The Interactive Strategies Approach to Early Literacy Instruction

- Developed and refined across three major federally funded studies focused on reducing the incidence of early reading difficulties
- An approach, not a program
- Takes a comprehensive view of literacy development and instruction
- Relies heavily on teacher knowledge and skills to plan and deliver responsive instruction
- Places an emphasis on developing strategic, self-regulated literacy learners.

The Interactive Strategies Approach (ISA)
- Basic Premises and Foundations:
  - Set high expectations for all students.
  - Provide instruction that is goal oriented and responsive to what the children know and are able to do.
  - Ensure that students are actively engaged in learning
    - Children learn to read and write by engaging in reading and writing
  - Plan for success
    - Instruction should focus just a little beyond what children are able to do independently
  - Interface support services with the classroom program.

Instruction Needs to…

- Maintain a focus on the central goal
- Be comprehensive
  - Multiple components
  - Multiple goals
- Help children to see the interconnections
- Be responsive to the needs of individuals
  - We teach children, not programs
- Be coordinated and coherent

Effective early literacy instruction includes emphases on:

- Motivating children to want to read and write
- Engaging children in actively constructing meaning from text
- Providing extensive opportunities to build the general knowledge base upon which reading comprehension depends
- Developing vocabulary and oral language skills
- Developing phonemic awareness
- Teaching about the alphabetic code
- Development of high frequency sight vocabulary
- Development of a strategic approach to word identification
- Large amounts of academic engaged time

Instructional Goals of the Interactive Strategies Approach

- Motivation to Read and Write
- Alphabets
  - Purposes and Conventions of Print
  - Phonological/phonemic Awareness
  - Letter Names
  - Letter-Sounds
  - Decoding and Encoding Skills (word reading and word writing)
- Word Learning (Word Identification)
  - Strategic Approach to Word Learning
  - High Frequency Sight Vocabulary
  - Vocabulary and Oral Language skills
  - Comprehension and General Knowledge
The Vygotskian Perspective

- Identify the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) –
  - The range of (cognitive) activity between what a child can do on his/her own and what he/she can do only with assistance.
  - Instruction is most effective when focused in this range.
  - Careful observation on the teacher's part allows her to identify the ZPD.

Vygotskian Perspective

- Teach with the intention of developing strategic, self-regulated learners
  - Self-regulation - Independence in noticing and solving (cognitive) problems

General Principles for Effective Instruction:

- Engagement leads to learning
  - The more a child reads, the better she gets
- Set high expectations for all children
- Support services should be congruent with the classroom program
- Plan for Success
- Take a Vygotskian Perspective on teaching and learning

Scaffolding

- Definition: The provision of temporary supports that allow a child to successfully accomplish a task that is too challenging for him/her to accomplish on his/her own.
- Example: Suggesting a word identification strategy when a child encounters a word that she/he cannot easily identify.
Basic Elements of Response to Intervention approaches

Most RTI approaches involve a “tiered” approach. The number of tiers varies – but most models involve 3 tiers:

- **Tier 1** – instruction provided by classroom teacher – which, ideally, includes both whole class and differentiated small group instruction.
- **Tier 2** – small group instruction provided by a specialist.
- **Tier 3** – very small group or one-to-one instruction, provided by a specialist.

Instruction across the tiers should differ primarily in:

- The degree to which instruction is tailored to the needs of individual children.
- The amount of time children are engaged in supported reading.
- The opportunities that children have to respond and receive guidance.
- The detail of record keeping relative to individual children.

Similarities across the Tiers

Instruction across the tiers should be:

- Designed around the same set of instructional goals
- Reflective of and responsive to what the children already know and are able to do
- Both targeted and comprehensive in its approach.

