassidy@tamucc.edu) any of your 2007 publications which we may have missed.)

Maryann Manning (University of Alabama – Birmingham) co-authored the book *Reading and Teaching* published by Erlbaum, and is first author of the chapter, "DIBELS; Not Justifiable" in *The Truth About DIBELS* published by Heinemann.

Barbara Chesler Buckner (Coastal Carolina University, SC) is IRA's representative to NCATE and the author of "The Prophecy Fulfilled: Teacher Educators Become Campus Leaders" which appears in the fall 2007 issue of *Quality Teaching*, NCATE's quarterly newsletter.

Jack and Drew Cassidy (Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi) had their article "What's Hot, for 2007" translated into Spanish as "Temas Candentes"; it appears in the September, 2007 issue of the Spanish language journal *Lectura y Vida*.

A number of SIG members have articles in the recent College Reading Association yearbook entitled *Multiple Literacies in the 21st Century*. **Barbara Fox** (North Carolina State University), **Jill Lewis** (New Jersey City University), **D. Ray Reutzel** (Utah State University), and **Jack Cassidy** (Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi) are some of the authors of "Stepping Forward Together: Voicing the Concerns of Teacher Educators through Practical Applications and Collaborative Actions." **Sherrye Garrett**, **Dan Pearce** (Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi), and **Laura Salazar** (Corpus Christi Independent School District) authored "University – Based Reading Clinics: Where Are We Now?" **Judith K. Wenrich** (Millersville University, PA) is one of the authors of "Three Views of Content-Area Literacy: Making Inroads, Making it Inclusive and Making Up for Lost Time."

Bryant Griffith (Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi) authored a book entitled *A Philosophy of Curriculum*, published by Sense Publishers. He also co-authored "Social Studies Methodology as Viewed in a Hermeneutic Perspective," which appeared in *The Journal of Thought*.

Rebecca Olness (Black Diamond, WA) is the author of *Using Literature to Enhance Content Area Instruction: A Guide for Teachers* published by IRA.



Coaching RtI: Tier Two A Differentiated Double Dose

By Barbara Marinak, Ph.D.
Pennsylvania State University – Harrisburg
and Susan Mazzoni, Ph.D.

(This is the second in a three part series on response to intervention (RtI) a very "hot" topic, mandated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004. Tier One which was described in the first article (The Literacy Professional, Summer 2007) involves differentiated instruction in the classroom. Here Marinak and Mazzoni describe how they work with schools in implementing Tier Two of RtI. Both Tiers One and Two are "steps" in the "early intervening services" designed to prevent the degree of school failure that results in special education (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2005).)

In their book, *Made to Stick* (2007), Chip Heath and Bruce Heath explore the notion of "sticky ideas". Sticky ideas are ideas that thrive within a community. The authors suggest such ideas are simple, concrete, credible, and lend themselves to stories. During RtI coaching, we seem to have created a sticky idea by describing Tier Two as a "differentiated double dose of intervention". Our teachers and reading specialists describe what it means, who is receiving the double dose, and how it's working. A differentiated double dose for struggling readers, as per the Heath brothers, is simple, concrete, and credible. Most important, colleagues are sharing stories about the progress of their students.

To arrive at a Tier Two plan, we begin with a discussion of research-based attributes. The crucial attributes that inform Tier Two are: (1) highly qualified interventionist, (2) intensity and ratio, and (3) method.

Attribute 1: Highly Qualified Interventionist

Highly qualified interventionist refers to the educator delivering the intervention. Crucial in this planning process are the following questions:

- How many reading specialists/literacy coaches are available to deliver intervention?
- How does the master schedule need to be revised to ensure that the reading specialist can provide seamless services to each targeted grade level?
- Is the reading specialist well versed on the instructional priorities of the core classroom program?
- What training might the reading specialist require to deliver differentiated interventions?

Consistent with the recommendations of literacy leaders (Allington, 2007) and organizations (IRA, 2007), we build classroom and intervention schedules to ensure that reading



Leveling Guided Reading Books for Tier Two instruction at Belmont Hills Elementary School, Bensalem PA. From left to right: Christine Dailey, Susan Mazzoni, Penelope Carboni, and Judith Diehl.

Attribute 2: Intensity/Ratio

Intensity is the length and duration of the intervention. Ratio is the number of students assigned to an interventionist during a given period. Tier Two should be delivered in addition to, never in lieu of, core reading instruction. The essential questions include:

- How much time is available in the school day to double dose struggling readers?
- What instruction will the student be missing to receive the intervention?
- How often will the intervention occur (daily, three days a week, etc.)?
- How long is each intervention period (20 minutes, 30 minutes, 45 minutes, etc.)?
- Is there a plan to avoid "the roller coaster effect" (i.e. students moving in and out of intervention haphazardly based on limited data)?
- Is the reading specialist to student ratio reduced during the intervention compared to the core reading instruction?

If our Tier One coaching is effective and each child receives daily reading instruction in a small differentiated group, planning intensity and ratio becomes easier. By creating a staggered master schedule, struggling readers receive their intervention during a period of time when they are not receiving core reading instruction (i.e., center time, independent work time, etc.). Our goal in Tier Two is 30 minutes of daily intervention for the entire school year. Providing intervention for the entire school year minimizes the "roller coaster effect". In Tier Two, we strive for a ratio of 5:1 in the primary grades and 6:1 in grades three and up.

Dr. Marinak and Dr. Mazzoni, next page

Dr. Marinak and Dr. Mazzoni, Continued

Attribute 3: Method

Method is the instructional approach chosen for the intervention group. Just as core classroom instruction should be differentiated based on the needs of learners, so too should intervention. As we plan intervention groups, the following questions prove helpful:

- What does the classroom and/or diagnostic data reveal about student needs?
- What method(s) are indicated within a grade level intervention population? How can grade level populations be grouped to ensure an appropriate reader to method match?
- Do methodological decisions need to be prioritized? Are the needs of an intervention group so great that one instructional priority is the focus of intervention for a period of time?

A variety of Tier Two intervention groups evolve after considering these questions. A few examples we have coached include diagnostic prompting for intensive word study and/or reciprocal teaching (Palinscar & Brown, 1984) for comprehension.

Coaching Tier Two RtI can be a challenge when planning differentiated intervention for struggling readers. Consequently, there are many variables to consider. Using the three attributes above has helped us move Tier Two from a theoretical concept to a "sticky idea"—simple, concrete, and credible.

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(Barbara Marinak is an Assistant Professor at Pennsylvania State University – Harrisburg. Susan Mazzoni is an independent literacy consultant. Barbara and Susan Mazzoni consult with districts on effective literacy practices and the implementation of RtI.)

LEADER Eleuthera & Belize Book Projects Help Needy Children

At the Haynes Library in the Bahamas, Judy True (in the black hat) along with the local librarian poses with some Eleuthera children who have received books.



Many members of the Specialized Reading Professionals special interest group (SIG) are also members of the LEADER SIG. Judy True is one of the founders of the LEADER SIG and also the originator of the book projects below. She is also a longtime member of our SIG.

Because children on the Islands of the Bahamas and in Central America lack books, the Outreach Committee of the LEADER SIG works with two projects to promote availability of books for children. The LEADER initiative for Eleuthera (LIFE) provides a Christmas gift book for each pre and primary school child in Governor's Harbor. In Belize, LEADER provides instructional materials, reading books, and content area books to the "Better Believe it BELIZE" program, a program offering continuing education for Belize teachers.

LEADER is seeking help in sustaining these projects. Through your monetary donation, books will be purchased and shipped to these LEADER Book Projects. Many local and state IRA councils are contributing as well as individuals. If the project is being done by a local or state council, LEADER will recognize your organization's donation through a certificate documenting your council's participation in an international project. This will help councils meet council requirements.

Contribution checks made out to LEADER and referenced "Outreach" may be sent directly to Dee Cramer, LEADER Treasurer, 705 Dianjou, El Paso, TX 79912.

The Evolving Role of the Reading Specialist

By Kim Skinner and
Judy S. Richardson

Intervention models seem to be "hot" these days in reading circles. At recent conferences, many sessions presented intervention models as if they were a new idea! This brief article is intended to remind us what history shows; intervention is part of the role of the reading specialist and has been for many years. The role of the reading specialist has undergone a transformation in the last half-century as the demands of schools have changed. As defined by the IRA Commission on the Role of the Reading Specialist (1996), a *reading specialist* is a specially prepared professional who has responsibility (e.g., providing instruction, serving as a resource to teachers) for the literacy performance of readers in general or struggling readers in particular. While the reading specialist has traditionally been responsible for supplementary intervention designed for students with reading difficulties, that role is expanding as legislation has changed and the need for support in the classroom is recognized.

Some History

Reading specialist responsibilities have evolved from working primarily with students to also working more closely with teachers. With the inception of Title I funding for programs to improve reading in 1965, reading specialists were hired by schools or school districts to run pull-out programs to offer remediation for struggling readers. While initially going by many titles, the primary focus of the reading specialist in the 1960s and 1970s was providing reading diagnosis and remediation to small groups of students. This model was sometimes called "the closet clinician model" because, according to Vogt and Shearer (2003), reading specialists supplied instruction anywhere there was a place to teach, including custodial closets.

By 1986, the International Reading Association listed five well-defined roles for the reading specialist: diagnostic/remedial specialist, reading consultant/reading resource teacher, developmental reading/study skills specialist, reading coordinator/supervisor, and reading professor. The job descriptions of the reading specialists depended primarily on context and the setting of their work. Generally though, there was little interaction between the regular classroom teacher and the reading specialist who provided supplementary instruction.