Similarities across the Tiers

Instruction across the tiers should also:

- Help children to develop a Self-Teaching Mechanism (Share, 1995)
  - Using both code-based and meaning-based strategies in interactive and confirmatory ways to solve unfamiliar words encountered in text.
- Focus on meaning construction

Similarities across the Tiers

High quality literacy instruction across tiers is:

- Goal-oriented
- Responsive to the strengths and needs of children
- Coherent across settings
- Both targeted and comprehensive
### High Quality Classroom Instruction
- Is responsive to the needs of a wide range of early literacy learners
- Includes an appropriate mix of reading, writing, and oral language components that support the development of early literacy
- Includes whole class, small group, and one-to-one contexts

### Across contexts, instruction
- Conveys that reading and writing are enjoyable, meaning-making activities
- Connects foundational skills with authentic reading and writing
- Takes into account
  - the instructional goals
  - grade level expectations for literacy development
  - what the children know and are able to do

### Small Group Instruction at the Classroom Level (Tier 1)
**For children at risk of early reading difficulties,**
- Small group instruction should be:
  - Congruent with the classroom language arts program
  - Goal oriented
  - Responsive to the strengths and needs of children in the group
  - Both targeted and comprehensive
  - Provided in smaller groups and/or more frequently than small group instruction provided for children who are not considered to be at risk.

### Small Group Intervention Beyond the Classroom (Tier 2)
**Small group intervention provided to children who make insufficient progress in Tier 1 should be:**
- Congruent with the classroom program
- Goal oriented
- Responsive to the strengths and needs of children in the group
- Both targeted and comprehensive
- Provided by a teacher who has expertise in early literacy
- Provided in addition to classroom instruction
- Ideally, provided in groups that are smaller than the classroom groups
**Additional support, smaller group size, and increased teacher expertise should serve to accelerate the progress of students at Tier 2.**

### Very Intensive Intervention Beyond the Classroom (Tier 3)
**One-to-one intervention provided to children who make insufficient progress in Tier 2 should be:**
- Congruent with the classroom program
- Goal oriented
- Responsive to the strengths and needs of the individual child
- Both targeted and comprehensive
- Provided by a teacher who has expertise in early literacy
- Provided in addition to classroom instruction
**Individualization and intensity of instruction, more explicit guidance and feedback, and teacher expertise make this the most powerful level of intervention.**

### Intervention should increase the children’s ability to profit from classroom instruction
- Teachers within a given school should:
  - Work toward consistency and congruence in target areas across instructional settings
  - Establish and maintain communication between classroom and intervention teachers on key aspects of literacy instruction
Target areas for consistency and congruence across instructional settings

- Expectations for literacy competencies at the end of each grade level
- Approaches to teaching about the alphabet and decoding skills more generally
- Strategies to be taught to promote word solving
- Comprehension strategies taught
- Terminology teachers use for important concepts such as:
  - Upper case (big, capital)
  - Lower case (small, little)
  - Word families (chunks, phonograms, keys)
  - Silent e (magic e, bossy e)
- Resources available in the classroom
- Efforts to build world knowledge and language skills

Important areas of ongoing communication between classroom and intervention teachers

- The books and other instructional materials that are available in the classroom.
- The themes or instructional units that are to be covered.
- The foundational skills that are currently being worked on in the classroom and have been covered in the past. For example:
  - High frequency words
  - Spelling words
  - Decoding skills
- Strategies
- The knowledge and skills of students being served across settings, based on formal and informal assessment
- Documentation of intervention.

Priorities for Planning Instruction in an RTI context

- Knowledgeable teachers
- Instruction that is:
  - Responsive
  - Coherent
  - Collaborative
- Informative informal assessments
- Begin as early as potential difficulties are apparent
  - Kindergarten intervention
  - ........

Group Work

The Intersection of the Goals of Instruction and the Components of Language Arts Instruction

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Teacher Leader Session 1 - PM

ISA Instructional Goals

- **Motivation to Read and Write**
- **Alphabets**
  - Purposes and Conventions of Print
  - Phonological Awareness
  - Letter Identification
  - Letter-Sound Association
  - The Alphabetic Principle and the Alphabetic Code
  - Larger Orthographic Units and Multi-Syllabic Words
- **Word Learning and the Development of Sight Vocabulary**
  - Strategic Word Learning
  - High Frequency Sight Vocabulary
- **Meaning Construction**
  - Vocabulary and Oral Language Development
  - Comprehension and General Knowledge

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