The revisions authorized by Congress in 2000 to Title I funding put more emphasis on schoolwide programs and classroom instruction. Meeting the needs of struggling readers entailed the expansion of classroom support. Reading specialists were required to collaborate and communicate well with classroom teachers, other allied professionals, and parents (Quatroche, Bean, & Hamilton, 2001).



Recent Research

According to a far-reaching survey conducted by the Commission on the Role of the Reading Specialist appointed by the International Reading Association, the main functions of reading specialists can be classified into four areas: instruction, assessment, resource, and administration (Bean, Cassidy, Grumet, Shelton, & Wallis, 2002). Responding to this nationwide survey, 90% of respondents indicated that they instruct students on a daily basis, though only 37% use a pull-out model exclusively (p. 737). As the pull-out model is less frequently used, it is being replaced by the push-in model; the reading specialist becoming a part of the fabric of the classroom. Additionally, contemporary reading specialists often perform the role of literacy coach, though as stated by Cassidy (2007), this is not universally the case. Cassidy cautions that with the popularity of literacy coaches in today's schools, care should be taken to "hire excellent classroom teachers who are also certified reading specialists" (p. 2). As the role of the reading specialist becomes more complex, the need exists for reading specialists to network and seek out resources to be successful in their broadening roles.

In conclusion, while the new buzz word "intervention" is very popular, the historic roles of the reading specialist show that intervention is not a new concept at all!

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(Kim Skinner and Judy Richardson are both members of our SIG. Kim is a reading specialist and former elementary teacher. She is now a doctoral student at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. Judy is professor emeritus at Virginia Commonwealth University and author of a very popular content area reading text.)

The Devil's Dictionary - Redux

By Jack Cassidy, Ph.D.
Texas A&M University
- Corpus Christi



(After chatting with Camille Blachowicz about vocabulary, I was reminded of a brief article I wrote over 20 years ago for the precursor to Reading Today entitled Reading 84. Over the years, a variety of educators have alluded to this activity and some have actually renamed it. I myself sometimes call it the Daffy Dictionary. Anyway, it is one means to foster that "playful attitude" toward vocabulary advocated by Dr. Blachowicz. Here is the article in its entirety.)

Teaching structural analysis (roots, prefixes and suffixes) can be extremely dull for both the teacher and the student. The Devil's Dictionary was devised as a means to make this activity more interesting and meaningful. It has been used effectively in grades three and higher.

The basic procedure is quite simple. After some instruction in roots and affixes, as well as some instruction in the organization of a dictionary, youngsters are told that they are going to construct their own dictionary. However, this dictionary is going to be "very special."

Requirements

There are three basic requirements for the Devil's Dictionary:

1. All words must have one each of the roots, prefixes and suffixes previously studied. (See Figure 1 for a sample list.)
2. Entries in this dictionary must be written in exactly the same form as the dictionary that the students are using in the classroom.
3. No words included in the Devil's Dictionary can be found in any other existing dictionary. (Youngsters should check to make sure their words are not in any of the dictionaries. A number of other dictionaries should be available for inspection, including an unabridged dictionary.)

Using these criteria, students often create interesting and humorous words. One fourth grade boy developed the word *antihydrist*: (n: a person, usually male, who does not like to take baths).

Organization

The class can be organized in many different patterns for constructing a Devil's Dictionary. Some teachers have had all youngsters develop five or ten words individually. Then, youngsters are grouped in small clusters of three to five students with each cluster responsible for suggesting fifteen words to be included in the class dictionary.

Other teachers have initially organized their pupils in groups of two to five and had each group brainstorm as many entries as possible, with each student taking turns recording suggested words. A time limit is set; and after the time is up, each group is told to select the three most creative entries in the dictionary. The words are shared with the rest of the class, who try to guess the "correct meaning." This activity can be particularly enjoyable for a whole class, since the definitions generated by the students often are quite humorous.

Extensions

Obviously, this activity develops more than knowledge of select roots, prefixes and suffixes. By having various dictionaries available and by requiring that entries be written in correct dictionary form, teachers are also helping students develop a much greater knowledge about the construction of dictionaries. In addition to being enjoyable, this activity also enhances flexible, creative thinking in students.

Figure 1
Sample Roots & Affixes for The Devil's Dictionary

Prefix	Roots	Suffix
1. auto(self)	graph(writing)	mania(madness for)
2. anti(against, opposite)	phon(sound, voice)	phobia(fear of)
3. tele(far)	hydr(water)	itis(inflammation)
4. bi(two, twice)	therm(heat)	ist(one who)
5. dia(through, between)	meter(measure)	is(pertaining to)
6. con(together)	dic(say)	ism(condition of)
7. trans(across)	vit, viv(life)	able, ible(able to)
8. re(back, again)	port(carry)	ment(state of)
9. in, im, il, ir, un (not, in, on, with in)	pen, pun(punish)	er(one who)
10. pre(before)	vert(turn) condition	ous(full of)
		ion, tion(act of)

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